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**Liturgical non-sense – Negative Hermeneutics as a method for liturgical studies
based on liturgical case studies of Holy Saturday, by Edda Wolff**

Abstract

Negative hermeneutics is a philosophical method that focusses on the significance of a lack of sense and an insufficiency within language in relation to the task of communication and understanding. This project outlines how this approach can be applied to liturgy to bring out the aporetic, ironic, and absurdist elements of religious worship. By way of a test case, demonstrating the potential of negative hermeneutics for liturgical studies, it critically engages the liturgy of Holy Saturday (the paradigmatic liturgical ‘gap’). It does so from the standpoint of four alternative Church traditions (Church of England, Roman Catholic Benedictines, Iona Community, Byzantine tradition). The use of case studies grounds the hermeneutical endeavour with concrete liturgical practice. The aim of the project, then, is to show how negative hermeneutics can be fruitfully applied to liturgical studies, i.e. open different perspectives on liturgical texts and celebrations, and help redefine the role of liturgy for the wider theological context by showing the value of liturgical studies for other theological disciplines. In moving beyond the dichotomy of a liturgical theology and a theological liturgy, this study shows how the gaps and breaks in liturgical text and action can help fathom its theological-anthropological value. It therefore builds a basis for further application of negative hermeneutics to different liturgical celebrations as well as contributing to ecumenical approaches to liturgy.

Liturgical non-sense

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**Negative Hermeneutics as a Method for Liturgical
Studies based on Liturgical Case Studies of Holy
Saturday**

Edda Stephanie Wolff

Thesis in one volume submitted for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Department of Theology and Religion
University of Durham
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Table of Contents

<i>Declaration and Statement of Copyright</i>	<i>p. 5</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>p. 6</i>
Main Part I. Introduction	p. 7
Main Part II. Liturgy and Negative Hermeneutics	p. 11
Chapter II. 1. Starting Points for a Hermeneutic of Liturgy – A Brief Methodology	p. 11
Section A. Liturgy as Object of Research	p. 11
Section B. The Hermeneutic of Liturgy	p. 22
Section C. Methodological Deepening – the Dialectical Criticism of Andrea Grillo	p. 31
Chapter II. 2. Negative Hermeneutics	p. 37
Section A. Constellation of Negative Hermeneutics	p. 37
1. <i>Place within the Philosophic-Hermeneutic Discussion</i>	<i>p. 37</i>
a) <i>Rootedness in Classical Hermeneutics</i>	<i>p. 37</i>
b) <i>Specificity of Negative Hermeneutics</i>	<i>p. 40</i>
2. <i>Critique and Impulses from other Disciplines</i>	<i>p. 41</i>
Section B. Basic Concepts – the Dynamics of Understanding	p. 44
1. <i>Place of understanding</i>	<i>p. 49</i>
a) <i>Understanding of Sense (Subject-Relatedness of Sense)</i>	<i>p. 50</i>
α) <i>Language-Relatedness of Sense</i>	<i>p. 50</i>
β) <i>Subject-Relatedness of Language</i>	<i>p. 52</i>
b) <i>Self-Communication (Sense-Relatedness of the Subject)</i>	<i>p. 53</i>
2. <i>Limitations of Understanding</i>	<i>p. 56</i>
a) <i>Formal</i>	<i>p. 57</i>
b) <i>Content-Related</i>	<i>p. 59</i>
c) <i>Dealing with Negativity</i>	<i>p. 61</i>

Section C. Status of Negative Hermeneutics – Sense of Self-Communication	p. 63
1. <i>Object</i>	p. 64
2. <i>Method/Methodology</i>	p. 65
3. <i>Critique</i>	p. 68
Chapter II. 3. Negative Hermeneutics of Liturgy: Theory and Potential	p. 71
Section A. Methodological Pre-Thoughts	p. 71
1. <i>Givenness</i>	p. 74
2. <i>Transformation</i>	p. 78
Section B. Conceptual Unfolding	p. 83
1. <i>Language</i>	p. 83
2. <i>Subject</i>	p. 86
3. <i>Sense</i>	p. 87
Section C. Liturgical Hyperbole?	p. 90
Main Part III. Liturgy of Holy Saturday: Structure	p. 96
Chapter III. 1 Methodological Preliminaries	p. 96
Chapter III. 2. Holy Saturday as an Object of Study	p. 100
Section A. Theological Framework	p. 101
Section B. Liturgical Framework	p. 103
1. <i>Historic</i>	p. 106
2. <i>Systematic-Theological</i>	p. 109
3. <i>Pastoral</i>	p. 112
Section C. A Negative Hermeneutic of Holy Saturday	p. 115
1. <i>Language/Writing</i>	p. 116
2. <i>Subject</i>	p. 117
3. <i>Sense</i>	p. 119
Section D. The Dynamic of Reading Liturgy	p. 121

Chapter III. 2. Case Studies	p. 123
Section A. The Liturgy of Holy Saturday in the Church of England	p. 126
1. <i>Framework</i>	<i>p. 126</i>
2. <i>Text Hermeneutic</i>	<i>p. 131</i>
a) <i>Principal Service</i>	<i>p. 131</i>
b) <i>Offices</i>	<i>p. 135</i>
α) <i>Omissions</i>	<i>p. 136</i>
β) <i>Text</i>	<i>p. 136</i>
3. <i>Conclusions</i>	<i>p. 139</i>
Section B. Holy Saturday at Glenstal Abbey	p. 142
1. <i>Framework</i>	<i>p. 142</i>
a) <i>Background</i>	<i>p. 142</i>
b) <i>Context</i>	<i>p. 145</i>
2. <i>Text Hermeneutic</i>	<i>p. 148</i>
a) <i>Morning Prayer</i>	<i>p. 150</i>
b) <i>Midday Prayer</i>	<i>p. 152</i>
c) <i>Evening Prayer</i>	<i>p. 153</i>
3. <i>Conclusions</i>	<i>p. 154</i>
Section C. Holy Saturday with the Iona Community	p. 159
1. <i>Setting</i>	<i>p. 159</i>
2. <i>Liturgy</i>	<i>p. 164</i>
a) <i>Framework</i>	<i>p. 165</i>
b) <i>Analysis</i>	<i>p. 167</i>
α) <i>Introduction</i>	<i>p. 167</i>
β) <i>Liturgical Text</i>	<i>p. 169</i>
3. <i>Conclusions</i>	<i>p. 171</i>
Section D. Holy Saturday in the Byzantine Tradition	p. 176
1. <i>Basis</i>	<i>p. 176</i>
2. <i>Liturgy</i>	<i>p. 182</i>
a) <i>Matins</i>	<i>p. 184</i>
b) <i>Vespers</i>	<i>p. 187</i>
3. <i>Conclusions</i>	<i>p. 190</i>

Section E. Conclusions and Evaluation of the Case Studies	p. 195
Main Part IV. Conclusion and Outlook	p. 199
Chapter IV. 1. Anthropological	p. 206
Chapter IV. 2. Theological	p. 210
Bibliography	p. 214

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Edda Wolff

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I. Introduction

“In the beginning was the nonsense and the nonsense was with God, and the nonsense was God.”¹

“Ob der Nichtsinn nur als logische Negation des Sinns fungiert oder als Gegenmacht zu diesem – oder gar umgekehrt der Sinn als bloße Variante von Unsinn – fungiert, betrifft menschliches Sein und Verstehen in seinem Kern.”²

Nietzsche’s twist on the opening verses of John’s Gospel substitutes ‘nonsense’ for ‘logos’. This is a powerful reversal of what we are used to reading as the ‘word,’ and the ‘sense,’ and God himself. Yet, far from the radical atheistic framework Nietzsche’s work, this study will look at non-sense as a starting point for the study of liturgy and at its theological potential. This seems at first glance counterintuitive for a theological study. How could it be anything but provocative to talk about the non-sense of liturgy?

This study will show how a more subtle and nuanced understanding of ‘non-sense’ can enhance our knowledge of liturgy and how, in a sense, it even lies at the very centre of liturgical studies and its contribution to a wider theological interest. For this purpose, this study takes ‘negative hermeneutics’, a philosophical concept developed by Emil Angehrn, as a starting point for a methodological deepening of systematic liturgical studies. Negative hermeneutics is a philosophical method that focusses on the role of non-sense and a lack of meaning in the process of understanding and communication. This study will analyse the methodological implications and practical impact of negative hermeneutics for liturgical studies. It builds therefore on the tradition of a dialogue between liturgical studies and the philosophical disciplines,³ and more specifically with hermeneutics.⁴ The original contribution of this work consists in its application of negative hermeneutics to liturgical studies and the presentation of this through case studies. The study intends to outline a specific philosophical method to the reader and, on this basis, to outline the potential for the wider interdisciplinary dialogue between liturgical studies and other subjects. It is based on the presuppositions of an explicitly Christian theology and liturgy celebrated in the context of Christian

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Reginald J. Hollingdale, and Richard Schacht, *Human, all too human*, Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p.20 aph. 22.

² Emil Angehrn, “Hermeneutik und Kritik,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 338.

³ e.g. Andrea Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto? Prospettive filosofiche nella svolta tardo-moderna del pensiero liturgico,” *Rivista Liturgica* 101, no. 2 (2014).

⁴ e.g. Bridget Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics: Interpreting liturgical rites in performance* (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.]: Lang, 1996).

communities. Some of its methods and questions will, however, build an interesting basis for further studies within an interfaith context. It will prove that the use of a negative hermeneutics perspective will deepen the systematic-theological understanding of liturgical methods as well as develop a unique and significant perspective on liturgical commentaries and case studies. It will go beyond a simple 'application' of a method by asking what liturgical studies can contribute to the undertaking of hermeneutics and what this shows about their fundamental theological potential.

This study understands itself as an adventure in methodological hybridity, which explores the resonant silence of Holy Saturday through the lens of a negative hermeneutic. It is supported by two main pillars: a theoretical groundwork and an application of the liturgy of Holy Saturday through four case studies. The first part gives a detailed outline of the liturgical starting point and for a dialogue with philosophic concepts. This seems necessary to build a common understanding with the reader while drawing from the Anglo-American as well as the Continental-European tradition of liturgical studies. As a specific source for (meta-)liturgical methods and terminology, Andrea Grillo's work on systematic perspectives on liturgical studies will be useful. His studies on the dynamics of mediation and immediacy will build a suitable link to the focus of hermeneutic studies and their rootedness in dialectic philosophy and social sciences.⁵ Since the works of Angehrn are not available in English, the outline of his arguments will be detailed and provide context for a further application and critique of his methods. This two-pillar approach will deliberately create some tension and a potential gap of methodological expectations and the concrete reality of case studies. The choice to include case studies as an established method of liturgical studies is significant for the scope of this work.

This study understands itself as liturgical study, i.e. as an attempt to hold theological questions and concrete liturgical expression together. Thus, it draws on traditional liturgical methods attempting to sharpen the perspective and to show new and unexpected layers through the dialogue with a non-theological discipline. It will open a new perspective on the importance of gaps, but also on the significance of mistakes and the importance of laughter in liturgy.⁶ The iterative character of liturgy aims at the next celebration and is thus an interpretative challenge. The paradox of every liturgical study, as a non-literary approach to texts, will be intensified by the (meta-)hermeneutic consequences of this approach. On this basis, this study will analyse

⁵ Robert Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik: Zur sozialen Anthropologie des Nicht-Verstehens* (Opladen: Westdt. Verl., 1995).

⁶ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy things: A liturgical theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 172.

the potential of negative hermeneutics to articulate the dynamic of anabatic and katabatic elements in the liturgical act more clearly.

From a theological point of view, it will present concrete and specific material on Holy Saturday and its adaption in different liturgical traditions, and at the same time reflect on the potential theological implications of liturgical studies as an ‘in between’ discipline that analyses the positive ritual expression of the Church. The choice of Holy Saturday as an example for liturgical application represents the wider interest of the work in the ‘in-between’; something that from a negative hermeneutics point of view is reflected in the liturgical gap, the negative and the im-mediate. Holy Saturday will therefore be a paradigm for the liturgical engagement with the experience of a loss of sense, as well as the formal lack of pre-given structures and concepts to frame this loss.

It is therefore part of the methodological approach of this study to give a detailed philosophical and theological analysis of context, methods, and traditions, but at the same time to encourage the reader to reflect on how the dynamic of theological mediation and liturgical immediacy plays out in the details of each layer. This perspective intends to give a solid and profound basis for theological creativity and a playful engagement with texts (*homo ludens* and *Deus ludens*⁷). In a sense, the negative hermeneutics approach of a rediscovery and re-creation of sense, through the experiences of gaps and immediacy, becomes a starting point for the methodical introduction of the reader to profound reflection and a process of wrestling with the experience of non-sense. The challenge is not to simplify and reconcile neither the (at times rigid) language and philosophical depth of the philosophical-methodological aspects; nor to pass over the concrete and confrontational exiguity of the liturgical question (i.e. the question of how liturgy can be a function of theology). The selection of text will give a broad impression of different approaches to Holy Saturday and its representation and celebration in the concrete liturgy. All text examples are taken from an English-speaking context, while the theoretical background (in hermeneutics as well as in liturgical studies) are deeply rooted in the continental academic tradition. This reflects on the one side the background of the author, and on the other side it is the expression of an interest in the process of a ‘translation’ or ‘transliteration’ of academic methods in diverse fields and language contexts, and the potential this might open. At the same time, the reality of a text (in contrast to a video analysis of the celebration or detailed interviews with participants) shapes a formidable counterpoint to a purely methodological approach on the one side and the desire for purely ‘empirical data’ on the other side. It is not simply a further explanation of the ‘use’ of negative

⁷ Richard Kearney, *The God who may be: A hermeneutics of religion*, Indiana series in the philosophy of religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 107.

hermeneutics approach but its application and exposition in this wrestling with the concrete text and its gaps. The case studies provide a frame and a starting point for a deeper understanding of continuity and discontinuity in the liturgy and wider theological reflection on Holy Saturday. The exploration of the text will thus be largely descriptive, but nevertheless critical in that it aims to highlight gaps and hidden layers in the text. This project does not attempt to provide a comparative liturgical study that contrasts different liturgical traditions with each other but rather tries to engage their gaps and tensions in a playful and creative dialogue.

This study will show how the gaps and tensions between liturgical mediation and immediacy reveal a layer of theological desire and hope for a reconciliation and resurrection of sense beyond the loss of liturgical meaning. It will adopt the framework of a katabatic and anabatic dynamic articulated at the beginning and use it to explore the wider implications of the theological contributions of negative hermeneutics and liturgy. The goal is not to fully integrate the methodological framework and the case studies but to deliberately make room for the possibility of gaps and disaccord and to weigh their implications for an interdenominational exercise. At the same time, this opening and allowing of tension must not be taken as a dismissal of intellectual sincerity but as an encouragement to allow creativity and the appearance of an unexpected and potential meaning. Herein lies the creative and refreshing potential of negative hermeneutics for liturgical studies: it is not simply a tool to develop refined and more coherent answers, but a starting point to raise new and unexpected questions.

This project wants to not only introduce its readers to a specific method and its applications, but also to stretch their theological and liturgical preconceptions by introducing the dynamic of liturgical non-sense and disaccord. Different levels of analysis open the potential for a critical and creative engagement with texts and methods.

II. Liturgy and Negative Hermeneutics

II. 1. Starting Points for a Hermeneutic of Liturgy – A Brief Methodology

A. Liturgy as Object of Research

Before we look at the more specific question of the potential of (negative) hermeneutics as a methodical approach to liturgy, it seems necessary to clarify some of the basic concepts and constellations of liturgical studies as a theological subject, to situate the approach of negative hermeneutics within this context. The following outline will be strongly influenced by continental European approaches (particularly the tradition of the Roman Catholic liturgical movement) but will also take influences from the Anglo-American tradition into account.

First, it seems necessary to give some preliminary clarification on the concept of ‘liturgy’ and its study as an academic subject. For a study like this, which works at the borders of established liturgical concepts and seeks to create a dialogue that also incorporates philosophical hermeneutics, it is necessary to give a clear outline of its basic concepts and perspective. This cannot, however, be an attempt to cover the rather complex and controversial history of liturgical studies completely but rather an effort to provide a certain ‘context’ for the following work; some insight on where it is situated within the current state of the academic liturgical discussion; and how it can enrich a traditional theological approach to liturgy.

It is not at all obvious how and why liturgy should be the **object of theology rather than of social sciences**⁸ nor why it needs a separate discipline among the traditional theological core subjects (“Fächerkanon”) rather than leave its study to other disciplines such as church history or pastoral theology. The way theology and its different disciplines are understood is determined by a more general perspective on the relationship between of academic, scientific and cultural studies. The methodological framework for this dialogue and the justification of certain choices of methods and

⁸ Nathan Mitchell, *Liturgy and the social sciences*, American essays in liturgy (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999) and Kieran Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy: Re-presentations of the holy* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

concepts will be developed in chapter II. 2. and given as a résumé in chapter II. 3., after key concepts and methodological principles have been established.

The word 'liturgy' comes from the Greek word **leiturgia** (λειτουργία), a word used in the context of the ancient Greek polity to describe the public and cultic work and service of citizens. It found its way into the Septuagint as a specific term for the cult in the temple (Hebrew: שרת / עבודה). Subsequently it is used 15 times in the New Testament, it is used for the worship of the First Covenant (e.g. Lk 1:23) but also for the 'service' which Christ and his angels perform (e.g. Hebrews 8:2 and 1:17). But only in Acts 13:2 is the term used to talk about the worship of the Christian community⁹. In the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Church, it continued to be used as a term to talk about sacred rites and especially the Eucharist, whereas in the West it reappeared only in the 16th century as a synonym for the Mass. Under Pope Gregory XVI the term used only for other forms of worship.¹⁰ Even after these etymological explanations, the understanding of the word 'liturgy' is not at all homogeneous among different schools and writers. It rather reflects a complex of themes and aspects, from traditional questions of a 'correct' celebration of liturgical rites to current studies on the sociology of worship.¹¹ The mutual mediation of an externally mediated cult and the postulate of a transcendent faith in the liturgical celebration will thus be the basis for a liturgical hermeneutic that engages in a dialogue with phenomenology and deconstruction.

Liturgical studies is the theological discipline which studies these texts and movements, insofar they are expressions of the Church as a praying community.¹² For the historical development of liturgical studies as an original theological subject, the 'crisis of faith' at the beginning of the 20th century was a crucial impulse. The term 'liturgical science' ('scienza liturgica', 'Liturgiewissenschaft') was first used in a German-speaking context by Romano Guardini to describe the purpose and method of an emerging theological discipline in relation to the humanities ('Geisteswissenschaften'). This new discipline was distinguished from the traditional

⁹ For the Christian cult the word *λατρεία* is usually used.

¹⁰ Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, "Liturgy," in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 13, Anscar J. Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, I:3 and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, *Liturgik* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 1–7 In an English-speaking context some writers use the distinction between "**worship**" and "**liturgy**". However, both those words imply an intentional act targeted towards God, whereas the expression "church service" tries to give a descriptive determination of an outward activity (similar "descriptions" are used in other Western European languages like German "Gottesdienst") orutch "Kerkdienst"). Often, they are associated with different church traditions ("liturgy" for Orthodox, Catholic, and High Anglican services, "worship" for reformed churches). A more systematic distinction is drawn by Irvine and Bergquist, who describe worship, the "response of the whole person towards God," as a prerequisite for liturgy as the "structured set of words and movements that enables worship to happen" (Christopher Irvine and Anders Bergquist, "Thinking about liturgy," *Anaphora* 5, no. 2 (2011): 45)The following study will use both concepts synonymously since it tries to be in dialogue with different denominational and linguistic traditions.

¹¹ Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*.

¹² Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, "Liturgy," in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 14.

study of “rubrics” (‘Rubrizistik’) which explains the normative ‘meaning’ of liturgical texts based on a purely historical or canonical understanding. Whereas a purely ‘rubrical’ approach to liturgy was interested mainly in the question of ‘how’, celebrated liturgical science rediscovered the aspects of ‘why’ and ‘what’.¹³ From the very beginning, these were situated between historical-systematic studies, social and cultural sciences, and pastoral studies.

A certain ambivalence between the visible expression of liturgy and its understanding as a ‘spiritual’ reality is repeated in the very broad and heterogeneous views on the **purpose and method** of liturgical studies. The first and most general inquiry is whether Christian worship is legitimate as a cultural praxis, and, therefore, whether the study of it can draw on concepts and methods of anthropology and cultural studies. In the context of Catholic liturgical studies, a possible answer is given based on *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,¹⁴ describing liturgy and its ritual character as part of the economy of salvation; not only as legitimate expression but as *culmen et fons* in the life of the Church. The fact that the paschal mystery as liturgical key event presents itself in a ritual manner urges theological consideration of the rite to enter a phenomenological-hermeneutic inquiry discerning the fundamental unity and tension between anthropology and theology.¹⁵ The understanding of liturgy as a revelation *sub specie celebrationis*¹⁶ opens a perspective on the relation of faith to its ritual expression that will serve as the starting point for this study. The communal character of liturgy has implications for the ways liturgy is situated in time and space. From a Christian perspective, in worship, “time and space are the stage where God and humankind meet each other.”¹⁷ In an even more explicit way than individual prayer and piety, communal worship expresses the link between historic, cosmic, and divine time and space. A

¹³ Andrea Grillo, ““Intellectus fidei” und “intellectus ritus”: Die Überraschende Konvergenz von Liturgietheologie, Sakramententheologie und Fundamentaltheologie,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 50 (2000): 149, Andrea Grillo and Michael Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie: Zur Theorie des Gottesdienstes und der christlichen Sakramente* vol. 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 27 and Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 222. Andrea Grillo compares, in this context, the crisis which the emerging liturgical sciences caused to theology at the beginning of the 20th century with the radical change of the developing human sciences meant for philosophy (Andrea Grillo, “Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica: Consonanze e dissonanze tra due campi del sapere (e tra due esperienze) del XX secolo,” in *Liturgia e scienze umane: Itinerari di ricerca atti della XXIX Settimana di studio dell'Associazione professori di liturgia Santuario di Vicoforte, 26-31 agosto 2001*, Bibliotheca Ephemerides liturgicae. Subsidia 121 (Roma: Edizioni liturgiche, 2002), 85s.. The distinction between liturgical studies and liturgics is sometimes based on a similar demarcation between the academic study of liturgy and the application and exercise in a concrete Church context. More recent publications tend, though, to use both terms synonymously, Louis Weil, “Worship,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*.

¹⁴ The Church Sacred Liturgy — Sacrosanctum Concilium, “Promulgated by Pope Paul VI,” http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

¹⁵ Alceste Catella, “Theology of the Liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:16.

¹⁶ Alceste Catella, “Theology of the Liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:17.

¹⁷ Anscar J. Chupungco, “Liturgical Time and Space. Introduction,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, p. XVII.

‘Christian’ view on liturgy can either stress the difference between divine salvation and creation and oppose the human ‘ritualization’ of a purely revealed faith based on the principles of revelation and conversion, or focus on the Christological dimension of human expressions and needs as an integral part of salvation.

The fundamental theological question of the dynamic between **cultural anthropology and theology** is asked in the context of liturgical studies in an even more radical way since it must justify its existence as a genuine theological subject.¹⁸ An ‘objective’ concept of liturgy, as presupposed by the Catholic and Anglican liturgical movement in the early 20th century,¹⁹ cannot be assumed anymore, neither as a basis for critique nor a source of affirmation. It is therefore an inevitable task for current liturgical studies to not only think through the modern assumption of a subjective and personal faith, but also to further engage with a postmodern inquiry, towards a possible reintegration of exterior bodily practises in the context of a theological discussion.²⁰ The concept of ‘anthropology’ in this context cannot be reduced to a natural scientific project, but rather needs to discourse with a cultural and phenomenological-descriptive definition of the human nature that is open to engage with a symbolic dimension.²¹ Closely related to the question of the legitimacy of a ‘cultic’ (and ‘cultural’)²² understanding of liturgy is, therefore, the consideration as to how far a dynamic of liturgy, following the rules of an *urgia* rather than a ‘logic’, can be studied and taught in an academic context. This inquiry can contribute to the development of an understanding of liturgy and its study that is emancipated from a merely intellectualistic reduction.²³ The non-propositional and dynamic character of liturgy has consequences for the methodology of liturgical studies, and its relationship to other theological and extra-theological subjects.

To explore the reach and suitability of negative hermeneutics as a method of liturgical studies, the potential and the limitation of liturgical studies as a theological discipline will need to be explored in a twofold way: **1. in the relationship with social**

¹⁸ The different approaches to the understanding of liturgy, from a primarily anthropological point of view to a primarily theological point of view, are already present in the very early stages of the liturgical movement, especially in the discourse between Guardini and Casel Martin Klöckener, Benedikt Kranemann, and Angelus A. O. Häußling, “Liturgie verstehen. Die Herausgeber des Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft im Gespräch,” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 17.

¹⁹ Bryan D. Spinks, “The Liturgical Movement: 2. United Kingdom,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

²⁰ Albert Gerhards, “Gottesdienst und Menschwerdung: Vom Subjekt liturgischer Feier,” in *Markierungen: Theologie in den Zeichen der Zeit*, ed. Mariano Delgado and Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl vol. 11 (Berlin: Morus, 1995), 283–86.

²¹ Aldo N. Terrin, “Antropologia Culturale,” in *Nuovo dizionario di liturgia*, ed. Domenico Sartore and Achille M. Triacca (Roma: Edizioni paoline, 1984), 72–74.

²² For the perspective of cultural anthropology in liturgical studies Terrin, “Antropologia Culturale” and Graham Hughes, *Worship as meaning: A liturgical theology for late modernity*, Cambridge studies in Christian doctrine 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²³ Grillo, ““Intellectus fidei” und “intellectus ritus”,” 144.

and human sciences (ad extra): Most liturgical scholars agree that the insights of social science can and should be used within the discussion of liturgical science, but there is a dissension as to whether those ‘non-theological’ disciplines serve as ancillary sciences providing only analytical tools, or as equal dialogue partners yielding fundamental insights. Depending on the understanding of the purpose and nature of liturgical studies, its sources and methods vary: from interviews and analysis of videos of specific liturgical celebrations, focusing on the concrete liturgy celebrated at a certain point in time, to traditional textual criticism of normative sources.²⁴ For commentary on concrete liturgical texts, it is more and more of a consensus among liturgists that the combination of synchronic and diachronic readings makes the richness of texts more profoundly accessible than the limitation of a specific method.²⁵ Due to this methodological complexity, and its holistic approach, liturgical studies offers an example for other theological disciplines.²⁶

At the same time, the opening of liturgical studies up to new methods and approaches beyond traditional dogma made space for an ecumenical dialogue, and the non-dogmatic potential of liturgical sciences made it a “truly ecumenical exercise.”²⁷ This study will explore, through case studies from different Christian traditions, what a negative hermeneutics approach will contribute to this task. A traditionally key area for the dialogue between liturgical studies and humanities is the concept of ‘ritual’, a concept that became of academic interest in the 19th century through the developing

²⁴ Renato de Zan, “Criticism and Interpretation of Liturgical Texts,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, I.

²⁵ Gerard Lukken, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique irremplaçable: Méthodes d’analyse et de vérification théologiques,” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia: Anthropological, theological, and semiotic studies on the liturgy and the sacraments 2* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994), 248–54. On a formal level, liturgical texts can be studied via the means of semiotics: Semiotics is the theory of signs and their meaning. Traditionally, the concept of meaning is thereby described through the concepts of “signifier” and “signified,” that become connected through the process of interpretation. Following Pierce and Eco, the content of the process of interpretation is unlimited and cannot be traced to a final referent insofar it always refers to the interpretant which includes always new significats. Following the analysis of Charles Sanders Pierce, Karl-Heinrich Bieritz distinguishes between 1. iconic sign, 2. indexical signs and 3. arbitrary signs depending on the identical character of *signifié* and significant. Text as selection of meaningful connections between signs can be analysed according to 1. coherence, (grammar, syntax), 2. meaningfulness (*significat* – significant), 3. pragmatics (efficiency). also Gerard Lukken, “Semiotics of the Ritual: Signification in Rituals as a Specific Mediation of Meaning,” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia: Anthropological, theological, and semiotic studies on the liturgy and the sacraments 2* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994) For a semiotic approach to worship also Graham Hughes, *Worship as meaning: A liturgical theology for late modernity*, Cambridge studies in Christian doctrine 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁶ Gerard Lukken, “Plaidoyer pour une approche intégral de la liturgie comme lieu théologique: Un défi à toute la théologie,” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia: Anthropological, theological, and semiotic studies on the liturgy and the sacraments 2* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994), 259–67. Unfortunately, this complexity is not necessarily reflected in the epistemological considerations of many liturgical studies Angelus Häußling, “Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in *Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie: Theologische und historische Studien zum Gottesdienst der Kirche*, ed. Martin Klöckener, Benedikt Kranemann and Michael B. Merz vol. 79 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1997), 284.

²⁷ Juliette Day, ed., *The study of liturgy and worship: An Alcuin guide* (London: SPCK, 2013), XIII.

ritual studies based on the rising interest in religious and cultural rites. In dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical studies started to rediscover the principle of ‘rite’, which had supplanted the key concepts of ‘symbol’ and ‘sign’, as these had been predominant in liturgical discussion since the Middle Ages. For large parts of the tradition, the understanding of sacraments as signs (*in genere signi*) had shaped the dogmatic discussion as well as the discourse of fundamental theology with epistemology or hermeneutics. The reference of symbols to a ritual context shifts the focus from a merely theoretical understanding of ‘meaning’ to the ‘decentred’ analysis of ‘bodily’ and collective expressions.²⁸ Symbols become an authentic expression of boundary phenomenon between a meaningful language and an ontology of the ineffable. From this perspective, the human being, even in its brokenness as the very image of God, evades the danger of idolatry through its own transparency and volubility; especially, its dialogue with concepts of modern analytical psychology²⁹ opens the potential to talk about liturgy using a language of ritual experience which leaves space for an interpretation of a symbolic difference. The ability to communicate and understand through symbols becomes a key ability for the individual as well as for any community. The understanding of humans as ‘symbolic being’ (*animal symbolicum*) forms the basis for a dialogue with ritual studies as well as contemporary philosophical approaches to anthropology. The level of the symbolic cannot be reduced to a mere self-transcending but needs to be linked back to the categorical finality of the historically grown symbol.³⁰ This perspective on liturgy as a process of symbolisation becomes even more fundamental as it gets broadened to the principle of ritual action. The liturgist Paul Bradshaw defines rituals as action which are performed for their symbolic value and repeated, in a social group.³¹ Between transformation and stabilisation, ritual facilitates the experience of ‘community’ in everyday life as well as in the exceptional moment.

²⁸ Stephen Buckland, “Ritual, Körper und "kulturelles Gedächtnis",” *Concilium* 31, no. 3 (1995): 215. Thereby the distinction between “**sign**” and “**symbol**” varies among different traditions: traditionally “sign” was understood as a conventional element representing an instruction, operation, or concept, Maurice Waite, “Symbol,” in *Paperback Oxford English dictionary*, 9/2, ed. Maurice Waite, Seventh edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9/2:I.2b /page other. Today the concept “sign” is often understood as pictorial stand in for words (e.g. no smoking), whereas “symbol” has a surplus that cannot be identified or described with precision; at the same time, the symbol does not refer only to a fixed unit but rather makes it present in a mediated fashion. In the context of liturgy, the celebration can be described as the process of symbolisation; accordingly, symbols come into view rather as an act of “placing together” (συνβάλλειν) rather than as “simple” signifier, i.e. as verbs rather than as nouns. George Guiver CR, “Sign and symbol,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 33 and Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:30–33.

²⁹ For example Andreas Odenthal's liturgical studies based on self-psychology in Heribert Wahl Andreas Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual: Theologische und psychoanalytische Überlegungen zu einer praktisch-theologischen Theorie des Gottesdienstes als Symbolgeschehen* vol. 60 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002) and Heribert Wahl, *Narzissmus? Von Freuds Narzissmustheorie zur Selbstpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985).

³⁰ Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 103.

³¹ Paul F. Bradshaw and Harmon Katharine E., “Ritual,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 21.

For this study, the understanding of ritualization as fundamental human reaction to the experience of lack and abyss, and at the same time the possibility of understanding the nature of the symbol as deeply allocentric, is the most significant aspect of this dialogue.³²

A second perspective is crucial for the comprehensive understanding of liturgical sciences and therefore of the starting point of a liturgical hermeneutic – **2. the relationship between liturgical studies and other theological subjects (ad intra):** How do liturgical studies justify their existence as an original and independent subject? How do they relate to the general dynamic and systematic among the traditional theological core subjects?³³ What is its original contribution to the study of theology as a whole? The way different authors place liturgical studies and its relationship to other disciplines is linked to its their general understanding of its purpose and scope.³⁴ A schematic comparison of more ‘systematic’ and more ‘practical’ approaches will help to clarify basic dynamics and to outline the potential of liturgical studies as theological core subject. These different ‘scopes’ of its study will highlight the strengths of liturgy as a dialogue partner and object of study. The study of symbols that links liturgical studies to various human sciences is problematised in the intra-theological discussion by ambivalence of a Christian use of symbols. The British liturgist George Guiver talks in this context about the ‘irony’ of Christian symbols: “Unlike a religion where given idols are identified with the gods, in Christianity that ultimate identity is not there.”³⁵ Guiver sees a gradual development from a relegating sign to a symbol and finally to a ‘sacrament’, which affects what it symbolises. The Second Vatican Council broadened the concept of **sacrament** and enabled a new understanding of liturgical science as theology of celebrative ritual actions, and challenged fundamental theology to revise the general concept of sacraments (*in genere signi*).³⁶ Accordingly, the question can be

³² Gerard Lukken, “L' "autre côté" du rituel humain: Réconsidération à partir de la phénoménologie et la sémiotique sur des couches anthropologiques et théologiques dans le rituel chrétien,” *Questions liturgiques* 83, no. 1 (2002): 81–86.

³³ A certain scepticism towards the “locus” of liturgical studies within theology seems to exist, especially in the context of “continental” theology, and is a more systematic and traditional perspective on the theological core subjects, Robert S. Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” in *Hebdomadae sanctae celebratio: Conspectus historicus comparativus = The celebration of Holy Week in ancient Jerusalem and its development in the rites of East and West = L'antica celebrazione della Settimana Santa a Gerusalemme e il suo sviluppo nei riti dell'Oriente e dell'Occidente*, ed. Kidane Habtemichael and Antony G. Kollampampil, Bibliotheca “Ephemerides liturgicae.” Subsidia 93 (Roma: C.L.V.-Edizioni liturgiche, 1997), 244.

³⁴ Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 27.

³⁵ George Guiver CR, “Sign and symbol,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 36.

³⁶ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:39 The aspect of sacramentality is used in this context to create a basis for the dialogue with other theological subjects. In the proceeding of the study, the distinction between liturgical studies and sacramental theology will be explained further (II.1.C) Also Andrea Grillo, “L'esperienza rituale come “dato” della teologia fondamentale: Hermeneutica di una rimozione e prospettive teoriche di reintegrazione,” in *Liturgia e incarnazione*, ed. Aldo N. Terrin 14 (Padova: Messaggero; Abbazia di Santa Giustina, 1997).

asked, what danger does the potential of the broadening of the concept of ‘sacrament’ to all liturgical symbols bring,³⁷ without losing the specific Christian content? The Italian theologian Crispino Valenziano puts it as follows: “while every symbol refers to the order of a transcendence, the sacramental symbol refers to the order of Christian immanence.”³⁸ The ambivalence of the symbolic and sacramental character of liturgy manifests in the fact that liturgical studies as a theological subject is situated between a) systematic and b) practical theology. Both aspects are based on a commentary ‘along the text’ together with the careful study of its historic development as key methods of liturgical studies.³⁹ At the same time the study of this historic sources needs to be linked back to the experience of the faith in the Church that enables a salvific encounter between God and his people in the celebration.⁴⁰

More traditional approaches stressing the **systematic** character of liturgical studies and like are closely to the study of dogmatic theology. Its relation to the tradition tends to emphasise the normative and prescriptive aspect of liturgy. The theological character of liturgical study is thereby because its object is not the liturgical rite itself but the faith of the Church expressed in it. To legitimise liturgy either as a source for theology (theology of or from worship) or as theology itself, Prosper of Aquitaine's dictum *lex orandi lex credendi* is often cited. Prosper, a Christian writer in the 5th century, uses this expression in his work *Auctoritates de gratia* to fight semi-Pelagianism. Referring to 1 Tim 2:1.2,⁴¹ he argues that the prayer founded on a biblical basis is an expression of the faith of the universal Church as well as for the congregation. Traditionally, this quote was used to justify liturgical texts as a basis for dogmatic theological statement. The strength of this view is surely a wide and integral understanding of theology, which sees the value of liturgy as an irreplaceable expression of faith that cannot be reduced to intellectualistic concepts.⁴² Systematic theology is

³⁷ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:38–42.

³⁸ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:37.

³⁹ Reinhard Messner, “Was ist systematische Liturgiewissenschaft? Ein Entwurf in sieben Thesen,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 40 (1998): 260–65, for the paradoxical character of the sacrament Joris Geldhof, “The Figure of the Monk as the Ideal of a Liturgical Life? Perspectives from Political Philosophy and Liturgical Theology,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 77 (2016).

⁴⁰ Martin Klöckener, “Wie Liturgie verstehen? Anfragen an das Motu proprio “Summorum pontificum” Papst Benedikts XVI.” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 272 and Reinhard Messner, *Einführung in die Liturgiewissenschaft* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 23.

⁴¹ “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” *Holy Bible: New revised standard version containing the Old and New Testaments and the Deuterocanonical Books*, Hendrickson ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Bibles, 2005, ©1993). More recently liturgists like Paul de Clerck have conceded that the quote does not “favour” one side or the other but rather underlines the dynamic and mutual interpretation of theology and liturgy (Paul d. Clerck, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique,” in *La liturgie, lieu théologique*, ed. Paul d. Clerck 9 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999), 129–33).

⁴² Lukken, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique irremplaçable” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia*, 244–46.

forced to engage with contingent and concrete liturgical expression as a source of theological truth. Taking this perspective seriously urges theology to engage on a fundamental theological level with the relationship between general claims of systematic theology and the individual expression of faith. This is the starting point for a hermeneutic that emphasises truth in its individual expressions.

As a basis for the very role of liturgy for theology, the idea of a present eschatology within the liturgical celebration is used; the liturgy of the Church becomes the image of the eternal heavenly liturgy. And, therefore, the possibility of a ‘re-translation’ of theological assumptions in the language of corporate prayer becomes a criterion for its truth, since theology is understood as a doxological endeavour.⁴³ Here a third aspect of liturgy comes into focus: the confessed faith needs to prove its value in the everyday life of the Church. The *lex agendi*, the pastoral and ethical (‘diaconal’) truth of the Church, is simultaneously the continuation and critique of liturgy.⁴⁴ British theologian Bridget Nichols speaks in this context about the “eschatological imperative of prayer”,⁴⁵ as a mirror to the worship in heaven and at the same time an objection against the uncritical dogmatisation of traditional liturgical forms. A negative hermeneutics approach would, however, point out that this perspective carries a certain danger of losing the critical and ‘nonconformist’ potential of the single liturgical celebration in favour of a focus on the ‘law’ of a united Church without the distinction of ‘theology’ and its ‘object’. Thus, the dialogue with other theological disciplines, and especially the critical dispute with the human and social sciences, is necessary to prevent a one-sided ‘pan-liturgism’ that mixes the ideal of an abstract *leiturgia*, as the culmination of Christian life, with the necessarily limited and concrete celebration.⁴⁶ A less close conjunction of liturgy and theology has to deal necessarily with the ‘gap’ and tension and a certain incommensurability between both disciplines, and therefore has to enter a phenomenological-hermeneutic inquiry and discern the fundamental ability to communicate between anthropology and theology.⁴⁷ This opposition can be described through the dynamic of the **immediacy of faith and its theological mediation**, and at a later point in this study (II. 3.B) it will prove to be one of the key concepts of a negative-hermeneutic of liturgy.

After the systematic theological aspects of liturgical studies is discussed, its practical theological foundation needs to come into view to situate it within the order of theological core subjects. The ‘practical’ understanding of liturgy is thereby not separate

⁴³ Messner, “Was ist systematische Liturgiewissenschaft?,” 267–72.

⁴⁴ Also *lex vivendi* in Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and text: Method in liturgical theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 311–46.

⁴⁵ Bridget Nichols, “Prayer,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 52.

⁴⁶ Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 226.

⁴⁷ Alceste Catella, “Theology of the Liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:16.

from its systematic description but focusses on different aspects. Based on Karl Rahner's statement that all theological disciplines should serve the realisation of the Church,⁴⁸ i.e. necessarily carry a moment of practical theology, this understanding of liturgical sciences as distinctive **practical theological** subject initiates the discussion about methods and has led to a more diverse and rather descriptive understanding.⁴⁹ 'Practical' theology in this context does not mean simply mean establishing guidelines 'how to do or be Church', but rather refers to a critical reflection and discourse with an experience of liturgy mediated by theology. This approach does not necessarily stay behind a theological ideal but can also be described as the appropriate description of a dynamic relation between God and his fallen creation that focusses on the experience of the distance and separation which experiences transcendence only through God's radical affirmation of immanence in the incarnation.⁵⁰ A key question for liturgical studies is thereby how far it can embrace the fully human reality of faith expressed in the individual celebration as an event of revelation *sub specie celebrations*. In other words, how far can the concrete celebration and the celebrating individual become objects of theological, and not only sociological, study?⁵¹ This approach understands the liturgical act from a more 'Christological/soteriological' perspective, describing it as carried by head and members at the same time. The human dimension and its diverse expression become equally valid objects of theological interest.⁵² Especially in the context of catechises and the 'practical' application of liturgical studies, the question is raised as to how far 'understanding' is the basis of an active and responsible participation in liturgy. The connection between liturgy and catechises in mystagogy does not lead to a random subjectivism but aims to link the experience of the participant back to the *lex orandi* of the liturgical tradition. Thus, liturgical sciences cannot be reduced to the right knowledge of what should be done or what has been done but rather is an ongoing dialogue between experience and tradition with the aim of enabling all participants to 'inhabit' the world of liturgy.⁵³

⁴⁸ Karl Rahner, "Die Praktische Theologie," in *Schriften zur Theologie* (Einsiedeln, Zürich, Köln 1967), 8:140.

⁴⁹ Practical theology is thereby understood as hermeneutic approach to Christian praxis rather than as practical orders or instructions Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 24.

⁵⁰ Patrick Prétot, "Comprendre la Liturgie:: Tâche, but et responsabilité de la science liturgique à l'aube de 3e Millénaire," in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 125.

⁵¹ Alceste Catella, "Theology of the Liturgy," in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:17; for a profound engagement between sociology and liturgy Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*.

⁵² Albert Gerhards and Birgit Osterholt-Kootz, "Kommentar zur "Standortbestimmung der Liturgiewissenschaft"," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 42 (1992): 124–26.

⁵³ Patrick Prétot, "Comprendre la Liturgie:: Tâche, but et responsabilité de la science liturgique à l'aube de 3e Millénaire," in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 122–26.

The facilitation of understanding is thus the aim of liturgical sciences as well as any liturgical catechises and remains a touchstone for all theological endeavours.⁵⁴ An **understanding of liturgy** as integrated in the whole of the human existence and as an essential act of faith can draw on the tradition of liturgy as ‘mystagogy’, which leads beyond a purely didactic understanding.⁵⁵ The ‘mystagogical’ understanding of liturgy from a practical theological point of view fosters a prolific engagement with hermeneutics and wrestles with the understanding of absence and the individual experience of (negative) truth. This profoundly ‘practical’ rootedness forces liturgical studies as a theological subject to take seriously that hermeneutics need not only understand but also ‘explain’ liturgy. This perspective can help track back to an understanding of theology, and the relationship of theological subjects, to its fundamental rootedness in the experience of a mediated faith and the problem of understanding and communication within it.

As an alternative to the extremes of liturgical studies as a purely anthropological description or a merely theoretical ‘phenomenological’ reading, this study will analyse the potential of a ‘**hermeneutics**’ open to the challenge of a detailed cultural analysis as well as to a theory of the ritual.⁵⁶ Thus the ‘immediacy’ of liturgy as its object and its ‘ecclesial’ basis are the strengths of liturgical studies and its genuine (although not overarching) contribution to theology. Thereby the assumption of ‘immediacy’ does not necessarily lead to a traditional and normative view on liturgy but can be rather liberating and confrontational for traditional, dogmatic theology faced with the challenge of human experience in a new and creative way.⁵⁷ Through the increasing estrangement and tension between liturgical experiences and present-day culture, the necessity of ‘translating’ between different areas of life becomes obvious. Therefore, liturgical studies, focussing on the ‘objective’ side of the grown liturgy through a historic-systematic approach, needs, almost at a meta-level, a practical perspective

⁵⁴ Martin Klöckener, “Wie Liturgie verstehen? Anfragen an das *Motu proprio* "Summorum pontificum" Papst Benedikts XVI.” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*.

⁵⁵ Gunda Brüske, “Plädoye für liturgische Sprachkompetez: Thesen zur Sprachlichkeit der Liturgie,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 42 (2000) and Arno Schilson, “Theologie als Mystagogie: Der theologische Neuaufbruch nach der Jahrhundertwende,” in *Gottes Weisheit im Mysterium: Vergessene Wege christlicher Spiritualität*, ed. Arno Schilson (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verl, 1989) The term mystagogy is by no chance univocal; it is rather used to describe a variety of approaches which try to make ritual tradition accessible to a personal experience. In the context of the theological rise in the early 20th century, it is often linked to the idea that, to meet the needs of the time, community experience and “mysticism” (youth movement, and “Lebensphilosophie”) must develop within the context of liturgy. Analogous to liturgical celebration as mystagogy, the role of the study of liturgy is described as developing a “restrained intuition” (Birgit Jeggle-Merz, “Mysterii edoctus: vom Erleben zum Erkennen: Liturgiewissenschaft als eine Theologie der Erfahrung,” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 195).

⁵⁶ Also Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II.

⁵⁷ Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 18 and Häußling, “Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft” in *Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie*.

which verbalises the dynamic side of the celebration.⁵⁸ The distance between a ‘first’ and a ‘second’ theology (i.e. between a practical and experiential theology, and its theoretical reflection), combined with an awareness of the value and strangeness of a historic gap, allows an ‘engaged’ and at the same time critical understanding (“critico-normative”)⁵⁹ of the liturgy as *liturgia semper condenda*. The reflection on the contingency of the concrete celebration thereby opens a new and challenging potential for liturgical studies.⁶⁰ For liturgical studies, in the context of a crisis with the ritual which rediscovers the complexity of the liturgical question and an ‘in-between space’ between anthropological and theological disciplines, the hermeneutics of liturgy becomes central as a method to explore this dynamic potential. This section has outlined how liturgy as an *urgia* resists any reduction to a purely (systematic or practical) theological or social-anthropological method. The following section will show what hermeneutics can contribute to this question.

B. The Hermeneutic of Liturgy

Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of the understanding and interpretation (of texts). Its main purpose is to understand the dynamic between object and subject in the process of interpretation that needs but is also able to correct previous anticipations.⁶¹ According to the German theologian Ingolf Dalferth, for a **theological hermeneutic**, the question of the ‘understanding of the understanding of God’ (understanding something as God – understanding God as something) becomes key.

As we have seen, the question of how we understand and interpret liturgy can be a threshold for theological discussion: How do traditional expressions and personal experience relate? How can faith be adequately expressed and mediated? How far is human mediation relevant for theology? The question of a possible hermeneutic of liturgy has two main dimensions: the applicability of non-theological (philosophical) methods for theological studies, and the original contribution of a liturgical perspective to a fundamental theological or philosophical hermeneutic.⁶² Considering the breadth of possible implications, it is rather surprising how little modern liturgical studies and

⁵⁸ Andreas Odenthal, “Rituelle Erfahrung: Thesen zu einer praktisch-theologischen Liturgiewissenschaft,” *Theologische Quartalsschrift* 188, no. 1 (2008): 39–42.

⁵⁹ Lukken, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique irremplaçable” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia*, 253.

⁶⁰ Brüske, “Plädoye für liturgische Sprachkompetez,” 322 and Alceste Catella, “Theology of the Liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:5.

⁶¹ The next two chapters will look in much more detail at key concepts and developments of hermeneutics. At this stage, only the starting point and the opening question of liturgical hermeneutics shall be outlined.

⁶² Grillo, “Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica,” 87–91 For Catholic theology, the need for a hermeneutical basis became clear especially in the context of a possible “translation” of liturgy (linguistical and cultural) into the vernacular, to find the right balance between a purely technical transcription and the ideal of a translation as a genius of its own (Anscar J. Chupungco, “The Translation of Liturgical Texts,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, I:390s.).

fundamental theology have yet reflected on the **hermeneutic of liturgy**.⁶³ Such a hermeneutic would need to engage with the wide range of symbolic expressions within liturgical celebration (language, movements, colours etc.) and at the same time offer an adequate methodological framework to engage with recent philosophical and theological concepts and questions. It would need to offer tools for a positive and critical reading of liturgical texts yet also find a language for the traditional, normative self-conception of liturgy. As symbolic process and as cultural event, the liturgical act becomes the object of a hermeneutics that tries to understand the dynamic of worship between cultural emergence and eschatological perspective that seeks to be an explicit break with the understanding of an earthly continuum.⁶⁴ In the context of continental liturgical studies, the lack of a systematic hermeneutics has been noted by several authors in the 50th anniversary issue of the Swiss journal “Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft,” published in 2008.⁶⁵ In it, Wintersig's 1924 text, “Methodisches zur Erklärung von Meßformularen”⁶⁶ is still considered the most systematic approach to a hermeneutic of liturgy. In Anglo-American theology, more recent publications have approached the question especially in the context of a structuralist-linguistic approach in Joyce Ann Zimmerman⁶⁷ and the discourse with Ricoeur in Bridget Nichols.⁶⁸ Nichols engages, therefore, the challenge of applying philosophical hermeneutics in the interpretation of liturgy as a practice.⁶⁹ She notices that liturgy as a discipline has “not yet discovered a firm theoretical basis for conducting its investigations.”⁷⁰ On this basis she suggests that the key insight liturgical hermeneutics could learn from the dialogue with philosophical approaches would be that meaning is not found 'behind' the text, but “inherent in a certain practice of interpretation”.⁷¹ According to Nichols, the liturgical act crosses the distinction between textual communal ‘Faith’ and individual actions of faith, and therefore is rooted in the paradox of giving up one's identity in order to recover an identity in Christ: “Hermeneutics can proclaim that as a possibility, but

⁶³ Benedikt Kranemann, “Anmerkungen zur Hermeneutik der Liturgie,” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen* and Reinhard Messner, “Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie: Ein bedeutender Beitrag Angelus A. Häußlings zu einer Hermeneutik der Liturgie,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 41 (1999): 337.

⁶⁴ Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, “Anthropologische Grundlegung,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3. ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 105–7.

⁶⁵ Martin Klöckener, Benedikt Kranemann and Angelus A. Häußling, eds., *Liturgie verstehen: Ansatz, Ziele und Aufgaben der Liturgiewissenschaft* 50.2008 (Fribourg: Acad Pr, 2008).

⁶⁶ Athanasius Wintersig, “Methodisches zur Erklärung von Meßformularen,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 4 (1924).

⁶⁷ Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy as language of faith: A liturgical methodology in the mode of Paul Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).

⁶⁸ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*.

⁶⁹ op.cit.

⁷⁰ op.cit., 21.

⁷¹ op.cit., 24.

cannot force it into being.”⁷² The leap of faith remains the final task within the performance between Gadamer's ‘presence’ coming to presentation through the play's transformation into structure and Derrida's denial of any ground for discourse. Hermeneutical enterprise is concerned “with the topics of self-understanding and experience as avenues that lead to the reconfiguration of the self.”⁷³ Nichols strongly argues that liturgical studies cannot simply “use” general hermeneutics uncritically, but that “liturgy calls for a special hermeneutics”.⁷⁴ As a liturgical work which tries to make accessible a philosophical perspective and critique, this study will have to engage with methodological questions about the relation between general hermeneutics, negative hermeneutics as a distinct approach, and the needs and potential of a liturgical theological hermeneutics (chapter II. 3.). She points out that liturgical hermeneutics is normative as far as “it makes the practice of worship answerable to the obligation of proposing the Kingdom.”⁷⁵ The dynamic of the Kingdom as promise that lies beyond the biblical/liturgical narrative links liturgy and its hermeneutics back to the tradition of ‘Faith’. Nichols speaks about the Kingdom as an ongoing possibility; i.e. it cannot be reduced to the content of Faith but needs to keep open a moment of suspension. Negative hermeneutics will, as we will see, assume again concepts of hope and desire for a future utopia. It will, however, in its approach focus more strongly on the gaps and shortcomings of its expression in the liturgical act. The traditional hermeneutical scheme of text, conversation, and expression opens a new perspective on the dynamic of liturgical re-staging and the importance of mutual referentiality of text and performance. It aims to articulate questions about the understanding of liturgy. How can liturgical texts do justice to the event character of liturgy? How can they be questioned by the reality of a celebration? How can a liturgical anticipation, which is always directed towards the celebration of the next liturgy, relate to the paradigm of foundation in tradition?

The previous considerations of ritual immediacy and mediation will serve as basis for ritual studies in dialogue with philosophic disciplines. In this section the hermeneutical key concepts of “**anguage**”, **‘subject’** and **‘sense’** will illustrate this dynamic and provide a structure for the articulation of the scope and potential tensions

⁷² *op.cit.*, 27.

⁷³ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 40.

⁷⁴ *op.cit.*, 35 A moment of suspension between creedal Faith in the promise of the Kingdom and faith (stake in this Kingdom) means a certain risk to the worshipper. For a liturgical hermeneutic, that promise must remain always provisional as the perfect appropriation of the worshipper to the promised Kingdom that lies beyond the temporal experience. At the same time, the effects which liturgy has on everyday life are an important parameter for liturgical hermeneutics Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 251s.:

⁷⁵ *op.cit.*, 36.

of a hermeneutic of liturgy. They will be reassumed in the following section (II. 3.B) under the scope of negative hermeneutics.

1. While for traditional hermeneutics the text was the primary object of study, more recent approaches try to engage with the nature of language and understanding in far more complex ways.⁷⁶ A specific potential for religious language, but even more specific for **liturgical language**, is the dimension of a ‘metaphorical’ use of language (ordinary words applied in special settings). This opens the complex relationship between everyday language use and theological use. Hence, not *one* analogy or metaphor explains Christian experience but several fix points “[t]o see that a word is used metaphorically warns us about what it does *not* mean”.⁷⁷ Contemporary theological and philosophical hermeneutics is aware that the problem of meaning cannot be solved in terms of vocabulary alone. Different linguistic activities occur in liturgy. Worship becomes an essential part of rehearsing the faith and its language therefore develops the human disposition to listen and answer God's call. It keeps up the tension between anamnesis and personal mediation and application.⁷⁸

The **role of language** in the liturgical celebration was one of the key questions of the liturgical movement. Finding a balance between the extremes of language as a pure ‘instrument’ of communication and language and as a ‘holy’ structure was one of the most crucial tasks after the Second Vatican Council's decision to approve liturgy in the vernacular. The ongoing discussion around different translation techniques and principles is a very vivid example of the topicality of liturgical questions.⁷⁹ The insight that language is more than words and grammar is the basis of the study of liturgical language as open to the question of ‘how’ liturgy is done. Beyond a merely functional descriptive level, the insight emerges that: “In worship, participants, both speakers and hearers, assent to the reality of what is said potentially or, whether or not they experience the fulfilment of what is prayed for or about.”⁸⁰ In doing so they form, preserve, and renew the identity of ‘Church’. Therefore, the concept of language must not be reduced to verbal language but rather includes pre- and post-verbal interaction. It does not simply communicate information but rather expresses relational aspects (believing in) as well as content (believing that). The importance of the relational side

⁷⁶ Emil Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn: Das Verstehen des Menschen*, 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 126–76.

⁷⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Language, liturgy and meaning* no. 2 (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1975), 5.

⁷⁸ Messner, “Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie,” 342–44.

⁷⁹ *Comme le prévoit* is orientated towards a target language, whereas *Liturgiam authenticam* stresses the importance of a more literal translation (Martin Klöckener, “Auf der Suche nach einer ‘angemessenen Liturgiesprache’: Perspektiven für eine ungelöste Problematik,” in “... *Ohren der Barmherzigkeit*”: *Über angemessene Liturgiesprache*, 1. ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2011), 227–29.

⁸⁰ Juliette Day, “Language,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 70.

of liturgy questions the clear distinction between katabatic and anabatic aspects: the process of being addressed and giving answer, of praise and sanctification, become more dynamic.

2. In dialogue with the rather complex relation of the classic dynamic between anabasis and katabasis (i.e. the dynamic from human calling ‘upwards’ and divine calling “downwards), the question of the ‘**subject**’ of liturgy becomes central for the understanding of the relation of liturgical studies and hermeneutics.⁸¹ The role of the celebrating human becomes the threshold for a reevaluation of the subject of liturgy (anthropological turn). The liturgist Patrick Dondelinger stresses, with Marie Dominique Chenu, that the inseparability of the divine and the human in the incarnation is the basis for the principle that the more God is God, the more the human being is human.⁸² This does not oppose the assumption that God's grace works through psychological means but supports it. A ‘philosophic-anthropological’ theory of symbols *etsi Deus non daretur* allows talk about liturgical experiences and images on a purely anthropological level, but at the same time leaves the possibility of an encounter with the divine in the celebration open.⁸³ Thus, rituals are performed in a strange tension between the reduction of any individuality to a ‘role’ given by ‘restricted codes’ for the preservation of identity and the radical potential for irony in this identity which reveals that neither the presence nor the past of a ritual is ever indisputable and always a political statement.⁸⁴ The rhetoric of ritual as a power repetitively affirming social structures gets undermined by the creativity that lies within the potential of bodily, and therefore always new and different, re-enacting of the traditional corporal and communal shaping.⁸⁵ The ritual interrupts the tension between public and private sphere through its efficiency, and it is the task of liturgical sciences to recognise and determine the relevance of the everyday spiritual in the mediation of the ritual. Life and faith can only communicate if the rite interrupts both and allows theology to be profound without neglecting the superficial, and for experience to be spiritual without neglecting the body⁸⁶.

⁸¹ At the same time, the dynamic of praxis and theoretical speculation in liturgical studies intensifies the more general inquiry of theology as discipline situated between “academic” study and personal faith. It culminates in the reflection of the theologian as a person wrestling with faith.

⁸² Patrick Dondelinger, “Der religionsanthropologische Ansatz in der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in Hoping; Jeggle-Merz, *Liturgische Theologie* and Marie-Dominique Chenu, “Anthropologie de la liturgie,” in *La Liturgie après Vatican II.: Bilans, études, prospective*, ed. Jean-Pierre O. Jossua, Yves, Y., Marie-Joseph and Jean-Pierre O. Congar (Paris 1967).

⁸³ For the link between liturgy and Christian anthropology Nathan Mitchell, *Meeting mystery: Liturgy, worship, sacraments*, Theology in global perspective series (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2006), 162–74.

⁸⁴ Buckland, “Ritual, Körper und "kulturelles Gedächtnis",” 218s..

⁸⁵ op.cit., 219s..

⁸⁶ Andrea Grillo, “Esperienza simbolico-rituale e vita spirituale: Una relazione da riscoprire attraverso il movimento liturgico, il concilio Vaticano II e la riforma dei riti,” *Vita monastica* 59, no. 232 (2005): 70 and 89s..

A key concept for the understanding of the ‘subject’ of liturgy (since Romano Guardini)⁸⁷ as well as traditional hermeneutics (Hans-Georg Gadamer)⁸⁸ is the category of ‘**play**’. Playing is a human action in which the paradox structure of a simultaneity between reality and unreality crystallises: through the game, the controllable becomes uncontrollable. The participant takes on a role and moves from a given reality to its reduction; thereby, they have experiences in a condition of discontinuity.⁸⁹ The play itself follows rules which are observed with earnestness to maintain the framework and the life of the game.⁹⁰ Looking at Gadamer's concept of ‘Spiel’, Nichols notices that the meaning is not the same as the English, ‘play’: it is a mode of being rather than amusement. Play is a phenomenon “which supervenes over the player's consciousness”⁹¹ and therefore involves a certain risk. Gadamer's play allows an ‘ontological shift’, i.e. a turning from an intra-linguistic structure to an external reality and guarantees a certain independence of words from the confines of intentionality.

The hermeneutic challenge for liturgical sciences is to read liturgy within the horizon of its context and concrete celebration. The parallel between liturgy and theatre drawn by some authors also proves to be edifying. The distinction between text and rubric equals the two concepts of script and scenario which are not simply ends in themselves but rather authorise the liturgical celebration that oscillates between ‘translation’, ‘interpretation’, or even independence from the ‘original’ text.⁹² The connection between ritual and creativity shows that liturgy is more than the performance of old rites but rather aims for the transformation of reality through the potential of an anti-structure.⁹³

One of the key insights of contemporary philosophical anthropology is the challenge of outward-ness and **bodilyness**. The Italian liturgist Andrea Grillo, whose work will be the basis for the following section, sees the chance for a post-liberal theology that reintegrates the bodily aspect of the rite.⁹⁴ The rediscovery of the human body as starting point for any liturgical expression is rooted in a biblical tradition that links body parts to emotions, as well as in the patristic tradition (cf. Tertullian: *caro*

⁸⁷ Romano Guardini and Franz Henrich, *Vom Geist der Liturgie*, 21. ed., Freiburg, Herder, 1957 25,2 (Mainz [u.a.]: Matthias-Grünwald-Verl. [u.a.], 2007).

⁸⁸ in particular Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 2. ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 493s..

⁸⁹ Aldo N. Terrin, “Per un rapporto autentico tra fenomenologia e teologia/liturgia: Saggio di fenomenologia della religione,” *Liturgia e scienze umane*, 2002, 122.

⁹⁰ Silvia Lupini, “Polarità e contributo ludico-estetico nell'ermeneutica liturgica di Romano Guardini,” *Rivista Liturgica* 101, no. 2 (2014): 346–49.

⁹¹ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 28.

⁹² Lukken, “Semiotics of the Ritual” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia*, 275–80.

⁹³ Edward Schillebeeckx, “Hin zu einer Wiederentdeckung der christlichen Sakramente: Ritualisierung religiöser Momente im alltäglichen Leben,” in *Interdisziplinäre Ethik: Grundlagen, Methoden, Bereiche; Festgabe für Dietmar Mieth zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Adrian Holderegger 89 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Univ.-Verl, 2001), 321–23.

⁹⁴ Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?,” 330–32.

salutis cardo). For an understanding of liturgy as living rite, the importance of a sensitive and expressive bodilyness is a crucial link between the claim of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and its ‘re-membering’ in the tradition of a sacramental celebration.⁹⁵ The bodily celebration, which is never logical and functional, praises God even in its incapability of approaching him adequately, and therefore is able to be lifted up by grace. According to Grillo, it is the very bodilyness of liturgy that is grounded in the experience of sense: the body itself tends to have sense and therefore can actualise the experience of salvation in the ritual against the vertigo of a possible non-sense.⁹⁶

3. The category of **sense** (Sinn) is thereby the threshold of any philosophical hermeneutics and for liturgical hermeneutics becomes the formal and material basis that wrestles between a merely ‘anthropological’ understanding of sense, and its postmodern challenge, and the opposition of a radical theological grounding of sense. For the German liturgist Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, the object of liturgical studies is, then, always the orientation of sense creating expression, and sense assuring affirmation within the liturgical celebration.⁹⁷ Though it is always framed by sense being questioned through the experience of negativity, the symbolic experience of liturgy, oscillating between the language games of revelation as the experience of faith and the existential questions of bodily living, forms the horizon of the interpretation of the Christian mysteries.⁹⁸ This approach of a symbolically theoretical analysis of the ritual allows one to describe a paradoxical structure of liturgy that becomes the threshold for a hermeneutic based on an experience of the dynamic between sense and non-sense.⁹⁹ Art and celebration which ‘interrupt’ the ordinary everyday life of the community, as well as of the individual, becomes the key determinant of what it means to be human (not ‘super-human’).¹⁰⁰

This postulate of sense corresponds to the human **desire to understand** and becomes the basis for a hermeneutic that is challenged through the loss of self-evidence

⁹⁵ Gerard Lukken, “Liturgie und Sinnlichkeit: Über die Bedeutung der Leiblichkeit in der Liturgie,” in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia: Anthropological, theological, and semiotic studies on the liturgy and the sacraments 2* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994), 118–20 and Schillebeeckx, “Hin zu einer Wiederentdeckung der christlichen Sakramente,” 312–14. At the same time, the body presents to theology a dangerous ambivalence, all at once psychological social, spiritual and political. Theologically, Grillo carries this out on three levels: 1. finiteness of the body protects from false infiniteness of the mind, 2. a theological experience through the sacraments is necessity bodily, 3. the materiality of the body is guardian of the grace. The inter-subjective potential of the body becomes the proper space of revelation and encounter with God: human as open symbol, a link between Christology and anthropology [Andrea Grillo and Giuseppe Mazzocchi, “I corpo nel pensiero teologico contemporaneo: Nuovi percorsi teoretici e prospettive significative per la scienza liturgica,” *Rivista Liturgica* 89, no. 1 (2002): 14–21].

⁹⁶ Grillo and Mazzocchi, “I corpo nel pensiero teologico contemporaneo,” 28s..

⁹⁷ Bieritz, *Liturgik*, 9.

⁹⁸ Albert Gerhards and Andreas Odenthal, “Auf dem Weg zu einer Liturgiewissenschaft im Dialog: Thesen zur wissenschaftstheoretischen Standortbestimmung,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 50, no. 1 (2000): 44–50.

⁹⁹ Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 224s..

¹⁰⁰ Bieritz, *Liturgik*, 9.

in ritual practice. While the meaning given through participation is independent of an intellectual understanding, it poses, however, the risk of splitting off an exoteric, naive understanding from an esoteric, ‘gnostic’ understanding of ‘true’ meaning,¹⁰¹ or to spiral into randomly different interpretations. In contrast, a hermeneutic of liturgy would need to cultivate that desire and learn its method from the revealing dynamics of liturgy itself. Rituals play, therefore, an important part in coping with the contingencies in the life (Kontingenzbewältigung) of a society and re-establishes the human desire for sense.¹⁰² Acknowledging the key role of symbol in liturgy heralds the development of a new methodological language, one that attempts to describe the symbolic dynamic not so much in a scholarly terms, but rather as “poetic of the presence of God”.¹⁰³ The original experience of liturgy and prayer becomes the point of reference of a creative poetic. At the same time, the ‘unexplainable’ dimension of symbols stresses the necessity of liturgy as a mystagogy rather than a simple teaching: the ‘use’ of liturgical symbols cannot be reduced to a didactic or pedagogic effort but are invoked to bring forward reality.¹⁰⁴ Rituals do not simply contain meaning; they convey, create, and are meaning itself.¹⁰⁵

All these areas of overlap and shared key concepts show that a hermeneutic of liturgy is not only a necessary tool for the deeper understanding of texts and celebrations, but could also, on a meta-level, helps ground the discussion of liturgical studies in the wider theological perspective. The celebration of liturgy itself can already been described as a ‘hermeneutical’ process, in which the promises of Scripture are interpreted through the joint celebration.¹⁰⁶ As we have seen in the previous section, liturgy can be described as the expression of the desire for sense and at the same time as a resistance against the experience of non-sense. In its symbolic character, both aspects come together and such a hermeneutic of liturgy will have to engage theologically with the dynamics of an insecure, unsecured, and fragile sense. According to Paul Tillich (“Dynamics of Faith”),¹⁰⁷ it is, in particular, the broken myth and the reference to a ‘new’ thing which guarantees the truth and appropriateness of liturgy.¹⁰⁸ The ideal of celebrating liturgy in ‘the ways it wants to be celebrated’ is linked to a hermeneutic that does not approach the liturgical celebration ‘from outside’ but takes the risk to be

¹⁰¹ Jürgen Werbick, “Sich von Ihm zu denken geben lassen: Christlich-theologische Hermeneutik post et secundum Paul Ricoeur,” in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 83s..

¹⁰² Bieritz, “Anthropologische Grundlegung,” 111.

¹⁰³ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:37.

¹⁰⁴ op.cit., II:31.

¹⁰⁵ Cyprian O. Krause, “Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden: Ein fundamentalliturgischer Essay zu Jean Anouilh’s Antigone,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 52 (2010).

¹⁰⁶ Lathrop, *Holy things*, 213.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of faith*, 1st Perennial classics ed (New York: Perennial, 2001).

¹⁰⁸ Lathrop, *Holy things*, 27–31.

challenged and transformed by it: liturgy itself becomes the key for the understanding of liturgy.¹⁰⁹ But this perspective must not forget that it is not identity and consistency that guarantee the truth and authenticity of liturgy. It is rather the aspect of imperfection and deficiency that saves liturgy from becoming an instrument of a (political) program. Its **uncontrollable dynamics** makes it ‘dangerous’ but at the same time protect it from political perversion. Its freedom from instrumentalization allows a critical view on the celebration itself, and has as its aim a being (praxis) rather than a use.¹¹⁰

How can a hermeneutic take seriously the ritual experience as the zero-point of faith?¹¹¹ How can a liturgical hermeneutic adequately consider a symbolism which represents synchronicity between authentic meaningful symbolic language and the ontology of the ineffable, while enabling the participants to enact recognisable functions and to get into an impersonal role that reduces individuality to a minimum and allows repetitive actions as well as renewal?¹¹² If we assume, with Louis-Marie Chauvet, that the liturgical space keeps the space for imagination open and allows the celebrating subject to **engage in an unsecured sense**, then the prayer (*precare*) becomes a precarious game for the right distance between God and human in which presence and distance need to be balanced.¹¹³ In their attempt to overcome ‘onto-theology’, both hermeneutics and phenomenology often come back to negative-theological thinking patterns, where a human response becomes secondary.¹¹⁴ The radical questioning of a preceding meaning in liturgy would need a hermeneutic capable of questioning the postulate of sense itself.¹¹⁵

Which requirements would a hermeneutic need to meet to be able to understand and communicate an unsecured sense? That is, how might a hermeneutic, open to methods and dynamics of deconstruction, retain the openness of liturgical texts and the inscrutability of their founding mystery?¹¹⁶ The entanglement of formal and material

¹⁰⁹ Angelus Häußling, “Liturgie und Leben,” in *Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie: Theologische und historische Studien zum Gottesdienst der Kirche*, ed. Martin Klöckener, Benedikt Kranemann and Michael B. Merz vol. 79 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1997), 138 and Birgit Jeggle-Merz, “Im Feiern erst erschließt sich die Liturgie: Die liturgische Praxis als Forschungsfeld der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in Hoping; Jeggle-Merz, *Liturgische Theologie*.

¹¹⁰ Gunda Brüske, “Liturgie - Gesamtkunstwerk unter eschatologischem Vorbehalt: Versuche zur Rezeption eines ambivalenten Begriffs,” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*.

¹¹¹ Andrea Grillo, “Alla riscoperte del ruolo ‘fondamentale’ della liturgia: Recenti contributi teologici su un tema classico,” *Ecclesia orans* 16 (1999).

¹¹² Buckland, “Ritual, Körper und "kulturelles Gedächtnis",” 218s..

¹¹³ Louis-Marie Chauvet, “Die Liturgie in ihrem symbolischen Raum,” *Concilium* 31, no. 3 (1995): 202s..

¹¹⁴ Lieven Boeve, “Negative Theology and Theological Hermeneutics: The Particularity of Naming God,” in *Gott nennen: Gottes Namen und Gott als Name*, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth and Philipp Stoellger 35 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 194–96.

¹¹⁵ Häußling, “Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft” in *Christliche Identität aus der Liturgie*, 299.

¹¹⁶ Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy and hermeneutics* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 70–73.

(regarding the ‘content’ of the celebration) **aspects of ‘negativity’**, the human experience of senselessness expressed in the ritual, and the liturgical potential to meet this fundamental lack, are the original focus of this study. It will analyse how liturgical studies can talk about moments of estrangement from God in the celebration. The reflection of an absence of God in liturgy challenges liturgical studies on different levels since rituals usually feed from the experience and mediation of a present divine. How can Christian liturgy and its wrestling with the revelation of the cross and the tradition of a mystical silence be taken seriously?¹¹⁷ How can the always mediated form of God in the ritual, the hiddenness and unveiling of Christ through incarnation and cross, the gap between the experience of sinful human-being and an almighty exalted God be understood? The paradox of liturgy in this view is that it talks about the future of God by announcing his death.¹¹⁸ Its potential lies especially in its strangeness and even the giving presence of God is not experienced immediately but through the dynamic of the paschal mystery which needs to be re-staged.¹¹⁹

C. Methodological Deepening – The Dialectical Criticism of Andrea Grillo

The perspective of a negative hermeneutic is particularly promising since it helps to explore the dynamic, ‘in between’ character of liturgy. This section will analyse the complex relationship of mediation and immediacy for liturgical studies and prepare the methodological ground for a more detailed understanding of the task and potential of negative hermeneutics. Thus, it will provide a further methodological deepening that will clarify how a negative hermeneutic is not only a potential ‘extension’ of liturgical studies, but operates at the very core of liturgical questioning, i.e. the relationship between mediation and immediacy of faith.

The starting point for this analysis will be a postmodern view of humanity that opens, according to the Italian scholar Andrea Grillo, a new potential for liturgical studies.¹²⁰ In contrast to a modern view, it does not reduce human nature to a radically immanent-rational interpretation but is open to a transcendent or even theological dimension of the human being.¹²¹ Thus, it makes necessary the reintegration of a liturgical-ritual dimension of faith, which urges reflection anew on the relationship of

¹¹⁷ Arno Schilson, “Negative Theologie der Liturgie? Über die liturgische Erfahrung der Verborgenheit des nahen Gottes,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 50 (2000): 136–38.

¹¹⁸ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 274.

¹¹⁹ Andreas Odenthal, “Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ein Gespräch von Theologie und Psychoanalyse im Hinblick auf einen symboltheoretischen Ansatz der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 188–92.

¹²⁰ A similarly profound turn to doxology for a postmodern agenda can be found in the studies of Louis-Marie Chauvet and Catherine Pickstock (Glenn P. Ambrose, “Chauvet and Pickstock: Two compatible visions?,” *Questions liturgiques* 82 (2001)).

¹²¹ Andrea Grillo, “La "visione antropologica" dei sacramenti e la teologia: Ovvero, come fanno dei ciechi a identificare la "verità" di un elefante?,” *Ecclesia orans* XX (2003): 256s.

liturgical sciences, fundamental theology, and dogmatic understanding. Grillo's approach engages with contemporary philosophical discourse and provides an appropriate basis for methodologically situating negative hermeneutics as a dialogue partner for liturgical studies. Grillo opposes an understanding of the human sciences as merely ancillary disciplines arguing that the 'liturgical question', if it is taken seriously, leads to an '**anthropological vision**' of **liturgy** that becomes the basis of any theological reflection.¹²² He describes the combination of theoretic discipline (fundamental theology) and a positive (liturgy) discipline as one of the main challenges for modern theology. This project has become important as the reintegration of experience is crucial for the communicable structure of Christianity and the positivity of faith. Grillo's original strength and his contribution to this study consist in the radicalisation of the 'liturgical question' towards the original connection **of revelation, faith and rite** and to play them through in Christological, ecclesiological, and anthropological dimensions.¹²³

Grillo argues that religion needs **theoretical mediation**, but that theoretical mediation is again always based on religious mediations itself.¹²⁴ Thus, he opposes the over-valuation of a single discipline as a surrogate for theological mediation and reintegration (e.g. the primacy of anthropology in Aldo Natale Terrin).¹²⁵ He rather outlines the dialectical relation between a fundamental theology that needs to take seriously the threshold role of the rite and the breath of the liturgical mediation. Fundamental theology needs to be based in the permanent mediation of theological immediacy and ritual mediation, on the one side, and theological mediation and ritual immediacy on the other. Thus, the symbolic dimension of Christianity becomes the basic 'given' (*datum*) of theology.¹²⁶ Grillo supposes three stages of the relation between theology and ritual: 1). the presumption which is mainly interested in the 'how' of the performance in the context of rites and sacraments, 2). the 'removal' (*remozione*) can lead to either an unreflective adaptation and iteration, or to a denial of the ritual dimension of faith, and. 3). the reintegration of religious experience, symbolic language,

¹²² Grillo, "La "visione antropologica" dei sacramenti e la teologia," 258–65.

¹²³ Francesco Nasini, "Uomo e sacramento: un paradigma angelico-razionalistico nella sacramentaria del xx secolo," *Revista Liturgica* 101/2 (2014): 368s.

¹²⁴ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 167–72.

¹²⁵ Aldo N. Terrin, "Per un rapporto delle scienze umane alla fondazione della liturgia pastorale," in *Una liturgia per l'uomo: La liturgia pastorale e i suoi compiti*, ed. Pelagio Visentin, Aldo N. Terrin and R. Cecolin 5 (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero; Abbazia di Santa Giustina, 1986) and Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 177s..

¹²⁶ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 182–92 and Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 46s.. In discourse with Grillo's theology, liturgist Michael Meyer Blanck points out that, in a Protestant context, the assumptions Grillo makes about the relation between Eucharist and liturgy as *culmen et fons* of the life of the Church would need to be reflected again in the relation of preaching as an integral part of worship (Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 24).

and ritual action in the fundamentals of faith. Through the reintegration of cult as necessary condition for theology, a mediation of the presupposed immediate is established: the rite is no longer presupposed by theology but rather becomes a dynamic object that it 'gives rise to thought' (in a comparable way to Ricoeur's concept of symbol).¹²⁷ This dynamic builds a fruitful base for a hermeneutic of liturgy that emphasises the process character of understanding and its object.

This project must be undertaken with the support of anthropological science and on a theoretical level reflect the crisis of modernity articulated in the '**second anthropological turn**' which puts the question of how to separate faith and religion (*remozione*) at the epistemological centre of theology. This turn closes the gap between theology and anthropology: the critique and deconstruction of the modern ideal of a rational and autonomous human by modern human sciences goes hand in hand with the over-valuation of the ideal of a presupposition-less theology. At the same time, the idea of a second anthropological turn opens the perspective not only on a liturgy for humankind, but also on humankind for liturgy.¹²⁸ For our approach, the insights given in Grillo's criticism of Chauvet is particularly helpful to explore the potential and danger of a systematic perspective in dialogue with hermeneutics. Grillo argues that the **dialectic between immediacy and mediation** is necessary to keep the space for a mediation (theological-fundamental) between experience of faith and theological reflection. This space he sees as guaranteed through the dialectic between liturgical studies (sacramental mediation of theological immediacy) and sacramental theology (theological immediacy of the sacramental mediation).¹²⁹

The liturgical rite itself becomes not only a 'given' that needs to be interpreted (*dato da interpretare*) but even more an interpreting given (*dato interpretante*).¹³⁰ Using a distinction drawn by phenomenology, Grillo describes the ritually experienced in liturgy as 'gift' (*donato*) which stands as an immediate at the beginning but is recognised only at the end as mediated, and appears only in the difference between the two. Whereas the 'given' of fundamental theology is structurally based on the inseparability of the immediate and the original,¹³¹ the 'liturgical' approach keeps a last space open for the impossibility to anticipate God's presence (Nicht-Antizipierbarkeit) and the saving difference of grace that allows one to interpret the ritual experience as a transcendent experience. Thus, no discourse on faith is possible that is not based on a

¹²⁷ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 205–10 and Paul Ricoeur and Emerson Buchanan, *The symbolism of evil* 18 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, ©1967).

¹²⁸ This dialectic of mutual mediation is reflected in the traditional spiritual dynamic between mysticism and asceticism op.cit., 219–23.

¹²⁹ Andrea Grillo, "Ragioni del simbolo e rifiuto del fondamento nella sacramentaria generale di L.M. Chauvet: Spunti per una critica "in bonam partem"," *Ecclesia orans* 12, no. 2 (1995): 188–92.

¹³⁰ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 218.

¹³¹ op.cit., 220s..

ritual experience pointing towards its original event. Through this opening towards the otherness of faith, the immanence of the rite guarantees the transcendence of theology, that is 'Christian' mediation only through the preceding anthropological immediacy of the celebration. The balance between a 'given' (*datum*, Gegebenheit [i.e. the ritual experience]) and its interpretation (theology) makes it necessary to reflect again on the **fundamental role of liturgy**. Thus, theological knowledge itself can never be understood as a conclusion but is itself a 'liturgical' process. A post-modern extension of an anthropological understanding broadens the concept of knowledge: the logic of liturgical rituals thereby includes the presence of the celebrating human being even in its non-rational (pre-/post-rational) dimensions. Thus, liturgical studies must point towards constitutive blindness and imperfection as the foundation of knowledge.¹³²

The fundamental challenge the liturgical studies discipline poses for theology is not only the integration of a new subject but rather the revaluation of the system of theological disciplines. The paradigm of the rite does not simply justify liturgy as a new *theologia prima* but rather questions the primacy of a single discipline fundamentally. The modification of the theological task becomes the task for a "liturgical theology".¹³³ Liturgy cannot be the ultimate horizon of theology, but likewise there cannot be any Christian theology beyond the form of ritual experience. Rather, a **hermeneutic of the presupposed and remote** becomes a guiding principle for any theological undertaking.¹³⁴ This perspective will prove helpful for a hermeneutic that understands liturgy as ritual expression of a desire for sense and a resistance against non-sense.

In dialogue with phenomenology, contemporary hermeneutics has discovered the **aspect of givenness**. This exceeds the concept of a phenomenon by opening the dimension of a radical otherness that gives without being given itself and has become the basis for a fruitful encounter between ethics and mysticism. In dialogue with the works of Jean-Luc Marion and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Grillo shows the parallels between a **phenomenological and a liturgical method**.¹³⁵ The phenomenological

¹³² Andrea Grillo, "La tradition liturgique dans le monde postmoderne: Un modèle interdisciplinaire de compréhension," *Recherches de science religieuse* 101 (2003): 96–99 and Grillo, "La "visione antropologica" dei sacramenti e la teologia," 265–70.

¹³³ Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 235–42. This approach is clearly distinct from a "liturgical theology" which sees rite as ontological condition for theology and establishes liturgy as *theologia prima* against any theoretical mediation (David W. Fagerberg, *What is liturgical theology? A study in methodology*, A Pueblo book (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, op. 1992)). A similar attempt to fathom the non-semantic potential of liturgy for sacramental dogmatic is found in the works of the German theologian Thomas Freyer: he sees the aesthetic potential of liturgy between faith and theology. Its characteristic in this dynamic can neither be reduced to a prepositional logic nor be made dispensable but is the aesthetic value of liturgy as a practical theological discipline Thomas Freyer, "'Liturgie" - einer Herausforderung für die Dogmatik: Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Dogmatik und Liturgiewissenschaft," *Theologische Quartalsschrift* 189, no. 2 (2009). For a more detailed approach to liturgical theology Irwin, *Context and text*.

¹³⁴ Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 61.

¹³⁵ Grillo, "Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?," 276s..

contribution of a “liturgical method” to theology consists in the rediscovery of a more original logic of how to use anthropological insights to open our rationality to understand what underlies and exceeds rationality.¹³⁶ The corporeality of liturgy entails fundamental elements of animality and chaos that remain a source of its explicability. Grillo suggests that, as a basis for study, the liturgical question needs to be re-laborated. He uses Marion's concept of the *donum* as a basis for a phenomenological reading of the relation between knowledge and grace.¹³⁷

This perspective relates liturgical studies more closely to a hermeneutic that recognises the aspect of givenness, but at the same time engages with the struggle for communication and sense within the celebration. In an analogy to a second anthropological turn, Grillo speaks about a second theological turn toward the ritual dimension of faith, as correlation between *donum* of grace that saves and experience in the ritual celebration that **exceeds anthropocentrism and theocentrism**. God cannot make Himself perceptible without the giving Himself to the conditions of the sacred; it is therefore possible to look for the conditions of the possibility of the self-giving of God in the creaturely openness of the human. The traditional understanding of theology as a talking-about God (3rd person) as based on a doxology that talks to God (2nd person)¹³⁸ is broadened through the dimension of a liturgical spirituality started by the praying subject (1st person singular and plural).

This change of perspective becomes the basis for a hermeneutic that takes the interpreting person seriously as part of the process of understanding, interpreting, and communicating. According to Grillo, the rediscovering of the symbolic value of the body allows us to put into play the proper structure of the spiritual body, not as an objective mental *significats*, but as a source of signifying. A striking example is the very complex genre of liturgical books in the Byzantine tradition. Even today, it is not uncommon to frame liturgical texts by theological or mystagogical commentaries about the ‘meaning’ of liturgical or extra-liturgical (e.g. fasting) actions.¹³⁹ This brings us back to the consideration of the relationship between the different *leges*. Theological commentaries “have served not only to explicate ritual, but also to influence its

¹³⁶ Grillo, “Esperienza simbolico-rituale e vita spirituale,” 90 and Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?,” 291 In a similar way, Aldo Natale Terrin describes the discovery that the cult must move us towards its origin, the uncontrollable. As one of the most significant insights in discourse with phenomenology, the liturgical celebration allows us to make experiences a condition of discontinuity where the controllable becomes uncontrollable Terrin, “Per un rapporto autentico tra fenomenologia e teologia/liturgia”.

¹³⁷ Grillo, “Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica,” 110s. and Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenology and the “theological turn”: The French debate*, ed. Dominique Janicaud, 1. ed., Perspectives in continental philosophy no. 15 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

¹³⁸ Messner, “Was ist systematische Liturgiewissenschaft?,” 266.

¹³⁹ Kallistos Ware, “The Meaning of the Great Fast,” in *Mother Mary; Ware, Kallistos (ed.), The Lenten Triodion, 1984, ©1977, 13–28.*

development.”¹⁴⁰ At the same time, liturgical documents are not necessarily intended to be used simply as reference materials, but as ideal images which ultimately refer to an eternal heavenly liturgy. Liturgy in this way is not a sequence of successive actions (choreography), but as dance. Thus, liturgical texts do not prescribe a clear sequence but describe unidirectional movements.¹⁴¹ This dynamic illustrates once more how theological thinking, lived piety, and liturgical rituals influenced each other and how “a dynamic interplay between transmission, acceptance, adaption, maintenance, rejection, and conservatism”¹⁴² marks the experience of the liturgical rite. This change of perspective illustrates the importance of a negative hermeneutic in the context of liturgical studies. Its character of a ‘borderline discipline’, one that tries not simply to describe an ‘abstract’ and general meaning of symbols but rather studies the experience of this meaning in the concrete liturgical act, makes liturgical studies apt to talk about rites as interpretations of reality which leave open a vast ‘uncontrolled niches’.¹⁴³

The idea of a playful dissolution (*szenische Verflüssigung*) becomes a hedge against a potential separation between a given ritual forms and the experience of the participants. Rituals protect the individual from negative feelings of insecurity as well as of the fear of an immediate ‘mystical’ experience of the divine. Through the strictly codified norms, they can satisfy the desire for transcendence without becoming too ‘dangerous’ for the individual.¹⁴⁴ As we will see later (II. 3.C), this dynamic perspective is important for liturgical studies to preserve the mediating character of the ritual. Only the critical interrelation of tradition and experience allows us to keep the ability to speak within the community without losing the ability to communicate with the traditional texts and rites as well as with the concrete celebrating community.¹⁴⁵ This relationship between liturgical mediation and the immediacy of faith yields a meta-hermeneutic reflection on the religious ritual.

This chapter outlined how the unique potential and challenge of mediation and immediacy play out in the methodological problem of liturgical studies, and, in a wider

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” in *The Oxford history of Christian worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 291.

¹⁴¹ Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” 289–93 also John Gordon Davies, *Liturgical dance: An historical, theological and practical handbook* (London: SCM, 1984).

¹⁴² Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” 299.

¹⁴³ Andreas Odenthal, “Von der "symbolischen" zur "rituellen" Erfahrung: Das praktisch-theologische Paradigma von Heribert Wahl in seiner Bedeutung für die Liturgiewissenschaft,” in *Psychologisch, pastoral, diakonisch: Praktische Theologie für die Menschen; Heribert Wahl zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gundo Lames (Trier: Paulinus, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ Pinkus, Lucio Maria, O.S.M., “The Psychosociological Aspekt of the Liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:178–80.

¹⁴⁵ Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 36–38 and Peter Welsen, “Die Figuration des Selbst im Spannungsfeld zwischen Kraft und Sinn,” in *Die Vermessung der Seele: Konzepte des Selbst in Philosophie und Psychoanalyse*, ed. Emil Angehrn, 1. ed. (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wiss, 2009).

sense, in the understanding and questions of theology. Next, this study will present the concept of negative hermeneutics as a philosophical method and argue why it is a particularly effective approach to the questions confronting liturgical studies.

II. 2. Negative Hermeneutics

This chapter will outline the methods and concepts of negative hermeneutics. As negative hermeneutics is hardly known in an English-speaking context, the chapter will give a rather detailed description, before analysing its application in the context of liturgical studies.

A. Constellation of Negative Hermeneutics

The concept of a 'negative hermeneutic' as it is presented in this section has been developed and brought into the philosophic discussion by Professor Emil Angehrn (emeritus at the Philosophic Faculty of the University of Basel).¹⁴⁶ This section will place Angehrn's approach within the philosophic hermeneutics and relate it to other philosophical schools (A.), then it will present and clarify key concepts and dynamics of negative hermeneutic (B.), which finally will lead to a methodological overview and a potential critique (C.) The next part will focus on a potential application of these principles in liturgical studies.

1. Place within the Philosophic-Hermeneutic Discussion

a) Rootedness in Classical Hermeneutics

Negative hermeneutics is a school of thought that developed out of classical hermeneutics. It reemphasises elements that have been present in traditional approaches. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting, of making understandable, what is not self-evident but needs the mediating approach of interpretation.¹⁴⁷ This paragraph will outline key aspects of traditional hermeneutics to clarify the specificity of negative hermeneutics.

¹⁴⁶ It also appears as a key concept in Robert Schurz' "Negative Hermeneutik" in view of social theory (Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*). Schurz' ideas shall be incorporated and critically compared with Angehrn's approach.

¹⁴⁷ Emil Angehrn, "Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst," in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 46.

Hermeneutics is the art or theory of proclaiming, translating, explaining, and expounding. For classical hermeneutics, the **experience of a non-self-evident** is the point of origin for the question of methods and the limits of understanding. What epistemology formulates for human understanding in general, hermeneutics carries out based on a specific object. Thus, hermeneutics tries to establish rules and approaches for understanding when day-to-day understanding reaches its limits.¹⁴⁸ While the word's meaning, 'art of interpretation', was predominant until the beginning of modern times, in the 17th century, it increasingly developed into a theory and practical method of interpretation. As a discipline, hermeneutics first emerged within theology and philology as a method of interpreting sacred texts (exegesis, dogmatic-theological hermeneutics, pastoral and spiritual-mystical hermeneutics) or philosophical texts and poetry (literary or poetic hermeneutics). From there, it was extended to laws (legal hermeneutics), and finally, at the beginning of modern times, into a general method of humanities.¹⁴⁹

Over time it was understood more and more as an enactment form of existence (hermeneutics of facticity) and no longer as theory of the interpretation of text.¹⁵⁰ Thus, a trajectory can be seen from a specific methodology to a general hermeneutic ending in a philosophical hermeneutic. This last development refers to the phenomenon of (non-)understanding within the philosophic discussion, and finally to a 'hermeneutic philosophy', which takes the question of understanding as a basis for every philosophic discourse.¹⁵¹ The concept of 'philosophic hermeneutics' in this context will not be understood as a specific direction within a more general hermeneutics discussion, or even as a special hermeneutic used only in the context of an academic discipline. It rather points out the fundamental character and the basic function of hermeneutics for philosophy as well as the horizon of philosophy for hermeneutics.¹⁵²

Developing a milestone in modern hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his work **“Wahrheit und Methode,”** describes the task of hermeneutics as the claim that understanding requires a recognition (Wiedererkennen) through which it changes its

¹⁴⁸ Emil Angehrn, “Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?,” in *Spielräume und Grenzen der Interpretation: Philosophie, Theologie und Rechtswissenschaft im Gespräch*, ed. Michele Luminati, TeNor - Text und Normativität 1 (Basel2010), 168 and Emil Angehrn, “Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst,” in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 46.

¹⁴⁹ Albert Veraart: Hermeneutik in: Mittelstraß, e.a. (eds.): *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, Vol. 3., 364–367.

¹⁵⁰ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 81.

¹⁵¹ Otto Pöggeler, *Schritte zu einer hermeneutischen Philosophie* (Freiburg [im Breisgau]: K. Alber, 1994) and Bernhard Waldenfels, “Was sich der Dekonstruktion entzieht,” in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 336.

¹⁵² Bormann, Claus von. “Hermeneutik I: Philosophisch-theologisch.” In *Theologische Realenzyklopädie. Heinrich II. - Ibsen*. Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Müller; vol. 15. (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1986), 123.

own preconceptions (Andersverstehen). Thus, the principle of the 'hermeneutical circle' is established and lets us conclude that we continue to understand what has already been understood in one tradition (at a higher level). To understand something means to confront a text, conversation partner, or artwork with a concrete expectation and to constantly revise it during the intrusion into the understanding of the other person. This expectation is a premonition or a prejudice vis-a-vis the respective topic. To understand an 'other', it is not enough to integrate its meaning into one's own pre-opinion. Rather, one must check the validity and origin of one's prejudice and to set it in relation to the meaning of the other person. Out of this arises a truth encompassing one's own prejudice and the meaning of the other in the sense of broadening horizons.

The concept of '**prejudice**' is important for this approach. A distinction must be made between a prejudice, in the sense of bias and narrow-mindedness, and a prejudice, in the sense of a premonition and open-mindedness. 'Prejudice' has been criticized in the sense of an unjustified judgement by modern science and the Enlightenment emphasis on reason. The emphasis on reason and freedom in the Enlightenment led to the negative use of the concept of authority as resonant with blind obedience. However, classical hermeneutics argues that it is precisely because of reason that one should grant authority to someone who is superior in insight and judgment. Authority must be acquired through superiority of judgment and cannot be arbitrarily conferred. Thus, an authority is a source of truth. Thus, for Gadamer, tradition is of overriding importance because the science of reason is also subject to development and change within history. Gadamer's assertion of an authoritative validity of classical texts and art for the present-day horizon, as well as his turn against a methodological instrument intended to secure the attainment of objectivity and truth in the humanities, have been criticized. According to Gadamer, the foundation in tradition and the basis of prejudice allow hermeneutics to ask questions and to open the horizon of the understanding subject.

Thus, the understanding of the meaning of cultural utterances (representations, works of art, texts, etc.) as well as any human expressions is bound to certain preconditions (prior knowledge and assumptions, value judgments, conceptual schemas, etc.) of the receiving subject not congruent with those of the producers /expressing subject. The process of a 'merging' between the two 'horizons' of their understanding does not happen directly but consists in a progressive rapprochement and via a 'detour' of their expressions. The idea of a circle (ie, a circular movement) mirrors the fact that there is no objective, straightforward way to the meaning of a text or artwork, starting from a secure location, but understanding is already movement-in-itself. It can best be

described as a spiral motion without ever achieving a complete ‘merging’ and cohering with its object.

This is the starting point for a negative hermeneutic that takes the experience (Erfahrung) of the concrete object and its ‘resistance’ as a starting point and focuses on questioning and potential failing in the process of understanding. Thus, it shifts the perspective from a presupposed meaning to the negativity of the concrete object for understanding.

b) Specificity of Negative Hermeneutics

While a traditional hermeneutic of understanding assumes an ideal of merging horizons, negative hermeneutics questions this possibility fundamentally and starts with concepts of (necessary) non-understanding.¹⁵³ Against the hermeneutic ideal of an infinite progress of discourse, negative hermeneutic assumes the possibility of a breakdown of dialogue. This opens space for surprise and wonder. This finiteness of dialogue is not a simple reaction, but an insight into the negativity of the process of understanding and work against the reflex of understanding.¹⁵⁴ Negative hermeneutics goes beyond the project of critical theory: it does not only critique the injustice that the concept (Begriff) does to the experience, but also the injustice that the experience does to the experienced object.¹⁵⁵ For liturgy this raises several questions: how is the mystery communicated and kept in the celebration? Where does corporate liturgy point back to the prayer and silence of the individual? How does liturgy imply an outside of worship?

Angehern takes thereby the description of hermeneutic as an ‘experience of limits’¹⁵⁶ as a starting point and reflects on key categories of the hermeneutic discussion. In his main work *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, which was published in 2010 and will provide the basis for our study, he describes three scopes of topics, in which a negative-hermeneutic thinking unfolds: language, subject and meaning. These three categories, which we have already used as pattern in the context of a hermeneutic of liturgy, will build the framework for this analysis and potential focus points for a negative hermeneutics of liturgy. Angehrn analyses those three motives in his approach and reflects on their relation to each other.¹⁵⁷ Distinctive for his approach is the fact that he

¹⁵³ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 204.

¹⁵⁴ *op.cit.*, 208.

¹⁵⁵ *op.cit.*, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Emil Angehrn, “Die Grenzen des Verstehens und der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik,” in *Rechtswissenschaft und Hermeneutik: Kongress der Schweizerischen Vereinigung für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie, 16. und 17. 2008, Universität Zürich*, ed. Marcel Senn and Barbara Fritschi (2009) (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009), 143.

¹⁵⁷ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 42–53. The German word “Sinn” contains aspects of meaning and sense. This study will translate it and refer to it mostly as “sense” to preserve a consistency of the text. Only where the reference to other English-speaking works suggests so, will it use the word “meaning”.

understands them especially in their limitation and 'negativity' which he takes as a point of origin for his thinking. In doing so he radicalises and carries forward the dynamic of traditional hermeneutics. According to Angehrn a thinking which knows that it is conditioned through its limitations and does not want this conditions to disappear, can be called 'hermeneutic': Such a thinking verbalises, what eludes as its condition and at the same time carries its articulation and in becoming aware of its own representative character (*Darstellungscharakter*) it preserves a trace of the other.¹⁵⁸ A negative hermeneutics emphasises thereby that sense and understanding are always related to an 'other' (different from the subject) as negativity,¹⁵⁹ and focusses on its critical view of understanding on itself as reflection on its own conditions and limits.¹⁶⁰ This is the most central advancement of a negative hermeneutics classical hermeneutics which emphasises the ideal of a 'total' and unlimited understanding. This is a necessary response to the critic of hermeneutics and its relation to tradition and authority articulated by other philosophical disciplines and human sciences. This study will describe Angehrn's reflections on the negative potential of all three concepts (sense, language, subject) in the next section (II. 2.B). First of all, it will situate the method of negative hermeneutics within its philosophical basis and focus on the advantages and strengths of negative hermeneutics in comparison to traditional hermeneutical approaches..

2. Critique and Impulses from other Disciplines

To show more clearly what the strengths of a negative hermeneutic in the context of liturgical studies might be, it seems helpful to analyse the cross-connections to other philosophical disciplines which are referred to in the theological discourse. Thus, this chapter will outline influences and distinctions of other philosophical discourses on negative hermeneutics.

A philosophical hermeneutic in the style of Gadamer (or his reception) has been criticised from different perspectives.¹⁶¹ First of all, he has been accused of an uncritical relation to **tradition and authority**. Gadamer's valuing of tradition and his revaluation of 'prejudices' can lead dangerously close to uncritical acceptance of ruling opinions. In the recent discussion the necessity of a critical relation to power and tradition, which does not lead to a simple conformism has been stressed. An insufficient self-critique of a hierarchical and appropriating reason, has been criticised as well as fundamental

¹⁵⁸ Günter Figal, "Die ästhetisch begrenzte Vernunft," in Figal, *Der Sinn des Verstehens*, 82.

¹⁵⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 322.

¹⁶⁰ *op.cit.*, 324.

¹⁶¹ Bormann, "Hermeneutik I," 131s..

invasiveness of a hermeneutic desire to understand, which overcomes and completely absorbs any otherness. Considering the increasing acquaintances between different cultures and the diversity within a cultural space, the importance of 'encounters' with the other is stressed not only in ethics but also for the process of understanding.¹⁶² The contact with the concrete other as well as the engagement with the abstract **question of 'otherness'**¹⁶³ becomes the central point of critique and a touchstone for hermeneutic confronted with the accusation of an uncritical-intrusive understanding. Especially the concept of hermeneutic philosophy, which sees 'hermeneutic' more as answer than as mere method and therefore claims its universal demand to understanding, has been criticised and accordingly hermeneutics is blamed a close vicinity to an ontological concept of understanding, which supposes the primacy of logocentric accessibility of the world.¹⁶⁴ A negative hermeneutic will have to take this critique seriously and engage with the potential of otherness and negativity as principles which resist the appropriation through sense and meaning. This framework is crucial for the understanding of the reach and the motivation of a negative hermeneutical approach compared to more traditional hermeneutical perspectives. From the point of view of liturgical studies these insights will be useful in the context of a critical relationship to text and tradition.

Angehrn's approach thereby engages with critique by other philosophic disciplines like philosophy of interpretation and deconstruction, which also study the field of sense and meaning, and even sometimes call their work hermeneutic,¹⁶⁵ but also by non-philosophical subjects like psychoanalysis or linguistics which take the concepts of understanding and communication through language as their starting point. In the following the study will outline, how negative hermeneutics relate to other philosophical disciplines and provide a base for a comparison of other philosophical approaches to liturgy.¹⁶⁶ Angehrn describes the dealing with sense as complex and poly-centric process, which depending on its object, situation and interest puts different

¹⁶² cf. Andeas Cremoni, "Sinn und Alterität: Zu den "nicht-allergischen" Voraussetzungen des Verstehens in Gadamer's Hermeneutik," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*, 218–20.

¹⁶³ Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the alien: Basic concepts*, Northwestern University studies in phenomenology and existential philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

¹⁶⁴ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 48–50. As examples of post-Gadamerian hermeneutical discussion in the German speaking context Günther Figal "Der Sinn des Verstehens" [Günther Figal, ed., *Der Sinn des Verstehens: Beiträge zur hermeneutischen Philosophie*, Universal-Bibliothek Nr. 9492 (Stuttgart, 1996)] and Jürgen Habermas "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik" [Jürgen Habermas, "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik," in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik: Aufsätze I. Methode und Wissenschaft, Lebenswelt und Geschichte*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner, Konrad Cramer and Reiner Wiehl (Tübingen, 1970).

¹⁶⁵ Emil Angehrn, "Deconstruction und Hermeneutik," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 177.

¹⁶⁶ Hughes, *Worship as meaning*.

emphasise and includes various operations¹⁶⁷. He distinguishes **three key operations** of *perceiving, destructing and (re-)constructing of sense*. All three play a part in a specific relation within the hermeneutic, deconstruction and philosophy of interpretation. The 'perceiving-reconstructing', the 'dissolving-critical' and the 'interpreting-constructive' dealings with sense in the specific emphasis on a single aspect shapes the horizon of the hermeneutic, deconstructionist and interpretationist relation to sense. Opposing a one-sided exaggerated self-description of the single disciplines Angehrn stresses thereby the interplay and their indissoluble reference context.¹⁶⁸ Against a more narrow understanding of '**negative hermeneutic**' as a hermeneutic which is based on the pre-eminence of misunderstanding in any communication,¹⁶⁹ Angehrn describes a hermeneutic as negativistic, which understands the building and interpreting of sense based on a confrontation with a negative.¹⁷⁰ Negative hermeneutics thereby follows the approach of deconstruction, to understand sense not so much as a subjective and transparent foundation but rather based on its incompleteness and processional character.¹⁷¹ In a similar way Paul Ricoeur's 'hermeneutic of suspicion' the critical potential of hermeneutic as ideological critique is radicalised. But the question remains, whether this is only a special case of hermeneutics or an exception of understanding.¹⁷²

The German philosopher **Robert Schurz**, who has developed the concept 'negative hermeneutic' independently from Angehrn's approach based on social anthropology, argues that hermeneutic always starts from the need of protection of the individual whereas ideology critic abstracts from the concrete need to challenge the immanence of ideology. He asks how a non-understanding would be possible given that, any experience that opens itself up to a general is in danger of being reduced to its intentionality. The challenge for a negative hermeneutic is, according to Schurz, to keep open the dissociation between an experienced sense and a negative sense of loss and meaninglessness.

The tension between understanding and accordance and misunderstanding and discord cannot be resolved in favour of a one or the other but should rather be seen in the interdependent dynamic of sense and non-sense and its impact on human understanding. Disregarding the fundamental differences between the two studies which shall be analysed at a later stage (II. 2.C), Angehrn's approach can well be described as

¹⁶⁷ Emil Angehrn, "Dekonstruktion und Hermeneutik," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 178.

¹⁶⁸ cf. Emil Angehrn, "Dekonstruktion und Hermeneutik," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 196.

¹⁶⁹ Udo Tietz, *Vernunft und Verstehen: Perspektiven einer integrativen Hermeneutik*, 1. ed., *Studia hermeneutica n.F.*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Parerga, 2004), 191–208.

¹⁷⁰ Emil Angehrn, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 333.

¹⁷¹ cf. Emil Angehrn, "Subjekt und Sinn," in Dalferth; Stoellger, *Krisen der Subjektivität*, 230.

¹⁷² cf. Emil Angehrn, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 320s..

attempt to outline this dynamic within the categories of a philosophical hermeneutic. The question whether non-sense functions only as a logical negation of sense or as countervailing power to it – or even the other way round sense as variation of non-sense – functions, concerns human understanding in its core.¹⁷³

B. Basic concepts – the Dynamics of Understanding

In this section central concepts of 'negative hermeneutics' shall be presented. The distinction between 'concepts' (B.1) and 'dynamics' (B.2) is slightly artificial, but it seems useful to help with the comprehension based on a rather slender delineation. Angehrn develops his approach in discourse with philosophy and cultural studies (e.g. deconstruction¹⁷⁴, semiotics¹⁷⁵ and psychoanalysis¹⁷⁶), therefore the attempt of a 'closed' and 'isolated' presentation will rely on cross references. Negative hermeneutics is particularly suitable for traditional as well as progressive-critical thought and opens a dialogue with them, as it is based on an approach that uses the concepts of 'sense' and 'desire for sense'. This begins a discourse with metaphysics as well its criticism.¹⁷⁷ This dynamic will be useful for a liturgical point of view as it focusses the interdependence of mediation on immediacy, that is crucial for a fundamental liturgical approach.

Angehrn's analysis of negativity stands in the tradition of Gadamer who in contrast to Heidegger stresses especially the 'shadows' and imponderables in the process of understanding and sees sense founded in a limited openness. With Dieter Mersch he assumes that sense exists only in the context of non-sense and understanding only in the horizon of non-understanding.¹⁷⁸ 'Negative' is this type of hermeneutic in that it sees understanding as a 'spending' itself on the limits of understanding.¹⁷⁹ It is difficult to track the concept of negativity back through the history of philosophy. Most authors and schools discuss it, but it is hardly ever treated as its own category. A prominent example for the systematic analysis of the negative is Hegel's logic. In contrast to Kant who describes negativity simply as quality, in Hegel it is understood as a form, which at the same time is not abstract, but appears in a concrete being.¹⁸⁰ According to Heinrich Hegel mixes thereby two different forms of negativity: a self-referential (logical)

¹⁷³ op.cit., 338.

¹⁷⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Deonstruktion und Hermeneutik," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*.

¹⁷⁵ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?"

¹⁷⁶ Emil Angehrn, "Die Sprachlichkeit der Existenz: Zwischen Kommunikation und Welterschließung," in *Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache: Philosophische und psychoanalytische Perspektiven*, ed. Emil Angehrn, 1. ed. (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2012).

¹⁷⁷ Brigitte Hilmer and Tilo Wesche, "Einleitung," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*, 12s..

¹⁷⁸ Dieter Mersch, "Gibt es Verstehen?," in *Kultur nicht verstehen: Produktives Nichtverstehen und Verstehen als Gestaltung*, ed. Juerg Albrecht and Marie-Luise Angerer, *Theorie Gestaltung(T:G)* 4 (Zürich, Wien, New York: Edition Voldemeer; Springer, 2005), 117; Mersch, "Gibt es Verstehen?"

¹⁷⁹ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 53.

negativity and a negation of otherness (ontological). For the dynamic of sublation not to become a process of erosion it is necessary to finally negate the negativity itself. Hegel's concept of the negation of negation tips the balance towards an understanding of negativity as a relation/quality, rather than a substance. The idea of a final reconciliation of the individual with the collective precedes the experience of the individual. The evil and death are without substance as they cannot be other than negative. This move is like Gadamer's tendency towards a dissolving of the individual in a collective.¹⁸¹ 'Negativity' occurs in the tension between concept and experience. It is the task of a negative hermeneutic to develop a concept of negativity which is neither contingent nor specific, which needs to develop this dynamic through the study of content and concrete object. Its methodological field is therefore at the same time its content.¹⁸²

In Angehrn's study the tension between understanding and non-understanding correlates a concept of sense, and comes into view especially in its relation to a non-sense, or to an 'other' of sense.¹⁸³ He sees the eligibility of hermeneutic as a discipline founded in the **desire for sense** as part of the *conditio humana*. As this desire is understood not so much as the communication of a 'finished' sense but rather the requisite interpretation, of a 'wrestling for sense'; critical approaches of philosophy get involved in the dialogue as well as approaches for which sense is the intrinsic starting point for any argumentation. Through the experience of non-understanding the primacy of a 'progress' in knowledge and communication is challenged. Although a negative hermeneutic agrees with the general ethos and ideal of a universal communication, it opens the perspective of a possible limit and the potential breaking-off of discourse.¹⁸⁴ The fact that sense is called into question forms the transcendental foundation for the understanding of ourselves and the world.¹⁸⁵ Sense turns out to be a phenomenon of difference (Differenzphänomen), which is experienced in the tension **between understanding and non-understanding**. Angehrn does not analyse this foundation in the medium of speculative concepts (spekulativer Begriff), but rather through the hermeneutic 'dealing with' phenomena of sense and understanding.¹⁸⁶ 'Sense' comes out of its 'other', in this it has its foundation and place, it realises itself in between an inner and an outer, bodiliness and action of an understanding.¹⁸⁷ With Ricoeur Angehrn

¹⁸¹ op.cit., 54–56.

¹⁸² op.cit., 78–80.

¹⁸³ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 206.

¹⁸⁵ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 38 and Brigitte Hilmer and Tilo Wesche, "Einleitung," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*.

¹⁸⁶ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 39.

¹⁸⁷ Emil Angehrn, "Der hermeneutische Umweg: Von der Gegenständlichkeit des Sinns," in: David Espinet, Friederike Rese and Michael Steinmann (eds.): *Gegenständlichkeit und Objektivität*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 194: „Sinn kommt aus dem Anderen des Sinns, er hat in diesem seinen Grund und seinen Raum, er realisiert sich im Zwischen des Innen und Außen, Leiblichkeit und

emphasises the necessity of a detour of understanding through culture rather than a shortcut of understanding in the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). This circuitous character remains a structural moment of a hermeneutic thinking that opens itself to a possible resistance of expressions against an integration in the own understanding.¹⁸⁸ In the following, consequences of the 'negative' of the focus will be outlined in their implications for the hermeneutic scopes of subject, language, and sense.

Sense, language and subject forms the field for hermeneutics. Negative hermeneutics analyses all three, especially in their limitation and resistance:

1. As a first theme **relatedness to sense** can be stated, which reflects Dilthey's distinction of 'understanding' and 'interpreting'¹⁸⁹ sense becomes the key category for hermeneutic work. The German word 'Sinn' contains aspects of 'sense' and 'meaning', making a consistent translation difficult. Angehrn's use of sense goes beyond a purely semantic relation of an 'x meaning y'. Thus, he is even able to talk about music as sense without meaning and thereby offer a concept of sense broader than meaning. Understanding is not reduced to a simple processing of information but tries to make 'sense' of its environment, assumes a correlating 'sense' expressed in its objects.¹⁹⁰ Angehrn distinguishes a threefold use of the word 'sense'¹⁹¹: 1) sense as '*sensus*' and '*sensorium*', the sensibility, or even more, the ability to perceive external expressions. This relation forms a link between sense and sensibility¹⁹² and 2) a semantic or hermeneutic sense (cf. 'meaning'). Sense is a correlation of an understanding; it is the reference that can be understood in a given context, its meaning.¹⁹³ In particular, the theory of production of presence has pointed out the importance of a presence and materiality for the event of sense.¹⁹⁴ In this respect, sense is understood as understanding of signs: the verbal expression becomes the paradigm of 'meaningful' understanding; thus 3) normative or teleologic sense is the value of a cause/reason/thing. This aspect comes into view especially where is challenged in the experience of senselessness. The question for meaning is asked from a personal-existential as well as from an objective-metaphysic perspective. Thus, negative

Handlungsbezug des Verstehens.”

¹⁸⁸ Angehrn, “Der hermeneutische Umweg,” 198–204.

¹⁸⁹ *Heinrich II. - Ibsen* / in Gemeinschaft mit Horst Balz hrsg. von Gerhard Müller; vol. 15 (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1986), 120s..

¹⁹⁰ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 10s. and 194s. also Hughes, *Worship as meaning*.

¹⁹¹ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 8–18 and Emil Angehrn, *Interpretation und Dekonstruktion: Untersuchungen zur Hermeneutik*, 1. ed. (Weilerswist, 2003), 18s..

¹⁹² Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 9.

¹⁹³ op.cit., 10.

¹⁹⁴ Dieter Mersch, “Chiasmen: Über den unbestimmten Zwischenraum,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten* Looking at this inherent aspects of sense Angehrn distinguishes between linguistic and non-linguistic as well as subjective and non-subjective sense, Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 35.

hermeneutics analyses the polarity between the intrinsic character of sense and its imminence, specifically the withdrawal of sense. Angehrn points out that sense in the hermeneutic process must not be understood as a non-negotiable medium (as for example in sociology) but rather represents a phenomenon of difference (Differenzphänomen), which oscillating between the poles of an original misunderstanding and the trust in the fundamental potential of understanding. With Merleau-Ponty he assumes that the human being is “*condemned to meaning*”,¹⁹⁵ and that therefore sense is irreducible yet always distilled from human understanding. Angehrn describes the fact that sense and understanding are always related to an 'other' (different from the subject) as negativity,¹⁹⁶ and writes about the fact that hermeneutic based on that could not be but critical: a critical view of understanding on itself as reflection on its own conditions and limits.¹⁹⁷ This is the most central contribution of a negative hermeneutics to question of the reach of hermeneutical understanding, of which classical hermeneutics was less self-reflexive.

2. Secondly Angehrn reflects on the importance of **language** for understanding. The development of a hermeneutic philosophy initiated by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger, which sees understanding and interpreting as a feature of human existence, takes the fundamental verbality of understanding as a point of origin.¹⁹⁸ By reflecting on the universal character of language and historicity, and the perspective of the human being to its self and the world, hermeneutics can become the horizon for any philosophical reflection. This focus on language is equally radical as the 'linguistic turn' in analytic philosophy and is understood as a fundamental break with traditional metaphysics.¹⁹⁹ In his study Angehrn picks up the tension between a fundamental verbality of understanding and the human relationships to the world and a limitation of language, based on pre-linguistic phenomena of bodilyness and at the same time points beyond verbality (e.g. to mysticism and poetry).²⁰⁰ Therefore, the concept of sense has its privileged place in language, and conversely, language has its original function in the formation of sense.²⁰¹ Although the two cannot be transferred completely into each other, and Angehrn specifically emphasises the importance of the preverbal and oververbal for the genesis of sense, the analogy of limitation remains obvious. For language too can be beyond, 'over' or 'under' in regard of to its object and its subjective accessibility. As an illustration, Angehrn chooses the creation myths: namelessness can

¹⁹⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London: Routledge, 2012), XXII.

¹⁹⁶ Emil Angehrn, “Hermeneutik und Kritik,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 322.

¹⁹⁷ op.cit., 324.

¹⁹⁸ Angehrn, *Interpretation und Dekonstruktion*, 54.

¹⁹⁹ op.cit., 55s..

²⁰⁰ cf. Angehrn, “Die Grenzen des Verstehens und der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik,” 47–50.

²⁰¹ Emil Angehrn, “Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 171.

be the reason but also the consequence of ontological as well as cognitive negativity. It follows necessarily from a lack of determination and reversely it is the creating word which provokes the cosmos.²⁰² This reflection on the range of the concept of language correlates to discussion about the range and object of hermeneutics, widened from the interpretation of normative texts to any kind of verbal or cultural expression. Thereby hermeneutics needs to reflect on the power and powerlessness of language as well as on the desire of the speaking person.²⁰³ The trust in the fundamental possibility of verbal communication structures the desire for language. Language becomes the paradigmatic place and the privileged medium of communication characterised by a structural deficit and a desire for fulfilment. Through speech, the desire for understanding and communication, and finally for sense, is expressed. Hence all aspects converge in the ideal of **self-communication**: the subject understands and communicates itself in the external mediation of language.²⁰⁴

3. This leads to a reflection on the third key motive is the relatedness of understanding to a **subject**: The possibility of communication and 'self-communication' can be described as the widest object of hermeneutic reflection. The relational and reflexive character of understanding becomes the central theme of hermeneutic thinking. The relatedness of sense to an understanding subject was a threshold for Gadamer and is again discussed within hermeneutics²⁰⁵ as Angehrn's approach vacillates between the classic-transcendental philosophic centrality of the subject and its current critique. Negative hermeneutics exceeds a traditional hermeneutical understanding of the subject thereby as it emphasises its incoherence and fundamental relatedness to an inconsistent external object. On the one side, it points out that sense and meaning are always related to an understanding subject; on the other side, he picks up the modern and postmodern insight about the brokenness and limitedness of this subject.²⁰⁶ In a hermeneutic context the human being comes into view first as an understanding subject, but this approach does not need to reduce it to a rational identity but rather describes the dynamic process of a subject who needs the mediation of external expression to communicate and become herself. The idea of a subject who never coincides with herself, but who can only be described through her dependence on and desire for language and sense.

²⁰² op.cit., 167.

²⁰³ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 171.

²⁰⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Subjekt und Sinn," in Dalferth; Stoellger, *Krisen der Subjektivität*, 236–40 I have decided to translate Angehrn's term "Selbstverständigung" as "self-communication" to preserve notions of communication and dialogue in the term. Other possible translations are "self-explication" or "self-understanding", but these would have focussed more on aspects of presence and exploration.

²⁰⁵ op.cit., 239.

²⁰⁶ cf. Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 42–45.

1. Place of understanding

The conceptual basis for all hermeneutic questioning—even more fundamental than the concept of 'sense'—is the **process of 'understanding'**. In the model of a classic-hermeneutic intentionalism 'understanding' is described as assimilation and acquisition of an 'other' into one's own sphere.²⁰⁷ Thus the twofold difference between saying and meaning and internal and external must be bridged. The epistemology of the 19th and early 20th century distinguishes between 'explanation' as the method of the sciences and 'understanding' as the method of the cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) which try to grasp the meaning of their objects.²⁰⁸ Hermeneutics do not attempt to go beyond the different perspectives of observer and participant, but rather attempt to perfect them as they describe the understanding of cultural objects as a response to their being for themselves: i.e. their self-description. Through an engagement with an intrinsic perspective of an object, this understanding loses a bit of the arbitrariness that can adhere to a subjective reception and constitution of objects.²⁰⁹ At the same time this perspective enables hermeneutics to study the gradual transition from meaningfulness to senselessness.²¹⁰ In Angehrn's studies the process of understanding gets reconsidered through the **dynamic of the negative**. Whereas philosophic negativism focusses on a 'practical' negativity, or the experiences of negativity, Angehrn studies additional theoretical aspects of negation.²¹¹ Theoretical negativity (that something is not) and practical aspects (that something should not be) overlay each other, but according to Angehrn they are not constitutively linked: Theoretical negativity is more than a mere consequence of practical experiences of negativity, but both are perceived in their originality. Starting from the experience of the instability and uncertainty of existence, the human person is forced to engage with the negative in its different forms. The exposure to the negative forces a confrontation with senselessness and thus a person attempts to understand it from a place of resistance. This is the distinctive perspective of a hermeneutic negativism.²¹² The move of resistance specifies negativity

²⁰⁷ Angehrn, "Der hermeneutische Umweg," 191s..

²⁰⁸ Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation: A Transcendental-pragmatic Perspective (Studies in contemporary German social thought)* (MIT Press, 1984) This distinction has been criticised in recent discussions, as far as it is based on the 'ontological' assumption of a 'meaningful' structure open to the dimension of 'sense', in its presupposed relation between part and whole, inner, and outer.

²⁰⁹ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 24.

²¹⁰ op.cit 19–25.

²¹¹ Emil Angehrn, "Dispositive des Negativen: Grundzüge negativistischen Denkens," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 13s..

²¹² op.cit., 36.

not in an intellectual sense but brings it closer to the realm of affect and therefore bodilyness.²¹³ In the following section the different motives of language sense and subject shall be presented in their relations to each other. This analysis will clarify the dynamics of mediation and immediacy situated at the base of negative hermeneutics and will later bring this detailed exposition to the questions of liturgical studies.

a) Understanding of Sense (Subject-Relatedness of Sense)

First of all, the relatedness of sense to a subject shall be studied, followed by the deconstruction of a concept of sense through postmodern critique of an autonomous subject. One starting point is the transition from non-sense to sense, which needs to be taken seriously as an expression of heterogeneous areas of being.²¹⁴ With the decentralising of the subject, the question of sense as related to the subject is shifted to the question of a division between verbal and non-verbal structures. The gesture of abolition of the subject is revoked partially by the unboundedness and foundationalism of language.²¹⁵

The subject relatedness of sense will be analysed in two parts, mediated through the concept of language. First, the relatedness of sense to language will be analysed and then linked to the relatedness of the subject to language.

α) Language-Relatedness of Sense

Angehrn describes the ‘logos’ as the original place of sense.²¹⁶ At the same time negative hermeneutics shares the interest of phenomenology in the pre-verbal origin of sense and the **potential of pre-verbal and extralinguistic constellations of sense**. Immediately linked to the reach of language is the questioning of a universality of hermeneutics; the key role of language for human understanding is connected to the question of linguistic and non-linguistic relation of being. A theory of the production of presence emphasises the importance of a material presence underlying every articulated effect of meaning.²¹⁷ The presence of the ‘that’ of any phenomenon precedes its ‘what’. This ‘presence’ preceding any articulation and understanding is crucial for the

²¹³ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 62.

²¹⁴ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 44.

²¹⁵ op.cit., 45.

²¹⁶ op.cit., 45.

²¹⁷ Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen*, 1. ed., Aesthetica (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002) and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of presence: What meaning cannot convey* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

hermeneutic understanding of liturgy. However, a strict opposition of sense to presence belies a narrow concept of sense that reduces sense to an explicitly verbal articulation.²¹⁸ Negative hermeneutics, in comparison, operates with a wider concept of sense that tries to describe the whole of human relating to the world within the categories of sense (and non-sense). The creative potential of language in negative hermeneutics culminates in the **ability to ask questions**: this refers to the propositional content as well as to its communicative aspects.²¹⁹ At the same time, it reflects an attitude of openness that dares us to engage with the question of its object and the responsive attempts of another subject as the basis for a ‘dialogical’ encounter.²²⁰ This thought follows Gadamer's remark that there is no way of methodologically creating questions, but that what is required is an adoption and opening to the questionable character of an object. The dynamic of questioning puts the focus to the openness of a subject and the possibility of a productive and creative dealings with sense, which language facilitates.

Asking questions creates the basis for a negative hermeneutics that opposes a purely formal and functional analysis of language. The object of a phenomenological or hermeneutic study is especially the **'producing' of sense through language**.²²¹ Angehrn points out that verbal understanding not only emerges out of experience but rather informs and shapes it. Language is out of the control of the subject and speaking is founded in a process open to two sides: We neither have the origin of language to our disposal, but are always rely on it, neither is it up to us to decide whereto speaking leads – neither in expressions or texts and even less in conversations. The gap between expression and meaning correlates the inconclusiveness of an interpretation, in which the interpreting converges with the openness of language, that refers to the complementary character of language and translation.²²² The human being remains always dependent on the deferment and obligation, for which the relation between translation and 'original language' stands paradigmatic.²²³ The relatedness of sense is therefore most closely linked to the relatedness of language to a subject and therefore to the **paradigm of self-communication**.

²¹⁸ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 54s..

²¹⁹ Emil Angehrn, “Vom Sinn des Fragens: Wege nachmetaphysischen Philosophierens,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 51.

²²⁰ op.cit 55–57.

²²¹ cf. Angehrn, “Die Sprachlichkeit der Existenz,” 51.

²²² op.cit., 54.

²²³ Angehrn, *Interpretation und Dekonstruktion*, 288–90, also Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” in *Difference in translation*, ed. Joseph f. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Pr, 1985).

Angehrn emphasises that the subject does not freely control of its relatedness to language but rather constitutes itself only through language and especially through a spending itself at the limitations of language. With Ricoeur he assumes that the individual not only verifies, but creates its identity through self-attribution. Thus hermeneutics does not talk about a structural but a meaningful, reflexive creating.²²⁴ The assumption that language is always related to a speaking subject must not be misunderstood in the sense that a subject has language simply at its disposal. In fact, language has its starting point always in an 'other'. Of great interest for the study of the relatedness of language to a subject is the character of self-revelation in **different forms of language** and their mutual relationship. Especially helpful are the concepts of 'story', 'text' and 'translation, though which the basic dynamics of hermeneutic argumentation can be observed. These will efficacious in the subsequent case studies.

Following Ricoeur, Angehrn analyses the importance of 'story' for the constitution of the subject. His starting point is an individuality, that can be understood as either an identity with something or as difference from something. In a hermeneutic perspective thereby, the concept of identity over time (*idem*) is most important, as it is the basis for any ability of the subject to communicate.²²⁵ Through the acquirement of history in story contingency is shaped through sense, and at the same time a basis for individuality is established. The subject in its identifiability is not foundation but result of history.²²⁶ Its desire for sense is characterised by an uncatchable lack, which forces it to continue speaking and acquire is expression repeatedly.²²⁷ Paradigmatic becomes also the importance of **texts** for the human understanding and its verballity. Through constructivism and deconstruction the 'text' comes into view, especially though tension between *intentiones operis*, *auctoris* and *lectoris* for the human self-understanding: I.e. a particular figuration of communication and self-communication, which get condenses in it and requires the mediation of a fixed expression.²²⁸ Through the *interpreting, opening and critical dealing* with the non-reconstructive claim for sense, the text can become anew a paradigm for hermeneutic work.²²⁹ The text is a

²²⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Das erzählte Selbst," in *Konstruktionsgeschichten: Narrationsbezogene Ansätze in der Religionsforschung*, ed. G. Brahier and Dirk Johannsen vol. 2 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2013), 90s. and Paul Ricoeur and Kathleen McLaughlin, *Time and narrative*, Repr (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr, 2008).

²²⁵ cf. Angehrn, "Das erzählte Selbst," 90–95.

²²⁶ op.cit., 99.

²²⁷ op.cit., 105.

²²⁸ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 174.

²²⁹ op.cit., 168–78.

specific figuration of communication and self-communication which “condenses in it and needs the mediation of a fixated expression”.²³⁰ The interpretative distance of the text becomes the point of origin for interpreting, critique and construction of sense. Thereby Angehrn turns around the traditional hermeneutic paradigm which is based on the normative content of (religious or juridical) texts as well as in its temporal distance. Humans need texts to understand the world and themselves. In this desire all normativity of texts is founded.²³¹ Hence it is no longer the normativity point of origin for any understanding but rather the basic desire for sense the foundation for normativity. This shift of perspective will provide a valuable understanding of liturgical textuality. Closely linked to the paradigm of 'text' is as a third figure '**translation**', which is a key object of study for deconstruction as well as for hermeneutics. Deconstructivism turns towards textuality, which replaces any original relation to language. What translation voices and defers from a non-said into words, it does not receive from an original speaking, but through its condensation in a text and in the complexity and multi-layered complexity of writing.²³² The lack of origin of writing, which deconstruction discovers in the process of translation, creates a desire for an 'absolute translation', as a basis for the own speaking which is open towards the translation of a 'coming'. Thus 'translation' also becomes the paradigm for negative hermeneutic, which describes the tension between convergence and divergence of language, the slipping away of any origin.²³³

The desire of human beings for language and the relatedness of language to speaking subjects allows inferences to the human nature or at least for the ways, in which we can talk about human beings. 'Self-communication' becomes the content and form of any speaking of humans: The human being is an understanding, self-understanding and self-communication being. This is according to Angehrn the first anthropological determination, which distinguishes humans from other animals. It is point of origin and at the same time demand and aim.²³⁴

b) Self-Communication (Sense-Relatedness of the Subject)

Because of a rather epistemological question of the relatedness of sense to a subject, which has been studied through the mediation of language, now the question of the relatedness of a subject to sense will be asked. Thereby anthropological and

²³⁰ op.cit., 174.

²³¹ Angehrn, “Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?,” 182.

²³² Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 282.

²³³ op.cit., 282–84.

²³⁴ Emil Angehrn, “Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik,” in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 18.

fundamental philosophical considerations come into view, which will be the basis for the analysis of a 'negative' dynamic of understanding (II. 2.B).

For Angehrn's hermeneutic, the human self-relation builds the origin and the core; only in its relatedness to a subject can the world be understood.²³⁵ But this self-understanding cannot be founded, but rather is accessible only through a mediated passing through its externalisation and interpretation. Angehrn describes hermeneutics as the art of interpretation – the making understood of that which is no longer self-evident and requires the mediated approach of interpretation.²³⁶ Accordingly, a hermeneutic of self-communication can be understood as a rejection of philosophy of reflection which takes the immediate accessibility of the thinking subject (*cogito*) as a base. As we have seen in the previous section, Angehrn emphasises in his description of the self the proscriptive potential of a subject accessible only through its **desire and self-communication**.²³⁷ According to Angehrn, the human being is the creature able to ask for and question itself. Through the active responding to these questions and the engaging with the attempted answers in human statements and actions anthropology can be understood as the origin and aim of hermeneutics. Self-communication turns out to be profoundly verbal; between the poles of construction and reception, language allows one to create the necessary distance between a description of the self and of the world.²³⁸ Hence, on the one side, identity and consistency of self-description come into view; and on the other side, the brokenness of this description and the possibility and potential of communicating of oneself 'differently'.²³⁹ The assumption of an irreducible character of the subjects is given only through its continual reinterpretation linking negative hermeneutics to the dynamic of psychoanalysis stressing the importance of rupture and inconstancy. Additionally, a **phenomenological dimension of self-communication** is reflected. Sense, as it exists through subjective construction and deliberate design, also stands for everything that is not producible; what is not in control of human producing and creating, but rather looked for, found and appropriated.²⁴⁰ The model of self-communication refers us back to the mediating character of language, relating the subject to sense but also sense to the speaking subject. Verbal expression

²³⁵ Emil Angehrn, "Einleitung," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 7.

²³⁶ Emil Angehrn, "Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst," in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 47.

²³⁷ op.cit., 58.

²³⁸ Emil Angehrn, "Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik," in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 10–12.

²³⁹ Joachim Küchenhoff, "Mitspieler und Kritiker: Die kritische Hermeneutik des psychoanalytischen Gesprächs," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 305 and Paul Ricœur, "Memory and Forgetting," in *Questioning ethics: Contemporary debates in philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999). For the ecumenical potential of this approach Marianne Moyaert, *Fragile identities: Towards a theology of interreligious hospitality*, Currents of encounter v. 39 (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2011).

²⁴⁰ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 374 s..

becomes the founding act of an emerging, which is manifested in language in an even more radical way than in other cultural practices. While all sense refers to a certain mediation, in the case of language this medialisation is linked in an original way to the phenomenon of expression – the expression of a bodily subject which expresses itself through language.²⁴¹ Hermeneutic takes seriously the openness as well as its relatedness to an other – a “rehabilitation of a bad infinity”²⁴² – as well as “anticipation of completeness”.²⁴³ The reflexivity of the subject culminates in its desire for self-communication as a cognitive self-relation, but also as its overcoming through the acceptance of a constitutive relatedness to another. Thereby not only the other subject in its hearing or speaking is considered but just as much the otherness of language, in which the dimensions of mediation and temporarily cross and which point towards the unavailability of an autonomously beginning and a defined objective. The ideal of a hermeneutic detour gets turned around and related to the subject. On the one side is the subjective conscience characterised by its slipping away and not being one with itself, on the other side it is always related to another.²⁴⁴

Understanding thereby happens in an unsecured anticipation and retrospection, described by Gadamer, as based on 'prejudices', while also engaging in the possibility of refutation.²⁴⁵ This openness and uncertainty has consequences for the methodological status of hermeneutics: If the dialectic of understanding and self-communication shall not be reduced to the model of a necessary return to the self, hermeneutic must relate its own status to the necessity or obsolescence of the perspective of sense.²⁴⁶ For a hermeneutic of the self this dynamic is radicalised again. If identity shall not merge in an immediate self-presence but shall rather be the result of self-communication mediated by another, it is essentially shaped by the form of this communication.²⁴⁷ The discourse with the limitations and the experience of horror and commotion of trust in sense and **the fundamental possibility of a misconduct and a failing of understanding** and communication becomes a key assumption of a negative hermeneutic.

²⁴¹ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 142.

²⁴² Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Das Erbe Hegels,” in *Das Erbe Hegels: 2 Reden aus Anlass d. Verleihung d. Hegel-Preises 1979 der Stadt Stuttgart an Hans-Georg Gadamer am 13. Juni 1979*, ed. Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer, first ed., Suhrkamp-Taschenbücher 596 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 39.

²⁴³ Hans-Georg Gadamer and Joel Weinsheimer, *Truth and method*, 2., rev. ed., reprint., Continuum impacts (London [u.a.]: Continuum, 2006), 277, Emil Angehrn, “Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst,” in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 67.

²⁴⁴ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 376.

²⁴⁵ Gadamer and Weinsheimer, *Truth and method*, 9.

²⁴⁶ Emil Angehrn, “Einleitung,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 9.

²⁴⁷ Emil Angehrn, “Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst,” in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 50.

2. *Limitations of Understanding*

The previous section has shown the importance of limitations for understanding; now these limitations shall be analysed more closely. First implications for the hermeneutic of liturgy will be shown in this section. Its primary task will, however, be to provide tools and methods for the following case studies. In the context of liturgical studies, the limits of understanding and the epistemological consequences of negative hermeneutics for the study of desire and resistance are intriguing.

From a philosophical point of view the question arises, whether despite the experience of limitation, negation and lack every understanding is based on an original affirmation and a positive assumption. Opposing the assumption of an understandable sense, negative hermeneutic emits especially in the double negation of a wish to understand as **resistance against the loss of sense**.²⁴⁸ What kind of negativity does Angehrn mean when he writes that a hermeneutic can be called 'negative', which understands production and interpretation of sense as based on a discourse with a negative?²⁴⁹ Against approaches of an abstract epistemological dialectic, but also against a narrowing and reduction of negativity to a mere experience in existential philosophy, Angehrn begins with the concept of 'non-sense' as contra-concept to an absolute underlying sense. A hermeneutic negativism thus needs to start with the assumption that negativity can only be understood as a negation of signs, and possibilities, but not of reality and that therefore a 'radical negativity' would cause its own self-difference and must therefore be refused.²⁵⁰ Against the superficial reduction of a positivity and against dualistic tendencies of an ontological negativity Angehrn emphasises the importance of a dynamic between positive and negative for the process of understanding and creation of sense. The idea of a constituting negativity does not necessarily lead to the postulate of an ontological negativity, but it prohibits a limitation of negation to a purely mental or linguistic act. It is rather the confrontation, or, more precisely, the interaction with, negativity, that determines the human relation to the dynamic of positivity and negativity. Hermeneutics has not only the task of bridging the temporal and cultural distance from its object but also understanding the **distortion of sense** which adhere to the object itself. The human being is confronted, in multiple ways, with the radical boundlessness of sense and its incomprehensibility and

²⁴⁸ The motive of wish and the desire for sense follows traditions of translation theory as well as psychoanalyse, which describes desire as the negation of a negation, Timo Storck, "ANDERES VERSTEHEN: Negativität und freie Assoziation in einer psychoanalytischen Hermeneutik," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 234 and Gerhard Schneider, "Die Konzeption personaler Identität in einer negativitätstheoretischen Perspektive," in op.cit., 158.

²⁴⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 333.

²⁵⁰ Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Ist radikale Negativität möglich?," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*.

insufficiency. Through the approaches of reception, deconstruction, and construction of sense hermeneutic must consider the conditions of finiteness of human understanding, of its object and of the differential nature of sense.²⁵¹ Hermeneutic can therefore, according to Angehrn not be but critical, as critique of understanding towards itself and as reflection on its own conditions and limits.²⁵²

This section of the study will be structured by the (slightly artificial) distinction between 'formal' and 'content related' limits to analyse **different kinds of limitations** in the process of understanding independently from their concretion/manifestation (sense, subject, language) and then to show their dynamic and interdependence through content related limitations.

a) Formal

1. The generic first form of this 'otherness' of sense is the **object strange to the category of sense**: certain structures of reality precede the understanding relation (e.g. landscape). This form of otherness encourages the understanding to ask questions and describe sense as phenomenon of difference. Angehrn distinguishes between 1) non-sense as external constellation materiality and bodiliness as well as the event character which adhere the process of sense; 2) the precursor of sense as a sub-semantic and functioning sense. Thereby the focus is much more on a transition rather than a separation between two areas of being. Sense develops gradually from a not-yet-meaningful; and 3) the interdependence of sense and non-sense is described, which is understood as a dynamic of understanding and self-interpreting life.²⁵³ Following Ricoeur, Angehrn here locates the transition from 'power to meaning,' which also is a threshold for psychoanalytic approaches to sense.²⁵⁴ For liturgy, this fundamental aspect is a corrective and a reminder of the presence of the 'strange' (nature) in the highly complex symbolic act of liturgy (e.g. rain during a procession).

2. Accordingly, Angehrn introduces, as a second form of 'otherness,' **the incomprehensible**: the hidden or distorted sense. The focus lies no longer on objects which remain incomprehensible out of a lack of sense but as an obstacle for understanding, either between object and understanding subject (hidden sense) or in the process of creation of sense itself (distorted sense).²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Emil Angehrn, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 322–28.

²⁵² op.cit., 324.

²⁵³ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 277.

²⁵⁴ op.cit., 268–79.

²⁵⁵ op.cit., 285s..

a) The **hidden sense** represents the standard case for hermeneutics: it implies a change of perspective, which aims to adopt a position and, in that way, to overcome the strange and distant. Such strangeness is gradual and would have to be overcome through subjective understanding. At the same time, Angehrn takes on a theory of otherness that stresses that the experience of strangeness (especially in a subjective, ethical context as analysed by Lévinas) that resists a complete transformation into sense. Understanding remains always confronted with its own constitutive boundaries and, therefore, with its limitation.²⁵⁶ Angehrn points out the functioning tension between sense and non-sense which underlies every understanding, but at the same time he asks how far even the most radical difference is encompassed by a general foundation of understanding and therefore based on an irreducible a-priori of communication through which difference can be figured.²⁵⁷ This is the main field of study for most liturgical analysis: the historic, cultural, and symbolic distance of a rite is analysed and explained without appropriating its 'otherness'.

b) As a second constellation of the incomprehensible, the **distorted sense** comes into view, through which understanding is confronted with an element of strangeness within itself. Thereby Angehrn refers mainly to a hermeneutic of suspicion, which starts from a false self-conception. On the one side, the detour via non-sense becomes a starting point for understanding, on the other side the overcoming of the strangeness of the object and of self-alienation coincide.²⁵⁸ Hermeneutics as well as deconstruction insist that distortion is not limited to pathological cases but occurs in every meaning and saying. A similar self-opacity can be found on the side of the understanding subject. That we are strange to ourselves radicalises our strangeness to others.²⁵⁹ The transition from the strangeness of another is already a radicalisation, but even more radically resistance and negativity occur in the third form of non-sense: the absurdity and refusal of sense.²⁶⁰ For liturgical studies, this raises the fundamental question about the 'subject' of liturgy. How far can the individual, collective, or even ecclesial perception of sense and understanding in liturgy be distorted? What consequences would that have for the anabatic and katabatic dynamics of the worshipping act? This dimension comes into play especially in the context of a pastoral-theological study of liturgy.

3. The third, and in a certain way most radical, form of an incomprehensible is the **refusal of sense** and destruction of meaning: an object which genuinely belongs to the sphere of understanding but opposes it.²⁶¹ In this case, practical and theoretical

²⁵⁶ op.cit., 289.

²⁵⁷ op.cit., 290.

²⁵⁸ op.cit., 290s..

²⁵⁹ op.cit., 293.

²⁶⁰ op.cit., 294s.

²⁶¹ op.cit., 296.

aspects get are brought together. Although Angehrn emphasises that both aspects are not necessarily linked, both are connected via the negative, as the subject is related to sense and language, and must act in concrete situations.²⁶² Therefore, two levels overlap: the deficit of sense in the concrete object and a theoretical and practical acting in another.²⁶³ As Ricoeur assumes that evil cannot be talked about in purely metaphysical categories, but needs to be explored through symbols and stories, Angehrn extends this thought to finiteness, guilt, and suffering. Theoretical reflection and practical behaviour are interwoven especially where understanding reaches its limits.²⁶⁴ This leads to considerations of the 'content-related' negativity.

b) Content -Related

Angehrn distinguishes three kinds of negativity which are experienced as absurd. The experience of the absurd, and the unfathomable difference between ideal and reality, or between two ideals, brings us back to Krause's analysis of the positioning of the acting person and the protest of this difference.

1. **Finiteness** as *conditio humana*: the human desire for sense encounters the resistance of a limited existence. The human being becomes aware of its unrealizable desire and its defectiveness. As described in Plato's myth of Aristophanes²⁶⁵ this experience of lack is the drive for a human desire for wholeness. Existential philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis have tried especially hard to describe this defectiveness. In the constellation of the 'tragic,' the motive of suffering from finiteness becomes concrete.²⁶⁶ The experience of a void, the dependence on external powers, and one's own weakness unsettles the human self. They evoke the original fear of chaos and nothingness.²⁶⁷ The experience of one's own weakness becomes even more radical when it concerns one's moral integrity. The constellation of guilt questions the human desire for justification. Therefore, it is the inevitability of guilt that is the tragic moment. In the tragedy, it is not so much the conflict between good and evil but the clash of affirmative values which entrap the tragic subject in guilt. Guilt imposed on the 'innocent' is the paradox but also scandal of the unbearable which we can neither justify nor

²⁶² Emil Angehrn, "Dispositive des Negativen: Grundzüge negativistischen Denkens," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 13s..

²⁶³ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 297.

²⁶⁴ op.cit , 296–300.

²⁶⁵ Plato and Tom Griffith, *Symposium of Plato: Platōnos Sumposion*, Repr (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 190a–193a.

²⁶⁶ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 303.

²⁶⁷ op.cit., 300–304.

understand.²⁶⁸ The acceptance of guilt, the acceptance of punishment, and the consequent suffering radicalises incomprehensibility and non-acceptability.²⁶⁹

2. The second shape in which negativity is experienced is the '**negativity of the world**'. Negativistic thinking insists on the practical and theoretically reconcilable nature of thinking and world. The experience of a radical strangeness of natural and historical events resists reconciliation and a complete 'understanding'. Angehrn distinguishes between the contingency and factuality of history, and the objection of a radical-transcendental negative. But even the latter is not an abstract negativity, but an intractability experienced as real. Through its radicality, it does not question the concrete constellations of sense, but rather the possibility of meaningful interpretation and dialogue in general.²⁷⁰ For liturgy, this concerns not only the individual performance of a role, but the referential 'original' of potential sense. Why would we celebrate liturgy in the first place?

3. This leads us to the third category: **the *malum***. In the form of evil, the negative functions in the most abysmal way as a counter-potency of reason and desire for sense.²⁷¹ Here the perspectives of guilt and the radical negativity of the world cross. Evil as pure *privatio boni* must remain strange for understanding what is essentially aligned to a positive. In his analysis of evil, Angehrn again follows Ricoeur, who emphasises that not a strictly phenomenological approach but a detour through symbols and myths can show the nature of a radical refusal of sense. In the context of a symbolic narrative of representation, the human being encounters the non-rationality of evil, which he must integrate in his understanding of the world.²⁷² Inevitably, the human being must deal with the experience of evil. Against approaches which understand suffering as a complementary concept to evil, Angehrn emphasises that evil is the more fundamental negative in a normative sense, but that the suffering of the innocent does not only challenge reason but also the human sensation. The resistance against what we feel is wrong, and what we cannot want to happen, is the core of the absurd, the intractable against understanding.²⁷³ This understanding of 'non-sense' culminates according to Angehrn in a negative anthropology which tries to articulate the unsubstantial nature of the human being starting from the genuine need for interpretation of their existence though the general negativity of the *conditio humana* to

²⁶⁸ op.cit., 306.

²⁶⁹ op.cit., 304–7.

²⁷⁰ op.cit., 307–9.

²⁷¹ op.cit., 309.

²⁷² op.cit., 311: „Im Kreis der symbolisch narrativen Vergegenwärtigung begegnet ihm [dem Menschen, E.W.] das nicht-rationalisierbare [...] des Bösen, das er in sein Verständnis der Welt und seiner selbst auszunehmen hat.“

²⁷³ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 315.

a confrontation of the human being with a concrete experience of 'what should not be'²⁷⁴
The negative can get experienced either as resisting or as threatening or as internally opposing a positive, and therefore as impulse of liveliness and creativity. In both cases, it remains irreducible for the self-communication of the subject and challenges it.²⁷⁵

c) *Dealing with Negativity*

For negative hermeneutics as a theory of self-communication, the experiencing subject dealing with the negative is a central moment that tests the reach of hermeneutics through the strangeness of the most radical other to sense.²⁷⁶ These concepts will be highly relevant for liturgy, as a process of ritualization situated within and against the experience of a negative (cf. II. 3.B). Angehrn distinguishes **three attitudes towards non-sense**: 1) the **resistance** and insistence on the non-understanding. He uses again the example of the tragic: the self-assertion of the subject against the unbearable. The subject can either call on a 'higher' sense or express absurdity and senselessness. As the blankness becomes the expression of the most intensive suffering, so silence becomes the most insistent voice of protest.²⁷⁷ Opposed to this attitude are a repressive not-allowing (*mauvaise foi*) and a bearing of the non-sense. 2) The **integration** of the negative – acceptance and reconciliation. This attitude tries to make sense of the absurd through rationalisation and submission to a greater whole. In the most radical way, this is articulated in Hegel's philosophy as a process of passing over into the other and of a final appropriation. According to Angehrn, models of 'negative dialectic' take part in this turning: it is the basic model of dialectic negativity, i.e. of a negative, which in the end does not remain fixed to itself, but is sublimed through the negation of a negative – or, an affirmation which through the mediation of its otherness maintains its positivity.²⁷⁸ The creative power of the negation in this model lies in the reflexive, double negation.²⁷⁹ 3. A **meaningful relation to the senseless**: resistance against a non-sense is not only practical resistance but also a hermeneutic resource. Out of experiences of negativity, we create and form sense; based on these experiences, we perceive sense.²⁸⁰ The experience of a non-sense, against which all cultural achievements and production of sense run counter, remains a sting which drives the human desire for sense. The experience of suffering is crucial not only for the

²⁷⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Dispositive des Negativen: Grundzüge negativistischen Denkens," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 26s..

²⁷⁵ op.cit., 34–36.

²⁷⁶ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 318.

²⁷⁷ op.cit., 320.

²⁷⁸ op.cit., 323.

²⁷⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Dispositive des Negativen: Grundzüge negativistischen Denkens," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 325.

²⁸⁰ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 331.

practical life, but also for understanding and cognitive engagement. The negative experience cannot simply be assimilated but needs to be reflected as horizon of the process of understanding: it is necessary to reflect on it *as* negative – as the dimension which we cannot understand or desire – in the horizon of our understanding, to be able to develop a meaningful relation the meaningless.²⁸¹

Angehrn's concept describes understanding as a process between trust and distrust, desire and resistance, and raises the question of a possible reconciliation not as a dialectic 'solution' but rather as a hermeneutic anthropology. **Trust** has an essential task in resisting a loss of sense, not through its denial or reinterpretation, but through insisting on the power of the wish to understand in the face of an endangered sense.²⁸² The concept of trust in sense points towards a relation between cognitive and existential dimensions in the dealing with the negative. The confrontation with the loss of this trust is an essential feature of the hermeneutic.²⁸³ As a philosophical example of the trust in the logos (in a wider sense as word, not limiting it to 'rationality') on which hermeneutics (if not all philosophy) is based, Angehrn quotes Plato's *Phaedo*:²⁸⁴ At the end of the dialogue, Socrates asks his friends not to fall into misology. Thereby the philosophical 'life' of Socrates itself becomes the strongest rhetorical means to convince others of the power of the logos, without offering a last rational certainty.²⁸⁵

A complementary dynamic is the representation and articulation of protest, especially in discourse with the concept of '**utopia**.' According to Angehrn, the power of utopia lies not only in the strengths of a negation as an exceeding of a present reality, but also in its creative power of visualisation and image-making.²⁸⁶ In a utopia, a stage of suffering partially caused by the current circumstances, partially by the *conditio humana*, is opposed by a state of perfect happiness, itself in danger of absolute positivity. A utopia points towards an unswerving negation of the factual, and, only through the reflection of the transcendence of a radical otherness, becomes a critical negation.²⁸⁷ It is characterised by a representation, always pointing beyond itself. Its image must remain without place; the utopic must remain utopic.²⁸⁸ In the liturgical play, the meaning of the mystery emerges only through the expression of the ineffable

²⁸¹ op.cit., 333.

²⁸² Emil Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik: Vom Seinsvertrauen zum Vertrauen in den Menschen," in *Grundvertrauen: Hermeneutik eines Grenzphänomens*, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth and Simon Peng-Keller, 1. print. (Leipzig 2013), 180.

²⁸³ op.cit.

²⁸⁴ Plato and E. A. Duke, eds., *Platonis opera: Euthyphro; Apologia; Crito; Phaedo; Cratylus; Theaetetus; Sophista; Politicus* (1995), 89d-e.

²⁸⁵ Günter Figal, "Dem Logos vertrauen," in Figal, *Der Sinn des Verstehens*, p. 150s..

²⁸⁶ Emil Angehrn, "Dialektik der Utopie: Von der Unverzichtbarkeit und Fragwürdigkeit utopischen Denkens," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 152.

²⁸⁷ op.cit., 161.

²⁸⁸ op.cit., 162.

(ἄρρητον), as seen but not understood in the play.²⁸⁹ Liturgy is a becoming simultaneously aware of the holy service and of the presence of the divine. It is a striving for an ideal-typical identity through the play of a role, but at the same time is realised only through divine grace within the frame of ritual action. The symbolic and the grace-filled dimensions cannot be reduced to universal concepts but realised only in the *hic* and *nunc* of the hope in the emerging of the name, i.e. the always broken promise of identity and continuation.²⁹⁰ The challenge for a hermeneutic based on negativity would therefore be to represent the concrete experience of a negative; this shows the freedom. But also, the character of 'play' in the hermeneutic model must at the same time remind us of its commitment to truth.

Negative hermeneutics emphasises different aspects as far as it stresses the dynamic tension between understanding and non-understanding, succeeding and failing.²⁹¹ The awareness of homelessness and uncertainty becomes the point of origin for a hermeneutic dealing with negativity. In their self-communication, humans must engage especially with the breaks and gaps of their existence, and these are caused by a structural lack of the *conditio humana* or by an experienced absurdity. Therefore, the possibility of a fundamental failing and mistaking is experienced and builds a negative framework.

According to Angehrn, understanding has at last to raise the question whether the world is carried by a fundamental comprehensibility or whether sense is irreducibly withdrawn. Here hermeneutic and metaphysic premises cross: within the hermeneutic insistence on both an original, fundamental affirmation and an identical negation, the never-fulfilled desire for sense, connecting both, stops them from falling into a dualism.²⁹²

C. Status of Negative Hermeneutics – The Sense of Self-Communication

This section will outline the critical potential of negative hermeneutics as well as its limits and consequences for liturgy. The attempt shall be to show basic concepts of negative hermeneutics and to present more clearly its specific object and methods. In a last step, critical points as well as its ability to self-criticism (and their limits) shall be analysed.

²⁸⁹ Krause, "Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden," 23–26.

²⁹⁰ *op.cit.*, 41–49.

²⁹¹ cf. Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik," 173–83.

²⁹² Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 335.

1. Object

Starting from the basic concepts of sense, subject, and language, negative hermeneutics is especially interested in their obduracy and resistance against a 'smooth' understanding. While hermeneutics tries to establish and articulate rules for understanding and communicating, negative hermeneutic focusses even more on the circumlocutory character of understanding and, accordingly, emphasises the dimension of **process in truth and communication**.²⁹³ Thus, it does not remain on the level of a pre-Gadamerian hermeneutics that reduces this process to a simple relation between inward and outward, partial and whole, but describes representation as a necessary mediation of an intended.²⁹⁴ It radicalises its approach under two aspects. On the one side, it insists on the possibility of a self-transcendence (of language), and of the subject in the process, while on the other side, it stresses the fundamental character of brokenness for every human understanding. While Gadamer already emphasises the importance of the 'other' for understanding, negative hermeneutics shifts that relation, and points out that the other person representing the boundary of understanding is the source of any sense.²⁹⁵ This movement is crucial for negative hermeneutics and its potential for the understanding of the concrete and individual beyond the interpretation of classical hermeneutics.

Against a comprehensive expectation of sense, this hermeneutic insists on the fundamental option of misunderstanding and **failing in communication**. It does not start with the experience of presence (as in art, for example) and becomes the basis of an 'expected' sense.²⁹⁶ Rather it begins with the human desire for sense, which then is challenged by the absence of sense. A structural as well as creative aspect of the negative comes into view. On the one hand, the existential event-character in world and history is examined; on the other, at the level of interpersonal communication, the dimension of negation, resistance, and refusal to communicate is considered. This ambivalence interrupts and disturbs, but at the same time makes communication possible.²⁹⁷ Additionally, the selective 'no,' which decides which traditions and descriptions are passed on and which are excluded from memory and communication, is

²⁹³ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 168 and Emil Angehrn, "Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 180.

²⁹⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Der entgegenkommende Sinn: Offenbarung und Wahrheitsgeschehen," in *Offenbarung - verstehen oder erleben? Hermeneutische Theologie in der Diskussion*, ed. Andreas Klein and Christof Landmesser (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2012), 62.

²⁹⁵ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 478–94 For the importance of "otherness" for hermeneutics Andeas Cremoni, "Sinn und Alterität: Zu den "nicht-allergischen" Voraussetzungen des Verstehens in Gadamers Hermeneutik," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*.

²⁹⁶ Günter Figal, "Sinn: Zur Bedeutung eines philosophischen Schlüsselbegriffs," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*.

²⁹⁷ Joachim Küchenhoff, "Die Negativität des Symptoms und die Schwierigkeiten, Nein zu hören," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*, 204–8.

analysed and, following the dynamic of deconstruction, the possibility of a just understanding is fathomed.²⁹⁸ As origin and core of understanding but also of exhausting oneself against non-understanding, human self-relation and self-communication come into view.²⁹⁹ In light of human self-communication, hermeneutics needs to engage with the gradual **transition between self-awareness and self-description**. Since negative hermeneutics culminates in a hermeneutic of the self that tries to grasp the dynamics of self-communication in its fragility and imperfection, it needs to link a theoretical view of humankind with a reflective, internal perspective, i.e. the human self-relation.³⁰⁰ Thereby, it is the incompleteness and the structural lack of self-communication that interest negative hermeneutics. Human beings are first understanding, self-understanding, and communicating beings. This description is not only a point of origin but also demand and aim.³⁰¹ Self-communication is the hermeneutical object *par excellence* because through it, the double-relation of the self-expressing person, who sees herself mirrored in the other, comes into view. In speaking and self-expressing, the other gives reality to a context of meaning known to the communicating self.³⁰² Hermeneutic understanding is formed in this dynamic and must relate to the obsolescence or necessity of a perspective of sense. Thus, it must reflect on the existential and theoretical self-relation of the human being.³⁰³ It is therefore Angehrn's concern to study hermeneutics not only as a methodology, but rather in its **interdependence of object and reflexion**³⁰⁴ and to facilitate a discourse on understanding. In chapter II. 3 we will outline how this dynamic is resumed in the context of liturgical studies.

2. Method/Methodology

As we have seen in Angehrn's studies, but also in Schulz's negative hermeneutic, resistance and desire are key concepts for any 'meta-hermeneutic' that asks not only 'how' but 'why'. The interdependence of 'perceiving-reconstructing', the 'dissolving-critical' and the 'interpreting-constructive' relations to its object, which have been outlined (II. 2.A), represents a structure of possible dealings with sense. It is the mutual dependence and tension among the different relations that corresponds to human

²⁹⁸ Paul Ricœur, Andris Breitling and Burkhard Liebsch, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit: Erinnern - Vergessen - Verzeihen*, Essener kulturwissenschaftliche Vorträge vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1998), 17s..

²⁹⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Einleitung," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 7s..

³⁰⁰ Emil Angehrn, "Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik," in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 17.

³⁰¹ Emil Angehrn, "Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik," in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 18.

³⁰² Günter Figal, "Leibhaft inmitten der Dinge: Zum Ansatz einer phänomenologischen Anthropologie," in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 42.

³⁰³ Emil Angehrn, "Einleitung," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 9.

³⁰⁴ Angehrn, *Interpretation und Dekonstruktion*, 331.

finitude.³⁰⁵ Against a conventional hermeneutic, characterised by its vicinity to metaphysics and understood merely as affirmative style of thinking, Angehrn emphasises its **critical potential**, which is not limited to a 'hermeneutic of suspicion.' It is the task of hermeneutics to read constructions of sense against the grain and to point towards the negativity of understanding – in the distorted, hidden, or incomprehensible.³⁰⁶ Hermeneutics is hereby understood in the sense of a condemnation and negation, which resists the meaningless suffering (cf. Tolstoy: “*Comprendre c'est pardonner*”).³⁰⁷ Negative hermeneutics stands against the idea of a complete mediation of the tension between independence and 'objectivity' of an event of sense and its dependence on human speaking; in doing so, it stresses the necessity of an exceeding of one's horizon for real understanding.³⁰⁸ Its concern is not to create a simple balance between understanding and non-understanding or to declare negativity to a part of the process of understanding. It is the very crossing of logical-epistemological and existential dimensions that makes it necessary to **resist** what should not be, and to exhaust oneself against the boundaries and limitations of understanding. The experience of the senseless challenges understanding and forces it to enter a discourse.³⁰⁹ The deep level of the senseless which is opposed to the desire of understanding is not a refutation, but the constituting basis of sense.³¹⁰ This focus on the in-between and liminality makes negative hermeneutics a very suitable approach for liturgical studies. This aspect will prove crucial as we will see in the following chapter (II. 3.)

The fundamental idea of a circumlocutory character of sense correlates the orientation of negative hermeneutic towards an expressivity and relationality of sense. It starts with the paradigm of a '**questionable and unsecured sense**', forcing the subject to continue asking. This openness encourages engagement with otherness and incomprehensibility beyond an ontological ideal of identity and sameness, driven by the creative power of questioning and desire for sense³¹¹. Foundation is not the idea of a power structure of language but rather its lack, and the fact that the speech-event is never under the control of the speaking subject. It commits a betrayal of language

³⁰⁵ op.cit., 332–36.

³⁰⁶ Emil Angehrn, “Hermeneutik und Kritik,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 319–21.

³⁰⁷ Leo Tolstoy, Anthony Briggs and Orlando Figes, *War and peace*, First American edition (New York, New York, U.S.A.: Viking, 2006), vol. 1, part 1, chapter 28, Emil Angehrn, “Hermeneutik und Kritik,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 329 and Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 51.

³⁰⁸ cf. Angehrn, “Die Grenzen des Verstehens und der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik,” 151 and Angehrn, “Der entgegenkommende Sinn,” 75.

³⁰⁹ Emil Angehrn, “Hermeneutik und Kritik,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 330–32.

³¹⁰ op.cit , 332.

³¹¹ Emil Angehrn, “Vom Sinn des Fragens: Wege nachmetaphysischen Philosophierens,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 62–64 and Angehrn, “Der hermeneutische Umweg,” 197 This understanding oscillates between a concept of radical otherness, as it is found in Waldenfels and Lévinas and a classical hermeneutic understanding of otherness and starting point of communication and understanding. Bernhard Waldenfels, “Spielräume des Möglichen und Überschüsse des Unmöglichen,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 11.

before any speaking by falling behind the saying and at the same time through a surplus exceeding the said.³¹² Negative hermeneutics does not try to establish a higher level metalanguage, which would be able to overcome the paradox of self-referring speech, but a para-language which radicalises this paradox by revealing the relatedness to another in any self-relation.³¹³ Alongside its expressivity, it is especially the limitation of the analysed sense that characterises the work of negative hermeneutics. It is the insufficiency and failure to communicate and understand which keeps alive the desire for a ‘coming’ and the promising structure of language.

Analogous to psychoanalytic theories, negative hermeneutics starts from the experience of gaps and inconsistencies, of lack and negativity through which true communication is enabled. It is the process of understanding and self-communication that allows a critical reckoning with precariousness and resistance.³¹⁴ The German psychologist Timo Storck talks in this context of a transformative understanding opposed to a negative-psychoanalytic hermeneutic that tries to do justice to the epistemological as well as the dynamic negativity of the psychoanalytic talk. A negativity which has been proved to be epistemological and desirous, points towards the methodical and methodologic negativity of the psychoanalytic theory.³¹⁵ Double negation within the analysis does therefore not refer so much to a positivity, but rather to a fundamental desire. In the case of psychoanalysis, it is the technique of free association which does justice to this interdependence of object and method; its critical touchstone is the clinical practice. For a philosophical hermeneutic, however, the question whether negation opens the possibility of a hyperbole or rather leads to a simple regression must remain open. For the dialogue with liturgical studies, this dynamic is particularly important as it challenges traditional methods and creates space for a ‘free association’ of liturgy, justified by the interweaving of liturgical sense and subject. Could liturgy be a possible touchstone for this hermeneutic difficulty? Is the Church’s work rooted in the same way in liturgical practice as the psychoanalyst’s work is rooted in clinical practice?³¹⁶

³¹² Bernhard Waldenfels, “Spielräume des Möglichen und Überschüsse des Unmöglichen,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 15–19.

³¹³ op.cit., 20.

³¹⁴ Joachim Küchenhoff, “Die Negativität des Symptoms und die Schwierigkeiten, Nein zu hören,” in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*, 201 and Joachim Küchenhoff, “Mitspieler und Kritiker: Die kritische Hermeneutik des psychoanalytischen Gesprächs,” in Jaeggi; Wesche, *Was ist Kritik?*, 306–8.

³¹⁵ Timo Storck, “ANDERES VERSTEHEN: Negativität und freie Assoziation in einer psychoanalytischen Hermeneutik,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 231–34.

³¹⁶ Marcus Pound, *Theology, psychoanalysis, trauma*, Veritas (London: SCM Press, 2007), 155.

3. Critique

Without being able to enter the detailed philosophical discussion around possible weaknesses and limits of a negative hermeneutic, some brief delineations shall be drawn at the end of this chapter to deepen lines of thought as well as pose possible future developments. As part of the next chapter, these differences and dissents shall be articulated further within the context of its possible applications within a liturgical context. The chapter will be structured by two potential critiques. As the hermeneutic dimension has been questioned from the perspective of methodological (relation between method and area of work) as well as an interdisciplinary meta-level (delineation to deconstruction and critique ideal of hermeneutic self-communication), the aspect of negativity becomes challenged as 1. falling short of its radical potential, or 2. paralysing the surrendering the subject to a quasi-ontological power of sense.

1. First, from the prospective of an interdisciplinary dialogue, Angehrn's opening of hermeneutics towards a **discourse with deconstruction** is recognised as one of the main strengths of his approach, but also this shift is criticised as not being consistent enough with authors like Albrecht Wellmer, who, in his article "Hermeneutische Reflexion und ihre «dekonstruktive» Radikalisierung. Kommentar zu Emil Angehrn," analyses the attitude of Angehrn's approach. He asks whether two such diverse projects as hermeneutics and deconstruction can be compared at all, and on what basis such a comparison would make sense. He accuses Angehrn of using an ideal type of pre-Gadamerian hermeneutics as a starting point, thus creating an artificial boundary between hermeneutics and deconstruction.³¹⁷ He points out that hermeneutics as reflexive understanding already involves a deconstructive element and that presupposed 'prejudices' must be challenged in the act of understanding. Wellmer sees a self-reflexive hermeneutics that tries to integrate dynamics of interpretation and deconstruction as intrinsic to Gadamer's fusion of horizons. This is a basis for a reflective acceptance of change in tradition and of otherness, while simultaneously he criticises the self-authorisation of the process of tradition fundamental for Gadamer's hermeneutics.³¹⁸ Instead, he proposes a criticism of tradition: saving tradition requires the separation of true and false within the tradition itself, or what he calls a critical relation (*kritisches Verhältnis*)³¹⁹ to tradition. Against a 'left-over objectivism', he stresses the importance of interpretation and the 'productive' element for the process of sense. The 'productive' moment of understanding is therefore not extrinsic but a consequent radicalisation of hermeneutics. Angehrn, on the other hand, assumes that the

³¹⁷ Albrecht Wellmer, "Hermeneutische Reflexion und ihre "dekonstruktive" Radikalisierung: Kommentar zu Emil Angehrn," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 200.

³¹⁸ op.cit., 202–5.

³¹⁹ op.cit., 206.

reflexivity of understanding is the point of origin for hermeneutics and is not present to the same degree in deconstruction. Deconstruction, he claims, goes beyond the subject to a pre-subjective process that could turn out to either be a bad abstraction or lead to hyperbole that the self-reflecting character of hermeneutics must challenge.

2. From a very different angle, the potential danger of a passivity and dependency on an ontological ideal of reconciliation has been criticised as a pitfall of negative hermeneutics. In dialogue with Angehrn's approach, the German philosopher Burkhardt Liebisch asks how negativistic concepts can leave behind the **idea of a final reconciliation**. According to him, it would be the 'travail' of the negative itself, or a radical negativism that would need to abandon to open space for the scared individual (cf. Lévinas and Nány), while insisting on a more radical irreconcilability than Angehrn assumes remains a last condition for truth.³²⁰ Thus, he radicalises the idea of a 'dealing' with the negative as he describes the necessity of a 'dealing' with the lack of answers that leaves any promise or hope for surmounting the negative behind. Therefore, the negative is directly related to the life it had scared. Following Eastern traditions, Liebisch invokes a rhythm of breathing in and out, through which the negative shall escape a dialectic reduction.³²¹ The concept of the poetic rhythm of language and the significance of 'pauses' and silence are thus central for this analysis of liturgy and especially Holy Saturday. This functions as productive horizon for liturgical studies by taking seriously the self-reflexive merging of the liturgical subject in the celebration and the critical re-staging and development of liturgy.

After the aspect of a necessary resistance that exceeds the hermeneutic self-reflection, the aspect of an underlying desire will be outlined. Angehrn's emphasis on desire supersedes Gadamer's ideal of reconciliation, insofar it does not secure an immanence of the discourse through which the individual experiences limitation and submits to an inescapable dialogue. This raises the possibility of a radical loss and failure of conversation. Angehrn's approach thus correlates with Schurz' project of a negative hermeneutics, which is open for a possible breaking-off discourse and radically challenging the self-consciousness of the subject. At the same time, it allows for the possibility of a non-metaphysical experience. Against a 'reflex of understanding', Schurz

³²⁰ Burkhard Liebisch, "Ein- und Aussetzen der Arbeit des Negativen: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven phänomenologischer Revision negativistischen Denkens," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 135.

³²¹ op.cit. The attitude of an active passivity as Ricoeur describes it in the context of forgiveness and which in Angehrn can be found in the dynamic of a meaningful relating to the senseless, could be criticised as attempt to 'systematise' what in its very nature lies beyond sense and language, and asked, in how far any relating other than a bearing of the other. This would radicalise the perspective of a phenomenology of the other, in which the human being loses its own freedom as well as the challenge of the other Bernhard Waldenfels, "Spielräume des Möglichen und Überschüsse des Unmöglichen," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten* and Ricoeur, Breiting and Liebisch, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit*, 144–56.

considers the potential of an awareness of the negative through the experiences of wonder and surprise.³²² Angehrn emphasises the importance of the concrete experience, for example, in his appreciation of texts for self-understanding,³²³ but the question remains, how far his hermeneutics operates on a meta-level rather than to reflect on the relation between method and application.³²⁴

Between the intentionality of discourse and a concrete, historic event, and the experience of passivity within it, negative hermeneutics would have to justify its desire for sense and the potential of a subject who is able to **create and form a future**, and hence take ethical and political responsibility.³²⁵ Angehrn's conception of an 'unsecured' trust would be questioned by the venture of a distrust that abandons desire and hope for fulfilment. It would, however, be necessary to explain how such a radicalisation can keep the fundamental possibility of communication open in which the trust in the other and in language accumulates.³²⁶ Schurz emphasises that a certain freedom from angst and external need is necessary to allow the individual to let go of the answers and security a traditional hermeneutics of sense provides. This turn to a universal (non-metaphysical) need requires a self-confidence as well as a 'formation of the subconscious' and an opening of society. This factor is the foundation of a negative hermeneutic ethos as it cultivates a resistance against the power of a universal rather than a specific reality.³²⁷ This question must be asked especially in this study's attempt to 'apply' negative hermeneutics to a specific field of work, like liturgy. This means wrestling with an individual dynamic, its systematisation and conceptualisation through authority, and its reflection at a removed scholarly level.

Finally, after having outlined an 'external' critique, the self-reflexivity as core dynamic of negative hermeneutics will be helpful to analyse its difficulties. The **self-reflexivity** of negative hermeneutics is both its strength and pathology. Negative hermeneutics can keep a dialogue moving against the potential dangers of relativism and absolutism, but it also needs to persistently reflect on its own position and role to keep this precarious balance. The strong focus on desire as a fundamental principle of the hermeneutic process is questioned by the incalculable power of an interrupting drive, i.e. not a lack but a superabundance.³²⁸ From a liturgical perspective, this refers back to the interdependence of anabatic and katabatic dynamics and the liturgical reference to a divine that precedes any desire. The hyper-reflexivity of hermeneutics and

³²² Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 51 and 278s..

³²³ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 182.

³²⁴ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 78.

³²⁵ Ricœur, Breitling and Liebsch, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit*, 18.

³²⁶ Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik," 183.

³²⁷ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 211s..

³²⁸ Marcus Pound, "The Assumption of Desire: Kierkegaard, Lacan, and the Trauma of the Eucharist," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008).

the expectation of one's own wrongness is thereby one of the main critiques of hermeneutics from critical theory. In this negative move, the individual is integrated in a universality of potential truths.³²⁹ Its self-understanding oscillates between a method, a perspective, and a philosophical attitude. For liturgical studies, this flexibility and intensity can be a great strength but needs to be watched in order not to get in the way of the analysis of a given object. This analysis will explore how liturgy is affected by the hyper-reflexivity of negative hermeneutics, and how it can possibly counter-balance it.

II.3. Negative Hermeneutics of Liturgy: Theory and Potential

Having outlined the concept of negative hermeneutics the next chapter will analyse, how a negative hermeneutic can be advantageous for liturgical studies and which methodological implications and limitations such an approach brings. Based on the categories of mediation and immediacy for the understanding of liturgy, this chapter will explore the reach of negative hermeneutics for liturgy. Particularly, the critical potential of negative hermeneutics and its implications for liturgical studies will be explored. In a first step, it will be necessary to analyse how far liturgy can become an object of hermeneutics, what the links for such a connection are based on, and how far liturgy permits a hermeneutic. In a second step, the study will have to prove how far liturgy could be a prominent object and driving force for a 'philosophic hyperbole', i.e. how far the specific feature of liturgy necessarily moves beyond a hermeneutic analysis.

A. Methodological Pre-Thoughts

The **theological character** of liturgical studies is reflected in its ambivalent relation to liturgy as 1. an object of study, and 2. as a 'theological act' itself.³³⁰ The study of liturgy is always from the perspective not only of human boundedness but a theological foundation, which makes accessible the non-propositional, metaphorical potential of liturgical expression.³³¹ As phenomena are described in the concrete theories, the experience of these phenomena is also shaped by a specific conceptual framework. The task of a negative hermeneutic is thereby to uncover the fundamental inconsistency of these processes.³³² This perspective makes it necessary to go beyond

³²⁹ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 40–42.

³³⁰ Gerhards and Osterholt-Kootz, "Kommentar zur "Standortbestimmung der Liturgiewissenschaft"," 129–32.

³³¹ Freyer, "'Liturgie' - einer Herausforderung für die Dogmatik," 86.

³³² Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 82.

the traditional language of analysis to a fundamental inquiry for liturgical studies, as its method tries to mediate the richness of the liturgical act as a presupposed immediate. This insight demands a more theoretical reflection on the epistemological meta-theoretical considerations basis of liturgical studies.³³³ First, the question must be asked, how far hermeneutics, and especially negative hermeneutics, can be an appropriate method for the study of liturgy. As this question concerns primarily the understanding, limits, and sources of liturgy, it can be described as 'epistemological' consideration.

Text and performance can be described as the two poles between which a hermeneutic of liturgy is situated. Emphasising the meaning of texts might lead to either a de-emphasis on ritual or to an overestimation of the role of tradition and authority for the performance of worship.³³⁴ The British theologian Martin Stringer criticises a textual hermeneutic, as it is presupposed, in his view, in methods like that of Bridget Nichols. These can never do justice to the liturgical dynamic as an 'un-writing' of text in the performance.³³⁵ Stringer argues that a hermeneutic must prioritise 'meaning' on the side of the text or of the participants, and that the liturgy needs to be understood as performative discourse rather than as confined text, based on an abstract and idealised concept which loses its contingent details.³³⁶ Following Stringer's critique of 'understanding' as a purely intellectual academic category which reduces the meaning of liturgy to reading and intellectual 'understanding', a rereading of Ricoeur's categories of understanding and interpretation as interdependent dynamics seems helpful. Based on a view of **hermeneutic as "mode of being"**³³⁷ rather than mode of knowing, Ricoeur argues that hermeneutics does not remain on the level of an objective (negative) perception of a traditional text, but rather aims for a subjective (positive) reading and writing that tries to reach the subjectivity of the one who speaks and, at the same time, opens its potential towards the subjectivity of its actual reader/participant.³³⁸ Following Dilthey, Ricoeur develops the idea that the main task for hermeneutics is to reconstruct the interplay of mental life through signs and detours of understanding of text and other people. The idea that "*life grasps life*"³³⁹ is thereby always based on historic mediation

³³³ Grillo, "Intellectus fidei" und "intellectus ritus", 248–54 Especially the Italian discussion seems to be influenced by systematic interest (e.g. Andrea Grillo and Gergio Bonaccorso) while a more methodological pragmatic approach shapes the Anglo-American and Dutch schools (e.g. Gerard Lukken and Geoffrey Wainwright).

³³⁴ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 15, Birgit Jeggle-Merz, "Im Feiern erst erschließt sich die Liturgie: Die liturgische Praxis als Forschungsfeld der Liturgiewissenschaft," in Hoping; Jeggle-Merz, *Liturgische Theologie*, 160 and Aidan Kavanagh, "Textuality and Deritualization: The Case of Western Liturgy Usage," *Studia Liturgica* 23, no. 1 (1993).

³³⁵ Martin Stringer, "Text, Context, Performance: Hermeneutics and the Stud of Worship," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53, no. 1 (2000): 377.

³³⁶ op.cit., 370s..

³³⁷ Paul Ricoeur, "The task of hermeneutics," in Ricoeur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, 44.

³³⁸ op.cit., 47.

³³⁹ op.cit., 53.

and a detour via tradition. As the hermeneutic circle is reduced to a subject-object structure, it must necessarily appear as a vicious circle. Only through the disclosure of the structure of anticipation, as the basic application of a fundamental ontology, is this reduction could be overcome.³⁴⁰

A similar dynamic can be found through Angehrn's categories of reception and production of sense, which describe the shift from an epistemological to an ontological perspective. It is one of the strengths of his approach that it evinces the category of sense beyond a simple correlation of understanding, i.e. it is especially the need of interpretation of sense that makes it necessary to reflect on the conditions and limits of sense. The human desire for sense remains thereby a starting point without reducing it to a purely human construction.³⁴¹ This clarification provides a link between a fundamental hermeneutic methodology and a potential **opening towards the social sciences** (as we have seen in chapter II. 1.) that justifies liturgical studies as a critical discipline.³⁴² This critical potential of the social sciences for theology, and especially liturgy, Chauvet observes and calls the 'mediation' and insight. Subject precedes the first but is simultaneous to the second, a primary benefit of human sciences for his work.³⁴³ He stresses the necessity of a transition from phenomenology to hermeneutics that adds the aspect of temporality and processualism to a symbolic and communal understanding of truth. At the same time, a symbolic sense based on language remains always referred to a subject who must resist the temptation of an immediate. This refers negative hermeneutics back to a more systematic theological approach to liturgy. In discourse with deconstruction, hermeneutics must emphasize the reflexive character of its understanding and critically focus on the self-communicating subject.³⁴⁴ A negative hermeneutic emphasises not only the necessity of a detour character of understanding, but the genuine potential of the process of searching and finding as part of the development of sense. It can thereby build a basis for a study of liturgy that reflects critically on theological as well as sociological methods.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ op.cit., 57s..

³⁴¹ Brigitte Hilmer and Tilo Wesche, "Einleitung," in Angehrn; Hilmer; Lohmann; Wesche, *Anfang und Grenzen des Sinns*.

³⁴² for example Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual criticism: Case studies in its practice, essays on its theory*, 2. edition, last revised: April 17, 2014 (Waterloo, Canada: Ritual Studies International, 2014), 27–61.

³⁴³ Louis-Marie Chauvet, "Quand la théologie rencontre les sciences humaines," in *La responsabilité des théologiens: Mélanges offerts à Joseph Doré*, ed. François Bousquet et al. (Paris: Desclée, 2002), 404.

³⁴⁴ Emil Angehrn, "Dekonstruktion und Hermeneutik," in Kern; Menke, *Philosophie der Dekonstruktion*, 189s..

³⁴⁵ This challenge is described in a simplified way in John Wilvliet's essay "For our own purpose: the appropriation of social sciences in liturgical studies." As the three main temptations for liturgists he names: 1. believing in value-free data, 2. denying of fundamental value commitment (of social science?), 3. being unaware of own preferences and values John D. Wilvliet, "For our own purpose: the appropriation of social sciences in liturgical studies," in *Foundations in ritual studies: A reader for students of Christian worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and John A. Melloh (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 22–24.

Having studied the negative hermeneutic dynamic of perception and creation of sense, two focus points suggests themselves as a framework for a **fundamental hermeneutic of liturgy**. First, the explanation of the symbolic representative character of liturgy approaches subject and object first from the structure of givenness and the desire for sense; second, the potential for interpretative transformation emphasises the dynamic aspect and transformative individual resistance against non-sense.

1. Givenness

In its explaining-descriptive dimension, hermeneutics converges into a phenomenological approach and takes the structure of liturgy as a starting point and structural base. In this context, Grillo's re-valuation of **representation and givenness** as a key category for liturgical studies becomes important. Once in dialogue with postmodern philosophy, liturgical studies articulates the liturgical question anew and re-discovers the value of body and chaos under the premises of a post-liberal theology.³⁴⁶ Because the liturgical rite becomes the point of origin for a discourse between a theoretical (fundamental theology) and a positive (liturgy) discipline, a liturgical methodology needs to reflect on the dynamic between an immediate given of tradition, acquired through faith, and a postulated original.³⁴⁷

How far can a phenomenological manifestation become the starting point for a hermeneutic of liturgy? If God is understood as anti-phenomenon, the possibility of God via experience opens to a non-phenomenological phenomenology that performs the phenomenological reduction of experience in its most radical consequences without having to suppose a 'hermetic' hermeneutic. This approach emphasises the importance of hermeneutic anthropology as a dialogue partner for the study of liturgy.³⁴⁸ Liturgical concepts regarding passivity and the reception of the liturgical tradition tend to emphasise the mystery of the liturgical act which cannot be established through the effort of the acting subject. The dependence on a liturgical 'other' opposed to the transcendental ego and a radical understanding of givenness becomes the critique of a transcendental, idealistic philosophy of the subject.³⁴⁹

A re-valuation of bodily aspects of liturgy opens a new focus on non-verbal cultural practices and the social implications of tradition and authority inscribed and reinforced through the ritual.³⁵⁰ In this context, the dimension of tradition and authority,

³⁴⁶ Grillo, "Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?," 300–302.

³⁴⁷ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 167 and 221.

³⁴⁸ Grillo, "Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?," 293–301.

³⁴⁹ Friedrich Lohmann, "Subjekt und Offenbarung: Theologische Überlegungen zur phänomenologischen Erkenntnistheorie Jean-Luc Marions," in Dalferth; Stoellger, *Krisen der Subjektivität*, 369–76.

³⁵⁰ Grillo and Mazzocchi, "I corpo nel pensiero teologico contemporaneo".

given in Gadamer's hermeneutic as preceding the liturgical action, is an important foundation for the analysis of liturgical understanding. The **conventional rootedness** of the liturgical act becomes the basis for its authentic religious experience, and for a critical and transformative discourse and encounter with social sciences. The set symbolic language of liturgy mediates between an improper separation from an institutional authority and a personal, idiosyncratic faith.³⁵¹ Angehrn emphasises that the engagement with traditional texts forces the reader as well as society to affirm and renew their cultural consciousness.³⁵² Angehrn's hermeneutic is not limited to a simple postulation of the normativity and authority of the text, but rather makes human self-communication through the text the main focus. He assumes that humans need texts to understand themselves and the world, and the normativity of text is founded on this need. Angehrn describes the process of remembrance as a dynamic between the poles of happiness and suffering. Both meet in their resistance against the process of forgetting. The remembrance of suffering fights against an internal inhibition to 'represent' and an external tendency to overwrite the history of victims. The memory of an original happiness points to a utopic past that never was. Wrestling against a simple elimination of suffering and denying of meaning, and against the loss of hope for something better, these poles meet in their fundamental negation of a status quo. Both point towards a retrieved time and identity of the subject, as a never-original discovery of itself. Strong involuntary memories, forcing themselves upon a subject and pull it out of its day-to-day activities, catalyse this process. The preservation of tradition can be described as a hope and care for the latent possibilities beyond the pure power of facts.

The liturgy of Holy Saturday engages in particular with the remembrance of suffering, not only experienced as pain and loss (Good Friday) but characterized by its fundamental non-representability, and exponentiates its irrationality and unacceptability.³⁵³ For the mediation through liturgical performance, this raises the question as to how far a given liturgy can be perceived as a start for the interaction between human and divine.³⁵⁴ The religious rite contains the potential for both closure in a psychological immanence and openness towards a transcendence. The most important insight is that the two systems are not independent but exist in a dynamic polarity. Despite the possible failure of a transformation of the human action, the rite

³⁵¹ Francis Jacques, "Von den Sprachspielen zu den "Textspielen": Der Fall des religiösen Ritus," *Concilium* 31, no. 3 (1995): 186–89.

³⁵² Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 171.

³⁵³ Emil Angehrn, "Das Vergangene, das nie gegenwärtig war: Zwischen Leidenserinnerung und Glücksversprechen," in *Das unerledigte Vergangene: Konstellationen der Erinnerung*, ed. Emil Angehrn and Joachim Küchenhoff, 1. ed. (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2015).

³⁵⁴ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 178–82.

carries the idea of a mediated hope of a transformative, powerless action into sense and meaningful life.³⁵⁵

The play between the remembering of tradition and the eschatological outlook to an individual faith confronts the commensurability of both through grace using a symbolic language. The linguistic forms of metaphor and metonymy express the ritual distance of the sacred and the profane and at the same time their mutual mediation and interdependence. The liturgical action is a metaphor for the faith of the participants, and also the content of their faith. It represents a 'dynamic anamnesis', i.e. a symbolic remembering, in which the celebrating and the celebrated become one: "[B]eing reminded we remember, and remembering we celebrate, and celebrating we become what we do."³⁵⁶ The aspect of presence and givenness is closely linked to an **aesthetic and poetic** view of liturgy which starts with the subjective experience of beauty and coherence.

Accordingly, liturgical action is seen as an expression of the wonder that arises from the experience of aesthetic and poetic realities given to us (*poietia*) in the perception or mediation of sensible realities (*aestheta*). Such an understanding connects psychological-epistemological concepts with ideas of truth and ethical goodness expressed in beauty and links them to a hermeneutic of representation and aesthetics.³⁵⁷ How do speech and action relate in liturgy? Does an ethics of liturgy need to take its starting point from an authenticity where both accord?³⁵⁸ Hermeneutics must go beyond the assumptions of an aesthetic presence and emphasise the dynamic character of an explanation based on the concepts of temporality and historical distance.³⁵⁹ Against a reduction of liturgy to an aesthetic, Guardini emphasises the praxis and the immediate purposelessness of liturgy. In this context, it is necessary to emphasise the 'haematological retention' of liturgy that leaves space for God's grace realised in space and time.³⁶⁰

Based on a 'givenness', a negative hermeneutic of liturgy enters a discourse with the movement of **Radical Orthodoxy** and its claim of a 'doxological turn'. One of the most elaborate undertakings to establish a 'liturgical thinking' against a modern and

³⁵⁵ Jacques, "Von den Sprachspielen zu den "Textspielen", 182s..

³⁵⁶ Robert S. Taft, "The Theology of the Liturgy of the Hours," in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 122 In a similar way Lacan describes the role of anamnesis for the subject as a breaking-free from the neurotic holding onto the *hic* and *nunc*. "The present becomes figured between the past promise and future expectation." (Pound, "The Assumption of Desire," 76).

³⁵⁷ Silvio O. Maggiani, "Liturgy and Aesthetics," in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II: 264–68.

³⁵⁸ Pound, "The Assumption of Desire," 70.

³⁵⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the postmodern self: On meaning, manipulation, and promise* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1995).

³⁶⁰ Gunda Brüske, "Liturgie - Gesamtkunstwerk unter eschatologischem Vorbehalt: Versuche zur Rezeption eines ambivalenten Begriffs," in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*.

postmodern, functional reduction of liturgy is Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*.³⁶¹ This impressive attempt to introduce liturgical categories into a philosophic-theological discourse focuses on the authoritative and hierarchical aspects of liturgy. The question arises whether the refutation of modernity is the only alternative for a meta-liturgical method or whether there is an intrinsic, critical element to liturgy.³⁶² The postmodern turn to an (reversed) interdependence of internal being and external expression forces liturgical studies to reflect on the mutual influence of the worshipping subject and revelation/giveness.

The theologian Ambrose Glenn describes Chauvet and Pickstock as two excellent examples of a 'doxological turn'; both engage in different ways with a postmodern agenda criticising the sovereign subject. He contrasts Chauvet's idea of mediation, which limits him to a certain psychoanalytic intellectual culture, with Pickstock's 'residing' in the Trinity, which might lose sight of human autonomy.³⁶³ For a hermeneutic of liturgy, the insight that the liturgical dynamic can only be described adequately if both human and divine elements are analysed in their interdependence and incompatibility becomes a starting point for a reformulation of dynamism of liturgy. From the perspective of Radical Orthodoxy, analogy and participation, in and with God's creation, find their expression in the Eucharist. "The liturgy is central to analogy because it provides the interpretative framework that allows analogy and participation to work at all because liturgy provides the discursive rules by which we can refer ourselves back to the creator,"³⁶⁴ claims Pound. Negative hermeneutic would agree with this perspective but emphasise the imperfection and insufficiency of this participation.

A negative hermeneutic of liturgy will agree with Radical Orthodoxy that, in liturgy, "a collective human action invites the divine descent."³⁶⁵ It will, however, focus on the necessary gaps and the importance of desire for sense as a basis for theology and liturgy. It is exactly the openness to difference and creativity that risks failure but also creates space for a manifestation of divine grace. The analysis of liturgy needs to be aware of a dangerous methodological tendency to grant authority to a ritual based on power dynamics external to the ritual itself.³⁶⁶ A negative hermeneutics of 'utopia' is therefore opposed to a theological re-establishing of hierarchy and authority as key

³⁶¹ Catherine Pickstock: "After writing. On the liturgical consummation of philosophy." Oxford: Blackwell Publ (Challenges in contemporary theology, 1998).

³⁶² Grillo, "Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?," 284.

³⁶³ Ambrose, "Chauvet and Pickstock: Two compatible visions?"

³⁶⁴ Pound, *Theology, psychoanalysis, trauma*, 139.

³⁶⁵ John Milbank, "What is radical Orthodoxy," accessed February 25, 2018, http://www.unifr.ch/theo/assets/files/SA2015/Theses_EN.pdf.

³⁶⁶ Maria G. McDowell, "Seeing Gender: Orthodox Liturgy, Orthodox Personhood, Unorthodox Exclusion," Society of Christian Ethics, accessed April 23, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23563096>, p. 78.

features of Church and ritual.³⁶⁷ The creative engagement with difference as a key dynamic of negative hermeneutics will be central for the analysis of case studies, not as an evaluative comparison but as a challenging interplay.

2. Transformation

The structural analysis of a current shape, and its being handed over by tradition, forms one aspect of a hermeneutic of liturgy. However, a negative hermeneutic will have to go further and analyse the non-given, critical, and transformative (even dangerous) potential of liturgy. A liturgical hermeneutic cannot simply analyse how a liturgical celebration 'works' i.e. **transforms** its participants in a psychological, ethical, or spiritual sense.³⁶⁸ It rather characterises a 'liturgical' method that assumes “[s]ome mysterious and indeterminate form of relationship operates between the liturgical act and its spiritual outcome.”³⁶⁹

Against a modern separation of theology and religion, Grillo's attempt at a reintegration of cult as *conditio necessaria* of theology introduces the dynamic of a mediation of the presupposed immediate. He argues that religion needs theoretical mediation, but the theoretical mediation is based on those religious mediations. This is a two-sided process which does not presuppose the theological function of liturgy and the liturgical function of theology.³⁷⁰ The structural interdependence of immediacy and originality in fundamental theology and the difference between immediacy and originality in liturgy cannot be finally mediated. It needs to hold space for the grace and impossibility of God's presence (Nicht-Antizipierbarkeit) as a possible framework for a potential community of intentions, both of which are de facto impossible. The necessity of ritual experience refers to the anthropological dimension and the original event presupposed as regulative idea in liturgy.³⁷¹

In this context, the Dutch liturgist Paul Post has pointed out the parallels of the formed liturgical language and the performance of the liturgical act in the context of theatre.³⁷² The performative character of liturgy becomes the means of a subjective desire expressed and reflected in **play**. One of the most recent and thought-provoking attempts to consider the fundamental relationship between liturgical and theatrical

³⁶⁷ Also Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*, 310–20.

³⁶⁸ Ingolf U. Dalferth, “Hermeneutische Theologie -heute?,” in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 19–21.

³⁶⁹ Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*, 6.

³⁷⁰ Grillo, “L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale,” 172 and 208.

³⁷¹ op.cit., 221–24.

³⁷² As interfaces, he analyses 1. the practical dimension of the act, 2. the bodiliness of the rite, 3. the relation of illocution and perlocution, and 4. The connection of the ritual to a holy space Ingolf U. Dalferth and Philipp Stoellger, eds., *Gott nennen: Gottes Namen und Gott als Name* 35 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) For the three units of classical theatre (action, time, place) also Ambrose, “Chauvet and Pickstock: Two compatible visions?,” 122.

performance has been articulated by the German Benedictine Cyprian Krause. In his essay “Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden”, he uses Jean Anouilh's “Antigone” as a starting point for the study of a fundamental liturgical foundation of the rite. As a possible method for the analysis of a post-intentional language when faced with the experience of the absurd, he refers to phenomenology, which holds in abeyance sense and meaning. The insight of the theatrical turn is that the most essential aspects of human life can be represented only in an aesthetic and performative way; it is the starting point for his study of the performative rite as original *locus theologicus*.³⁷³ In his essay, he argues for the traditionalist motivation for Antigone's resistance to Kreon's order.

Krause takes his considerations about the relationship between theatre and liturgy as a basis for the question. How does theatre suggest a re-valuation of the relationship between **role difference and representation** in liturgy?³⁷⁴ Krause concludes that Antigone's role cannot be justified within the play, but needs to be linked back to her irrational decision to 'play' Antigone. This exceeds a traditional hermeneutic as far as it starts with formal language of the text to reveal the power of a role seized by a subject who disappears behind it. The sense claimed through acting is only possible through the representation of a meaningless *aporia*, i.e. it becomes a symbolic difference, not an onto-theological overcoming nor a difference-ontological point of origin.³⁷⁵

Hermeneutic philosophy cannot be expressed through a simple identity or difference, but rather through desire and failing. Thus, difference determines the taking on of a specific role. The play cannot explain meaning but become a symbolic space for self-communication. Role and self and text equiprimordially interpret each other, as Antigone's giving of her own body becomes an irreducible, ritualized cipher for the superabundance of sense. Quoting Manfred Flügge, Krause takes Antigone's gesture as a protest of the loss of transcendence.³⁷⁶ Re-enactment links Krause's hermeneutic back to Gadamer, whose concepts of play points beyond a rational use to the repetitive character of a work (ἔργον, i.e. a carrying out in the sense of a *'poiesis'* as creative act). Outward play expresses of a profound inwardly and existential play.³⁷⁷

For a negative hermeneutic, sense actualised by the playing and celebrating subject is of great interest. The human desire for sense through language is seen in creative, communicative, unpredictably honest potential of liturgy. **Reality and**

³⁷³ Krause, “Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden,” 2–11. For an understanding of theatre as existential performance of texts Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 156.

³⁷⁴ Krause, “Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden,” 47.

³⁷⁵ op.cit., 25–27.

³⁷⁶ op.cit., 292.

³⁷⁷ op.cit., 36–45.

unreality appear in the play in a paradoxical simultaneity. The fantastic unreality of the play is linked to a reality which limits the 'healthy schizophrenia'³⁷⁸ of the playing subject, that surrenders itself to its role and thereby wins a new potential through the reduction of its pre-given self. Fink's interpretation of play as realisation of childlikeness as a playing before God comes to mind. The religious or even magical dimensions of the play functions as, which transcends life and death and in the end even the game itself.³⁷⁹

The creating and receiving performance of the celebrating subject becomes the starting point for a reflection on the immanent and transcendent features of sense in liturgy. Liturgy must not be reduced neither to a subjectively successful act nor a naïve objectivism. The re-evaluation of the concept of playing, found in Guardini as well as Gadamer, forms a strong basis for a hermeneutic that takes seriously the givenness of liturgy without reducing it to a traditional prescription.³⁸⁰ The transformation of 'play' into 'established play' (*begründetes Spiel*) is seen as the original sin of occidental thinking for Derrida.³⁸¹ An ontological determination of the liturgical act would fail, along with a simple aesthetic reduction of liturgy to an art form.

The idea of liturgy as a play is the point of origin for a hermeneutic re-lecture of liturgy focuses on the transformative sense of worship without trying to reduce it to a manipulative 'how'. In this process aspects of understanding of the self, the other, and the world overlap. The key point is congruence of hermeneutic and metaphysical dimensions, which guarantee at the same time the seriousness and the unselfconsciousness of the play.³⁸² This anticipation shapes discourse with the human and social sciences. Often, the critical transformative consciousness discussed in social sciences, lying beyond a purely positive analysis is opposed to a hermeneutic perspective. However, Ricoeur's studies have shown that the **link between hermeneutics and critique** is far more complex. If 'prejudice' in Gadamer and Heidegger is seen as a "fundamental upheaval which subordinates the theory of knowledge to ontology,"³⁸³ Ricoeur's conclusion that "it is on the return route that hermeneutics is likely to encounter critique"³⁸⁴ confronts a liturgical hermeneutic with anthropological and theological conditions for comprehension. His attempt to re-

³⁷⁸ Lupini, "Polarità e contributo ludico-estetico nell'ermeneutica liturgica di Romano Guardini," 348.

³⁷⁹ op.cit., 347–50 and Gerhards and Odenthal, "Auf dem Weg zu einer Liturgiewissenschaft im Dialog".

³⁸⁰ Gunda Brüske, "Liturgie - Gesamtkunstwerk unter eschatologischem Vorbehalt: Versuche zur Rezeption eines ambivalenten Begriffs," in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*.

³⁸¹ Peter Zeillinger, "How to avoid theology: Jacques Derrida an den Grenzen des abendländischen Denkens," in *Essays zu Jacques Derrida und Gianni Vattimo, Religion*, ed. Ludwig Nagl (Frankfurt am Main: New York; P. Lang, 2001), 83.

³⁸² Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik".

³⁸³ Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutic and the critique of ideology," in Ricoeur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, 69.

³⁸⁴ op.cit., 70.

discover the critical element of the hermeneutical task, its starting point in the restoring link between hermeneutics and exegesis which oscillates between a sense of belonging and alienation.

This approach emphasises the potential of critique as meta-hermeneutic: the category of interests is taken as fundamental, which are neither observable nor theoretical entities but rather existential. The pact with the social sciences fosters interest in a critical emancipation that has no content other than unrestricted communication.³⁸⁵ For a liturgical hermeneutic this would imply the application of a radical critique not only to tradition, but as much of the uncritical use of human or social sciences to 'justify' liturgical truth.

The liturgical ritual is a promise of a transcendent and the anticipation of a hope it does not have at its disposal; through its **paradoxical structure** between a transcendent and proleptic dynamic, it points towards the promise of a meaningful life.³⁸⁶ Thereby hermeneutics reminds ideology that communication can be projected only because of a reinterpretation of cultural heritage, whereby the idea of a preceding consensus becomes a regulative idea rather than a given reality.³⁸⁷ Negative hermeneutics goes even further in emphasising the possibility of a fundamental misunderstanding and failing beyond a situational misunderstanding. Based on an experience of lack and resistance, a hermeneutic of liturgy "can proclaim [a leap of faith] as a possibility but cannot force it into being."³⁸⁸ The **leap of faith** remains a final task within the performance, with a different focus from Nichols' approach, and remains unattainable for the fundamental desire. In this way, a liturgical hermeneutic could face the critique of being based on the unity of *cognitio hominis et Dei*, which allows negative theological thinking only as a corrective, not as an alternative way of speaking about God.³⁸⁹ For a negative hermeneutic, this assumption will not simply be the source of meaning in liturgy, but rather the starting point for the questioning of meaning and sense in the liturgical act.

The task of liturgical studies would be to consider "the liturgical past as tradition/salvation history and the liturgical future as fiction/eschatological utopia is [sic!] mediated through the liturgical present in *anamnesis/epiclesis*"³⁹⁰ and explore the

³⁸⁵ op.cit., 97.

³⁸⁶ Frank Meier-Hamidi, "Vom Ritual zum Sakrament: Ansätze zu einer theologischen Interpretation neuer Ritualität," in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 278.

³⁸⁷ Paul Ricœur, "Hermeneutic and the critique of ideology," in Ricœur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, 90–95.

³⁸⁸ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 27.

³⁸⁹ Andreas Hunziker, "Der Andere als Ende dere Hermeneutik?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 144.

³⁹⁰ David A. Stosur, "Liturgy and (Post)Modernity: A Narrative Response to Guardini's Challenge," *Worship* 77, no. 1 (2003): 40.

theological as well as the hermeneutic potential of liturgy in the interaction of receptive (desire) and creative (fictional/transformative) features. This dynamic enables negative hermeneutics to enter a discourse with traditions of negativism and critique without falling into nihilism, and thus it can join a postmodern dialogue between philosophy, (negative) theology and mysticism.³⁹¹ In particular, the 'beyond' of the verbal and non-verbal shown by **negative theology** reveals that it is the wordlessness in language, the silence in language, which is the source and potential of any speech.³⁹² It is the dynamic of a turn which correlates language and sense. This turn corresponds, on the level of logic, the inconsistency, the ›*coincidentia oppositorum*‹ as an 'ultimate' beyond thinking, being and saying.³⁹³ Silence as limit and basis of language will be very important for a negative hermeneutic study.³⁹⁴ In his essay "Negative Theology and Theological Hermeneutics: The Particularity of Naming God," the Belgian theologian Lieven Boeve asks how a radical theological hermeneutic can be placed within a culturally motivated drive towards an 'apophatic theology,' which seems better suited for a pluralistic context. Against indifference and non-speaking, he suggests a 'hyperbolic' hermeneutic of religious language in which "[e]very form of prayer and praise is reduced to a radically pragmatic and performative speaking of the God who is beyond being and discourse."³⁹⁵ Commenting on Caputo's radical hermeneutic of religion (as religion without religion), he emphasises that religious being takes place beyond the particular discourse; thus "[p]ure religion makes praying *etsi Deus daretur*."³⁹⁶ Boeve concludes that, in the irreducible particularity of religious discourse, "[a]pophatic theology does not abandon cataphatic theology but qualifies it."³⁹⁷ He stresses that the apophatic way is not new for Christian theology, but rather funded in it from the very beginning and always carried by the doctrine of the incarnation. This view is of great interest for a negative hermeneutic which can take the assumption of an '**etsi daretur**' as a starting point and reflect on the interpretive dynamic between object and subject, or

³⁹¹ Thomas Rentsch, "Negativität und dialektische Sinnkonstitution," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 62–66, Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Hermeneutische Theologie -heute?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 19 and Bernhard Waldenfels, "Spielräume des Möglichen und Überschüsse des Unmöglichen," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*

³⁹² Emil Angehrn, "Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 170.

³⁹³ op.cit., 171: „Diesem Umschlagen korrespondiert im Logischen die Widersprüchlichkeit, die ›*coincidentia oppositorum*‹, als Merkmal des Höchsten jenseits des Denkens, Seins und Sagens.“

³⁹⁴ The question rises whether especially at the interface of the two topics (language and sense), the dynamic of a hermeneutic of the self could be drawn in a similar way. Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 172–77 and also Stoellger's thought that passivity is the phenomenologic aequivalent of the otherness of a subject (Philipp Stoellger, "Selbstwerdung: Ricoeurs Beitrag zur passiven Genesis des Selbst," in Dalferth; Stoellger, *Krisen der Subjektivität*).

³⁹⁵ Boeve, "Negative Theology and Theological Hermeneutics," 197.

³⁹⁶ op.cit., 198, original without italics.

³⁹⁷ op.cit., 205.

subject and object as shaped by radical desire, while shifting the perspective towards the particularity of its gaps.

This section has outlined the inherent character of liturgy as object of hermeneutic studies. Its inherent dynamic between received tradition and dynamic-creative process were analysed in their significance to liturgical studies. The following section will focus on how these dynamics play out within the hermeneutic categories of sense, subject, and liturgy in their negative constellation.

B. Conceptual Unfolding

The rather abstract methodological consideration of the previous section will be unpacked in this section. Without over-schematizing the complex methodological field, themes of traditional liturgical studies will serve as focus points for Angehrn's hermeneutic. This approach will help develop a language, making it possible to compare disciplines.

Based on Grillo's concepts of ritual givenness, the liturgical act comes into view in its character of **mediation and immediacy**. This perspective has consequences for the relation between religion and theology, between faith and its ritual expressions. A liturgical hermeneutic must not confuse theological and anthropological categories or claim an interdependence. It rather needs to analyse familiarity as well as alienation and 'homelessness' in liturgy. This hermeneutical work is not extrinsic for theology, but takes seriously the second anthropological turn and the challenges of postmodern anthropology.³⁹⁸ This section attempts to grasp the nature of liturgy and ask how its 'resistance' can correct prejudice and transform structure.

1. Language

The first and most obvious key area of hermeneutic is language. If spoken language is defined broadly, it becomes crucial for the study of liturgy. How is liturgical language, as 'hymnic' language, able to transgress structure? Can the liturgical rite, through the expression of lament and invocation, open a space for incompleteness and lack?³⁹⁹ How can liturgy become dialogue partner for a 'temporal' hermeneutics that integrates progress and thinking into its methodology?

According to Chauvet, words can be effective, i.e. an in-instance of a subject in relationship to other subjects. But most of the time this 'word' takes place in the non-said., and especially in the in-between of what is expected and its repetition, intonation,

³⁹⁸ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale".

³⁹⁹ Hendrik J. Adriannse, "Religion als das Andere der Philosophie," in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 315.

omission, mistake, and surprise. This difference allows what Chauvet calls the 'symbolic speech of love', the graceful and gratuitous gift of the act of recognition and self-reception.⁴⁰⁰ **Hymnic language** is not a 'scripted' yearning, but represents potential hope after losing the superabundance of the language of love.⁴⁰¹ Joy and sorrow in liturgy are starting points for a mutuality of *orandi* and *agendi*, as God's plan to transform the universe.⁴⁰² Negative hermeneutics will clarify liturgy (*lex orandi*) as 'drama' between the aesthetics of martyria, which in this case manifests as the radical 'no' of the individual (*lex credendi*), and the logic of diakonia, i.e. the collectively justified 'ethics' and 'metaphysics' of the law (*lex agendi*).⁴⁰³

Liturgical texts and the act of worship as possible objects of liturgical study are re-articulated here. Central questions are: how can interest in texts be justified beyond the purely historical? How is the category of 'text' applicable to the study of liturgy as performance? How are individual celebration and traditional 'text' related? This section will examine the function of language for the study of liturgy, while the importance of more specific language forms will be approached later. How can we understand, criticise, and create liturgical language and action? What role does silence play in worship?

Hermeneutics will articulate a different view on the textual character of liturgy.⁴⁰⁴ According to Angehrn, the reading of **eminent texts** is the basis for any hermeneutic. Based on Foucault's exposition on 'commentary,' where he describes the necessary superabundance of signified versus significant, and a non-articulated rest, Angehrn conceives liturgical studies as an analysis of a commentary of a (preceding) action, with the necessity to reflect on the superabundance of content, form and subject of the text and its interpretation.⁴⁰⁵ These texts are, on the one hand, far enough removed from the reader that they need to be made accessible, yet their normative character obliges one to read them and thereby becomes a driving force for their repetition, re-enactment and translation.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁰ Louis-Marie Chauvet, "Une relecture de "Symbole et Sacrament"," *La Maison-Dieu* 252, no. 4 (2007): 124–27.

⁴⁰¹ Hendrik J. Adriannse, "Religion als das Andere der Philosophie," in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 313–16.

⁴⁰² Nathan Mitchell, "Liturgy and Ecclesiology," in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, 119–22.

⁴⁰³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love alone is credible*, with the assistance of D. C. Schindler, Communio (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 22 and Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 11–18.

⁴⁰⁴ Juliette J. Day, *Reading the liturgy: An exploration of texts in Christian worship* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁴⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), XVI.

⁴⁰⁶ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 165–73.

Reading texts forces engagement with truth claims and the 'false sense' that inhibits a new, transformative understanding.⁴⁰⁷ This view takes seriously the importance of both standardized repetition and unpredictable transformation. Angehrn's responsive character of language can become an effective way to analyse liturgy. While conventional liturgical studies focus either on passive ritual 'reception' or active human expression, the discourse with hermeneutics opens a helps avoid a one-sided focus on the subject.

The fundamental critique of liturgical language remains ambivalent as it oscillates between a 'talking about', 'talking with' and 'moving beyond expression.' Key questions reflect on the capacity of language. According to Gadamer, the **gap between saying and meaning** remains troublesome for every speaking. Hermeneutics must develop a sensitivity for the inconclusive, desirous, and transcendent elements of language and culture.⁴⁰⁸ As ritual, liturgy refers to pre-verbal bodily and sensual expressions and to a predicative, self-transcending language. The truth represented and performed in liturgy is processual and articulates a breaking-up of a presupposed whole.⁴⁰⁹ The focus on language frees liturgy from its immediate connection to a concrete situatedness, and yet prevents it from losing its immediacy.

The Roman Catholic theologian Gerard Lukken argues that symbolic language remains void and idiosyncratic without the abundance of bodily existence. An extreme scenario would be an idiomatic liturgical expression that has lost its link to everyday language and is thus free to function ritually. As an example, Lukken mentions the Tridentine liturgy could be reinstated, since the (Latin) word had become a non-word for most of participants.⁴¹⁰ Hence, after the consideration of aspects too complex and 'overdetermined' for verbal language, the preverbal, bodily anchor of language comes into view. A hermeneutic which emphasises the **gradual development of the word** and its connections to other human expressions will be able to associate all aspects and develop their mutual interconnectedness.⁴¹¹ Lukken links the two to an 'ionic' language rooted in the non-verbal. For liturgical studies, the question is how much of liturgy lies on the verbal and nonverbal. He emphasises a symbolism of several, simultaneous nonverbal layers of sense, in contrast to a descriptive, discursive symbolism.⁴¹² Through the rite human beings refuse radical lack and frailty, and the materiality of the symbolic act orders their actions in a non-idiosyncratic way. The religious rite represents the

⁴⁰⁷ Angehrn, "Der Text als Norm der Interpretation?," 175 and Paul Ricœur, "What is a text? Exolantion and Understanding," in Ricœur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*.

⁴⁰⁸ Angehrn, "Die Sprachlichkeit der Existenz," 54.

⁴⁰⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 178–80.

⁴¹⁰ Lukken, "Liturgie und Sinnlichkeit" in *Per visibilia ad invisibilia*, 127–34.

⁴¹¹ op.cit., 127.

⁴¹² op.cit., 135–38.

conditional as well as the unconditional in a way that is non-repetitive but worth repeating. At the same time, liturgy is confronted with absence based on the inadequacy of language: An “[e]xcess, fusion and finally absence of language”⁴¹³ produced by the body or writing finally moves towards voice and gestural language.

2. Subject

The insight that a subject is constituted only in her self-expression is refined by a negative hermeneutic focus on otherness and mediation.⁴¹⁴ The general question of objectivity versus subjectivity in liturgy brings the analysis back to fundamental considerations about the liturgical actor. How can liturgical studies refer to a subject which is object, participant, and author of liturgy at the same time?⁴¹⁵ The anthropological critique of the autonomous subject and the theological critique of an immediacy of faith open a space for an understanding of the *homo liturgicus* as gift, in the sense of a finding and discovering itself in worship.⁴¹⁶ It describes the subject as creating liturgy, but at the same time argues that liturgy is an object and cause for the subject who created it.⁴¹⁷ Similar to Ricoeur's concept of symbols as objects and operators, liturgy as an '*urgie*' can be understood as influence on the celebrating and interpreting subject.⁴¹⁸ “What liturgy says about itself” must not be separated from the understanding ‘of’ liturgy.⁴¹⁹ It is the task of a liturgical hermeneutic to analyse and describe this paradox.

Reflecting on postmodern philosophical anthropology, a hermeneutic of the subject notes the non-rational, contingent, and bodily character of the liturgical act. Radical **bodiliness** is the intersubjective dimension of the 'game' of the divine.⁴²⁰ Intersubjective openness and humility, both doxologically necessary, create the basis for the experience of being lifted up by grace.⁴²¹

Here Angehrn's concept of sense linked to, but not subsumed in, bodiliness can help us analyse the concrete celebration. Symbolisation allows worshippers to negotiate

⁴¹³ Michel d. Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing, a Christian Transit,” in *The Certeau reader*, ed. Michel d. Certeau and Graham Ward, Blackwell readers (Oxford, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 223.

⁴¹⁴ Emil Angehrn, “Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst,” in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 48–50.

⁴¹⁵ op.cit., 66.

⁴¹⁶ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Anthropology: The Meaning of the Question and the Method for Answering it,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:193.

⁴¹⁷ op.cit., II:223.

⁴¹⁸ Chauvet, “Die Liturgie in ihrem symbolischen Raum,” 201.

⁴¹⁹ Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” 294.

⁴²⁰ Siobhán Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology after Habermas* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2004). Garrigan's study applies Habermas's theory of communicative action to liturgy and to the sacraments. It bears a resemblance to this study but focusses solely on the linguistic aspect of the liturgical act.

⁴²¹ Grillo and Mazzocchi, “I corpo nel pensiero teologico contemporaneo,” 18–22.

subjective (ambivalent) life experience and prescribed religious tradition. Oscillation between manifestation and subjectivity becomes the process of symbolic understanding.⁴²² This perspective is based on a hermeneutic detour via specific cultural and sociological expression. Through the divine assumption of human nature, not only anabatic but katabatic aspects are sanctified.⁴²³ For a negative hermeneutic study of the liturgical subject, the strangeness and otherness of God are central. This is felt as liturgical rite oscillates between the same and the new, as in a game.⁴²⁴ Liturgy does not lead to uniformity, but opens **uncontrolled niches and an unpredictable potential**. The academic question is whether establishment or change is the appropriate focus for liturgical studies.⁴²⁵ Subjects becoming themselves through communication that exceeds speech links their activity back to the topic of sense.

3. *Sense*

As a third key topic, a liturgical hermeneutic will have to engage with the concept of sense and its application in a liturgical context. How does the concept of sense and meaning which is point of origin for any hermeneutic analysis relate to the basic concern of liturgical science? What is the basis from which we ask for meaning in liturgy? Does this question already impose a strange category to a theological subject or in contrary should liturgical studies limit itself to purely positive case studies?

A hermeneutic liturgical analysis that aims to describe worship within a certain historic and social setting will have to engage with sense at least on a negative level, since any act of worship is by human beings **desiring to communicate** themselves. Thus, it implies at least a desire to be understood. Desire for (self-)expression, according to Angehrn, cannot be reduced to a pure formalism. Human expression always oscillates between creation and transformation of an object and the communication of a subject.⁴²⁶ This desire can be corrupted externally and internally. Superficial sense might therefore be a useful category for a hermeneutic of understanding, explaining, and criticising activities of a subject. Ritually, **tradition and remembrance** are central aspects. According to Angehrn, remembrance is an

⁴²² Emil Angehrn, "Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst," in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 53.

⁴²³ Crispino Valenziano, "Liturgy and Anthropology: The Meaning of the Question and the Method for Answering it," in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:194s..

⁴²⁴ Andreas Odenthal, "Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ein Gespräch von Theologie und Psychoanalyse im Hinblick auf einen symboltheoretischen Ansatz der Liturgiewissenschaft," in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 188–92.

⁴²⁵ op.cit., 170–76.

⁴²⁶ Emil Angehrn, "Kultur zwischen Bewahrung und Veränderung: Eine hermeneutische Perspektive," in *Formen kulturellen Wandels*, 1., ed. (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 94.

interpretation rather than an objective attempt at history. Just as consciousness relates present to past and future, the liturgical subject involves herself in a tradition.⁴²⁷

Memory is therefore always a re-production with its own logic. Subjective reflexivity is replaced by a dialectic of self to other.⁴²⁸ What implications does this have for understanding in a liturgical context? What does tradition mean for understanding a concrete liturgical act? While remembrance plays a crucial role in Hegel's dialectic, the final reconciliation of the individual happens through self-forgetfulness. How does the liturgy (of Holy Saturday) root remembrance in a collective yet individual narrative?⁴²⁹ Remembrance and replay come into effect especially in the **divergence** and openness of repetition, i.e. as a regulation-free moment of reconstruction of sense.⁴³⁰ Liturgical expression is a standardized 'game,' not a deficient deviation. Its expression is not the 'translation' of static tradition, but a movement of searching and finding.⁴³¹ When it comes to liturgical texts, negative hermeneutics is interested in their 'deviations', ambiguities, and uncertainties, evinced in worship. Nevertheless, silence invokes a pause that questions language and acts, and must be considered.

Every liturgical act can therefore be an exploitation of gaps within tradition and at the same time an application of a specific content. The interdependence of sense and non-sense can be analysed on a formal level, as the play of power (mixed discourse (cf. Ricoeur)) as well as theodicy and 'negative' content, i.e. mortality, evil, etc.⁴³² But deviation leads to reception and creation of sense. In the context of applying, creating, and developing sense, Angehrn emphasises the importance of **reading as a continuation of writing, and writing as an interpreting reading**, i.e. the fruitfulness of tradition and renewal. Understanding cannot be one-sided but is the genesis of sense. Understanding, as reflective being-part of a world, is itself remembrance. How, then, is celebrating not only a process of interpreting, but also creating? And how much does writing represent what is already given in the concrete celebration? This approach links hermeneutics back to liturgy as fundamental *lex orandi*, and its relation to a *lex credendi* of faith and liturgical praxis. Their interdependence clarifies the ritualized relation between human and divine. Religious ritual is meant as an act of representation beyond its practical (social, economic etc.) function.⁴³³

⁴²⁷ Emil Angehrn, "Erinnerung und Interpretation," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 167.

⁴²⁸ op.cit., 165–76.

⁴²⁹ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 61.

⁴³⁰ Thomas Rentsch, "Negativität und dialektische Sinnkonstitution," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 66–73.

⁴³¹ Angehrn, "Der hermeneutische Umweg," 198.

⁴³² Emil Angehrn, "Vom Sinn des Sinnlosen: Die Herausforderung der Psychoanalyse für die Philosophie," in Mauser, Pfeiffer ed., *Freuds Aktualität*, 2006, 89–91.

⁴³³ Angehrn, "Kultur zwischen Bewahrung und Veränderung," 94.

The central task of liturgical hermeneutics is to grasp this process of pointing beyond and to adequately describe immanent ritual functions and their fundamental reference character. But what if Angehrn's notion, culture as both preservation and transformation, could be applied to liturgy as immanent and grounded in transcendence?⁴³⁴

A suitable starting point seems Angehrn's reference of the emergence of sense in ontology and anthropology. Desire for sense and its 'givenness' are the basis for receiving, creating and expressing.⁴³⁵ According to Grillo, the religious experience is the essential 'given' within the liturgical action. This description goes beyond both tradition and immediacy as instances of transcendence.⁴³⁶ It rather reclaims the transcendental experience of faith. This understanding turns the relation between experience and act upside down: the ritual becomes the basis for faith without evading lack and abandonment and their rebuttal in the desire for sense. The second anthropological turn demands not only a liturgy for the human being but a human being for liturgy.⁴³⁷ A starting point for a negative hermeneutic of liturgy is the openness to an **unsecured sense**. Sense is desired and represented in the liturgical act, but it remains unattainable and withdrawn, and thus unsecure. The desire for sense becomes central for analysis, yet remains couched in failure and inadequacy. Psychological explication only points more strongly towards the desire for sense, taking it as a given.

Desire, expressed in utterances such as 'me', 'us', and God, becomes the basis for prayer as soulful search. Liturgy is constituted by the fundamental experience of loss of a body (empty tomb), the origin for all Christian faith and prayer,⁴³⁸ and the radical assumption of superlative divine grace. The liturgical play takes place between these two extremes without a cathartic shortcut.⁴³⁹ Desire and lack are foundational in negative hermeneutics. For the study of liturgy, this is very productive and profound; Irish philosopher Richard Kearney evokes as 'eschatological desire', i.e. a desire not to 'master' God, but to enter an active-passive game. This game is played by desiring the 'kingdom' beyond history "while welcoming the coming of what comes *in each instant*."⁴⁴⁰ Unsecured sense is both patient hope and persistent longing for a utopic, unrealizable 'promised' future.

⁴³⁴ op.cit., 102.

⁴³⁵ For a more semiotic approach to the transmission and apprehension of meaning in liturgy Hughes, *Worship as meaning*.

⁴³⁶ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 181s..

⁴³⁷ op.cit., 223.

⁴³⁸ Andreas Odenthal, "Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ein Gespräch von Theologie und Psychoanalyse im Hinblick auf einen symboltheoretischen Ansatz der Liturgiewissenschaft," in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 182.

⁴³⁹ Pound, "The Assumption of Desire".

⁴⁴⁰ Kearney, *The God who may be*, 63.

Hermeneutics reveals a liturgical theology of unsecure sense. The following section analyses the contribution of liturgical studies to hermeneutical method and questions how the desire for sense, as a resistance against non-sense, culminates in the protest of loss.

C. Liturgical Hyperbole?

Having outlined some central concepts, the next section will show how liturgy is not only a possible object for hermeneutics, but in a certain sense brings together key themes. The concept of hyperbole comes from the context of rhetoric. It is a figure of speech in which exaggeration represents a concept. In this study, it is used to represent the twofold relatedness of liturgy and negative hermeneutics. Liturgy is highly compatible with negative hermeneutics, and yet goes beyond its methodologies.

First, it is necessary to reflect again on the significance of a negative hermeneutic of liturgy for theology: does a 'Christian' interpretation of liturgy have to insist on truth beyond the experience of sense and meaning? On what basis can we analyse liturgy as a communal expression of faith? Concepts based in the self-revealing the triune God might argue that texts are the self-communication of God.⁴⁴¹ Liturgical texts raise the question: how helpful is understanding humans as standing before God?

Against Lieven Boeve's reading of a deconstructive interpretation of religion as 'committed agnosticism,' and its *etsi Deus daretur* leaving behind any form of particularity, a (negative) hermeneutic of liturgy argues that concrete performance is commitment to a **desire for a lost transcendent**. This understanding of liturgy would outstrip (cultural) apophatic tradition and take desire, and its protest language, as a point of reference.⁴⁴² This view does not leave behind doxology but takes seriously its links to a (critical) anthropology.⁴⁴³ Such an anthropology would begin with human invisibility in the face of God's hypervisibility; this sensibility has become, according to Marion, a crucial stumbling block for phenomenology. How impactful can a hermeneutic that takes the **dynamic of understanding and not-understanding** as its centre, be? How successfully can the representative character of liturgical play incorporate understanding and non-understanding?⁴⁴⁴ How appropriate is the category of understanding for the

⁴⁴¹ Jürgen Werbick, "Sich von Ihm zu denken geben lassen: Christlich-theologische Hermeneutik post et secundum Paul Ricoeur," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 90.

⁴⁴² Boeve, "Negative Theology and Theological Hermeneutics," 197–202.

⁴⁴³ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 184.

⁴⁴⁴ Andreas Hunziker, "Der Andere als Ende dere Hermeneutik?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 141.

study of faith or liturgy? The necessary loss of understanding turns out to be a rich source of 'liturgical identity'.

Key is liturgy as anticipated 'otherness': in a certain sense the otherness of the other precedes myself as another. My own otherness is therefore the basis of my identity.⁴⁴⁵ Crucially, (negative) hermeneutics does not integrate this 'otherness' but protects reciprocity from ontology and ecstasy.⁴⁴⁶ Mystery becomes key for liturgical analysis.

A hermeneutic of Christian faith and its ritual expression assumes understanding and non-understanding to be central.⁴⁴⁷ The category of non-understanding implies not only a cosmological 'otherness,' but also a hamartiological and socio-political self-alienation. This hermeneutic differentiates and analyses different variants of non-sense.⁴⁴⁸ A fundamental engagement with the non-understandable, in its different forms, is one of the key challenges for postmodern thinking. Grillo connects the sciences to philosophy, liturgy, and theology. Building upon previous considerations, especially Ricoeur's argument that hermeneutics needs to be linked to textual exegesis, Grillo's considerations of the 'political' character of liturgy could also be congruously continued as a **meta-hermeneutic**. How can liturgical action (*agere liturgicum*) become a basis for hermeneutical thinking (*scire philosophicum*)?⁴⁴⁹ As we have seen (II. 2.C), Grillo stresses the 'phenomenological' character of liturgy and its fusion of thinking and action. Is there a way to adapt his ideas to the language of liturgical hermeneutics? If we assume, with Ricoeur, that the social sciences demand hermeneutics take seriously otherness, and we claim they suggest a presupposed 'meta-hermeneutic', then that understanding would link back to Grillo's description of the 'unreachable'. The poles of desire and resistance are key for a meta-hermeneutic of liturgy. Grillo radically concludes it is necessary to 'think philosophically' in liturgy, so as to do justice to the interplay between thinking and performance ("oportet philosophari in liturgia"⁴⁵⁰). A negative hermeneutic would turn the argument upside-down and ask whether it is also necessary to hope and despair in theology. Faith through existential self-restriction and self-communication may be unavoidable (*oportet [de-]sperari in theologia*).

⁴⁴⁵ Andreas Hunziker, "Der Andere als Ende der Hermeneutik?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 132.

⁴⁴⁶ op.cit., 136 and Thomas Freyer, "Alterität und Transzendenz: Theologische Anmerkungen zur Hermeneutik," *Berliner theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1996): 35.

⁴⁴⁷ Andreas Hunziker, "Der Andere als Ende der Hermeneutik?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 141s., also Marion's understanding of the human privilege to become unfathomable in faith (following Augustin).

⁴⁴⁸ op.cit., 142–44.

⁴⁴⁹ Grillo, "Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica," 85–87.

⁴⁵⁰ op.cit., 120, original without italics.

At this point, a look at Johannes Hoff's analysis of a foundation of liturgy and spirituality beyond language will be helpful. Hoff compares the pre-discursive ecclesiological practices that structure negative theology with the institutionalisation of Lacanian therapy that allows authority and 'cult' to take the place of scientific truth. He asks whether negative theology could end with a 'no' without losing its standing as theology.⁴⁵¹ Hoff argues, therefore, that in the double bind of negative theology, possibility and impossibility coincide and offer the paradox of a univocal, mystical discourse. Hoff sees the role of liturgy as a remembrance of the name of God so as not to betray the promise to remember a preceding 'yes.'⁴⁵² The **'yes' to one's own contingent existence** becomes necessary for hearing of God's call.

For Hoff the Church in her bodily contingency becomes a necessary placeholder for the possibility of this 'yes.' Only tradition and authority project a discourse that keeps the outcome open. His understanding of the unavailability of science and philosophy links back to an authority that generates otherness as well as structure.⁴⁵³ A negative hermeneutic approach to liturgy agrees with his emphasis on contingency and the reversal of a traditional split between active and passive functions. Also, this approach shifts the focus away from a one-sided 'receiving' of tradition towards a necessary opening and holding of an 'emancipated' space, a space for the irrational marked by a 'name' without a present referent.⁴⁵⁴ If we agree with the French philosopher Francis Jacques, that thought is not the basis for rite but rite is itself the original meaning, then the event is not a simple performance but a profound expression of self. The rite becomes a symbolisation of life's protest against frailty and irrefutable mortality.⁴⁵⁵ The strength of the rite lies, therefore, in its relation to both institutional and social structures and dangerously abysmal sinfulness.

The power of shared liturgy protects the individual participant from falling into an idiosyncratic cult. Liturgy offers an immediate mediation with an authoritative structure counterbalanced only by a salvific eschatology.⁴⁵⁶ This dynamic plays out on the levels of ecclesial hierarchy as well as on the level of the reception of authoritative, dogmatic, or liturgical forms and texts. A negative hermeneutic of liturgy that wants to suggest a potential critique could question the unconditional authority of the text by reflecting on the fundamental **structure of the *lex***. In a sense, the tradition that a community is stepping into and out of in worship becomes the point of origin for the

⁴⁵¹ Johannes Hoff, *Spiritualität und Sprachverlust: Theologie nach Foucault und Derrida* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999), 278–84.

⁴⁵² Hoff, *Spiritualität und Sprachverlust*, 292s..

⁴⁵³ op.cit., 298–320.

⁴⁵⁴ Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 220s. and Paul Ricœur, "Hermeneutic and the critique of ideology," in Ricœur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, 97–99.

⁴⁵⁵ Jacques, "Von den Sprachspielen zu den "Textspielen", 182–90.

⁴⁵⁶ op.cit., 190 and Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*, 310–20.

self-expression of participants. It takes the authority of the text as an irreducible starting point but perceives the potential loss of meaning in performance.⁴⁵⁷

Based on this analysis of liturgical study, the evasive and **ambiguous relation of the participants** to the liturgical ritual can become a catalyst for a range of differentiations and ambivalences. Liturgy opens a space for individuality beyond the attempt of a logocentric self-justification.⁴⁵⁸ Liturgical speech leaves space for the self-identification of the participant with the liturgical 'role' as well as for obedience to an authoritative system; it opens the abyss of an unfathomable discourse, where the speaking subject becomes a symbolically acting subject.⁴⁵⁹

The repertoire of gestures and functions reduces individuality to a minimum, yet is never diminished to simple repetition. The ritual involves a minimum of renewal within the continuity of culture. This goes beyond the authoritative and monitored dimensions of rituals to an implied **affirmation or critique of the existing conditions**. Elements of a temporal retardation, ironic take, or even a boycott of traditional rituals contain a social brisance that questions the action in every performance.⁴⁶⁰ The non-justifiable nature and superabundance of the liturgical play oscillates between gracefulness and vainness (*gratui*), and in the end cannot justify its attitude of resistance or acceptance. The 'political' simplification of everyday life is unacceptable, as liturgy keeps the awareness of playfulness and unpredictability open.⁴⁶¹

The task of a negative hermeneutical liturgy will not simply be to consider an ideal 'pure' performance or to analyse the details of a concrete celebration, but to point out **where both necessarily differ**.⁴⁶² This is what generates liturgical brisance. Stringer's argument is that every participant constructs his or her own meaning, and no liturgist or anthropology can know the meaning of a rite for an individual. Hence, "‘meaning’ is probably not an issue that the liturgist should be concerned with."⁴⁶³ Such a concern would be more easily dispelled if anthropology were to jettison its positive subject, and function as a hermeneutic discipline, i.e. as an open question about the unfathomable nature of the human. A crucial feature of a negative hermeneutic is to engage with the chaotic and unpredictable elements of experience; the subject is part of the hermeneutic process itself. While this is already a key point in conventional hermeneutics, a negative hermeneutic will open its perspective even more towards a free association and a mutual (unpredictable) influence between the analysing subject

⁴⁵⁷ For the "legacy" of Holy Saturday and its implications for the early Church, Ian G. Wallis, *Holy Saturday faith: Rediscovering the legacy of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2000), 62–129.

⁴⁵⁸ Krause, "Zur Begründung von Ritualität angesichts des Absurden," 5.

⁴⁵⁹ Isabelle Renaud-Chamska, "Liturgie als Zitat," *Concilium* 31, no. 3 (1995): 240.

⁴⁶⁰ Buckland, "Ritual, Körper und "kulturelles Gedächtnis"".

⁴⁶¹ Kearney, *The God who may be*, 109

⁴⁶² For a liturgical study concerned with liturgical reality rather than ideals Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual*.

⁴⁶³ Stringer, "Text, Context, Performance," 378.

and interpreted object. For liturgical studies, this insight has been articulated as a necessary (denominational) situatedness of the liturgist and her or his study.

For liturgical case studies, the 'church perspective' of liturgical studies is a key feature for its theological 'truth'. A negative hermeneutic will go even further and explore the mutuality between a receiving-listening to tradition and the active articulating of experience within the liturgical game. This has consequences for the perspective of a study, from the selection of liturgical texts to the details the study focusses on. At the same time, these must not be used as an excuse for academic inaccuracy or intellectual laziness.

What kind of structures within liturgy makes it possible to listen to these tensions, derivations and differences? How far does the irony of Christian symbols, i.e. the lack of the ultimate identification of an idol, build the basis for the **irony and playfulness** of liturgy? Are sacraments immune to irony?⁴⁶⁴ Or would this focus even more clearly on ludic play and losing oneself and also losing the tradition in its performance? Angehrn reflects on Gadamer's assumption that the process of understanding is always based on the reference on cultural resources and draws a parallel to the dynamics of religious trust and faith in religious symbols. In his analysis of trust, he establishes a theory of 'metaphysical trust' beyond the distinction between practical and theoretical trust. In a way analogous to his display of 'understanding', he argues that the experience of uncertainty and instability, together with the desire to trust and communicate, determines our relationship to cultural and social traditions.

This trust does not deny or overcome the loss of sense but speaks out against it. In a similar way to Paul Tillich, Angehrn argues that liturgy makes accessible a broken myth. And he draws the conclusion that liturgy is only 'true' through reference to a new thing.⁴⁶⁵ Tradition, as it articulates an experience of absence and loss, can thereby become pillar and driving force for the ritual expression of a fundamental desire. Before a premature hope for resurrection, the image of the empty tomb is taken seriously in its catastrophic emptiness and 'finality'.⁴⁶⁶ Can this **dynamic of challenge and reconsideration** serve as a foundation for meaningful liturgy? Gordon Lathrop asks the question: "Concerning the significance of the whole: Can the community laugh at its mistakes?"⁴⁶⁷ This, though, seems crucial for the understanding liturgy as constancy and an alternative vision against status quo.⁴⁶⁸ Here lies the potential of liturgy for negative

⁴⁶⁴ George Guiver CR, "Sign and symbol," in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 36–38.

⁴⁶⁵ What the Lutheran liturgist Gordon Lathrop argues for preaching, with its use of broken words, could be transferred to liturgy, Lathrop, *Holy things*, 27–32.

⁴⁶⁶ Tippelskirch-Eissinger, Dorothee C. von, "Glaube als negative Fähigkeit," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*.

⁴⁶⁷ Lathrop, *Holy things*, 172.

⁴⁶⁸ op.cit., 190 and 207-210 According to Lacan humour acts as a corrective against unity of the imaginary order (Pound, *Theology, psychoanalysis, trauma*, 135).

hermeneutics: the liturgical act is challenged by the need to celebrate the next liturgy, and destabilizes a hyperbolic self-reflexivity through a concrete need to celebrate again.

This emphasis on the subversive creativity of the ritual underlines that its meaning remains unavailable. Rather than trying to pin down meaning by applying it to a situation, it establishes a rhythmic play orientated towards a desired future.⁴⁶⁹ The question whether liturgy ‘works’ is thereby not answered from the perspective of a desired outcome (pastoral/aesthetic), but from its willingness to **take risks** and guide participants towards the mystery of incarnation and resurrection. This hermeneutic Marianne Moyaert describes as a risk of loss of meaning in the liturgical celebration and the possible love and superabundance of sense against non-sense.⁴⁷⁰ The paradox of liturgy reveals the “tension between what is theoretically unthinkable, but in practice is happening.”⁴⁷¹ In this process, a negative hermeneutic would emphasise the openness and undecidedness of the re-creation of sense.

So far, this study has outlined the purpose and question of liturgical studies, i.e. the theological discipline that analyses the dynamics of mediation and immediacy in the ritual expression of faith. It has shown that hermeneutics is an effective method for the understanding of liturgical texts and rituals. Then, it demonstrated the specific character of a negative hermeneutic method, and, finally, outlined how such a method could be applied in the context of liturgical studies. The second main part will use the celebration of Holy Saturday from four different traditions as a basis for the application of these questions and methods.

⁴⁶⁹ Johannes Hoff, “Das Verschwinden des Körpers: Eine Kritik an der "Wut des Verstehens" in der Liturgie,” *Herder Korrespondenz* 54, no. 3 (2000): 151s..

⁴⁷⁰ Moyaert, *Fragile identities*, 195.

⁴⁷¹ *op.cit.*, 195.

III. Liturgy of Holy Saturday: Structure

III. 1. Methodological Preliminaries

Liturgical case studies and a “commentary along the text”⁴⁷² are standard methods of liturgical studies. This study understands itself as a liturgical-theological work. The second main part will engage with case studies. These will be analysed with traditional methods of liturgical studies and specify the perspective of negative hermeneutics. Through the categories of language, subject, and sense, this study will show how negative hermeneutics opens new perspectives on the traditional objects of study. While liturgical studies focuses on liturgical texts within their historical, pastoral, and dogmatic contexts, hermeneutics allows us to **encounter texts as texts** and to be challenged by their resistance against abstraction.⁴⁷³

This perspective does not attempt to (re-)gain an ‘innocent’ reading unaware of context and danger. It would rather contrast the text with the reader's own ‘blind spots’, in the encounter with a celebrating subject. As the reader interprets the text, she is criticised and challenged in the exchange. This is the starting point for a negative hermeneutic reading. Case studies will represent the ‘resistance’ and particularity of a liturgical celebration that evades generalization and abstract understanding. This approach yields the insight that liturgy has a life of its own, as well as the necessary ‘perspectivism’ of an academic study of liturgical texts.⁴⁷⁴

Rational understanding, cultural expression, and ritual experience are analysed as elements of being-in-the-world.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, negative hermeneutics can fundamentally be described as an **anthropology in the form of a question**.⁴⁷⁶ This perspective explains why negative hermeneutics cannot be reduced to a simple method, and must articulate questions and discover unexpected layers and gaps in its objects. Gadamer’s argument that there is no method of ‘producing’ questions, but questions need to be found in dialogue with the ‘questionable’ object, guides this study.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² Messner, *Einführung in die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 33.

⁴⁷³ Paul Ricœur, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text,” in Ricœur; Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*.

⁴⁷⁴ For the necessity of a moving beyond a first “naivety” in liturgical theology, Hughes, *Worship as meaning*, 233.

⁴⁷⁵ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 338.

⁴⁷⁶ *op.cit.*, 341.

⁴⁷⁷ Emil Angehrn, “Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik,” in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 56.

The question whether negative hermeneutics is first and foremost a philosophical paradigm or an applied method is somewhat misleading. The intention of negative hermeneutics is to provide tools to talk about the **process of understanding and interpretation** on a meta-level, and to create a sensibility for the individual experience of limitation. A negative hermeneutical of liturgy stresses the ritual significance of non-understanding and scepticism as constitutive features of the individual, as opposed to the conceptual generalising work of the Enlightenment.⁴⁷⁸ The emphasis on the individual prohibits a simple ‘application’ of a rule. The negative hermeneutical analysis of phenomena within communication leads to a description of its inconsistency. Thus, as phenomena appear in the concrete, the experiences of these phenomena also bear a certain conceptual form.

This is the starting point for the interest in negative hermeneutics in the context of liturgical studies to understand how the framework of liturgical studies shapes the appearance of liturgy and at the same time how liturgy criticises liturgical studies as a discipline. A negative hermeneutic of liturgy analyses the potential and limitations of an experience, as well as a conceptual representation of a concrete liturgy. Fundamentally, this approach cannot be reduced to a simple method. Since it reflects on and integrates the position of the ‘reader,’ it stresses the possibilities of individual experience.⁴⁷⁹ This study will analyse how liturgy reflects the hermeneutical interest in non-understanding, and how the celebrating community, liturgical ‘law,’ and individual limitation clarify dynamics of non-understanding in liturgical celebration.⁴⁸⁰

The hermeneutical three-step approach of **perceiving, deconstructing, and recreating** sense needs to be taken seriously on the level of structure. Negative hermeneutics as a philosophical paradigm articulates an approach to and framework for case studies on a meta-level. However, it cannot be used to deduct concrete methodological questions. It contradicts the very nature of this study to articulate a set of specific questions before engaging with texts. It rather provides a guideline for rigorous questioning and playful engagement with texts and context (subject, sense, language) and encourages its reader to look at familiar texts from a new, creative perspective.

The ultimate interest of negative hermeneutics is in the human being ‘being in the world’ and is reflected in liturgical hermeneutical study as interest in faith and its ritual expression.⁴⁸¹ The main goal of this study is not to gain additional historical-liturgical insight that has been lacking in previous studies. It does not aim to provide a

⁴⁷⁸ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 7s..

⁴⁷⁹ op.cit., 200.

⁴⁸⁰ op.cit., 203.

⁴⁸¹ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 378.

list of specific historical or practical theological ‘findings’, but rather to explore a certain way of being with texts. It attempts to cultivate an attitude of wonder and serious engagement with the gaps and incongruencies of texts. A negative hermeneutic of liturgy is mostly interested in this process, and the reader is a crucial part. Thus, the study will not end with section III. 2.A.3 “*Conclusion*,” but provide a final part IV. “*Conclusion and Outlook*” that reflects on this process.

To remain open and compatible with the main discourse within liturgical studies, it is necessary for the following approach to situate the study of texts within a **traditional framework** (cf. III. 1. “Holy Saturday as an Object of Study”) of historical, pastoral and systematic considerations and preliminaries. The analysis of these will be relatively brief yet provide a necessary link to liturgical and wider theological studies. This step seems especially important as this work understands itself as theological, and therefore does not attempt simply to ‘rediscover’ texts traditionally claimed by (liturgical) theology through hermeneutics. Rather this study seeks to facilitate a discourse between different disciplines based on a shared text. This approach links back to a self-understanding of liturgical studies as a critical discipline⁴⁸² going beyond mere description and engaging the text on the level of its potential transformation.

As Holy Saturday links the experience of negativity and loss of sense on Good Friday with the reality of Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday through the dynamic of the descent, this chapter will create a bridge between theoretical negative hermeneutics and its application to case studies. To clarify how the ‘liturgical hyperbole’ manifests in the concrete liturgical act, this chapter will reflect on the structure of Holy Saturday and provide a framework for talking about the ‘gap’, and the necessary katabatic movement that creates space for a worshipping anabasis in the concrete and individual liturgical act.

This chapter attempts to link methodological considerations and practical applications. To do so, it seems useful to first provide a theological framework for traditional questions and their discourses before looking at textual examples. The danger of limiting the following analysis through preconceived ideas is countered by an awareness of the underlying **potential of the incompleteness and possible ‘negativity’ of liturgical texts** (cf. III. 1.B. “Negative Hermeneutic of Holy Saturday”). The dynamic of a critical openness focusing on the hidden and unsaid layers of the text is contrasted by an earnest description of its historical and narrative form, to phrase questions and perceive the text in its character. These preliminary considerations will

⁴⁸² Paul F. Bradshaw and Harmon Katharine E., “Ritual,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*.

facilitate the study of concrete texts and build a counter-pole for subsequent conclusions which can contrast and clarify a presupposed method and content.

Holy Saturday serves thereby as paradigm for the ambiguous and fragmentary character of life and community. On the level of **content**, it focuses on the ‘already’ of death, betrayal, and separation from God as well as on the ‘not yet’ of a risen hope and reconciliation. On the level of **form**, it reflects the Church’s inability to fully express the dynamic of divine activity and human passivity.⁴⁸³ The liturgy of Holy Saturday is a particularly appropriate example for the application of negative hermeneutics on different levels. First, Holy Saturday is simply a day in the liturgical year recognised and celebrated by most Christian traditions and often has a very specific liturgical character. Secondly, it is the day of the Christian year which most explicitly deals with the experience of gaps and ‘in-between’ spaces. Finally, this dissertation attempts to show how the liturgy of Holy Saturday embodies katabasis and anabasis as Christ’s descent and ascent. The liturgy of Holy Saturday becomes a key example for a negative hermeneutic reading of liturgy. The profound tendency to either keep a ‘liturgy-free’ day or ‘fill’ the time and space between Good Friday and Easter Sunday with (para-)liturgical actions can help us to analyse the different ways liturgy engages with silence and fragmentariness.

This day of Jesus' being-in-the-grave stretches the experience of emptiness in a unique way over a period of time in the course of a liturgical year. But the fundamental question as to how to inhabit the ‘in-between’ space (and time) of the liturgical break and liturgical discontent about its own self-communication, i.e. the consciousness of a fundamental lack, can be **applied to any liturgical action**. By focussing on the unsaid and the hidden aspects of the celebration, a negative hermeneutic study of Holy Saturday can develop methodological tools as well as a sensorium for liturgical texts.

If Easter becomes the paradigm of any Eucharist⁴⁸⁴ and the structure of any week in the liturgical year, the question of its preceding ‘other’ and the framework of an underlying ineffable becomes crucial for the study of liturgy. When we speak with Augé of the sacramental character of the liturgical year, what implications does this assumption have for the role of Holy Saturday as the day between death and resurrection?⁴⁸⁵ How is not only the person of Christ transformed, but also the liturgy celebrating his mysteries? As there are no early traditional sources for liturgical

⁴⁸³ The other adverb that could be used to characterise Holy Saturday, from a negative hermeneutic perspective, is “despite”. Ricoeur uses it to describe the relationship between negation as transcendence and negation as finality (Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 71).

⁴⁸⁴ Hansjörg auf der Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit, I: Herrenfeste in Woche und Jahr*, Gottesdienst der Kirche Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft T. 5 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1983), 129 and Sacrosanctum Concilium Paul VI., “Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia” (II. Vatican Council, Rome, 1963), no. 102.

⁴⁸⁵ Matias C. Augé, “A Theology of the Liturgical Year,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 322.

celebrations, 'liturgy' on Holy Saturday often refers to the liturgy of the hours as the official prayer of the Church. What is traditionally seen as the 'monastic', rather than the parochial worship, becomes the prayer of the whole Church. This shift has implications for the allocation of roles as it questions the primacy of clergy for worship and focusses on the common call to prayer.⁴⁸⁶ At the same time the 'ordinary' character of the ongoing liturgical offices keeps the day regular enough to apply insights based on the study of Holy Saturday to further disquisitions on other liturgical celebrations.

Liturgy of Holy Saturday seems an even more fitting object for a negative hermeneutic study due not only to its liturgical qualities, but also to the fact that it has often been ignored by mainstream theology. The interest in Holy Saturday, and its theological and cultural ambiguity as a **basis for postmodern approaches** to theology, has grown over the last decades. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the liturgical expression and celebratory character of the day. Even standard works evade it; Alan Lewis' "Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday"⁴⁸⁷ mentions the word liturgy only once. The predominant assumption is still that Holy Saturday is fundamentally 'a-liturgical', and many liturgical studies of Holy Week and the Triduum do not even mention it.⁴⁸⁸ One exception is Hans-Ulrich Wiese's "Karsamstagsexistenz. Auseinandersetzung mit dem Karsamstag in Liturgie und moderner Kunst"⁴⁸⁹ as it actually engages with the liturgical features of the day. However, his study remains a fundamental-theological approach that tries to import impulses and ideas from a different area (modern art) into a theological study.

III. 2. Holy Saturday as an Object of Study

This chapter will give an outline of the theological and liturgical relevance of Holy Saturday in its liturgical expressions. It will then explore where the point of origin

⁴⁸⁶ Ingrid Fischer, "Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern: Vom römischen (und monastischen) Offizium zur heutigen Liturgia Horarum," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 65 (2015): 105s., Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit, I*, 137 and Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God: Living the liturgical year* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193.

⁴⁸⁷ Alan Edmond Lewis, *Between cross and resurrection: A theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁴⁸⁸ e.g. Mary A. Piil, "Paschal mystery, Christian identity, and paschal triduum," *Liturgical Ministry* 5, no. 4 (1996).

⁴⁸⁹ Hans-Ulrich Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz: Auseinandersetzung mit dem Karsamstag in Liturgie und moderner Kunst*, 1. ed., Bild - Raum - Feier Studien zu Kirche und Kunst 1 (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2002).

for a negative hermeneutic study of Holy Saturday could be situated, and finally give some methodological remarks for the study of liturgical texts.⁴⁹⁰

A. Theological framework

What do we refer to when we speak about ‘Holy Saturday’? First, it is a temporal unit between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. **Different languages** characterise the day in very different ways.⁴⁹¹ In English, it is the only day that is called ‘holy’, whereas most Roman languages refer to ‘Good Friday’ also as ‘Holy Friday’ (Sabato santo – Venerdì santo). In German, the day is linguistically more closely linked to ‘Good Friday’ the ‘Friday of Tears’ and Holy Week as ‘Week of Tears’ (Karfreitag – Karsamstag – Karwoche). The same period is called “great” in Greek (Μεγάλη Παρασκευή – Σάββατον – Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα) and some Slavic languages (e.g. Polish: Wielki Piątek – Wielka Sobota – Wielki Tydzień), whereas others use the term ‘White Saturday’ (e.g. Czech: Bílá sobota). In the Scandinavian languages, however, the day has lost its ‘independence’ completely and is simply called ‘Easter Eve’ (Swedish: Påskafton). Some refer to the day as the ‘Silent Saturday’ (cf. Dutch: Stille Zaterdag and Modern Hebrew: יום שבת השקט). The Arabic expression السبت المقدس calls the day simply ‘holy’, while Holy Week is called the ‘Week of Pains’ (أسبوع الآلام) and Good Friday the ‘Friday of Pains’ (جمعة الآلام). All these expressions are influenced by the (liturgical) experiences of certain times and cultures and give an idea how differently the day can be perceived and integrated in the paschal event.

The intrinsic connection with Easter has certain implications for the date of Holy Saturday: as a movable **date** calculated according to a lunisolar calendar its data varies between the 12th and the 17th calendar week. Always on a Saturday, it is, in contrast to Easter and Good Friday, only in very few countries a public holiday (e.g. in the Philippines and (regionally) in Australia). The character of Holy Saturday as a Church celebration rather than a ‘public’ feast and its situatedness between two of the major feasts of the Christian year (in a liturgical as well as a ‘public’ sense) has implications for the question of ‘whom’ it concerns and who can afford to take time for liturgical celebrations or meditative private practice. As the last day of Lent (in the West),⁴⁹² as well as of the Holy Week fast, it is traditionally considered to be a strict day of fasting, linking private/familiar practice back to official (semi-)liturgical actions.⁴⁹³ The various

⁴⁹⁰ For Holy Saturday as a hermeneutic key to the New Testament, Wallis, *Holy Saturday faith*.

⁴⁹¹ For the etymology of Good Friday Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God*, 197.

⁴⁹² In the Orthodox tradition, Lent ends before Holy Week Hugh Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter: Liturgical texts with commentary*, 1. publ (London: SPCK, 1995), 12.

⁴⁹³ Matias C. Augé, “The Liturgical Year in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 180.

links to Easter and Good Friday show that the understanding **where the ‘day’ starts and where it ends** can vary depending on theological and pastoral perspectives. As the day in the biblical tradition traditionally starts with at dusk, the beginning of liturgical feasts has been celebrated from the beginning with the night prayer of the ‘previous’ day. For Holy Saturday, this raises the question whether the dusk of Good Friday, the end of the celebration of the Death of Jesus on the Cross (Friday afternoon), or the dawn or the first proper prayer of Saturday marks the beginning of the liturgical day. In the same way, the dusk and its last prayer of Saturday, or the first prayer or dawn of Sunday could potentially mark the end of Holy Saturday.

In the consideration of different liturgical traditions, we encounter a tendency to characterize Holy Saturday by the days before and after. The character of an **in-between day** implies that the day is framed by two major feasts that (as we will see in the following chapters) build a liturgical unity. The characterisation of the day as the ‘silent’ day implies ‘negativity’, a lack of a specific expression, and, as Philip Pfatteicher puts it, a “fast for the ears”.⁴⁹⁴ Holy Saturday thereby keeps the tension between a liturgically marked sense of emptiness and absolute silence and the tendency to ignore it and carry on with the day-to-day business, since the day does not provide any content ‘fill’ the emptiness.⁴⁹⁵

The concept of Holy Saturday as a liturgy-free day refers traditionally only to the Eucharistic liturgy. However, as public liturgical functions are often reduced to a minimum, the day forces us to rethink the concept of ‘liturgy’ and ask how the silence of the Church is reflected or opposed by Christian life.⁴⁹⁶ If Holy Friday and Easter Sunday are characterised more by the content of their liturgical celebrations than by their actual date, this could (and traditionally has) lead to the paradox whereby ‘Holy Saturday’ is not identically with the temporal unit of Saturday any more but much shorter (interestingly enough, there never seems to have been a tendency to ‘stretch’ the day beyond Friday early evening or Sunday morning – in the context of modern liturgical and pastoral considerations, we will have a closer look at this phenomenon later). The **‘in-between’** character of Holy Saturday can be understood as a *‘transitus’* (*passio* – passage) from the death of Jesus on Good Friday to his resurrection on Easter Sunday, and as a dynamic between liturgical katabasis and anabasis leading to an eschatological reconciliation between activity and passivity.⁴⁹⁷ As we will see in the following sections, different traditions approached the question of beginnings and ends

⁴⁹⁴ Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God*, 193.

⁴⁹⁵ op.cit., 213.

⁴⁹⁶ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 134s..

⁴⁹⁷ op.cit., 138–42.

of the day from different angles which lead to massive differences in the understanding of the independence and role of the day and its liturgy.

This feature makes it a most interesting object for negative hermeneutic studies focussing on the non-said and the ignored in between the lines. At the same time, the strong link to Easter and Good Friday raises the question whether it is at all legitimate to ‘separate’ the day from the other days of the **Triduum**, or Holy Week.⁴⁹⁸ For historical, dogmatic, and pastoral reasons, it could be argued that the analysis of Holy Saturday always needs to emphasise its connectedness and situatedness, within a wider liturgical context, more than its autonomy. However, this study will show that it is important to acknowledge and depict the ambiguous dynamic of Holy Saturday and emphasise individual features as independent moments, before putting the different elements of the Triduum ‘back together’ and looking at the overall structure. Without the clear focus towards Easter, a study of Holy Saturday might well be accused of being necrophilia and miss the dynamic of death and resurrection. A hermeneutic that situates itself closely to existential philosophy needs to establish a concept of temporality which does not reduce life to a forerunning towards death.⁴⁹⁹ A hermeneutic of Holy Saturday will thereby have to explore the dynamic of expectation and presence, and engage with a concept of (non-)sense and wrestle with (God's) death as a given reality. It will have to explore the potential of the temporal ‘gap’ in the face of the senselessness of death.

This next chapter will articulate questions around key themes of Holy Saturday and present different approaches to a liturgical ‘meaning’ of the day.

B. Liturgical framework

This section will outline some of the most influential theological aspects about Holy Saturday and link them to liturgical considerations.

As the only (Western) Christian holiday which always coincides with the **Jewish Sabbath**, and at the same time refers to the historic Passover as day of the last supper and Jesus’ death, Holy Saturday has a unique place in an interreligious liturgical dialogue.⁵⁰⁰ How is the traditional juxtaposition of death and life at the Passover

⁴⁹⁸ Martin Connell, *Eternity today: On the liturgical year* (New York: Continuum, 2006-), 128.

⁴⁹⁹ For the importance of Holy Saturday for a Christian understanding of time John Meyendorff, “The time of Holy Saturday,” in *Orthodox synthesis: The unity of theological thought; an anthology published in commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of Metropolitan Philip as Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*, ed. Joseph J. Allen (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Pr, 1981).

⁵⁰⁰ Lathrop, *Holy things*, 68–79, Also parallels to the Jewish fast day of Tisha B'Av, when the destruction of the temple is remembered, the synagogue is darkened, decorative elements are removed, and the book of Lamentations is read Yves de Maeseneer, “Leçons de Ténèbres: Catholic Theological Notes on Adorno’s Art of Redemption,” FINAL DRAFT version of an article published in: *Phrasis: Studies in Language and Literature* 49 (2008) 117-130, accessed November 21, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/11397014/Le%C3%A7ons_de_T%C3%A9n%C3%A8bres._Catholic_Theological_Notes_on_Adorno_s_Art_of_Redemption, 4

reinterpreted and opposed by the ambiguity of Holy Saturday? How does the Church keep the quiet and reserve of the Sabbath? Is it a unique interpretation of a single day of the year pointing towards Easter, or does it allow a generalisation about the Christian Saturday? The perception of Saturday has changed with the introduction of the free weekend as post-industrial renewal Sundays are not any longer the highlights of the week but rather the close of the weekend.⁵⁰¹ The **Sabbath character** of Holy Saturday provides an opportunity to reflect on characteristics of Christian worship and at the same time on its origins in the Jewish traditions. Potential dangers are the unreflective identification with what is projected onto Jewish tradition, as well as a radical refutation of and emphasis on difference.

For recognising the liturgical characteristics of Holy Saturday, it is important to understand the ‘function’ of the liturgical day within a wider context, and acknowledge its unique obduracy and theoretical irreducibility. The congregation's relationship to unusual forms of public prayer, or the lack thereof, within the wider context of Holy Week and the expectations this time generates must be examined. As Clemens Leonhard notices: during the year nobody in the parish complains about the lack of communal public offices.⁵⁰² However, the liturgical intensity of Holy Week, and especially Easter Vigil, raises the question, who has the time and energy to attend additional celebrations on Saturday?

At the same time, the **empty church building**, not reserved for worship and often almost abandoned by its regular congregation, opens the potential for public ‘disinterest’. Holy Saturday, as the ‘silent’ day, points not only beyond a (Church) culture of business and sound, but more fundamentally beyond the temporal extension of sound. Silence and void become the central categories of an ‘in-between’ open to an unknown public ‘addressee’ as its other. As the Church commemorates and liturgically celebrates the being-dead of Jesus, and the undecidedness of salvation, it becomes open to the experience of estrangement, refusal, or even complete disinterest in God.⁵⁰³ How does liturgical reduction and simplification relate to an ecclesiological self-understanding open to the interpretation and identification of the individual? Holy Saturday is thereby not only the ‘middle day’ of the Easter Triduum, but the **end (and height?) of Lent**. As the Church reduced herself liturgically and through fasting, it became more open to a reinterpretation and restructuring. Holy Saturday bridges the

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, “Ninth of Av,” in *The Blackwell dictionary of Judaica*, ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Blackwell reference (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1992).

⁵⁰¹ Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, “Der Tag zwischen den Tagen: Liturgische Anmerkungen zum Karsamstag,” *Pastoraltheologie* 99, no. 11 (2010): 214.

⁵⁰² Clemens Leonhard, “Die Leere aushalten: Überlegungen zu einer sinnvollen Gestaltung des Karsamstags,” *Gottesdienst* 39 (2005): 24.

⁵⁰³ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 113.

chasm between the factuality of a dead body on Good Friday and the interpretative openness of an empty tomb on Easter Sunday.⁵⁰⁴ The day becomes paradigmatic of a liturgical ‘promise’ through negativity. It oscillates between the traditional interpretation of liturgy as cultural expression and the invocation and protest of an absent God through worship.

The idea of empty space and negative sense is key for a hermeneutic based on the dynamic of sense and its other. In the dynamic of abandonment and emptiness, the Church can regain an ‘**iconic distance**’. The distinction between the ‘idol’ and the ‘icon’ becomes crucial for the liturgical play.⁵⁰⁵ The remoteness of God questions the function of liturgy fundamentally and turns from a ‘looking-at’ to a ‘being-looked-at’.⁵⁰⁶ A liturgy despite/because of the death of God seems to be an ironizing of worship, but might also clarify liturgy based on its ‘iconic’ self-distancing. While remembrance plays a crucial role in Hegel’s understanding of dialectic and sublation, the final reconciliation of the individual with the collective happens through a process of self-forgetfulness. How does the liturgy (of Holy Saturday) provide space for not only the remembrance of a collective religious narrative, but the remembrance of the negativity and uniqueness of the individual?⁵⁰⁷

Can this dynamic be described within the classic categories of the hiddenness and self-revelation of God in the ritual action? Or does it point beyond ritual and its religious framework?⁵⁰⁸ How can liturgical texts engage with this dynamic? How can the resistance of a written text, meant for performance and celebration in a specific context, emphasise the importance of distance, gaps and defamiliarization? Richard McLauchlan has argued that poetry as a medium is able to “draw the reader into the absence and silence of God through the very form”⁵⁰⁹ of its rhythmic enjambment and caesura, as integral parts that force the reader to stop and breathe. Is it possible to talk about a natural rhythm or breath of liturgy in a comparable way?

In the following sections, historic, systematic, and practical theological aspects of Holy Saturday will be outlined to provide a basis for the following case studies.

⁵⁰⁴ Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 234.

⁵⁰⁵ Andreas Odenthal, “Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ein Gespräch von Theologie und Psychoanalyse im Hinblick auf einen symboltheoretischen Ansatz der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 64–70 and Jean-Luc Marion, “Le prototype et l’image,” in *La croisée du visible*, 2e éd, Quadrige (Paris: PUF, 2013).

⁵⁰⁶ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 70.

⁵⁰⁷ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 61.

⁵⁰⁸ Schilson, “Negative Theologie der Liturgie?,” 236s..

⁵⁰⁹ Richard McLauchlan, “R.S. Thomas: Poet of Holy Saturday,” *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 1 (2011): 981, also Burkhard Liebsch, “Ein- und Aussetzen der Arbeit des Negativen: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven phänomenologischer Revision negativistischen Denkens,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 152.

1. *Historical*

Concerning the historic development of the liturgy of Holy Saturday, Paul Bradshaw has overturned some of the traditional assumptions of previous decades.⁵¹⁰ In his work, “The Origins of Feasts, Fasts, and Seasons in Early Christianity,” he shows how the old paradigm of a shift, from an eschatological orientation before Constantine to historical orientation afterwards, is oversimplifying historic realities. With Taft and Baldwin, he assumes that both categories are not mutually exclusive but complement each other.⁵¹¹ He argues that the development of the **Easter Triduum as a three-day feast** with a shift of focus to Sunday and a remembrance of death and passion on Friday and Saturday (from ‘passover’ as ‘passage’ to ‘passio’) was still not finalised in the 5th century. The Triduum mentioned by Ambrose and Augustine did not necessarily refer to a liturgical reality. For the development of a specific liturgical shape of Holy Saturday, the proposition of the Triduum as a liturgical three-day unit is central. Bradshaw asks whether the traditional assumption that the Triduum developed as an imitation of liturgy in Jerusalem (cf. based on Egeria's account on the celebration of Holy Week) is viable.⁵¹² He argues that it is questionable whether these practices were imitated elsewhere.⁵¹³

The idea of the Triduum as liturgical and spiritual unit became most central for the reforms of the 20th century, and the restoration of the Easter Triduum became a key focus for the liturgical year according to the Second Vatican Council. This reform was guided by the idea that the celebration of Easter in the Early Church brought first forward the Triduum and then Holy Week.⁵¹⁴ The German Church Historian Harald Buchinger, however, argues that Augustine uses his classical formulation about Christ's “death and resurrection” (Epistula 55)⁵¹⁵ in the context of an exegesis of Ex 5:3. Buchinger assumes that Augustine might have borrowed the idea (already in Origen) from Ambrose, but it cannot be proven that he knew Holy Week as a liturgical entity. However, the idea later may or may not have shaped the liturgy in the West. Buchinger

⁵¹⁰ For more traditional views on the Triduum Patrick O. Regan, “The three days and the forty days,” in *Between memory and hope: Readings on the liturgical year*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000).

⁵¹¹ Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The origins of feasts, fasts, and seasons in early Christianity*, Alcuin Club collections 86 (London, Collegeville, Minn.: SPCK; Liturgical Press, 2011), 89s..

⁵¹² For a critical edition Agustín Arce, ed., *Itinerario de la virgen Egeria: (381 - 384); Constantinopla, Asia Menor, Palestina, Siná, Egipto, Arabia, Siria*, Biblioteca de autores cristianos 416 (Madrid: Ed. Católica, 1980), for the standard English translation Aetheria, *Egeria's travels*, 3. ed., repr. with corrections, ed. John Wilkinson (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002).

⁵¹³ Bradshaw and Johnson, *The origins of feasts, fasts, and seasons in early Christianity*, 60–65.

⁵¹⁴ Harald G. Buchinger, “Was there ever a liturgical triduum in antiquity?,” *Ecclesia orans* 27, no. 3 (2010): 257s..

⁵¹⁵ Augustinus, “Epistula 55,” in *S. AURELI AUGUSTINI OPERUM: Vollständige Neuedition*, ed. AUSTRIAN A. O. S. PRESS, 1. ed. (s.l.: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht; AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIEN, 2014 // 2013), Chapter 9.

states that it is difficult to pin down when different ideas reached various regions. He counters thereby two traditional arguments for a distinction between the Triduum and Holy Week.

First, he argues that Leo I's (440-461) calculation of the Quadragesima as ending on Mundy Thursday refers to an ascetic not liturgical practice. Secondly, Buchinger argues that the medieval offices for Good Friday and Holy Saturday were selectively chosen and distinct from Maundy Thursday and follow the ordinary weekly selection. However, other liturgical particularities move Maundy Thursday much closer to Good Friday and Holy Saturday, forming a 'passion' Triduum.⁵¹⁶ In Egeria's account, we do not find any specific celebrations on Holy Saturday. She mentions only 'normal services' at the third and sixth hour, but not at the ninth hour as they prepare for vigil in the Great Church. Tally mentions that in fourth and fifth century the bishop lightens a taper "from a lamp that burned constantly in the tomb in the Anastasis, and proceeded to the Martyrium, where he lighted one or more lamps."⁵¹⁷ The tendency to see Mundy Thursday more and more as part of the Triduum (of the passion) led to a progressive bringing forward of the Easter vigil. The rule was to celebrate the vigil only after the noon was avoided by bringing forward the offices. Finally, this practice was made a requirement by Pope Pius V. who banned the celebration of the vigil after noon in his bull "Sanctissimus" in 1566.⁵¹⁸ Thereby Holy Saturday, which was "originally a day without any liturgy at all, dedicated to prayer, penance and fasting,"⁵¹⁹ became more and more the introduction of Easter. In the tradition of the West, Holy Saturday therefore often had to fear for its autonomy. According to Balthasar and Fischer, it was especially the long rest from work during Holy Week which became a problem for agricultural societies in northern Europe, leading Urban VIII 1642 to declare Holy Saturday as a work day.⁵²⁰ Only in the **restoration of Easter Vigil** by Pius XII 1951 (*Mediator Dei*) and new order of Holy Week in 1956 was Holy Saturday recovered in its autonomy. And even the restoration of the Easter Vigil in the 20th century did not happen without 'practical' critique. Jungman, for example, warns of the moral dangers of a celebration at night.⁵²¹ At the same time, the reintroduction of the communion of the congregation on Good Friday raises the question of the presence of God outside of a sacramental and

⁵¹⁶ Buchinger, "Was there ever a liturgical triduum in antiquity?," 259–67.

⁵¹⁷ Aetheria, *Egeria's travels*, no. 24 and Thomas J. Talley, *The origins of the liturgical year* (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1986), 47.

⁵¹⁸ Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit*, I, 84.

⁵¹⁹ Matias C. Augé, "The Liturgical Year in the Roman Rite," in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 180.

⁵²⁰ Piil, "Paschal mystery, Christian identity, and paschal triduum," 179.

⁵²¹ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 106–8 and Josef A. S. Jungmann, "Die Vorverlegung der Ostervigil seit dem christlichen Altertum," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 1 (1951): 54.

formal liturgical setting.⁵²² The non-Eucharistic character of Holy Saturday is (and has been for a long time) a challenge for a still Eucharist-centred understanding of liturgy.

The question whether the (pre-consecrated) Eucharist can be received, except in extreme circumstances, on Good Friday (Catholic and Free Churches), or whether Eucharistic abstinence is to be kept has implications for Holy Saturday. It raises the question whether there is any other day in the liturgical year that is non-Eucharistic but still liturgical, and if liturgy is justified only through the consummation of the (pre-sanctified) Eucharist.⁵²³

Buchinger suggests revising the strong separation of the Triduum from the rest of Holy Week for catechetical and liturgical purposes (strong divide from Maundy Thursday). This would have consequences for the understanding of Holy Saturday; pronouncing the build-up of Holy Week and Lent, and emphasizing the mimetic and ascetic aspects, would re-shape the ‘in-between’ character of Holy Saturday.⁵²⁴ It would link the day to a broader context and frame it as the highlight of the Lenten fast as the anamnetic celebration of a full week. Based on observations within the German Lutheran liturgy,⁵²⁵ Karl-Heinrich Bieritz describes the ascetic fasting the liturgical and homiletic fasting before Easter as a preparation for Easter. He stresses that the symbolic meaning of Holy Saturday can only be understood in the context of its celebration. He states that the restoration of the Easter vigil fills in the liturgical gaps.⁵²⁶

This refers to traditional **practices of popular piety** and para-liturgical development to recover a liturgical meaning of the day. The emptiness of the day tends to be filled with devotion. Over the centuries, it was a day of catechesis (for baptism on Sunday or even on Saturday itself) and minor Blessings (Easter bread, etc.).⁵²⁷ The traditional **iconographic** representation of Holy Saturday is confronted with the lack of biblical narratives for the day after the resurrection. The only biblical account which goes beyond the fact that the disciples and women kept the Sabbath (Luke 23:56b) is Matthew 28:62-66: It is set in Pilate’s palace and tells us not about the actions of the disciples, but rather of Jesus’ opponents and how they decide to watch the grave. This results in the traditional theological ‘interpretation’ of time between the death and resurrection of Christ.

⁵²² Matias C. Augé, “The Liturgical Year in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 180–88.

⁵²³ Michael Perham, *New handbook of pastoral liturgy* (London: SPCK, 2000), 235.

⁵²⁴ Buchinger, “Was there ever a liturgical triduum in antiquity?,” 269.

⁵²⁵ In a way, as in the Roman Catholic Church, in the German Lutheran agenda from 1955, Holy Saturday is still called “Easter-eve” and a principal service with the Eucharist is provided. The Lectionary from 1978 and the Service book from 1999 do not provide a main service any more but still provide a proper with lessons and three offices.

⁵²⁶ Bieritz, “Der Tag zwischen den Tagen”.

⁵²⁷ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 110–12.

A traditional reading of this ‘in-between’ time is the motive of Christ’s **descent** to the underworld. The story of the descent is indirectly mentioned in Matthew 27:52-53 (and as reference to the story of Jonah in Matthew 12:40) and has foundations in the Second Testament tradition in Acts 2:22-24 and 29-32 and 1. Peter 4:6.⁵²⁸ From these traditions three main themes found their way into the early Christian literature:⁵²⁹ 1. the preaching of Christ in the Underworld, 2. the link between the descent and baptism, 3. death and hell being vanquished by the descent of Christ. While the descent has been part of the liturgical tradition from the beginning, many parallel interpretations of the event exist. Questions such as whether all people in hell followed Christ or only the righteous of the First Testament, and whether hell has been destroyed once for all, have been answered in various ways during the history of the Church.⁵³⁰ The interpretation of the event of Holy Saturday have thus a significant impact on the theology of salvation and theodicy.

Regarding the liturgy of Holy Saturday, this raises the question as to how far the Church can join in the Sabbath silence of the disciples and mourn at the grave, and in how far it must reinterpret this silence. In iconographic representation, Christ's descent to the underworld and his resurrection are united and the moment of victory and transformation is emphasised.⁵³¹ In a similar way, neither secular **art nor music** has developed a distinct tradition for Holy Saturday.⁵³² While we have images of Good Friday, the silence and ‘nothingness’ of Holy Saturday has not inspired as many artists. Nevertheless, the influence of Holy Saturday on postmodern art has been analysed in detail by Hans-Ulrich Wiese's in his dissertation, “Karsamstagsexistenz. Auseinandersetzung mit dem Karsamstag in Liturgie und moderner Kunst”.

2. Systematic-theological

The ‘in-between’ and the passage from Christ's death to his risen life is a challenge for the faith of the individual as well as for theology. The silence of biblical sources and the fundamental, unexplainable transformation happening on Holy Saturday lead theological speculation already in the early Church to ‘fill’ the gaps with

⁵²⁸ Ilarion, *Christ the conqueror of hell: The descent into Hades from an Orthodox perspective* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 17.

⁵²⁹ op.cit., 20 An interesting aspect of Christ’s descent on the Sabbath is that his lying in the tomb does not break any “travel restrictions” for the day, while at the same time he “travels” to the depths of the earth.

⁵³⁰ op.cit., 204–14.

⁵³¹ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 102s and 118.

⁵³² Maeseneer, “Leçons de Ténèbres” links the tradition of the Tenebrae to Holy Saturday. As a celebration that can take place on Good Friday as well as on Holy Saturday, it is not a “specific” expression and interpretation of the day.

Christological images.⁵³³ The category of an ‘**in-between**’ has thereby been used to talk about Holy Saturday, since Balthasar's “Mysterium Paschale,” to describe the category of encounter as key element of the paschal mystery.⁵³⁴ According to Balthasar, Holy Saturday reflects the dynamic of a metaphorical speech, which does not simply present but changes and questions reality. This category of interruption becomes important for the understanding of a liturgy which engages with the absence of God. Only through the loss of images can human beings become empty and open for the image of God.⁵³⁵ In the context of the Arian struggle, the understanding of *passover-passio* is replaced by *passover-transitus* and Easter is understood more as an Easter-passage (as an allegory of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 13s.).

The link between theology (*lex credendi*) and liturgical year (*lex orandi*) gave anti-Arian bishops a way to teach about the two natures of the Son: fully human and equal to the Father without risking the paradox of Patripassionism.⁵³⁶ The crucial question for the understanding of Holy Saturday is how Christ's suffering in death and descent to the underworld is situated in a Christological-Trinitarian **dynamic**: “How one interprets the Hypostatic Union will have a pervasive influence on how one sees the event of Holy Saturday,” claims Oakes.⁵³⁷ The dogmatic fear of a Patripassionism leads thereby to a reduction of Christ's suffering in the virtue of the communication of idioms.⁵³⁸ The critical potential of the theology of Holy Saturday has been especially emphasised by von Balthasar.⁵³⁹ He bases his theology of Holy Saturday on the concept of the ‘**Harrowing of Hell**’, an image of a descent prevalent in the Orthodox Church. In a statement of faith, the descent is mentioned the first time in the synod of Sirmium (359), in the Western tradition in the confession of Aquileia (before 410) but in the apostolic creed only after a detour via the Gaule tradition in the 9th century.⁵⁴⁰

The focus on Christ's passivity and ‘obedience’ is thereby distinctive against the idea of a mythological fight, and it yields a crucial link to the Trinity. The event of Christ's death and passion, as an economic Trinitarian event, has shaped theological speculations on its immanent relationship.⁵⁴¹ The central question for the understanding

⁵³³ For Holy Saturday as a radical challenge for understanding also James W. Farwell, *This is the night: Suffering, salvation, and the liturgies of Holy Week* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 69.

⁵³⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar and Aidan Nichols, *Mysterium paschale: The mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990).

⁵³⁵ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 19–25.

⁵³⁶ Connell, *Eternity today*, 114–17.

⁵³⁷ Edward T. Oakes, “The Internal Logic of Holy Saturday in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 2 (2007): 198.

⁵³⁸ Alyssa Pitstick, “Development of Doctrine, or Denial? Balthasar's Holy Saturday and Newman's Essay,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 2 (2009), also Lewis, *Between cross and resurrection*, 153–62.

⁵³⁹ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 7.

⁵⁴⁰ op.cit., 104s..

⁵⁴¹ op.cit., 123–25.

of Balthasar's reinterpretation of Holy Saturday is thereby how actively we understand Jesus' descent into the underworld. Was it already the beginning of his triumph or the final 'passive' act of the Cross and completing of the kenosis? Balthasar's interpretation of the descent to 'sheol' (as the realm of death in the Hebrew Scripture) implies thereby that Jesus liberated not only righteous, but sinners too; he does not only suffer punishment but becomes 'sin' in order to destroy it.⁵⁴² The Catholic theologian Sigurd Lefsrud interprets Balthasar's approach as a 'bridge' over the hiatus between Easter and the Cross, as an understanding via the **Trinitarian purposiveness**. Balthasar focusses thereby especially on the category of rupture, passivity and 'distance' within the Trinity. The Triduum becomes thereby a temporal/spatial event linking back to an inner-Trinitarian dynamic. The 'obedient' descent becomes the crucial link that bridges being and nothingness through the potential of dramatic action. The dynamic of obedience and freedom is key for the understanding of Holy Saturday (and its liturgy) on several levels. The obedience of Christ finally overcomes the gap between God and fallen creation, the Church perseveres on the day of hopelessness (cf. role of Mary)⁵⁴³, and the concrete community joins the traditional prayers and takes up the liturgical rhythm of prayer and silence.

How can an approach that focusses on gaps open a perspective on human frailty, the 'spacious' dynamic of the Trinity, and the necessity of protest, renewal and 'disobedience' within liturgy? How can the prayer of a fallen and corrupted Church necessarily counter the absence of God? How can the Church, founded on a 'broken' and failed myth, become able to refer, as Gordon Lathrop put it, to a 'new thing' which guarantees its truth?⁵⁴⁴ The fundamental challenge for traditional views on the Trinity is the liminal potential of Holy Saturday used by current authors to establish a **Christological model of (liturgical) prayer**. The German theologian Ingrid Fischer sees thereby a danger in the shift to a 'high Christology' in the post-council liturgy to shift the dynamic from an event between Father/God and Son/Human to Christ/God and Church/Humans. She argues that the loss of the 'dark sides' of the event reduces the message of Holy Saturday to the proclamation of salvation by the (official) Church, but minus the detailed experience and understanding of the individual believer.⁵⁴⁵ The day 'in-between' unfolds the meaning of the cross by providing a new space and openness without 'adding' any meaning. However, the extension of the 'moment' of death to a

⁵⁴² Sigurd Lefsrud, "From Dialectic to Dialogic: Beyond Luther's Theology of the Cross to Balthasar's Theology of Holy Saturday," *Louvain Studies* 36 (2012): 84 and Meyendorff, "The time of Holy Saturday".

⁵⁴³ Maeseneer, "Leçons de Ténèbres".

⁵⁴⁴ Lathrop, *Holy things*, 27.

⁵⁴⁵ Fischer, "Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern," 120s..

period of three days fundamentally questions human existence.⁵⁴⁶ The absolute separation and loneliness of the sinner gets thereby obscured by the always bigger loneliness of God.⁵⁴⁷ The unsecured and ‘bizarre’ of a divine reality opens a new access to the reality of the human being before God. The main feature of Holy Saturday's liturgy is thereby to dramatize the gaps and space.⁵⁴⁸

Holy Saturday as the day of God being dead, questions key assumptions of liturgy: How can we pray *remoto Deo*? Which implications has God's ‘un-bodilyness’ for our own experience of rite and symbol? Which aspects of our self-understanding are questioned or underlined by God being dead? What implications does a liturgy have when it is not ‘aimed’ at a God of power and drive but of silence and brokenness?⁵⁴⁹ Is the concept of religion as ritual and cultic practice challenged, i.e. what did the disciples do after Jesus' death – did they keep the Sabbath? How far does this perspective open a discourse with other traditions and a renewed Christian understanding of contemplative silence and emptiness?⁵⁵⁰

3. Pastoral

The most obvious pastoral connection point is the individual and collective **process of grief** and dealing with loss.⁵⁵¹ The whole circle of life, death, and burial is affirmed and embraced over three days and gives the opportunity for “rites [to] make the occasion in which all five senses are engaged.”⁵⁵² Holy Saturday can help individuals articulate fears, cry out pain, and herald hope. Importantly, the focus on the Psalter provides an opportunity for voicing profound human feelings and bringing them before God.⁵⁵³ Holy Saturday keeps the option of an unlikely ending, of the apparently already decided future, open. This dynamic reflects on the existential uncertainty of any individual as well as community. The strength of the openness is to provide a framework for the individual and collective identification with or refutation of the set prayer (Psalm).⁵⁵⁴ The liturgical rite can help to articulate different stages of the grieving and restructuring process (anger, denial, etc.). The Christological focus of the

⁵⁴⁶ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 144.

⁵⁴⁷ Karsten Erdmann, “Karsamstag und christliche Kontemplation,” *Geist und Leben* 86, no. 1 (2013) and Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 127–30.

⁵⁴⁸ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 222 and 259–268.

⁵⁴⁹ *op.cit.*, 267.

⁵⁵⁰ Erdmann, “Karsamstag und christliche Kontemplation”.

⁵⁵¹ David J. Atkinson, “Bereavement,” in *New dictionary of Christian ethics and pastoral theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).

⁵⁵² Connell, *Eternity today*, 155.

⁵⁵³ David Philippart, “Lenten devotions in time of tragedy and terror: Tenebrae,” *Liturgy* 17, no. 3 (2002): 91s. and Michael Perham, *The way of Christlikeness: Living the liturgies of Lent, Holy Week and Eastertide* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2016), 98s..

⁵⁵⁴ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 113s., for “psychological” dynamics of Holy Saturday also Wallis, *Holy Saturday faith*, 45–61.

day leaves space for the celebrating person/community to identify with Christ and enter a dialogue with God based on brokenness and fragility. This is even more significant as Holy Saturday is often understood as a day that reflects the manifold experiences of suffering and guilt of the 20th century, and therefore reminds us of the social and political function of liturgy without being simply instrumental for an unambiguous message.⁵⁵⁵ On the level of the community, one of the crucial features is that Holy Saturday **questions traditional power dynamics**. Its non-Eucharistic liturgy of offices and Tenebraes questions the primacy of the clergy, mainly a group paid for prayer and therefore expected to commit to the intensity of the Triduum but without any special ‘qualification’. The liturgy focusses on the community, its intimacy, and the need for mutual forgiveness. At the same time, the study of liturgical expressions can provide significant insights for rebuilding community during the process of disintegration and the fundamental questioning of former structures.⁵⁵⁶ The analysis of this ‘in-between’ stage can provide insights regarding past and future communal structures as well as the **restructuring forces**. Allowing the individual to join this process and help to shape it requires understanding mystagogical guidance. At the same time, the liminal character and the critical potential of day can reveal hidden dynamics and underlying structures hidden during ‘ordinary’ times. What does the liturgical celebration say about the Church as an institution, on the one hand characterised by structure and hierarchy but at the same time in its very nature subversive? As I have argued earlier (II. 3.B), the dynamic of rituals functions as uncontrolled niche for the human consciousness. On Holy Saturday, the idea of an active participation is counterbalanced by a passive joining in a preceding tradition that precedes any deliberate adaption. A (sacramental) liturgy tries to connect the symbol with the interpreting word in the sense of liturgical reform, to widen the understanding of human subjectivity and to link symbolic actions with their rational interpretation. Holy Saturday and its ‘negative’ outline can thereby raise the questions about a ‘beyond’ and outside of this connection.⁵⁵⁷ As Odenthal points out, the potential of liturgy consists especially in its strangeness and potential for identification. This reception of the symbolic gift of the ritual does not happen seamlessly, but only through the experience of loss and absurdity, and the need of a continuing re-staging.⁵⁵⁸ Liturgically and scripturally, the content of grief is framed by an even more profound experience of silence and emptiness (cf. Sabbath rest before the

⁵⁵⁵ Benedict VIX., *Introduction to Christianity*, Communio books (Princeton, N.J.: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, 2005), 298.

⁵⁵⁶ Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God*, 193 and Talley, *The origins of the liturgical year*, 47.

⁵⁵⁷ Andreas Odenthal, “Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ein Gespräch von Theologie und Psychoanalyse im Hinblick auf einen symboltheoretischen Ansatz der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in Kranemann, *Die modernen "ritual studies" als Herausforderung für die Liturgiewissenschaft*, 175–78.

⁵⁵⁸ op.cit., 188–92.

women go to the grave) as well as **social and individual practices** like fasting and the rest of work. To understand this critical potential better, it will be necessary to look at ‘official’ liturgies as well as popular practices and other pious customs to mark and life the day like fasting, abstinence etc. How much are devotional practices an attempt to ‘fill’ the emptiness, or can they function in keeping and setting aside space?⁵⁵⁹ The concrete and individual experience of suffering denies a reduction to a general form, and the continuation and acceptance of the non-reducible singularity prevents understanding from becoming metaphysics. Holy Saturday can thereby serve as a model of the irreducible negativity of the suffering and death of the individual, which through the death of God, becomes communicable and at the same time preserves its singularity.⁵⁶⁰ For the studies of Holy Saturday, this model can help to identify the significance of the day threatened by the possibility of a negative which cannot simply be sublated into a universal. This radical questioning of faith prepares the celebrating congregation for Easter. This ideal, in which the individual forgets itself, raises questions for the tradition of baptism on Holy Saturday: is the assimilation of the individual on the day of crisis a model of the Church as institution where the sinful/resisting individuality gets removed?⁵⁶¹

An additional challenge would be the emphasis on silence and rest against an ideal of business and work.⁵⁶² The silence and the ‘death of the word’ challenges traditional understandings of language and communication; even the symbolic and critical power of **art** is queried.⁵⁶³ Against Adorno's critique of an overemphasis on magic and mystery, liturgy moves closer to art, allowing a critical distance to its object (and subject).⁵⁶⁴ As a traditional point of reference for the relationship between Holy Saturday and art, George Steiner bases his understanding of modern art around the desire for the presence of God and the justified hope to communicate sense and beauty. Through the model of the logos as basis for presence and communication, he assumes an encounter with the other in art as an analogy with the first act of creation.⁵⁶⁵ Only the ‘in-between’ of the experience of loss and the hope of resurrection opens room for creative expression. While Steiner emphasises the aspect of presence for art and liturgy,

⁵⁵⁹ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 109–13.

⁵⁶⁰ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 63.

⁵⁶¹ *op.cit.*, 60.

⁵⁶² Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 259.

⁵⁶³ Leonhard, “Die Leere aushalten,” 24.

⁵⁶⁴ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 33–43 and Theodor W. Adorno and Gretel Adorno, eds., *Ästhetische Theorie*, 1. ed., [18. Nachdr.], Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010), 199.

⁵⁶⁵ George Steiner, *Real presences: Is there anything in what we say?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 223–32.

a negative hermeneutic would focus on the pastoral and spiritual implications of absence.⁵⁶⁶

C. Negative Hermeneutic of Holy Saturday

As has been shown (II. 3.), hermeneutics, as a discipline that claims to be able to articulate what lies beyond propositional thinking, provides a unique potential for liturgical studies as it analyses the dimension of the symbolic to understand human language and culture. Negative hermeneutics focusses thereby especially on the limits of understanding of form and content. Holy Saturday seems to be an example *par excellence* to as it is a liturgically liminal day.⁵⁶⁷ The following analysis of case studies will show how both the theological negativity of the absence of God and the anthropological experience of existential fear and grief are dealt with in the liturgy of Holy Saturday. A careful analysis of the strength and potential of this liminality will help work out the characteristics of the liturgical day. This requires an analysis of traditional texts as well as a critique of unreflective borrowings from other traditions (e.g. Orthodox icons) or immediate devotional filling of silence and emptiness. Against creating a ‘celebration of ideas’, which is not able to bear the emptiness of the day, negative hermeneutics could offer a way to read and understand the reduced liturgy more suitable for the study of concrete texts.

In dialogue with more traditional liturgical traditions, we encounter a fidelity to an original truth of the celebration through **repetition**. The reflection on how repetition is constructed will be a crucial contribution to the critical understanding of the liturgical year as well as for any formal and communal prayer. Negative hermeneutics can help to overcome the strict separation of liturgy as an ‘objective’ category and the subjective experience by focussing on the gaps in the set liturgy that require interpreting and filling in.⁵⁶⁸ The integration into the rhythm of a set prayer does not necessarily exclude elements of critique and questioning but can be the basis and framework for a change of perspective of the relationship between katabatic and anabatic dynamics. As we have seen (III. 2.B.2), in the context of Holy Saturday, the category of Jesus’ ‘obedience’ becomes central as the fulfilment and culmination of the divine love and at the same time as the following of tradition, with a liturgical remembering and re-imagining this act of obedience in every celebration.

Negative hermeneutics does not provide a simple method which could be applied in different texts and contexts. It rather gives a framework for questions which help to

⁵⁶⁶ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 47s..

⁵⁶⁷ Angehrn, “Der hermeneutische Umweg,” 202s..

⁵⁶⁸ Marcel T. Rooney, “Gotteserfahrung und liturgisches Gebet,” *Erbe und Auftrag* 75, no. 2 (1999): 118–21.

discover hidden layers and fractures of a text or ritual. The following three sections will outline the potential of negative hermeneutic key categories for a deepened understanding and questioning of the liturgy of Holy Saturday. The focus will thereby lie in the creative articulation of questions to help us engage with the upcoming case studies.

1. Language/Writing

When it comes to forms of hermeneutic questioning, written language is the primary medium. In this study, the written liturgy will be analysed and therefore the text character of its object needs to be explored further: When and for what purpose was the text written? Is there a previous celebration which, over time, became ‘fixed’ as a text? Or was it created as a text for a liturgical celebration? To whom is the text available and accessible? In which language is it originally written, and does it require or allow translation? Which ‘roles’ within the celebration are mentioned? How are rubrics phrased and which actions do they refer to? How is silence used within the celebration? Where does the text show ‘gaps’? In addition to these phenomenological questions, hermeneutic analysis will go further and ask, what understanding of language and writing underlies the text? Which conclusions does it allow to be drawn as to the relationship between text and spoken word? How are word and gesture/rite linked? How are different roles within the celebration constructed? On an even more profound level, this study will attempt to discern the theological and anthropological implications of these questions. How do humans use language when they speak to God and with each other? How does the text frame and shape silence? How does it enable a new and creative language?

The concept of gaps in the text has occupied liturgical studies especially in the context of ‘**silence**’. The liturgical reform of the 20th century changed the role of silence in worship significantly. Even though the Western liturgy did not know the concept of a ‘discipline of the arcane’ and all silent prayers could always been said out loud, praying them silently was seen as an appropriate expression of reverence in the context of the Eucharist.⁵⁶⁹ It is a major challenge for the liturgy of Holy Saturday to find expressions adequate for the ambivalences of an openly questionable reality.⁵⁷⁰ Silence leaves space for imagination, but at the same time refuses a clear and open identification, which does

⁵⁶⁹ Traditionally, liturgical studies distinguishes three different types of silence: structural silence within the service, silent recitation of prescribed prayers, and prayers that only over time become silent. Liturgical silence is distinct from mystical through its prescribed content and place (within the celebration) W. J. Grisbrooke, “Silent Prayer,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*, John Henning, “Formen des Heiligen Schweigens,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 19 (1969): 167–71 and Louis Weil, “Worship,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 9.

⁵⁷⁰ McLauchlan, “R.S. Thomas: Poet of Holy Saturday,” 983 and Farwell, *This is the night*, 69.

not offer a simple teaching and explaining of ‘what happens’, but rather points towards the experience and mystagogical guiding. The considerations around the difficulties of verbal language raises the question whether total silence would be more appropriate for the day, and how liturgical ‘fasting’ gets ironized by the ‘getting on’ with every-day tasks. Or could the lack of liturgical expressions even point towards these? Does the experience of silence as action or as lack of action intensify or counter liturgy? How does liturgical silence relate to irony and laughter as powerful reactions to the ambivalences of a perceived reality?⁵⁷¹ The expression of ambivalences and the use of metaphors presupposes the ability of ‘bisociation’, i.e. the ability to build a concept around two irreconcilable poles.⁵⁷² This leads the celebrating subject towards an encounter with a remaining hopeless difference, challenging us as a ‘bizarre predication’. The bisociative and **metaphorical language** of liturgy becomes radicalised on a Day of Silence and loss, directly challenging language as a basis for faith.⁵⁷³ It creates a chance for a new and unheard-of narrative daring to imagine God beyond a dichotomy of being and non-being and redefining the celebrating community.

How can this dynamic help the celebrating community to grow in the awareness that the language they use is always based on a ‘false consciousness’? How can the study of liturgy become a tool for the critique of (religious) language and point beyond the dichotomy of private idiosyncratic prayer and the external repetition of traditional forms? What chances and freedom and individuation could the distance of Holy Saturday offer to the celebrating community? How can liturgy become the starting point for nonhegemonic language? How can the sense of absence as basis for art be realised on Holy Saturday as actual absence of God and radical break within a system of faith?⁵⁷⁴ How can we describe this loss of meaning as a process that redefines prayer?

2. Subject

The concept of the subject lends itself as second centre of a negative hermeneutic study of Holy Saturday. Who celebrates the liturgy? Whose participation is limited or not intended? For whom are liturgical texts available? What does the text say about its reader and the celebrating community? How does the text/rite interpret its supposed reader/performing community? What dynamic of activity/passivity does it imply? On a more profound level: how does it inspire imagination and desire? How does it create and manage longing and aversion? Where does it give space, encourage play, and risk

⁵⁷¹ For the “joke as the clearest form of meaning transaction” Hughes, *Worship as meaning*, 108 ND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LITURGY Cf: Hughes, *Worship as meaning*, 107–11

⁵⁷² Jürgen Werbick, *Bilder sind Wege: Eine Gotteslehre* (München: Kösel, 1992), 304.

⁵⁷³ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 70–72 and Werbick, *Bilder sind Wege*, 67.

⁵⁷⁴ op.cit., 48–52.

freedom in opening or giving itself up? What kind of mystagogical/ascetic practice does it encourage? Does it have social/ethical implications?

On an **existential level**, Holy Saturday takes the possibility of missed existence as a serious divine failure, but at the same time keeps the option of a different answer open: an answer that needs to be discovered and interpreted by the celebrating community. How can Holy Saturday articulate the experience of suffering and yet point towards a sense of hope and desire for life?⁵⁷⁵ The emancipation of the individual is an important part for the growing and maturation, as well as a challenge and questioning of faith. Holy Saturday represents the element of uncertainty and potential failure of this process. The radical challenge of Holy Saturday confronts the human being with the profound angst of chaos and nothingness. Symbolically, it reflects the paradox of the non-graspable. Holy Saturday re-articulates the understanding of religious cult as a double-structure between protection and renewal by tipping the balance towards a continuous search, or as Certeau puts it: Christianity begins with the loss of a body.⁵⁷⁶ The experience of resurrection is framed by the fundamental shock of absence. Through the passage, through a radical loss, the celebrating person is confronted with the possibility of an unsecured trust and a metaphysical venture.⁵⁷⁷ Liturgy, in its **ecclesiological and pastoral** function, is often described as a praising and glorifying answer to the presence of God around which the communion of the Church (we) and the conscience of the faithful (me) centre. The basic assumption of negative hermeneutics is that only an affirmation provides space for negation and critique, referring to the celebration of Lent and Holy Week (if not the whole liturgical year) as a build-up to Holy Saturday and Easter.⁵⁷⁸ In contrast, Holy Saturday, as radical confrontation with the absence of God, highlights the dynamic of a searching and the restructuring of a community challenged and defined by its radical immanence.

While other liturgical celebrations keep an openness for the presence of God and are structured around an exploratory search, Holy Saturday emphasises up the moment of a potential definite disappointment and its implied consequences for the prayer and community.⁵⁷⁹ The trauma of God's death and the loss of the Other forces the Church to

⁵⁷⁵ Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik," 181.

⁵⁷⁶ Daniel Bogner, *Gebrochene Gegenwart: Mystik und Politik bei Michel de Certeau* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verl., 2002), 124 and Certeau, Michel de, and Michael B. Smith (ed.). *The mystic fable*. Religion and postmodernism series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 81.

⁵⁷⁷ Angehrn, "Grundvertrauen zwischen Metaphysik und Hermeneutik," 164–70.

⁵⁷⁸ The concept of the reduction of liturgy and experience could be compared with André Green's idea of the "psychose blanche" – the reduction of drive and desire for the building of an inner world – whereby the "hallucination" of a white empty space provides the possibility to experience the world like an empty stage Joachim Küchenhoff, "Zu den Voraussetzungen und Grenzen produktiver Negativität - eine psychoanalytische Perspektive," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 215–17.

⁵⁷⁹ Thomas Quartier, "Das liturgische Selbst: Ich, Wir und Gott in benediktinischer Perspektive," *Erbe und Auftrag* 88, no. 2 (2012): 152–55.

reinvent itself. Holy Saturday can thereby be a paradigm for how the celebrating community must allow unity as well as separation and absence in its worship. Analogous to the psychoanalytic process, the space of Holy Saturday provides space for 'rêverie' and imagination.⁵⁸⁰ The affirmation of the radical emptiness of Holy Saturday does not provide a safe base but enables a new and dangerous balance for faith and individuation. The experience of trust and presence, on which faith in the sense of an assured knowledge and fellowship is based, is lost. This dynamic can, depending on the individual disposition, be experienced as sudden night and extreme darkness, or as slow fainting. The individual whose faith is challenged in this way needs to find ways to deal with this blank space and reinterpret abandonment through freedom. This process opens room for being human more fully and more fully being God. The 'in-between status' of Holy Saturday can open a new perspective of individual faith. While the experience of God is always retrospective, human existence happens in the here-and-now; the overlap of both points towards a desired future. Holy Saturday can be a reminder that human faith is always in a position of crisis and transition.⁵⁸¹

3. *Sense*

Lastly, a negative hermeneutic of the liturgy of Holy Saturday must reckon with 'sense'. Which areas of life and communication does the liturgy address or imply? Where is its 'Sitz im Leben'? What does the celebration tell us about the 'rest of the day'? How does the liturgy try to 'make sense' of the day? How are potential celebrating subjects meant to 'make sense' of the liturgy? How does liturgy interpret the relationship between God and human on this day? On a more profound level, how does Christian worship celebrate a 'broken' and disrupted Trinity? Which implications does this have for the relationship of anthropology and theology? If Holy Saturday offers an 'in-between' for the dynamic of human prayer, how is God's being (or non-being) imagined on this day? How can liturgy be an expression of the fundamental searching, wrestling with, and protesting the absence of God?⁵⁸² Which consequences does a liturgical silence and asceticism have for ethics and spirituality? What kind of bodiliness does this perspective imply especially in terms of gender and sexuality? Does it help to open a perspective of a post-anthropocentric approach to liturgy, which does not necessarily put reason at the centre of its celebration? And how does this relate to a theological understanding of 'being in the world' in a spatial-temporal sense?

⁵⁸⁰ Joachim Küchenhoff, "Zu den Voraussetzungen und Grenzen produktiver Negativität - eine psychoanalytische Perspektive," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 223–26 and Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 237.

⁵⁸¹ Erdmann, "Karsamstag und christliche Kontemplation," 24s..

⁵⁸² Quartier, "Das liturgische Selbst," 153–55.

How can **liturgy, as a blank space or a gap**, create space for the play and the re-creation of sense? How can it open possibilities for a new and creative approach to the experience of negativity? To reframe negativity and the experience of a lack of sense, the paradox of identity and difference, absence and presence needs to be mediated through another who accompanies the transition. For the experience of Holy Saturday, this paradigm is intensified as the Other. God is dead and does not survive the tension and attack. The fundamental assumption of faith as response to the experience of loss and separation, which is the basis for meaning, has to be rephrased.⁵⁸³ How can liturgy keep this space for an experience of referentiality and symbolism open and allow mediation and triangulation, wherein God is absent and dead?⁵⁸⁴ Joining multi-layered liturgical prayers allows participants to articulate loss, and express disappointment and anger towards God. The playing-through of this radical sense of transformation, and the shift from an ‘other’ to the other in the celebration of the community, is a threshold for the dynamic understanding of liturgy.⁵⁸⁵

Holy Saturday can open a link between liturgy and **modern art** to see the celebration as negation of beauty and desperation as the broken promise of a utopia. Or, as Adorno has pointed out, the tenebrous has become the place-holder for utopia. The Belgian theologian Yves de Maeseneer, in his essay on the liturgy of the Tenebrae, claims the utopian appears as broken promise and paradoxical fulfilment. He points out that in an alternative reading of the extinguishing of the candles, it is not the light of Christ symbolised by the last hidden yet not extinguished candle, but the light of Mary. In the context of a negative anthropology of liturgy, this could be understood as the belief in Mary that the Church keeps burning beyond the desperation of Good Friday and as proclamation of resurrection.⁵⁸⁶ If the dynamic of non-sense and failure characterise the human being and opens towards a new, transformative reality of God, how can these adequately be expressed in the liturgical celebration?⁵⁸⁷ What does the liturgy of Holy Saturday imply about the relation between play and reality? How does it avoid a doketistic aesthetication? How can liturgy keep the aesthetic script with broken/void meaning in the face of the catastrophic and at the same time remain faithful to its incarnatory and messianic promise?⁵⁸⁸ As much as the world is interpreted by

⁵⁸³ Joachim Küchenhoff, “Zu den Voraussetzungen und Grenzen produktiver Negativität - eine psychoanalytische Perspektive,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 222, also Hughes, *Worship as meaning*, 81–98.

⁵⁸⁴ op.cit., 220s..

⁵⁸⁵ op.cit., 223s.. Holy Saturday contains the necessary element of disappointment and lack in a relationship in a way analogous to the analytic process, op.cit., 229s..

⁵⁸⁶ Maeseneer, “Leçons de Ténèbres,” 5–9.

⁵⁸⁷ Richard D. McCall, “Anamnesis or mimesis? Unity and drama in the paschal triduum,” *Ecclesia orans* 13 (1996): 263–68.

⁵⁸⁸ Maeseneer, “Leçons de Ténèbres”.

Christ's obedience and love and becomes part of a Theo-drama, his suffering and death is interpreted by the actualisation and faith of his Church. This does not simply happen as in an intellectual or spiritual act, but through the realisation in the communal celebration of Church.⁵⁸⁹

The intersection of Christological and Trinitarian dimensions raises questions for the understanding of a **liturgical spirituality**.⁵⁹⁰ How can liturgy be a medium and expression of symbolic faith, when God's own mediation in the Trinity and in revelation is profoundly challenged? The assumption of a radical conclusion of Christology in the death and descent of Christ highlights the tensions and potential of a Trinitarian theology.⁵⁹¹ How can a liturgical theology speak adequately about God as a 'mad lover' and describe the dialogical and dialectical relation of the Trinity?⁵⁹² Can a hermeneutic open to the potential of non-sense gain a new perspective on the radical tensions between Christocentric and Trinitarian theology that Holy Saturday highlights? Balthasar's redefining of reason as divine love, which is the basis for this radical shift, forces a hermeneutic interpretation to re-evaluate the human desire for sense as a basis for understanding.⁵⁹³ On a formal level this points towards a promise of sense kept and challenged through the experience of negativity.

D. The Dynamic of Reading Liturgy

While every text requires readers to question their own preconceptions, liturgical texts confront their 'recipient' also with their historic and present claims on a pastoral as well as a (denominational) dogmatic and aesthetic level. The self-understanding of the texts is key to understand their purpose as prescriptive or descriptive. Like dramatic texts, liturgical texts are not meant for reading, but for performance. Like poetry "the very form"⁵⁹⁴ of the text is part of how it communicates. The importance of the performative quality of a text raises questions about the **role of non-verbal elements** for the following study. Some instructions are expressed in the rubrics or introductions to liturgical texts; some elements are neglected; and some, necessarily ignored. The way the text can define body and social language is very limited.

⁵⁸⁹ Juan M. Sara, "Descensus ad inferos, Dawn of Hope: Aspects of the Theology of Holy Saturday in the Trilogy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Love alone is credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar as interpreter of the Catholic tradition*, ed. David L. Schindler, Ressourcement (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008), 223s..

⁵⁹⁰ Erdmann, "Karsamstag und christliche Kontemplation," 19s..

⁵⁹¹ Fischer, "Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern," 120.

⁵⁹² Lefsrud, "From Dialectic to Dialogic," 97s. Catherine of St. Siena, *The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena: A Conversation with God on Living Your Spiritual Life to the Fullest* (s.l.: TAN Books, 1991), <http://gbv.ebib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=4465408>, Dialogue 167.

⁵⁹³ Lefsrud, "From Dialectic to Dialogic," 89–93.

⁵⁹⁴ McLauchlan, "R.S. Thomas: Poet of Holy Saturday," 981.

The following study is especially interested in the resulting indefiniteness and openness. The question of the **object of research and self-understanding of liturgical studies** is rephrased on the level of its relationship with texts. The hermeneutic research is interested in the experience and the (re-)staging of a meaning beyond the text without leaving it behind, i.e. the self-communication of Church in the expressions of its communal prayer becomes the start and end of every liturgical study.

This dynamic is heightened through the self-understanding of the Church as engaging the text, celebrating, wrestling with, and protesting it. Hence, space for an encounter with the (missing) transcendent gets opened and the negative potential of liturgy and its theological implications are realised. This links back to the fundamental dialectic between the immediacy and mediation in faith and theological reflection mediated partially in the liturgical symbol. For the liturgy of Holy Saturday, this raises even more specific questions about the textual character of liturgy. What framework does the text provide for the performance of a celebration? Does it guarantee an identity of celebration between pure self-actualisation (*ipse*: identity) and iteration (*idem*: identity)? How is this reflected in the dynamic of Holy Saturday, wherein God as guarantor of identity is dead? How does the text answer the loss of a theocentric affirmation other than through silence and iteration of the same old?⁵⁹⁵ Is there any sense of actualisation left? What does the text say about the time and space of the liturgy? How long does the celebration take? What does it include? At whom is it aimed?

For practical reasons, elements of **flourish and arrangement**, like music, will not be considered; neither will the emotional and spiritual impact music has on a given congregation. An analysis of a concrete celebration would require the study of video records and the detailed interview of its participants which this project cannot accomplish. It envisages, however, to both show the strengths of a purely textual approach and to provide the basis for further studies of different kinds of liturgical 'material'.⁵⁹⁶ This limits the perspective of pluralism and the real difference between the ideal of a text and the concrete celebration. Neither can this study present and analyse the "often feverish activity in Churches"⁵⁹⁷ on this liturgical day of reticence and waiting. At the same time, the very reduced methodological approach of this study can open doors for further research and will point out areas of future interest.

⁵⁹⁵ Gerhard Schneider, "Die Konzeption personaler Identität in einer negativitätstheoretischen Perspektive," in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*.

⁵⁹⁶ Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual*, 205.

⁵⁹⁷ Perham, *New handbook of pastoral liturgy*, 235.

III. 3. Case Studies

After reviewing the strengths of negative hermeneutics, and the potential for Holy Saturday as a liturgical paradigm, this chapter will present its application. This chapter does not intend to provide a ‘step by step’ method that can be applied to any given text nor a detailed historical-liturgical comparison between different traditions. It rather wants to engage with texts and their contexts in an attitude of curiosity and playfulness and to focus on gaps and incongruencies. It wants the reader to reflect on his or her perspective, draw informed conclusions about a text. This approach chooses to work with case studies as a way of combining classical liturgical methods with the perspective of negative hermeneutics. It does not simply describe how a negative theology could be developed based on negative hermeneutics, but deliberately dives into the text. It would not only be a missed opportunity to simply ‘describe’ the advantages and the potential of negative hermeneutics, but it would be a profound misconception, if it was not applied to the concrete and specific text.

This work does not attempt to provide a fully fleshed out comparative liturgical study by drawing detailed parallels between the different celebrations. It will rather present all of them in their specific perspectives and potential for a negative hermeneutic analysis. By focussing on the creative potential of each tradition, the space of ecumenism shall be inhabited in a playful and challenging way.

Text studies is the ‘genre’ of liturgical studies par excellence and the commentary is the key method for liturgical studies,⁵⁹⁸ combining the concrete liturgical tradition, with the abstract of a text (rather than for example with a video analysis of the celebration). Case studies are already a deeply hermeneutic exercise combining the revision of theological prejudices with the re-articulation of liturgical concepts. As a liturgical theological work, this study will use the classical genre of case studies and explore how negative hermeneutics provides useful tools and perspectives to deepen the understanding of liturgical textual experiences. It will ask, how a focus on brokenness, gaps in language, liturgical subjectivity, and sense helps to achieve a more profound understanding of anabasis and katabasis? Methodologically, this study will not attempt to fully integrate the case studies into a theoretical framework. Its aim is to encourage creative textual engagement and to articulate questions rather than provide a full methodological answer.

The gap character of Holy Saturday is found in the tension between a theoretical frame and the **resistance of a concrete text**. The theoretical impossibility of an

⁵⁹⁸ Messner, *Einführung in die Liturgiewissenschaft* as example for a hermeneutical approach to case studies also Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*.

unambiguous mediation is expressed as a reevaluation of the unique character of text, one that provides the necessary architecture to understand the continuity and discontinuity on Holy Saturday. At the same time, the focus of the study is not the historical (or pastoral) explanation of certain gaps and tensions in the text, but their critical function for the liturgical dynamic. The case studies in this context are used primarily in an illustrative way, i.e. they function as descriptive studies and serve primarily to create familiarity with a topic and give readers a common language. As an ‘exploratory, theory-building, multiple’ case study, this chapter does not intend to provide a ‘theory-building’ ‘key-case’ approach, i.e. it does not choose the ‘best, most central, most convincing’ texts and traditions, but those that help explore different aspects of a negative hermeneutical approach to liturgy.⁵⁹⁹ Thus, this section will build from a fruitful variety of texts, but this is the only possible or objectively ‘best’ choice.

I will study **four very different sources**: The Church of England Office from the Book of Common Worship, the Liturgy of the Hours from the Roman Catholic Benedictine Abbey in Glenstal (Ireland), the Liturgy of the Iona Community (Scotland), and the Byzantine Rite in its English Translation. The only commonality among these diverse texts is their use in the celebration of Holy Saturday. The different texts necessary for each liturgical celebration are not necessarily edited in a single book, but united through the one act of worship for which they are used. They vary hugely in their intended context, form, and framework. Three of them are denominationally specific (Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Church of England). Two are for celebrations in a parish, one in a monastery, one (Iona) without further specification. Only the Iona liturgy is written by a specific author. All of them are in English, though two refer to an underlying original (Greek, Latin). Two of the texts are general official Church documents for the celebration of Holy Week (Church of England and Orthodox); one is written for a specific community context, but published with the idea of an appropriation in different settings (Iona); and one is the application of a general liturgical basis (Benedictine) for a specific community (Glenstal). None of the documents attempts to describe a celebration in a specific context. Glenstal and Iona are more specifically linked to places. These are not limited to a certain year in which liturgy was celebrated in a specific way, but provide a scheme and pretext for a performance.

Overall, their variety illustrates how a negative hermeneutical approach can help to engage with liturgical texts from a range of different perspectives. This study does not intend to provide detailed methodological steps which can be applied mechanically

⁵⁹⁹ Albert Mills: “Encyclopedia of case study research,” Volume 2.

to different texts. Its 'slow' approach raises questions and engages in a 'thought play' to guide the reader to the gaps and incongruencies within each tradition. Its findings are presented under the rubrics of language, subject, and sense to connect earlier methodological groundwork to text-based questions.

Based on the model of a liturgical commentary, the given texts will be briefly analysed in their historic development and their current social and ecclesial context. However, this study does not aim to provide a full history of official and alternative liturgies. Their genesis comes into view only to understand breaks and gaps within the given text more profoundly. This study understands itself clearly as a 'liturgical' and not social study. As we have seen (II. 1), this does not exclude the use of 'ethnographic' or other 'anthropological' observations and insights as apt for liturgical observations. Secondary literature will be used for the analysis of the context and framework of the text and the celebration. For textual study, secondary material is limited to occasional comments on Holy Saturday within wider studies of the liturgy of the Triduum or Holy Week. In the English-speaking world, there are very few comprehensive liturgical studies done on the liturgy of Holy Saturday itself. This kind of 'commentary' needs to keep the fine balance between an ethnographic study, using liturgical texts, and a 'pure' text study. The aim is an appropriate engagement with the text as text. This matches the negative hermeneutic three-step process of receiving (situating), deconstructing (criticising), and creating.

Each case will give a brief outline of the liturgy, analyse the given text, and finish with conclusions. The conclusions are arranged under 'language', 'subject' and 'sense' depending on the perspective. A short conclusion will summarize the observations.

A. The liturgy of Holy Saturday in the Church of England

1. Framework

The basis for the following analysis will be the liturgy from the “**Book of Common Worship**”. Whilst the “Book of Common Prayer” from 1662 remains the official liturgy of the Church of England, this series of authorised services published between 2000 and 2008 have become the standard liturgy for most parishes. The project of a renewed liturgy, drafted by a Liturgical Commission and made up of people from different backgrounds and expertise, lay as well as clergy, was a result of the Anglican Liturgical Movement.⁶⁰⁰ The wish for a more adaptable liturgy led to the introduction of new experimental rites in the 1960s; it culminated in the “The Alternative Service Book” in 1980 that was eventually replaced by Common Worship.⁶⁰¹ The liturgical reform project developed a collection of resources over a long process; these were initially drafted by the Liturgical Commission, amended by the House of Bishops, debated by the representatives of laity and clergy in the General Synod, amended by revision committees, considered again by the House of Bishops, and finally voted on by the General Synod. Finally, they were published by “Church House Publishing”.⁶⁰²

Such a rigorous process raises questions about liturgy as the outcome of a democratic process and its authorisation by an official body of the Church. Uniformity and flexibility have been two crucial motivations behind the development of liturgy. The attempt to achieve “the widest assent possible”⁶⁰³ expresses an understanding of liturgy as both ‘creating’ Church and as a ‘sign’ of the Church. Liturgical texts need to be applicable to different contexts, but also standardised across the denomination. The idea to publish in parallel a printed and an online version of the text provides an opportunity for congregations to combine different versions of the text and to add additional prayers and readings. This reinforces the idea of a set, authorised liturgy which allows creative use within defined boundaries, or, as Paul Bradshaw puts it, in his “Companion to Common Worship,” “the concept of Anglican worship [...] as based upon the idea of a recognisable shape in which some elements are mandatory and others optional.”⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Bryan D. Spinks, “The Liturgical Movement: 2. United Kingdom,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁶⁰¹ *op.cit.*

⁶⁰² John Morgan, “An account of the making of Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England,” *Typography papers* 5 (2003): 33.

⁶⁰³ *op.cit.*

⁶⁰⁴ Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 60.

One of the most obvious differences between the Alternative Service Book and the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship is distribution. It was one of the strengths and particularities of the Book of Common Prayer that it was extremely widespread: While most parishioners owned their own copy of the Book of Common Prayer, it is unusual for parishioners today to own “Common Worship”. This is because it is commonly seen a **resource for worship** rather than a liturgical book. This approach shifts the responsibility to the parish, expecting the celebrating community to select and compose texts. While all texts are available online, the process of finding and selecting the corresponding liturgical texts presupposes a certain liturgical knowledge.⁶⁰⁵

The sources for the following study are “Times and Seasons”⁶⁰⁶ (for the liturgical ‘set up’), the Lectionary⁶⁰⁷ and the “Daily Prayer”⁶⁰⁸ (for the offices). This is the minimum number of documents needed for the celebration of all services on Holy Saturday.⁶⁰⁹ Additional prayers and readings⁶¹⁰ are not considered, since such a wide range of material is beyond the framework of this section. All liturgical texts were originally drafted in **English**. Even when they were based on biblical or traditional sources, they followed an English-speaking tradition rather than an original attempt at translation. Only the Psalter has “been specifically prepared to complement *CW* services.”⁶¹¹ It is thereby a unique attempt at trying to combine biblical and Church tradition and liturgical quality of language. It is the Church of England’s adoption of the Episcopal Church’s revision on the Book of Common Prayer Psalter.

Common Worship is currently being translated into some non-English languages for use in Church of England churches with multi-lingual congregations. Each translation has been approved by the House of Bishops before being made available.”⁶¹² This shows its strong rootedness in the English-speaking tradition that is able to account for an authorised monoglot version as an ‘original’ for all potential further versions in other languages. One of the characteristics of the liturgy of Holy Saturday in Common Worship is that it is situated in the wider context of daily prayer and of the spiritual preparation of Lent and Holy Week. A negative hermeneutic reading will be interested in the clearly designed gaps and omissions of the text. The book of “**Times and**

⁶⁰⁵ Colin O. Buchanan, “Liturgical Books: 4. Anglican,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁶⁰⁶ Church of England, *Common worship: Times and seasons* (London: Church House Pub, 2006).

⁶⁰⁷ *The Christian year: Calendar, lectionary and collects*, Authorized ed., 1. publ.; 2. impression (London: National Society/Church House Publishing, 1997).

⁶⁰⁸ *Common worship: Daily prayer*, First published, fifth impression (London: Church House Publishing, 2005).

⁶⁰⁹ There are additional editions of “The President’s Edition” for use by the person presiding; however, since Holy Saturday is a non-Eucharistic celebration, these do not play a role in this study.

⁶¹⁰ e.g. Robert Atwell, *Celebrating the seasons* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1999).

⁶¹¹ Jane Sinclair, “The Psalter,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 238.

⁶¹² <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/translations.aspx> (accessed on 16.02.2017).

Seasons” sets the scene for the celebration. Holy Saturday is mentioned only in the introductory section, “Easter”. The introduction to the chapter on “Passiontide” instructs that after Good Friday “[t]he Church remains stripped of all decoration. It continues bare and empty throughout the following day, which is a day without liturgy: there can be no adequate way of recalling the being dead of the Son of God, other than silence and desolation. But within the silence there grows a sense of peace and completion, and the rising excitement as the Easter Vigil draws near.”⁶¹³ In a similar way, the official Church of England website limits its explanation of Holy Saturday to “Easter Eve, or Holy Saturday, is a day like no other, a day of desolation and despair.”⁶¹⁴ This description of the spiritual ‘effects’ of a ‘day without liturgy’ is contrasted by an introduction to the “**Easter liturgy**” stating “according to ancient custom there is no celebration of the Eucharist.”⁶¹⁵ It continues, “The orders of Morning and Evening Prayer offer adequate liturgical provision for the day.”⁶¹⁶

These multi-layered orders reflect the diverse Anglican tradition which combines Catholic influences with a more Protestant tradition⁶¹⁷. The orders do not say anything about Midday Prayer or Compline as potential expressions of the day. Does this reduction take into account the silent character of the day, which reduces offices to a minimum, or is it more of a practical consideration that tries not to overload the day between two of the major feasts of the liturgical year (especially as Compline might interfere with the celebration of the Easter vigil)?⁶¹⁸ The switches between ‘Holy Saturday’ and ‘Easter Eve’ show an underlying ambiguity about how to situate the day within the liturgical year. Does it point only towards Easter, or is it the culmination and end of Lent and Passiontide? The text emphasises “It is particularly important that Evening Prayer should be treated, by the style of its celebration, as belonging to the Eve, and not as the first service of Easter, anticipating the Easter Liturgy itself.”⁶¹⁹ However, the instructions of “Time and Seasons” fail to make it clear that the offices on Holy Saturday are of the Passiontide, not Easter.

The directions also do not mention what the lectionary calls the “Principal Service.” Only in the negative does it point out that “there is no celebration of the Eucharist.”⁶²⁰ The provisions in “Times and Seasons” do not at all touch upon the fact

⁶¹³ Church of England, *Common worship*, 259.

⁶¹⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/the-liturgical-year.aspx#Lent> (proved on 16.02.2017).

⁶¹⁵ Church of England, *Common worship*, 323.

⁶¹⁶ *op.cit.*, 323.

⁶¹⁷ Anglo-Catholic parishes, for example, expect a night-vigil, while more evangelical congregations will tend to celebrate an Easter morning service.

⁶¹⁸ The instructions in “Daily Prayer” do not explicitly preclude the celebration of a Night Prayer on Holy Saturday (*Common worship*, XIX).

⁶¹⁹ Church of England, *Common worship*, 323.

⁶²⁰ *op.cit.*, 323.

that, according to the instructions of “Daily Prayer,” the liturgy of Morning and Evening Prayer is radically reduced between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday. Only the directions in “Daily Prayer” clarify that “material proper to Passiontide is used from Evening Prayer on the Eve of the Fifth Sunday of Lent to the evening of Easter Eve.”⁶²¹ The texts continue with instructions for the celebration of Morning, Evening, or Night Prayer from the service of the Last Supper, on Maundy Thursday, to the Easter Vigil. These instructions are the framework for the textual analysis that follows. Looking more closely at the directions for ‘omissions’ between the Last Supper and Easter Vigil, it turns out that every ‘seasonal’ characteristic is omitted. It would not matter whether the material of Easter or of Passiontide (or Christmas etc.) were used. The liturgy leaves open ‘what is not said’. In the Anglo-Catholic tradition, the liturgy of the Triduum is therefore stripped of some normally essential elements.

The **dates for Easter** and Holy Saturday follow the determinations of the Western Church. The earliest possible date for Easter is the 21st of March and the latest is the 24th of April. According to the instructions of Daily Prayer, “[n]o Principal Feast, Festival or Lesser Festival may be observed in Holy Week”.⁶²² The Church of England schedules seventeen feasts that potentially coincide with Holy Saturday and can be either transferred or ignored. In describing the location of the celebration, we hear that the church “continues bare and empty”.⁶²³ In churches where the Eucharist is kept, the tabernacle is emptied (and remains open) at the end of the celebration of Maundy Thursday. After the veneration of the cross on Good Friday, the cross is veiled.

The empty church and the Eucharistic/non-sacramental liturgy raise the question as to whether Holy Saturday is limited to the **church as space** for its celebration, or whether the church as space becomes redundant. Does the liturgy need an empty, clear space? Where do people gather on this day? What is there to watch when every decoration and the preserved sacrament itself are removed? What are the practical challenges and chances of an empty church? Will communities feel more inclined to leave the church open (almost analogous to the open tabernacle – open doors that hide nothing and invite everybody)? What are the ecumenical implications of having only one day a year when non-baptised people are welcome to every part of the service? Will non-churchgoing people feel more inclined to enter their local church on this ‘Easter weekend’ (assuming it is apparently another Christian Holiday)? Or, will the day be used to prepare the church for the main celebration of Easter? Will Holy Saturday be used for the annual spring cleaning, flower arranging, choir singing, bell ringing, and

⁶²¹ *Common worship*, XIX.

⁶²² *Common worship*, XIX.

⁶²³ Church of England, *Common worship*, 259.

altar serving rehearsals? Or, will people be encouraged to take a day off and rest between the other tiring services of Holy Week, especially the highlight of the church year, the Easter vigil? From a negative hermeneutic point of view, the opening of space (open tabernacle/open Church doors), dissolution of temporal boundaries (reversal of day and night imagery and the silence of bells) are particularly interesting. Holy Saturday could be the day when churches learn from each other's gaps and omissions in liturgy and prayer. Even though most communities today do not rely on them, the symbolic power of these missing bells is noticeable to a wider population in places where the bells are rung regularly.

These considerations lead to the consideration of **who** celebrates the liturgy on Holy Saturday: as a non-Eucharistic day, it would be an ideal basis for the equal participation of lay and clergy people. Potentially, the day could involve the whole Church using the offices to envision a general priestly calling.⁶²⁴ At the same time, the liturgically challenging reality of Holy Week, and the fact that Holy Saturday in England does not count as a bank holiday, limits the ability of volunteers and parish members to attend additional services. For practical reasons, the celebration of the day might end up being a matter of duty for full-time religious workers. The introduction to "Passiontide" does not give any clarification on **how** to keep, facilitate, provide, or engage with the silence of the day. It is almost as if the liturgical 'imagination' and 'scene-setting' have given up on this day: "there is no adequate way of recalling the being dead of the Son of God".⁶²⁵

Thus, is liturgy primarily a process of 'recalling' and 're-enacting', or could it be more of an answering, adapting, and interpreting? Which role does the Church play in facilitating or enabling the spiritual challenge and potential of the day? Does it simply trust in the 'work' of the Spirit, relying on the certainty that the resurrection will happen the next day? Or, will it have to engage with the radical uncertainty of an unsecured future? How does liturgy hold the balance between anamnesis and mimesis when it is framed by silence and uncertainty?

One danger the introduction to Passiontide mentions is the potential **anti-Judaism** of Holy Week: "This places a double responsibility on those who lead the keeping of Holy Week today: to be faithful to the act of collective memory, but also to be sensitive to the ways in which an unreflected use of traditional texts (like the reproaches) can perpetuate a strain of Christian anti-Semitism."⁶²⁶ This is especially the case for the celebration of Good Friday, but it is an important reminder for Holy

⁶²⁴ *Common worship*, 100.

⁶²⁵ Church of England, *Common worship*, 259.

⁶²⁶ *op.cit.*, 259.

Saturday to be aware of the potentially destructive power of negative emotions and social dynamics heightened by the silence of the day. Violence and exclusion remain fundamental challenges for liturgy, but, at the same time, re-enactment makes them open for transformation. The **ability to translate and interpret** becomes crucial in its potential ethical/political consequences.

2. Text Hermeneutic

a) Principal Service

The Lectionary of Common Worship provides texts for **three the celebrations** on Holy Saturday. The readings are the same for all the reading cycles (A, B and C), which implies that the proper character of the day outbalances the annual changes of the reading cycle. The First one is an un-specified “**Principal Service**”. As we have seen, Times and Seasons points out that “[a]ccording to an ancient custom there is no celebration of the Eucharist on Easter Eve.”⁶²⁷ The re-establishing of the Communion of Good Friday (pre-consecrated on Maundy Thursday), through the reform of Common Worship, leaves Holy Saturday as the only truly ‘non-Eucharistic’ day the liturgical year. The question whether the “Principal Service” on Holy Saturday is ever celebrated must remain unanswered as this study analyses a ‘potential’ liturgy based on text material.⁶²⁸ The lack of specific instructions for the principal service suggests that it is intended as a **liturgy of the word** without communion. This type of service is suggested in Common Worship as an ‘authorised structure’, rather than a set ‘text’ and provides material for ritual and symbolic interpretation in its local celebration.⁶²⁹ Neither “Times and Seasons” nor the “Daily Prayer” mention this type of celebration on Holy Saturday; these represent the orders of Morning and Evening Prayer as adequate expressions for the day.⁶³⁰ The seasonal instructions in “Daily Prayer” mention again only the offices, but allow a theoretical application to a potential service of the word.⁶³¹ Following the standard structure of a “Service of the Word”⁶³² and applying the instructions of “Daily Prayer,” the lectionary gives the texts in the order of the pre-Eucharistic service (First

⁶²⁷ Church of England, *Common worship*, 323.

⁶²⁸ Perham, *The way of Christlikeness*, 100.

⁶²⁹ Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 61.

⁶³⁰ Church of England, *Common worship*, 323.

⁶³¹ *Common worship*, XX.

⁶³² Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 61–71.

Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel) rather than in the order for a Service of the Word (Reading[s], Psalm).⁶³³

One attempt to apply the given order would be:

- The Preparation would be omitted
- the Reading would consist of Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24, 1 Peter 4:1-8 and Matthew 27-66 or John 19:38-42
- Psalm 31.1-4, 15,16*, the Gloria after the Psalm would be omitted
- possibly a sermon or meditation
- possibly an authorised Creed
- prayers would be reduced to the Collect of the day
- Conclusions would be omitted

The use of a Creed is unexpected for an otherwise radically reduced service and prompts the question whether the instructions in “Daily Prayer” have just overlooked the possibility of a Principal Service of the Word and therefore omitted specific instructions. The omission of a preparation seems strange for a service of the word and the lack of any form of penitence raises questions around the penitential character of Holy Saturday. A sermon would give the opportunity to interpret the day and to frame the atmosphere of emptiness and despair; however, the preacher would need to be very sensitive to the sense of silence and openness and leave enough space for the individual experience and adaptation. The reduction of prayers to the Collect alone would hinder the sermon’s suggestion of intercession and thanksgiving.⁶³⁴ It moves the sermon closer to a catechetical/pastoral tool rather than framing it as a liturgical/ritual part of the service.⁶³⁵

The lack of Preparation and Conclusion would still guarantee an openness and continuous ‘flow’ of the services from Maundy Thursday to the Easter Vigil. The **Reading** of Matthew 27:55-66 follows the traditional Lectionary of the Book of Common Prayer, the Reading from 1. Peter 4:1-8 is the continuation of the Book of Common Prayer Reading ((3:17-end).⁶³⁶ The reading of John 19:38-42 is an interesting choice since it is the suggested Reading for the principal service on Good Friday (John 18:1-19:42) and, if not used there, also for Morning Prayer (a part of John 18-19) and

⁶³³ The Book of Common Prayer provides specific readings for three services on “Easter Eve” (Matins, Evensong and principal service – again without mentioning the celebration of the Eucharist) but no proper Psalm.

⁶³⁴ Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 67.

⁶³⁵ For different purposes of preaching Carolyn Headley, “Preaching,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 91–95.

⁶³⁶ also Perham, *The way of Christlikeness*, 98.

Evening Prayer (John 19:38-42) on Good Friday. The other reading is found neither in the Book of Common Prayer nor in the Roman Catholic Lectionary but seems to be more ‘thematically’ chosen. The Reading from Job 14:1-14 and the alternative Reading of Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 present the radical ambivalence between the experience of suffering and the wrath of God, and the hope for release and deliverance. Psalm 31 focusses much more directly on the refuge in God and the hopeful dependence on God's salvation (it is striking that Verse 16 is optional – this raises the question if this is for theological reasons).

The second Reading of 1. Peter 4:4- 8 encourages the recipient to align their desires with God's will and this could be read as an identification with Christ's obedience in passion and death. The obvious link to Holy Saturday is drawn through the idea of the Gospel being proclaimed to the dead and therefore (in the liturgical tradition) to Jesus' descent to the underworld. The two suggested Gospel readings are characterised by the description of what happened (or did not happen) between the death of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday and the resurrection. John 19:38-42 focusses on the service that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus provide to the dead body of Jesus (without mentioning the women who likely carried out the work) but does not provide any account of the events after the actual burial. Matthew 27:57-66 instead tells about the burial, Mary Magdalene and the ‘other’ Mary staying opposite the tomb (for how long?) and the events in the palace of Pilate and the decision to guard the tomb. Neither of the two Readings gives details about what the disciples did after the burial, but both reports highlight the very visceral bodily reality of death.

As the only specific liturgical ‘provision’ for the day, the **Collect** deserves attention. It is taken from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which appears to have taken it from the 1637 Scottish Prayer Book.⁶³⁷ Its central biblical reference is Romans 6. Connecting the remembrance of the death and burial of Jesus and his resurrection, it points towards the resurrection while still being part of the passion narrative. It deviates from the most common form of the Collect as it is not addressed to “God the Father,” but to the “Lord.” It does not conclude with a doxology,⁶³⁸ but the prayer “through his merits, who died and was buried and rose again for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus is called “Lord” and the prayer is addressed to God, the “Lord”. It is similarly rooted in passion (“died”) and resurrection (“rose”) and therefore proscribes the idea of Holy Saturday as a purely mimetic celebration without the resurrection.

⁶³⁷ Bridget Nichols, “Collects and Post Communion Prayers,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 189.

⁶³⁸ *op.cit* , 180s..

Other types of traditional services that could be expected as “Principal” service might be a Tenebrae or a Service of Penitence. A **Tenebrae** is a service traditionally held on the night of Maundy Thursday, is based on the office of Matins, and includes readings from Lamentations, the extinguishing of several candles and the symbolic banging of the pews by the minister and the congregation.⁶³⁹ Analogously, combinations of *Matins* and *Lauds* were traditionally celebrated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday Morning. These services are still observed in the Roman Catholic Tradition. In the American Episcopal Church, following a medieval custom, provisions are made only for Wednesday evening as an anticipation of the Maundy Thursday celebration.⁶⁴⁰ However, neither the reading suggested in the Common Worship nor the liturgical form and ritual show any overlap with the traditional Tenebrae service.⁶⁴¹

Another service which suits the reflective character of Holy Saturday would be a rite of **Penitence**, a common practice in the oriental tradition⁶⁴² and, since 1973, part of the Liturgy of the Roman Church (in its sacramental and non-sacramental forms).⁶⁴³ As the understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, often celebrated in the preparation for Easter is very controversial within the Church of England, a liturgy of general penitence could be a suitable celebration. This could be a potential framework to address pastoral needs and emphasise “the primacy of the community and its intimacy: mutual forgiveness, absolution, reconciliation and peace, the service of one another.”⁶⁴⁴ Even though the book of “New patterns of worship”⁶⁴⁵ suggests a service of penitence (adapted from the Church of Scotland), this service does not have a long-standing tradition in the Church of England. Similarly, there is no liturgical provision made for (the completion of) a catechetical introduction to the baptism at the Easter Vigil – especially as baptism into the death of Jesus is the central theme of the Collect (cf. Romans 6). An absence can be noticed especially on Holy Saturday of a preparation of the reception of communion and remembrance of baptism at Easter. The theological/sacramental aspiration of Easter remains open and vague given the rather minimalistic introduction of Holy Saturday.

⁶³⁹ Joanne M. Pierce, “Tenebrae,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship* and Philippart, “Lenten devotions in time of tragedy and terror: Tenebrae,” 92.

⁶⁴⁰ Episcopal Church, *The book of occasional services, 2003: Conforming to General Convention 2003* (New York: Church Pub, 2004), 74.

⁶⁴¹ op.cit., 74–92.

⁶⁴² Andreas Heinz, “Die Feier der Versöhnung am "Samstag des Lichts",” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 46, no. 4 (1996).

⁶⁴³ James Dallen, “Penance,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*, 368.

⁶⁴⁴ Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God*, 193.

⁶⁴⁵ *New patterns for worship* (Church House Publishing, 2016).

b) *Offices*

Liturgically, Morning and Evening Prayers are more defined than the non-Eucharistic Principal Service. The Introduction of “Daily Prayer” tells us: “From earliest times, Christians gathered at regular hours during each day and night to respond to God's word with praise on behalf of all creation and with intercession for the salvation of the world. By the fourth century, if not earlier, morning and evening had emerged as the pre-eminent hours for the offering of this sacrifice of praise. Although they have remained so ever since, eventually two major changes were made to the form of prayer offered. First, regular daily prayer became more and more the practice of the clergy and members of religious orders alone, with the rest of the people of God participating chiefly on Sundays and festivals. Second, because of this, the forms of prayer came to be thought of more as words to be said or sung than as a liturgy to be celebrated corporately.”⁶⁴⁶ Morning and Evening Prayers, in Common Worship, have developed as a combination of the revised Book of Common Prayer offices from the Book of Alternative Worship and the adaptation of the Franciscan “The Daily Office” in the developing Celebrating Common Prayer.⁶⁴⁷ The traditional interpretation of Morning Prayer as commemoration of the resurrection⁶⁴⁸ raises interesting questions for the structure of Holy Saturday but remains not reflected in the liturgy. As “Times and Seasons” mentions Morning and Evening Prayer as “adequate liturgical provision for the day”⁶⁴⁹ and “Daily Prayer” does not provide seasonal material for Midday Prayer and Compline, the following analysis will limit itself to these services. However, it must be noted as paradoxical that Holy Saturday includes a service of ‘resurrection’ in the morning, but not service of ‘completion’ with Compline in the evening.⁶⁵⁰ The seasonal liturgy for Passiontide is reduced radically between the celebration of the Last Supper and the Easter Vigil.⁶⁵¹ For greater clarity it seems helpful to focus first on the omissions of the texts and then on the actual prayer material.

⁶⁴⁶ *Common worship*, 100.

⁶⁴⁷ Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 71s..

⁶⁴⁸ op.cit., 72 and Rubén M. O. Leikam, “The liturgy of the Hours in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 89s..

⁶⁴⁹ Church of England, *Common worship*, 323.

⁶⁵⁰ Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 74 Theoretically, there could be a Compline Service on Good Friday evening. However, as the day is characterised by the two main services, the “Three Hour devotion” and the “Adoration of the Cross” (Church of England, *Common worship*, 259), this might not be appropriate. A Compline on Good Friday is not mentioned in “Common Worship”.

⁶⁵¹ *Common worship*, XIX.

α) Omissions

While the season of Lent is characterised by a simplification of liturgical patterns (cf. the omission of the Alleluia) and the expression of an ascetic liturgical setting, the difference between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday is a radical defamiliarisation and distortion. According to “Daily Prayer,” the services on Holy Saturday (as well as Morning and Evening Prayer on Good Friday, where celebrated), begin with the Psalm. The Preparation is completely omitted, including the Greeting as well as the Prayer of Penitence and the Prayer of Thanksgiving, the Open Canticle and the Opening Prayer.⁶⁵² Beginning with a Psalm without any introduction is abrupt and challenges the participants to join in immediately as liturgical actors. The abruptness that characterises a service without opening and clear ending is typical for this reduced liturgy, and replays the unfamiliar, unprepared and scary character of the day. All Glorias and Doxologies are omitted. The Greater Doxology is not used for any of Lent, during these last two days of Holy Week. Even the lesser doxology is omitted,⁶⁵³ as not only the glory of God seems hidden and incomprehensible on this day but the Trinity appears to be out of balance and disrupted. The Responsory as joyful answer to the Gospel is omitted, not only for its content, as all the Readings used in these services are part of the regular weekday lectionary, but because the intensity of the events of Holy Week seems to hinder a faithful joint response.

The Prayers are reduced to the Collect of the day, so Intercessions, Responses and the Lord's Prayer are omitted. The ability of the praying congregation (represented by the worship leader) to articulate their needs, gratitude, and desires on this day are reduced to fixed liturgical expressions. Neither freely formulated intercessions nor the Lord's Prayer as absolute core of the Christian prayer life, seem to be adequate forms for the experience of disturbance. The prayer taught by Jesus himself seems to be questioned by the radicality of his death. Similarly, the Conclusion and the final blessing are omitted. The service does not end with the mutual encouragement of grace and peace, but as abruptly as it began, with the Amen after the Collect.

β) Text

What kind of liturgical provisions are made for Morning and Evening Prayer? In the tradition of the Church of England it is the duty of all ordained ministers to say the offices every day. Morning Prayer is thereby often held publicly (even though often not

⁶⁵² Anne Dawtry and Carolyn Headley, “A Service of the Word,” in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*, 73.

⁶⁵³ W. J. Grisbrooke, “Doxology,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

communally) in church.⁶⁵⁴ This daily routine forms the basis, or at least the aspirational framework, for the celebration of the offices on Holy Saturday. The **prayer routine** continues and, without provisions for time and venue, there is no reason to change the normal routine. Depending on the concrete circumstances, the demands of the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week and Easter might force change in the time and setting of the prayer routine. In a similar way, changes might make the often dry prayer more accessible and inviting for people looking for a liturgical framework.

As we have seen, prayer starts with the Psalm. Depending on how the Psalm is said (responsively, alternating, communal),⁶⁵⁵ this practice questions the traditional ‘**leading structure**’ of a service. Up to the Collect, all parts led by the officiant are omitted, so that for most of the service, it is unclear who has summoned the people to prayer and who is ‘initiating’ the liturgy. As all decorations in the church are removed, the question may be whether any liturgical vestments (surplice, scarf) would be appropriate or whether the wearing of ‘ordinary clothes’ would emphasise the unspecific character of the liturgy.

Morning Prayer starts with Psalm 142 and its superscription, “A Maskil of David. When he was in a cave. A Prayer.” Even though this title, traditionally, is not part of the said psalmody, it helps to understand the underlying prayer dynamic. As a prayer from the one who has been “brought very low”⁶⁵⁶ and for whom “no one cares”⁶⁵⁷ anymore, it encourages the people to identify with the dead and buried Jesus for whom all worldly hope is lost. At the same time, the ‘cry of hope’ for the “portion in the land of the living”⁶⁵⁸ and for God's final righteousness remain.⁶⁵⁹ The Psalm does not conclude with the Doxology but is followed by the reading of Hosea 6:1-6 and John 2:19-22. Both Readings are comparatively short and reduce the framing narrative of the day to a minimum. Hosea 6 has traditionally been read as an allegory for the resurrection in the First Testament.

The idea of a revival “after two days”⁶⁶⁰ is a type for Easter. The reliability of God's reviving power is compared to the reliable recurrence of nature in sun and rain. After the call to repentance in the first three verses, verses four to the end focus on the impenitence of Israel. Within the Readings of Holy Saturday, this is the first mention of guilt and faithlessness towards God and his prophets. John 2 19-22 again looks back to

⁶⁵⁴ George Guiver, “Daily Prayer: 4. Anglican,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁶⁵⁵ John Harper, “Psalmody,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁶⁵⁶ Psalm 142:6.

⁶⁵⁷ Psalm 142:4.

⁶⁵⁸ Psalm 142:5.

⁶⁵⁹ Psalm 142:7.

⁶⁶⁰ Hosea 6:2.

a narrative linked to the time between death and resurrection. After cleansing the Temple, Jesus promised to raise the new Temple “in three days”.⁶⁶¹

This text raises the question of the dynamic of promise and fulfilment and their temporal structure. The narrative in John gives an account of Jesus expelling the merchants and money changers from the Temple in Jerusalem, (past event). It looks forward to the resurrection and the responding faith of the disciples. Also, the emptiness of Holy Saturday recaptures the ‘not yet’ situation before Easter and questions the present faith of the people engaging in prayer. As a Canticle between the two Readings “A Song of Jonah” (Jonah 2:2-7,9) is suggested. This text combines images of distress and drowning and a concluding thanksgiving and praise and is linked to traditional baptismal metaphor.

The following *Benedictus* is the only feature distinguishing Morning and Evening Prayer. The traditional use of biblical canticles (*Benedictus* in the morning and *Magnificat* in the evening) survives radical reduction and keeps the time structure of the day. The Introductory Refrain for the *Benedictus* is John 2:19.21 (“Destroy this temple and, in three days, I will raise it up, says the Lord; this he said of the temple that was his body.”) this clearly gives the Canticle a hopeful outlook and links it to the expectation of the resurrection.

Evening Prayer starts again abruptly, this time with Psalm 116. While Psalm 142 at the morning service talks in the present tense about the praying person crying and making supplications, Psalm 116 starts off by stating “I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.”⁶⁶² It refers to death and Sheol as something from which the Lord has delivered them. The “land of the living”⁶⁶³ is here, now, and secure. The present is characterised by the sacrifices of thanksgiving and salvation⁶⁶⁴ and by the paying of vows “in the presence of all his people”.⁶⁶⁵ It raises the question where this more secure and hopeful perspective comes from, when it happened, and how the praying subject is informed by it.

The readings are relatively short, only 15 verses altogether. The First Reading from Job 19:21-27 shows like the Psalm a very different dynamic between life and death. Job's hope and certainty to see his Redeemer has become exemplary of the Christian hope and faith in the risen Jesus.⁶⁶⁶ It is no longer God's wrath that punishes and unsettles Job, but the persecution of his ‘pitiless’ friends.⁶⁶⁷ The dichotomy between

⁶⁶¹ John 2:19

⁶⁶² Psalm 116:1.

⁶⁶³ Psalm 116:9.

⁶⁶⁴ Psalm 116:13 and 17.

⁶⁶⁵ Psalm 116:14 and 18s..

⁶⁶⁶ Job 19:25s..

⁶⁶⁷ Job 19:21s..

the hope in the world and the incomprehensible shock of death and God's wrath has changed to a hope which seems to point beyond the worldly securities. The Second Reading of 1 John 5:5-12 focusses on the testimony and fidelity of Jesus as Son of God. Here, the Holy Spirit is mentioned for the first time within the liturgy since Good Friday. As a Canticle "Daily Prayer" suggests, "A Song of the Justified" (Romans 4:24,25;5:1-5,8,9,11) strongly focusses on hope and justification through Christ's death. As an Introductory Refrain for the *Magnificat*, "Daily Prayer" uses a verse based on Philippians 2:8s. that points towards Christ's resurrection and links to traditions of liturgical confessions.

Morning and Evening Prayer alike conclude rather suddenly with the Collect. They are similar in structure. Also, there is a considerable difference between the hopeless and dire readings at Morning Prayer and the trusting and joyful readings at Evening Prayer. In the evening themes like life, hope, community, ritual and faith come into view again. These considerations articulate more precise questions about the character and liturgical significance of both services.

3. Conclusions

Having analysed the services the Church of England provides for Holy Saturday, a negative hermeneutic will be applied regarding its relevance and potential.

Regarding liturgical **language**, what is said in the text and what is left out? We have seen Bible texts in the Readings, not framed by any traditional liturgical setting, and the Collect as a traditional liturgical expression.⁶⁶⁸ The *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* are used year-round almost as 'markers' of time between Morning and Evening Prayer. They are framed by Refrains that involve hope and expectation and give the liturgical 'backbone' of the day a clear direction towards Easter. The Canticles form the skeleton of a prayer office, reduced to its biblical heritage and traditional form, and therefore repeated daily. Only the Collect is a non-biblical source. But a traditional liturgical text attempts to frame the tensions and central dynamics of the day into a single petition.⁶⁶⁹ This very Bible-based liturgy offers a hermeneutic enquiry about the relationship between traditional/textual and personal/community prayer. Does the brokenness of the day simply not leave any space for spontaneous intercessions? Are praying individuals united in their silence? How does the spiritual void of the day get answered or articulated in Biblical texts?

⁶⁶⁸ Bridget Nichols, "Collects and Post Communion Prayers," in Bradshaw, *A Companion to common worship*.

⁶⁶⁹ *op.cit.*, 189.

The texts are fundamentally aimed at an English-speaking congregation, while generally being open to translations. Nowhere in the service is an explicit pause or silence designated. However, the suddenness of the opening and ending raises the question whether the liturgy itself reflects the silence of the day by interrupting it. In terms of the 'in-between' character of the day, it is significant that the radical reductions omit all seasonal characteristics and leave the day open to the perspective of Passiontide as well as Easter.

Which conclusions does the liturgy allow to its celebrating **subjects**? Who celebrates in which function? Who does not celebrate? The fact that the 'main services' of the day are Morning and Evening prayer and therefore formed according to the clerical prayer routine raises the question whom the liturgy of the day is 'aimed' at. As non-Eucharistic public services, they are genuinely open and fully accessible to anybody (even non-Christians). However, the setting and structure of offices will be unfamiliar to most congregations, and participants will rely on liturgical texts. The ideal of the offices as the 'prayer of the whole Church' emphasises the non-hierarchical character of the day.⁶⁷⁰ Yet, practical limitations, including accessibility, question this. The "Daily Prayer" is "intended to help Christians of our own day take their part in this privilege and duty which belongs to all God's priestly people"⁶⁷¹ and by not offering any liturgical 'alternative' it encourages people to engage with a different and very rudimentary form of liturgy. It (together with Good Friday) is the only day where the offices do not contain any 'responses' and therefore can be said by a single person not playing two liturgical roles at the same time (as many clergy do in practise). The extended services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday question the necessity (and possibility) to have a large congregation involved in the celebration of Holy Saturday.

The services do not prescribe any ritual movements, no standing or kneeling. The rubrics do not give any directions for seating or arrangement of the prayer space. The purely 'verbal' service reduces the bodily presence of its participants to a minimum. The church as potential space for liturgy is stripped and empty after Good Friday, the tabernacle (and church doors?) is open and empty. Nothing hinders the liturgy on this day, even outside the church. Temporality is held by the recitation of *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, and the 'natural' sequence of the day-structure is subverted by a Morning Prayer that focusses on death and despair and an Evening Prayer carried by hope and a shift of perspective. Both prepare for the Easter vigil to begin the new day and the new 'life' after sunset, as "nature reversed".⁶⁷² At the same time, the services of Holy Week

⁶⁷⁰ Perham, *The way of Christlikeness*, 97.

⁶⁷¹ *Common worship*, 100.

⁶⁷² Pfatteicher, *Journey into the heart of God*, 215.

are relatively ‘mimetic’ and strongly linked to the emotional and spiritual content of the events. The reduction, disfiguration, and suddenness of the day can be read as an expression of the incomprehension of the shock and the disorientation after the preceding events. The way the liturgy creates space frames this experience through its ritual repetition and reduction. In this sense, the liturgy is ‘emotional’ by blanking out emotions.

How does the liturgy express and handle the loss of **sense** and meaning in the face of the death of God's Son? How does it deal with the intersection between practical (experience of a negative) and theoretical negativity (the possibility of negation)?⁶⁷³ What can a distorted ritual provide for the re-establishing of sense? How can prayer on this ‘in-between’ day be relevant at all?

The liturgy engages with uncertainty of the day through the continuation and defamiliarization of a daily prayer routine and through the provision of a rather unspecific and disconnected “Principal Service”. The liturgical books do not provide a coherent text, but a compilation of different traditions. Thus, the celebrating community experiences insecurity and unease. The liturgical expression becomes itself a challenge. The day challenges congregations to interpret and adapt liturgy. Even though numbers are likely minimal (even one), the Church maintains the pattern of prayer, expressing despair of the day. Yet, interrupting the silence calls people to prayer despite all hopelessness. The church remains a space for prayer in all its external reduction. Emptiness and openness become a sign not yet of hope and new life, but still a rejection of hopelessness. Against the individualisation of silence and chaos, people are called by silenced bells to (an impossible) prayer – even if nobody shows up.

While the texts of the Morning Prayer show a clear focus on the hopelessness and the destroying wrath of God (and of Jesus in the Temple!), these seem almost disconnected from the underlying promises of healing and restoration. There seems to be a shift of emphasis between Morning and Evening Prayer. The Evening Prayer allows the person to identify with the saved and hopeful, and with the restored community. Liturgically, this shift is hard to pin down: it seems to happen in the liturgical silence between the two services. All we have is a liturgically distorted “Principal Service” whose shape and intention is rather unclear. The liturgical ambivalence forces one to ‘make sense’ of the preceding events.

How does this framework prepare for Easter? What can we conclude for the self-understanding of liturgy in general? We have noticed a shift of emphasis between Morning and Evening Prayer. After a stage of despair and wrestling with God, the

⁶⁷³ Emil Angehrn, “Dispositive des Negativen: Grundzüge negativistischen Denkens,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 13s..

prayer seems to change perspective to the 'already' of restoration in community and prayer. A redefining of life and an adaption to the shift of perspective that enables belief in the resurrection in the Easter Vigil. The liturgy does not explain or simply express what happens in the 'in-between', but provides a base familiar and empty enough for the individual and the community to redefine their roles as praying subjects after Jesus' death.

B. Holy Saturday at Glenstal Abbey

1. Framework

a) Background

The next example of liturgy on Holy Saturday will be the services at Glenstal Abbey, i.e. an adaption of Roman Catholic Benedictine liturgy. This example of liturgy is much more specific than the services from the Church of England Book of Common Worship. It is again partly based on the **liturgy of the Hours** that, after the Liturgical Reform of the Second Vatican Council, became the basis for Holy Saturday.⁶⁷⁴ In the Catholic tradition, Holy Saturday is still often called an ‘a-liturgical’ day. It is the only day when the Eucharist is given only as viaticum in the context of the Anointing of the Sick – a tradition that challenges a theology of liturgy centred around an understanding of Christ's presence in the Eucharist.⁶⁷⁵

A service of the word is not provided in the official liturgical books, nor any structured prayer at the tomb. This leaves space for private prayer and devotion, adequate for the theological narrative of the day as well as for adaptations of the liturgy of the Hours to its various contexts. Thus, the liturgy of the Hours, often celebrated by only clergy and religious, becomes (like the Church of England provisions) the core of the communal celebration of the day⁶⁷⁶. The reform of the Liturgy of the Hours tried to restore the daily office as prayer of the entire Church. The changes of the role of the Liturgy of the Hours in the *Institutio Liturgia Horarum*⁶⁷⁷ from 1971, shifted from a ‘clerical’ prayer to the prayer of the whole Church, is an attempt to make it both more ‘accessible’ and to sanctify the course of the day.⁶⁷⁸ The liturgy of the Hours structures the day and, as an *opus operantis ecclesiae*,⁶⁷⁹ points ultimately towards Christ's priestly work through the Church.

⁶⁷⁴ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 113.

⁶⁷⁵ Matias C. Augé, “The Liturgical Year in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 188.

⁶⁷⁶ Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit*, I, 137.

⁶⁷⁷ Catholic Church, *Liturgia horarum: Iuxta ritum romanum*, Editio secundum typicam alteram (Chicago: Midwest Theological Forum, 2010).

⁶⁷⁸ Rubén M. O. Leikam, “The liturgy of the Hours in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 78s..

⁶⁷⁹ Anscar J. Chupungco, “Liturgical Time and Space. Introduction,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, XXII, also Rubén M. O. Leikam, “Introduction,” in *The monastic hours: Directory for the Celebration of the Work of God and directive norms for the Celebration of the Monastic Liturgy of the Hours*, ed. Anne M. Field (Collegeville Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2007).

Before the liturgical reform of the 20th century the day was characterised by the celebration of the Easter Vigil in the morning and the (third) **Tenebrae** Service on Friday night.⁶⁸⁰ The three celebrations of the Tenebrae were a very specific liturgical form, characterised by its reduction and the readings from Lamentations (Lam 3:22-30, 4:1-6 and 5:1-11 on Holy Saturday). The service was simplified and assimilated into the ‘ordinary’ form of the Liturgy of the Hours by the Second Vatican Council. The archaic form of the Tenebrae was replaced in the liturgy reform by full Liturgical Hours.⁶⁸¹ This simplification was especially true for the ritual of the extinguishing of the candles together with the reading from Lamentations, often interpreted as anti-Jewish.⁶⁸² Together with a general tendency to reinforce the liturgy of the Hours as prayer of the entire Church, there is an inclination to replace the traditional Tenebrae services with a ‘standard’ Morning Prayer. The day loses its liturgical characteristics, but at the same time provides the opportunity for a joint Prayer of the Hours, unusual and challenging for many communities. This tendency carries the danger to ‘normalise’ the day and mask its strangeness and unusual character.⁶⁸³

The perspective of a **monastic community** is necessarily different since its routine is centred around the Prayer of the Hours. This is particularly true for the Benedictine tradition; for them, liturgy (*opus Dei*) is at the very centre of their spirituality and vocation.⁶⁸⁴ As reaction to the reform of the parochial liturgy, the Benedictine Confederation⁶⁸⁵ did not simply edit a new monastic breviary, but a “Thesaurus,” i.e. a ‘treasure’, and a directory on how to adapt liturgy for the specific circumstances of a monastery. This *Thesaurus Liturgiae Horarum Monasticae*⁶⁸⁶ (approved by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments and Divine Worship on the 10th of February 1977) still supplies the basis for the application of the liturgy of the hours to all Benedictine congregations and monasteries linked to the Confederation.

The provision of a “Thesaurus” and “Directory”⁶⁸⁷ as a basis for liturgy reflects, on one side, the idea of the Benedictines as more strongly linked to the individual monastery than to an overarching order. Yet, at the same time, it encourages the preservation of either more traditional liturgical expression or new and creative liturgy,

⁶⁸⁰ Joanne M. Pierce, “Tenebrae,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁶⁸¹ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 116.

⁶⁸² Joanne M. Pierce, “Tenebrae,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship* and Theresa Sanders, *Tenebrae: Holy Week after the Holocaust* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2006).

⁶⁸³ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern”.

⁶⁸⁴ Rubén M. O. Leikam, “The liturgy of the Hours in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 62 and Benedict and Luke Dysinger, *The rule of St. Benedict: Latin & English* (Trabuco Canyon, Calif.: Source Books, 1997), no. 8–20.

⁶⁸⁵ “Benedictine, Order,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁶⁸⁶ Benedictines, *Thesaurus liturgiae horarum monasticae* (Rome, 1977).

⁶⁸⁷ Anne M. Field, ed., *The monastic hours: Directory for the Celebration of the Work of God and directive norms for the Celebration of the Monastic Liturgy of the Hours* (Collegeville Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2007).

according to circumstance and need.⁶⁸⁸ Thus, it can be either a resort for the preservation of liturgical forms or an interpretation of the tradition through the creativity within it.

This is reflected again in the directions of the *Thesaurus*. It talks about monks as being privileged through their vocation to give more frequently common symbolic expression of the communion with God.⁶⁸⁹ In a similar way, the *Directorium* talks about the ‘monastic experience’⁶⁹⁰ of the prayer of the Church. Thus, a monastic community is, by nature, defined by its **vocation** in comparison with a parish defined by location and space. Also, the ‘core community’ of religious is often complemented by temporary non-religious workers, volunteers, and guests.⁶⁹¹ While the core communities, in most cases, are still shaped by their expectations of gender and religious denominations, this is not necessarily the case for their guests. This can create a new sense of a community, which is very limited in its spatial and temporal existence (e.g. for a retreat) and engages with the liturgy from a very diverse perspective, expectations, and experiences.

Using the *Thesaurus*, the primary point of reference for Benedictine liturgy is not a set and given text, but its interpretation and adaption within the concrete community.⁶⁹² Thus, it makes sense to study the custom of a specific abbey. The liturgical texts used for this case study are obviously far more specific than the ‘general’ liturgical books. To contextualise these documents, I have contacted the Abbey directly and had an e-mail exchange with the sacristan responsible for the organisation of liturgy. The aim of this additional information is not to replace the study of liturgical texts with ethnographic interviews, but to take the text seriously in its purpose as grown within and created for a context. The tension between the liturgical experience of an individual (or a group) and the liturgical ‘imaginary’ of a scholar refers to a negative hermeneutic and the need to engage with texts through their reception, deconstruction, and re-creation.

b) Context

Glenstal Abbey is a Benedictine Abbey in Limerick, Ireland, founded in 1927. Today, between thirty and forty monks live in the Community in addition to oblates attached to the abbey. The monks run a dairy farm and a boarding school for boys.⁶⁹³ Glenstal Abbey is part of the Congregation of the Annunciation (*Congregatio Annuntiationis B.M.V.*), founded in 1920 by three great abbeys in Belgium (St. André,

⁶⁸⁸ Rooney, “Gotteserfahrung und liturgisches Gebet,” 108–10 and Field, *The monastic hours*.

⁶⁸⁹ Terrin, “Per un rapporto autentico tra fenomenologia e teologia/liturgia,” 131.

⁶⁹⁰ Leikam, “Introduction,” 9.

⁶⁹¹ For the importance of hospitality in the Benedictine tradition, Benedict and Dysinger, *The rule of St. Benedict*, no. 53

⁶⁹² Leikam, “Introduction,” 12–14.

⁶⁹³ <http://www.glenstal.org/15.03.2017>.

Keiserberg (Mont César) and Maredsous), all of which were closely related through the German abbey of Beuron. It is a congregation within the Benedictine Confederation of fifteen independent male monasteries and two female monasteries as members of the Congregation, a further affiliated ten. The Congregation of the Annunciation is characterised by its international orientation, its aim from the beginning.⁶⁹⁴

This leads us to the first observation concerning the **language** of the liturgy. While the official liturgical language of the Roman liturgy is still Latin, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,⁶⁹⁵ influenced by the Benedictine spirit of the Liturgical Movement, encourages the translation of the liturgy into the vernacular. All offices at Glenstal, apart from the Vespers outside of the Triduum, are prayed in English.⁶⁹⁶ At the same time, it is interesting to note that the Glenstal Prayer Book provides prayers in Irish Gaelic⁶⁹⁷ and clearly references the tradition of the Irish language. However, the main language of the liturgy is English. The use of vernacular as a ‘translation’ raises questions about the relationship between a ‘lost’ original and an always contextual translation. These considerations lead to the analysis of translations used for liturgy. The Community in Glenstal uses the New Jerusalem Bible version, i.e. the authorised translation, for the readings of the Breviary.⁶⁹⁸ Other liturgical texts like hymns and antiphons are based partly on English originals and partly on different translations of traditional liturgy. The Kyrie is used in its Greek original in transliteration.

During the Triduum, the Community runs a retreat, with over one hundred residing and participating.⁶⁹⁹ Hence, using English as primary liturgical language makes sense. But the use of a monastic framework raises questions about the connection and defamiliarization of an ‘expected’ liturgy in comparison with parish or private custom. The presence of the retreat guests changes the composition of the **celebrating congregation** significantly and challenges the liturgical arrangement to engage with different spiritual and pastoral experiences and needs. The liturgy is performed by the monks sitting in the choir, while the congregation is seated in the pews. The Abbot leads the liturgy; only monks read the Office, while for the other liturgies guests are invited to read.⁷⁰⁰ The large number of retreat guests change the composition of the liturgical community significantly. Since the retreat is open to men and women, it differs from the

⁶⁹⁴ http://www.saintandrewsabbey.com/Congregation_of_the_Annunciation_s/38.htm 15.03.2017.

⁶⁹⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Paul VI., “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” no. 36.

⁶⁹⁶ “All services, except Vespers are chanted in English, with some Latin hymns and Antiphons. While the Eucharist is celebrated in English, the ordinary and proper chants are sung in Latin” (<http://www.glenstal.org/liturgy-prayer/daily-timetable/15.03.2017>).

⁶⁹⁷ *The Glenstal book of prayer: A Benedictine prayer book* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001).

⁶⁹⁸ “Bible (English Versions),” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁶⁹⁹ <http://www.glenstal.org/easter-triduum-retreat-2017/15.03.2017> The “Triduum” in Glenstal starts with the celebration of the Last Supper and ends after the Easter Vigil.

⁷⁰⁰ Senan Furlong, e-mail to Edda Wolff, March 21, 2017.

purely male monastic community, e.g. having more female voices changes the sound of the liturgical music.

A negative hermeneutic is particularly interested in the creativity of the compilation and the relationship of originality and the trust in textual tradition. Which guiding principles underlie the **composition and arrangement** of the liturgy for the following celebrations? Which conclusions can be drawn for the wider understanding of liturgy and its purpose? As we will see in the analysis of the liturgical text, the community composes and arranges its own services combining different elements of the Roman Liturgy of the Hours⁷⁰¹ and the Monastic Thesaurus.⁷⁰² The liturgy of the Triduum was developed in the mid-nineties by two Glenstal members. It was then revised in 2014 when the community decided to combine Matins and Lauds. The normal practice at Glenstal is to celebrate Matins and Lauds together, but they were celebrated separately during the Triduum to suit the guests' timetable as it existed then. The format of the retreat was changed in recent years and so the liturgy was also adjusted.⁷⁰³

The liturgy of **Holy Saturday** in Glenstal is structured around three prayer times: Morning Prayer (combining Matins and Lauds), Midday Prayer and Evening Prayer. It differs from the structure of a 'normal' Saturday that does not provide a Midday prayer. But the celebration of the Eucharist at 10:00 p.m. Holy Saturday is more closely linked to the ordinary pattern of a week than to the build-up of the Lenten liturgy. Usually the pattern of the liturgy on Saturday follows the template of a 'weekday' (6:35 a.m. Matins and Lauds (Morning Prayer), 12:10 p.m. Conventual Mass, 6:00 p.m. Vespers (Evening Prayer), 8:35 p.m. Compline (Night Prayer)).⁷⁰⁴ The only 'characteristic' of Saturdays during the year is that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. in the church.⁷⁰⁵ The text of the liturgy is provided as a **booklet**, containing all services from Compline on Maundy Thursday to Evening Prayer on Holy Saturday apart from the "Celebration of the Passion" on Friday. Even though the booklet has the title "Paschal Triduum,"⁷⁰⁶ it contains basically just 'other' unspecific services, i.e. neither the washing of the feet nor the adoration of the cross nor the Easter Vigil. While

⁷⁰¹ *The Divine office: The liturgy of the hours according to the Roman rite as renewed by decree of the second Vatican Council and promulgated by the authority of Pope Paul VI* (London, Glasgow, Sydney, Dublin: Collins; E.J. Dwyer; Talbot, 1974).

⁷⁰² Benedictines, *Thesaurus liturgiae horarum monasticae*; for the different roles within the celebration Field, *The monastic hours*, 47s..

⁷⁰³ Senan Furlong, e-mail to Edda Wolff.

⁷⁰⁴ <http://www.glenstal.org/liturgy-prayer/daily-timetable/27.03.2017>.

⁷⁰⁵ <http://www.glenstal.org/liturgy-prayer/daily-timetable/15.03.2017> The confession on Saturday serves as a preparation for the Eucharist on Sunday. The "in between status" of Saturday, between the structure of an ordinary workday and a more flexible schedule, gives the time to hear and to make individual confessions.

⁷⁰⁶ "Paschal Triduum" (Glenstal Abbey, 2014).

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday have very characteristic services, contained in different booklets, the liturgy of Holy Saturday is in this collection of “other services.” The booklets are printed by the Community and provides all participants with the full liturgical texts (apart from the readings).⁷⁰⁷

As the basis for the liturgy of Holy Saturday, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Thesaurus, and liturgical customs serve the Glenstal Community. Since the Congregation of the Annunciation does not provide any specific liturgical directions for its members, the challenge for the following study will be to analyse where the liturgy follows these directions and where it deviates from them. Can a certain liturgical, aesthetic, or theological ‘sense’, a guiding principle, or a depicted message be perceived in the text? Attention will be paid to ‘missing’ elements and gaps in the text.

2. Text Hermeneutic

As an introduction to the communal liturgy, the website of the Glenstal community tells us that

In Christian tradition, the two most cherished times for prayer are in the morning (Lauds) and in the evening (Vespers). At Lauds we consecrate the day to God, recalling and celebrating the light of Christ who visits us like the dawn from on high. At Vespers, remembering that Christ’s light will never die, we give thanks for the day that is past, praising the God who has done great things for us. The tradition of the Church has also given us the beautiful office of Compline, in which we commend ourselves to God’s protection before we go to sleep. Each of these offices is made up almost entirely of scripture.⁷⁰⁸

Accordingly, the liturgy of the Hours in Glenstal is very much centred around these offices. The liturgy on Holy Saturday is framed by the “Celebration of the Passion”⁷⁰⁹ on **Good Friday** afternoon, closing with all (congregation and monks) departing in silence. The Eucharist has already been removed to the ‘Altar of Repose’ on Thursday and is brought back only for the Communion on Friday. The rubrics do not say anything about the state of the church – most likely it is stripped during or after the Service of the Lord’s Supper on Maundy Thursday. Knowledge about emptying and clearing seems to be implied for participants, more in the background than something they actively take part in or reflect on. Holy Saturday ends with the blessing after Evening Prayer. No provisions are made for a Compline and the **Easter Vigil** starts with the Abbot greeting the congregation (“whether permitting”)⁷¹⁰ gathered outside the church for the blessing of the fire. The booklet “**Paschal Triduum**” keeps rubrics to a

⁷⁰⁷ Glenstal Abbey, “Paschal Triduum”.

⁷⁰⁸ <http://www.glenstal.org/liturgy-prayer/introduction/27.03.2017>

⁷⁰⁹ “Good Friday: Celebration of the Passion of the Lord” (Glenstal Abbey, 2014).

⁷¹⁰ “Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord: The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night” (Glenstal Abbey, 2014).

minimum. Most liturgical actions (e.g. standing and sitting) are taken for granted; thus it forces the wider congregation to follow the monks and other worshippers familiar with the specific customs of the Abbey. This implies that guests keep liturgical actions to a minimum (movements within the church, liturgical positions etc.) while monks follow the customs of 'regular days' (entry etc.) - if not verbally agreed otherwise. Apart from a lack of rubrics, the booklets are sufficient for the entire liturgy. They contain the Opening and Closing Responses, Hymns, Psalm, Antiphons, Responsories Canticles, the sung Kyrie and Lord's Prayer. Only the Readings and the Concluding Prayer are not provided. These are taken from the Roman Breviary, where they are Scripture Readings, the New Jerusalem version of the Bible is used.⁷¹¹ All Psalms are given without verse numbers; Responsories and Antiphons, however, are adapted from Roman Breviary

The booklet has a Celtic style cross with vine branches on the front page and Celtic symbols as markers between different sections of the liturgy. Various **pictures** are used at the beginning and end of each celebration. The section on Holy Saturday is introduced with a traditional icon of Christ leading naked people out of a lion's mouth while the devil lies chained on the ground. Nowhere in the service is 'silence' mentioned. This is the only image used for the section on Holy Saturday.

The **music** for the hymns is noted as plain chant; only the refrain of the NT Canticle (Phil 2:6-11) and the melody of Lord's Prayer are noted in modern notation. Hymns come from Glenstal Abbey (Holy Saturday, Morning and Midday Prayer: "Today the earth in vigil keeps") and the New English Hymnal⁷¹² (Holy Saturday Evening prayer: "In the hidden realm of darkness" – in the liturgy, it is set to a different tone). For most Antiphons and Responsories, the texts come from the Roman Breviary while the music is composed at Glenstal Abbey. As Antiphons and responsories play a crucial role by linking the different psalms and services together, the analysis of how they are chosen is key for the understanding of the basic intentions of a liturgical composition.⁷¹³ Traditionally, the Nocturne/Lauds has been the liturgical highlight of Holy Saturday.⁷¹⁴ The liturgy in Glenstal, however, is comparatively evenly spread over the day with **three services**. The liturgy on Holy Saturday ends after Evening Prayer; no Compline is provided. For Holy Saturday the Breviary as well as the Thesaurus suggests a Compline "*Only by those who don't attend Easter Vigil*".⁷¹⁵

⁷¹¹ Senan Furlong, e-mail to Edda Wolff, March 9, 2017.

⁷¹² *The New English Hymnal: Full music and words*, 16th impression (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005).

⁷¹³ Fischer, "Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern," 110.

⁷¹⁴ *op.cit.*, 108.

⁷¹⁵ *The Divine office*, 338 (italics in original) The Compline provided in the Breviary followed the standard structure with an Antiphon (instead of short Responsory): Christ humbled himself (as in Evening Prayer). In Glenstal, the omission of a Night Prayer on Holy Saturday provides space for a practical and spiritual preparation for the Easter Vigil.

a) *Morning Prayer*

The initial part of Morning Prayer is based on the liturgy of the **Nocturnes** (without any specific ‘title’ in the booklet) and a second part titled “Lauds”. The First part starts with a sung Opening Verse and the Invitatory to Psalm 94.⁷¹⁶ The psalm is sung responsively (everyone is singing the antiphons; the rest is sung by a cantor).⁷¹⁷ The liturgy of Matins has been significantly shortened for this occasion: compared with the liturgy of the Breviary, there is no Invitatory Antiphon (“Christ the Lord suffered for us”) and no hymn (“His cross stands empty”). The Glenstal liturgy starts with the invitatory psalm and then leads straight into the said psalms without antiphons. Psalm 15 shows a strong contrast to the overall theme of the day by asking for God's preservation and overall focussing on the themes of happiness and blessing. Psalm 23 again praises the power of God and calls him the “king of glory.” The two Psalms conclude with the “Glory be”. A reading of Hebrews 4:1-13 follows, focusing on the theme of entering with God into his (Sabbath) rest.⁷¹⁸ The following responsory (“Today the tomb hold him”) is taken from an Orthodox Matins for Holy Saturday, quoted from “The Oxford Book of Prayer”⁷¹⁹ (the Breviary uses the responsory “They buried the Lord” instead between the first and the second Reading). The following part is entitled “II” and is based on the Second Nocturne.

While the Breviary leads straight into the second Reading, the Glenstal tradition refers to the pattern of the Thesaurus and adds one psalm from the first and one from the second Nocturne: Psalm 29 again gives thanks to the Lord and his mercy and Psalm 87 introduces a change in perspective and focusses much more on the misery and suffering of the praying person. It seems to be more direct and open with God about the person's fears and afflictions. Both again conclude with the “Glory be”. The following Reading is a traditional patristic reading⁷²⁰ “from an ancient homily” and is taken from the Roman Breviary. The reading dates from the 4th century; it was written in Greek but the author is unknown. It focusses on the theme of the so-called Harrowing of Hell, i.e. the descent of Christ to the realms of existence.⁷²¹

The next part of the service is the **Lauds**. It begins with a hymn composed in Glenstal itself and focusses again on the silence of the day and the harrowing of Hell (instead of the Breviary hymn “O loving Wisdom”). The following antiphon is based on

⁷¹⁶ “Invitatory,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁷¹⁷ John Harper, “Psalmody,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁷¹⁸ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 114.

⁷¹⁹ George Appleton, ed., *The Oxford book of prayer* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷²⁰ “The second reading (non-scriptural) at Matins is at the discretion of the reader who may use the breviary or else select an appropriate reading from any source, ancient or modern.” Senan Furlong, e-mail to Edda Wolff

⁷²¹ “Descent of Christ into Hell, the,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

the Vulgate translation of Hosea 13:14 and has been the traditional Antiphon for the first Psalm of the Lauds since the 9th century and became the liturgical nucleus of the Paschal Mystery.⁷²² It has been adopted into the *Thesaurus*, but not the Breviary. Psalm 56 is found in neither of the above. It depicts a sharp contrast between God's protection and love and the danger and deceit of the world.

The next Antiphon is taken from the Breviary Evening Prayer. The image of Jonah as a metaphor for Jesus is based on Matthew 12:40. It raises the question whether Jesus' 'captivity' in the earth is a (vicarious) punishment, as a necessary period of waiting, or part of God's victory. Psalm 63 is taken from the Morning Prayer in the Breviary again. It depicts God's deeds and just actions against the wicked. Afterwards the liturgy segues into a very different tradition and includes elements of the Tenebrae service, where the Antiphon "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, come back to the Lord your God" is used between the readings of Lamentations. In contrast to the traditional plain chant used at the Tenebrae in minor mode, Glenstal uses a tone in mode VI. The Canticle (Lam 3:1-3, 3:22-24, 325-28, Glory be) is a compilation of the third reading of the Tenebrae on Good Friday (Lam. 3:1-9) and the first reading of Holy Saturday (Lam 3:22-30). This compilation is inspired by the traditional Tenebrae service and replaces the Canticle from Isaiah 38:10-14, 17-20 suggested in the breviary; the OT Antiphon ("Save my soul") is used later as the Antiphon for the Midday Prayer. The canticle expresses the ambivalence of an experience of affliction and alongside a trust and hope in God's love. It picks up the motive of silent waiting for God and a desire for his awaited salvation.

The Glenstal liturgy leads straight into the next antiphon and the recitation of Psalm 149 (verses 1-5) and 150 (only 150 can be found in the Breviary, 149 originates the again the tradition of the Tenebrae). A similar pattern can be found in Lauds on Good Friday when a canticle from Lamentations is framed by the "Jerusalem" antiphon and concluding with Psalms 149 and 150. On Good Friday, the corresponding antiphon is "We venerate your holy cross, o Lord", also used on Good Friday for the veneration of the cross (there set as plain chant).⁷²³ The Antiphon on Holy Saturday comes instead straight from the Breviary and focusses on the aliveness of the praying person and conquest of death and hell. The Glenstal liturgy skips the Reading from Hosea 6:1-3a (later referenced in the Magnificat Antiphon) and the Antiphon, used instead of a Response ("Christ humbled himself") a pattern, and repeated for the Midday and Evening Prayer. The Antiphon to the Benedictus ("Save us, O saviour") is taken again from the Breviary. Instead of intercessions the Kyrie is sung (as it is custom in

⁷²² Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 113 and Balthasar Fischer, "O mors, ero mors tua: Eine Kurzformel der römischen Liturgie für das Paschamysterium," in *Redemptionis mysterium: Studien zur Osterfeier und zur christlichen Initiation*, ed. Albert Gerhards (Paderborn, Wien u.a.: Schöningh, 1992), 111.

⁷²³ Glenstal Abbey, "Good Friday".

Glenstal), then the Lord's Prayer. The tone of the Lord's Prayer is based on a Russian melody by Ruisky Korsakov. The service closes with Concluding Prayers (not specified in the booklet, prayed by the presider from the Breviary) and a traditional concluding verse.

b) Midday Prayer

“The middle Hours (Terce, Sext, None), which are meant to sanctify the daily activity of Christians through a moment of prayer, makes [sic!] reference to the meaning of human work”.⁷²⁴ This is particularly interesting since Holy Saturday is so contrary to work itself. The pattern of the Midday Prayer follows the Glenstal structure of Midday Prayer on Sundays and Solemnities, and combines the three Small Hours (Opening Verse; Hymn; 3 psalms under 1 antiphon; reading; versicle; commemoration of the dead; collect; Closing verse). On weekdays, the Small Hours do not get prayed in the Abbey. The commemoration of the dead is omitted on Holy Saturday.⁷²⁵ Another peculiarity is that Midday Prayer usually ‘replaces’ the Midday Eucharist on days when there is a festive community Eucharist in the Morning; on Holy Saturday, however, it points out even more clearly the lack of a Eucharist.⁷²⁶ After the Opening Verse, the Hymn of the Lauds (“Today the earth in vigil keeps”) gets repeated. As an antiphon the OT antiphon of the Lauds in the Breviary is used (“Save my soul”). The Psalms 122, 123 and 124 (each separated by a “Glory be”) are neither found in the liturgy of Holy Saturday in Breviary nor in the Thesaurus. However, it is standard to pray the Gradual Psalms in the Small Hours on Solemnities, and so their use on Holy Saturday is a resumption of the psalms 119, 120 and 121 prayed at Midday Prayer on Good Friday.⁷²⁷ The psalm focus on themes of praise and security in God. Psalm 124 compares the trust in God with the strength and peace on Israel. The reading is taken from 1. John 2:8b-10 (Breviary Sext) and presents Christ as the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. The Responsory (“Our Shepherd, the source of living water”) is taken from the Office of Reading in the Breviary. The Office finishes with the Concluding Prayer. Compared with the liturgical structure for the Small Hours in the Breviary, the Glenstal liturgy misses the Psalms 26, 29 and 75 each with antiphon and hymn.

⁷²⁴ Rubén M. O. Leikam, “The liturgy of the Hours in the Roman Rite,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 87.

⁷²⁵ Senan Furlong, e-mail to Edda Wolff.

⁷²⁶ <http://www.glenstal.org/liturgy-prayer/daily-timetable/>.

⁷²⁷ Congregation for Divine Worship, “General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours” (1971), § 134.

c) *Evening Prayer*

After the Opening Verse, a hymn is sung. It is based on hymn number 99 from the New English Hymnal,⁷²⁸ traditionally for Good Friday (instead of the Breviary hymn “My God, I love thee”). For the service, only verses 3:4.6 and 7 are sung; the text has derivations from the hymnal version. The tone derives from the traditional hymn tone and is noted as plain chant. The following Antiphon (“Death I will be your death”) is taken from the tradition of the Breviary. In the Glenstal liturgy, it has already been used for the first Psalm of the Lauds (Psalm 56). The following recitation of Psalm 115 (verses 10-19) is again based on the Breviary. The Psalm focusses on the experience of overcoming affliction and the restored communion and sacrifices of thanksgiving.

The following Antiphon again is based on the Breviary (“As Jonah was within the whale”), but within the Glenstal liturgy links back to the Lauds and Psalm 63. While the Breviary continues with Psalm 142 (verses 1-11), this liturgy uses elements from the *Thesaurus* by reciting Psalm 140 and 141 and inserts an Antiphon from the III. Nocturne (*Dum tribularer, clamavi ad Dominum de ventre inferi, et exaudivit me.*). The Psalm 140 is linked through the Antiphon to Psalm 63 in the Lauds; it picks up the theme of prayer for refuge in God but shifts the perspective to the past: the praying person has prayed to God and asks to be kept under God's protection. This theme resumes in the following Antiphon to Psalm 141, a very different perspective on the distress experienced and brought before God in the present tense. It concludes with the “Glory be.”

With the NT Cantic Phil 2:6-11, the liturgy follows the breviary again. The cantic is said, with the last verse sung as refrain between the verses. It focusses on the kenosis of Jesus as a basis for his exaltation. It finishes with a Trinitarian formula. The following reading of 1. Pet 1:18-21 is again based on the Breviary. It reminds the congregation of the death of Christ as the basis for their faith and trust in God. While this continues with an Antiphon (“Christ humbled himself”) instead of a Responsory, Glenstal inserts a short Responsory based on Psalm 76 (“The earth in terror was still”). The Magnificat Antiphon also does not follow the Breviary (“Now the Son of Man has been glorified”), but provides an unusual Antiphon based on Hosea 6:1 (linking back to the reading of Hosea 6:1-3a provided, for the Lauds, in the Breviary). After the Magnificat, the office closes in the same way as the Lauds with a sung Kyrie, Lord's Prayer and Concluding Prayers.

⁷²⁸ *The New English Hymnal.*

3. Conclusions

Is it possible to map out hermeneutic main topics and the focal point of the liturgy as it is presented in the booklets of Glenstal? What can we say about its language, subject or sense? What are the blind spots and gaps of the liturgy?

As expected for Benedictine liturgy, the celebration is very much shaped by the **monastic prayer** tradition, in the structure of the consistent offices, as well as the creative interpretation of traditions and the free handling of given patterns so characteristic of the monastic approach. The three prayer times seem like a standard daily structure for a Benedictine monastery, but the **non-Eucharistic** character of Holy Saturday confronts the celebration of liturgy, from the very beginning, with the challenge to adapt given structures. So is Midday Prayer, usually reserved for Sundays and Solemnities, when there is a Community Eucharist in the morning. It redefines the meaning and function of the prayer having it ‘instead’ of the daily Eucharist. Compared to the first two days of the Triduum, the services of Holy Saturday stand out though their ‘unspecific’ character – a day of the liturgy of the hours, and abstain from the highlight of the Eucharist. Since a simple Midday Prayer takes the place of the Eucharist, one could ask how the rhythm and routine of prayer takes the place of an ultimate sacramental reality.

What does the non-Eucharistic liturgy tell about its celebrating ‘**subject**’? The liturgical setting and framework of the Triduum is very much influenced by the participation of the retreat guests. The fundamental Benedictine ideal of hospitality and openness of liturgy becomes the core for a community gathered together for four days and creates a temporary and very limited setting. This intensity is even more intentional through the composition of the liturgy. While all Antiphons and Psalm create a highly complex net of interlinked texts,⁷²⁹ the arrangement of liturgy can try to make this experience of interconnectedness, development, and defamiliarization accessible to people who are less familiar with the liturgy of the hours.

At the same time, the Glenstal policy to have only monks read during the offices reinforces the ideal that the community continues their daily office with guests joining in. The Abbot leading all offices during the Triduum structures the liturgy in an explicitly hierarchical way, giving the participants a clear focus point allowing them to build on a pre-given order and join a structured community. This approach raises question about the understanding of liturgy as experience or as a-temporal praise of God sustained by a sense of duty and thankful adoration.⁷³⁰ The liturgical texts on Holy Saturday are surprisingly intentional about the concrete and immanent community.

⁷²⁹ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 109s..

⁷³⁰ Rooney, “Gotteserfahrung und liturgisches Gebet,” 111s..

Neither Mary, nor the Saints, nor representatives of the wider Church are mentioned. The ongoing ritual prayer of the gathered community becomes the focus. The fact that the usual commemoration of the dead, part of the liturgy of Midday Prayer, is omitted, again increases the focus on the present community (united in time and space for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery).

This dynamic is supported by extra-liturgical practices like a shared rhythm of the day and meals. The idea of a fast in preparation for Easter might shape the day, as well as other ascetic practices, or the overall idea of a liturgical in community. The joining in of external guests, not only into the services, but in the whole life of the community for a certain amount of time, raises questions about the boundaries of liturgy in a 'monastic' understanding. How far is the whole life and the daily practices already part or preparation of a communal prayer?⁷³¹ The temporal limitations of this 'one-week community' raises questions around the spatial and temporal limits of the monastic calling as well as for the gifts and contributions that external visitors can contribute to (even exceeding) the monastic ideal. Where prayer is such a crucial element of the day to day existence, in how far is the 'doing' of the liturgy itself opposed to the rest and the silence of the day? In the case of Glenstal the ordinary rhythm of the monastic prayer gets interrupted not only by Holy Week but by the presence of retreat guests. In how far does the 'in between' of Holy Saturday provide space for hospitality and does the newly formed community become the source of hope? How does the standard liturgy of Glenstal allow the guests to experience limited defamiliarization and create community?

The **language** of all services is English, making the prayers accessible to all participants, but also indicates translation. Shaped by Responsorial Psalms, Hymns, Antiphons, and Responsories, the liturgy is highly poetic and encourages its participants to enter a metaphorical space, where they can identify or deidentify with the praying subject. The community exercises its liturgical freedom, from the Benedictine tradition, to choose a Bible translation, hymns from different sources, and compose Antiphon tones. The creative use of new Antiphons for the offices, that sometimes refer to older tones, can build a contrast and a surprising interpretation of liturgical melodies (e.g. tones in major, to traditional 'minor' themes). The *Thesaurus* provides already a specific view on liturgy as an arrangement that needs to be adapted to context. This reemphasises the self-understanding of a Benedictine Community as linked to its abbey and the *opus Dei* as contextual.

Liturgy is the prayer of the community, distinct from private prayer. The careful composition of the **Triduum as one celebration** makes the analysis of a single day

⁷³¹ op.cit , 112 and 121.

separated from its context even more problematic. Moreover, this approach can sharpen the perception of small details in the overall composition. This focus will allow us to highlight tensions and gaps without reconciliation. The whole celebration combines elements of the Breviary, the *Thesaurus*, the classical Tenebrae service, and other sources (Matins hymns). Overall, the composition of the different services follows tradition and emphasizes developments. The hymn of the Lauds is repeated at Midday Prayer. The Antiphon for the first (taken from Hosea 13:14, cf. Lauds) and the second (“As Jonah was within the whale”) Psalm of the Lauds and of the Evening Prayer links both offices together.

Repetition seems to be one of the central stylistic elements of the arrangement of the liturgy; this enables continuity as well as change and uncertainty. Lauds and Evening Prayer follow a similar structure: Hymn, two or three Antiphons, canticle, Responsory/Antiphon, Benedictus/Magnificat, Kyrie, Our Father, Concluding Prayers. This allows the community to notice developments of the theological content even more clearly. The power of intentional composition is even more noticeable in a ‘closed’ liturgical community, celebrating the full Triduum together. Links and differences between services can be deliberately ‘placed’ and used to facilitate a certain experience and understanding of the liturgical development. Also, a challenge is to create a sense of ‘normality’ from which it then can selectively differ. The relatively structured rhythm of the monastic offices are helpful as background for subtle changes.

This sense of a **gradual development** is created through the numerous links to the liturgy of Good Friday (elements of a Tenebrae at Morning Prayer, festive gradual Psalms for Midday Prayer). The omission the Compline again acts as an ambivalent sign in this setting: does the practical and pastoral considerations require a break before the Easter Vigil, or does derivation create space for the radicality of the resurrection? The tendency of the post-Vatican liturgy of Holy Saturday to replace the archaic and reduced celebrations with fuller hours⁷³² is even more accelerated in the liturgy at Glenstal.

Silence as a liturgical element and counter-pole to the speech-centred perspective of the offices is not explicitly mentioned in the rubrics, this emphasises the contrast of the communal prayer and the unspecific emptiness and forsakenness of the day. The contrast of a missing silence of the Divine Logos being dead and lost in the underworld becomes even sharper and the non-sense of the day is depicted even more clearly.

⁷³² Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 116 Interestingly, Fischer notices the opposite tendency in her study of German Benedictine liturgy, and its preservation of traditional forms inspired by the Tenebrae service.

The community provides a space where liturgy in its monastic form just continues and provides a welcoming and hospitable space for guests, who can join in and experience the rhythm and dynamic of a constant, ongoing prayer. The idea of a fidelity to an original through repetition and ‘obedience’ is a pillar of monastic liturgy and spirituality.⁷³³ It is challenged by the interpretation and adaption to the liturgical needs of a wider temporal community. The monastic ‘obedience’ and the requisite engagement in the rhythm of prayer is counterbalanced by the experience of a praying community, with their human and pastoral needs. This challenges participants to engage with the **unsecured sense** of a temporary community exploring the ‘in-between’ reality of the day.

The **ambivalent character** of Holy Saturday is a challenge for the composition and development of the liturgical day.⁷³⁴ The readings lead the praying community to sometimes follow expected liturgical and theological patterns, and sometimes follow others that are surprisingly counter-intuitive. This becomes clear looking at the back and forth movement of the spiritual and emotional ‘themes’ of the day. After the celebration of the passion and burial of Christ on Good Friday, the first Psalm of Holy Saturday (Psalm 15 and 23) focus on themes of blessing, and praise and the power of God. This seems like a radical contrast to the recent experiences of radical powerlessness of Christ on the cross.

The reading then leads to the ambivalent image of God's rest, the desired rest of Sabbath, but at the same time the final rest of the tomb. The Psalms of the second Nocturne continue by contrasting the experience of God's mercy with the misery of the praying person. The Psalms seem to grow into an openness and confidence, expecting more of God. The following Reading evokes the Harrowing of Hell, Christ's radical kenosis and the beginning of his victory over death and sin.⁷³⁵ This theme is continued by the Hymn of Lauds. The Lauds Psalms (56 and 63) look back again on a contrast between the wickedness of the world and God's justice and love. This culminate in the Cantic from Lamentations, where affliction and hope in God's salvation get contrasted with the idea of an expectant silence and sitting in awaiting of God. The following Psalms 149 and 150 bring the praying community back to the dynamic of praise and thanksgiving, which now is framed by the preceding process of despair and wrestling with God.

The Liturgy of the Morning Office presents the ambivalent and dynamic experience of Holy Saturday concisely. The following Midday Prayer links back to the

⁷³³ Rooney, “Gotteserfahrung und liturgisches Gebet,” 118.

⁷³⁴ Fischer, “Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern,” 112s..

⁷³⁵ “Descent of Christ into Hell, the,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

overall perspective of the Triduum as a process of ascent and festive pilgrimage. It also brings into view the perspective of the wider Church community and its need for peace and salvation. The first Psalms of the Evening Prayer summarises the dynamic of Holy Saturday and resumes themes of despair, salvation, anticipated joy, and thanksgiving. The next Psalm (63) arouses affliction and danger, in which the praying person turns to God. However, it shifts the perspective in this experience to the past and asks for ongoing protection from God. Psalm 141 finally articulates the experience of distress and affliction in the present tense and the praying person seems able to articulate their experience of despair clearly and with integrity before God. The Canticle from Phil 2 and the Reading from 1. Pet focus strongly on the connection of Christ's saving kenosis and his glorification by God. The slow development, and the gradual increase of hope and joy, Wiese ascribes to the texts of the Breviary,⁷³⁶ is contrasted by the dynamic of the Glenstal liturgy, the ambivalence and 'unclear' development of the spiritual and 'theological' processes of the day.

Fischer's criticism of the post-Vatican liturgy for Holy Saturday applies: the liturgy focusses very early on a 'high Christology' and shifts the dynamic from a dialogue between God/Father and human/Son, to a dialogue between Christ/God and Church/humans. The **Church** takes on a role of praise and the liturgy is shaped by the expectation of salvation. Experiences of doubt and darkness can easily get lost.⁷³⁷ The way, this liturgy is aimed at a specific community gathered for the celebration of Easter and the experience of an ongoing monastic liturgy questions whether the general ideal of Church overwhelms the experience of a human Church, or whether the concrete church, with all its human particularities, forms Church in the first place.⁷³⁸ The principle of humility, as the foundation of prayer and life in community, becomes the basis for the experience of liturgy, and contrasts by the community being adapted to provide hospitality and accessibility. The **communal search and desire for God** in liturgy and prayer shapes the praise and waiting.

The experience of search and mutual hospitality does not end with the gathered community, but becomes the basis for a wider community of prayer and shared life as participants explore their role, vocation, and contribution to the liturgical process.⁷³⁹ The gathered community becomes a sign and expression of the wider Church and her dialogue with God, and a constant challenge to keep the celebration open to everybody, for different perspectives, and space for liturgical self-distancing.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁶ Wiese, *Karsamstagssexistenz*, 114.

⁷³⁷ Fischer, "Zur Tagzeitenliturgie an den drei Tagen vor Ostern," 120s..

⁷³⁸ Rubén M. O. Leikam, "The liturgy of the Hours in the Roman Rite," in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 79–82.

⁷³⁹ Quartier, "Das liturgische Selbst," 150–55.

⁷⁴⁰ Field, *The monastic hours*, 20–23 and 40s..

C. Holy Saturday with the Iona Community

1. *Setting*

The ‘youngest’ liturgy in this study comes from the **Iona Community**. This international community is named after a small Scottish island in the Inner Hebrides. After St. Columba and his companions arrived and founded a monastery in 563, the island was a spiritual and cultural centre for several centuries and the starting point for significant missionary enterprises in Scotland and North England. During Columba's time, only monks settled on Iona; nevertheless, there was a sense of hospitality for strangers. Women, however, were strictly banned.⁷⁴¹ The monastery stayed in close contact with monasteries in Ireland, where St Columba's relics and the famous book of Kells were moved when Iona was threatened by Viking attacks in the 8th century. However, the island was never completely abandoned by the monks and was still a flourishing Celtic religious community when a Benedictine monastery was established in 1203. The graveyard of the island was the burial ground for Scottish kings from the 9th to the 11th century. In the 16th century, the abbey was acquired by the Scottish Bishop of the Isles and their Protestant successors before being abandoned and falling into ruin in the 17th century.⁷⁴² Over the course of history, Iona kept being a centre of pilgrimage and a ‘sacred’, remote place, inspiring writers and artists (for example, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, who visited the island in 1829).⁷⁴³

One of the turning points was the reroofing of the Abbey church in 1910 and the rebuilding of the conventual buildings under **George MacLeod** between 1938 and 1959.⁷⁴⁴ During the Great Depression in Scotland, George MacLeod worked as a Presbyterian Minister in Glasgow and was deeply concerned about the poverty in his working-class parish. He believed that the language of the ‘world’ and that of the Church had dangerously drifted apart, leaving ordinary people with the sense they did not belong and leaving clergy unable to address problems of injustice and social change. He recruited a group of young ministers, who had just finished their training, and unemployed workers from Glasgow. They lived and worked together on Iona for three

⁷⁴¹ Donald MacLeod, “Celtic Spirituality,” in Forrester; Gay, *Worship and liturgy in context*, 44 Although the wider Celtic church had married clergy, monks were always celibate.

⁷⁴² “Iona,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁷⁴³ Robert Crawford, *The book of Iona: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2016), XI. Texts inspired by the island and its unique character start with Adomnán’s “Life of St. Columba” and continue today with writers such as Kenneth Steven (*Steven, Kenneth C. Iona: Poems. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew’s Press, 2000.*).

⁷⁴⁴ “Iona,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

months of the year, rebuilding the monastic buildings. Even though the project was first and foremost driven by MacLeod's idea of social justice and living Church, the choice of Iona as a place which had been deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and had inspired people for centuries, was not accidental.⁷⁴⁵

The days on the island were structured by communal prayer, work and theological reflection. After the summer, the ministers would go to poor urban parishes in central Scotland, while the craftsmen would either return to the cities or continue rebuilding.⁷⁴⁶ After the rebuilding works had finished in the summer of 1959, with the official opening of the restored cloisters, the **Community** had to redefine their goals and purpose.⁷⁴⁷ Although the purpose of MacLeod's idea had from the very beginning been wider than just the community on Iona itself, following the end of the original work and MacLeod's retirement, the community underwent significant changes in the mid-1960s. The refurbished Abbey became a year-round place for conferences, meetings, and training. Today, it consists of about 280 Members, mostly in Britain, and 1500 Associate Members, with 1400 Friends worldwide.⁷⁴⁸ Together with staff and volunteers, the community runs two guest houses on Iona and a youth centre on the nearby Isle of Mull. The headquarters is based in Glasgow and coordinates the administration of the Community as well as work with young people. For the distribution of its liturgical resources, as well as its musical and core texts, the community runs a publishing house, Wild Goose Publications.⁷⁴⁹ While the community started as a mainly Presbyterian undertaking, it has developed into an ecumenical and international organisation with members from a wide spectrum of Church traditions and backgrounds. In the first few decades, only men were allowed to join the community (till 1970 members' wives were not allowed to stay with them during their training on the island) and women were only accepted as members in 1969. Nowadays, however, the community has around equal numbers of men and women in full membership.⁷⁵⁰

Since then, **inclusivity** has become a central theme of the Community and its views on worship. The liturgies are meant to help people of any gender, race, culture, sexual orientation to feel welcome. To achieve this purpose, the Community replaces old language and concepts with newer, more appropriate ones, and aims to “marry both

⁷⁴⁵ Ron Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community*, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2001), 153–63.

⁷⁴⁶ Kathy Galloway, *Living by the rule: The rule of the Iona Community* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ, 2010), 8s. and “Iona,” in Cross; Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁷⁴⁷ Ferguson, *George MacLeod*, 304.

⁷⁴⁸ <http://www.ionabooks.com/about-wild-goose-publications/11.04.2017> and Norman Shanks, *Iona, God's energy: The vision and spirituality of the Iona Community* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 134.

⁷⁴⁹ <http://www.ionabooks.com/about-wild-goose-publications/11.04.2017>.

⁷⁵⁰ Galloway, *Living by the rule*, 138–41.

the old and new”.⁷⁵¹ Along these lines, the Community is keen to include songs and musical arrangements from around the world, and uses Scottish folk traditions as well as music and poetry from contemporary artists.

Despite its international engagement, the Community is mainly **English-speaking**, and English is the first and predominant language for the liturgy. However, some Wild Goose Resource “titles are also published in translation in Sweden, Norway, Netherlands & Denmark. In addition, there are individual songs & texts in various other languages.”⁷⁵² In this context, it is interesting to note that, from the very beginning, in St. Columba's time, the remote island of Iona was connected to Europe through the Latin language, while still deeply rooted in the Celtic language tradition and culture.⁷⁵³ The community is dispersed over several countries, with only a few members (and many more staff and volunteers, who are not part of the community) living and working on the island for a limited period. What unites the community is a **shared rule** of life to which members all make an annual re-commitment.⁷⁵⁴

According to Kathy Galloway, “the rule is essentially relational rather than institutional.”⁷⁵⁵ From the early days of the community, when the life was shared in a very confined space, close interpersonal accountability was crucial. Members account for each other’s prayer discipline and meet up in regional groups for fellowship and shared prayer. For this study, the **understanding of prayer and liturgy** is central as part of the communal rule. At the same time, the communal liturgy experienced on the islands, in small groups, through liturgical resources, and the Community's “revitalising of worship”⁷⁵⁶ in parishes, is for many people the first point of contact with the Community's work. The ‘revitalising of liturgy’ and the publication of sources for worship is a key part of the self-understanding of the Iona Community. “The WGRG [Wild Goose Resource Group] exists to enable and equip congregations and clergy in the shaping and creation of new forms of relevant, participative worship.”⁷⁵⁷ This aim to make liturgical resources available to as many people as possible is shown in the open guidelines for the use of material published by Wild Goose: “The material in the books published by Wild Goose Publications may be used *non-commercially* for worship and group work without written permission from the publisher.”⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵¹ Shanks, *Iona, God's energy*, 142.

⁷⁵² <http://www.ionabooks.com/content/using-our-materials/12.04.2017>.

⁷⁵³ Crawford, *The book of Iona*, X.

⁷⁵⁴ The Iona Community. *Iona Abby Worship Book*, revised edition. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ., 2017, 268.

⁷⁵⁵ Galloway, *Living by the rule*, 23.

⁷⁵⁶ <http://www.ionabooks.com/about-wild-goose-publications/11.04.2017>.

⁷⁵⁷ <https://iona.org.uk/resources/wild-goose-resource-group/13.04.2017>.

⁷⁵⁸ <http://www.ionabooks.com/content/using-our-materials/12.04.2017>. This system is founded on a trust basis and not reenforced by the community.

Liturgy structures **daily prayer on the islands**. The prayer on Iona “reflects our life together”.⁷⁵⁹ Everyone involved in the Community starts their work right after morning service. They believe the sacredness of everyday life “is affirmed in the way visitors[...] share meals, engage in daily work and conversation”.⁷⁶⁰ And the blessing is given only after the evening prayer, creating an impression that the whole day is one continuous service.⁷⁶¹

Many people first encounter the Community through the **prayer and music resources** the Community has “sought to share with the wider church”.⁷⁶² Twenty years ago, the Iona Community was known mainly for political engagement, in the context of worship, especially through its popular song book “Common Ground”⁷⁶³ and “The Iona Community Worship Book,”⁷⁶⁴ its bestseller. People encounter ‘Iona style’ services in their home churches, at festivals, and at special services with specific themes (healing, social justice etc.). People who have visited the island and stayed with the Community for a week, or for a single service as day-visitors, or staying in other guest houses, experience the worship.⁷⁶⁵ These resources have been developed not in the abstract, but for occasions like community prayers, “demonstrations and blockades, in anti-poverty campaigns, in industrial disputes, and in prison, for pastoral crisis and situations of deep tragedy.”⁷⁶⁶

This understanding is shown in the way the **Iona Abbey Worship Book**, a primary liturgical resource, talks implicitly and explicitly about worship. The **fifth edition** was recently been published in January of 2017. It contains patterns of the daily morning and evening prayer (in a weekly cycle), as it is prayed on Iona, as well as additional resources and adjustments. It was “compiled by members of the Iona Community in consultation with staff working on Iona and members who regularly visit the island centres.”⁷⁶⁷ The liturgy is altered during the winter months when there are no guests on the island. In addition to the Worship Book, the Community has published several other liturgical resources and collections. Some “might be created ex nihilo, while others may be composed of material from any number of different sources”.⁷⁶⁸ The book does not name the author of its services (many can be traced to the time of

⁷⁵⁹ Galloway, *Living by the rule*, 26.

⁷⁶⁰ The Iona Community. *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, revised edition. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ., 2017, 7.

⁷⁶¹ Shanks, *Iona, God's energy*, 133.

⁷⁶² Galloway, *Living by the rule*, 27.

⁷⁶³ John L. Bell, *Common ground: A song book for all the churches full music edition*, Reprint (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2000).

⁷⁶⁴ The Iona Community. *Iona Abbey Worship Book*.

⁷⁶⁵ Shanks, *Iona, God's energy*, 131s..

⁷⁶⁶ Galloway, *Living by the rule*, 27s..

⁷⁶⁷ The Iona Community. *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, 8.

⁷⁶⁸ Shanks, *Iona, God's energy*, 146.

George MacLeod),⁷⁶⁹ but does not try to give the impression that liturgy originates without context. Even though it is aimed first and foremost for the services in the island centres, the additional material and the guidelines help people adapt the services to their needs. The development of liturgy is understood as relational rather than technical or academic. The worship settings are developed collaboratively and ‘tested’ with the whole community. This allows authenticity and freshness and highlights the ‘dependence’ of liturgy.⁷⁷⁰ The liturgy of the community is both highly contextual and rooted in tradition. It is designed for the people present and their situations and equally values Iona tradition. The Worship Book “is offered to people of faith and doubt whose presence is always valued on Iona, and offered to God in gratitude for a legacy which began in 563AD, when St Columba landed on the island, and which we pray will last for many years to come.”⁷⁷¹ This raises the question whether the resources are ‘liturgical’ texts in a strict sense or rather examples meant to encourage people to engage with communal prayer and develop prayer patterns for their own settings? Does a liturgy require an original on which it is based on or could a spontaneous celebration or adaption be counted as liturgy?

The approach of the Community attempts to keep the balance between making use of the skill of their members (many professional artists, poets, musicians are involved in the work of the wild Goose Resource Group) and valuing the particularity of the contributor's stories and participants’ context. A **free and creative approach to liturgy** is reflected in the weekly rota for leading the services. While all staff members (ordained and lay, Community members or not, from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences) will lead worship and preach regularly, readings, prayers, and some services are also led by volunteers and guests. As a standard Bible translation, the Community use the NRSV unless the person leading the service requests another translation. The final responsibility for worship falls within the domain of the sacristan, who is a resident staff member, but not necessarily a member of the Iona Community or any kind of “liturgical expert”.⁷⁷² The liturgy is ‘owned’ by Community. The fact that services are led by different people, from all over the world, every day is part of this ownership and encourages innovation. The Community makes the practising of unfamiliar songs and text material a part of its discipline.

Liturgy is seen as a collaborative process and testing, which enables authenticity, freshness and integrity, but at the same time tries to remind the individuals as well as the

⁷⁶⁹ Norman Shanks, “The Worship of the Iona Community and Its Global Impact,” in Forrester; Gay, *Worship and liturgy in context*, 234.

⁷⁷⁰ *op.cit.*, 237–45.

⁷⁷¹ The Iona Community. *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, 8.

⁷⁷² Norman Shanks, “The Worship of the Iona Community and Its Global Impact,” in Forrester; Gay, *Worship and liturgy in context*, 235.

community to be aware of limitations and frailty.⁷⁷³ People in the congregation will be familiar with the liturgy to various degrees. This ad-hoc character of the Community makes it difficult for liturgy to refer to an original and to create the sense of estrangement. A self-distancing within liturgy and its self-critique would need to be based on the shared immanent experience counter-posted by the utopia of a reconciled community.

2. Liturgy

This understanding of liturgy confronts an academic study with additional challenges. While the Church of England liturgy for Holy Saturday is a ‘standardised’ liturgy, the Glenstal liturgy is a ‘concrete’ liturgy; it has been (and will be) celebrated in the Abby for several years. Iona, however, offers resources that can be recombined and adapted according to context. The choice of a reference liturgy is therefore crucial for and already part of the hermeneutic process.

The **most complete liturgy for the Easter Triduum** is “The Cross in the Marketplace. An Easter resource book from Iona.”⁷⁷⁴ The resource has been published as a book and an e-book by Wild Goose. It was written by Dave Broom, a member of the Community and resident sacristan on Iona for 2012.⁷⁷⁵ This book will be used as a basis for the following study, since it provides the most coherent and independent material for a celebration of Holy Saturday. There are, however, additional resources for Holy Week; resources for Easter and Holy Week include “Eggs and Ashes: A Practical and Liturgical Resources for Lent and Holy Week”,⁷⁷⁶ a book of readings, responses, music, prayers, sermons, and activities for different liturgical celebrations. A key resource is “Iona Dawn: Through Holy Week with the Iona Community”;⁷⁷⁷ it includes reflections on the different events of Holy Week as well as possible activities to engage with the events of the week. It is written by several members and “[c]onnecting the denials, betrayals, suffering and eventual new dawn of this life-changing week with what is happening in our own world today, this book accompanies the reader as an insightful guide.”⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷³ op.cit., 235–45.

⁷⁷⁴ Dave Broom, *The cross in the marketplace: An Easter resource book from Iona* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ., 2014).

⁷⁷⁵ op.cit., 13.

⁷⁷⁶ Ruth Burgess and Chris Polhill, eds., *Eggs and ashes: Practical & liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week* (Glasgow, U.K.: Wild Goose Publ., 2004).

⁷⁷⁷ Neil Paynter, ed., *Iona dawn: Through Holy Week with the Iona Community* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ., 2006).

⁷⁷⁸ <http://www.ionabooks.com/iona-dawn.html/13.04.2017> Other Iona Resources include “Rosemary for Remembrance. Resources for Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day.” [Trevor Thorn, “Rosemary for Remembrance: Resources for Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day” (digital download,)] An e-resource that proves reflections for Good Friday and Holy Saturday and a simple all-age activity for Easter Sunday. And “Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Three reflections by Jan

This plenitude and diversity of resources complicates what a ‘liturgical’ text is. While most traditional liturgies provide rubrics, prayers and responses, but explicitly not music and sermon/reflection, these are often the starting point for Iona resources. How is the whole ‘setup’, including reflections and interpretations on the readings, a part of the liturgy? How can we interpret sources that are explicitly meant to be contextualised and adapted in a concrete setting? How can an academic study take responsibility for the choice of text if not through the concrete situation it is aimed at? Does the community provide the necessary ‘other’ for the hermeneutic process? Or can the hermeneutic of a ‘fictive’ celebration provide enough framework for the ‘dreaming’ and free association about liturgy, that the text and its intended community could become its own dialogue partner?

a) *Framework*

David Broom, in the Introduction to his book “The Cross in the Marketplace: An Easter resource book from Iona”, describes the development of his own faith and how he found in the Iona Community “a place where people were not prepared to disconnect their spirituality and their politics, their work and their worship.”⁷⁷⁹ He describes how the connection of prayer and action shaped his own life, and he developed his understanding of worship as the resident sacristan on Iona in 2012. Based on this experience, he has written a resource book. He emphasises that, although he has written the text, it emerged out of a context and a shared experience. In addition to this personal account, he gives a **short guideline** about the “shape of the book and some suggestions how to use it”.⁷⁸⁰ The book is divided into two sections. The first one is an “Easter Pilgrimage which happens just before Holy Week, the second part provides texts for the services of Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday). Broom emphasises that the book can be used for individual or group reading as a spiritual practise, as well as for the celebration of Holy Week. He encourages the user to adapt services to a context. This raises questions about the liturgical responsibility of worship leaders as well as the relationship between (faithful)

Sutch Pickard.” [Jan S. Pickard, “Good Friday and Holy Saturday: Three reflections,” <http://www.ionabooks.com/good-friday-holy-saturday.html>] as well as numerous suggestions for poetry, reflections, and music [for example Sally Foster-Fulton, *Step gently in the world: Resources for Holy Week* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ., 2015)]; the most recent publication, “The Sun Slowly Rises. Readings, Reflections and Prayers for Holy Week from the Iona Community” [Neil Paynter, *SUN SLOWLY RISES: Readings, reflections and prayers for holy week from the iona community* ([S.l.]: Wild goose Publ., 2017)] provides “Bible readings, reflections and prayers for the days of Holy Week, and a large section of resources, including ‘Prayers on the seven words from the Cross’, ‘A service of lamentation to liberate us for action’, poems, meditations, and reflections” [<http://www.ionabooks.com/the-sun-slowly-rises.html/13.04.2017>]

⁷⁷⁹ Broom, *The cross in the marketplace*, 13.

⁷⁸⁰ op.cit., 14.

reading and ritual celebration.⁷⁸¹ In his Introduction, Broom mentions the **people** he encountered during his time on Iona and with whom he shared Holy Week. However, the book is not just a diary or record of a past liturgical event, but a resource meant for celebrating and ‘performing’.

The setting of the book is very specific as it assumes a concrete ‘closed’ community that spends all Holy Week together in the very confined space of an island. People gathering for Holy week with the Iona Community, stay in of the island centres (Abbey or MacLeod centre) for eight days and share not only the liturgical experiences, but also the experiences of meals, work, conversation and the surrounding environment of the island. The services staff, volunteers, and guests are joined by other people living on the island or visiting for one or several days. In an ordinary week on the island, Saturday is the day when new guests arrive, and the day ‘begins’ with a welcome service in the evening. During Holy week the guests stay from Saturday before Palm Sunday to Easter Monday. So, by Holy Saturday they have been on the island for a week and have become familiar with the standard structure of the days.

Liturgy in this context is very much a relational event. A hermeneutic of liturgical texts needs to be aware of this lack of relationship and context, which leaves a gap in its understanding, but at the same time can free potential to study and analyse these gaps and breaks, and their function in a liturgical process. Whether the Eucharist can be celebrated on Holy Saturday is not asked in this context, since it is celebrated on Sundays only. In a similar way, the Community does not have a tradition for sacramental confession, so that this possibility does not come into view for the structure of Holy Saturday.

The very **inclusive approach** of the Iona Community will attract people from different denominations, social backgrounds, and spiritual pathways – even people who would not attend Holy Week services anywhere else. Still, it is necessary to consider that the very remote situation of the island will be difficult to access for people with certain disabilities, as well as for people who cannot afford the long and expensive travel (though the Community offers reduced prices for people on low income and supports its volunteers financially).

The text is available as a **book or e-book** though the Wild Goose Publication. The front cover shows a young woman spraying a graffiti cross on a wall. The same picture is shown several times in the book between sections. The image as well as the title of the book are based on a quote of George MacLeod about the cross being “raised again at

⁷⁸¹ op.cit., 14.

the centre of a market place as well as on the steeple of the church”,⁷⁸² preceding the introduction of the book. The publishers allow the use of material for non-commercial purposes and the e-resource provides enough copies for all people actively involved in the liturgy. Every chapter begins with a short introduction and directions for its use. Despite the Community's interest in accessibility, there is no large print version available (there is for the Iona Abbey Worship Book).

The book provides reference for **sources and acknowledgements**. It uses readings from the ESV Bible, the Good News Bible and the NRSV Bible.⁷⁸³ The chapter on Holy Saturday contains all the instructions and text necessary (without music) including bible readings. As the opening responses are said by the congregation and the Psalm is prayed responsively, at least these parts would need to be available for the entire congregation.

b) Analysis

α) Introduction

The text starts with an **introduction**, which is entitled “Holy Saturday – a service of waiting and hope”. The texts refer to Holy Saturday as day “when Christians traditionally renew their baptismal promises” and when the new Paschal candle is lit. Both these practices are linked to the Easter vigil, traditionally moved forward to the Saturday rather than being typical rites of Holy Saturday itself. Broom does not include these elements in his service but suggests that they could be used in an adaption of the service. He describes the service as “build around the prophecy of Jeremiah” and gives a short introduction to the historical context of this prophecy. He links the prophecy of hope to the situation of the disciples after Jesus' death. “[W]hen all hope seems lost, Jeremiah had told the people that there were still grounds for hope.”

Regarding **ritual action**, Broom links the service back to the pilgrimage around the island that people had been on a few days before. As part of their journey, they visit Columba's Bay, the place where, according to the tradition, Columba and his companions first arrived on the island. Broom describes the history and importance of Columba's Bay to make it understandable and accessible for people who have not been on Iona themselves. During the pilgrimage to Columba's Bay, people are asked to pick up two stones, one of them representing something left behind, the other, something to be taken up. The leader encourages people to throw the first stone into the water and take the second stone home with them. From his experience, Broom suggests “they keep

⁷⁸² George F. MacLeod and Ron Ferguson, *Daily readings with George MacLeod*, New ed. (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2001, ©1991).

⁷⁸³ Broom, *The cross in the marketplace*, 171.

the second stone in their pocket when they return home”.⁷⁸⁴ Thus, it can become a reminder of Columba's Bay in everyday life and encourages people to pray every time they take it into their hands.

There is only one service held on Holy Saturday (contrary to the ‘normal’ pattern of Morning and Evening Prayer on the island), **framed** by the celebrations of Good Friday and the dawn service very early on Sunday. The Good Friday evening service is held as a ‘dispersed worship’ in small groups at different places around the island. This recalls the dispersed disciples after the crucifixion, but also of the permeable boundaries between worship, community and work. After the hopeful and encouraging closing words from Romans 8:31-39 (NRSV) “folk disperse in prayer and silence”.⁷⁸⁵ The dawn service on Sunday again starts in the open air and people gather outside the church.

The **setting** for Holy Saturday is very different. After the introduction the service starts immediately, without any explanations about location, setting, or structure. It must be assumed that the service is held again in the Abbey church. It is remarkable that the service of Holy Saturday in terms of its location is the most ‘church bound’ act during the Triduum and the only opportunity to ‘experience’ the empty church in a liturgical setting. The church has been stripped and every decoration that cannot be removed is covered in black cloth at the end of the service on Maundy Thursday.⁷⁸⁶ As it is already dark, when the church is stripped (the remaining candles are extinguished one by one) and the services on Good Friday (Stations of the Cross, personal reflection, dispersed services) are held outside the church, this is the first time that people see the emptied church. In a similar way to the location, the time of the service is not specified. It follows neither the pattern of an Iona Morning nor Evening Prayer. It is not linked to any specific events on the day (as for example the Stations of the Cross) nor to any specific time of day (e.g. dawn or dusk).⁷⁸⁷

The unspecific timelines reflect the time of waiting and patience. The people ‘actively’ involved in the liturgy are three readers and a leader, as well as musicians (the settings suggested in the book are simple and well known and could potentially happen without musicians involved). The parts said by the leader are all written (including a reflection, a sermon and a preliminary introduction, which is not part of the service). The four readings are all printed in the text. No special ‘equipment’ is used during the service the only additional item needed is a bowl of water, used later in the service for

⁷⁸⁴ op.cit., 148.

⁷⁸⁵ op.cit., 146.

⁷⁸⁶ op.cit., 77.

⁷⁸⁷ In the reflection during the service the text talks in parallel to the worship of Good Friday about “tonight” which indicates that the service is held in the evening, op.cit., 151.

the people to throw one of their stones in, and the flower bulbs planted in groups on Good Friday.

β) Liturgical text

The service begins, like most Iona services, with **opening responses** said responsively by the worship leader and the congregation. They are characterised by their precise and catchy language. While the leader refers in the four verses to the darkness and hopelessness of the day, the congregation answers four times with “we wait for” and an expression of hope. The leader closes the responses with a short prayer for the presence of God and his sustaining power in despair. The responses are followed by a song (the only piece of music that is not provided by the service). The standard songbook, the “Iona Abbey Music Book”,⁷⁸⁸ offers songs for Holy Saturday.

The following **three readings** are divided between three readers: Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:36-38:42-44 and 33:14-16.⁷⁸⁹ The readings are chosen thematically rather than following a liturgical tradition.⁷⁹⁰ They are printed in the book and follow the NRSV translation. These texts continue the Reading of Jeremiah 32:1-2, 6-7, 9-12, 13-15, one of the five readings during the ‘dispersed service’ on Good Friday. The first reading talks about the new covenant that God wants to make with his people, and the obedience of Israel. The prophecy of the second reading concerning the conquest of Jerusalem and the exile of the people is framed by a prophesy of hope and leads straight into the promise of good fortune. The texts leave out the second part of verse 32:37 about God driving his people out “in [his] anger and my wrath and in great indignation”. The third reading intensifies the promise and emphasises that the reign of David will be re-established.

It follows a **short reflection** led by the worship leader. While most liturgies explicitly do not have a sermon but leave space for the adaption or interpretation of the read texts (if not of the entire liturgy), the textbook provides a fully written reflection and interpretation. The reflection refers to the dispersed liturgy on Good Friday and the reading about the exile in Babylon. The reflection talks about the difficult situation of Jeremiah who had to give these rather unpopular prophecies. It gives historical background for the prophecy and talks about the conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. It

⁷⁸⁸ Jan Sutch Pickard, *Iona Abbey music book: Songs from the Iona Abbey Worship Book*, [Partitur] (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publ, 2011).

⁷⁸⁹ The text refers to Jeremiah 32:26-38:42-44, but the uses sections reveal a typing error.

⁷⁹⁰ The first Reading is used in the Revised Common Lectionary in year B for the 5th Sunday of Lent; the second is not part of the lectionary; and the third is used in year C for the first Sunday of Advent, *Revised common lectionary in NRSV: Sundays and festivals; principal common lectionary of the Church of England*, Personal ed. (London: Mowbray, 1998).

links to the final reading of Jeremiah 32:6-7, 9a, 13-15 in which Jeremiah buys a field despite the hopelessness of the political situation.

The reader of the following reading is not specified; it could be one of the people who did one of the first three readings or a different person. After the reading, the leader gives the **second part of his reflection**. The second reflection talks about hope and belief in the future and God's desire for a new relationship with his people. The reflection links the motive of God's will to establish a new covenant directly to the belief in the incarnation and Jesus' suffering in human form. The sermon reflects on the communal experience of all Holy Week and draws a parallel to the experience of the first disciples. The text uses a strong mimetic language ("We watched as Jesus dies... And then we run away in terror and confusion."). It describes the attitude of Holy Saturday as 'waiting'. The tension of not-knowing leaves the gathered congregation in a state of uncertainty, where people do not know if they have any reason for hope. At the same time, it reflects on the possibility of hope based on the experience of God's people during the exile in Babylon.

After this part of the reflection a song is sung. The book suggests "In our darkness" from Taizé. The **songs of the Taizé-Community**⁷⁹¹ are well known and catchy, so they can easily be sung without musical accompaniment. The choice of the song links the Iona liturgy to another modern Christian Community and emphasises the universal and international character of the celebration of Holy Week. The song is originally written in French (*Dans nos obscurités*) and refers to the light of God illuminating human darkness. After the song follows the final part of the reflection.

This **final reflection** again begins with a reference to the dispersed worship on Friday. It contrasts the feelings and the fear of the first disciples with the hope against all hope that we see in Jeremiah. The reflection then links Jeremiah's hope back to the action on Good Friday, part of the dispersed service when, in response to the reading of Jeremiah, people are encouraged to plant flowers. The same flower bulbs are now brought forward and placed together at the front of the church in the Easter garden. This sign is explained and interpreted as an act of solidarity with the oppressed and linked to the trust in a better future. The reflection ends with a quote of 1. Cor 12:27 "For all of you are Christ's Body, and each one is a part of it." This interpretation shifts the perspective from an individual experience of fear and hope to a collective perspective of commitment and solidarity.

⁷⁹¹ Verlag Herder, *Die Gesänge aus Taizé: Neuauflage* (Freiburg, Taizé: Verlag Herder; Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2016).

Then **Psalm 27** (NRSV version) is said responsively between group A and B; the text is given without verse numbers. This is again untraditional.⁷⁹² The content of the Psalm is very much characterised by hope and the first three verses talk about the trust in God despite the external danger. Verse 4 and 5 ask for protection in the house of the Lord and the beauty of God's temple. Verse 6 again talks about sacrifices and the music of joy in the tent of the Lord. Then verses 7 to 11 ask for God's help and salvation against adversaries and for the teaching of his law. Verses 12 and 13 are again characterised by hope and the trust in God's goodness "in the land of the living". The theme of 'waiting for the Lord' gets resumed by the following song from Taizé "Wait for the Lord, his day is near, wait for the Lord, be strong take heart", based on this verse (the original in English).

Afterwards the leader introduces the **ritual action**. The introductory text speaks again of Holy Saturday as the day of renewing baptismal promises and then leads on to the invitation to pick up two stones and drop one into the water in the middle of the church as symbols of letting something go and 'die' and to take up another stone symbolising something they want to do. The action is carried out with quiet music underneath.

The service ends with **closing responses**, contrasting themes of the opening responses (sorrow, darkness etc.) with the acknowledgement of God's transformative power and to which the congregation response with thanks and hope. The last of the four responses is still characterised by an attitude of waiting, but the waiting has been changed into a hopeful waiting. Afterwards, the leader reads Jeremiah 29:11-14 and Rom 15:13 (NRSV), both emphasizing trust and joy in God, and then gives a blessing. No instructions for the leaving (music or silence) or remaining in the church are given.

3. Conclusions

The most obvious difference from other liturgical texts is that this example is written by a named author based on a unique context (Holy Week on Iona in 2012). At the same time, it is explicitly meant for use and adaption in other contexts. The suggestion that it can be used for reading (individual or with groups) as well as for worship, makes for an interesting hermeneutical study analysing the particularities of 'liturgical' texts. The text comes with additional '**explications**', giving information about the background of readings and their interpretation as well as suggestions on 'how' the service could be celebrated. Thus, it is not so much an interpretation, as a given 'meaning'. This is meant to support people prepare the liturgy and to lead the

⁷⁹² The Revised Common Lectionary uses Psalm 27 only for Epiphany and the third Sunday of Epiphany in year A. The Church of England lectionary uses it for Morning Prayer on Tuesday in Holy Week.

services. For those not used to leading worship and preaching, the reflection provides a theological and pastoral base to use or adapt to their context.

For Good Friday, reflections written by seven different authors are provided as a basis for contemplation and discussion so that people individually or as a group must choose which text to focus on. For Holy Saturday, only one service is provided, and it comes without additional or alternative actions or texts, so that the variety is relatively limited. However, in the wider context of the celebration of Holy Week this text too is regarded as a ‘**source**’ or description for worship rather than a liturgical ‘norm’. While the reflections and the disperses service on Good Friday are more obviously focussed on social justice and action,⁷⁹³ the service on Holy Saturday is introduced with a reflection using the liturgical tradition of the commemoration of baptismal vows. As many people present (and maybe even the person leading the service) might not be familiar with this liturgical tradition, it is mentioned and explained in the introduction as well as in the reflection leading up to the action. In this, the author refers to the baptismal liturgy in the Easter Vigil,⁷⁹⁴ traditionally celebrated on Holy Saturday. But here it is not necessarily connected to this day and the time of ‘waiting’, but rather to the experience of the resurrection in the Easter night. The liturgical action itself links different classes of symbols and actions: water and baptism, death and resurrection, letting go and taking on, commitment and emptiness.

How does the understanding of liturgy as linked to the experience of everyday life and community influence the use of **language**? Which genres, styles, and rhetoric do the texts use? Liturgical sources created by the Iona Community are famous for their poetic power and their creative and strong use of language. So are many of the other resources for Holy Saturday are based on poems or written reflections.⁷⁹⁵ Broom's use of language for the liturgy of Holy Saturday is, however, much simpler compared with the wording of other celebration provided in the book. The service is centred around readings from Jeremiah; reflections on these readings and the symbolic action of picking up two stones. Other than the catchy and poetic opening and closing responses, the service is very discursive and wordy. The choice of the readings is based more on content and a desired experience of the day than on liturgical tradition. The question could be whether this lack of poetic expression is suitable for the immanent and ‘literal’ character of the day.

The text is based on the NRSV translation. The first three readings are chosen from different chapters of Jeremiah; the fourth one even goes back to a previous

⁷⁹³ Broom, *The cross in the marketplace*, 123.

⁷⁹⁴ Wiese, *Karsamstagsexistenz*, 110–12.

⁷⁹⁵ Paynter, *Iona dawn*.

chapter. The order, however, gives the impression of moving from desperation to trust in God's promised salvation. The reflection and introduction to the symbolic action interpret and give background information. The parts are more didactic and pastoral than symbolical or ritualistic themselves. At no point is silence used. Even the ritual action is performed "with quiet music underneath".⁷⁹⁶

The author explains his own background, intention, and context and encourages the 'user' of the book to adapt the text to their requirements. This creates a very specific interconnectedness of author, original audience, reader, and current celebrants. What, then, is the subject of this liturgy? The text encourages new worship leaders. The text seems to assume the leader and the person in charge of the service to be the same person as the introduction (meant to help organise the celebration) and the reflections given by the reader are very similar in their content and there is no role distinction visible. The leader is given a large amount of text and will need a certain confidence to read/memorise or interpret it more freely. Other distinct roles within the celebration are three or four readers who read a few verses from Jeremiah each. During the recitation of the Psalm, the congregation is divided into two groups saying the text responsively. Everybody is invited to join in the opening and closing responses and actively the part in the stone ritual. The use of two well-known and repetitive songs from Taizé again encourage people to join in and actively the part in the liturgy.

Another key dimension for liturgy is **solidarity**. It is a central theme of the first action (bringing flowerpots together), symbolizing not only unity within the present community but "solidarity with the oppressed, enslaved, abused and marginalised of the world."⁷⁹⁷ The focus is on the wider humanity. The idea of a transcendent Church to which liturgy is correlated is not mentioned. God is addressed as a benevolent and wise Lord, who wants good for his people (the second part of Jeremiah 32:37, about anger and wrath, is left out) and whose promise of a brighter future can be trusted. The text does not ignore themes of despair and wrestling with God but focusses much more on elements of waiting and trusting.

While not completely avoiding dark and pastorally difficult themes, the omission of this verse is a clear decision, considering the celebrations on Iona often attract people who struggle with traditional images of God and have negative experiences with Church hierarchy. The perspective is mainly an immanent one, feeling with and remembering alongside the disciples and their waiting between Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The text as presented is based on the experience of celebrating Holy Week together and spending a week sharing life on a small island. It can therefore assume a certain level of

⁷⁹⁶ Broom, *The cross in the marketplace*, 154.

⁷⁹⁷ *op.cit.*, 151.

shared experiences, emotions and compassion, the basis for empathy and identification with the disciples in their uncertainty. The perspective of solidarity and compassion becomes central for the wider outlook to all people and all of creation suffering and the call to action. The focus of the liturgy of Holy Saturday is 'waiting'; and it accomplishes the shift from hopelessness to hope with elements of 'doing' and campaigning already implied. What consequences does this have for the adaptation of liturgy in a different context? How far is the concept of worship here based on a wider experience? Can the 'meaning' be simply transferred and consummated in a different setting? Is an 'immanent' answer adequate?

The setting is one of the great strengths of Iona: people spend a week (or as volunteers and staff an extended period) together on a remote island with the beautiful nature and a shared program. This experience yields an understanding of community, solidarity, and responsibility within the liturgical celebration. The liturgy makes this '**program**' explicit and does address directly questions of social and political engagement and action. Even the reference to the remembrance of baptismal vows does not lead to a ritualization or symbolisation of this part of the service, but to a very different action, the ritual of baptism mainly related by water. Based on the dynamic of passing from death through water to life, the suggested action changes the meaning to an opposition of letting go/letting die and taking something on/committing to something. The traditional paradigm of death and repentance is contrasted by action and commitment. In a similar way, planting flower bulbs outside depicts an idea of community and shared hope without fully staying within a coherent symbolic system.

The liturgy attempts to **create meaning** and sense not only within those present but beyond the island by encouraging people to take up a commitment in their everyday life. Liturgy has thereby a pastoral and pedagogical dimension as well as a celebratory and spiritual. The composition of the texts creates a 'turning point' within the service which shifts the perspective from separation and fearful waiting to solidarity and hope. This happens through the purposeful use of readings and their explanation with the service. The more mimetic element of empathy with the disciples going through the events of Holy Week gets counterbalanced with the anamnestic remembering of God's promise to his people in the Jeremiah reading.

The following reflection immediately links this promise to Jesus' death and suffering on the cross and draws hope from the experience of God's saving power in seemingly hopeless situations. How does the liturgy of the Iona Community deal with the experience of a broken utopia? Negative hermeneutics will be especially interested in the aspect of 'waiting' and how is used as a liturgical element to educate the desire of

the participants and to help them grow in awareness of thankfulness and the need for justice. The new sense of community (“we are waiting in hope”) and thankfulness (“we give you thanks”) answers the to the initial experience of fear and despair.

To what degree is this understanding and this use of liturgy to be considered ‘immanent’ and literal? Does it carry the danger of being too ‘pragmatic’ and eschew the spiritual and mystagogical potential of liturgy? Does this approach do justice of the ‘in-between’ character of Holy Saturday? Can the political and educational character of the service keep space open for the mystery and the unanswerable ambiguity of the day? The service has a clear social and pastoral focus which makes it more easily adaptable in different contexts. At the same time the desired meaning requires a certain understanding and contextual use, a more open and reduced use, which allows an individual understanding and experience of ritual and symbols, leaving more space for an ‘unsecured’ and unpredicted meaning. How can the liturgy be linked and perused in every-day life in a parish or community context? The lack of silence and openness within the service on Iona is easily balanced by the experience of silence and nature as well as that of a ‘contained’ local community. This shifts the perspective to social action and commitment. A transfer of liturgy to a different context would need to bear this setting in mind. It would question the **lack of mystery** and silence as well as the existing group dynamic before using symbols and set reflections. Otherwise, the liturgy is in danger of becoming a simple teaching, avoiding silence and the experience of the incomprehensible. The silence and ‘gap’ character on the island is ensured through the contained ‘outside’ of the worship; any different context would need to be aware of this.

D. Holy Saturday in the Byzantine Tradition

1. Basis

The last example of liturgy and the liturgical understanding of Holy Saturday is the “**Byzantine Liturgy**”. As the only example of non-Western liturgy, this tradition confronts the study with additional challenges and enriching perspectives. The concept of ‘liturgy’ is challenged because, in Orthodox use, it often refers only to the “Divine Liturgy” (i.e. the Eucharistic liturgy Θεία Λειτουργία), while other services are called by specific names (e.g. Daily Offices ἀκολουθίες). In the following study, the word ‘liturgy’ will be used to preserve the continuity with the previous case studies. The liturgy of the Byzantine liturgical ‘family’ is part of the wider Eastern Christian liturgical tradition and is used by Eastern Orthodox Churches and Byzantine Catholic Churches.⁷⁹⁸ Within this ancient tradition, Greek and Slavic use represent the two main types of liturgical adaptation. The translation of liturgy into the vernacular has long been a reality for the Orthodox Church.⁷⁹⁹ The general openness to translation is juxtaposed by the strong nationalistic and ethnic rootedness of many Orthodox Churches. Particularly, expatriate congregations face the challenge of wanting to preserve their cultural identity, often inaccessible for people of the second and third generation. At the same time, for practical reasons, parishes often serve ‘pan-Orthodox’ congregations that forced to ‘translate’ beyond a single language tradition or cultural tradition. Finally, Orthodox congregations in mainly non-Orthodox countries attract converts who are not at all familiar with the ‘home language’ of the church. The use of the vernacular is the basis for mission as well as for dialogue with other local churches.⁸⁰⁰ For a negative hermeneutic, this provides a rich basis for the study of layers of predominant and more hidden voices within the liturgy.

The **Orthodox Church in America**, whose liturgical texts are going to be the basis for this study, must deal with large, ethnically mixed Orthodox congregations. They made it part of their mission statement “to utilize for her [the Church's] mission the various languages of the peoples of this continent.”⁸⁰¹ In 1967, the OCA published an official translation of the Divine Liturgy. The text was based on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, from which all direct passages of Scripture are taken. This

⁷⁹⁸ John Klentos, “Orthodox Worship,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁷⁹⁹ <https://oca.org/about/mission-vision> 27.02.2018.

⁸⁰⁰ the very interesting article <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/orthodoxbridge/why-we-need-an-all-english-liturgy/22.05.2017>.

⁸⁰¹ <https://oca.org/about/mission-vision22.05.2017>.

translation is published by the Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press and is widely used in English-speaking contexts.

Saint Vladimir's Press was established in 1968 as part of the Orthodox seminary of Saint Vladimir in New York with the intention of “[t]he publication and distribution of quality Orthodox Christian material, both on the scholarly and popular levels”.⁸⁰² This translation is, however, not the only ‘normative’ version. The services of Holy Week are published in several booklets, providing all the textual material needed for services and can be used by the altar party and congregation alike. For the choir, the publisher provides additional resources, which cannot be treated adequately within the parameter of this study.

The **booklets** published by Saint Vladimir's Press confront us with a very different type of liturgical ‘text’: even though they are used in a highly complex ‘liturgical’ act of worship, including processions and chants, they do not resemble how one might expect a ‘liturgical book’ to look. They are printed as A6 paperback booklets with simple pictures and illustrations of biblical and iconographic scenes. The altar party and the congregation rely on the same books. These booklets contain all text necessary for the service (including readings). Only the Great Litany is not included. It varies by region and is said by the priest either from memory or from a different source. For the choir, Saint Vladimir's Press offers a musical edition. The complete text of the service of Great and Holy Week and Pascha are available in a single volume some parishes (or individual) might use for the services.⁸⁰³ Even though the booklets are used by people actively involved in the service, rubrics are kept to a minimum. This is the case for the simplified translated version, and “[b]ooks of rubrics as a type of liturgical book develop relatively late in the history of the Byzantine rite, and this development seems to have been in response to the almost complete absence of rubrics in the euchology texts,”⁸⁰⁴ Also, some Byzantine books resisted, until recently, the usage of rubrics. This reflects a complex dynamic of oral tradition, theological commentary, and liturgical ‘accuracy’ within the Byzantine tradition.⁸⁰⁵ Due to such specificity, this study will use the text of the St. Vladimir booklets, and, for additional explanations and rubrics, consult the **translation by Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary**. This translation follows the wording of the King James translation and the Book of Common Prayer as much as possible and is based on the “triodion katanyktikon”.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² <https://www.svspress.com/pages/About-SVS-Press.html>06.06.2017.

⁸⁰³ Joseph Rahal and John G. Winfrey, *The services of great and holy week and pascha, according to the use of the self-ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*, 2nd rev. ed. (Englewood, N.J.: Antakya Press; Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, 2006).

⁸⁰⁴ Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” 289.

⁸⁰⁵ op.cit.

⁸⁰⁶ Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 4 and Ware, “The Meaning of the Great Fast,” 66.

In the booklet for Matins, we find a **mystagogical introduction** about the liturgical structure as well as the theological significance of Holy Saturday by Alexander Schmemmann. The same text has been published as part of Schmemmann monograph on Holy Week, showing the interconnectedness of liturgy and (mystagogical) theology.⁸⁰⁷ The introduction of the Vespers gives an explanation to the Liturgy of Saint Basil as well as to the icon of the descent shown on the book cover. In a similar way, Kallistos Ware begins his translation of the Triodion with a fifty-page introduction on the theological significance of fasting. The expression ‘fast’ is used for the liturgical season of Lent, as well as for the personal and social practice of abstinence.⁸⁰⁸ This links personal practices and the broader liturgical framework. The ‘decision’ to assume traditional, ascetic commitments is not limited to the act of worship. The interweaving of personal commitment and framework are particularly remarkable from a negative hermeneutic point of view.

One of the most notable difference to the previous examples is the Orthodox **Easter date**, calculated according to the Julian Calendar.⁸⁰⁹ For Orthodox communities in English-speaking ‘exile’, this implies Holy Week may or may not coincide with the Western Holy week and therefore liturgical feasts may or may not coincide with holidays. The study of Holy Saturday is especially important as the celebration begins on Friday Evening, not always a holiday. Eastern Holy Week does not end on Lazarus Saturday as in the West.⁸¹⁰ This separates Lenten fasting as preparation for Easter (and baptism) from fasting as part of Holy Week.⁸¹¹ By the end of Holy Week, people have fasted and abstained from animal products for seven weeks. “On Good Friday and Holy Saturday as strict an observance as possible is encouraged”.⁸¹²

The **fast** frames the experience of Holy Week and the preparation for Easter. An additional characteristic is the practise of confession. Many Orthodox Churches require adult communicants to make an individual confession on the evening before they receive communion.⁸¹³ As Easter is one of the four days of the year when Orthodox believers must receive the Eucharist, hearing confessions is an additional task for priests in addition to the extensive liturgies.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *Holy Week: A Liturgical Explanation for the Days of Holy Week* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1971).

⁸⁰⁸ Ware, “The Meaning of the Great Fast,” 13–66. For the mystagogical interpretations of fasting, also Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent*. 6. printing (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

⁸⁰⁹ Paul Bradshaw, “Easter,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM dictionary of liturgy and worship*.

⁸¹⁰ Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 12.

⁸¹¹ Bradshaw and Johnson, *The origins of feasts, fasts, and seasons in early Christianity*.

⁸¹² Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 14.

⁸¹³ Nicola Bux, “Reconciliation in the Eastern Churches,” in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies, Volume IV: Sacraments and Sacramentals*, ed. Anscar J. Chupungco, Handbook for liturgical studies v.4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000).

⁸¹⁴ Nicola Bux, “Reconciliation in the Eastern Churches,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, IV:115s..

Even though Holy Week is not considered part of the forty days of Lent, the liturgy follows a ‘**Lenten**’ pattern. The offices of Holy week add ‘proper’ readings to the running lectionary of First Testament readings during Lent.⁸¹⁵ The Byzantine liturgy limits the reading of the First Testament to certain seasons and restricted number of feasts; the regular course begins in the week following the Sunday of the Last Judgement. This restricted use of readings has a broad influence on the liturgical tradition. The language and “the development of Byzantine hymnography may partly explain the limitation of our liturgical Bible to a restricted number of Old Testament Books.”⁸¹⁶ Between the Great Thursday and Easter Sunday, as these attract the largest number of faithful in the entire year, additional dramatic/mimetic elements are added to the regular services (funeral procession etc.).⁸¹⁷ While the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts⁸¹⁸ is celebrated on the first three days of Holy Week, on Holy Saturday the liturgy of Saint Basil is celebrated together with Vespers.⁸¹⁹ This study will focus on Matins and Vespers of Holy Saturday but will ignore the service of the reading of Acts which leads to the midnight service of Easter.⁸²⁰

The **time structure** of the day poses additional challenges. The Orthodox liturgy works like the pre-Vatican Catholic liturgy with a ‘time difference’: from Palm Sunday on, all services are advanced by half a day.⁸²¹ Holy Saturday Matins (“Orthos” in Byzantine tradition) is therefore celebrated on the Evening of Friday and Vespers on Saturday Morning. This raises again the question how we ‘define’ the liturgy of a certain feast: Is the liturgy of Holy Saturday all the celebrations that are celebrated within 24 (or 36) hours? What about those traditionally celebrated within this time frame or those whose content matches the liturgical function of a day? Would it be appropriate for a liturgical hermeneutic to assume what ‘should be’ celebrated and then to see whether the actual service ‘fits’ these categories? As this study is going to focus on the Vespers (with the liturgy of St Basil) and the Matins of Holy Saturday, it will encounter themes and structures very different from the Holy Saturday liturgy in the first three case studies. The advantage of this approach is that it broadens the understanding of Holy Saturday.

Compared to other liturgical approaches, difference allows one to take seriously the liturgical intention to express whatever Holy Saturday is within a certain tradition.

⁸¹⁵ Bridget Nichols, “Prayer,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 18.

⁸¹⁶ *op.cit.*, 19.

⁸¹⁷ Elena V. Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 172.

⁸¹⁸ Nicola Bux, “Reconciliation in the Eastern Churches,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*.

⁸¹⁹ This liturgy which differs from the “ordinary” liturgy of Saint Chrysostom only in certain (mostly still) prayers is used on 10 days of the year among them Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Holy Saturday (Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 16).

⁸²⁰ Ware, “The Meaning of the Great Fast,” 63.

⁸²¹ Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 18.

The **liturgical pattern of Holy Saturday** can be studied through a threefold model: the structure of an ‘ordinary’ Saturday, a Saturday in Lent and the preceding Lazarus Saturday. This feast, which is celebrated on the day before Palm Sunday, is often seen as a prophetic announcement of Pascha before Holy Week. While Saturday is usually devoted for the liturgical commemoration of the dead, Lazarus Saturday proclaims Jesus' power about death.⁸²² During Lent, the Eucharist is only celebrated on Saturday, Sunday and Annunciation. This regulation, which was meant as a limitation, rather makes Lent for many communities a ‘Eucharistic’ period and gives the character of Holy Saturday a specific frame.⁸²³

As in the West, Holy Week is considered the most sacred week of the liturgical year. Holy Saturday is also known as the Great Saturday of the Lord's Tomb. The strong focus on the grave and its representation in the liturgy through the **Epitaphion** (i.e. a Holy Shroud or Winding Sheet, which represents the tomb of Jesus and is placed in the middle of the church) are significant elements of the worship on this day. The ‘theme’ of Holy Saturday as day of the tomb begins with the bringing in of the Holy Shroud during the Vespers on Good Friday. During the service of Matins on Good Friday Evening, the epitaph is carried around (as in a funeral procession) outside the church, followed by a procession during the singing of the Trisagion. Afterwards, it remains in there until just before Easter Vigil. In some churches, it is custom that the Epitaphion never stays unguarded. The tradition of carrying the shroud back into the sanctuary is a devotional practice which has only been developed 16th century.⁸²⁴

Compared with the first three examples of liturgy on Holy Saturday, the Byzantine tradition is significantly more complex. Accordingly, the different modes of involvement and **liturgical roles** are much more varied. Additional provisions for a liturgical deacon and a bishop are made. Large parts of the liturgy are sung by a choir and significant parts are read or sung by a reader. The ‘clerical’ (deacon, priest, bishop) and ‘minor order clerical’ (cantor, reader subdeacon) roles can only be taken on by men; however, the participation in the choir can be executed by men and women. The long and, in part, nocturnal celebration (including a procession) of the feast require a certain stamina of the participants especially as many traditional churches do not provide any seating. While the services of Matins and Vesper are open to all people, the liturgy of Saint Basil (like all Divine Liturgies) distinguishes a part for ‘catechumens’ (non-baptised) and baptised. In a similar way, the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is only open for the baptised. Depending on the Church tradition, a confession is required for

⁸²² Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 4 also Meyendorff, “The time of Holy Saturday”.

⁸²³ Elena V. Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 159s..

⁸²⁴ Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 18.

the admission to the Eucharist. The admission of baptised infants to communion has consequences for the composition of many congregations as (even late night) celebrations are not only considered a task for (single) adults.

For reasons of space and of scope, this study cannot try to present the **complex historical development** of the Byzantine liturgy of Holy Saturday. As there is no definitive academic study of Byzantine liturgy of Holy Saturday⁸²⁵ this section can only point out significant questions and delineate gaps. For this study, it is of interest to note the liturgy has grown over time and it is possible to distinguish three different layers. The liturgy in its contemporary shape is a complex synthesis of elements of the Constantinopolitan Cathedral tradition, the tradition of Jerusalem, and the Palestinian monastic liturgy.⁸²⁶ Through all stages of development, the focus of liturgical books was not the tidiest or historically authentic ‘rite’, but the union of different traditions.⁸²⁷ What is codified as the “Byzantine tradition” of Holy Week today is a very mixed entity⁸²⁸. Holy Week as a liturgical entity was developed during the fourth century. Again, Egeria's account of the events in Jerusalem is quoted to analyse different historical layers. According to Egeria, special services of Holy Week are celebrated in addition to daily services. The liturgy is very demanding for participants but provides a genuine opportunity to experience “for themselves the passion, death and resurrection of Christ”.⁸²⁹

Over several centuries, the Orthodox Church gradually merged regular daily offices incorporating special elements. This led to a very complex and liturgically challenging structure, critiqued by Orthodox theologians for theological as well as pastoral reasons. The Greek theologian Pavlos Koumarios argues, for example, that during the last two centuries the divine services was changed to different times and many mimetic/representational actions were added. The liturgical combination of three traditions without forethought, in his opinion, leads to a series of liturgical problems. First, he points out the repetitive character of the services (e.g. repetition of Gospel readings, of ‘funeral procession’ and burial). Second, he argues that dislocation of the services disconnects worship and real time. Events in sacred history not only lose their meaning for people, but also their symbolic power. Additionally, the deferral leads to a confusion of the faithful about when things happened. Koumarios argues that “Holy

⁸²⁵ Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 85.

⁸²⁶ Pavlos Koumarios, “Liturgical problems of Holy Week,” *Saint Vladimir's theological quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2002): 6–8.

⁸²⁷ Rentel, “Byzantine and Slavic Orthodoxy,” 255–70 and Robert S. Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities: The Byzantine Holy Week Triduum as a Paradigm of Liturgical History,” in *Time and community: In honor of Thomas J. Talley*, ed. Thomas J. Talley and J. N. Alexander, NPM studies in church music and liturgy (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1990), 21–33.

⁸²⁸ Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 70.

⁸²⁹ Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*, 10.

Thursday, Holy Saturday and the Sunday of Pascha do not exist theologically in our contemporary Holy Week Ritual.”

The rite in its current form represents a double Holy Friday and premature paschal rite. He continues to state that Holy Saturday has vanished from the life of the Church and the mystagogical process of worship. As a day of mourning and silence, it was for the ancient Church the only day without celebration of Eucharist and the only Saturday of the year with strict fast. However, now Holy Saturday is the chief day of resurrection, while the Sunday of Pascha is not a liturgical day. Koumarianos considers the pastoral challenges of the lengths of the services and criticises especially their disorganisation.⁸³⁰

According to Robert Taft, the development of iconography and contemporary Triduum services happened in continuity with Constantinopolitan elements in monastic *typika* (i.e. the books that contain the liturgical order), while the dramatization of Jesus’ burial happened later. Similarly to Koumarianos, he comes to the conclusion that changing liturgy in history can be considered a source of freedom and creativity; however, presently the structure of the Triduum is more of a **patchwork liturgy** that needs revising.⁸³¹ He raises the question of what an appropriate use of the lectionary and the liturgical tradition could look like: whether the individual parish should consider a simplification and adaption of the liturgy or need a general reform. He points out that the structure of the Week has significantly changed over time and that, in the Constantinopolitan system historically, the whole passion was celebrated in one day. He states that liturgical knowledge is not only an acknowledgement of the past (historian) but appreciation of present heritage.⁸³²

This study cannot enter this complex and intra-denominational discussion. It is, however, of great interest for a negative hermeneutic to follow and compare breaks and gaps that other scholars and liturgists have noticed and discussed in a very different (practical) context.

2. *Liturgy*

Holy Saturday is widely considered the most complex day of the liturgical year. In a simplified way, one could say that the liturgy of the day contains two consecutive parts: one still in passion one already Easter. At the same time, Holy Saturday ‘pierces’ into Good Friday through the motive of the burial symbolised by the Epithaphion.⁸³³ The

⁸³⁰ Koumarianos, “Liturgical problems of Holy Week,” 14–17 also Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities”.

⁸³¹ Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 87–91.

⁸³² Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 34.

⁸³³ Moine de l’Eglise d’Orient, *The year of grace of the Lord: A scriptural and liturgical commentary on the calendar of the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 159.

question of the beginning and the end of the liturgical day is therefore even more complex, as in the previous case studies. The following analysis will be particularly interested in the gradual development and the **mutual reference** of both parts. For most churchgoers (and liturgists), Good Friday and Easter Sunday are the important days – they acknowledge the significance of cross and resurrection but miss the liturgical and spiritual ‘connection’ of the two. Alexander Schmemmann points out in his introduction to the Matins of Holy Saturday, that sorrow is not simply replaced, but transformed into joy, and that though the celebration and the ‘space’ of Holy Saturday “we are given to contemplate the death of death itself”.⁸³⁴

Compared with ‘Western’ liturgies, the Byzantine Triduum is **much less ‘mimetic’** (apart from the foot washing on Maundy Thursday) and even the veneration of the tomb is more of a ‘para-liturgical’ practice, that does not have an impact on the liturgical texts. The liturgy of Holy Saturday contains thereby only two special refrains on the theme of guarding the tomb. A liturgical study therefore refers to the structure and the internal references of the liturgical celebrations; the analysis of differences and tensions will be especially fruitful.

Robert Taft points out that the meditation on Sabbath of the Saviour on Holy Saturday is the least ‘anamnetic’ and most ‘dogmatic’ service, i.e. it is based more directly on beliefs of the Church than on Biblical accounts of the life of Jesus. This is little surprising since accounts of the day do not provide a lot of ‘material’ for anamnetic liturgy. In his opinion, Holy Saturday, and the service of Lauds in particular, is characterised by the **extensive use of poetry** as part of the divine services. He points out that the service reflects on the meaning and mystery of salvation within the cosmic scheme. According to Taft, the entire service is poetry.⁸³⁵ The hymns are, together with the prophetic reading, the most characteristic elements of the Triodion. Holy Saturday is, together with Good Friday, among the oldest parts of the liturgy and some liturgical structures and readings (e.g. Ezekiel 37:1) can be traced back to Egeria's account of the liturgy in Jerusalem in the 4th century. Originally, the Readings were provided in a separate book the “prophetic lectionary”.⁸³⁶ The analysis of the use of liturgical books gets simplified in our context as all liturgical texts are provided in translation. A hermeneutic study must therefore engage with a non-descriptive, but mystagogical use of language and at the same time reflect on the practical necessity of translating these liturgical rites.

⁸³⁴ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 35 However, none of the Psalms used in the Triodion (i.e. the liturgical book for Lent and Holy Week) originate in the first period of hymnology [J. Savas Savas, *The treasury of Orthodox hymnology: Triodon vol.1: an historical and hymnographic examination* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Co, 1983), 22].

⁸³⁵ Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 81.

⁸³⁶ Savas, *The treasury of Orthodox hymnology*, 22.

The booklets provided by **Saint Vladimir's Press** contain translations for all celebrations of Holy Week. These provide the necessary text for a full participation in the liturgy and include even silent clerical prayers. For Holy Saturday, Saint Vladimir's provides two separate booklets, one for the Matins and one for Vespers, and the liturgy of Saint Basil. Both are A6-sized, have a simple layout, and a few images of iconic scenes. Both give the number of the tone for all sung parts. The book for Matins includes a few simple melodies for the congregation. Clergy, readers and congregation rely on the same edition. For the choir, an additional music edition is available. The texts are lengthy and complex and require a certain knowledge of the English language.

a) Matins

Despite its strong focus on the tomb, the Matins of Saturday has already a certain “Easter intonation”.⁸³⁷ Like any other Saturday of the year, it begins after sunset of the previous day. It starts with the celebration of the word, followed by seven or more readings from the First Testament. While the service of Matins, according to Kallistos Ware, is usually celebrated at the seventh hours of night (one o'clock at night), in many parishes it is celebrated earlier.

The Service starts with the standard opening of Matins:⁸³⁸ a blessing by the priest, the incensing of the church, the altar, and the people, and a prayer, followed by six Psalms (3, 38, 63, 88, 103, 14), during which the priest says twelve silent prayers, six in front of the Holy Table (altar) and six in front of the Holy Doors. The first part of the service finishes with the Great Litany. After this opening, the service continues with the “Proper” for Holy Saturday. These begin with the so-called “Praises”⁸³⁹ (“God is the Lord”), Troparia (i.e. short hymns) interspersed between the verses of Psalm 119, divided into three sections or stasis. Alexander Schmemmann remarks that, for the celebration of Matins, the sorrow of Friday is initial theme of the service. The celebration contains elements of a ‘funeral service’ and is shaped by the singing of funeral Troparia during slow incensing of the church while the celebrants approach the Epitaphion.⁸⁴⁰ Psalm 119 today is a funeral psalm; however, in early liturgical tradition, it was a part of the Sunday Vigil and the weekly commemoration of the resurrection.

The first Stasis includes the verses 1-72 and is sung on tone five. It closes with the Theotokion (i.e. a hymn to Mary), the repetition of the first Troparion and the Little Litany. The priest incenses the Epitaphion, the Iconostasis, and the people. The second

⁸³⁷ Elena V. Velkovska, “The Liturgical Year in the East,” in Chupungco, *Liturgical time and space*, 162.

⁸³⁸ For the structure of the service Meyendorff, “The time of Holy Saturday”.

⁸³⁹ The St. Vladimir Edition calls them “Praises”; in most of the Orthodox world, this part of the liturgy will be known as the “Lamentations”.

⁸⁴⁰ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 36.

Stasis, sung again on tone five, includes the verses 73 to 131 and closes with the Theotokion, the repetition of the first Troparion and the Little Litany. The priest incenses once more the Epitaphion, the Iconostasis, and the people. The third Stasis contains the verses 132 to 176.

Schmemmann distinguishes three themes of the Praises as a “duel between Life and Death”⁸⁴¹: the contemplation of death, the loving obedience of Jesus, and the overcoming of death by life. Finally, the joy wins and leads to the revitalizing Troparia, part of every Sunday Vigil. As Taft points out, “the method used [in the Stasis] is paradox.”⁸⁴² They are sung by the choir on tone five, while the priest carrying a lit candle incenses the Epitaphion, the church and the sanctuary.

They finish with the Theotokion, an alleluia and the Little Litany. In contrast to the Western rites, the Byzantine rite continues to use the Great Doxology during Lent in its normal place at Matins and the Alleluia appears with greater frequency, replacing “God is the Lord” at Matins. The Praises are followed by Kathysma Hymn (tone one), another seasonal hymn sung by the choir, and Psalm 51, read by the reader instead of “We have seen the Resurrection of Christ.” The psalm focusses the service on forgiveness and God’s restoration. It is used frequently during the liturgy of the Hours.

The prayer of intercession (“O Lord, save thy people”) is not said on this day. Instead, the “Canon of Great Saturday” adheres to the general theme.⁸⁴³ The Canon is not unusual, but follows the standard structure of nine Odes based on biblical canticles. The Canon of Holy Saturday gets repeated at the beginning of the Midnight Office of Easter Sunday. The odes 1/3/4/5 are traditionally attributed to Mark the Monk the last four to Kosmas of the Holy City.⁸⁴⁴ The Canon follows the following structure

- Ode 1⁸⁴⁵
- Ode 3
- Small Litany
- Kathysma Hymn (tone one)
- Ode 4
- Ode 5
- Ode 6
- Small Litany
- Kontakion, i.e. a hymn for the feast day (tone 6)
- Oikos, no Synaxarion (remembering of the Saints of the day)

⁸⁴¹ op.cit., 37.

⁸⁴² Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 82.

⁸⁴³ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 42.

⁸⁴⁴ Savas, *The treasury of Orthodox hymnology*.

⁸⁴⁵ Ode 2 is used only in the Liturgy of St Andrew of Crete.

- Ode 7
- Ode 8
- Ode 9 (no Magnificat or “Greater in honour than the cherubim”)
- Small Litany

Afterwards, the Exapostilarion (i.e. a group of hymns) is sung on tone two three times as it is usually in the Matins on Sunday. Then the choir sings the Praises, while the priest vests in full vestments and marks the begin of the Lauds. The Praises consist of four Stichera (i.e. a hymn after the Psalm; usually at this part the psalms 148, 149 and 150 are sung)

- today the tomb holds him (tone two)
- Joseph asked (tone six)
- Moses the great mystical (tone six), which the OCA booklet combines with the previous Sticheron, this hymn is repeated before the readings at the vespers
- Most blessed art thou, O Virgin theotokos (tone two)

During the Great Doxology, the clergy go around the Epitaphion three times, incensing it from all sides. When the choir sings the processional Trisagion to a solemn funeral melody, the priest takes the Gospel Book and four ‘laymen’ (according to Ware “other clergy”) take the Epitaphion and start a procession around the church. The choir and the people continue singing throughout. Choir, deacons with incense, the Epitaphion, and the congregation holding lit candles form the procession. Then the procession returns to the interior of the Church; the Epitaphion is carried to the Holy Doors and the priest exclaims “Wisdom! Let us attend”. Some churches observe the practice of holding the Epitaphion at the door, so the congregation passes under it, symbolising entry into the death and resurrection of Christ. The choir sings the Troparion “The Noble Joseph” (tone two). The booklet remarks as a footnote that, in the Greek practice, the Choir sings the hymn “Come, let us bless Joseph of eternal memory” and the Epitaphion is carried into the sanctuary and placed on the altar. After, the choir sings the Troparion “O Christ who holds fast” (tone two) then the Prokeimenon (introduction to the Scripture reading) is sung: “Arise, O Lord, and help us! Deliver us for thy name's sake” (Psalm 44, fourth tone), and after the reader reads Ezekiel 37:1-14, about the resurrection of the bones.

Then the choir sings the Prokeimenon “Arise, O Lord, my God, Lift up Thy Hand” (Psalm 9, seventh tone) and the reader reads 1. Cor. 5:6-8 and Gal 3:13-14 (introduced only as reading from the “First Epistle of the holy apostle Paul to the Corinthians”). The choir sings the Alleluia (Psalm 68:2s., tone 5) and the priest reads the Gospel (Matt.

27:62-66). The Alleluia verse is the same as the beginning of the Easter Matins service.⁸⁴⁶

The choir concludes with the Glory to Thee. Afterwards, the service concludes in the usual way: the priest says the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Prayer of the Bowing of the Heads in front of the Holy Shroud. Then the priest says the Dismissal. As the faithful come to venerate the Shroud, the choir continues to sing the hymn “Come, let us bless Joseph of eternal memory” (tone 5), with slightly different versions in the Greek and in the Slavonic use. Ware notes that the Hours are said in the Narthex “simply and without singing”.

b) Vespers

Robert Taft describes the Vesper in the morning of Holy Saturday as today's Holy Week climax, with its “greater play to expression of religious emotions and theological reflection”.⁸⁴⁷ Its stylistic climax is religious poetry. Most of the texts used in the service can be traced to the Byzantine or post-Byzantine period. According to Kallistos Ware, Vespers should be celebrated at about the tenth hour of the day (at four in the afternoon), but, as we have already seen for Matins, the current custom is to celebrate it much earlier.

The service starts with a blessing given by the priest. Then a reader starts reading the Proemial Psalm 104, about creation and human wonder. After, the priest recites the Great Litany and the choir responds with “Lord, have mercy” after each bidding. The spaces for the name of the Metropolitan and (Arch)Bishop are kept empty as the text is used in different dioceses. Next, the Saturday Vesper Sticheron “Lord I have Cried” (Psalms 140 (141), 141 (142), 129 (130), and 116 (117)) is chanted in the tone of the week, starting with the last two verses of Psalm 141 (142). This is the first time since the beginning of the season of Lent that tone one is used; it marks the beginning of a new liturgical season and a further step to the celebration of the resurrection. The reader chants the psalm and the choir responds with the Stichera about the feast day (on Saturday evenings about Christ's resurrection), chanted alternately with the verses. The first four Stichera come from the Octoechos (i.e. a liturgical which contains a repertoire of hymns ordered in eight parts according to the eight Echoi), set to tone one and three ‘proper’ tones for Holy Saturday (the first of which is repeated twice) set to tone six. The proper tones describe the ‘groaning’ of hell during the descent of Jesus. The reader concludes with the lesser doxology. Next, the Doxasticon (hymn after Stichera) “Moses

⁸⁴⁶ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 45 This structure contains some elements of the old cathedral office: the reading of three pericopes (lessons from the First Testament, Epistle, and Gospel at the end).

⁸⁴⁷ Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” 89.

the great mystical”, mystically foreshadowing the day of Moses' blessing of the Sabbath, is sung to tone six. This links the service back to Matins where the hymn is used during the praises. As in every Saturday Vespers, the choir continues with the Theotokion in tone one.

After that the Great Entrance, a procession with the Gospel book follows. This is the only additional book required in the service (as the St Vladimir Musical editions combines Triodion and Oktoikos). The choir sing the 'Phos Hilarion', the oldest non-biblical Christian hymn still in use, in its English translation. This hymn is an essential part of the vespers service and is recited at the great entrance of the Gospel book. It is used only when there is a Gospel procession, rarely sung on Saturday, and usually connected to the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. It emphasises the importance of the Readings and the following liturgy. After the entrance, the liturgy of Vespers would normally continue with the Prokimenon, a psalm or canticle refrain sung responsively to introduce a Scripture reading. However, at the Vespers of Holy Saturday, the readings are framed by the Exclamation “Wisdom” and “Let us Attend”. The proper Prokimenon has already been sung during the Vespers on Good Friday.

The 15 readings from the First Testament, sometimes sung, are the following:

- Gen 1:1-13
- Isaiah 60:1-6
- Ex 12:1-11
- Jonah 1:1-17, 2:1-10, 3:1-10, 4:1-11
- Joshua 5:10-15
- Ex 13:20-15:1

The reader continues with the “Song of Moses” (Ex 15:1-11) and the choir repeats the line “For gloriously he has been glorified” after every verse. This ‘refrain’, a similar section after the final reading of Daniel, and the “Arise, O God, and judge he earth” before the Gospel reading are the only three pieces of music printed in the booklets, encouraging the congregation to join the singing. This celebratory way of reciting the Readings underlines the importance of the paragraph. It is a strong link between the events of Holy Saturday (with its references to baptism) and the salvation of the Israelites at the Red Sea. The reader closes with the lesser doxology and finally joins the choir: “For gloriously he has been glorified”. The readings continue with:

- Zephaniah 3:8-15
- 1. King or 3. King LXX 17:8-24
- Isaiah 61:10-62:5
- Gen 22:1-18

- Isaiah 61:1-19
- 2. King or 4. King LXX 4:8-27
- Isaiah 63:11-64:5
- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Daniel 3:1-57 (Song of the three Holy Children)

After verse 34, the choir joins in and repeats the refrain “Praise the Lord, sing and exalt him throughout all the ages.” Again, the music is noted, and the reader closes with the lesser doxology and then repeats the song of the choir. The booklet shows a simple picture of three young men and an angel in the fire. The Readings herald the resurrection and use symbols and metaphors for God’s salvific power.⁸⁴⁸ After these, the paschal joy dominates the service.⁸⁴⁹

The Little Litany is next. Instead of Trisagion, the choir sings “As many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia,”⁸⁵⁰ leading straight into the Prokeimenon (Psalm 65:4-6, in tone five) for the Epistle Reading. The reader chants the Epistle from Romans 6:3-11. The priest closes with “Peace unto thee, reader.” The reader responds with “And to your spirit.” The Royal Doors are then closed. Instead of an “Alleluia,” the choir sings the “Arise, O God and judge the earth” (Psalm 82, tone 7 printed with musical notation). The reader recites Psalm 82. The clergy remove their dark vestments and re-vest in white. The rest of the church is likewise changed from dark to white.⁸⁵¹ The atmosphere of the service changes to the Paschal joy. Then, the doors are opened and the Gospel Reading from Matthew 28:1-20 is read. It tells of Jesus’ encounter with the women at the tomb, the report of the soldiers to the elders, and the Great Commission. These readings are, in the Western tradition, separated on different feasts. Like the preceding readings, the Gospel does not tell about the risen Lord, but points to him through the account of the empty tomb.⁸⁵²

After the Gospel Reading, the service continues with the liturgy of Saint Basil. It begins with the Litany of the Fervent Supplication. As in the Great Litany, the names of the Metropolitan or bishop need to be filled in. The liturgy of the catechumens follows, after which all catechumens are asked to leave the church. The First and Second Litany of the faithful follows. If there is a deacon serving, additional petitions follow. This is the only part with additional roles but is handled according to the number of clergy available. For the Great Entrance, the hymn “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” is sung (tone five) instead of the Hymn of the Cherubim, which otherwise appears only in the

⁸⁴⁸ Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 27.

⁸⁴⁹ Ilarion, *Christ the conqueror of hell*, 195.

⁸⁵⁰ The Byzantine tradition sings the Alleluia during Lent.

⁸⁵¹ *Mother Mary; Ware, Kallistos (Ed.) The Lenten Triodion, 1984, ©1977, 659.*

⁸⁵² Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 27.

Liturgy of St James. Next, the Litany of Supplication is recited. The entrance is made in silence, something that happens only at the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Apart from this day, this liturgy is never celebrated on a Saturday or Sunday. The Litany of Supplication is sung, followed by the confession of faith said by all present. Then, the priest begins reciting the Eucharistic prayer (partly at low voice), interspersed with the choir singing the “Holy, Holy, Holy.” After the Eucharistic prayer, the choir continues with the Hymn to the Theotokos. In place of “Truly it is right,” they sing the Irmos “Weep not for me mother”. It follows the Litany before the Lord's Prayer (again, said by all present) and the peace. After the bowing of heads, the priests and deacons receive Holy Communion in the sanctuary. The communion of the faithful follows. It consists of the prayer before communion, the reception, and thanksgiving after communion. The liturgy continues with prayer before the holy shroud.

The service finally concludes with the blessing of wine and bread (no oil as usual at the Artoklasia) as a sustenance for the faithful, who stay in Church for the reading of the Acts of the Apostles before the midnight office and the dismissal. While the chants of Vespers already announce Christ's victory, the final blessing does not mention the resurrection. The celebration of this mystery has an intimate character.⁸⁵³

3. Conclusions

The Byzantine liturgy of Holy Saturday is not only a very rich and historically complex service, but also provides an excellent framework for a negative hermeneutic analysis. The selection of certain themes is due to the complexity of the material and perspective of this study.

Concerning the language of the service, the fact that this study uses a **translation** raises far-reaching questions. The English text used in the liturgy is neither ‘original’ nor normative, and most participants will have experienced the liturgy in other languages or in a different translation.⁸⁵⁴ The celebration, however, sticks precisely to the words provided in the book and the Orthodox ethos of the liturgy does not allow deviation, modernisation, or simplification of the text. The celebration follows a given text that draws authority from its continuity with an original. On a material level, this also questions the usage of liturgical books. While the liturgical books are a crucial element of the traditional Byzantine liturgy (just as vestments or candles), the use of rather simple booklets exchanges aesthetics for practicality.

⁸⁵³ Moine de l'Eglise d'Orient, *The year of grace of the Lord*, 175s..

⁸⁵⁴ This complexity manifests itself for example in capitalisation. The question when to capitalise terms is not answered consistently in the liturgical discourse.

The lack of rubrics and the **expat congregation**'s motley experiences of different customs and shapes form an interesting basis for the development of a norm as well as the creative use of rites. On the one hand, the liturgy claims its foundation in a tradition. On the other hand, the proximity of different interpretations and the lack of standardisation problematises this claim. From a negative hermeneutic perspective, this relative openness to adaptation is particularly significant.

What does a negative hermeneutic help us understand about the subject of the service? In terms of different **degrees of participation**, the Byzantine tradition is very clear about allowing only men at the altar.⁸⁵⁵ Women and children can participate in the choir and sometimes as reader. For the carrying of the winding-sheet, the OCA booklets mention four laymen (could it be laywomen?) while Ware assumes four clergy people (if a congregation has that many). Participation in liturgy is open to everybody. Even where the catechumens are traditionally asked to leave the church, this happens only after the Gospel is read. The change of vestment and decor indicates the joy of the resurrection. This raises interesting questions about participation and the significance and meaning of the resurrection 'outside' of the Church. This disparity between the symbols pointing towards the reality of the resurrection and the words speaking of the tomb is one of the strongest tensions within the celebration.

Compared to the other liturgies analysed in this study, the Byzantine is the most complex and lengthy. The expectation that everyone who is physically able, including children, attend Holy Week services adds an element of ascetism. The late-night liturgies are often long and do not always fall on public holidays; thus, attendance can test one's endurance. In a similar way, the extensive fasting practice, still an essential part of the piety in most Orthodox Churches, shapes the experience of Holy Week and Easter significantly, and pushes individuals to their limits.

The **time difference** with which services are celebrated (Matins in the evening, Vespers in the morning) stand in a contrast to the very 'experiential' character of the liturgy. Some authors suggest that a celebration of the services at the appropriate and by the Typikon suggested time would help to clarify the structure of the day (Matins at 1 am vespers at 4pm)⁸⁵⁶. While the gravity of the liturgy is reflected in the fasting and ascetic quality of the services, the time difference works against a simple 'mimetic' engagement with the events.

The liturgical narrative is embodied; not simply re-played but put in a different setting and in a different time of day. It is disconnected from the narrated time of events and, with repetition, can confuse participants about the sequence of events. This is not

⁸⁵⁵ For a more liberal approach to gender roles in orthodox liturgy McDowell, "Seeing Gender".

⁸⁵⁶ Ilarion, *Christ the conqueror of hell*, 194 and Meyendorff, "The time of Holy Saturday".

the space to ask whether the Byzantine liturgy of Holy Week needs reform, but to analyse the liturgical potential of the current services. The fact that, before the readings, no Prokimenon is read links the liturgy back to the Vespers of Good Friday and raises questions about the import of the service. Is Holy Saturday simply one part of a ‘three-day service’, as has been argued is the case in the West? What are the implications for the interpretations of portions of it?

As we have seen in other church traditions, here Holy Saturday must bridge the theological and spiritual gap between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The Byzantine liturgy engages with this ‘in-between’ day more actively and presents more structure than other liturgies. Large parts of the services follow the ordinary structure of the offices, and these lengthy celebrations culminate the liturgical year. The liturgy is highly **experiential** and engages its participant on all levels. At the same time, it is not measured by its effects, but provides an open framework for personal and communal engagement.

Holy Saturday, as the day of remembrance of the tomb, is a unique challenge for the Church. On the one hand, it re-presents the women who honour Jesus when he is veiled and silent, with no agitation in the preparation. This makes “Holy Saturday [...] the feast of those mystics whom the world is unaware of, and who wish to be known only to Jesus.”⁸⁵⁷ Individual experience, and spiritual ‘passing through’ of the tomb, makes Holy Saturday a day of individual and collective contemplation. On the other hand, the highly structured liturgy and ritualised protest make it a day of tension and expectation. Byzantine services reflect simultaneously the terrifying desperation of the first disciples (mimesis) and the most beautiful, complex ‘reply’ of the year (anamnesis). A negative hermeneutic perspective wants to uncover how liturgy handles this ‘broken utopia’. How does the liturgy negotiate loss and failure? How can the rite protest this loss? The Byzantine rite creates an even more complex and elaborate liturgy affirming heavenly reality despite the experience of death and desolation.

What are the insights about the ‘sense’ of the celebration? During the first part of the Matins, which consists in the singing of Psalm 119 (17th Kathisma) with its interspersed verses, the **paradox** used in the poetry (the overcoming of death through life) is reflected in the form of the ritual that looks like a funeral hymn but celebrates the (empty) tomb and a foretaste of the resurrection. According to Schmemmann, ‘expectation’ becomes the basic category of Christian existence. He points out that the third reading is still read in front of the tomb even though the Reading of prophecies is over, except for the Gospel prophecies. At the end of Matins, the meaning of the

⁸⁵⁷ Moine de l’Eglise d’Orient, *The year of grace of the Lord*, 161.

‘middle day’ is made manifest as commemoration of the past and anticipation of the future.⁸⁵⁸ Holy Saturday represents both a funeral procession and a protest of Christ's rest in the tomb.

The tomb and entombment as symbolic centres of the day are represented by the **shroud**, placed in the middle of the church. The procession with the shroud is one of the most outstanding elements of the liturgy of Matins. If the shroud is the key feature of Holy Saturday, then the day begins indeed at the end of the Vespers of Good Friday and is removed (Slavonic rite) to the altar at the end of the canon during the Midnight Office on Easter Sunday, where it traditionally remains until ascension. The shroud is the visible and paradoxical symbol for death at the centre of the services on Holy Saturday. It is incensed during the service and is the centre the procession.

In Greek custom, it is placed on the altar and out of the sight of the congregation. The two funeral processions (on Good Friday Vespers and Holy Saturday Matins) have been criticised as an unnecessary doubling of the ritual. This is an appropriate critique from an historical, and possibly pastoral-practical, point of view. It is, however, an interesting perspective from which to explore a liturgy and irreducible to function. The (hidden) symbol of an (empty) tomb at the centre of a service, or at a procession, makes the participants wonder what is inside. It leaves space for projection in a psychological sense and could be a representation of the sense and meaning.

Holy Saturday as a liturgical day of the tomb and emptiness framed by the liturgical expectations is disputed by the Greek scholar Pavlos Koumarios. Koumarios who argues “Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and the Sunday of Pascha do not exist theologically in our contemporary Holy Week Ritual.”⁸⁵⁹ In his opinion, the current liturgy is structured around a double Holy Friday and premature paschal rite, and Holy Saturday has vanished from the life of the Church. He argues for a reintegration of the mystagogical process of worship, and the gravity of a day of mourning and silence, one that, for the ancient Church, the only day without celebration of Eucharist.⁸⁶⁰ Koumarios emphasises the **importance of the emptiness** of Holy Saturday where “people ponder unforeseen possibilities of evil in history,”⁸⁶¹ and the momentousness of the Fall. Instead of the contemplation of evil and negativity, the current liturgy has, in his opinion, turned Holy Saturday into a “first resurrection of Christ.”⁸⁶² This means Holy Saturday loses its potential as a ritual practice able to reckon with tension (between earthly grief and a glimpse of heavenly liturgy), and

⁸⁵⁸ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 45s..

⁸⁵⁹ Koumarios, “Liturgical problems of Holy Week,” 13.

⁸⁶⁰ *op.cit.*, 13s..

⁸⁶¹ *op.cit.*, 14.

⁸⁶² *op.cit.*, 14.

implies that Easter Sunday has lost its importance for many congregations and is seen as a day without liturgy.

This is evinced by the replacement of the Trisagion with the Little Litany and the quote from Galatians 3:27 (“As many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia”) before the Epistle Reading is interesting as it shifts the focus from the eternal glory of the Trinity to the concrete of Christ's salvific work and the reflection of the life of the faithful. Even stronger is the quotation of Psalm 82, with the choir repeating the phrase “Arise, O God, judge the earth, for to thee belong all the nations” (Verse 8). It questions the role of liturgy in the descent and resurrection. How can the Church ask God to arise? Is the phrase ‘only’ a quote or expectations of hope and despair calling God to arise? How much irony and subversion can liturgy bear? How much space and stillness does Holy Saturday need to provide and for whom?

It is striking that at the beginning of Vespers the entrance is made in silence, and happens only during the liturgy of the pre-sanctified gifts. This link emphasises the paradox of Holy Saturday and an experience of things ‘already happened’ but still held in solemn secret. The paschal greeting is not exchanged until the midnight office. Similarly, the fasting is not yet over. The faithful are given some wine, bread, and fruit to sustain them for the Midnight Office, but no oil since the full resurrection is yet to come. Holy Saturday holds the tension between the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’, thus sustaining the unease until the midnight office.

E. Conclusions and Evaluation of the Case Studies

These four case studies argue for the suitability of negative hermeneutics as a methodological instrument for liturgical studies. This section will briefly gather and evaluate the findings, before drawing wider conclusions. These cases are illustrative of how negative hermeneutics can be applied, rather than deductively developing a detailed 'method'. Hence, the following conclusions are structured along negative hermeneutical categories, outlining how these played out in the different studies rather than focussing on the wider methodological picture.

Where, in these cases, is negative hermeneutics useful? Where did the analysis encounter limitations? Where have we been able to discover layers other studies missed? Where has the detour via non-sense and otherness clarified the sense and meaning of liturgy?

The negative hermeneutic three step process of **receiving – deconstructing – creating** frames the analysis of liturgical text and the study of its language, subject, and sense. This framework illustrates liturgical texts do not appear devoid of meaning or free of context. Also, it provides enough room for a creative theological approach not limited to historical and pastoral contexts.

As for the **language** of the liturgical services, negative hermeneutics explored brokenness and dependence of language, and its suitability for the liturgy of Holy Saturday in form and content. The significance of omissions compared with a standard text (Book of Common Worship) and the dependence upon a presupposed original (Glenstal and Byzantine Tradition) became key areas of interest. The surprising lack of silence in these four instances became a starting point for the revaluation of the relationship between public structured worship and private devotion. Hereby, the official liturgy becomes a negative for what happens outside this structure. The lack of intercessions and the very strong Biblical reference of the texts (Church of England) question the spontaneous and communicative use of language in the face of the theological and spiritual challenge of the day. The recourse to liturgical source texts and the composition of liturgical elements (Glenstal) are contrasted by the thematic and substantive creation of liturgical 'sources' meant for contextual use (Iona Community). Two aspects of liturgical language were a strong poetical and metaphoric language (Byzantine tradition and Iona Community) and a much more pragmatic and politic-educative speech (Iona Community). In each case, a negative hermeneutic for textual self-understanding and what is presupposed, excluded, or suppressed has been fruitful.

In each context, language is used differently and relates to text in very different ways. This has been an engaging starting point for a negative hermeneutical analysis.

The question of the **subject** of liturgy is even more intensified with Holy Saturday, since the complete passivity of God seems to reduce the katabatic-anabatic dynamic to an empty ritualistic form. Different liturgical traditions encounter this danger in manifold ways: through an anticipation to heavenly and eternal dimensions of liturgy (Byzantine tradition) that questions the time structure of the liturgy; or through the re-establishing of a celebrating community, characterised by spontaneous gathering (Glenstal) to celebrate Holy Week; or through shared political and ethical responsibility (Iona Community). Principles of hospitality and welcome become the basis for the praying and celebrating community. From a negative hermeneutic perspective, the concept of utopia becomes central to the hope in God's salvation put into question on Good Friday, and the re-structuring of the individual faith and the Church on Holy Saturday. Some traditions characterise the liturgical subject through its activity. For the Byzantine tradition, the ascetic practices of the individuals as well as of the group are closely interwoven with the liturgical celebration and ritual practices of a group. The Iona Community talks about the importance of waiting as well as of social engagement. The liturgy of Glenstal, finally, implicitly centres around the importance of 'doing' the liturgy and saying the offices which structure the monastic day. Only the Church of England offices seem to implicitly focus more on the rest and the omissions of the day (no bell as call to prayer).

The negative hermeneutics perspective focuses on the 'absent' people, those who will not (or only to a certain extent) participate in a certain liturgy based on health, age, gender, language, or financial limitations. One insight is that the liturgy of Holy Saturday does not exclude people based on their denominational (or other faith) background since it is a day on which the Eucharist is not celebrated. This makes the liturgy an ideal for further ecumenical explorations. At the same time, it raises a necessary political and utopic perspective via negative hermeneutics.

How do different traditions engage with **sense** for a day that theologically and spiritually is marked by the encounter with the ultimate senselessness and desperation? Is liturgy set as a protest the loss of the divine? Does it realise a hope against all hopelessness, or does it offer an alternative and playful perspective, when faith cannot be justified? All four traditions are challenged by the loss and the ultimate 'deconstruction' of sense and articulate a basis for receiving and re-creating of any framework of theological meaning.

The liturgy of the Iona Community keeps a delicate balance between the building a new community sustained by hope and waiting and desperation. It risks becoming 'immanent' and 'programmatic' and losing the openness for a transcendent and unexpected turn. While the Church of England and the Byzantine liturgy situate Holy Saturday as part of the Triduum in the wider context of Lent, and therefore can celebrate it as the highlight of an extended spiritual and mystagogical preparation, the Glenstal and the Iona liturgy are for obvious reasons much more aimed at temporal communities that cannot refer to a prolonged journey. Sense needs to be found and created within and against the experience of meaninglessness. Liturgies must situate themselves between hasty reframing of sense and a resisting, denying protest. Negative hermeneutics analyses and articulates this fine balance. It describes liturgical desire for sense and the resistance against non-sense, and leaves 'open space' for katabatic and anabatic movement. This open space is seen as these individual contexts are taken seriously rather than confronted with a packaged set of questions. The negative hermeneutical themes of language, subject, and sense, in the movement from reception to deconstruction to recreation, build a suitably 'open' structure for personal engagement with the text.

On the level of liturgical contents, negative hermeneutics speaks about the community's experience of loss and desperation, and the attempt to create a meaningful relationship to the meaningless through prayer, ritual, and hope against all hope. On the level of structure, it articulates the 'in-between character' of Holy Saturday. It highlights ambivalent, metaphorical language, an inconsistent subject, and an unsecured sense. A negative hermeneutic of the 'commentary' written alongside text asks, what is not expressed, but presupposed, suppressed or excluded in the text? For liturgical texts, this revaluation must not remain on an immanent level but explore katabatic and anabatic movements. For a negative hermeneutic analysis, this is what is said or unsaid about God and the Church. For a Holy Saturday liturgy, God's absence is quite significant. As we have seen, different liturgical examples give very different answers to the question of where God is not and how the Church should respond to his absence. A negative liturgical hermeneutics detects the (necessary) breaks in texts and between text and the celebration. Herein lies its unique sensitivity to an 'invisible' liturgical meta-text a conventional hermeneutic might overlook. This text involves questions about God, along with self-understanding and self-description. These case studies demonstrate how negative hermeneutics accesses this meta-text and engages with different liturgical perspectives.

The process of simultaneously listening closely and creating a critical distance is reflected in the liturgical move of an iconic self-distancing that creates theological reality by ritually expressing it. This movement seems particularly apt for the liturgy of Holy Saturday and highlights the ambivalence that comes the loss of a body (of Jesus). Here, negative hermeneutic not only deconstructs liturgical-theological assumptions but provides a framework for creatively rethinking them. Play allows us to enter a new liturgical-theological enterprise. Negative hermeneutics is an effective and fertile method for exploring the unthought behind the rite, and fathoming the dynamic between mediation and immediacy in the celebration.

VI. Conclusion and Outlook

After the Introduction, the second part analysed the methodological framework and theological implications of an application of negative hermeneutics to liturgical studies. The third deepened this understanding through the case studies of the liturgy of Holy Saturday and explored the interwoven nature of theological content (descent) and method. This fourth part will show the methodological implications as well as anthropological and theological consequences of this study. One of its central questions is what liturgical studies, seen through the lens of negative hermeneutics, must contribute to the wider theological discourse. The focus of this study has been methodological groundwork and textual study; it intends, nevertheless, to provide tools and directions for further liturgical projects using video and interview materials.

As we have seen, liturgy is situated between a collective desire for sense and the individual resistance against non-sense. From a negative hermeneutic, the desire for sense expressed in ritual, and its confrontations with negativity experienced in shortcomings of language, subject, and sense, are crucial for the understanding of liturgy. According to Balthasar, liturgy can be described as ‘drama’ between the aesthetics of martyrria, manifesting as the radical ‘no’ of the individual, and the logic of diakonia, the collectively justified ‘ethics’ and ‘metaphysics’ of law.⁸⁶³ Hermeneutics as a method is situated between aesthetic (rhetoric) and ethics/metaphysics (logic), and is therefore able to articulate this tension and express the fragility of unsecured sense. The previous chapter has shown how an openness towards the limitations of sense leads to a theology of an **unsecured liturgical sense**.

The unique potential of the liturgical perspective is its ability to engage with the **ritual experience expressed as a general term**. This challenges theology’s tendency to reduce liturgical studies to a collection of ‘metaphysical’ notions. Instead, it should use a method appropriate to the form and content of its object. Peter Zeillinger describes how the play of liturgy can never be turned into a ‘justified play’. This view confronts liturgical studies with the challenge of a method that is always inadequate.⁸⁶⁴ Liturgy offers the possibility of dialogue with Truth but sides with personal experience and its temporalisation of truth claims.⁸⁶⁵ A negative hermeneutic of liturgy will emphasise the radical otherness of the ‘no’ and ‘maybe’ of the person. While a traditional theological

⁸⁶³ Balthasar, *Love alone is credible*, 22.

⁸⁶⁴ Zeillinger, “How to avoid theology,” 83.

⁸⁶⁵ Chauvet, “Une relecture de "Symbole et Sacrement",” 115.

hermeneutic strives to understand God the way God understands himself,⁸⁶⁶ a negative-liturgical hermeneutic push on to the limits and gaps of God's self-communication and revelation, leaving space for the radical possibility of a 'maybe'. Hence, this approach emphasises the particularity of liturgical anabasis and katabasis.

Here it seems useful to return to Grillo's thesis. A possible **reintegration of ritual experience** as a 'given' in fundamental theology is an effective basis for a hermeneutic of liturgy because: 1) the rite allows fundamental theology to rediscover the 'unthought' behind every established tradition; 2) sacraments and liturgy can become ritual mediations for a theological immediacy; and 3) through its impossible immediacy, the rite mediates between tradition and continual reformation. How we speak about the experience (of faith) is crucial to the theology of liturgical studies. A negative hermeneutic can open a new perspective on the negative experience of the individual mediated through the symbolic order of the collective ritual.⁸⁶⁷ The 'faith' of the individual does not become the *fundamentum inconcussum* but the starting point for a responsive wrestling for sense and engagement with the givenness of liturgy.

The negative aspect prevents this approach from assuming a fixed 'once for all' leap of faith as a basis for an absolute affirmation of subject, sense and language; it rather forces the hermeneutic analysis to go further and explore the radical implications of a faithful 'no'.⁸⁶⁸ As Adorno puts it, philosophy hopes to name the unnameable.⁸⁶⁹ In liturgy, the 'unnameable' is mediated through a set text and rules that, as *lex orandi*, are always destined to fail. By providing an engagement without 'solutions' or specific outcome, negative hermeneutics can explore ecumenical aspects of liturgy by contrasting given traditions (and their gaps) in a playful way rather than reducing them to their stated meaning and differences.

The potential of negative hermeneutics lies in its ability to **qualify this 'no'**. Against a logic of reconciliation, it takes seriously the possibility of failure and evil. According to Schurz, traditional hermeneutics tends to equate non-verbal/non-sense with evil (cf. the *topos* of the nameless devil). Schurz speaks of negative hermeneutics as a 'further step' towards the recognition of an ontological evil (against enlightenment and Protestantism). While these argue that only God knows the origin of evil and that the negative itself resists any description, negative hermeneutics assumes an evil that

⁸⁶⁶ Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Hermeneutische Theologie -heute?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 27.

⁸⁶⁷ Grillo, "L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale," 181.

⁸⁶⁸ Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Hermeneutische Theologie -heute?," in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 20.

⁸⁶⁹ Emil Angehrn, "Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 163 and Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 9. ed., Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 113 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 19.

equiprimordially appears only in the concrete negative in an historic constellation.⁸⁷⁰ This has important implications for liturgy: if we assume that not only is negativity part of the *conditio humana*, and the abyss of hell (i.e. concrete evil) is fundamentally embraced and pervaded by God, we can re-evaluate of individual ‘gaps’ in the celebration.

Understanding is delimited by experience. Schurz recognises that this perspective assumes a subject free from fear and distress, able to take on the radical challenge of non-sense. Its subject is then able to engage not only with a specific negative constellation, but with the negative character of any understanding. In theological terms, this would be a hermeneutic from the perspective of Holy Saturday, from the desperation and existential fear of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday to the profound non-understanding of God’s descent to hell.

After facing the limits of sense and understanding, from where would a hope for change come? Is a hermeneutic of liturgical hope as resistance against reality possible? How do the categories of immediacy and mediation relate to desire and resistance? As we have seen, Grillo explains the dialectic between mediation and immediacy as a feature of the second anthropological turn. The parallels he draws between individual consciousness, individual mystical experiences, and communal ascetic (orthopraxical) practices are a fertile basis for negative hermeneutics.⁸⁷¹ The relationship between mediation and immediacy cannot be reduced to a simple rule. The change from structure to independently creative application cannot easily be explained,⁸⁷² but is the articulation of negative/mystical theology in the **form of questions**.

It is crucial that a negative hermeneutic strike the balance between desire and openness but also does not fall into relativism. The hermeneutical process is still curious and a longing for sense. While Lacan argues the gap between language and being creates desire,⁸⁷³ negative hermeneutics can face this gap and hold the space for **hope and trust in sense**. This comes very close to what Bridget Nichols has described as faith in the Kingdom. The crucial difference is that a negative hermeneutic of liturgy will maintain the precariousness and not answer the question of whether sense has the final word. It describes the individual leap of faith happening without ‘taking sides’ or anticipating. This does not contradict a key assumption that liturgical studies must come from the experience of faith. In fact, it encourages the theologian to reflect on her or his faith as part of the process of (non-)understanding.

⁸⁷⁰ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 211.

⁸⁷¹ Grillo, “L’esperienza rituale come “dato” della teologia fondamentale,” 219.

⁸⁷² Thomas Rentsch, “Negativität und dialektische Sinnkonstitution,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 74.

⁸⁷³ Pound, *Theology, psychoanalysis, trauma*, 48.

Grillo talks in this context about the different attitudes of hope. Contrary to fatalistic desperation, liturgy and theology must cultivate a hope that accepts reality and resists a hasty understanding of the imperfect.⁸⁷⁴ It opens space for what Chauvet describes as the word of desire: what is usually not explicit (“I love you”) takes place in the non-said, in repetition, gaps, intonation, and surprise. This symbolic game of love resists the temptation of the immediate.⁸⁷⁵ The cultivation of stillness and listening becomes crucial for a hermeneutic that overcomes impatient expectation through hope in the resurrection. A negative hermeneutic of liturgy would cultivate an attitude of curiosity and hope, overcoming the desire to cut the process of understanding and communication short. It is an adventure that does not know its outcome but is aware of the possibility of radical failure.⁸⁷⁶ Negative hermeneutics does not counter the experience of ‘nullity’ and gaps through abstraction, but through bodily expression. In contrast to Radical Orthodoxy, it takes the experience of gaps and breaks as a starting point for creative and playful engagement with a possible transcendent. Mediation through tradition and hierarchy is thereby another level in the process of receiving, deconstructing, and recreating sense. Liturgy is not a foreshadowing of the Kingdom,⁸⁷⁷ but a yearning for a promised future.

This liturgical ‘logic’ would re-imagine human desire for God not as a unifying love, but as what Kearney describes as “[a]n impossible, terrifying love, not embraced but suffered, not offered but inflicted – a “psychosis bordering at times, on theo-erotic masochism.”⁸⁷⁸ The hermeneutic of the gap describes how the liturgy of Holy Saturday does not shy away from God in his deepest (psychotic) lack of desire but joins in the **katabatic movement of God’s descent**. It provides a blanc, empty space for imagining. The liturgical hyperbole would risk welcoming the stranger. Analogous to Kearney’s “God who maybe”, negative hermeneutics answers the criticism that this does not allow classification of alterity and distinction between monster and messiah. A negative hermeneutic can answer only with the possibility of ‘hope’. It believes in what should be and joins in with curiosity into the divine play.⁸⁷⁹ While traditional liturgical theories assume of an aesthetic and harmonic unity of the universe, a theory of creativity and play opens a perspective of a paradoxical simultaneity between reality and unreality. The challenge for a theological hermeneutic is to revalue the potential of transformation

⁸⁷⁴ Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?,” 301s.; also Flanagan’s example of the “incorrect” liturgical gesture (monks not bowing) making the strongest “converting” impression on participants Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*, 238s..

⁸⁷⁵ Chauvet, “Une relecture de “Symbole et Sacrament”,” 124–28.

⁸⁷⁶ Zeillinger, “How to avoid theology,” 105.

⁸⁷⁷ Milbank, “What is radical Orthodoxy”.

⁸⁷⁸ Kearney, *The God who may be*, 69.

⁸⁷⁹ op.cit., 105–7.

and self-difference in the liturgical act. “The real risk in liturgical language is not that it is different, but that it is reassuringly the same.”⁸⁸⁰

What are the implications of negative hermeneutic for a liturgical understanding of the sacraments? Do they counterbalance the temporalisation of liturgy and open space for a different logic of remembrance and anticipation? Or, could they be understood as liturgical exhaustion, by pointing towards non-sense? Possibility and impossibility coincide and cumulate in the paradox of a ‘broken promise’ to remember, which necessarily keeps the reality of God’s being kept suspended.⁸⁸¹ The possibility of a (liturgical) anabasis is kept alive and proclaimed in the individual liturgical act.

Hermeneutics articulates this hope through the categories of **sense, subject, and language**. It prevents the study of liturgy from falling into the temptation of a short cut that avoids circumlocution through text, language, and ritual. At the same time, it keeps these principles from becoming ends themselves. Nichols talks in this context about the individual finding “a way towards a new self-understanding within the community, so the community itself experiences reconfiguration.”⁸⁸² The liturgical act carries a certain risk not to ‘work’, and to fail in its aspirations. While every liturgical hermeneutic takes and is a risk, for negative hermeneutics, the possibility of non-sense is at the very centre. Negative hermeneutics continues the discourse with tradition as a *liturgia semper reformanda*, reminds us of the frailty and limitations of this dialogue, and is thus crucial for liturgical studies. A hermeneutic is thus more than a method; it is an engagement with the experience of the non-self-evident, with the communicating self and its desire to understand. From the perspective of liturgical hermeneutics, this is a self-communication in the liturgical act and a process of rupturing and re-creating sense. Hope is crucial: it keeps the possibility of hearing and creating sense open.

Negative hermeneutics goes beyond Nichols’ concept of the Kingdom and emphasises the unsecured hope in the celebration. In the case studies, the categories of subject, sense, and language, in their brokenness, are not only rewarding for negative hermeneutics but lead to reflection on the theological and hermeneutical potential of liturgy.

Negative hermeneutics takes seriously the **non-originality of the interpreting subject** and criticises the emphasis on self-identity as unquestioned basis of hermeneutics. The ineffable character of the individual is a central theme of mysticism and transcendental philosophy.⁸⁸³ Negative hermeneutics is able to contain what

⁸⁸⁰ Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 259.

⁸⁸¹ Hoff, *Spiritualität und Sprachverlust*, 281–94.

⁸⁸² Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics*, 252.

⁸⁸³ Thomas Rentsch, “Negativität und dialektische Sinnkonstitution,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 68.

Johannes Hoff calls an ‘anti-hermeneutic turn’ in postmodern philosophy, the difference between object and method. It lies closer to the mystical tradition.⁸⁸⁴ As in negative theology, the subject is both hidden and present as answer to an unfathomable call.⁸⁸⁵ Negative hermeneutics takes seriously the non-originality of the interpreting subject and refutes self-identity as an unquestioned basis. Hermeneutic theology defines itself as an understanding of the limited human understanding of God. It asks, what we can say about a God who understands himself through the lens of incarnation?⁸⁸⁶ Grillo talks about the systematising of change as organon of liturgical theology. The ritual experience creates the basis for a change of the self (*Selbstwerdung*).⁸⁸⁷

What does that mean for a theological hermeneutic interested in the understanding of God himself? Could liturgy be the exercise in listening to the non-said and the superabundance of sense? The letting-go of a secure concept of God and even his assurance drives liturgy. As a 'choreography,' it reverses seeing and being seen. The organon of a negative hermeneutic helps to carry out what Gadamer called “rehabilitation of a bad infinity”⁸⁸⁸ as well as “anticipation of completeness”.⁸⁸⁹ It establishes liturgy as question and metaphor. The **play with hidden patterns** and the creative discovery of different ritual layers is key for the understanding and engagement with liturgical celebrations. “Liturgies demand an interest and they secure meaning through the hidden, by making the apparent unapparent. They operate in conditions of paradox and delight in the sign of contradiction they display for play. They generate curiosity”.⁸⁹⁰ The relation between liturgical act and spiritual impact remains thereby open and ‘mysterious’.

While Flanagan assumes that any inductive understanding of rite assumes that the actors’ belief that their actions do make a crucial difference that can be rendered to account, negative hermeneutics would question also the belief of the ritual actors as foundation of understanding. The possibility of transcendent completeness based on the social incompleteness remains as a possibility that can (and needs to be) played with but ultimately cannot be proven real.⁸⁹¹ Negative hermeneutics does not aim for a meta-language to replace the methods of liturgical studies, but points towards a hetero-referentiality in every auto-referentiality that intensifies the paradox of the liturgical

⁸⁸⁴ Hoff, *Spiritualität und Sprachverlust*, 91.

⁸⁸⁵ op.cit., 81.

⁸⁸⁶ Ingolf U. Dalferth, “Hermeneutische Theologie -heute?,” in Dalferth; Bühler; Hunziker, *Hermeneutische Theologie - heute?*, 18 und Zeillinger, “How to avoid theology,” 87.

⁸⁸⁷ Grillo, “L'esperienza rituale come "dato" della teologia fondamentale,” 224.

⁸⁸⁸ Gadamer, “Das Erbe Hegels,” 39.

⁸⁸⁹ Gadamer and Weinsheimer, *Truth and method*, 277, Emil Angehrn, “Selbstverständigung und Identität: Zur Hermeneutik des Selbst,” in Liebsch, *Hermeneutik des Selbst - im Zeichen des Anderen*, 67.

⁸⁹⁰ Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*, 5.

⁸⁹¹ op.cit., 14–16.

question. The recognition of the strangeness of liturgy culminates in the experience of the impossibility of talking about it and the necessity to keep silent.⁸⁹² It reasserts silence as a basis for any verbal expression in liturgy.⁸⁹³ In the liturgy of Holy Saturday, the use of silence, and the lack thereof, is particularly crucial for the understanding of a liturgy ‘of the word’ and its limitations.

The repetitive ritual and bodily structure of liturgy provides a base for a hermeneutic analysis that acknowledges the concrete content of the celebration. A negative hermeneutic would emphasise, with Certeau, the **subversive potential** of underlying and hidden practices not necessarily ‘intended’ by the institutional power. Its interest is in the potential of the sense-creating process where the subject is inattentive and forgetful (as after a week of nocturnal liturgical celebrations and fasting in preparation for Easter).⁸⁹⁴ The methodological three-step of perceiving, deconstructing, and (re-)constructing of sense can be applied to the creating, studying, reading, and celebrating of liturgical texts. The openness of iterability allows space for the regulation-free element of liturgy that can neither be predicted nor explained but only described.⁸⁹⁵ The dynamic of the *leges orandi*, *credendi* and *agendi* is thereby characterised by their tension and indissoluble independence. This builds the basis for a hermeneutic play with sense.

The dynamic of faith as a belief in God’s descent into the world (and underworld) and worship as human response to this salvific event opens a new perspective on the human participation in kata- and anabasis. This dynamic is opposed to a magical understanding of liturgy that assumes an immediate turn of immanence into transcendence through manipulation. According to Valenziano, it would be the task of a theological hermeneutic of liturgy to analyse the interdependence between the believing subject who creates liturgy and the liturgy that shapes the belief of the celebrating subject.⁸⁹⁶ On this basis, it seems useful to structure this concluding section in anthropological and theological dynamics.

Liturgical hermeneutics, situated between anthropology and theology, does not allow the tension to dissolve. Liturgy happens in the balance between anabasis and katabasis and it is only in this space that the hermeneutic of the ritual can take place. As we have seen, the katabatic aspect cannot simply be reduced to the theological and the

⁸⁹² Bernhard Waldenfels, “Spielräume des Möglichen und Überschüsse des Unmöglichen,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 14–20.

⁸⁹³ Emil Angehrn, “Diesseits und jenseits des Sinns: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache,” in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 175.

⁸⁹⁴ Hoff, *Spiritualität und Sprachverlust*, 247.

⁸⁹⁵ Thomas Rentsch, “Negativität und dialektische Sinnkonstitution,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 73.

⁸⁹⁶ Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and Anthropology: The Meaning of the Question and the Method for Answering it,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*, II:223.

anabatic aspect to the anthropological dynamic of liturgy. Nevertheless, the two perspectives of human intention and desire for liturgy and the divine ‘meeting’ of this desire will structure the following two chapters, both including anabatic and katabatic elements.

VI. 1. Anthropological

This chapter will outline the anabatic and katabatic dynamics of the liturgical act under an anthropological perspective, i.e. the human intention to worship and to create liturgical sense. It will ask how a negative hermeneutic can help to describe the anthropological and ‘worshipping’ dimension of liturgy.

‘Negative liturgy’ begins with the human experience of imperfection and non-sense.⁸⁹⁷ The liturgical subject is in tension between a receiving and a creating of sense. Only in the creative and radically open play between these two poles can the play of liturgy be described.⁸⁹⁸ The hermeneutic of liturgy cannot be reduced to a simple anthropological description, but must provide a necessary dialogue partner for a discourse with fundamental theological questions.⁸⁹⁹ This openness implies that the subject does not come into view with the same depth as in the moral-dialogical relation: the subject in its self-communication is not so much the origin of sense as it is recipient of moral demands. This classifies the liturgical relationship of anabatic and katabatic dynamics as of a creative symbol rather than a standard solution.⁹⁰⁰ It is, however, the same subject who believes and expresses faith in the liturgical act and cultivates hope for a selfhood that expresses both identity and difference.⁹⁰¹ A negative hermeneutic anthropological view on the liturgical subject emphasises its infiniteness and brokenness, but, unlike deconstruction, keeps the question open as to whether a final self-identification and fulfilment is possible.⁹⁰² It takes seriously the anticipation of fulfilment as well as the rehabilitation of bad infinity and the relation to otherness.⁹⁰³ The gradual dynamic opens a realm beyond the opposition of identity and selfhood.

⁸⁹⁷ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 48.

⁸⁹⁸ Emil Angehrn, “Vom Sinn des Fragens: Wege nachmetaphysischen Philosophierens,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 53.

⁸⁹⁹ Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?,” 282.

⁹⁰⁰ Emil Angehrn, “Vom Sinn des Fragens: Wege nachmetaphysischen Philosophierens,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 64.

⁹⁰¹ op.cit., 66.

⁹⁰² op.cit., 64.

⁹⁰³ Gadamer, “Das Erbe Hegels,” 39.

Both the hope for and the willingness to act ‘**as if**’ there was a final good and wholeness in the human existence hold the two poles together.⁹⁰⁴

The starting point of this concluding exposition is a negative liturgical anthropology, i.e. the question about the **necessary limitations of the anabatic and human perspective** of liturgy. A negative hermeneutic shows different ways of engagement with negativity (non-sense) as well as articulating the possibility of falling short as part of the *conditio humana*.⁹⁰⁵

An illustration of this approach to a negative anthropology of liturgy is the psychoanalytical concept of a ‘**negative hallucination**’, i.e. the reduction (*steresis*) of the field of drives and impulses allows the building of an inner world. André Green compares this dynamic to the white background screen for a theatre. At the beginning, it remains undecided whether this negation is productive or impeding.⁹⁰⁶ The concept of the reduction of liturgy and experience could thereby be compared with André Greens idea of the *psychose blanche* – the reduction of drive and desire for an inner world – whereby the ‘hallucination’ of a white empty space provides the possibility to experience the world like an empty stage.⁹⁰⁷

According to Küchenhoff, it is desperation that provokes faith, i.e. the affirmation of lack and dependency. With Lacan, he argues that a one-sided effort to cancel the loss would cause a distortion of the symbolic order; a one-sided negation would leave no space for the survival of the individual. This is where a negative hermeneutic of the anabatic dynamic begins: the celebrating subject is challenged by the experience of absence and loss (and its individual negation the ‘no’ of mystic and resistance) and the communal authorised forms set by tradition and authority. In this, the event of creative and transformative liturgy can happen. Like analytic practice, liturgy will never reverse the negative, and will necessarily disappoint the individual as well as the celebrating community. This is where its unique power and limitation lies.⁹⁰⁸ The clinical model of a *psychose blanche* cannot be transferred to a liturgical context without qualification; it can, however, illustrate the necessity of ‘blanc’ spaces and gaps for a human articulation of sense in liturgy.

On a communal level, we encounter the necessity of gaps and transformation we encounter again Schurz’s three **constituents of negativity in society**: the unreachable individuality of the subconscious (faith), the reality of society (Church) and the order

⁹⁰⁴ Emil Angehrn, “Vom Sinn des Fragens: Wege nachmetaphysischen Philosophierens,” in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 67s..

⁹⁰⁵ Emil Angehrn, “Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik,” in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 15.

⁹⁰⁶ Joachim Küchenhoff, “Zu den Voraussetzungen und Grenzen produktiver Negativität - eine psychoanalytische Perspektive,” in Küchenhoff; Angehrn, *Die Arbeit des Negativen*, 216.

⁹⁰⁷ op.cit., 215–17.

⁹⁰⁸ op.cit., 230.

that mediates the two (law of ritual worship).⁹⁰⁹ The potential of liturgy lies, as we have seen, in offering a space where the individual can take part in the communal celebration by choosing a role and entering (and leaving!) a game whose rules are spontaneously broken/reaffirmed. Here the perspective of negative hermeneutic comes into play by focussing on the gaps and the play within and beyond the set rules and the potential of a subverting and recreating of set structures. It claims that this process is not opposed to the traditional understanding of liturgy as anamnesis, but is, at the very core, an anabasis that redefines and rebuilds the Church and its belief in the act of worship. This dynamic is very intriguing for a liturgical anthropology understood as the relation between thinking and action (which politics conserves, ethics completes and religions overturns), at the heart of a 'mystical vision' always connected to action and especially to a primate of liturgical action. According to Grillo, the difference between philosophy and liturgy/mystic is first a political one, i.e. different in its relationship to authority (*lex*).⁹¹⁰ The liturgical act expresses the hope of an overcoming of a discrepancy between society and individual (Church and faith), and can only be described as 'binding' law. The unity of Christ in his body and his members is imagined in the iconic character of the Christian worship. As Valenziano puts it, Christian liturgy is anthropological as far as Christian being is liturgical.⁹¹¹

According to Michel Certeau, who writes in his essay "The Weakness of Believing"⁹¹² of the **necessity of 'movements'** for practice, it is necessary to turn a statement (*énoncé*) back towards its utterance (*énonciation*), since no work or faith can be realised without conversion. This links back to the *leges agendi, orandi* and *credendi* in a new constellation. As reference to classic (theological) authorities is no longer recognised in the context of an emerging evangelical consciousness, the newly appeared "discourse determined by a social body gives way to a body defined by theology."⁹¹³ Even though Church becomes a discursive product, it still "supposes a social place, it cannot constitute one. It is fundamentally utopian."⁹¹⁴ This can be transferred to liturgical texts (*argumentum a fortiori*): the production and usage of texts have transformed themselves into an unlimited representation, and can go wherever it wants and fill every void in society. To utter, a space for speech must be opened, and to do so a break must be made.

This space is organised by 'utopian writing', i.e. the circumscribed absence of a referent, and tries to ruin the discourse from within and thus make its own up to the

⁹⁰⁹ Schurz, *Negative Hermeneutik*, 205.

⁹¹⁰ Grillo, "Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica," 115–17.

⁹¹¹ Angehrn, "Kultur zwischen Bewahrung und Veränderung," 120.

⁹¹² Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 217.

⁹¹³ op.cit., 217.

⁹¹⁴ op.cit., 223.

ineffability of the subject (through figures of style and genres: confession, testimony, oxymoron, paradox).⁹¹⁵ The sense of the 'ecclesial body' and its expressions can no longer be guaranteed by authority, but "it is for Christians themselves to assure the articulation of this «model» with actual situations."⁹¹⁶ Certeau links these ideas to the biblical terms of **metanoia and fellowship** which describe a movement verified only by the response it provokes. This assumption does not lead to a site of ontological or social reality, but to an 'excess' of belief, trust, and desire. Negative hermeneutics will help to understand liturgy as effective expression of this utopic transformation.

While the negative hermeneutical definition of the human being as self-communicating is both starting point and aim, a liturgical perspective would have to go even further and talk about understanding of anabasis as a claim of the celebrating subject.⁹¹⁷ This emphasises the importance of Holy Saturday as a gap between the experience of loss on Good Friday and of resurrection on Easter. As an in-between day of the inexpressible, it ritualises the gradual transformation of sorrow into joy that cannot be further explained.⁹¹⁸ As a commemoration of the past and anticipation of the future, the day becomes an image of the human condition and of an attitude of expectation as a basic category of Christian experience.⁹¹⁹ The experience of liturgy is not only a claim, but also a formative practice. Liturgy becomes an icon of a community in relationship, i.e. *theosis* is anticipated and encouraged by liturgy.⁹²⁰ The joy and hope anticipated in the ritual is the transformative power for the liturgical subject and its anabatic expression.

This approach to a liturgical anthropology is characterised by its 'utopic' dynamic, i.e. by its openness towards a desired future and the resistance against the limits of the present reality. This idea is what Nichols describes as the 'Kingdom', as horizon for liturgy. The hope in God's future is not fixed but an ideal that the liturgical community and the celebrating individual must wrestle with continuously. The messiah might not come. The liturgy is celebrated *etsi Deus daretur* and resists a hasty immediate reconciliation. The hope of the liturgical celebration is not content with the reduction of the ritual to a 'reality' but insists on the playful 'as if' of its own creativity. Whether or not this hope and sense are of God's Kingdom remains unanswered.

⁹¹⁵ op.cit., 119–22.

⁹¹⁶ op.cit., 120.

⁹¹⁷ Emil Angehrn, "Die Fragwürdigkeit des Menschen: Zwischen Anthropologie und Hermeneutik," in Dalferth; Hunziker, *Seinkönnen*, 18.

⁹¹⁸ Schmemmann, *Holy Week*, 35.

⁹¹⁹ op.cit., 46s..

⁹²⁰ McDowell, "Seeing Gender," 74.

Like every utopic approach, it needs to balance the turn of an imagined (negative) into a real (positive), and the dialectic between transcendent openness and oppressive closedness. The question of whether the transcending of a finite needs the anticipation of a final infinity or whether this projected absolute turns into repressive closeness⁹²¹ is intensified in the context of a liturgical anthropology.

VI. 2. Theological

One of the more ambitious undertakings of the early stages of liturgical studies was the attempt to reorder the canon of theological subjects under a paradigm of liturgy.⁹²² This turned out to be problematic on many levels. Far from developing a liturgical theology, this final chapter will look at **theological implications of a negative hermeneutic** perspective on liturgy. Regarding anthropological outlooks, we have looked at the dynamic of anabasis and katabasis in the liturgical act. Now we will ask the question how the category of non-sense can help to clarify this liturgical dynamic under a theological perspective? How does the gap and the lack of sense enable a katabatic and revelatory process?

The Orthodox bishop Hilarion Alfeyev argues, in the context of a theology of Holy Saturday, that the last stage of Christ's katabasis and kenosis is the beginning of humanity's ascent and *theosis*.⁹²³ How can this dynamic be explained through concepts of negative hermeneutics? On Holy Saturday, God surrenders himself to the ultimate human senselessness: not only the violent death of Good Friday, but also the descent and, possibly most 'senseless', the resurrection of Easter. God's re-creation of meaning surpasses human understanding.

However, as God enters the ultimate realm of non-sense He also opens new possibilities of sense and meaning. The liturgy of Holy Saturday tries to capture this paradoxical dynamic. Against a postmodern 'apophysis', where "[e]very form of prayer and praise is reduced to a radically pragmatic and performative speaking of the God who is beyond being and discourse",⁹²⁴ a negative hermeneutic of liturgy emphasises the **importance of concrete celebration**. The 'hyperbolic' character of the liturgical act is found in the particularity not only of the discourse but even more of the ritual

⁹²¹ Emil Angehrn, "Dialektik der Utopie: Von der Unverzichtbarkeit und Fragwürdigkeit utopischen Denkens," in Angehrn, *Wege des Verstehens*, 159.

⁹²² Grillo and Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 226.

⁹²³ Hilarion, *Christ the conqueror of hell*, 217.

⁹²⁴ Boeve, "Negative Theology and Theological Hermeneutics," 197.

expression. As a countermovement to what Lieven Boeve describes as a “committed agnosticism,”⁹²⁵ a negative hermeneutic of liturgy does not simply replace messianic structures with a particular messianism but argues that “praying *etsi Deus daretur*”⁹²⁶ happens precisely in the particularity of the liturgical tradition. The desire and performance of an ‘as if’ offers a theological take on God’s death and descent. While Boeve argues that incarnation presupposes an unending, radical hermeneutics, the negative hermeneutics of liturgy would take the even more radical approach of a theology of descent that takes as its starting point the irreducible particularity of the gap.

The focus lies, then, on the possibility of **God’s self-communication in the gaps in liturgy**. As we have seen, self-communication and the communication of the underlying subject in the process of understanding and creation of sense is assumed by negative hermeneutics. For liturgical studies, this provides a refined method for the analysis of human self-communication before God. The ecclesial character of liturgy claims the interweaving of human and divine expression. What does a certain liturgical expression say about the God who is worshipped? Where does God reveal himself through or despite human and ecclesial expression? How does God, as the Ultimate Source of sense, engage with non-sense via deconstruction and (re-)creation? What are the implications for theology when faith is frail, lacking, and paradoxical? If the liturgical game precedes its players, what does that say about a God whom we invite to join us? A God who gives himself over to radical katabasis allows the anabatic movement of liturgy and enters a dynamic of ascension and anabasis, thus creating meaning in worship.

This perspective will not transform the liturgical experience into a ‘secured sense’ but reveal its drama in all its depth. The negative hermeneutic of liturgy does not simply try to map human experience onto a divine dynamic, but attempts to clarify our theological perception, conditions, and expressions. The paradoxical character of liturgy takes the ritual mediation as expression of an immediate faith. A negative hermeneutic will thus focus on the apophatic potential of liturgy, i.e. the silence and the gaps within the liturgical speech. Against Boeve’s concept of an “*etsi Deus daretur*” as starting point for a committed agnosticism, a (negative) hermeneutic of liturgy argues the resistance of concrete performance enables talk not only about the concrete incarnational narrative, but also the messianic hope beyond it. That is, in the hyperbolic process, it starts with the significance of the apophatic dynamic of liturgy.⁹²⁷

⁹²⁵ op.cit., 198.

⁹²⁶ op.cit., 198.

⁹²⁷ op.cit., 197–202.

Holy Saturday is hence the extreme privation of God. It is when God seems to be closest yet most removed from the world and from himself. God does not only take on human categories in the incarnation, but surpasses and deconstructs our perception of sense, by entering the ultimate realm of non-sense. The double movement of God's katabasis (incarnation/descent) and anabasis (resurrection/ascension) is mirrored in the liturgical movement of a **losing and re-creating of sense**. The desire for sense is not seen as a hindrance, but as enabling the divine. As in the Byzantine liturgy, God is called forth: "Arise, oh Lord, judge the earth"; the imagery manifests divinity. A negative hermeneutic discerns sense and desire for sense as coming from the same source⁹²⁸. The insistence on the impossible, ultimate sense in the liturgical act points beyond the limitations of human logic towards a different logic of abundant grace and resurrection.⁹²⁹ The act of performing and expressing this other logic in liturgy can almost be called 'sacrilegious' as it dares call the divine from a place where the source of sense (divine promise or human claim) is not determined. It is at the same time deeply rooted in human desire for meaning and transcended by God's saving act. Via katabasis and anabasis, the celebrating community is invited to join in a playfully challenging interaction with God. Against a simplified (superstitious), often fundamentalist, hope, it is the task of liturgy and prayer to cultivate circuitous hope in a bodily and verbal acceptance and love transformed by the divine grace.⁹³⁰

Richard Kearney writes of the Song of Songs about the potential of religious poetry and that "human and divine desire transfigure one another."⁹³¹ Similarly, the language of liturgy reveals God's desire for the human being and the human desire for God. Kearney uses the concept of 'eschatological desire', i.e. a desire not to 'master' God, but to enter an active-passive game with the divine. This supposes a desiring of the kingdom beyond history "while welcoming the coming of what comes *in each instant*."⁹³² Such desire is rooted in a far deeper hope preceding memory and anticipation. The **liturgical hyperbole** expresses this 'desire beyond desire'. The performance of an eschatological 'redeemed' liturgy qualifies the past (anamnesis) as well as the present and its desire for God (mimesis). The 'maybe' of God stated by faith believes in advent and is surpassed by performance 'as if' this advent had happened. This dynamic surpasses the dualism of divine and worldly desire. *Homo ludens* and *deus ludens* enter a realm of play and mutual challenge. The playful joining, (and or

⁹²⁸ Angehrn, *Sinn und Nicht-Sinn*, 383s..

⁹²⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, "Das dem Menschen Unmögliche - Gott*," in Dalferth; Stoellger; Hunziker, *Unmöglichkeiten*, 263.

⁹³⁰ Grillo, "Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?," 298–302.

⁹³¹ Kearney, *The God who may be*, 58.

⁹³² op.cit., 63.

abandoning) the play is an expression of human freedom: “We don’t have to dance. And the eschatological dance cannot be danced without two partners.”⁹³³

While negative hermeneutics is a useful to uncover the **utopia** hidden in a text, liturgical negative hermeneutics focuses on the eschatological hope for the kingdom of God hidden in texts and liturgical expressions. The crucial twist of its negative aspect is that it does not only look at statements and expressions, but at the gaps and breaks within liturgical texts and rituals. Methodologically, it reflect on the theological necessity of gaps (and on what liturgical studies cannot provide) on the threat of non-sense, and the interweaving of theological research and the cultivation of hope.⁹³⁴

Openness and uncertainty define the **negative theological potential of liturgy**. This approach does not assume an immediate turn of immanence into transcendence but explores its possibility. The final question is about working liturgy. Which limitations of the liturgical act guide participants towards knowledge of God? When does the gap allow divine self-revelation and when does study and intellectual engagement guide theological knowledge? These are practical questions about the use of gaps and paradox in the celebration (and creation) of liturgy and about the limits of liturgical expressions and symbols. Here, theology is linked to an anthropological/mystagogical application. Its political potential lies in the revaluation of sense and meaning though Holy Saturday. This clarifies the methodological and meta-hermeneutic contribution of liturgy. Since the liturgical act does not ‘answer’ the question how anabatic and katabatic dynamics are structured, neither does liturgical studies. It does, however, articulate questions.

The unique contribution of a negative hermeneutic is raising questions and analysing the limits of categories. Engagement with non-sense and gaps in communication encourages our exploration of liturgy and the mysterious incarnation and resurrection.

⁹³³ Kearney, *The God who may be*, 110.

⁹³⁴ Grillo, “Filosofia e Liturgia: Quale rapporto?,” 301s..

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