‘THE SEMIOTIC PASSION’ – A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO JULIA KRISTEVA’S
CONSTRUCT OF THE SPEAKING BEING FROM THE ‘THEOLOGIA CRUCIS’

(A Good Friday dialogue)

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Ph.D
2013
Abstract of Thesis (500 words):

‘THE SEMIOTIC PASSION’ – A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO JULIA KRISTEVA’S CONSTRUCT OF THE SPEAKING BEING FROM THE ‘THEOLOGIA CRUCIS’

This thesis develops a theological critique of Julia Kristeva’s project of the ‘speaking being. The main purpose of the thesis is to establish the theological context of a secular ‘atheist’ thinker, whose engagement with Christian texts is permanent throughout the oeuvre. The principal aspect of Kristeva’s project is the ‘speaking being’ and her Freudian materialist critique of religion. The thesis argues that Kristeva’s analysis of the ‘speaking being’ discloses itself as the crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’. The crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity is the central problem of her work, which is not fully answered by her psychoanalytic regime. Kristeva’s understanding of the ‘speaking being’ leads to an ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject, which can only be resolved through a theological engagement, namely, the ‘Semiotic Passion’, which is a comprehensive response from the theology of the cross. The thesis speaks of the ‘semiotic Passion’ because Kristeva’s methodology involves an intertextual and linguistic analysis, and therefore she has to be engaged with on that level. Central to the thesis is also an exploration of the key texts of Kristeva’s work which disclose a ‘mourning’ for the loss of a theological discourse and its potentials, albeit that this is never made explicit.

The thesis identifies the ‘linguistic gap’ (ontological, epistemological, semantic, ideological and methodological), to which the ‘Semiotic Passion’ is presented as a response. By ‘semiotic Passion’ is meant a re-reading of the Passion which aims both to respond to Kristeva in her own terms, and to incorporate her anthropological insights and elements of her own semiotic analysis. It is proposed that the ‘semiotic passion’ allows us to revisit the image of the Father, the regenerative dynamic of divine love, as a necessary completion of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ resourcing. The ‘Semiotic Passion’ makes this claim by developing a renewed imagery of the cross, by drawing also on Kristeva’s metaphor of ‘maternal suffering’. The solution that the ‘Semiotic Passion’ offers enters into a critical dialogue with the underlying materialist ontology of Kristeva’s model. It demonstrates that the theologia crucis has sufficient resources for doing this.

The overall concern of the study is to introduce Kristeva’s post-structuralism and her Freudian regime to the domain of systematic theology. At the same time, the other aim of the thesis is to show how Kristeva is an important dialogue partner and resource for theology. Kristeva’s complex Freudian anthropology is necessary for theology if it wants to develop a relationship with culture, which is not locked within apologetics. As a result of this, it becomes possible to develop a theological model of the secular through the image of the ‘Father’, which gives a more thorough understanding of the contemporary subject, which is central both to a theological project as well as to a humanist and a philosophical one. The ‘Semiotic Passion’, being also a theoretical proposal, outlines a core to a Christian anthropological program which can ground such a non-apologetic model of the secular.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing my Thesis, I am conscious of a debt of gratitude to a large number of people for their support. First and foremost, Dr James Hanvey S.J. has sustained me with his scholarship, encouragement, friendship and outstanding theological wisdom from the beginning in my interest in the theological reading of Kristeva’s work, and has been unfailingly generous with guidance and criticism. I am also grateful for the intellectual stimulus of Julia Kristeva whose interest in my ‘borderline’ work was highly inspirational.

I must also record my gratitude for financial support during the course of my research from the Order of Regular Canons of Csorna (Ordo Praemonstratensis, Hungary). I am especially indebted to the Canonesses of Saint Augustine (London) for their generous support during my studies, which was manifest in many forms, friendship, assistance, and accommodation. I am particularly conscious of a debt of gratitude to Sr. Gabriel Robin for reading my text and improving my English. I am also grateful to her for her intellectual and spiritual support.

I am offering my work for my mother and father whose love was the hidden ‘object’ of this work. I dedicate my thesis to my father, Gabor Thury who was hospitalised during the last weeks of the writing-up period. Witnessing his sufferings, which were beyond expression, was an existential confirmation that the Passion is our ultimate reality. I dedicate my Semiotic Passion to him and my mother.
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

My work explores Julia Kristeva’s construct of the ‘speaking being’ for systematic theology. The thesis argues that Kristeva’s analysis of the ‘speaking being’ discloses itself as the crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’. The crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity is the central problem of her work, which is not fully answered by her psychoanalytic regime. Kristeva’s understanding of the ‘speaking being’ leads to an ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject, which can only be resolved through a theological engagement, namely, the ‘Semiotic Passion’, which is a comprehensive response from the theology of the cross.

Advancing my argument takes place against the challenging background that Kristeva has no established response from systematic theology. We can speak of her theological reception as virtually non-existent. That is why, in my work, the problem of situating Kristeva for theology and the actual analysis of her project go together. Kristeva, the French psychoanalyst, linguist, non-believer thinker, offers to theology a fascinatingly fresh discourse on love. This discourse, in the first instance, is radically different from what theology is used to. Traditional ‘intra-theological’ approaches are simply insufficient for reading her psychoanalytical treatment of culture, the question of God and religion, love and, most of all, the crisis of the subject. Yet, my study presents Kristeva as the most timely dialogue partner. What systematic theology can develop from this encounter is making the ‘Father’ a central theological image again in dialogue with contemporary culture. Kristeva offers a fascinating ‘hidden’ discourse on the ‘Father’. Though the focal point of her themes is ‘motherhood’, Kristeva points to the ‘lack of the father’. If theology takes pains to comprehend this meta-discourse it can be a most rewarding business. Tradition can develop a new sensibility for dialogue with secular discourses, from which ‘orthodoxy’, for historical reasons, is cut off.

Constructing the method to access Kristeva theologically was a task in its own right. The argument rests upon this scaffolding. That is why, before the summary of the thesis, it is necessary to outline the three general theological ‘narratives’ through which Kristeva, as ‘unknown land’, became approachable. In this way this Introduction moves from the ‘general’ to the ‘particular’.

First, the specific linguistic gap between our discourses had to be identified. Kristeva compares psychoanalysis and faith in the following way:
‘As theology, that once vast continent, vanished between the time of Descartes and the end of the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis (along with linguistics and sociology) became the last of scientific disciplines to set itself up as a rational approach to the understanding of human behaviour and its always enigmatic “meaning”. Unlike the other human sciences, however, psychoanalysis has not been faithful to the positivist conception of rationality. Freud divorced psychoanalysis from psychiatry so that it might encompass a domain which for many is still that of the “irrational” or “supernatural”. In fact, the object of psychoanalysis is simply the *linguistic exchange* – and the accidents that are a part of that exchange – between two subjects in a situation of *transference* and *countertransference*.’

Kristeva situates psychoanalysis between theology and rational humanism. In this particular account, theology is regarded as a bygone world. It leaves the viewpoint of faith with some unease. It is an unusual feeling for theology, as it is forced to imagine that it is replaced by another discourse. Psychoanalysis resembles theology; yet, it speaks a very different language. We also have to know that Kristeva’s viewpoint is consistently that of a non-believer. As there is no connection whatsoever between Kristeva and ‘confessional’ theology, it will be a laborious journey to arrive at a common discourse on the ‘Father’.

In theory, but only in theory, the closest theological agenda which could frame the encounter with the ‘Freudian’ Kristeva is the problem of ‘nature and grace’. Though my study does not take this classic direction, yet, it needs to keep it as a general reference. What my study takes over from its twentieth century version is the objective to relate human nature and grace in a non-dualistic way. Revisiting the ‘nature’ – ‘grace’ debate, theology has laid the foundation of an important critical dialogue with secular humanism. This new sensitivity serves as the ground of my dialogical interest in Kristeva and confirms the hope that such a dialogue is possible:

‘Many debates which mark the history of theology are ultimately debates about nature and grace… From the sixteenth to the twentieth century the problem of nature and grace was technically resolved in such a way as to generate a variety of dualisms that were to bedevil Christian life, the dualisms of the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular, the Church and the world, faith and reason. *Only recently have new viewpoints on nature begun to exorcise these old dualisms.*’

Resolving these dualisms is an unfinished business. The stake of overcoming the separation of ‘world, faith, and reason’ is a renewed dialogue with ‘the secular’. My purpose is to find a fresh viewpoint on these inherited conflicts. Kristeva’s work is an excellent

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opportunity to respond to the linguistic gap between the Church and our ‘post-Freudian culture’ as she is a keen observer of human nature ‘outside grace’.

I have also chosen a less conventional, second theological context for my work. My critique will recurrently resort to Peter Homans’ concept of ‘cultural mourning’. Homans’ theory is a very useful model to connect discourses which respond to a paradigmatic change in culture in an opposing way. It is very fortunate that he developed his idea in order to understand better the Freudian shift in culture and the parallel conflict with religion. The story told by Homans is the second ‘gateway’ through which the dialogue with the ideological differences in Kristeva becomes possible. That is why I introduce Homans’ model of dialogue here.

According to Homans, with the collapse of the unified worldview of ‘Christendom’, the distance between Transcendence and ‘man’ was lost. This distance or difference between the Divine and the human was orienting, securing, and universally accepted. With the collapse of this structure, this lost orientation had to be rebuilt. The Freudian turn and traditional religion ‘restored’ the ultimate reference of the human self very differently. In Homans’ idiom, their respective ‘cultural mourning’ produced opposite results. On the side of religion Transcendence was ‘reinvented’. As a counter reaction to uncertainty and doubt in a weakened God, God as a ‘cultural superego’ was re-emphasised. To give a fresh orientation to culture, Christianity, regardless of denomination, developed the notion of a ‘High Transcendent’ God who is ‘strongly’ in control. This ‘super’ Transcendence meant a God who was seen above human nature and history. A strong sense of ‘distance’ was restored. In the Freudian solution this ‘High Transcendence’ was radically questioned. The God that this restoration produced as an ‘oppressive authority’, as a rigid ‘patriarchal Father’, was rejected. The ‘psychoanalytical turn’ offered a new vision of the human self based not on ‘Transcendence’ but on the analysis of the human self in its psychic and social relationships. The relationship between Kristeva and theology lies somewhere within this conflict.

There is a wider, cultural dynamic of ‘mourning’ in which we can also envision the Kristeva – theology relationship. In explaining the process of reflection on the past, Homans extended the original psychological concepts of object loss and narcissistic mourning from the psychological level to *ideals, values and traditions*. He calls the process ‘de-idealisation’. We can attribute to this broader sense of ‘symbolic mourning’ the emergence of new values,
new cultural symbols, and new psychological, social and religious structures. At the endpoint of this ‘mourning’ we find the emergence of new paradigmatic discourses of culture, e.g., the ‘secular Enlightenment’, ‘counter-Reformation’, ‘Marxism’, or the Freudian turn itself. What Homans’ model encourages is re-reading the conflict between theology and psychoanalysis in terms of a cultural dialogue.

My work presents the encounter with Kristeva’s updated Freudianism as an opportunity for a highly intense ‘cultural mourning’. The translation between the opposing positions indeed requires entering into the specific dynamic that Homans calls the ‘ability to mourn’. Entering into a genuine dialogue between the traditions of faith and philosophical atheism will require a painful ‘de-idealisation’ of positions, which were secure simply for the reason that they were uninterrupted by the paradigms of the opposite side. This conflict, which is my second working hypothesis, requires a ‘symbolic mourning’ which means an active interest in the ‘symbolic language’ of the interlocutor.

The ‘Semiotic Passion’ in the title of the thesis anticipates a shared symbol building. The ‘semiotic’ refers to a key feature of Kristeva’s project; the Passion refers to the flagship of theological discourse. The thesis, as my most overall concern, argues that the dialogue with Kristeva’s model is possible. The fact that I developed the theological reading of Kristeva from the theology of the cross, literally the heart of Christian thought, expresses the fact that this dialogue is not only possible but is of vital importance. The ‘Good Friday dialogue’ sub-title adds even more to it. This dialogue is crucial for both discourses.

The third context I chose for engaging with Kristeva is a shift within secular humanism itself. Jürgen Habermas draws attention to a growing awareness that ‘something is missing’ from the ‘philosophically enlightened self-understanding of modernity’. To name properly this absence is the central interest of my study. I will present the Passion of Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’ as the main evidence to ‘what is missing’. The Semiotic Passion to which my study arrives, will reclaim what is ‘missing’, that is, ‘grace’ through which the self is embedded in its ultimate ground, God. This reinstatement of ‘grace’ into the discourse will happen as a result of the dialogue with Kristeva’s materialism.

As a fourth theological context, my study resorts to a specific body of theological

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5 Jürgen Habermas, An Awareness of What is Missing, Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age, translated by Ciaran Cronin, Polity Press, Cambridge 2010 (first published in German as Ein Bewuβsein von dem, was fehlt, Suhrkamp Verlag Frenkfurt am Main 2008), p.16.
speech within the tradition of the *theologia crucis*. My motives for doing so are twofold. First, in the Passion the *human person* — in the light of the divinity of Christ — is central. With this, a shared framework for the critical analysis of ‘suffering’ in a nihilist culture is given. The second reason for turning to key players in the ‘theology of the cross’, like Rahner, Moltmann, Metz and Balthasar, is a historical one. Kristeva’s humanist authorities are from the world of ‘modernity’. It is natural that their philosophical atheism is addressed by their late contemporaries from theological modernity.

The underlying claim of my work, namely, that Kristeva is a timely issue for theology, was given two important, *indirect* confirmations. First, in the autumn of 2010 an official ‘interreligious dialogue’ with atheism was launched by the Pontifical Council for Culture. The objective of this project was dialogue with ‘unbelief’, once equated with atheism. I developed my project independently from this initiative. My context is not the traditional program of re-evangelisation. The medium in which my investigation takes place is not the ‘faith’ – ‘unbelief’ dichotomy. Instead, my focus is on the relationship between the ‘subject’ and nihilism, which offers a more direct dialogue. The Court of the Gentiles Foundation invited everyone to reflect on the philosophical foundations of a possible cooperation between ‘those who believe in heaven and those who do not believe in it.’ Julia Kristeva was one of the participants in the event. The first reports on the event highlighted the difficulty of this dialogue, which the participants themselves confirmed. Philosopher Fabrice Hadjad expressed the explicit wish to go beyond the level of a ‘stilted and formal ceremony where everyone comes to fulfil their function’, and the need for a discussion where all sides can relate to the question of God in a meaningful way. The meticulous work of ‘decoding’ Kristeva’s atheism for systematic theology has convinced me that the ‘official dialogue’ will remain for a long time a polite ‘formal ceremony’ without a major achievement. The future of this very important conversation will be decided at lower, unofficial levels. It necessarily has to take place there, at the ‘borders’ of official discourses. Back to our Homansian background, ‘what is missing’ is the work of a meticulous ‘revision’ of our concepts,

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6 Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, head of the Pontifical Council for Culture, announced the inaugural event of the Courtyard of the Gentiles Foundation that took place in March 2011 in Paris. Pope Benedict XVI had already called for the establishment of the permanent structure in 2009. The wording of the Pope’s initiative is significant: ‘Today, in addition to interreligious dialogue, there should be a dialogue with those to whom religion is something foreign, to whom God is unknown and who nevertheless do not want to be left merely Godless, but rather to draw near to him, albeit as the Unknown.’ The project is to be part of the new evangelisation. Fr Laurent Mazas FSJ (Freres de Saint-Jean), an official at the Vatican’s Culture Council, was directing the event. The 24-25 March launch included lectures on ‘Religion, Enlightenment and Common Reason’. See *The Tablet* (29 January 2011), p.31.


methods, solutions, and even strategies. All this is within a common ‘symbolic language’. My work aims at elaborating this form of dialogue.

The second confirmation of my project came from Julia Kristeva herself, not independently from the above context. She showed a genuine interest in my reading of her work within a theological framework. Kristeva confirmed my presentiment that the ‘what is missing’ from secular and theological humanism might not find its place in an official dialogue. She expressed this in a brief response to the specific nature of my project. Raising the important questions inevitably requires putting oneself at the margins of his or her ‘native’ discourse. The *Semiotic Passion* aims to evaluate Kristeva for systematic theology in a way which pushes both her Freudianism and theology to the limits of their regimes. It is in this borderline situation that the theologian can truly witness to the fact that ‘Tradition is the way in which the ontology of faith comes to act.’

The fact that Kristeva is not researched by ‘systematic theology’ deeply affects the form and content of my work. As Kristeva is unfamiliar to the British theological audience, I have had to resolve three tasks simultaneously. First, I had to introduce what her project is about. Second, I had to develop the ‘hermeneutic’ which translates Kristeva for the theological mindset as this ‘code of reading’ is simply missing. Third, I had to develop my argument. This would have been much easier if the authors of a rich theological ‘secondary literature’ had communicated with each other. In our case the discourse itself has had to be constructed, ‘starting from scratch’. This threefold task, respectively, requires a different style. This explains the relative ‘textual empiricism’ of my work. Primary texts and their interpretation naturally have required ‘space’ and a significant role in my study. I could not refer to these texts separately in an ‘Appendix’ as they had to be interpreted in the main body of the thesis. These texts are in the service of a *theological interpretation* of Kristeva.

When a ‘theological narrative’ has to be constructed, which accommodates a critique and through which the critique itself operates, the existing ‘academic resources’ attain a new

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9 ‘Cher Gabor Balint, Je suis évidemment très intéressée par votre recherche, je comprends que les églises traditionnelles sont dubitatives voir réticentes à l’égard d’une pensée comme la vôtre. Mais vous savez que c'est par une certaine dissidence que les choses avancent, et qu'il faut beaucoup de courage pour continuer dans cette voie. Je vous le souhaite en tout cas et je suis persuadée que votre foi aussi vous guidera dans cette autonomie de pensée qui est la vôtre. Tenons nous au courant de la suite de cette échange et comptez sur moi pour une lecture dans un avenir pas immédiat. En vous souhaitant un excellent été et peut-être dans l'espoir de nouvelle rencontre. Très cordialement à vous, Mme J. Kristeva’ 07.06.2011

significance. Accessible treatments of the field, however limited, have been revaluated. Sources and authorities in a situation like this need to be used differently. The primary purpose of my work, besides arguing my thesis, was to develop the ‘host narrative’ which can accommodate and welcome Kristeva, including secondary literature, into dialogue with systematic theology.

Now, against the above general perspective, I summarize the ‘particular’ contents of my thesis. Part One explores Kristeva’s materialist position and the motives of her ‘semiotic symbol building’. The underlying interest of this evaluation is that it explores the challenges of her project for theology. Part One argues that the underlying problem of the ‘speaking being’ is the ‘exhausted subject’.

Chapter 1, ‘Adventures and Impasses’, situates Kristeva with the methodological challenges in relation to theology. It offers a brief overview of Kristeva’s academic background and introduces her project for a theological readership. This introduction shows Kristeva in a tension with ‘rational humanism’. It presents her project as a revolt against ‘rational humanism’. The introduction also shows her tension with theology both in terms of the ‘gap’ with her founding discourses, and also in terms of the virtually missing response from systematic theology. This exposition makes the suggestion that the possibility of a critical dialogue between Kristeva and theology should be examined. This proposal takes place in view of the fact that the tension between Kristeva and mainstream secular humanism promises a less fertile co-operation than her encounter with theology.

Chapter 2, ‘The Exhausted Subject’, contains three analyses (I. The ‘exhausted subject’ as the underlying problem of the oeuvre, II. ‘Transcendence’, III. ‘Mourning’) In general these analyses seek a way to find a theological access to Kristeva’s work. Analysis I makes the important hermeneutical proposal to identify the ‘exhausted subject’ as the central problem of the oeuvre. The chronological reading of Kristeva’s work will bring to surface the ‘exhausted subject’. This serves as the ground for exploring the ‘speaking being’ as a complex materialist ‘ontological’ vision of the self. My study establishes a connection between Kristeva’s immanent resourcing and the ongoing ‘exhaustion’ of the subject in a nihilist culture. In this ‘historical reading’ of Kristeva’s work, it will emerge that her project responds to the ‘exhaustion’ of the subject of modernity and postmodernity with a materialist resourcing of the self. Analysis II will focus on Kristeva’s strategy for the inner resourcing of the ‘speaking being’. This is what my study calls the problem of ‘Transcendence’ in Kristeva’s work. Here my central concern will be her ‘linguistic reinterpretation of Transcendence’. I give an in-depth analysis of her program of the ‘self-transcending subject’
and how it is based on a materialist world-view. I pay specific attention to Kristeva’s concept of the ‘chora-thetic’, which I identify as the core of both her linguistic and psychoanalytical strategies. My study is also concerned with identifying the limits of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic strategies’ for the recovery of the subject. My critique highlights that the underlying materialism of her project prevents a full reading of ‘psychic suffering’. Despite her objectives, Kristeva’s method ‘exhausts’ the subject, and this ‘exhaustion’ is pre-built in her materialism. As ‘grace’ is ontologically excluded from her system, it is inevitable that this materialism overlooks the religious dimension of the subject’s ‘ontic’ crisis. Analysis III pays attention to Kristeva’s novels. My critique points out that a very intense personal and collective mourning for the self’s religious past is taking place in her fictional writings. It is this ‘melancholy mourning’ which remains unanswered in Kristeva’s project. In the novels it surfaces as an existential problem, whereas in the theoretical writings we encounter a highly disciplined psychological understanding of religion.

As a response, Chapter 3, ‘Aporias and Resolutions’, evaluates Kristeva’s materialist horizon. This evaluation shows that Kristeva’s project can be seen as a complex ‘ontological program’ from a materialist position. This program offers a ‘semiotic’ soteriology. As the external form of a comprehensive response, I will suggest an ‘ontological critique’ of Kristeva. My evaluation will point to the fact that it is not sufficient to reground ‘reason’ in its quasi transcendent horizon, the ‘sub-conscious’. I will make the claim that control over reason cannot be limited to the immanent discourse on love. Reinstating the Transcendent horizon as a relevant reference for dealing with the nihilist crisis is also necessary. I argue that reinstating the religious meaning of Transcendence is an important resource for responding to the problem of the ‘isolated self’ which her materialism reveals. The central task of this chapter is to find a solution through which a non-apologetic response to the ‘ontological’ conflict with her materialism becomes possible. My solution will be raising the critique onto a symbolic level. This will be given a support by Kristeva’s novels and the development in her relationship to religion. The ultimate confirmation that a shared ‘symbolic reflection’ is possible is Kristeva’s recently emerged dialogical position with religion.

The chapters in Part Two will bring to realisation the closing insight of Part One, namely, that it is possible to bring to realisation the suggested ‘ontological critique’, if theology, through its own efforts to renew its language on God, enters into dialogue with Kristeva’s ‘semiotic symbols’. That is why Part Two further advances the thesis of Part One: Kristeva’s project can best be responded to from within the theology of the cross. It brings out the non-apologetic dimension of my critique by arguing that a shared symbol building
with Kristeva is possible. My critique in this phase will identify, as the centre of a shared ‘cultural mourning’, the need to recover the Father’s Love for the (‘exhausted’) post-modern subject. This shared objective provides the platform to argue the relevance of a ‘graced’ Loving Third Party. Basically, Part Two will present three different, yet interrelated, readings of the Passion.

Chapter 4, ‘The New Situation in Culture: The Lost Father’, presents, as the starting point for dialogue, the situation of the lost Father. First, I present the historical expression of the problem in Freud. My specific focus will be how the ‘Father’s love’ in reference to the Christian God-image emerged in Freud’s ‘historical mourning’, that is, in his reading of the Christian Passion. In this way, the critique of Kristeva’s materialism will be taken up by making the question of the ‘God-image’ central. This ‘bridge’ with Freud is important as through him it becomes possible to engage with Kristeva’s ‘atheistic’, psychological, and humanist sub-texts through a shared focal point. This focus is the theological problem of presenting a relevant image of God to culture. The problem of correcting the God image, namely, the distortions of the images of atonement theology, will recapitulate the ontological conflict with Kristeva. That is why I will suggest the correction of the image of the ‘Father’ in the ‘bloody representation’ of the Passion as the platform from which the comprehensive response of theology to Kristeva can be articulated. The image of the Father in the Passion, it will be argued, can be presented as a narrative which integrates the problems that the encounter with Kristeva raises. The advantages and limits of her materialist anthropology, her critique of religion, and her critique of nihilism can all be linked to the Christian God-image in the Passion.

Chapter 5, ‘Kristeva’s “Semiotic Passion”: Reinstating the “Father” of Religion’, presents Kristeva’s recent reading of the Passion. It is organically linked to Freud’s critique of the God-image in two aspects. First, her dialogue with Christians on ‘Suffering’ is a recapitulation of her Freudian regime for the Christian interlocutor. Here specific attention will be paid to her correction of Freud’s premise, namely, that religion is not an illusion. Belief in the ‘loving Third’, as we shall learn from Kristeva’s new dialogical position, is a shared existential dynamic with religious faith. Kristeva, with her dialogical position in the Passion, herself brings the image of the Christian Father to the fore. My study will argue that, for the first time in the oeuvre, we see theology in a co-ordinate relationship with her regime, as a partner. If theology lives with this chance, it can argue that religion can speak with anthropological relevance to Kristeva’s humanism.
Chapter 6, ‘Theology’s “Semiotic Passion”: Renewing the Image of the Father from the *Theologia Crucis*, will demonstrate that the theology of the cross, as the ‘cultural mourning’ of theological modernity, has sufficient resources to respond to the problems of the ‘speaking being’. Drawing on the theologies of Rahner, Metz, Moltmann and von Balthasar, I show that theology has a genuine anthropological discourse, which provides vital data for answering the needs of the ‘exhausted subject’. On the one hand, it will be a response to Kristeva’s early position which regarded religion (theology) as an ‘expired’ discourse. On the contrary, theology’s ‘symbolic mourning’ has explored areas which were overlooked by the ‘anthropological turn’ in culture. Thus, Kristeva’s substituting psychoanalysis for religion on the ground that the latter lacks a proper contemporary anthropology does not hold. It is true that this lack can be stated in the classic theological concepts such as the ‘person’ and ‘God’. My point will be that the ‘symbolic’ development of the *theologia crucis* recognised this lack, and made significant corrections. However, I will conclude critically, this ‘anthropological mourning’ remained unfinished.

Chapter 7, ‘The ‘Semiotic Passion’: The Linguistic Imagery of the Father’, is going to submit a theoretical proposal, which is theology’s ‘semiotic reading’ of the Cross. This is the *linguistic imagery* of the Passion in the form of a theoretical model. It suggests those corrections which not only Kristeva’s ‘anthropological demands’ raise, but which the objective situation of the ‘exhausted subject’ also raises. My general argument throughout the study is that the crisis of the postmodern subject challenges both the humanist and the theological narratives. This challenge requires a co-operation between Kristevan psychoanalysis and faith. The *Semiotic Passion* submits an ‘experimental’ image of the Father which responds in relevant ways to ‘postmodern exhaustion’. It articulates a theological metaphor in its own right, which I term the image of the ‘mourning Father’. Its relevance is that the ‘unprecedented closeness of the Father’ posits a genuine dynamic of healing. As a comprehensive response to Kristeva, my study demonstrates that it is possible to represent the Christian Father *within* the self. This corrected imagery of the Passion, my claim will be, achieves a ‘new credibility’ of the ‘Father’ for the contemporary subject. It speaks directly to his ‘exhaustion’, when the subject’s last possession is *language*. Language will be presented as the ultimate ‘ontological’ narrative of postmodern identity. I will conclude that presenting the image of transcendent Love on this ‘horizon’ can remove a major cause of ‘mistrust’ in the Christian narrative. The *Semiotic Passion* as a whole will show that the banal images of God with which culture operates can be corrected. This unchallenged banality is a major hindrance that prevents the postmodern self (and our culture) from ‘mourning’ the lost ‘Christian past’. The *Semiotic Passion* serves as a narrative through which making ‘ontological statements’ on the subject becomes possible again in a
new way. In the narrow sense, it demonstrates that, for Kristeva, a much more fertile dialogue is possible with theology than with ‘Habermas’s’ rationalist recovery of Enlightenment humanism. In the wider sense, the revision of the banal images of God associated with the ‘bloody’ Cross aims at grounding a further dialogue with Kristeva. As a starting point for a further dialogue, by presenting non-banal images of the Father, the *Semiotic Passion* initiates a renewed communication between secular humanism, Tradition (orthodoxy), and the post-modern self.

Chapter 8, ‘Summary of the Thesis and Conclusions’, gives an overview of the thesis with some strategic outcomes.

*In order to assist the reader, I am introducing the major most frequently recurring hermeneutic concepts of my study in the ‘Appendices’. These critical keywords bring to the surface the necessary critical tension and, at the same time, ground a non-apologetic dialogue. (See Appendix 1.a)*
PART ONE: PREPARING THE DIALOGUE

My thesis argues that the central problem of Kristeva’s work is the crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity, which is not fully answered by her psychoanalytic regime. Her understanding of the ‘speaking being’ leads to an ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject, which can only be resolved through a specific engagement with theology, namely with the ‘Semiotic Passion’, which is a comprehensive response from the theology of the cross.

The two parts of my work relate to each other as exposition and conversation. The specific task of Part One is to situate Kristeva as a potential dialogue partner for theology. It does this by elucidating the first proposition of the thesis that the ‘exhausted subject’ is the underlying problem of Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’, and that it is her materialist horizon that prevents her from recognising the crisis of the post-modern self in its totality. Part Two will initiate a conversation to resolve this problem. It will spell out the second proposition of my thesis, namely that the historical exhaustion of the subject can be responded to best from the theology of the cross.

My critique engages on three major levels with Kristeva. Part One is the first step, establishing a contact between theology and Kristeva’s texts. This, as the ontological tension with her materialism will show, is a preliminary ‘apologetic relationship’. As a second stage, my purpose in Part Two will be to resolve this impasse by exploring an inter-textual relationship\(^{11}\) (potential dialogue) with theology, which lies beneath the initial tension. The closing step will be a demonstration that even the closest ‘intra-textual’ relationship (actual co-operation) is possible. These levels of engagement cover the critique of Kristeva’s materialism (Part One), the engagement through representatives of the theologia crucis, and the dialogue between Kristeva’s ‘semiotic symbols’ and theology in the Semiotic Passion (Part Two).

Kristeva’s agnostic atheism posits an unusual challenge for a critique articulated from the position of faith. From the onset, my study challenges the position of ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ that rejects an ‘ontological discourse’ with theology. Part One’s general working hypothesis is that Kristeva’s psychoanalytical discourse reveals a situation between secular humanism and theology in which the revision of this position is necessary.

\(^{11}\) See Appendix 1.a
The purpose of this chapter is to situate Kristeva for theological discourse. Though Kristeva could be examined in her French academic context, I deliberately draw on her English speaking authorities as my concern is to introduce Kristeva to the British theological audience.

This chapter situates Kristeva for theology in the following aspects. It examines (1) her unique relationship to mainstream secular discourse (the ‘Habermasian centre’), (2) her new contribution to psychoanalysis, (3) how her project, as a psychoanalytical ethic and a critique of culture, sees the ‘speaking being’, (4) and the questions that her engagement with religious texts raise for theology.

1.1 Submitting the Paradox: The Possibility of Ontological Discourse In a ‘Post-metaphysical Age’?

Situating Kristeva for theology has to start with showing her unique position among ‘post-metaphysical discourses’. Locating her within the humanist tradition offers a crucial direction for a critique. It also frames her professional contexts. Kristeva is caught up in a challenging inner tension. While sharing the Habermasian program that secular reason is not allowed to make ‘ontological pronouncements on the constitution of the being as such’,12 because the experience of faith is unverifiable by rational knowledge, her Freudianism is also in revolt against the hegemony of reason.

Kristeva’s philosophical context is undeniably mainstream secular humanism which defines itself as post-metaphysical thinking. My study deliberately relates Kristeva to Habermas’ recent call for a critical revision of the humanist project. He critically proposes that ‘something is missing’ from these discourses. This ‘something’ ‘intrudes into modernity as the most awkward element from its [religious] past’.13 The complementarity and the tension of their positions provide a vital orientation for my critique. Kristeva herself is

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13 Habermas, An Awareness of What is Missing, p.16.
involved in this debate. She fully agrees with Habermas in recognising the autonomy of reason over metaphysical thought. Both assign a leading role to critical reason in resolving the crisis of culture. They also share the need to revise the relationship between the Enlightenment and religion. Both urge a further criticism of the humanist project.

Yet, paradoxically, it is the Habermas – Kristeva disagreement which leads to the rehabilitation of ‘ontological discourse’ on Kristeva’s part. The paradox is that while Kristeva does not buy into ontological statements, her discourse relates to Habermas as an ‘alternative metaphysics’ which corrects ‘rational’ humanism. Kristeva rebels against the hegemony of reason in terms of the falsity of the ego. The psychoanalytic shift, she argues, presented the subconscious as the interruption of Cartesian reason. Kristeva challenges the ego cogito, the thinking subject, from the position of the ego amo, the subject believing in the other. In terms of this new dynamic, it is a real, quasi ‘metaphysical’ distance. The discovery of the unconscious was a paradigm shift in the development of the humanism of the Enlightenment. It brought it the missing ‘greater complexity’ and sophistication.

Kristeva, unlike Habermas, lets reason dream of love, its genuine other. We can evaluate this interruption of reason as reintroducing a ‘transcendent’ dynamic. Rational reason is raised to a level which is beyond the ‘physis’ (nature) of self-totalising reason.

There is a second level, where Kristeva gets ‘quasi-metaphysical’. This is her use of symbolic language. In contrast to the rationalist humanism of Habermas, Kristeva engages directly with Christian texts. We can locate her discourse between a corrected rationalist humanism and the interest of religion in the ‘beginnings’. This latter Habermas deems as ‘irrational’, ‘opaque’ and ‘totally alien’ to the agnostic reason. When he suggests a cognitive approximation between ‘self-reflexive humanism’ and a ‘self-reflexive theology’ it remains a theoretical suggestion. Unlike this ‘post-metaphysical suspicion’, Kristeva engages in a symbolism which she shares with Christians. A section in This Incredible Need to Believe, ‘The Debt of the Human Sciences toward Onto-theology’, tells of this overstepping of a border. Kristeva goes much further than the ‘splendid isolation’ of Habermas, when offering a second Freudian correction to ‘rationalist humanism’. ‘The remains of the

14 Kristeva, Julia. ‘ “Rethinking Normative Conscience”: The Task of the Intellectual Today’ (pp.219-226), Common Knowledge Spring 2007 13(2-3) (The article was a contribution to ‘A Dictatorship of Relativism’? Symposium in Response to Cardinal Ratzinger's Last Homily)
17 Kristeva, ‘Rethinking Normative Conscience’, p.221.
18 Habermas, Between Naturalism and Religion, p.143.
ontotheological continent, too rapidly decreed sunk, seem less and less like “dead letters” and more and more like laboratories of living cells whose exploration might allow us to clarify present aporias and impasses. To do justice to Habermas, they agree in ‘internalising’ the religious contribution. Part of ‘what is missing’ is the need to recognise the Christian metaphysical tradition within modernity as part of its own genesis.

The third level, where Kristeva goes beyond the Habermasian centre, is her turn to the subject. For Kristeva the human person is always an open system and not a substance and, just like language, is never transparent. It opposes Habermas whose subject is autonomous and an effective political agent. Here Kristeva’s project is much further ahead of Habermas whose analysis is limited mainly to the crisis of discourse. Kristeva articulates the crisis of culture also in terms of the crisis of the subject of discourse. This subjective turn is where Kristeva goes beyond the strict demarcation between agnostic post-metaphysical thinking and religion. My point is that any description of subjective crisis necessarily is ‘metaphysical’ in as much as it raises the problem of the resourcing of the person. The classic metaphysical questioning, ‘What is existent?’, ‘What is really there?’, is reformulated in Kristeva: what is a sufficient support to the person and his community? In practice, Kristeva’s project reintroduces ‘ontology’ into the post-modern situation. The question of the grounding of the self, that is, the need of re-orientation, sufficient resources, and the need for secular humanism to find a critical distance from its crisis, generates an ‘ontological discourse’.

The fourth level, where Kristeva emerges as a ‘transcendent discourse’, is the way her psychoanalytical regime, compared with Habermas, discloses its ideological subtexts. For Kristeva, coming out of one’s own discourse is necessary, because it is the only way to scrutinise the founding premises of the secular Enlightenment. The problem with the post-metaphysical position is that it refuses to question its ideological foundations. Compared with Habermas, as we will see, her model is more open for ‘ontological’ and ideological scrutiny. Kristeva allows us to see her ideological premises, her materialism, her Freudianism and ‘Marxism’ as an atheism. Mainstream secular humanism (‘Habermas’) does not. The ‘ontological correctness’ of the post-metaphysical age, in a sense, is based on a denial. The latter is reluctant to admit that ideologically it is not un-biased at all. The ‘split’

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19 Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p.32.
between Kristeva and Habermas reveals that secular discourse is founded on unchecked ontological premises.

It is against this background, before all subsequent engagements, that my study can clarify in what sense Kristeva’s project is ‘ontological’. On the one hand, strictly speaking, Kristeva does not buy into metaphysics. In fact, she regards her theories as ‘anti-metaphysical’. However, against the above backdrop, we encounter a deep epistemological ambiguity in her project. The second paradox emerges in her relation to Christian ‘metaphysical’ discourse itself. Kristeva draws heavily on elements of its metaphysical language, even if their original weight is replaced by a metaphorical or psychological meaning. ‘Psychoanalysis seems to be alone in radically making immanent what Western metaphysics considers transcendent.’

It is in view of this ‘immanent’ transposing of meaning that Kristeva speaks of her preoccupation with the ‘sacred’. ‘My preoccupation with the sacred is, in fact, anti-metaphysical…By understanding the “semitic” as the “emergence of meaning” we can overcome the dichotomies of metaphysics (soul/body, physical/psychical).’

With metaphysical language, Kristeva also dismisses religious ontology. In practice, however, she produces a complete materialist ‘ontology’ of the person. Her description of the ‘sub-psychic’ and love demonstrate all the functions of an ontology. Sneyder gives support to my approach, when he advances Kristeva’s ‘semitics’ as a metaphysical quest. Interestingly, Sneyder sees her as taking up Kant’s unfinished project from the metaphysical tradition of the Enlightenment. Kristeva revisits the unexamined ‘roots’ of human subjectivity. Her important references to Heidegger, as the archetypal writer between anthropology and metaphysics, give further support to the ‘ontological’ line I take. My ontological approach is given a further confirmation by Philippa Berry. She brings attention

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26 Kristeva engaged extensively with Heidegger through Hannah Arendt. She examines in detail how Arendt’s action centred philosophy departs from Heidegger’s reconstruction of metaphysical discourse. This study shows how well Kristeva is rehearsed in the classic metaphysical tradition. See, Ch 2 ‘Arendt and Aristotle, An Apologia for Narration’ (pp.11-29), in Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt, Life is A Narrative*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2001, and her monograph *Hannah Arendt*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001 (Original French publication *Le Génie féminine, Hannah Arendt*, by Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1999.), especially sections ‘Arendt and Aristotle: A Defense of Narration’ (pp. 69-86.) and ‘The Tale of the Twentieth Century’ (pp.86-99.)
to ‘the feminist alternative’ that Irigary and Kristeva spelled out in developing further Heidegger’s correction of the Western metaphysical tradition. Berry convincingly argues that Kristeva’s semiotics can be seen within the development of Western ontology and points out a direct contact with the late Heidegger’s key concept, the *Lichtung*, ‘clearing’ or ‘open place’ within which Being can manifest its *hiddenness*. Kristeva’s concept of the ‘chora’, Berry argues, is an original articulation of a ‘space’ ignored by the Western metaphysical tradition, in which the dualisms produced by a ‘patriarchal conceptual and experiential horizon can be corrected. Core elements of Kristeva’s semiotic program, like *extase* or *jouissance*, the maternal origins of meaning, point to the possibility of another kind of thinking which is missing from ‘patriarchal metaphysics’. Kristeva, Berry argues, resolves the philosophical dilemmas of the late Heidegger by reconfiguring (dissolving) the boundaries between sacred and profane, the bodily and the intellectual style of knowing. This kind of ‘ontological approach’ offers a correction of the implicitly *masculine* subject.\(^{27}\)

Berry also draws attention in *Of Chastity and Power* to the fact that the first secular canonisation of this subjectivity took place in late Renaissance philosophy. This masculine horizon was further manifest in the distinctive rational subject of late sixteenth and seventeenth century philosophy and science. Berry’s important thesis is that it is upon this radical paradigm shift in Western discourse on the ‘sacred’, the emergence of a *masculine* humanism with its epistemological regime, that the Enlightenment project has been erected up to the present.\(^{28}\) Despite the fact that my strategy of deconstructing theology’s ‘strong’ Father-narrative will rely on theological classics untouched by the feminist discourse, my study fully agrees with Berry in that Kristeva articulates the necessary correction of the masculine subject, the agent of modernity’s discourses on the sacred, secular and religious alike. Kristeva’s ‘ontological revision’ in *Tales of Love* examines the paradigm shift that Berry points out, not only in the Renaissance but also in the medieval period.\(^{29}\)

This preliminary situating of Kristeva holds two things in readiness for my critique. The first is her ambiguous position in ‘post-metaphysical’ discourses. This provides the potential for her critical position to re-introduce the question of ‘beginnings’. Secondly, if Kristeva can be seen as reopening ‘ontological discourse’ within the secular tradition, then, what directions can her discourse take? Is her emphasis on the subject pushing her towards the Habermasian ‘centres’ in terms of locking her in polemics with ‘normative reason’, or is it...

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pushing her towards an ‘ontological description’ of subjective suffering, which she has initiated? More explicitly, can Kristeva’s Freudian premise that reason has to be challenged outside reason lead to a critical dialogue with Christianity about the ‘beginnings’ and ‘ends’ of human potential?
1.2 Kristeva’s New Contribution to Psychoanalysis

Julia Kristeva’s corpus includes more than 26 volumes, including her novels. This introduction gives a comprehensive overview of Kristeva’s work. For systematic theology it is quite a process to learn the coherence and ‘autonomy’ of her post-structuralist psychoanalysis. The primary task of the following sections is to make clear that Kristeva’s ‘ontological’ reference is the language of the ‘speaking being’. It is from this core that she addresses critically both secular and theological discourses on the subject. It is crucial to see from the outset that Kristeva’s work always retains a fundamental link with religion. This relationship is best summed up by Arendt’s program, with which Kristeva entirely identifies. Religious tradition has to be rethought (“believing in God”) by constantly questioning transcendence. 30

1.2.1 Autobiographical Background

A brief autobiographical overview from Ives will explain much of the ‘story’ of the ‘speaking being’, as Kristeva’s theories respond to particular historical situations and cultural conditions of the human person. This overview also gives insights on the major influences on her as a thinker.

Kristeva was born in communist Bulgaria in 1941. She was educated in part by French Dominican nuns. She was involved with the Communist Party’s children’s groups and youth organisations. In her adolescence, she lost her orthodox faith. Kristeva attributed this loss not so much to the influence of atheist indoctrination, as to a personal conflict with the ‘bodily desires’ she experienced of her emerging adulthood. The faith of childhood never developed into the faith of an adult, despite her frequent references to her father’s faith and their visiting churches together when she was young.

In 1965 Kristeva moved to France with the Charles de Gaulle scholarship and the intention of not returning to Bulgaria. Now she is regarded in France as one of the most important thinkers of the era. Early on, Kristeva was associated with the Parisian avant-garde leftist journal *Tel Quel*, and the *Tel Quel* group of writers and philosophers: Michael Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Philippe Sollers and others. As a young linguist,

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she was greatly influenced by the function and workings of texts in modern avant-garde literature. Examining the ‘text’ in the modern novel, in her *Le Texte du roman*, Kristeva’s references were Georg Lukacs, Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In *Séméiotike: Recherches pour une Sémanalyse* (a collection of her early essays between 1966 and 1968), she referred to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Georges Bataille’s philosophy, with its emphasis on negativity and loss was an important influence on her own way of interpreting culture and the psychic space. In her hermeneutics Kristeva made central the category of ‘loss’. The philosophy of negativity that Kristeva developed includes the historical dialectic materialism of Marx, Freud’s drive theory, and her theory of the loss of the mother as a grounding event of language.

Kristeva’s visit to China in 1974 resulted in her break with political Marxism and Maoism (*About Chinese Women*). Her doctoral thesis, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) made her a philosopher and a critic. She turned to the transformative power of literary texts. While already developing her own original work, she was learning Lacanian psychoanalysis. In 1979 Kristeva became a practising Freudian psychoanalyst, while keeping a chair in linguistics at the University of Paris VII. Psychoanalysis, poetic language, gender, maternity and identity are her lasting topics from the 1980s. Borderline states of identity, exile, the foreigner are intertwined in her writings and result in a cosmopolitan ethics for the ‘cosmopolitan individual’. These themes of her work developed into her recent concern, the problem of how to preserve European identity as a cultural identity.

**1.2.2 A Brief Recapitulation of Kristeva’s Semiotic Program**

Julia Kristeva applies the structural tools of the psychoanalytic tradition to the dynamics of post-modern culture. Her thought, though critical of Jacques Lacan, the French Freudian psychoanalyst, is also indebted to him especially in his exploration of the ways in which language is the medium of subjectivity. For Kristeva, the relationship between the ‘semiotic’

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33 In the above biographical and thematic summary I followed closely Ives’ stresses in Kristeva’s biography. In Ives, *Julia Kristeva*, pp.27-31.
and the ‘symbolic’ is the constantly shifting site of the subject who emerges in language; that is why human beings are ‘the speaking subject’. It is her perception that meaning and subjectivity depend on the ability to connect the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘symbolic’ if self-relating, other-relating and world-relating are to be possible.

The ‘semiotic’ is the affective, desire-driven, non-discursive dimension in language and the person. It is almost like the ‘unconscious’ embodied in language which is present in and communicated through the ‘symbolic’, or ordered, rational, law-governed language. The semiotic is an expression of the life of the *chora*, a concept Kristeva takes over from Plato’s *Timaeus*. It is directly connected to the *thetic* function, which connects the bodily drives with the symbolic order, ‘renewing meaning’ through the drive inscription. These ‘semiotic’ drives represent the creative inchoateness, to some extent, the maternal primal womb, from which life forms, and from which new proposed meanings emerge for the ‘Symbolic’. In return for accommodating the drive-irruptions, the *chora-thetic* accepts the renewed authority of the Symbolic order. The *chora/thetic* thus has the power to express and inscribe bodily drives, which is why Kristeva is so attentive to the relationship between body and language.

*Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) and *Desire in Language* (1980, collected essays from 1969-76) show Kristeva’s post-structuralist period which culminates in the elaboration of the subject as a ‘heterogeneous contradiction’. Many highlight the ‘subject-in-process or on-trial’ as the dominant metaphor of the oeuvre. According to Kristeva, the unitary ego of modernity is an untenable definition of identity, as the subject is never stable but is in a permanent crisis. It is a divided subject, which is also constituted by his ‘unconscious’, desires, memories, and ‘bodily drive’ eruptions. The subject always emerges from the interaction between body and language. In her series, *Tales of Love* (1983), *Powers of Horror* (1982) and *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989), Kristeva traces this ‘emergence’ through its cultural symbolic forms. This major trilogy of the 1980s shows her exploring the ‘wounded narcissism’ that arises in the primal drama out of which subjectivity emerges. This is what psychology traditionally calls the period of ‘primary identifications’, that is, the separation process from the maternal with the help of paternal ‘authority’. Each work represents dimensions in this emergence: pre-historical identification (love), abjection (separation), melancholy (nonverbal sadness in the face of the loss of the maternal). In these dimensions of suffering subjectivity, Kristeva, as analyst, exposes the underlying modern nihilism, that is, the loss of meaning and idealising narratives which, as *telos*, give a value.

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orientation to person and culture. In subsequent works, especially in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) and *Nations without Nationalism* (1993), Kristeva attempts to develop the insights of her cultural analysis into a new, ‘therapeutic’ ethic. Her later important works, the trilogy of three feminine geniuses (Hannah Arendt, Melanie Klein, Colette), *New Maladies of the Soul* (1995), the *Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* (1996), *Intimate Revolt* (1997), *This Incredible Need to Believe* (2009), and *Hatred and Forgiveness* (2010), and *The Severed Head* (2012) develop her ‘therapeutic’ critique of culture.  

1.2.3 Kristeva’s Relationship to Lacanian Psychoanalysis

Kristeva’s critique of Lacan was crucial in developing her construct of the ‘speaking being’. Her departure from Lacan and from Freud helps theology to grasp the dynamic of Kristeva’s hermeneutics of culture. Deploying the ‘semiotic’ viewpoint offers her a unique penetration into the subject-culture relationship, and a powerful critical potential. Lacan’s influence goes much further than grounding Kristeva’s linguistic horizon. Lacan also represents an appropriation of Marxist analysis to psychoanalytic theory. It is through Lacan that we can speak of Kristeva’s ‘Marxian subtext’. Lacan can also be regarded as her ‘metaphysical subtext’. It is through Lacan’s ‘excessive reduction’ of the old metaphysical and moral framework that Kristeva can be linked, however indirectly, with the Christian metaphysical tradition. Kristeva herself refers to him in this context: ‘Lacan maintains the trans-Christian value of subjective interiority but radicalises it to the extreme… Lacan also had the courage to raise the question, not treated by Freud, of the ethics of psychoanalysis.’

The ethical thrust that she draws from Lacan/ Marx is the driving force in articulating her project not only as the linguistic model of the person but also as a psychoanalytical ethic.

My study also highlights Lacan as an important element of the ‘cultural mourning’ which takes place in Kristeva. Marcus Pound showed how Lacan’s developing of his Freudian psychoanalysis was grounded on actual contacts with texts of medieval

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37 Because of their technical precision and lucidity, in this section I mostly refer to the formulations of Buhle whose work is one of the finest feminist contextual readings of the oeuvre. The importance of this technical summary is to show that psychoanalysis is a complex and autonomous field the motives of which has to be understood first. Mari Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents, A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London 1998.
38 Kristeva shows how this Lacanian ‘radical reduction’ preserves moral questioning and the problem of freedom from the original Christian framework. See the sections ‘A Little History: Freud and Lacan’ (pp.226-231), ‘Is Psychoanalysis a Comprehensive Moralism’ (pp.231-234), and ‘Why Is Psychoanalysis an Atheism’ (pp. 234-239.) in Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, p.230
scholasticism under the influence of the French *nouvelle théologie*. He convincingly argues for seeing a genuine historical contact between the *nouvelle théologie* and the *nouvelle critique* in their aim to deconstruct ‘extrinsic’ metaphysical and psychological concepts. Pound’s reference is all the more significant, because prominent representatives of the *nouvelle critique* (New Criticism), French post-war critical theorists, like the structuralist Roland Barthes, or the surrealist poet and anthropologist George Bataille, are Kristeva’s immediate references.

As a ‘metaphysical-subtext’, Lacan points to a structural similarity with the role of ‘Revelation’ in religious experience. Revelation challenges the ‘homogeneity’ of human knowledge, the ‘ego’ understood as a closed system. This economy of *interpretation from the outside*, like ‘Revelation’, transforms the self’s knowledge of himself and of the world. In Lacan’s recognition it is a *structural* similarity, as psychoanalysis challenges the conscious from the unconscious. Through language, which connects the two realms, psychoanalysis, just like ‘Revelation’, aims at removing the illusions of the ego, which are a hindrance in telling the story of a genuine self – world/history relationship. This program of transposing the religious economy of ‘Revelation’ underlies Kristeva’s concept of language. She attributes to it a ‘transcendent dynamic’ through which the ‘speaking being’ transcends itself and emerges into *signification* (‘meaning’). I propose Lacan’s program of ‘transposed’ metaphysics as a major interpretative framework for theology when reading Kristeva’s theories.

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39 In mid-twentieth century, *nouvelle théologie* initiated the project of *ressourcement*, a return to the scriptures, to the Fathers, and to the liturgy, in order to retrieve a fuller, more contemplative understanding of faith. This definition refers to Daniélou’s seminal understanding of *ressourcement* from his programmatic essay (Jean Daniélou, ‘Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse’, *Études*, 249 (1946), 5-21.). In : Gerard Loughlin, Ch 2 ‘Nouvelle Théologie: A Return to Modernism?’ (pp.36-50), in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, edited by Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford 2012 (First published 2012), p.48.
40 Like Aquinas, Peter Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, or later engagements with the French Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin (his concept of *intériorité*, Pound suggests, could have influenced Lacan) or through the Augustinian expert philosopher Étienne Gilson. See Marcus Pound, ‘Lacan’s Return to Freud: A Case of Theological *Ressourcement*?’ (pp.440-456), in *Ressourcement*, cf.pp.443-449.
41 Barthes’ interest in the sensory dimension of the texts of St. Ignatius of Loyola was an important influence on Kristeva, just like the avant-garde language of Bataille who represented the ‘subject in process’ See: on Barthes: ‘Writing as Strangeness and Jouissance’ (pp.251-256) in Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*; and Ch 7 ‘Barthes: Constructor of Language, Constructor of the Sensory’ (pp.95-114), Ch 8 ‘Barthes: The Intractable Lover’ (pp.115-122), and Kristeva’s reference on Bataille’s avantgarde poetry in Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, p.130.
Kristeva’s model of the ‘speaking being’ originates from the possibility of a new synthesis of feminism and psychoanalysis, which Lacanian psychoanalysis offered. Lacan rehabilitated basic elements of Freud’s original system. The unconscious, sexuality, and the Oedipus complex were useful sources to articulate ‘difference’ as the central agenda of feminism, a parallel discourse with Freudian psychoanalysis. Kristeva’s other formative tradition, post-structuralist linguistics, was, in a sense, a twin-discourse of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Post-structuralism focused on the texts of the subject, which revealed the shaken identity of modernity. With Brennan, we can identify the post-structuralist source of Kristeva’s interest in history. Lacan here emerges also as Kristeva’s ‘historical subtext’. He added a psychoanalytical dimension to the Marxist critique of history. Lacan’s critique of history was influential in confirming the ‘sub-psychic’ viewpoint of Kristeva’s critique of culture. Lacan re-contextualised the critical agenda of Marx by setting into parallel the age of the capital and the activity of the uncontrolled ‘ego’. This was the ground of a psychoanalytic critique of history, making the crisis of the ego its central object. My point is that Lacan’s concept of history is important for seeing the general thrust of Kristeva’s critique of nihilism. What Lacan called the ‘era of the ego’ shows the inflated narcissism of the subject. According to the Lacanian critique, this wounded narcissism has led to a ‘social psychosis’. The totalised ‘ego’ acts itself out as domination. This ‘self’ extends at the cost of eliminating all genuine otherness and reducing everything to its sameness. It goes together with aggression and domination in history in order to gratify the needs of ego-narcissism. Kristeva’s critique of the ‘false selves’ (produced by consumerism) shows a similar merge of the linguistic, psychoanalytical and the social viewpoints. Kristeva takes up the idea from Lacan ‘to make the patient capable of love.’ This program is the basis of her psychoanalytical ethics.

Lacan’s psychoanalytic model showed a remarkable compatibility with post-structuralist linguistics. He had borrowed resourcefully from ‘French’ discourses on language: from Lévi-Strauss, Marleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, the surrealist aesthetics of Breton, from Saussure’s linguistics; from Descartes he took over with fascination the body-mind dualism. Lacan saw in Freud a remarkable opportunity for synthesising these discourses.

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43 Buhle, Feminism and Its Discontents, p. 321.
45 See Brennan, History After Lacan, pp. 90-91
46 Kristeva, Intimate Revolt, p.231.
47 Buhle, Feminism and Its Discontents, p.324.
By inviting discourses on language, he hugely influenced Kristeva’s own particular rediscovery of Freud and the development of her own interdisciplinary approach.

Kristeva also developed her work as a critique of Lacan. She challenged Lacan’s most famous edict that the unconscious is structured like language. Kristeva rejects the idea that the genesis of language can be modelled exclusively by the father’s language. Lacan took over the role of the father from Freud. He refashioned the Oedipus complex in terms of the notion of the child’s submission to the ‘Law of the Father’ being developed into a notion of the ‘law of language’. This ‘father’ mandates society’s norms both socially and linguistically. He, as the ‘Symbolic’ order, reigns as the carrier of speech and ‘grammar’. In the Lacanian model this authority is internalised by the speaking being as an individual and as a member of culture. A central element of Kristeva’s notion of the ‘speaking being’, the ‘work of the negative’, is taken over from this model. The child comes to terms with the trauma of separation from the mother through the intertwined process of repression and naming. In Lacan, the child resolves the Oedipus complex by exchanging gratification promised by the mother for the privileges of a new psychic register, the Symbolic Order. It is this language, then, specifically the father’s language, through which the child gains access to civilisation. The famous premise of Lacan is that the phallus is not a real penis or an object; neither is it a fantasy nor a phenomenon or force directly knowable. The phallus can never be uncovered. It functions to produce a subjectivity that is sexed. Kristeva is not satisfied with this solution which did not say much about what happens outside the oedipal phase, predating it.

Kristeva develops further the new direction that Lacan’s theoretical proposal of the ‘Mirror-stage’, as a correction of Freud’s oedipal scheme, opened up. Lacan had inserted the ‘Mirror-stage’, the early months of the infant into Freud’s scheme. Somewhere between the ages of six and eighteen months, Lacan proposed, the infant emerges from primary narcissism where ego boundaries are still unknown. In the ‘mirror’, the infant encounters otherness for the first time. The child observes both his own image and that of the person holding him, the ‘mirror’. The infant achieves a joyous sense of self-recognition while realizing, paradoxically, that this sense of self depends on the Other for validation. In Lacan’s other metaphor, this is the realm of the Imaginary. In it, the mother and child are in a mutual dependence, which is not altogether pleasant. The image of the self in the ‘mirror’ is also a distortion, a misrecognition. It is the role of the father to ‘rescue’ the infant from

48 Buhle, Feminism and Its Discontents, p.326.
49 Ibid., p.326.
50 Ibid., pp.326-327.
this undefined unity with the maternal container by severing the subject into Language. This mirror stage, Lacan states, never completely disappears from our psychic memory. Lacan, in contrast to Freud who did not say much about women’s otherness, by raising the importance of the ‘pre-oedipal phase’, has invited feminist approaches to psychoanalysis. He posited this uncharted otherness in the lingering (indefinable) power of the Imaginary femininity.

This technical recapitulation of Lacan with the help of Buhle was necessary for understanding in what sense Kristeva further developed Freud in a revolutionary way. She elaborates what in Lacan and Freud was left as an undiscovered ‘dark continent’. This is the presence of the mother and the loving father. It is a significant shift to the pre-oedipal realm of individual pre-history. Kristeva’s central concept, the ‘Loving Third party’, which is basically a metaphor of pre-oedipal love, is a deliberate break with the father of the oedipal phase for two important reasons. First, the mother’s role and the dynamic of love before language were unrecognised in previous Freudian models. ‘Meaning’ was exclusively associated with the authority of the Father. The same applies to the culture of modernity. It was the unquestionable authority of ‘masculine reason’ which, as an exclusive source, determined meaning. For Kristeva, the experience of motherhood decentralises the ‘language of the father’ and masculine theory. The second reason for the shift to ‘pre-oedipal love’ is historical. Freud clearly belonged to the classic world of modernity. Lacan, despite his presence in emerging post-modernity, still belonged to the world of the powerful ‘Father’. For him, though the Father’s authority was weakening, nevertheless it was still a functioning ‘phallic’ authority. Kristeva, in contrast to them, fully observed the ‘symptoms of post-modern society: the collapse of taboos, the prevalence of sadomasochistic sexuality, delinquency, vandalism, and new maladies of the soul: psychosomatosis, drug addiction, the diffusion of psychosis in neurotic structures’. Kristeva responded to the collapse of modernity’s ‘phallus’, or unscrutinised reason.

In order to compensate this loss, Kristeva submits an alternative source of meaning. It is what we can call her ‘semiotic resources’. There are two great cycles of her ‘semiotics’: the ‘semiotic’ constituent of meaning, and pre-oedipal love (the ‘Loving Third party’). There is

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51 The above recapitulation of Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’ is from Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents*, p.327.
52 Ibid., p.328.
53 Ives, *Julia Kristeva*, p.34.
54 What is of significance is Kristeva’s explicit reference to the postmodern period in which she locates her psychoanalysis. Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, pp.235-236
no point in separating Kristeva’s inventions. From the very beginning these ‘semiotic resources’ intertwine and give support to each other.

Chronologically, in terms of its elaboration, I mention first Kristeva’s groundbreaking discovery, the ‘semiotic’ dimension of language. She states that underlying what we know as the fully functioning language there is an archaic, pre-lingual layer. This is the ‘semiotic’, which is just as constitutive of language and meaning as the ‘Symbolic Order’. The ‘semiotic’ is a complex metaphor. In the narrowest sense, it is a pre-lingual, uncontrollable flow of rhythms, vocal cathexes and melodic fragments. This ‘invisible’ dimension of language is already a pre-signification and is directed towards the Symbolic. In the ‘semiotic’ the ‘fullness’ of language is already, as it were, pre-coded. The theory of the ‘semiotic’ is a clear example of how, as a replacement of classic metaphysical discourse, Kristeva’s ‘Lacanian’ psychoanalysis ‘biologizes the essence of man’.55

To this ignored pre-verbal ‘semiotic’ dimension is closely linked the unrecognised mother in individual prehistory. This second semiotic resource is Kristeva’s second major theoretical invention, as part of her theory of pre-oedipal love. Here Kristeva elaborates the world of primary identifications (Lacan’s mirror stage and the Imaginary). She presents the drama of pre-oedipal love. It takes place between the ‘archaic mother’, the nascent individual to be severed from her, and the loving father of individual pre-history. Kristeva’s fundamental correction of Lacan and Freud is that the ‘alchemy of love’ is an event equally formative of meaning, as is the world of secondary identifications. In this latter, the ‘Father’ speaks the ‘Language of Law’, and fully represents the ‘Symbolic Order’. The Loving Third party can be seen as the dominant metaphor of the oeuvre, which becomes especially dominant in Kristeva’s psychoanalysis and cultural critique. This love emerges on the threshold of identity, before the acquisition of language. The love of the ‘Loving Third’ is active in the most sensitive phase of psychic formation, when the ‘speaking being’ leaves behind the ‘semiotic’ pre-verbal regions and becomes integrated into the Symbolic Order of spoken language. In this model, Kristeva closely associates the ‘semiotic’ dimension of language with the maternal. The love of the ‘Loving Third’ is deeply self-giving and unselfish. Kristeva is aware that this is a hypothetical construct but she finds it necessary to postulate it as a creative force in the genesis of the subject.

The most significant element in this theory is that Kristeva does not set up a mechanical opposition between the archaic mother and the loving father. Their relationship does not

55 Kristeva, Intimate Revolt, p.230.
repeat the ‘passive mother vs. active father’ dualism of the oedipal scheme where we see them in a subordinating relationship. The ‘archaic mother’ equally participates in the ‘severing power’ of the ‘loving father’ who invites into language. The novelty is their positive co-operation. The ‘Father’s love’ integrates the love of the mother. He does so by teaching the mother to abandon her original ‘narcissistic withdrawal’ into a language-less joy, when she is one with her baby. In Kristeva’s model, the mother needs to learn how to let the child go and become an autonomous individual, separate from her. A mother’s love thus undergoes a transformation when it becomes ‘unselfish’ and joins with the Father’s ‘spoken’ love. The mother’s separation from the child is not definitive; it is not an absolute break. Through Language, the Mother and the elements of the world will be named in love. In this sense the ‘Symbolic Order’ is the gift of the Loving Third party. ‘Symbolised love’ retains the link between the mother and the child.

The above elements constitute a complete genesis-story of the subject. It is very important to highlight that Kristeva understands the subject not as a static but as a dynamic identity. Individual ‘pre-history’ reveals an invisible ‘semiotic drama’, which remains at work in us. Underneath the crystallised surface of language there is a sleeping volcano. An important observation of Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory – she draws on Freud’s theory of the death drive – is that this ‘semiotic chaos’ can burst onto the surface if identity is shaken. This fragility of meaning is pivotal in Kristeva’s critique of culture. Nihilism is always a threat to identity. It is the dynamic equilibrium between the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘Symbolic’ which is a defence against the loss of meaning. Their co-operation makes the ‘semiotic’ a vital and positive resource for ‘linguistic rebirth’; we speak of the recovery either of the individual or of culture.

1.2.4 Kristeva’s Psychoanalytical Critique of Culture and Ethics

The above theoretical innovations serve as ground not only for Kristeva’s linguistics and psychoanalysis. The full deployment of her innovative concepts takes place in what can be regarded as the ‘third cycle’ of her ‘semiotics’, Kristeva’s critique of culture and her psychoanalytical ethics. Thus, her linguistics, psychoanalysis, psychoanalytical hermeneutic of culture and her ethics comprise a unified whole. I refer to this coherence as Kristeva’s ‘regime’.

This ‘regime’ hinges on Arendt’s thesis: ‘life is a narrative’. One would miss Kristeva’s innovative linguistics if overlooking the primary motive of her project, the ethical revision of
European history. ‘Psychic rebirth’ and ‘linguistic re-beginning’ on the sub-psychic level are the prototype of ‘rebirth’ on the level of culture. This is an important completion of her argument that Cartesian reason has to be challenged from its subconscious ‘semiotic’ regions, most of all the discourse on love. My critique identifies and highlights her discourse on history, which underlies her ‘semiotics’. It can be seen as another important mode of her making ‘ontological’ statements in a post-metaphysical age.

Among Kristeva’s critics no one regards her as what she most intensely is, a ‘historian’. However striking this labelling may be, Kristeva’s most important innovation is re-writing ‘history’ for the ‘post-metaphysical age’, right at the heart of post-modernity. That is why it is a fundamental misunderstanding to pigeonhole her as a ‘post-modern’ thinker. While it is true from the post-modern perspective that she is a writer of ‘minor histories’ of love (Beardsworth), yet Kristeva also writes a collective history. Hers is a specific form of writing history. It is at the very ‘semiotic’ origins of language that Kristeva restores the ethical telos\(^{56}\) of history. My study highlights her monograph on Arendt as a hermeneutical key to her ‘semiotics’. Among her formative traditions, Arendt is Kristeva’s most important ‘historical subtext’. Kristeva takes over from Arendt’s action-centred philosophy the permanent ‘disclosure’ of the historical subject. The underlying question she raises is the same as in Arendt: what is the way to manifest who I am, not what am?\(^{57}\) Kristeva reconnects the Arendtian ideal of the polis, where the uniqueness and freedom of the subject is manifest, with the ‘psychic space’, Kristeva’s locus for history. Today she adds, in retrospect to Arendt’s situation, the exhaustion of modernity’s resources. It is psychoanalysis which creates the possibility of a life told as a narrative.

‘The classic narrative, which was Arendt’s implicit point of reference, has now been damaged. Through such a narrative, a writing in search of rejoicing and demystification seeks to record the human condition. Like an expansion of Arendt’s “narrative”…such writing [psychoanalysis] explores and renews the psychic realm, while using the recollection as a basis for examining the retrospective bond between man and meaning, between the creature and the eternal, and between the subject and Being, it exposes and puts into practice an incessant tendency toward conflict: a revolt. Life as a revolt is actualised in the no thought of writing. It also seeks to grow within the permanent questioning of recollections, pleasures, certainties, and identities, a questioning that underlies the psychoanalytic experience despite its worldly trappings.’\(^{58}\)

Directly quoting Arendt from The Human Condition, Kristeva emphasises the continuity between psychoanalysis and the Arendtian program of ‘examined life’, which leads to the historical rebirth of the subject:

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\(^{56}\) From the Greek τέλος, meaning ‘end’, ‘purpose’, or ‘goal’.  
\(^{57}\) Kristeva, Hannah Arendt, p.72.  
\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp.43-44.
Life ‘is realised only if it constantly questions meaning as well as action: “the revelatory character of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical, which together form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence.”’  

Kristeva’s ‘obsession’ with psychic and linguistic beginnings is a radical, micro-focal actualisation of Arendt’s concept of history in the post-modern context. Arendt, having witnessed the catastrophe of the holocaust, recognises that the moral purification of history is possible only through historical re-beginnings. This takes place through the rebirth of historical consciousness, which is based upon the rebirth of critical consciousness. It is in this sense that Kristeva’s quest for ‘semiotic beginnings’ is a historical telos, moreover an ethical one. She points out that identity is always dynamic, always has to be renewed, and never should be conceived as ‘homogeneous’ or fixed. The speaking subject (person) is a sujet en procès (‘subject-in-process’ or on-trial). Schweitzer draws attention to the fact that the French word procès always has a legal or ethical connotation. Kristeva herself emphasises the ethical in the ‘the process/trial of the subject in language’:

‘Nous entendons par éthique la négativation du narcissisme dans une pratique ; autrement dit, est éthique une pratique qui dissout les fixations narcissiques (étroitement subjectales) auxquelles succombe le procès signifiant dans son effectuation socio-symbolique. La pratique, telle que nous l’avons définie posant-dissolvant le sens et l’unité du sujet, recouvre ce que nous venons de dire de l’éthique.’

‘ “Ethics” should be understood here to mean the negativizing of narcissism within a practice; in other words, a practice is ethical when it dissolves those narcissistic fixations (ones that are narrowly confined to the subject) to which the signifying process succumbs in its socio-symbolic realization. Practice, such as we have defined it, positing and dissolving meaning and the unity [identity] of the subject, therefore encompasses the ethical.’

Narrated history, of which the very ‘semiotic’ beginning of selfhood is also part, in Kristeva’s reading of Arendt offers the possibility that we can envision birth and death, that we can contemplate them within time and that we can speak about them with the Other by sharing with other people – in a word, the possibility that we can tell a story – is at the heart of the specific, non-animalistic, and non-physiological nature of human life.

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59 Kristeva, Hannah Arendt, p.42.
60 Schweitzer, The Stranger’s Voice, p.32.
63 Kristeva, Hannah Arendt, p.41.
In Kristeva, the ‘sub-psychic’ is the ‘self-transcending’ cell of human history. Her semiotic genesis-story of language in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) is an archetypal expression of the need to re-begin failed human history, as the above ethical definitions of ‘the subject in processes’ showed. As our ‘post-metaphysical age’ is based on immanence, it explains Kristeva’s strategy of formulating the ethical imperative in language. The interruption of history necessarily has to take place through ‘the story of language’. This is the only available narrative of the self and its most direct experience.

With this, my critique wishes to highlight how the sub-psychic is the ground of Kristeva’s critique of culture. In her ‘turn to the subject’, an appreciative theological reading should recognise the attempt to establish a new *universalism*. This identifying of the Arendtian subtext of the ‘speaking being’ is important because it will allow an *ethical* evaluation of Kristeva’s materialism, not leaving critique alone with the mere ‘ontological’ conflict. My point is that Kristeva’s ‘semiotic symbol building’ starts here, in tracing the earliest ‘sub-lingual’ beginnings of personhood and culture. Her ‘semiotic symbols’, both in the early abstract and the later more ‘narrative’ forms, always want to express a *universal humaneness*. Kristeva’s critique of culture witnesses to what Arendt proposes as the universal dignity of the person:

‘The main point of Arendt’s argument was to advocate the toleration of radical differences in the social realm to prevent them from spilling over into the private and political realms, where they could become destructive…

…..Arendt wanted black children to feel “pride”, which she defined as “that untaught and natural feeling of identity with whatever we happen to be by accident of birth”, and which she distinguished from racial, ethnic, or national pride.’

From Kristeva’s micro-focusing on biological beginnings a powerful *symbolism* emerges. The more her ‘empirical observations’ evolve into an ethic and a critique of culture, the more symbolic Kristeva’s language becomes. From the disciplined materialist account of language in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, powerful images of love emerge, like ‘Narcissus’, the post-modern subject looking for love, the ‘imaginary Father’, the ‘feminine sacred’, or the ‘passion according to motherhood’.

The objective of Kristeva’s critique of culture in a narrow sense is to defend the ‘psychic life’ of the subject. The two most helpful evaluations of Kristeva’s hermeneutic of culture in English are Kelly Oliver’s *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-Bind*, and Sarah

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Beardsworth’s *Julia Kristeva, Psychoanalysis and Modernity*.65 Theirs is the most systemic contextualisation of how Kristeva continuously re-invents and integrates her ‘semiotics’ into a psychoanalytical analysis of nihilism. Beardsworth and Oliver together give a comprehensive understanding of why Kristeva focuses on the ‘intra-psychic dynamics’ (Oliver), and relates them to the wider project of modernity and post-modernity (Beardsworth). The advantage of Kristeva’s ‘microfocal’ approach is that it reveals a striking contrast between the fragility and manipulability of the psyche and the aggression of nihilism which intrudes into the human interior. We can sum up her critique of culture in the objective to *scrutinise* and counteract nihilism. Her main conclusion is that the ‘speaking being’ is a permanent vulnerability and therefore needs a permanent *support*. The final question of her cultural critique as ethics is who gives this *care*?

1.2.5 A Theological Link – The ‘Secularisation Debate’

Kristeva’s Arendtian ‘updates’ on the sub-psychic viewpoint resulted in a powerful synthesis of the Enlightenment tradition. Merging successfully the horizons of modernity with post-modernity produced one of the most penetrating critiques of both, if not the most complex available one. The significance of this synthesis is threefold.

First, by drawing on the critical tools of modernity and post-modernity, Kristeva is able to offer a *critical synopsis* of the two periods. Because she aimed at a full understanding of the relationship between the psyche and nihilist culture, there unfolds from Kristeva’s project a complete ‘ontology of nihilism’. Secondly, because of the firm interrelatedness of the ‘cultural’ and the ‘psychic’ space, the nihilism of culture is never an ‘external’ abstraction. It is always an internal event, ‘directly’ part of psychic history.

Thirdly, this internalisation of the crisis prepares the way for a dialogue with theology. Kristeva’s specific critique of culture offers an important connection. Relating her to the so called ‘secularisation debate’ completes her initial situating in the secular tradition (her ‘Habermasian background’). Making this reference to the ‘secularisation debate’ is important because it is a major theoretical background of the crisis of the subject, on which my study will focus. Though Kristeva is not a direct participant in this established discourse, seeing her against this background is her important ‘pre-context’ for theology. It is also a platform

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from which to engage critically with the ‘post-metaphysical position’, which excludes the ‘ontological’ viewpoint.

Her internal understanding of the crisis from within the ‘self’ makes Kristeva a unique source for a better understanding of secularisation. Her sub-psychic viewpoint helps to resolve the ‘apologetic deadlock’ as to whether secularisation led to a decline in belief in the supernatural and the loss of religion’s control over life, or not. Unlike in classical theories of secularisation, Kristeva’s primary concern is not the ‘agents’ of secularisation, that is, who contribute to it, rather, how nihilism, and what she refers to as the uncertainties of secularisation, affect the subject. Though my study does not engage in the debate, it posits the ‘secularisation theory’ as an indirect, yet important context for my critique. In practice, Kristeva’s investigations take place against this wider background of ‘questioning transcendence’. Her project of renewing the symbols of love has to do with ‘rationalization’, the secularisation of life, and the scientific perspective which are all her major themes. It should be noted that Kristeva’s primary audience is secular. She makes her professional utterances in a secular culture, drawing on the experiences of this milieu. Her critique of culture undoubtedly confirms that secularisation exists and it affects all the narratives and cultural agents of European culture. The ability to ‘believe’ in values is raised by both Kristeva and theology. It puts them on a common platform in terms of pointing to the inner dimension of ‘secularisation’.

1.3 The Problem of Kristeva’s Engagement with Christian Texts for Theology and the Problem of Kristeva’s Theological Reception

Despite the numerous areas that Kristeva offers (the person, love, secularisation, religion), systematic theology struggles to gain access to the prolific oeuvre. This ‘cognitive dissonance’ has important structural causes. First of all, Kristeva writes outside the horizon of faith. More than that, Kristeva’s ‘trenchantly atheistic’ relationship to religion is a commonplace in literature. In her own wording, she is ‘a non-believer for complex

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66 Shultz’s provides a long list of the different generations participating in the secularisation theory debate, pros and cons. Kevin M. Schultz, ‘Secularisation: A Bibliographic Essay’ (pp.170-177), The Hedgehog Review nos. 1-2. (Spring and Summer 2006)
67 Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.32.
philosophical reasons’.\textsuperscript{71} This position hugely contributes to the two interrelated problems that a critique of Kristeva has first to face. Her use of Christian texts and the fact that there is no established response to her from systematic theology pose a real challenge.

Kristeva’s ideological position hugely affects her psychoanalytical hermeneutics applied to Christian texts. The Cistercian theologian, Slater, recapitulates from a critical angle the standard obstacles Kristeva poses for systematic theology. This is creedal theology’s ‘instinctual’ perception. For Kristeva, the believer’s creed expresses subjective fantasy. Psychoanalysis is superior to Christianity for unmasking and celebrating the transferential dynamics of love. Kristeva severs the moral perspective of the mystics from their texts.\textsuperscript{72} Kristeva indeed regards both religious texts and dogmatic contents analysable from the psychoanalytical perspective. As Hanvey observes, she severs the texts of faith from the realm of faith in the service of her psychoanalytical demonstrations.\textsuperscript{73} Kristeva stresses this hermeneutical difference. As one of her recent reflections shows, she finds it important to reflect on the conflict with the approach of theology:

‘I am only interested in the psychic reality that these events generate in the believer subject, in the representation of phantasms, leaving aside the question whether these events really happened or not.’\textsuperscript{74}

Theology has to see clearly the underlying historical motive of Kristeva’s opting for psychoanalysis. Oliver shows that it is Kristeva’s conviction that, with the break-up of religion in modern Western culture today, it is psychoanalysis that takes over the role of providing meaning, security and love.\textsuperscript{75} Oliver’s is an important understanding that Kristeva’s hermeneutic of Christian texts is primarily historical, and not ideological. Despite its reductive economy, it is a conservative approach in the sense of preserving them as resources for the discourse on love. This ‘conservative’ reduction, nevertheless, because of the underlying replacement of religion, sets up an apologetic tension with systematic theology. However, the two layers of Kristeva’s hermeneutics together, her interest in the psychic reality of religious events and the replacement of religion, make it possible to see her dealing with Christian texts as a positive hermeneutical challenge to theology.

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\textsuperscript{71} ‘From Jesus to Mozart (Christianity’s Difference)’ (pp.77-86), in Kristeva, \textit{This Incredible Need to Believe}, p.79.
\textsuperscript{72} Slater, ‘Mysticism Turned Inside Out’, pp.144.156.164.169.
\textsuperscript{73} Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’ (pp.121-142), ch. pp.134-135.
\textsuperscript{74} Kristeva, \textit{This Incredible Need to Believe}, p.57.
\textsuperscript{75} See Oliver’s recapitulation of these motives in chapter ‘Religion’ (pp.125-144), in Oliver, \textit{Reading Kristeva}, p.125.
\end{flushright}
As my study will engage with Kristeva’s reading of the sacrifice, the Passion, the image of the ‘Virgin Mother’ and the Resurrection, it suffices to say that she reads them in terms of their revealing essential internal processes of psychic formation. She embeds these religious texts mostly within her theories of idealisation in primary processes. In general, Kristeva understands the Christian narrative in terms of creating a symbolic space in which the integrity of the psychic space can be sustained. This policy shows the deployment of Kristeva’s post-structuralist linguistics and ‘semiotic’ ethics. Important individual works which show her psycho-linguistic hermeneutics of religion at work are In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith (1987), Tales of Love (1983), and Powers of Horror (1980).

It is against this background that we see the puzzlement about Kristeva’s ‘Christianity’. From a Freudian regime, Kristeva’s is an unprecedented focusing on core Christian texts. Her interest in religion goes against the ideological limits of her atheistic subtexts. This unorthodox engagement, despite reducing the original religious meaning, raises the point that this relationship can be more than an extrinsic phenomenological description. Her critics respond to this riddle very differently. Apart from some responses from feminist theologians, we cannot speak of an established theological response to Kristeva. Moreover, the former mostly remain particular engagements through a specific topic (C. Schweitzer, T. Beattie, and K. O’Grady). In order to show the ‘hermeneutical gap’ that a systematic theological critique has to bridge, I highlight the diversity of attempts to decipher Kristeva’s intriguing relationship with Christian texts and religion. All of these approaches touch upon the dynamic of psychological reduction.

John Lechte suggests reading Kristeva as one who reformulates the salvific relationship between ‘transcendence’ (re-conceived as language) and the subject. Arthur Bradley argues, in a parallel way, for seeing Kristeva as a contemporary version of a via negativa (‘negative theology’) where the place of God is taken by the subject. He touches upon the question as to how closed Kristeva’s hermeneutics is. Is her psychoanalytical project a break with what she criticises as the dogmatic mythologization of Christian theology, or a repetition of it in secularised form? Bradley locates Kristeva’s position by quoting her: ‘For me, the Some Thing is immanent to man. It’s the possibility of speaking, of creating, and of making meaning and putting meaning into question. Where does the need come from

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to set up some authority beyond the human? That is what psychoanalysis asks. 78 Bradley’s is an important probing contextualisation as it raises the idea of opening up Kristeva’s atheism and relating it, as an ‘intertext’, to theology. Seeing Kristeva, the non-believer, as a ‘mystical atheist’ within the mystical tradition is a rather daring image. Though as a concept it is more eye-catching than adequate, Bradley clarifies further Kristeva’s actual hermeneutic of faith. For Kristeva, Christian mysticism represents a key moment in the transition from theology to the psychoanalytic method. She sees the emergence of a ‘mystic atheism’ in the works of Teresa of Avila and Angela of Foligno as the anticipation of the paradigm shift brought about by the psychoanalytic method. These female mystics developed a notion of the Other within the self. Kristeva reads this as the first discovery that the ‘other’ is not a distant, external divine Otherness that lies outside the self. 79 Realistically, what Bradley’s reading reveals is a consistently applied psychological hermeneutics. Locating Kristeva within the tradition of apophatic or ‘negative’ theology remains problematic. It is a rather abstract leap which in practice leaves Kristeva ‘external’ to theology.

In a similar fashion, though in a different context, Boer, in reference to Zizek, also too easily regards Kristeva as a ‘Christian writer’ coming from Marxism. In this oversimplification, her psychoanalysis is stated as a vivid, fresh realisation of Christianity. 80 There is a danger that these approaches are naive in their desire to locate Kristeva within ‘faith’. There is no direct continuity with theological discourse.

Yet, there are voices that suggest that establishing continuity is possible in a more complex way. Bruijn offers a balanced approach when saying that there is an unmistakable umbilical attachment to Christianity in Kristeva’s writing. She suggests that Kristeva’s persistent return to Christianity and Christian constructs can be best understood in light of her theory of revolt. Her primary concern is not Christian nostalgia or apologetics but finding resources, drawing on Christianity, for a new critical revolt in culture. Bruijn raises the idea that Kristeva can be challenged by forms of religious belief which are capable of bringing about an ‘intimate revolt’. 81 Mercer, drawing on actual textual engagements, arrives at the

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79 Bradley gives a synopsis of Kristeva’s psychoanalytic account of Christian theology from Tales of Love (1983), and of the mystical tradition from Teresa of Avila to Angela of Foligno from works like The Feminine and the Sacred (2001) and the trilogy on The Feminine Genius (Le génie Féminin, 1999—2002). Bradley, ‘Mystic Atheism’, pp.283-284.
81 Bonnie de Bruijn, Bonnie.‘Kristeva, Religion, and Revolt Culture’, unpublished conference presentation. It was presented on November 9th for the Psychology, Culture and Religion Group at the
striking conclusion that it is specifically Kristeva’s psychoanalytical reading of Christian texts that makes her an unexpected dialogue partner for theology.\textsuperscript{82} My study prioritises this approach. It would be a mistake to accept uncritically Slater’s total rejection of Kristeva on the grounds that she separates the sacred (‘meaning’) from religion/belief.\textsuperscript{83} Theology, my study argues, has to go beyond objecting apologetically that Kristeva fails to address the theological meaning of sin, or that it is God who is the ground of human love. The danger here is a theological reductionism which reclaims theological paradigms within the psychoanalytical discourse itself. This attitude misses the development of Kristeva’s relationship to religious texts. In her later works, Kristeva’s theory of subjectivity and language joins with a more developed examination of religious discourse. This includes a detailed examination of religious texts (\textit{Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Song of Songs}, and \textit{New Testament Writings}), religious writers (Duns Scotus, St. Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas), Christian concepts (sin, grace, faith, forgiveness), and religious figures (the Virgin Mary, the body of Christ).\textsuperscript{84} An overtly apologetic theology would overlook the fact that, at a later stage in Kristeva’s work, the images of Catholic theology become dominant. The task for a critique is to make the tension which her reading of Christian texts generates an essential part of her evaluation. We shall see that it will bring Kristeva’s Freudian orthodoxy to breaking point. Some of her secular criticism even speaks of the betrayal of her original Freudianism and of her conceding to Christian metaphysics.\textsuperscript{85} On the other hand, the purely confessional reading from the outset overlooks the fact that Kristeva’s ‘reductive reading’ is always in the service of her wider ‘ethical’ demonstrations.

Her Arendtian and ‘counter-Habermasian’ positions are sufficient reminders that engagement with Kristeva’s hermeneutic of Christian texts, besides exploring the theological conflict, has to explore the \textit{cultural motives} of these readings. What we can record at this stage is that there is a conflict with Kristeva’s psychoanalytical hermeneutics. Also, the way this tension is resolved decides what type of reading of Kristeva theology ends up with, a polemical or a constructive one.

\textsuperscript{82} Joyce Anne Mercer, ‘Psychoanalysis, Parents and God: Julia Kristeva on Subjectivity and the Imaginary Father’ (pp.243-258), Pastoral Psychology Vol. 50, No. 4, March 2002, p.253.

\textsuperscript{83} Slater, ‘Mysticism Turned Inside Out’, p.150.

\textsuperscript{84} Kathleen O’Grady, ‘The Tower and the Chalice: Julia Kristeva and the Story of Santa Barbara’ (pp.40-60), \textit{Feminist Theology} No. 29 (January 2002), pp.41-42.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p.43.
1.4 Conclusions

Kristeva’s project is a historically complex narrative. The main difficulty is to develop a response which is non-apologetic in the sense that it does not ignore this complexity. Kristeva’s reading of religious texts refers to an underlying cultural synthesis. Situating Kristeva in mainstream secular discourse (‘Habermas’) and in her Arendtian ‘cultural-text’ suggests developing a historical approach to her. Kristeva’s reviewing of the Enlightenment project suggests an equally dynamic theological synthesis as a response.

Finding this theological hermeneutic is all the more challenging as Kristeva fits all the boxes that make her discourses traditionally inconvenient for theology. These are, just to name the most important ones, her early Marxism, her Freudian critique of religion, her post-structuralist linguistics, her psychoanalytic reading of texts, her feminism, and her ‘postmodernism’. For theology to engage with her in these fields is still problematic. The cognitive, hermeneutical, and ideological dissonances posit a gap which is very difficult for systematic theology to bridge.

This situation is a real hermeneutical impasse. Kristeva proposes exciting fresh insights concerning the human subject and culture. She extensively draws on Christian texts. Yet, her atheistic position leaves theology with many aporias. Kristeva regards religion and religious doctrines as subjects for analysis, but her autonomous Freudian regime is highly resistant to any theological analysis. One of the causes is that mainstream theology traditionally shows no interest in reading ‘Freud’. Moreover, on the theological side there is also a serious division between the representatives and the opponents of co-operating with secular humanities. This disagreement leads my study to an important strategic conclusion. The ideological tension between ‘rivaling ontologies’, in an apologetic framework, cannot be resolved. From this impasse not even Charles Taylor’s effort to bring the secular humanities and theology into a synopsis offers a way out. Louis Dupré confirms a lasting conflict

between the Enlightenment project and religious identity. This tension, as available ‘mainstream’ literature shows, cannot be erased. Under these conditions two strategies suggest themselves. I find it desirable to avoid both.

(1) It is tempting to construct a ‘negative critique’ of Kristeva, in a purely apologetic way. In this case, theology is repeating old convictions and prejudices against the Enlightenment project, secularisation, and Freud, etc. In a wider sense, there is zero chance to arrive at a ‘positive model of the secular’ so that theology can contribute positively to the debate on what is missing from secular discourse. In our narrow context, there is little chance to relate constructively Christian texts in their faith economy to Kristeva’s theories. The ‘semiotic’ symbols of love that Kristeva develops are rejected together with their anthropological relevance in a ‘negative critique’.

(2) The second option, as a counter-reaction to the above, could be that a critique on Kristeva could end up in an optimistic, naïve, and equally superficial reading of Kristeva. The outcome would be an ‘a-historical’ merging of opposing positions. In fact, this concession to Kristeva would never lead to a real dialogue with her because it does not reach a structural understanding; Kristeva would remain external to theology. In the narrow sense, here the main danger is that Christian symbols remain unaddressed as there is ‘no conflict with Kristeva’. The difference between the psychological and the theological notions of redemption remain blurred. In the wider sense, avoiding the conflict with Kristeva’s Freudian regime leads to overlooking the acute problem: why does the Christian kerugma remain in a linguistic isolation from ‘present consciousness’? For it is this wider concern which theology faces when dealing with Kristeva’s ‘minor histories of love’.

Neither way offers a genuine critique because they do not take pains to engage systemically with a non-believer’s position. Kristeva’s regime, however, requires this approach as she gives an in-depth revision of the state of the subject by focusing on the problem of ‘beginnings’, psychic, ethical and historical. The response to this raises the possibility of theology once again making ‘ontological statements’ on the subject in the ‘post-metaphysical age’.

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2 THE EXHAUSTED SUBJECT

The task of the forthcoming analyses (I-III) is to resolve the dilemma of the previous chapter, namely, how can criticism avoid being either ‘apologetic’ or ‘naïve’ yet offer an in-depth, non-polemic and critical engagement? The precondition of this is having full theological access to Kristeva’s work. This chapter offers the solution through which a comprehensive theological engagement becomes possible. It brings it into realisation by introducing the important thesis that the crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity is the central problem of Kristeva’s work. It will form the basis of the exploration of the theological problems underlying this ‘exhaustion’. The focus on the crisis of the subject will make it possible for my critique to posit ‘ontological questions’ which post-metaphysical consciousness has to face.

With this, my study takes up the suggestion from Chapter 1 that Kristeva’s focus on ‘semiotic origins’ is a ‘quasi meta-physical’ correction of the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Introducing ‘heterogeneity’ into reason and gaining an objective distance from homogeneous discourses, as I argued, does create the possibility of making ‘ontological statements’. These, by virtue of their nature, are the ground of a critical stance on ‘present history’. Making a connection with this effort of Kristeva is an important link with the objective of this chapter. First, as we saw, it is not permitted in her ‘post-metaphysical’ environment (Habermas) to make ‘ontological statements’. Second, the motive of her ‘semiotic’ revolt is the recognised need to develop a discourse which actually listens to the unlistened to anxieties and needs or desires of the subject of history. Making the ‘exhausted subject’ visible in Kristeva’s work creates this opportunity for both. Unlike her Habermasian ‘opposition’, theology can accommodate both possibilities in Kristeva, her urge for a ‘metahorizon’ to control reason and her need to find effective strategies for listening to the subject.

In view of this, this chapter analyses the ‘exhausted subject’. Exploring its different aspects will make it possible for theology to raise its own ‘ontological’ questions about the impasse of the subject. These will be observations which cannot be dismissed on the grounds that theological statements are unverifiable by reason (‘Habermas’). My purpose is to offer an alternative to Kristeva’s being locked up in the polemics with Habermas on ‘the trustworthy higher authority’ of reason. This debate cannot be brought to fruition despite

89 ‘Secularism’ (pp.24-28), Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.27.
90 See the debate on the regulative authority of reason as a ‘normative conscience’ in section ‘A Radical Reformation of Human Existence is Underway’ (pp.25-30), in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.26.
McAfee’s attempt to mediate between the two positions. Instead, Kristeva can engage in a more fertile critical exchange if she accepts the invitation of theology to develop a new ‘ontological description’ of subjective suffering. Kristeva herself initiated something akin to this when raising the need to transcend ‘normative reason’ by challenging it outside its authority. The ‘exhausted subject’, which reveals the fundamental woundedness of love, creates the opportunity for a critical dialogue about the ‘beginnings’ and ‘ends’ of human potential. It raises Kristeva’s critical objective in the context of a theological discourse.

Exploring the ‘exhausted subject’ will direct our attention to a pivotal systemic element in Kristeva’s project, her materialism. In view of the above strategy, turning our attention to Kristeva’s materialist worldview is pivotal. Exploring the ‘ontological tension’ with this materialism is a connecting link to both her debate with rationalist humanism and the critical interest of my study. First, the ‘ontological critique’ of her refined materialism will bring to the surface why secular ‘reason’, which she herself criticises, cannot listen to and communicate with ‘psychic suffering’, and what lies behind it. Thus, this debate between theology and her system will help Kristeva to clarify a deficiency in mainstream secular humanism, which failure is also present in her project. This is the systemic exclusion of ‘grace’. Second, the analysis of her materialism will help to clarify the consequence of this exclusion, the overlooked ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject. It provides a basis for a genuine dialogue with theology.

My demonstration examines the ‘exhausted subject’ from two aspects. First, I examine historically how the problem emerges in the oeuvre. Secondly, I explore the connection between the problem of ‘exhaustion’ and the materialist resourcing of ‘psychic rebirth’ in Kristeva. The areas covered will be as follows. (1) The ‘exhausted subject’ as a historical problem. (2) The ontological (‘ideological’) narratives of the ‘exhausted subject’ (Kristeva’s reinterpretation of Transcendence: the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’). (3) The actual suffering of the ‘exhausted subject’, revealed in the ‘cultural mourning’ in Kristeva’s work. My critique will arrive at the ‘ontological’ questioning as to what extent intra-self resources are sufficient, and what are the limits of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ resourcing.

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91 Habermas clings to the vision of the fully autonomous subject transparent to itself, which can build up a universal public communication based on ‘reason’. Kristeva breaks with this Enlightenment idea to re-construct a universal discourse. She claims that split subjectivity needs an ethics and public discourse based upon the fundamental woundedness of reason and particularities, and difference. See McAfee, Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship, pp.37.133.
2.1 Analysis I. – The ‘Exhausted Subject’ as the Underlying Problem of the Oeuvre

Kristeva’s work from the 1970s reveals an awareness of the increasing crisis of the subject of modernity. This ‘exhaustion’ is experienced as ongoing and continues in post-modernity. We can follow the subject’s becoming inert from Revolution in Poetic Language (1974) to This Incredible Need to Believe (2009), and Hatred and Forgiveness (2010). Kristeva never uses the term ‘exhaustion’ or ‘exhausted subject’ concerning this shift, this is my hermeneutical concept. Literature on Kristeva, however, gives sufficient support for seeing the problem as the main organising principle of her oeuvre. Jones stresses that Kristeva, through her chosen disciplines, focuses on the dissolution of the subject.92 Kearney and Murdhadha relate Kristeva to religion through the problem of alienation. Both emphasise that Kristeva focuses on discourses – art, religion and psychoanalysis – which express our ‘fundamental experience of estrangement’.93 Estrangement and ‘loss’ grew to be her central focus. Major experts on Kristeva highlight this change but do not analyse it as a historical process. Neither have they raised the ‘exhausted subject’ as an independent problem. Presenting this is theology’s unique contribution. The concept can only be derived through a comprehensive reading of Kristeva’s work. My critique proposes two important phases in the emergence of the ‘exhausted subject’. These are Kristeva’s critique of the subject of modernity and her analysis of the condition of the subject in post-modernity.

2.1.1 Transition From Modernity to Post-modernity: Exhausted Subject or Exhausted Narratives?

Kristeva’s project on the ‘speaking being’ starts with her break with the subject of modernity. The two important works that record her critical observations belong to Kristeva’s post-structuralist linguistics, the doctoral thesis Revolution in Poetic Language (1974) and Desire in Language (1980). The two constitute a unified program, Kristeva’s ‘revolutionary period’. In them, she initiates a paradigm shift, the de-construction and the


transformation of the subject of modernity. As a ‘Marxist’ critique of history, her early linguistics unmasks modernity as a ‘homogeneous’ discourse. Kristeva proposes a ‘post-structuralist’ counter-narrative to ‘resurrect’ the subject entrapped in ‘bourgeois’ modernity.

Kristeva’s new ideal, ‘heterogeneous identity’, postulates the inherent ‘exhaustion’ of the person of modernity. This ultimate crisis is a historical experience, which claim she confirms through Arendt’s critique of twentieth century totalitarianisms. Kristeva, through Arendt, denounces the failed idols of a rationalist modernity: tribal nationalism, totalised capitalism, instrumental reason in the service of profit, racism, administration and the ‘virtual’ new world order that characterised the end of the twentieth century. These are ‘homogenising’ narratives which dissolve all particularity and uniqueness. Kristeva’s post-structuralist program urges their critical de-construction and analysis: this is the way to renew ‘old’ identity. The way to this is her proposed counter-paradigm, recognising the ‘speaking being’ as a ‘heterogeneous contradiction’. It is the realisation that the subject has no stable identity, contrary to modernity’s claim. Modernity denied the contextual view of identity which, Kristeva insinuates, is the ground of accountability. Now, as the illusions of a firm identity are over, narratives can be made accountable.

Kristeva’s critics pay little attention to Kristeva’s early response to modernity, though, like Beardsworth, they refer to her analysis of the period in Revolution in Poetic Language (1974) but shift focus too swiftly to Kristeva’s more accessible psychoanalytical critique of modernity. My study highlights the importance of the early ‘linguistic’ critique of culture. It is the point of emergence of the complex problems associated with the ‘exhausted subject’.

Kristeva’s early response to modernity is a clear-cut program of ‘substitution’. The previous erroneous mindset has to be replaced with the correct one. In a sense, Kristeva is repeating the program of modernity. The ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity has to rediscover his lost freedom which comes from comprehending his crisis. Kristeva offers specific ‘tools’

94 This is not an anachronism to illustrate Kristeva’s early post-structuralist program from her later engagement with Arendt. Kristeva’s critique of culture, developed from the mid 1980s is built upon the theoretical recognitions of her early linguistics. Jones confirms the unity of the oeuvre, see ‘Julia Kristeva on Femininity’.
95 In her linguistic period, in Revolution in Poetic Language and Desire in Language we still do not find references to Arendt. Kristeva’s major works Arendt appears from the mid 1990s when she develops her cultural critique. (See Intimate Revolt, Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt, and Julia Kristeva Interviews, Editor Ross Mitchell Guberman, Columbia University Press, New York 1996, and her first small piece on Arendt, Hannah Arendt, Life is a Narrative Kristeva, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2001.).
97 This recognition is the ground of what can be called Kristeva’s ‘post-structuralist ethic’ which her psychoanalysis and critique of culture integrate.
to reveal the crisis. As Oliver highlights, these are narratives which call up a crisis of identity. Poetic language and, later on, the experience of motherhood are such discourses. In these experiences identity breaks down and is revealed as a ‘subject-in-process’, or ‘subject-in-trial’. From the unquestioned ‘rationality’ of modernity, Kristeva shifts the centre of observation to the ‘sub-conscious’. Beyond the ‘unitary ego’ of modernity a whole ‘semiotic’ world of past memories, desires, dreams, etc., opens up.\(^9\)

Here my critique makes an important distinction. This early post-structuralist criticism is not yet the recognition of the ‘full’ crisis of the subject. Kristeva attributes ‘ontic’ exhaustion only to the narrative of modernity. It is crucial to see that, despite her very intense criticism, the early works understand only the partial crisis of the subject. Though technically Kristeva has all the means for a post-modern deconstruction, her revolutionary ‘post-structuralism’ is not yet a real post-modern program. Historically, *Revolution in Poetic Language and Desire in Language* belong to a transition period. It is a transition in the sense that divisions into periods do not necessarily reveal clear cultural dynamics and definite shifts of paradigm. Because of Kristeva’s revolutionary aspirations at the time, her post-structuralism shows a salvific confidence very similar to that of modernity, which she is deconstructing. Morris makes the important observation that Kristeva ‘remains within the long tradition of Western humanist individualism with its placing the human individual at the centre of its conception of reality.’\(^1\) Kristeva’s ‘renewed’ subject remains that ‘sovereign individual who is the intentional of her or his own words, thoughts, deeds and will.’\(^2\)

Kristeva’s early criticism indeed reveals a transition period. The first agenda of the emerging post-modern period was the deconstruction of the *previous epoch*. The changed condition of the subject is not yet in the fore. In this ‘pre-post-modernity’, the awareness that modernity left the subject wounded has not yet fully emerged and been reflected upon. At this point, it should also be noted, Kristeva’s *early* position is quite close to the ‘Habermasian centre’. It is still a confident correction of the ‘old identity’ by self-reflective reason. What Kristeva postulates is a fully ‘renewable’ identity. The subject gets off without a scratch from an expired modernity. It arrives from an *erroneous* self-image to an *authentic* one, which corresponds with authentic existence.

Kristeva shows this unproblematic ‘Exodus’ in the modern novel. The new self-image of the subject is in stark contrast with the ‘monologism’ of the old ‘epic’ novels. The old

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\(^9\) Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, p. 48.


\(^2\) Ibid., p.137.
epoch depended on ‘absolute entities’ such as God or community, the synonyms of modernity. In the polyphonic novels of the twentieth century, in the new epoch,

‘Identity, substance, causality, and definition are transgressed so that others may be adopted: analogy, relation, opposition, and therefore dialogism.’ ‘…Dialogism may well become the basis of our time’s intellectual structure. [It] radically abolishes problems of causality, finality, etcetera, from our philosophical arena.’

*Revolution in Poetic Language* and *Desire in Language* show an unwavering hope in the self-narrating subject, in its ‘self-rescuing capacity’ to replace old grand-narratives with a new one. There is no sense that ‘something is missing’ in culture. The ‘early’ Kristeva regards the new post-structuralist sensitivity as a ‘motion through which our culture forsakes itself in order to go beyond itself’.

We can locate what Hanvey calls Kristeva’s ‘soteriology’ in this transition program. That is, ‘heterogeneous identity’, when realised, is redemptive. History, through the ‘revolutionary rebirths’ of the subject is *fully transformable*. The ‘speaking being’ becomes active again by means of self-remembrance, writing and reading. This post-structuralism organically merges with Kristeva’s ‘reformed-Marxism’:

‘Since, as Marx notes, [liberation] lies outside the sphere of material production per se, the signifying process, as it is practiced by texts – those “truly free works” – transforms the opaque and impenetrable subject of social relations and struggles into a subject in process/on trial. Within this apparent asociality, however, lies the social function of texts: the production of a different kind of subject, one capable of bringing about new social relations, and thus joining in the process of capitalism’s subversion.’

This early soteriology shows language as a fully potent medium and agent of ‘redemption’. Expressing it in the other hermeneutical concept of my study, Kristeva’s position is not yet a full ‘cultural mourning’ over modernity’s paradigms. It is rather a rivalry between the soteriological programs of a fading modernity and a post-modernity (‘post-structuralism’) on the rise.

It should be noted here that this revolutionary post-structuralism forms Kristeva’s earliest critique of religion. Within this transition program, rather abstractly, Kristeva

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103 Ibid., p.89.

104 Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, p. 133.

reduces religion to a sub-branch of modernity. Her linguistics is inherently also a critique of ‘stable’ religious identity. Kristeva’s psychoanalytic replacement of religion is rooted in this first substitution of post-structuralism for ‘religion’/modernity. That this is a proper critique of religion in its own right is shown by the fact that her post-structuralism is intimately related to Kristeva’s most deep seated ‘atheistic subtexts’, Marx and Freud. Religion is a far cry from being a dialogue partner for her at the time; it is perceived through the lens of an absolute ideological distance. I underscore the implied ‘exhaustion’ of religion in the rejection of all ‘transcendent symbolics’:

‘This means that if poetic economy has always born witness to crises and impossibilities of transcendent symbolics, in our time it is coupled with crises of social institutions (state, family, religion), and, more profoundly, a turning point in the relationship of man to meaning. Transcendental mastery over discourse is possible, but repressive; such a position is necessary, but only as a limit open to constant challenge; this relief with respect to repression – establishing meaning – is no longer possible under the incarnate appearance of a providential, historical, or even rationalist, humanist ego, but through a discordance in the symbolic function and consequently within the identity of the transcendental ego itself; this is what literary experience of our century intimates to theoretical reason, thereby taking its place with other phenomena of symbolic and social unrest (youth, drugs, women.)’

Partly, we have to do justice to Kristeva’s critique of a ‘homogenising’ Christianity. The object of her criticism coincides with a theism which understood God as the ‘highest Being’ or a Supreme Person, who is a self-existent subject of infinite goodness and power. This theism was concerned to argue the existence of such a Being as the creator and most satisfying explanation of the world. Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’ confirm her criticism of religion as a sub-branch of ‘modernity’.

2.1.2 The Exhaustion of Kristeva’s Revolutionary Program

A second major shift is Kristeva’s psychoanalytical period when she comprehends the ultimate exhaustion of the subject of modernity. That is, not only the narrative of modernity is in crisis but the human self itself. There is hardly a greater contrast in the oeuvre than the one between ‘revolution through poetic language’ and Kristeva’s ‘post-revolutionary’ psychoanalysis. In her revolutionary period, ‘exhaustion’ was understood rather on the collective level. The loss of meaning was not central. Nihilism appeared only in the sense

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106 ‘Freud’, ‘Marx’, and ‘historical materialism’ are extensive entries in the Indexes of Revolution in Poetic Language and Desire in Language.

107 ‘From One Identity to an Other’ (1975), in Kristeva, Desire in Language, p.140.

that the new self-consciousness outperforms the ‘nihilism’ of bourgeois modernity. This nihilism was conceived as the denial of particularities. There, as we saw, the ‘speaking being’ obeyed a simple dialectic: ‘exhausted culture’ vs. ‘enlightened subject’, or ‘modernity’ vs. ‘pluralist’ identity. This program, as is shown in Kristeva’s study on Proust, echoes until the early mid-nineties:

Proust ‘belongs everywhere. He belongs to plurality, to a multiplicity… Proust has all the identities of the world, and his identity is extremely malleable, which is very different from saying that he has no identity. Proust enjoys a polyvalence of experiences that renders him polymorphic… This experiential multiplicity is entirely different from the emptiness and destruction experienced in the loss of identity.’

Though Kristeva retains the ideal of the self’s fulfilment through particularities brought to realisation, the undisturbed freedom her post-structuralism envisaged is brought to a halt. This break is definitive. Her 1980s trilogy gradually turned to the theme of ‘psychic suffering’. In Powers of Horror, Black Sun, and Tales of Love, we can follow how the previous ‘revolutionary subject’ becomes a passive and vulnerable ‘speaking being’. ‘Exhaustion’ is now dealt with in a wider sense. First, this is the loss of ‘idealising narratives’. It is closely connected with the loss of the source of these narratives, ‘authority’. Second, this loss takes place within the subject. These losses all point to the loss of the capacity to identify with the Other, which Kristeva stresses when speaking about the ‘paternal function’. The underlying problem is the loss of the ultimate source of the capacity to ‘identify’ the Father. This authority will gradually come to be named as love following this recognition:

‘Today, the state of the world poses a crucial question: Are we still living in a civilisation structured by authority and symbolic laws, or – like the patients suffering from the “new maladies of the soul” – have we lost our capacity to represent, to maintain a superego and a paternal function?’

Kristeva realises that the subject of modernity has reached a new type of crisis, ‘the emptiness and destruction experienced in the loss of identity.’ A major textual evidence is New Maladies of the Soul (1993). ‘Everyday experience points to a spectacular reduction of private life. These days, who still has a soul?’ Now, in this ‘post-revolutionary’, psychoanalytical period, Kristeva turns to history’s internal dimensions, the crisis of psychic

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110 Ibid., p.129.
111 Ibid., p. 131.
history. It should be noted that this is the very cross-road where her way of constructing subjectivity takes the opposite direction to that of Habermas. From the latter’s viewpoint, poststructuralist theories of subjectivity end up in relativism which make any expression of a shared ‘political’ or communal action impossible. Kristeva deliberately takes up the direction where the lack of authority, which the hyper-rationalism of Habermas overlooks, is fully faced. Kristeva realises that the Enlightenment ideal of the subject, a ‘shared rational’ community, cannot be built up from above, but only from below, from the realised common fragmentation.

In Kristeva’s new approach, nihilism is understood in its full meaning. The loss of meaning is not an external event in history. It takes place in individual history, also affecting deep layers of ‘individual pre-history’. In her writings, a systemic analysis of how this loss is connected with psychic suffering emerges. The ‘exhausted subject’ is described from within. In her trilogy, Kristeva examines how the undefined borders of the self lead to disorientation (Powers of Horror); how an unfinished mourning for the loss of the ‘mother’ in individuation can result in melancholia and depression, and the paralysis of language (Black Sun); and how a broken socialisation in love as the diminished ability to identify with the ‘other’ results in the return of the ‘suffering’ Narcissus (Tales of Love). Not only is Narcissus the central metaphor of Kristeva’s psychoanalytic phase, but it is also an important psychological formulation of the ‘exhausted subject’. Kristeva understands it as the return of a wounded narcissism. This is a state when Narcissus, the fully emerged post-modern subject, cannot discover the real and is self-absorbed in illusionary images. Narcissus, as the ‘extraterrestrial of love’, is forever bound up with the replicas of love.

Developing this metaphor of loss clearly coincided with Kristeva’s becoming a practising psychoanalyst. Compared with her extroverted revolutionary phase, this ‘retreat into the self’ concurs with the full bloom of a post-modern culture. Kristeva understood that, unlike the policy of reconstructing communities through a new ‘social’ investment into the Cartesian subject, the subject has to be approached through a new linguistic modality, healing.

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113 McAfee, Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship, p.134.
114 Ibid., p.36.
115 in terms of an unfinished psychic formation
116 See Kristeva’s difference from Habermas’ project on ‘communicative reason’ at the time (mid 1980s) in McAfee’s analysis. Habermas proposed a new, non instrumental form of reason, which leads to ‘communicative action’. His attempt was to reform the Cartesian ‘monological’ subject who emerges as a new ‘intersubjectivity’. This reformed subject is capable of recovering the fading Enlightenment grounds of culture. However, as McAfee admits, this ideal only redressed the traditional ‘confident’ subject of modernity. McAfee, Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship, pp.26-27.
‘...Left without a sexual, subjective, or moral identity, this amphibian is a being of [lost] boundaries, a borderline, or a “false self” – a body that acts, often without the joys of such performative drunkenness. Modern man is losing his soul, but he does not know it.’\textsuperscript{117}

Kristeva’s significant recognition was that she made this new way of speaking to the subject an ‘imperative’. Indoctrination – ‘new Cartesian investments’ – cannot find a way to post-modern ‘exhaustion’. She confirms psychoanalysis as a method that has the capacity to access the changed subject. She implied that ‘indoctrination’ is a failed strategy for humanist discourses. In this changed context, after her transition period, Kristeva confirms for the second time the failure of religion. Religion still remained a modernist discourse as it overlooks the fundamental brokenness of the subject.

‘If [religion] fails..., what else will inspire change, faced as we are with the glow of our silver high-rises, the implacable banality of banks, and the fact that destiny is being programmed into the genetic code itself?’ ‘Therefore, I suggest that in the future, psychoanalysis may be one of the few remaining endeavours that will allow change and surprise, that is, that will allow life.’\textsuperscript{118}

2.1.3 The ‘Exhausted Subject’: ‘Ontological’ Dialogue Through the Symbolic Needs of the Subject?

My study highlights that it is the program of healing the ‘exhausted subject’ which makes Kristeva’s ‘post-modernity’ a potential dialogue partner for theology. This is the very context within which the proposed ‘ontological’ dialogue can be initiated. Kristeva opens up the need to provide the subject with new symbols of love to ‘guide’ identity. These symbolic stories ‘endow us with a greater capacity for signification.’\textsuperscript{119} It is crucial to highlight the direction which Kristeva opens up here. The crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ can also be defined as a symbolic crisis. Addressing this symbolic crisis provides the ground for an ‘ontological exchange’ in the sense that in Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ‘symbol building’ we find her ‘atheistic subtexts’ at work. While Kristeva presents her semiotic symbols of love, she engages with these humanist narratives. She borrows from them and also, if they are insufficient, corrects them. In this sense, Kristeva’s symbolic quest reveals an active ‘cultural mourning’. Re-telling the story of love to the post-modern self is a reflection on the relationship between the subject of modernity and the subject of post-modernity; in terms of how their ‘symbolic resources’ have changed. At this stage, my point is that Kristeva makes

\textsuperscript{117} Kristeva, \textit{New Maladies of the Soul}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 36.
it her agenda to revise the Christian discourse on love (with its symbols) in order to build it into her new resourcing of the subject. Looking back from postmodernity to modernity she states that the subject has run out of imagination.\textsuperscript{120}

Kristeva’s full turn in the direction of the ‘exhausted subject’ introduces a new dynamic into her relationship with Christian texts. She produces a ‘symbolic mourning’, which now should not be read exclusively in terms of reduction. It is a ‘mourning’ within a Freudian regime which, within its ‘ontological limits’, incorporates Christian symbolism as intrinsically as possible.

‘For the driving force behind faith is the fantasy of returning to the mother”, even if Biblical faith wants specifically to distance us… By laying bare the splendours of the Virgin Mary, Christianity ...has unintentionally revealed what lies behind faith. In contrast to Freud, it could be maintained that the presence of the Virgin throughout Christianity is less a return to paganism than an acknowledgement of the hidden side of the sacred mechanism (of any sacred mechanism), which draws us into its soothing and grinding motion in order to leave us with a single path to salvation: having faith in the Father. [The father of idealisation in individual pre-history.]\textsuperscript{121} (Emphasis added.)

My point is that it is this secular synthesis which theology can complete from the hermeneutics of faith. It can be a constructive dialogue for the following reasons. Textual evidence shows that Kristeva’s opening up to Christian symbols is proportionate to her full perception of the ‘exhausted subject’. In other words, this was the breakdown of her revolutionary ‘semiotics’ where Kristeva’s ‘Christian’ mourning started.\textsuperscript{122} Oliver confirms the emergence of her post-revolutionary imagery in stating that Kristeva is a ‘melancholy atheist mourning the death of God.’\textsuperscript{123} It was indeed a mourning for the broken down symbols of modernity. It is in this context that many of her analysts regard Kristeva fundamentally as the postmodern thinker. According to Beardsworth, Kristeva does not construct a meta-narrative to answer the problem of nihilism in modernity. Instead, she becomes the writer of ‘minor histories’ of love and psychic suffering.\textsuperscript{124}

The good news for theological critique is that the ‘exhausted subject’ provides the ground for a non-polemic relationship at this very point. The common platform is the suffering of the ‘exhausted subject’. What is of importance for our further investigations is the fundamental symbolic conflict between modernity and post-modernity. A response to

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, pp. 124-125.
\textsuperscript{122} See the astonished responses to this turn.
\textsuperscript{123} Oliver, \textit{Reading Kristeva}, p.132.
\textsuperscript{124} Beardsworth, \textit{Julia Kristeva}, p.12.
Kristeva will have to give special attention to the mistrust of religious symbols in ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. If modernity was characterised by confidence and the unlimited expansion of human power, by contrast, the postmodern shift can be defined as the failure and ultimate withdrawal of these projections. Crucial for my critique, included in it is the lack of trust in the inherited (religious) symbols of modernity. If this is the crisis of trust in modernity’s ‘authority’, then specific attention will have to be paid to the image of God, traditionally regarded as ‘paternal authority’. A critical analysis of where these authorities merged in an objectionable way will be necessary.

The symbolic conflict between modernity and postmodern sensitivity, for my critique, becomes important in other aspects too. The subject, giving up external grand-narratives and ‘universal’ symbols, retreats into the self. It is a return to the ‘immediate’ existential symbols: language, the memories of the mother, and the desire for the father. Giving symbolic expression to these micro-narratives is the only way of avoiding becoming a ‘deflated’ Beckettian subject, without symbols, without catharsis, without any functioning language. Kristeva recognises that the chance of ‘survival’ is rebirth through symbolisation. However, it can turn out that one-sided focusing on the ‘inner-narratives’ does not fully answer the subject’s symbolic needs.

2.1.4 The Evaluation of Kristeva’s Turn to the ‘Exhausted Subject’

Kristeva’s objective to give a ‘symbolic’ support to the failed postmodern imagination reveals the paradoxical character of her ‘postmodernism.’ Indeed, Kristeva’s fragmentary essay-like style signals the breakdown of her previous revolutionary semiotics. Although Sarah Beardsworth is largely correct in stating Kristeva’s ‘post-modernity’ (as a writer of ‘minor histories’ of love), she does not take fully into account Kristeva’s revaluation of the classic Enlightenment principles. Kristeva wants to attain a full understanding of psychic suffering. This intention transcends the post-modern agenda. The thematic and systemic coherence of her regime, the synthesis of the secular Enlightenment, and her confidence in the success of a psychoanalytical hermeneutic of culture, show the return of a corrected grand-narrative in her oeuvre. Kristeva remains an Enlightenment thinker. The proof is that all agents of culture are evaluated from the unified viewpoint of psychoanalysis. Kristeva

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also retains the unflagging commitment to universal meaning. She preserves the ‘universal’ of the Enlightenment by correcting its external conception of history, which led to fetishing the totality of reason.\textsuperscript{126}

Kristeva reconceived the compromised ‘universal’ by positing it as a shared universal \textit{from within}, which emerges as an intra-psychic reality. In this corrected program, language and psychic suffering constitute the common story of the \textit{self}. This \textit{inwardness} cannot be put again in the service of the ‘nightmares of modernity’ (T. Eagleton). With this, Kristeva offers a revaluation of the dignity of the human self outside the religious framework. The dynamic of ‘cultural mourning’ is clear. Beyond the profile of her ‘exhausted subject’ Kristeva is operating with the ‘whole’ of the European cultural canon. The \textit{linguistic turn} for her is the very discourse of history. It is putting together a culture in \textit{pieces}.\textsuperscript{127} Kristeva’s latest piece, \textit{The Severed Head, Capital Visions} (2012), from a humanist point of view, confirms the commitment to revise the canon of the Enlightenment and merge the secular and the religious heritage. She re-reads the European canon for the postmodern, exhausted subject, and constructs a new canon for this suffering subjectivity. Ives confirms this enigmatic continuity when he says that Kristeva follows a critical tradition which exalts postmodernism via modernism. She revisits and actualises the heritage of ‘classic’ modernists like Arendt, Proust, Joyce and Artaud.\textsuperscript{128} Thus, in the final outcome, Kristeva constructs a ‘meta-narrative’: the subject is redeemable. The continuity between the programs of ‘revolution’ and ‘healing’ is manifest in her unwavering commitment to the historical subject.

There is a very important outcome of Kristeva’s encounter with the ‘exhausted subject’. She has realised that the traditional resources and strategies of psychoanalysis alone are not sufficient to combat nihilism. \textit{In the Beginning Was Love, Psychoanalysis and Faith} (1985) was the summit of Kristeva’s confident psychoanalysis. Even \textit{New Maladies of the Soul} (1993) presented psychoanalysis as a totalising discourse. Since then, the ongoing or ‘unstoppable’ exhaustion of the subject becomes the main object of Kristeva’s ‘symbolic mourning’. What structures this symbolic quest is her ultimate realisation of the failure of Marxian ‘metaphysics’. The Marxist argument about history’s self-transcending through dialectical materialism and the dialectics of nature seem to have utterly failed. Postulating

\textsuperscript{128} Ives, \textit{Julia Kristeva}., p.22.
the revolutionary renewal of ‘nature’ (history, culture, the psyche) through the program of thesis → antithesis → synthesis is the starkest possible contrast to the increasing crisis of the post-revolutionary subject. The ‘unredeemed’ psychic suffering shows that the Marxian program of redemption has failed. Unlike her early ideological authorities, Marx and Freud, Kristeva recognised the need for an immanent criticism of her own regime. Her psychoanalytical turn to the subject culminates in a conclusion which is the ground of a new ‘ontological’ description of subjective crisis. What post-metaphysical consciousness is most in need of is the search to interpret and reinvent ‘loving intelligence’.

2.1.5 Conclusions

The conclusions of our first analysis are as follows. First and foremost, the problem of the crisis of the subject of modernity and post-modernity provides theology with a major access to Kristeva’s project. It can become the ground for a non-apologetic engagement because its object is the ‘suffering subject’, which raises the problem not only of the resources for tackling suffering but also of co-operation in resourcing.

The ongoing ‘exhaustion’ of the subject is an open ended problem for Kristeva. From a confident idealisation of the subject’s potential to renew ‘history’, she arrived at the fundamental brokenness of the subject of modernity. As Dupré highlights, in terms of the consequences, Kristeva agrees with Habermas: ‘rationality has gone wild’, and that there is an objective need to return to the original emancipatory project of the Enlightenment. However, contrary to this mainstream position, Kristeva arrives at a radical questioning of the policy which makes reason the exclusive resource of ‘liberation’. It is the experience of love through which a new enlightenment of the self can be achieved. The primary reference of the self is not ‘reason’ but healing through ‘loving intelligence’.

The original claim of my study is further confirmed: the real dialogue is not between Kristeva and ‘rationalist humanism; it needs to be completed through a critical engagement with theology, which also makes the ‘suffering’ of the postmodern self a priority. This can lead to examining the ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject. If this is not a partial crisis (reason, narratives) as the Habermasian position claims, but the crisis of the whole self (the individual

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130 Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.98.
and the cultural ‘self’), then, the self’s very grounding needs to be revised. This is an ‘ontological problem’ which requires making ‘ontological statements’ about the human being. A new understanding of the self’s place in the whole reality is needed.

The problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ is also a challenge to Kristeva’s psychoanalysis which, in terms of its available resources, is suspended between modernity and post-modernity. The ‘graced’ ontological question to her is: does the self define the whole reality, rather than being part of it, according to the classic Enlightenment principle? Or, is the self embedded in discourses ‘outside’ the self? In other words, who guarantees the genuine otherness of the person?

Two further steps of analysis suggest themselves. The first is the analysis of Kristeva’s reinterpretation of ‘Transcendence’. This is an ontological examination of the ‘speaking being’ in terms of exploring its ‘ideological’ heritage, that is, exploring the materialist ontological program underlying the construct. Examining this grounding will reveal those ‘humanist subtexts’, engagement with which will be essential for the comprehensive response my critique develops. This analysis will also be helpful for Kristeva’s project itself. The conflict with her materialism, I expect, will demonstrate why the ‘postmetaphysical positon’ rejects an ‘ontological discourse’ with theology. My working hypothesis is that the rejection of making ontological statements about the human being coincides with the rejection of the use of Christian symbols. The emerging question will be: what is the reason that the central image of faith, the Father’s Love, does not penetrate the ‘firewalls’ of postmetaphysical consciousness?

In addition we must analyse the actual suffering of the ‘exhausted subject’. In view of these two aspects (ontological narratives and the content of suffering), the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ in Kristeva can be fully evaluated.

2.2 ANALYSIS II. ‘TRANSCENDENCE’

The problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ raises important further questions. What is the underlying ideological and philosophical ground of Kristeva’s ‘revolutionary’ and ‘psychoanalytical’ programs? If there was a genuine shift from ‘revolution’ to healing, how are these strategies related to Kristeva’s materialist world view?

This analysis aims at identifying the ‘ontological program’ upon which Kristeva’s project is based. Besides the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’, it is the second major contact point with theology. The forthcoming sections will examine how the systemic exclusion of ‘grace’ took place in Kristeva’s early project. My purpose is, however, to arrive from the ‘apologetic’ position, the active exclusion of grace, to seeing it as the problem of excluded grace. My critique is interested in the consequences of losing grace as the ground of the human self, rather than in the ideological conflict itself. I present Kristeva’s materialism, ignored by her critics as an integrative centre of her work. With this, my critique will identify a second way of comprehensively reading Kristeva’s work.

In order to re-open an ‘ontological’ discourse on the crisis of the subject, exploring the conflict with Kristeva’s materialism is an important preparatory step. A critique has to see clearly the underlying tension with her ‘semiotic symbolism’. My study identifies its source in Kristeva’s two major ‘ontological subtexts’, Marx and Freud. On the one hand, my interest is to explore what, through these narratives, Kristeva shares with ‘post-metaphysical consciousnesses’. Behind the rejection of ‘ontological’ engagements we find a common materialism. As our previous analysis suggested, Kristeva’s materialism can reveal important motives beyond this rejection. If it is a parallel rejection of engagement with Christian symbols, then it is crucial to see what makes conversing with theology ‘unacceptable’ for the postmetaphysical mindset. A major objective of this analysis is to listen to this criticism. It is an important preparation for a new type of ‘ontological’ response which my study develops.

My working hypothesis in this chapter is that Kristeva’s ‘materialism’, however strong the ideological conflict is, in the long run does not exclude a ‘symbolic cooperation’ with theology. The ground for this expectation is her strikingly short essay, ‘Atheism’, which nevertheless is an independent chapter (!) of Hatred and Forgiveness. 

‘Atheism’ is a pivotal reference for the evaluation of Kristeva’s materialism. She puts into context her own atheism in a revealing way. Kristeva contrasts ‘nihilist’ atheism, which is based on the denial

133 Three and a half pages altogether.
of the ‘divine’, with her version of atheism. The former is always a brutal denial of the human capacity for representation-symbolisation. Kristeva’s ‘atheism without nihilism’, contrary to the nihilist denial of the ‘divine’, states that the speaking being cannot be reduced to his biology. At the ‘endpoint’ of matter we always find a ‘beyond’, the ability to represent and symbolize.\\footnote{134}{\textit{Atheism}} (pp.209-212), in \textit{Hatred and Forgiveness}, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, pp.209-210.

It is against this background that I explore the ontological conflict in a non-polemic way. The primal objective is to relate this materialism to the crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’. Thus, my study presents the grounding of the ‘speaking being’ in immanence. It is a demonstration of Kristeva’s materialism as a complex ‘ontological program’. Kristeva re-interprets Transcendence within language; and develops it into a complex semiotic ‘soteriology’. The pivotal interest here is pointing out how this materialism imposes important limits upon her project. Kristeva’s ‘materialist soteriology’ is responsible for her not fully comprehending the ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the ‘exhausted subject’. Owing to the failure to recognise the religious dimension of the crisis, her \textit{regime} ‘exhausts’ the subject. This analysis furnishes a basis for this theological criticism.

\subsection*{2.2.1. \textit{The ‘Speaking Being’ Grounded in Immanence}}

\subsection*{2.2.1.1 Overlapping of Kristeva’s ‘Marxist’ and Freudian Frameworks}

In the background of Kristeva’s materialism we find two major formative traditions. These are her ‘Marxist’\footnote{135}{I am well aware of the problem of using the adjective ‘Marxist’ and the noun ‘Marxism’ in Kristeva’s case. With the terms I refer, in a more general sense, to her allegiances to the Marxian program of social transformation, and the notion of development in history which underlies different Marxian readings of ‘dialectical materialism’. This connection can only be made strictly in view of Kristeva’s own references to her early ‘leftist’ background. To consult the incredibly complex problem of situating Kristeva’s post-structuralism within the history of Western Marxist thought, see Terry Eagleton, ‘Marxism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism’ (pp.2-12), \textit{A Review of Perry Anderson’s In The Tracks of Historical Materialism}), \textit{Diacritics} (Vol.15, No.4 Marx After Derrida /Winter, 1985/), Stable URL: \url{http://www.jstor.org/stable/464931}. Accessed: 23/04/2012 12:49.} historical materialism and her Freudianism. Though Kristeva’s critics frequently refer to her materialism from \textit{Revolution in Poetic Language}, their emphasis is primarily on Kristeva’s political praxis. Her materialism as an ‘ontological program’ never occurs as a theme in its own right.\footnote{136}{Caws’ overview of the French literary context clearly shows this tendency. Eagleton too, who in his evaluation of the ‘difficult dialogue between Marxism and post-structuralism’ does not examine ‘philosophical materialism’ in the same way as other elements of their relationship. When Eagleton states as the cause of their tension the ‘difference in historical time-scale’, as a general attitude of critique, he associates ‘materialism’ with the past agenda of classic Marxism. In the Marxism – post-}
Kristeva there is no systemic examination of her materialist worldview. Her historical materialism is treated as part of her transitional radical ‘leftism’, which has no pivotal role in her psychoanalytical ethics. My critique makes it a hinge of evaluation. From a theological point of view, it is the close co-operation between her ‘materialist subtexts’ which leads to the systemic exclusion of ‘grace’ from her model.

In a very recent conversation with Sigrid Weigel, Kristeva still called the gap between the Freudian analytic point of view and the religious viewpoint ‘unbridgeable and problematic’. My critique points to an important ‘structural’ cause of this conflict. For theology, the precondition of a genuinely systematic engagement is a clear comprehension of Kristeva’s analytic viewpoint as a highly complex materialist narrative. Underlying this stance is an in-depth analysis of the language-self-history relationship. If this complexity is overlooked, the communication that theology attempts between faith and psychoanalysis will take place in a hermeneutical void. Theology cannot engage with individual psychoanalytic

structuralist debate, raising the former’s materialism as an ontological problem seems to be an archaism or an unfitting agenda. See: Mary Ann Caws, ‘Tel Quel: Text & Revolution’ (pp.2-8), (Reviews of the books Semiotiké, Recherches pour une semanalyse by Julia Kristeva; L’Enseignement de la Peinture by Marcellin Pleynet; Logiques by Philippe Sollers) Diacritics, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring, 1973), Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/464586, Accessed: 23/04/2012 14:21, and Eagleton, ‘Marxism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism’ (pp.2-12)

137 In Kristeva’s works we find important, but mostly general references to Marx’s influence on her. In her texts I have not found any detailed analysis of Marx’s critique of religion. Kristeva’s comprehensive knowledge of Marx’s social critique, however, presupposes Marx’s ideological presence in her early works. My study emphasises the need to incorporate the Marxian-Feuerbachian reduction of religion to the immanence of man, as a source of Kristeva’s general critique of religion. The most detailed references to Marx and Feuerbach are Kristeva’s historical survey of ‘negativity’ in Revolution in Poetic Language. Her connecting the Marxist program of social transformation with the psychoanalytical and linguistic point of view to analyse ‘alienation’ shows a sound knowledge of Marxist ideology. Marxism links religious and social alienation. It has a rather negative view on the role of institutionalised religion in contributing to social alienation. The critique of the ‘God-image’, however ideological, is central to this criticism.

I draw attention to Kristeva’s autobiographical recollections where she refers to these ‘leftist’ influences. First, in an interview with Philippe Petit, she talks of Marx as an important source of her understanding of the revolution of 1968. ‘First of all, there was Marx’s 18th Brumaire…Marx had seen both the signs of revolutionary movements and their failures very clearly, starting with the Revolution. As far as I am concerned, this book is still up to date.’ (In: Kristeva, Revolt, She Said, p.15.) Kristeva also highlights her participation in the leftist Tel Quel group. Owing to her fresh impulses from this literary movement (Freud, French post-structuralism), she broke away from the Maoist spell of Marxism owing to her negative experiences in China. ‘I made an institutional and personal criticism of leftist movements after my trip to China, for I had begun to feel alienated from leftist ideology.’ (In: Kristeva Interviews, p.7.) We can detect an apologetic stance in Kristeva’s critique of ‘religion as transcendence’. Underlying it is an inherited ‘ideological’ mistrust. In the interview, Kristeva confirms her position that a religious notion of transcendence and fetishizing reason are structurally the same. See Julia Kristeva Interviews, p.15.

statements if it does not realise that, while speaking about ‘God’ and the ‘person’, it needs to communicate with Kristeva’s underlying complex ‘ground’. My point is that despite the conflict with her materialism, becoming aware of the underlying composite discourses\(^\text{139}\) in itself is a way out from the hermeneutical impasse. That is why I lay bare this conflict. It is the only guarantee that theology will develop a response which actually communicates with Kristeva’s materialistic position. These complex narratives, which theology has to address, are Kristeva’s re-conception of ‘Transcendence’ \textit{within} language (‘the program of the self-transcending subject’) and the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’, in focus with the concept of the \textit{chora-thetic}.

I focus on \textit{Revolution in Poetic Language} because it is Kristeva’s only work where the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’ is systematically exposed. It reveals a structural intertwining of her ‘Marxist’ ideology and her Freudian framework.\(^\text{140}\) This results in a highly confident materialist narrative, which especially characterises Kristeva’s post-structuralist program from the \textit{Tel Quel} period\(^\text{141}\) and her early psychoanalysis. This ‘Marxism’ is in the background of Kristeva’s atheism as an active \textit{ideological} subtext: Marxism as a ‘loyal child of Enlightenment has always maintained an implacable hostility to irrationalism.’\(^\text{142}\) This ideological impact should be seen as a major cause of the fact that Kristeva, while searching for new resources for a post-Marxist critique of culture, from the onset excluded religious redemption.

Kristeva names two major influences in the formation of her humanist narrative, the events of 1968 and the influence of ‘French atheism’.

’68 meant ‘putting God himself (i.e. Meaning fixed as Value) into question… In short, questioning a model of humanity that had absorbed into itself the transcendent ideal (God) and which, from this immanence, was in hot pursuit of “values” and “objects”. The \textit{enragé} of ’68 bore the possibility of a mutation in metaphysics, a sort of change of religion or civilisation that like all upheavals takes time to reach people’s ears.’\(^\text{143}\)

\(^{139}\) as a complex ‘cultural mourning’
\(^{141}\) See the excellent linking of the works and motives of three \textit{Tel Quel} associates in reference to their texts, by Caws. (Reviews of the books \textit{Semiotiké, Recherches pour une semanalyse} by Julia Kristeva; \textit{L’Enseignement de la Peinture} by Marcelin Pleynet; \textit{Logiques} by Philippe Sollers. Kristeva is shown as an influential, dominant figure of the group. Caws, ‘Tel Quel: Text & Revolution’ (pp.2-8)
\(^{143}\) Kristeva, \textit{Revolt, She Said}, pp.26.28.
Kristeva very soon developed her preference for what she calls ‘French atheism’. This atheism paid attention to the subject, which was lacking in classic Marxism.

‘What is specific about French thought is that it is written with immediacy (following from Descartes and Pascal and then Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau), and it is also corporal, sexualized. (...) This way of taking into account sexual experience and its co-presence with thought is unique to France. Here we are at the source of French atheism: a strange valorization of a very particular psychic life, inasmuch as it is sustained by sexual desire and rooted in bodily needs; it exhausts transcendence though in no way denies it, instead it brings such incarnate transcendence back into meaning.’

These quotations point to a less visible dimension of her Marxism, the dismissed image of God. The above motives of Kristeva’s atheism show important aspects of why the ‘old’ God-image (as the theological hermeneutics of the person and history) was regarded as ‘irrelevant’. Kristeva saw ’68 as the ‘murder’ of traditional ‘paternal authority’. It was a protest against what was perceived as an inhibiting power. The Father-image of religion was seen within this ideological framework of abusive power. This underlying criticism together with the implied lack of a proper anthropology in religion will have to be addressed by theology. My critique points to the ‘God-question’ as a hidden ideological dimension of Kristeva’s early ‘Marxism’, as one which should be observed in the background of her linguistic re-conception of ‘transcendence’.

Kristeva’s critique of Maoism in Chinese Women (1974) already signals how the Marxist desire for a means of redemption, though in a transformed form, is transposed into her psychoanalysis. Boer also states this move as a systemic continuity in the oeuvre, though in a somewhat superficial way. He sees it as a straightforward ‘linear’ development. According to him, with the redemptive possibilities of socialism exhausted, Kristeva was in search of an alternative political and social redemption that may overcome the rampages of capitalism. For Boer, this explains Kristeva’s move to Freudian psychoanalysis and her interest in the psychoanalytical reading of Christian texts. The danger is that without an in-depth analysis of her materialism Kristeva is too quickly turned into a ‘Christian writer’. In Boer’s reductive scheme, her psychoanalytical turn to Christianity is a substitute for a

144 Kristeva, Revolt, She Said, p.20.

145 I highlighted in the text the concept of revolt and the psychological dynamics of ‘desire’ as her new psychoanalytical resources: ‘The information filtering out after [Mao’s] death seems to confirm the very opposite development: the triumph of a policy of stabilisation, to be sure, but also of conformism and stagnation, a policy anchored, on the one hand in the Confucian bureaucratic tradition, and on the other hand in Soviet bureaucracy. The permanent time of the Middle Kingdom is thus becoming the exclusive credo. But now, reinforced by the powerful batteries of bureaucratic Marxism devoid of any counterweight...it is turning into a despotic constraint to bring about a messianic society, with any surge of rebellion, insubordination or desire being removed a priori... We may be witnessing one of the most totalitarian of societies, which...will most likely be more craftily but no less coercive than the Gulag society.’ In Kristeva, Chinese Women, p.205.
sidelined Marxism, which she cannot excise completely. What Kristeva seeks, Boer concludes, is a new form of social, political and psychological remedies.  

I find problematic this simplified image of Kristeva’s ‘Christian turn’. Hers is a redemptive project, but she takes over the redemptive telos not from the Christian narrative but from her seminal Marxism.

Boer emphasises Kristeva’s departure from Marx. Kristeva trumps Marx by identifying a more original cause, the dream work which lies beneath Marx’s categories of work and production. Or else, Kristeva replaces Marxism by psychoanalysis because it provides the answers that Marx left hanging. It is true on a general level. But there is a more complex relationship with her formative tradition. It is true that this move can be understood as one from a collective focus to an individual one, from social and political questions to those of the individual psyche. Yet, what is missed in the caesura-approach is the significance of Kristeva’s materialism as the unifying element of the oeuvre. Her psychoanalysis is not simply an alternative materialism to Marxism. Her original Marxist and Freudian economies are perfectly integrated into a unified ‘ontological program’. It is indeed true that we can speak of a striking abundance in Christian images in Kristeva but, against the background of her early ‘Marxism’, we also have to speak of their suppressed original, ‘ontological’ meaning.

2.2.1.2 The ‘Chora-thetic’: Kristeva’s Reconception of ‘Transcendence’ in Language

The concept of the ‘chora-thetic’, a central element of her linguistic theory, is the core of Kristeva’s materialism for several reasons. It can be seen as Kristeva’s reinterpretation of Transcendence ‘within the self’. In it, the overlapping of the ‘Marxist’ and the Freudian frameworks is also best shown. It is the pivotal moment of excluding ‘grace’ from Kristeva’s model. Also, her program of the ‘self-transcending self’ is a major point where the conflict with the Christian notion of the ‘self’ is manifest. I present the three levels of ‘self-transcendence’ through language. The recapitulation of this program will be followed by exploring the materialist grounding of this program. This demonstration is the heart of my study, in the sense that it shows on what ground my study suggested an ‘ontological critique’ of Kristeva.

147 Ibid., p.159.
148 Ibid., p.155.
149 Ibid., p.155.
The basis of the program of the ‘self-transcending subject’ is the *chora-thetic*. Because of its significance, unlike Kristeva’s critics, I give a full overview of the image. Originally, the ‘*chora-thetic*’ is an ‘ontological’ concept from Plato’s cosmological myth, *Timaeus*, which Kristeva took over as a central image for her linguistics. In Plato’s myth, the ‘*chora*’ plays a primary role in the creation of the universe. It is a sort of pre-cosmos, a formless state in which we find the basic constituents of the cosmos, the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth only in formation. This pre-matter, and all the other constituents of the cosmos to be, are moved randomly, churning about in ‘the wet-nurse of becoming’ (52d 4-5). It is the erratic movement of this receptacle (*‘chora’*) that causes and preserves a state of non-uniformity.  

‘This above all: it is a receptacle of all becoming—its wetnurse, as it were.’ (49b)  

‘…we shouldn’t call the mother or receptacle of what has come to be, of what is visible or perceivable in every other way, either earth or air, fire, or water, or any of their compounds or their constituents. But if we speak of it as an invisible and characterless sort of thing, one that receives all *b* things and shares in a most perplexing way in what is intelligible, a thing extremely difficult to comprehend…’ (51a/b)  

‘That is how at that time the four kinds [elements, ‘pre- fire, air, water, and earth’] were being shaken by the receiver, which was itself agitating like a shaking machine, separating the kinds most unlike each other furthest apart and pushing those most like each other closest together into the same region. This, of course, explains how these different kinds came to occupy different regions of space, even before the universe was set in order and constituted from them. Indeed, it is a fact that before this took place the four kinds all lacked proportion and measure, and at the time the ordering of the universe was *b* undertaken, fire, water, earth, and air initially possessed certain traces of what they are now. They were indeed in the condition one would expect thoroughly god-forsaken things to be in. So, finding them in this natural condition, the first thing the god then did was to give them their distinctive shapes, using forms and numbers.’ (53a/b)  

The demiurge (‘creator-god’) brings order into this chaos, pre-ordered already by the ‘*chora’*/mother: ‘The god fashioned these four kinds to be as perfect and excellent as possible, when they were not so before.’ (53b)  

It is deeply emblematic that Kristeva builds her ‘anti-metaphysical’ project on a Platonic ‘metaphysical’ concept. It is a symbolic confirmation that she can indeed be approached as an ‘ontological discourse’. The original associations of the concept clearly show why Kristeva took over this symbol. The ‘*semiotic-maternal*’, the ‘*pre-symbolic*’ in her linguistics

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151 Ibid., p.38.  
152 Ibid., p.40.  
153 Ibid., p.43.  
154 Ibid., p.43.
correspond in Plato’s myth to the ‘chora’ (mother, receptacle), and the disordered state of the world, which disorder is the absence of the nous (‘Meaning’). The Symbolic Order (of the Father) corresponds to the nous and the creative act of the demiurge (‘creator’). Referring to the qualities of the chora’s kinetic rhythm, Kristeva says in her linguistics that the ‘chora’ is a ‘modality of significance in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic.’\textsuperscript{155} In this way, she identifies the ‘chora’ as the process of signification, the ‘space’ between the sign and the signified, and stresses that the ‘chora’ is ‘an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases’\textsuperscript{156} Added to this function, Kristeva calls the threshold of the symbolic the ‘thetic’ phase, which emerges out of Lacan’s mirror stage, the first ‘place’ or observation of the Other.\textsuperscript{157} That is why I refer to the full linguistic function of the ‘chora’ as the ‘chora-thetic’. The ‘thetic’ expresses rather the presence of the ‘nous’ or the Symbolic, an early inscription of the death-drive, or the semiotic chaos, into language.

In Kristeva’s model, the function of the ‘chora-thetic’ is to nourish and renew meaning. It is from this discovery that Kristeva’s project develops into a complex ‘semiotics’. As stated earlier, Kristeva’s focusing on linguistic origins always has to be seen against her Arendtian background, the quest for a new ethical beginning in history. The program she builds upon the regenerative function of the ‘chora-thetic’ complements and completes this Arendtian intention. The ‘chora-thetic’ cannot be restricted exclusively to Kristeva’s linguistics. It also animates her Freudian psychoanalysis, which is in the service of renewing the person as the moral agent of ‘external’ and internal history. Language is never a neutral medium in Kristeva. It is also (and always) a medium of ethics, of ethical self-transcending. Psychotherapy is indirectly in the service of recovering ethical reflection in culture.

Kristeva literally re-grounds Freud’s project by giving a structural analysis of language itself. Language is not a passive ‘technical device’ of therapy. It actively bears the full story of the subject. For Kristeva, language is also a healing medium, from within. This worked-out ‘ontological complexity’ of language makes it possible for her to draw on those intra-linguistic and psychic resources, which were available neither to Freud nor to Lacan. Within the Freudian method a far more nuanced operation becomes possible. In contrast to Freud’s

\textsuperscript{155} ‘Insistons sur cette réglementation: nous sommes ici dans une modalité de la significance où le signe linguistique n’est pas encore articulé comme distinction entre reel et symbolique.’ (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.25.) Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p.26.

\textsuperscript{156} ‘Une articulation toute provisoire, essentiellement mobile, constituée de mouvements et de leurs stases éphémères.’ (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p .23.) Ibid., p.25.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., pp.48-49
technical approach, Kristeva gives a complete ‘worldview’ through language. She is obliged to, because language, in reference to Arendt, is the meeting point between history (as ‘ethics’ or moral accountability) and the individual. Language is that event through which an ‘ethical’ self-transcending takes place. Kristeva expresses the dynamics of self-transcendence on different levels, which levels merge and follow her Arendtian telos from the ‘individual’ to the ‘collective’.

The first level of transcendence is the very genesis of language. It is the strictly understood linguistic function of the ‘chora-thetic’ ‘to prepare meaning’, which Kristeva describes in chapters 1-10 in Revolution in Poetic Language. The first transcendent ‘leap’ is between the ‘chora’ and the ‘thetic’. The semiotic ‘chora’ is the precondition of the ‘thetic’ phase.\(^{158}\) The ‘thetic’ phase, in close connection with the semiotic ‘chora’, ‘marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic. The second includes part of the first, and their scission is thereafter marked by the break between signifier and signified.’\(^{159}\)

‘We shall distinguish the semiotic (drives and their articulations) from the realm of signification, which is always that of proposition and judgement, in other words, a realm of positions. …We shall call this break, which produces the positing of signification, a thetic phase. All enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects.’\(^{160}\)

(‘The regulation of the semiotic in the symbolic through the thetic break; which is inherent in the operation of language, is also found on the various levels of a society’s signifying edifice. In all known archaic societies, this founding break of the symbolic order is represented by murder – the killing of a man, a slave, a prisoner, an animal. Freud reveals this founding break and generalizes from it when he emphasizes that society is founded on a complicity in the common crime.’\(^{161}\)) ‘We indicated earlier how language, already as a semiotic chora but above all as a symbolic system, is at the service of the death drive, diverts it, and confines it as if within an isolated pocket of narcissism [within the emerging borders of the nascent self].’ Identity and society are grounded on ‘this founding break of the symbolic order.’\(^{162}\) The Other (the Father of

\(^{158}\) Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p.50

\(^{159}\) ‘Elle marque un seuil entre deux domaines hétérogènes : le sémiotique et le symbolique. Le second comprend une partie du premier, et leur scission se marque désormais par la coupure signifiant/signifié.’ (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.46.), Ibid., pp.48-49.

\(^{160}\) ‘Nous distinguérons le sémiotique (les pulsions et leurs articulations) du domaine de la signification ; qui est toujours celui d’une proposition ou d’un jugement ; c’est-à-dire un domaine de positions. Nous appellerons cette coupure produisant la position de la signification, une phase thétique. Toute énonciation est thétique ; qu’elle soit énonciation de mot ou de phrase: toute énonciation exige une identification, c’est-à-dire une séparation du sujet de et dans son image, en même temps que de et dans ses objets.’ (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, pp.41-42); Ibid., p.43.

\(^{161}\) Ibid., p.70

\(^{162}\) ‘Nous avons indiqué plus haut comment le langage, déjà en tant que chora sémiotique, mais surtout en tant que système symbolique, est au service de la pulsion de mort, la fait dériver et la
individual pre-history or Loving Third) is ‘the regulator between semiotic chora and culture.’…There can be no signifying practice without a thetic phase.

We can see that the ‘speaking being’ from the very beginning lives with a notion of transcendence. He comes into being by transcending the loss of the mother when this loss becomes named and accepted through the event (‘act’) of language. This is the beginning of a permanent ‘transcending’ since, in Kristeva’s model, language is a progressive act of ‘self-transcending’. In this sense, the self is a self-redemptive subject. Through naming external reality and internal psychic events, the sense of reality is maintained. The subject is raised above himself by his own signification. If language fails, the subject falls back into the ‘maternal void’. In this state, the world and one’s own story becomes unrepresented again: contact with the ‘Real’ is lost. The working of the ‘thetic-chora’ is the sign that the subject is on its way to ‘become’ and remain a ‘speaking being’.

The adult psyche also needs to undergo subsequent resurrections. This is the second level of self-transcendence. It is prompted by the subject’s subsequent crises of identity. Kristeva highlights as the climax of crisis when the person has to be reborn in another language/culture. The self, almost in a Beckettian fashion, has no other option but the constant reinvention of itself by being reborn into another narrative, another identity. This rebirth is mirrored in the analyst’s role; he/she helps the subject to bring to realisation their awaiting self-transcendence:

‘Counter-transference love is my ability to put myself in their place; looking, dreaming, suffering as if I were she, as if I were he. Fleeting moments of identification. Temporary and yet effective meanings. Fruitful sparks of understanding.’

Psychoanalysis also draws upon the ‘redemptive’ dynamic which the ‘chora-thetic’ offers as the earliest birth-point of language. Language, having become lifeless, needs to be ‘re-sexualised’. In order to ‘recharge’ language, the energies of the pre-lingual drives need to be returned to it. This re-activation takes place from the pre-lingual resource which Kristeva associates with the maternal. The reintegration of this ‘nocturnal law’, the ‘semiotic’, into language is an important event in the process of healing. In order to nourish this ‘ascension’ through language, Kristeva resorts to the diversity of psychic representatives: thing-

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localise comme dans une poche narcissique.’ La société est fondée sur ‘cette coupure instauratrice de l’ordre symbolique.’ (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p. 69.) Ibid., p.70.

163 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p.67.

164 ‘…il n’y a pas de pratique signifiante possible sans moment thétique. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.63.), Ibid., p.64.

165 Kristeva, Tales of Love, p.11. (In the French original, Julia Kristeva, Histoires d’amour, Denoël, Paris 1983, p.22.)
representation, word-presentation, and the drive representative, affect presentation. Psychoanalysis, in one sense, restores the balance between these economies. The recovery and resourcing of the interior space ground both the ‘functioning’ self and the analysis which seeks access to it. The healing of the other in need is also a healing process for the analyst.

The third level of self-transcendence is ‘culture’. ‘Healing’ and the restoration of meaning emerge at this higher level, too. The functioning ‘psychic interior’ of the individual is the ground for the self-reflection of culture. As the first step, this interior, as the ‘cell’ of culture, provides room for the imaginary and the symbolic where the drama of the individuation process can be played out. This functioning interior is the ‘microcosm’ of Arendt’s polis, where life becomes narrated life. Kristeva’s ‘self-transcendence’ complies with the idea of Arendt, that culture is the place where identity can be told and listened to. This ‘communal psychic space’ is the precondition for expressing ‘who I am, which is always more than what I am’, it is the living human interior. Thus, ethics is rooted in its sub-psychic, ‘semiotic’ origins of language. The plurality of the political space intertwines with freedom (Arendt’s bios) and the heterogeneity of identity (constituted always by the ‘semiotic’ – Symbolic split). The life of a culture is a continuous oscillation between the intra-psychic and the social. Kristeva emphasises the psychic economy of the subject as the obverse of political economy. It is in this sense that life is a transcendent narrative: it needs to be grounded.

In this way, the dynamic of the ‘chora-thetic’ becomes an important element of Kristeva’s concept of history. Through the series of self-transcendence grounded upon it, the connection between nature and culture takes place. The atomic element of Kristeva’s model, the inscription of bodily drive eruptions into language, is also an internal event of history. This program of self-transcendence gives an intrinsic view of history. This insight grounds Kristeva’s ‘new’, internal analysis of culture. In this way, her program corrects the Enlightenment meta-narrative of history when the subject is seen ‘instrumentally’, ‘from above’. By linking human nature and culture (external history) in this intrinsic way, Kristeva particularly corrects her primary context, Marx’s extraverted view of history. As a fair appreciation, Kristeva successfully challenges the homogeneous view of history from within the same materialist tradition.

166 This recapitulation of ‘resexualising’ language from the ‘semiotic’ resource is an extract from Kristeva’s demonstration, in Kristeva, New Maladies of the Soul, pp.24-25,36.
167 See the ‘political dimension’ of language in Kristeva’s Hannah Arendt, Life Is a Narrative. On the distinction between the ‘who’ and the ‘what’, who we are as opposed to what we are, see Ch.4 ‘Who and the Body’ (pp. 53-72), especially pp. 56-58, and p. 27 from Chapter 2 ‘Arendt and Aristotle: An Apologia for Narration’.
168 Kristeva, The Crisis of the European Subject, pp. 4-5. 7.
Having a connection with the above three levels of self-transcendence, theology makes two general critical observations.

(1) This re-conception of transcendence is a replacement of the ‘Christian’ ontological horizon. On the one hand, theology agrees that ‘transcendence’ is a necessary dynamic for the self. The human being is never a given: it is becoming through being raised above itself in the Augustinian sense, with which Kristeva agrees.

‘St. Augustine was the first novelist of the subject, because he was the first to articulate the two fundamental principles of his transfiguration: Quaestio mihi factus (“I have been made a question to myself”) and In via, in patria (“The homeland is the journey”). This seems to me to be the metaphysical agenda of a speaker in a novel (…).’

This ‘transfiguration’ grounds the human self and also, Kristeva rightly recognises, culture itself. The latter, by joining in this dynamic, accommodates reflective consciousness and itself is a generator of values of humaneness.

Where this program becomes problematic for theology is the ‘systemic’ exclusion of grace. Lechte’s recapitulation of Kristeva’s transcendental program succinctly demonstrates why it is a materialist re-conception of transcendence. He reads Kristeva’s Black Sun, which deals with the emerged melancholia in culture, as a response ‘to the impending crisis of the symbolic owing to the disappearance of all forms of transcendence from Western cultural life and from art in particular.’ He presents Kristeva’s program as an alternative ‘linguistic transcendence’ when language is reconceived as ‘Transcendence’. Kristeva re-formulates the salvific relationship between the classic Transcendent and the subject. This ‘salvific’ relationship is defined negatively, as a failure to have faith, in language and through language, in the other. ‘Transcendence’, when negatively defined, is an absence of signs, a lack of language. Without a functioning language, the self is unable to describe the ‘other’. The other cannot be named. In Kristeva’s negative description of transcendence, this loss consists in the evacuation of affect from language and signs. It is the affective, ‘semiotic’ dimension that Kristeva posits as something beyond signs, beyond the symbolic.

169 ‘Murder in Byzantium, Or Why I “Ship Myself on a Voyage in a Novel”’ (pp.273-305), Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.276.
170 A careful extracting of Lechte clearly demonstrates Kristeva’s linguistic reconception of Transcendence. I used for this recapitulation Lechte, ‘Kristeva's "Soleil noir" and Postmodernity’ (pp.97-121)
171 Ibid., p.98.
This belief in the beyond turns out to be the poetic, material aspect of language. Positively, it is Transcendence reconceived as language that connects the subject with the Real (reality). In practice, ‘Resurrection’ is only possible within the language of the speaking being, within the written form of imagination and subjective anamnesis which we call art.

Margaroni goes as far as to see Kristeva’s language-related strategies as initiating a series of attempts to rewrite the familiar Johannine narrative. She explicitly situates Kristeva in the Western metaphysical tradition as one who attempts to reconfigure the philosophical problem of ‘the Beginning’ in linguistics and psychoanalysis. The ‘chora’, as the capacity for representation-symbolisation, paraphrases the Christian conviction that ‘In the beginning was the Word’. Margaroni explicitly states the replacement of religious Transcendence. The ‘chora’, as the principle of self-ordering, follows a materialist economy of the Beginning that permits Kristeva to displace all transcendental forms of origin (the Word, the divine nous). This ‘chora’-based project seeks to establish the grounds for a materialist psychoanalysis based on a materialist understanding of the origins of language and the subject.

In Kristeva’s ‘linguistic ontology’, it is a self-transcending material dynamic that marks out the borders between the inside and the outside, between the self and the other. This ‘transcendence’ is always the site of crisis, it is always the crisis of signification. But also, language as a narrative is always the resolution of the crisis of identity. This re-conception of Transcendence preserves faith in the ‘Other’ in two ways. First, it is the ‘Other’ towards which we transcend. The Other – self relationship is the stabilisation of identity. Second, Kristeva’s program of transcendence preserves the importance of reflecting on ‘lost foundations’. The subject needs to be concerned with his ‘beginnings’: this anamnesis is the very ground of ethics. In this regard, Kristeva attributes a positive transcendental quality to the ‘chora-thetic’. Margaroni confirms it when she characterises the ‘chora’ as an essential openness. It stands over against the rigidity of the social order or the rigidly, erroneously conceived ‘Other’; the ‘chora-thetic’ permanently prompts one to become open.

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172 Lechte, ‘Kristeva’s “Soleil noir” and Postmodernity’, p.98.
174 Maria Margaroni, “‘The Lost Foundation’: Kristeva’s Semiotic Chora and Its Ambiguous Legacy” (pp.78-98), Hypatia, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), p.80
175 Ibid., p.80.
178 Ibid., p.89.
179 Ibid., p.96.
To sum up the general stance of theology, if ‘Transcendence’ is exclusively reduced to this otherwise vital event of ‘permanent naming’, theology rightly regards it as a reduction. The religious dynamic of Transcendence is a genuine offer to the self to transcend its permanent woundedness. In Kristeva, this is an ‘exile’ into signification, and this self-transcending is the ‘eternal destiny of the speaking being’.\(^{180}\) Theology claims that there is a promise of a genuine rest, a caesura, in the permanent naming of the ‘pain’. In other words, there is another dynamic which can serve as a bridge to the ‘real’ other than the immanent and perpetuated crisis of the self. God’s literally transcendent Love is a genuine completion of the ‘exodus’ or naming of the crisis of identity. Language is more than an empty mask, a constant shift of identities,\(^ {181}\) it reveals a ground of human identity. There is a promise of arrival. The Transcendent dynamic of the self, in the sense that it is never alone in naming its crisis, is cut off from Kristeva’s immanent narrative.

(2) However, it is also important to see a crucial point of co-operation between Kristeva’s immanence and theology. Lechte and others highlight that Kristeva’s program of transcendence opposes post-modern nihilism.\(^ {182}\) The self, by transcending towards meaning through permanent renewals, counteracts the loss of meaning. Thus, to the program of the ‘chora-thetic’, in order to renew meaning, a ‘soteriological’ function can be attached in the positive sense. My point is that Kristeva is not in an absolute break with the Christian narrative. The telos of the ‘thetic-chora’, that the subject is redeemable, is a positive connection. By presenting the self as one which is always striving towards meaning, Kristeva exposes the woundedness of the post-modern self. She is laying bare the post-modern self as it is, with its limited linguistic resources over against nihilism.

The program of ‘self-transcendence’ unambiguously points to the ‘exhausted subject’. Kristeva clearly links the need for ‘self-transcendence’ to the structural impasses of ‘productive freedom’, following her Arendtian program. The failure of signification, when the self is unable to ‘transcend’, is always an ethical failure. In The Crisis of the European Subject, Kristeva collects the symptoms of ‘failed transcendence’. Accordingly, in a culture where ‘transcendence’ breaks down, reason becomes instrumental, the ability to judge disintegrates. Individuals allow the judgement of a leader or the consensus of a group to be imposed on them instead of making these judgements themselves. The ‘interior forum’ is threatened; many are in the process of losing the capacity to elaborate inner life and

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\(^{181}\) Ibid., pp.164-165

\(^{182}\) Lechte, ‘Kristeva's "Soleil noir" and Postmodernity’, p.117.
communicate it. ‘False selves’ emerge and, in the final outcome, the deterioration of value-based communication undermines democracies.  

This failure needs to be counteracted by a critical reflection which reinvigorates the ‘self-transcending’ of culture. Kristeva believes in the capacity for ‘self-renewal’. Theology raises the question of whether this self-transcendence is not totalised in Kristeva.

My conclusion is that Kristeva’s program by no means confirms the characterisation which regards her as a ‘Christian writer’, and that there is an explicit theological component in her writings. On the contrary, Kristeva’s definition of ‘belief in the other’ is wide enough to include many of the ostensibly secular or materialist positions. We can sum up the fundamental difference with Kristeva’s self-transcending in Bradley’s words: ‘If Christianity seeks to transcendentalise immanent drives, Kristeva’s work relocates the transcendent firmly back within the body.’ It is against this background that theology will need to present God as the regenerative ‘chora’.

2.2.1.3 The Materialist Grounding of the ‘Chora-thetic’

My study emphasises the materialist grounding of the ‘chora-thetic’ because it reveals the motives of Kristeva’s humanism which it is crucial to address. The ‘chora-thetic’ discloses a complex dynamic to which the question of the God-image can be linked in important ways. That Kristeva’s materialism can be addressed from the Christian discourse of love is confirmed by Nikolchina who also envisions the ‘chora’ in a wider, symbolic horizon. ‘In the beginning, therefore, is not the Word, not the Logos; in the beginning is Love, the generative chora.’ The ‘ontological discourse’ which theology wishes to re-open has indeed to be an ‘ontology of love’. The dialogue will necessarily have to attempt ‘opening up’ Kristeva’s ideologically closed materialism from this direction. In order to achieve this, a theological critique must internalise the most essential elements of Kristeva’s ‘ontological narrative’.

Revolution in Poetic Language lays a particular stress on the continuity between the ‘Marxist’ program of social transformation, Kristeva’s linguistics, and the evolving Freudian economy of her regime. Kristeva asserts that Freud was a ‘second overturning’ of Hegelian

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185 Ibid., p. 280.
negativity, ‘fundamentally [just as] radical as the Marxist overturning, if not more so.’

This deep-grounding of language is a very important difference with Lacan whose concept of history many regard as one which did not go deep enough. Kristeva gives an ‘ontological’ grounding of history, seeing language as a much wider narrative than Lacan did. The motive of this in-depth investigation is to find a categorical imperative which would serve as the bases for a universal ethics. Finding this universalism is Kristeva’s life-long concern, and here we see its earliest version. Kristeva submits the dialectic of matter, derived from Marx, as the ‘ontological root’ of the ethical imperative. This ‘ethical ground’ remains present in her later psychoanalytical ethics:

‘If history is made up of modes of production, the subject is a contradiction that brings about practice because practice is always both signified and semiotic…’

Kristeva’s central tenet, the subject-in-process or the person as ‘heterogeneous contradiction’, is also derived from this ontological core. The final ground of personhood is clearly the dialectic of matter. Kristeva’s psychoanalysis deliberately developed further the historical dialectics of Marx. Boer confirms the symbolic authority of Marx when quoting her from a 1996 interview, ‘we may need to be slightly Marxist’ (Julia Kristeva Interviews). My point is that the examination of Kristeva’s later themes centred upon ‘love’ should not lose sight of this founding materialism:

‘The logic exposed above [the ‘second overturning of Hegelian dialectic’] will become materialist, when, with the help of Freud’s discovery, one dares think negativity as the very movement of heterogeneous matter, inseparable from its differentiation’s symbolic function.’

To revise the ontological statements of her Freudianism and transcendent linguistics has never occurred to Kristeva as a real problem. ‘Matter’ remains a totalised, never questioned narrative. Kristeva consistently applies the ‘negativity-dialectic’ scheme, as the universal law of history, to language. Thus, the subject is the product of a process, an intersection, an impossible unity of the semiotic-symbolic workings in the signifying process. Kristeva’s materialist worldview in Revolution in Poetic Language is clear-cut. The subject is ‘created’ by the innate dialectical tension in language (the semiotic-symbolic interplay). The speaking

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187 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 216.
188 Brennan refers to this critical objection. Brennan, History After Lacan, p.44.
189 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 215. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.188.)
191 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 113. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.105.)
192 Ibid., p. 119.
subject, being constituted by this very same dialectical tension, continues creating his
language and, consequently, his self. Revolution in Poetic Language reveals a closed system.
There is no other origin of human consciousness than the materialistically conceived
signifying process. This repeats in a more subtle way the basic tenet of Marx’s ‘historical
materialism’. Consciousness is a reflection of matter; matter awakened to self-reflection.
Based on this, Kristeva says that she believes that the individual, despite his particular death,
survives in the human species through his contribution to ‘human thought’.

‘I had the physical sensation that thought was not my own in any way, that, on the
contrary, it went beyond or transcended me, and that it was indestructible. Not “my”
thought: no, an apperception had permeated me with the discontinuous thought of the
species, if I can formulate that inclusion of the finite in that way. Eternity was quite
simply that infinite discontinuity beyond individual death, that is, the thought of the
species – so long as men survive – clashing on the border of every body or thought of
one’s own.’

In general, there is a certain determinism attached to matter. The ‘speaking being’ is
driven by the movements of material contradictions. It is this inner law that incites his
emergence into language in order to ‘survive’.

This early materialism, from theological point of view, is self-referential, self-
explanatory, and totalising. The postulated objective law in nature, history and language, as
the totality of matter, replaces and denies (‘un-necessitates’) any extra-self Transcendence.
Here we can add an important element to Kristeva’s notion of language as a ‘transcendent
function’. Her redefinition of transcendence ideologically is not neutral. Lechte saw in it
only a technical substitution of language for religion’s Transcendence. This early
materialism is more than a passive retreat into language. It is not only the affective
dimension which Kristeva posits as something beyond signs. Kristeva wants to counteract
the ‘evacuation of affect from language’ from a ‘new’ regenerative horizon. The core of her
linguistic soteriology lies outside the technically understood redemptive devices (artworks,
therapeutic listening, reading and writing, etc.) These are rooted in a materialist ‘chora’ as a
meta-resource of ‘meaning’ and ‘life’. It is this ideologically charged relocation of
transcendence which is in explicit conflict with the religious concept of the self:

‘The sole function of our use of the term ‘negativity’ is to designate the process that
exceeds the signifying subject, binding him to the laws of objective struggles in nature
and society.’

193 In Catherine Clément, Julia Kristeva, The Feminine and the Sacred, Columbia University Press,
194 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p.119. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique,
p.110.)
It should be noted that this same ‘law’ operates also in Kristeva’s narcissistic structure. Kristeva’s early formulation on the subject’s separation from the ‘maternal container’ is governed by the same logic of materialist dialectic. Other key concepts of the oeuvre also draw on the dialectical vision of matter, the dialectics of ‘contradiction’. There is a dialectical tension between the mother and the ‘imaginary father’ in the separation process; between the semiotic and the symbolic registers of language; and between the subject in search of identifying with values and a culture to be permanently scrutinised.

Kristeva’s early framework explicitly states that ‘meaning’ and language are pre-programmed biologically. *Matter is always tending towards signification.* History manifests the same dialectical contradictions that are inscribed in matter; and this dialectic is also at work in the case of love, identity, or revolt. Language, just like history, is teleological. Language, from its ‘genotext’ form (language’s semiotic underlying foundation) to its ‘phenotext’ form (language that serves to communicate)\(^{195}\), is a process of unfolding. Already in its earliest ‘semiotic’ moment, ‘it is…already put in place by a biological setup and is always already social and therefore historical.’\(^{196}\) There is a destination to have arrived at: ‘The text is a practice that could be compared to political revolution: the one brings about in the subject what the other introduces into society.’\(^{197}\)

We have seen how the program of self-transcendence is ‘continued’ at the sub-psychic, even sub-biological levels. This self-transcending dynamic, which Kristeva attributes to matter, serves as the basis of a ‘materialist soteriology’. My point is that the oeuvre evolved concentrically from the ‘salvific function’ of the ‘chora-thetic’. The dynamic of renewal and ‘self-transcending’ resurfaces in Kristeva’s other semiotic agents, the therapist, the reader of ‘artworks’, or the creative artist. I suggest reconnecting Kristeva’s early ‘Marxist’ position (‘social revolution through poetic language’) and psychoanalysis through the regenerative function of the ‘chora-thetic’. In this sense the ‘thetic-chora’, Kristeva’s earliest concept, is the unifying element of the oeuvre.

My critique highlights Kristeva’s program of ‘revolt’. The two forms of revolt are ‘revolutionary transformation’ (reflection and transformation through texts) and ‘intimate’ revolt (transformation through psychoanalysis). Both draw upon the ‘chora-thetic’, the ‘semiotic production’ of meaning. I single out three themes in connection with ‘revolt’

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\(^{195}\) Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, pp.86-87
\(^{196}\) Ibid., 68. (Kristeva, *[La révolution du langage poétique]*, p.67.)
\(^{197}\) Ibid., p.17. (Kristeva, *[La révolution du langage poétique]*, p.17.)
which will be central for the theological response in Part Two. These are the role of ‘desire’ to identify with the Other, the subject’s transformation, and freedom from the nihilist economy of culture.

Capitalist society eliminates the free, reflexive subject. It no longer demands a ‘creative’ worker but rather a manipulator. The subject becomes one with this system, subjugated to its ‘Laws’. Consequently, the ‘speaking being’ becomes totally passive, unable to speak either as an individual or as a representative of the core-values of his community. Kristeva’s criticism of culture has developed in an uninterrupted way up to the present. The symptoms of crisis that her most recent reflections describe only complete the early ones with their ‘post-modern shadow’. The question remains the same: how to re-ignite desire for an authentic existence. Obviously, the solutions which Kristeva offers after a full understanding of the ‘exhausted subject’ are very different from the early ones. But the basic logic to re-introduce the subject into its genuine historicity is the same. To unlock this mutism, Kristeva draws on ‘the second overturning’ of the Hegelian ‘negativity’, the Freudian desire. She develops further Marx’s ‘dialectical materialism’. Kristeva makes more concrete the ‘dialectic law’ built into matter. It is Freud’s desire that ‘makes history move’ (psychic and collective alike). ‘Desire’ is the ground of a meaningful history for the subject:

‘Desire is the desire of the Other – which includes the subject as divided and always in movement. Because the subject is desiring, he is the subject of a practice… Both, desire and practice exist solely on the basis of language: desire is produced… by an animal at the mercy of language.”

For Kristeva, historical freedom is guaranteed in so far as the subject is capable of desiring. Desire, as the mobilisation of drives, grounds functioning language and social practice. Kristeva re-articulates social alienation in terms of a dysfunctional ‘chora-thetic’. Her psychoanalysis, by shifting emphasis from ‘historical alienation’ to ‘psychic alienation’, retains the continuity with her early critique of modernity. As we saw at the end of her ‘transition period’, Kristeva defined the ‘exhausted subject’ as an inert (but re-activatable) history-maker. Since then, she increasingly focused on the dissolving individual who is in need of a healing therapy, a new desire for history. It is a desire for subjective orientation in a ‘plural, non-homogeneous history, an era in which each person lives in his own time.’

The problem of nihilism connects Kristeva’s ‘revolutionary’ and the psychoanalytical phases.

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198 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 129.
200 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 131. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.120.)
201 Kristeva Interviews, p.69.
in an important way. The premise of both is that a ‘meaningful’ culture is regenerative for the subject. The values that a culture offers are necessary supports to the ‘speaking being’.

*Revolution in Poetic Language* detected an extreme repression of ‘drives’. This ‘delirium’ is ‘the culmination of the subjugation under the Law of the Signifier in which the living person himself becomes a sign and signifying activity stops.’ What is of theological importance is the recognised need for *interruption*. Kristeva is in search of an interruptive narrative. Following this objective, she develops the early abstract notion of the ‘chora-thetic’ into ‘textual’ and psychoanalytical practices which awaken the subject. ‘Delirium’ denotes both the different forms of alienation in a bourgeois society and the state of psychic suffering when the subject needs to resort to therapy. The early Kristeva proposes ‘poetic language’ or *textual practices* as a resource to overcome the failures of the signifying processes. ‘Texts’ have a *social* function: the production of a new type of subject, one capable of bringing about social transformation. This revolutionary subject *renews his own language*, that is, the consciousness of the subject is redeemed first. Then, through this inner transformation, capitalist and consumer society can be *actively* transformed.

This is a clear deployment of a mingled ‘Marxian-Freudian’ dialectic. It is Kristeva’s alternative transcendence. She insinuates a centre of interruption which is ‘eschatological’, outside present culture:

> ‘The productive process of the text thus belongs not to this established society, but to the social change that is inseparable from instinctual and linguistic change’. (Emphasis added.)

It is this ‘eschatology’ with which theology can enter into a creative dialogue. Kristeva’s later psychoanalytical project seems to have given up this focusing on a general subversion of culture. I highlight this element from her early project as one which remained valid and can be refashioned in the post-modern context. My critique holds in readiness this early ‘eschatology’ as one of the central themes which has to be addressed by a new type of ‘ontological discourse’. Theology can only agree with this early ‘Marxism’, that a disruption of present history is timelier in the post-modern situation than ever before. Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ eschatology related the subject to a *future* which produces ‘a different kind of subject, one capable of bringing about new social relations, and thus joining in the process of

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203 Ibid., pp. 105-106.
204 Ibid., pp. 105. (Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, p. 99.)
capitalism’s subversion.\textsuperscript{205} My study, when criticising the ‘passivity’ of the psychoanalytical horizon, will point back to this early materialist ‘eschatology’ as an unfinished business. It will be raised as part of ‘what is missing’ from secular discourse.

The problem of the ‘redemptive fellowship’ can also be raised in connection with this early materialism. It was Kristeva’s leftist period, which implicitly raised the need for a collective support for the subject. The problem that critics of Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ethic raise, namely that it remains an ethical ideal without any genuine fellowship, can be traced back to this early materialist vision. The ‘redemptive fellowship’ was an unfinished business already at this level. The vision of the person in ‘struggle’ and ‘contradiction’ against the background of matter leaves the subject abandoned. The totalisation of matter, when its dialectic becomes a universal law, does not provide the contemporary atomised subject with sufficient ‘companionship’. In this sense, the attempt of Revolution in Poetic Language to develop further the original Marxist dialectics of ‘social negativity’ from the outset is incomplete. For Marx, the proletarian as a man of desire and lack is always in struggle and contradiction with his social reality. Through praxis he has to realise the ‘total man’, mastered and un-conflicted. According to Marx, man is above all ‘mastery’, a ‘solution to the conflict’.\textsuperscript{206} Kristeva’s psychoanalytic worldview is deeply embedded in this dialectic. The person (the psychic space itself) is a product of conflicts. At the same time, it should be noted, Kristeva is critical of this dialectic inasmuch as she is not satisfied with Marx’s ‘unitary subject’. Nevertheless the problem of loneliness, the lack of companionship, as a problem for the ‘exhausted subject’, remains:

‘It remains an untouchable unity, in conflict with others but never in conflict with ‘himself’; he remains, in a sense, neutral. He is either an oppressing or oppressed subject, a boss or an exploited worker or the boss of exploited workers, but never a subject in process/on trial who is related to a process – itself brought to light by dialectical materialism – in nature and society.’\textsuperscript{207}

My last critical objection here is that the contemporary subject cannot be addressed by the abstract agency of matter. A more personal narrative is required, which responds to the need of genuine community. My critique holds this also in readiness for Part Two. The above connections show that Kristeva’s materialism as an ‘ontological program’ is by no means an ideological archaism. Making this materialism a central focus for my critique is indeed an essential strategy.

\textsuperscript{205} Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, pp. 105. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.100.)
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., p. 138.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., p. 139. (Kristeva, La révolution du langage poétique, p.127.)
2.2.3 Conclusions

Examining Kristeva’s concept of the self-transcending subject has shown that Kristeva’s materialism is not a closed ideological narrative. The thematic development that followed Revolution in Poetic Language shows that this heavy ‘material dialectic’ was transformed when love became the dominant theme. Because of the integration of the early materialist world-view, it can be rightly stated that Kristeva’s founding materialism is a complex ‘ontological program’. It is upon this that the program of the self-transcending subject is based. In the final outcome, the ‘chora-thetic’ emerges as a complex historical narrative. ‘Marx’ and ‘Freud’ are those speakers whom theological critique needs to make interlocutors when evaluating Kristeva. Owing to the ontological suppression of ‘grace’, Kristeva’s program remains in a dialectical tension with religion. Being the ground of Kristeva’s projects, and because of the retained critical link with religion, we can indeed speak of her materialism as a unifying element of the oeuvre.

My focus on Kristeva’s early materialism was deliberate. This materialism was developed in her revolutionary period, her confident post-structuralist critique of modernity. The analysis of her ‘founding materialism’ shows a stark contrast with our preceding analysis on the ‘exhausted subject’. The latter showed the expiry of those methods which were closely attached to Kristeva’s ‘confident materialism’.

My working hypothesis for the forthcoming analysis is as follows. The conflict between the ethical purpose of the examined ‘historical narratives’ (‘to redeem the subject’) and their ‘expiry’ in the present (the ‘exhausted subject’) necessarily lead to ‘a cultural mourning’. At the first level of this ‘mourning’ it will be interesting to see how Kristeva sees the post-modern ‘exhaustion’. What support can her ‘ontological subtexts’ give in understanding the subject in a ‘post-religious’ and ‘post-revolutionary’ milieu? Besides, part of my working hypothesis is that in this ‘cultural mourning’ the subject itself needs to be questioned and listened to. What is his account of his own ‘exhaustion’? As we saw in Analysis I, The Exhausted subject’, the failed ‘revolutionary narratives’ left the person abandoned. How has the subject of modernity emerged from the ruins of his ‘expired’ narratives? Is there a connection between the ‘materialism’ of Kristeva’s regime and this ‘mourning’? What is the prime object of the subject’s ‘mourning’ for his past? Can it be summarized in a central image or symbol?
2.3 ANALYSIS III – ‘MOURNING’

My study has analyzed the ‘exhausted subject’ from two aspects. The first analysis showed the historical ‘exhaustion’ of the subject of modernity and post-modernity. The second analysis pointed to the founding ontological narrative beyond Kristeva’s project, of ‘dialectical materialism’. My study highlighted this as an important ideological narrative of ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ and pointed to its ‘expiry’. The ‘exhausted subject’ was left in a vacuum. This forthcoming analysis identifies a specific historical element of the suffering of the ‘exhausted subject’. It turns out that the ‘speaking being’, as a consequence of failed redemption, is mourning for its lost religious past.

As already argued, Kristeva’s psychoanalytical shift made ‘psychic suffering’ and the healing of the subject central. However, in Kristeva’s theories, the loss of the Christian past is never regarded as a structural cause of the subjective crisis. My study presents the self’s lost Christian past as a loss which has resulted in an unanswered existential mourning. If this suggestion is correct, then Kristeva’s relationship with Christian texts is given a fuller context. It can reveal that the ‘ontological mourning’ of the post-modern subject underlies her extensive use of Christian imagery. McAfee notes that Kristeva writes her autobiography as a collective odyssey.

My work presents the underlying ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject as an objective content in Kristeva’s novels. Are we not witnessing a new claim upon ‘grace’ which was excluded from her materialism by the post-modern subject? Comprehending the full scope of ‘psychic suffering’ is a crucial strategic aim for my critique. I expect it can help to resolve the apologetic deadlock which the ‘head on collision’ with Kristeva’s materialism created. It will allow discussion to be raised onto a more ‘symbolic’ level. If this step is indeed possible, this will allow a move from the classic ‘ontological tension’ to a renewed ‘ontological discourse’ centred on the symbols of Love.

2.3.1 The Significance of Kristeva’s Novels: Mourned and Un-mourned Dimensions of the Post-modern Self

Kristeva’s novels are paid little or no attention. My critique deliberately turns to her fictional writings. In this writer’s view, they provide a critique with a fuller understanding of

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208 McAfee, Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship, p.57.
the exhaustion of the subject. The specific data that they reveal for a theological critique cannot be derived from Kristeva’s theories. On the one hand, a theological reading reveals an objective ‘mourning’ for the Christian past by the post-modern self. On the other hand, this ‘melancholic mourning’ (melancholic because it is not conscious, it is unfinished and unaided) shows a significant contrast to the claim that psychoanalysis gives a full description of the subjective crisis. This discrepancy is true despite the fact that Kristeva indeed gives a penetrating analysis of ‘psychic suffering’.

In order to highlight the novels as historical records of an overlooked ‘religious crisis’, I emphasise this discrepancy. Kristeva makes the ambitious claim that psychoanalysis is the ultimate response to the impasses of modernity. My study disputes the standpoint of Kołoszyc that the oeuvre is based on the conviction that the crisis of meaning is not curable, even by psychoanalysis.209 For Kristeva, it is psychoanalysis through which meaning can be recovered, though ‘meaning’ has to be understood in a dynamic and not a static way. She presents psychoanalysis as the best systemic understanding of ‘violent’ nihilism in culture. The ideal of a universally valid value-horizon has never been given up by her project. Psychoanalysis, Kristeva claims, produces a renewed, non-repressive ethics. It reformulates the moral imperative by unmasking how violence is inherent in human desire which needs to be counteracted.210 Furthermore, psychoanalysis is a more successful response to ‘otherness’, as it offers a more inclusive approach than religion which welcomes the other only on condition of accepting its moral code.211 Psychoanalysis can synthesise better the pluralisms of the age because it recognises the heterogeneous divisions in the person and challenges metaphysical dichotomies between the body and the spirit.212 It is also more responsive to the problem of cultural uprootedness, or the loss of traditions, than other discourses.213 Kristeva also posits psychoanalysis as a ‘discourse that is not closed’. It can integrate the living discourses on the subject, it is a continuous communication with a person’s existential questions.214 This shows that Kristeva regards psychoanalysis as the master discourse of the ‘exhausted subject’ who has lost ‘meaning’. The reason my critique focuses on the novels is that they unearth crucial data about the ‘exhausted’ subject which remain overlooked despite

211 Ibid., pp.40-41.
212 Ibid., pp.69-70
213 Ibid., pp.86.147.
214 Ibid.,198.
the above objectives. Paying attention to the historical experience of Kristeva’s protagonists will lead attention to the problem of how the self itself is ‘grounded’.

Kristeva’s novels, The Samurai (1990), The Old Man and the Wolves (1991), Possessions (1996), and Murder in Byzantium (2004) are not merely novelistic variations of the concerns of the theoretical works of the same period. They provide my critique with an aspect of the ‘speaking being’ which remains hidden on the theoretical level. It puts O’Grady’s observation, namely that Kristeva takes over religious texts, phenomenon and concepts primarily from the Catholic tradition, into a fresh context. 215 The presence of ‘theological’ imagery in her novels is still ignored in literature on Kristeva. My critique attributes a central significance to these fictional writings in view of intensifying Kristeva’s theories at crucial points of the oeuvre. 216

Kristeva’s understanding of ‘exhaustion’ stays strictly at the level of psychic suffering. My critique insists on going beyond this level and stresses the underlying ‘religious’ dimension of this subjective crisis, which is a ‘full’ or ‘ontic’ crisis of the modern self. I support this claim by the intriguing surfacing of a ‘personal mourning’ in Kristeva’s novels. Her father’s lost religious world becomes the centre of her general demonstration of the crisis. In the novels the ‘speaking being’ emerges as a genuine cultural symbol, and this symbolism says something more, beyond its Freudian references.

It is crucial to see that Kristeva’s protagonists live in a post-Christian world. The themes, to which the novels devote special attention, can all be linked to the problem of the Christian past. First, I highlight, as the dominant themes of her novels, psychic suffering and the counter-economy with which Kristeva confronts psychic alienation, revolt. As Keltner points out, the search of the ‘detective’, or the autobiographical ‘I’, confronts what the spectacle of society represses, transforming its ‘spectators’ into seekers of truth. 217 The integrity of the psychic space and the ‘society of the spectacle’ 218 are in stark contrast. We can summarize the main critical directions of the novels as follows. Kristeva describes a

216 Nooy draws attention to this correspondence in comparing Kristeva’s detective novel Possessions (1996) with her theoretical work, The Sense and non-Sense of Revolt (1996). In both of them the crisis of meaning is examined in terms of a ‘power vacuum’ in culture. Kristeva’s novel points to the post-communist Bulgaria in the late twentieth century as an example where the symbolic order is dangerously weakened. The dilemma in Sense and non-Sense of Revolt is how to revolt against the corruption of the Symbolic Order, when ‘authority’ cannot be identified any longer. See, de Nooy, ‘How to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs’, in The Kristeva Reader, p. 114.
complex passion-drama of the speaking being. The overall cause of this suffering is that the individual is deprived of any means of voicing his pain within an inter-subjective space (Chanter, Ziarek).\(^{219}\) Events in the novels unfold in this general medium of suffering. *The Old Man and the Wolves* describes psychic destruction, anxieties and defencelessness. *Murder in Byzantium* shows how compulsory aggression, corruption and ‘serial killers’ control public history. These two novels expound in great detail how the ‘Symbolic Order’ is emptied by the forces of a violent nihilism. Kristeva’s first novel, *The Samurai*, started an internal analysis of the ‘society of the spectacle’. This work is still relatively close to Kristeva’s ‘revolutionary period’. The ‘exhausted subject’, in its full impasse, culminates in *The Old Man and the Wolves* and *Murder in Byzantium*. The description of the passion of the human self becomes most ‘internal’ in Kristeva’s latest novel, *Possessions*. In it, the question of the broken self – language – world (reality) relationship is raised most intensely. *Possessions* shows the subject in an almost ultimate defencelessness.

Underlying the revolt against the ‘homogenising’ nihilism of ‘Santa Varvara’, the symbolic space of the nihilist crisis, there is a desperate struggle for a language to name violence, and a call for the counter-economy of love. If the subject cannot tell his passion story, he is absorbed into the death drives of culture. Keltner highlights that the residents of the ‘spectacular city’ become virtual, spectacular subjects, submerged in the destructive manipulations of ‘Santa Varvara’. With Keltner, we can identify their ‘exhaustion’ as the deterioration of the goal of personal and social life. ‘Life’ in this city becomes an uncritical imitation of competing images for the sake of social power, gained by whatever means, deception, violence, crime.\(^{220}\) ‘What might one do in such a city? Nothing but buy and sell goods and images, which amounts to the same thing, since both are dull, shallow symbols.’\(^{221}\) The struggling ‘speaking being’ is engulfed by an all pervasive ‘violence’\(^{222}\). It is only a matter of time before he becomes a ‘false self’.

‘Santa Varvara’ also touches upon the theme of the lack of the regenerative dynamic of human communities. Individual suffering shows up the capitalist, spectacle-induced societies of the West. Margaroni draws attention to the fact that, in these individual passions, Kristeva


\(^{221}\) Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, p.27.

\(^{222}\) In *Possessions*, everyone is capable of having murdered the decapitated Gloria Hanson. In *Murder in Byzantium*, Sebastian Chrest-Jones, a secret Byzantine scholar violently in search of his own roots, murders his mistress and disappears. Serial killer Number 8 is purifying the city of the members of the New Pantheon, a corrupt religious mafia. In *The Old Man and the Wolves* is a mass metamorphosis of its residents into actual and potential, *virtual* criminals. In Keltner, *Kristeva, Thresholds*, p.134.
points to the key ethical challenges we confront today: immigration, terrorism, the increase of violence, and the political tension between ‘clashing civilisations’. This is the objective situation when, on the one hand, Arendt’s ideal of the bios, the free space for self-expression and life, acted out as an authentic narrative, has totally deteriorated, while at the same time, it remains a valid program.

‘In the meantime, Santa Varvara expands in all directions. Everywhere? But where exactly? You want to locate Santa Varvara on a map? But it’s impossible, you know. How can one locate a global village? Santa Varvara is in Paris, New York, Moscow, Sofia, London, Plovdiv, and in Santa Varvara, too, of course – it’s everywhere, I tell you, everywhere where foreigners like you and I try to survive, we the inauthentic wanderers searching for who knows what truth, against all the money-soaked mafias peddling the easy way of life in this crime novel run wild, this spectacle still called for now – but who knows for how much longer – a “society.” The nonstop exhibition of intimacy, televising of values, and execution of our passions.'

My point is that it is insufficient to read these novels solely as the critique of consumer society. Underneath the mourning of the loss of a genuine humane fellowship, the relationship of the self to its Christian past emerges as a central problem. The ‘detective story’ of Possessions and Murder in Byzantium can be read as a meticulous search for this lost support.

2.3.2 Mourning the Father’s Religious World and the Ontological Anxiety of the Post-modern Self

In her theoretical writings, Kristeva already offers a version of ‘mourning’ for the Christian past. It is combined with her reflections on the loss of her early grand narrative, revolutionary Marxism. This level of mourning, both in the theories and in the novels, is successfully completed. Kristeva’s intellectual ‘mourning’ for religion is manifest in her critique of modernity. Speaking of the ‘crisis of religion’ is always part of her attempt to draw attention to the failure of secularism in Western culture which, together with metaphysical thought, attempts to fix language and meaning within one Truth. Kristeva mourns the disappearance only of this old conception of religious meaning, meaning as fixed, ultimate truth.

Margaroni, ‘Recent Work on and by Julia Kristeva’, p.795.


Koloszyc, Religion, Atheism, p.399-400.
However, the ‘autobiographical I’ tells a different story. Especially Kristeva’s *Old Man and the Wolves* raises the idea that the loss of religion is something more than the intellectually ‘mournable loss’ of a previously effective cultural discourse. It is here that the novels radically depart from the intellectual mourning of the theories. On the one hand, the fictions complement the integration of the Christian discourse on love as the origin of psychoanalytical thought into Kristeva’s project. On the other hand, however, the novels show that this ‘intellectual’ mourning for the Christian past remains problematic and unfinished. In the early novels the problem of ‘expired’ religion is already present. It reaches its peak in *Murder in Byzantium*. This latter, through the story of Sebastian Chrest-Jones, a Byzantine scholar, shows most palpably the personal pain of being uprooted from, and yearning for, reconnection with his Christian family past. My interpretation of the novels here goes contrary to Kristeva’s. She offers the genre of the ‘detective novel’ as a deliberate narrative of revolt. She regards it as a metaphysical voyage which is the counterpoint of the virtual, the explosion of death drives. Kristeva believes in the full unmasking of ‘Santa Varvara’ by the reader’s initiation into the ‘unknown time of others’, and the ‘acceleration of the narrative’. She believes in the novel as a genre for disrupting the linear monologues of culture.\(^\text{226}\) My point is that, underneath these ‘Socratic’ attempts to stimulate critical thinking, another type of ‘dispossession of the self’ is taking place. While the ‘voice of the psychoanalyst’ gives expression to the objective loss of a cultural discourse (‘the humanism of Christianity’) and its psychological consequences, an independent ‘meta-narrative’ emerges within this conscious program. This level shows both the protagonists and the readers with an unredeemed and un-reflected story.

The novels show a hidden symbolism as they are rewriting Christ’s passion without Christ. This is a lonely suffering, when the ‘speaking being’ is engulfed in an unnameable passion. My reading stresses the hidden ‘story of the Cross’ in Kristeva as the lost identity narrative of the subject. The suffering of the post-modern self, Kristeva’s autobiographical mourning for her father, and the crisis of community coincide with such an intensity that they cannot be confined to Kristeva’s conscious intention as a writer. Underlying the crisis of European identity which, according to Keltner, is at the forefront of Kristeva’s work,\(^\text{227}\) we find the sufferings of the post-Christian self. This ‘cultural mourning’ cannot be described by means of psychoanalysis. No wonder that this is the point where Kristeva’s ‘personal mourning’ overwrites the conscious levels. It is a hidden ‘theological’ dialogue between the self and its ‘unfinished’ (unexplored) Christian past. My study posits it as the ‘ontic’ dimension of post-modern alienation.

\(^\text{227}\) Keltner, *Kristeva, Thresholds*, p.133.
For this unnamed suffering Christ is the missing reference. Kristeva brings the symbolic allusions but never makes the connection. In The Old Man and the Wolves, the lead protagonist, Septicus Clarus, “the Old Man” (the persona is Kristeva’s tribute to her father) confronts the ‘spectacle’ and, in a Christ-like way, is killed in this rebellion. It is of deep significance that Kristeva draws a symbolic parallel between his suffering and the ‘Man of Sorrows’:

‘And though he never spoke of it, he made himself sick and silent with an otherworldly suffering completely beyond the ken of the wolves. I find myself wondering if he didn’t share that suffering with God. People lost no time in offering him the usual gift proposed to orphans, the pride of those in distress: the proposition that “God is love”. But he didn’t bite. He was more at home with Ovid in exile and the morbid songs of Tibullus, lover of Delia: a world of change and metamorphosis in which a new Messiah was scarcely credible. He loved to read the books written in that period of transition, and to discuss its ideas, myths, and morals. Yet he didn’t reject the God who was his one and only inheritance. He even, unobtrusively, turned Him into his secret home: for he had no other, apart from his Latin books.’

The ‘Professor’ or ‘the Scholasticus’ is a deeply ‘Christian’ figure. Kristeva’s personal ‘cultural mourning’ over the lost past reaches its peak in his person. He was the last one who, through his erudition and faith, could name Him. This naming would have been the last chance of a culture which lives with the loss of ‘God’ without the chance to name this loss, as culture had lost God before it could have named Him. This is the theological understanding of the tragic melancholy upon which post-modernity is erected. A seemingly playful culture lives with the suppressed (‘never born’) memory of the ‘Father’.

With the Professor’s death, ‘God’ is indeed dead and available only through nostalgic fragments. In The Old Man and the Wolves, Kristeva projects her personal story onto the father figure of the ‘Professor of Latin’. In the ‘Old Man’s’ faith, Kristeva’s unbelief mingles with her father’s free (Christian) mind. This is a genuine ‘toccata for the forever Foreigner-Christ’, through the image of the autobiographical father. It is worth placing side by side the ‘fiction’ and the ‘autobiographical’, they are closely interwoven:

‘The whole range of artifices was henceforth available to me. Father had passed on to me his God, the same as the Professor’s, in the logical form of an infinity of languages. He opened up that galaxy to me as if foreign words were going to play the

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part of seraphim for me, flocks of angels helping me soar through secret skies. Did he ever suspect this celestial teaching of his would drive me away for good, from him and the Professor and all the rest from places, bodies, and roots? Perhaps not.  

‘My father, a faithful man whose beautiful voice added to the Saint Nedelia church choir, would bring me to the cathedral before dawn so that I could take communion without being spotted.’  

(The Old Man and the Wolves)

The ‘Father-less’ self, just as its extension, the borderless city of Santa Varbara, becomes ungrounded. In the novel only the Old Man noticed the existence of the ‘wolves’ and dared speak out about the spreading evil. With the death of the Professor, with the loss of the world of faith, a means of resistance and rebellion is lost. Kristeva, at important points, confirms the power of resistance in the orthodox world of her father.

‘My father, though, would linger with the Professor amid old churches and Roman ruins dating back to the first century B.C., perhaps even to the third or fourth…In the early days of the invasion those secret places served as places of refuge. Until the wolves found their way there.’

(The Old Man and the Wolves)

‘I grew up in the shadow of icons and for a long time observed the faith of my father, an Orthodox Christian and seminarian; he cultivated faith, it seemed to me, as an intimate revolt against Communist atheism and as an aesthetic religion.’

(Autobiographical recollection from Hatred and Forgiveness)

This father-symbolism intensifies the governing thesis of my work. The thesis that the ‘exhausted subject’ is the underlying problem of Kristeva’s theoretical writings at the level of the novels occurs as follows. It is the ‘exhausted’ Christian self, uprooted from its Christian past, that emerges as the underlying problem of the ‘speaking being’. This suffering becomes visible in the voiceless pain of the characters, which is often mistaken for Kristeva’s pessimism. Though she objected to her novels being described as pessimistic, this pessimism, for the outside observer, is nevertheless there. While agreeing with Kristeva’s rejection of the charge of a cultural pessimism, to do justice to her readers, I explain this tone of the novels differently. As a historical observation, the novels also give voice to the pain of ‘ontological’ or religious mourning which the ‘exhausted subject’ suffers. This is the very point where the autobiographical ‘I’ can be read as a collective

\[230\] Kristeva, The Old Man and the Wolves, p.166.
\[231\] Julia Kristeva Interviews, p.138.
\[232\] Ibid., p.138, and ‘Europe Divided: Politics, Ethics, Religion’, where Kristeva also evaluates the contemplative power of the Orthodox tradition as a resource to counteract ‘productive freedom’. In Kristeva, The Crisis of the European Subject, pp. 111-162.
\[234\] ‘Atheism’, in Hatred and Forgiveness, p.165.
history. Its ground is our universal relatedness to the ‘father’. Kristeva herself allows this more ‘open reading’ of The Old Man and the Wolves.

‘In contrast to The Samurai, my second novel is anchored in a pain to which allegory aims to give significance without fixing it, instead irradiating it, having it vibrate, in an oneiric way, according to each reader’s framework of ordeals and choices.’\(^{236}\) (Emphasis added.)

If pain is a universal metaphor, it allows one to connect the deep personal mourning for the loss of the father’s world of faith with the collective significance of this ‘mourning’. Murder in Byzantium continues the personal mourning of The Old Man and the Wolves,\(^{237}\) now reporting Sebastian Chrest’s search for his family past. As a meta-connection between the two, ‘Byzantium’, with its external and internal landscapes, is a further historical description of the Old Man’s lost world. The buried memories of Christianity by now form a completed ‘ontological past’. In my reading, this detailed mourning of Byzantine history makes the figure of the Professor the symbol of the Christian self which underlies ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. This ongoing mourning is clearly confirmed by an interview from Kristeva’s recent work, This Incredible Need to Believe:

‘At times it seems that certain parts of your text could have been written by a Christian. How do you feel about such a remark? Why does Christ’s suffering touch you so? Your comment would have pleased my father immensely. A member of the Orthodox faith, he studied theology before he studied medicine. And the proper noun Kristev means “of the cross”.’\(^{238}\)

This time and again surfacing of the ‘personal loss’ confirms that the symbolic centre of this ‘mourning’ is the Cross. Is Kristeva struggling with naming her ‘name’, as the above quote shows? My point is that in the novels the Cross (‘Kristev’) emerges as a ‘meta-theme’ of the oeuvre. My critique identifies it as the genuine object of Kristeva’s ‘metaphysical’ and meta-historical quest. ‘Actually, Murder in Byzantium is at once a metaphysical detective novel, a historical novel, a lyrical narrative, and a social satire: the ego is broken down into multiple facets.’\(^{239}\) In the following chapter, my study will examine whether Kristeva’s relationship to religion confirms that the ‘Cross’ is indeed an emerging symbol for naming post-modern suffering. In the novels, on a ‘meta-level’, the recognition is being formed, that the Christian Cross is our universal symbol to name our lost ability to believe in the ‘loving Third party’, the ground of our ability to love.

\(^{236}\) Kristeva Interviews, p.164.

\(^{237}\) See Ibid., pp.138-139.

\(^{238}\) Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.84.

\(^{239}\) ‘Murder in Byzantium’, in Julia Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.275.
The image of the self in *Possessions*, Kristeva’s latest fiction, ‘speaks’ of this underlying uprootedness. The description of post-modern loneliness and isolation becomes the symbol of the post-Christian migrant:

‘It’s as though I were inhabited by another person, vague but impossible to get rid of, whom I’d rather ignore but who in fact possesses me; someone who likes these dirty streets, the painfully slow pedestrians jostling one another to give themselves the impression they’re in a hurry to get somewhere, the skyscrapers reflecting only emptiness.’

The economy of the novels insinuates a possible new turn in Kristeva’s theories, when the re-integration of the religious sacred excluded by her materialism will be attempted, at least symbolically. In her theories we are kept reminded that ‘Christian amorous discourse’ is the historical origin of the humanism of the Enlightenment, particularly that of the humanism of psychoanalysis. My critique claims that to the ‘cultural mourning’ of Kristeva’s Freudianism the dimension of the ‘un-mourned relationship to grace’ is to be added. One of her major critics, Kelly Oliver, also senses an ambiguity in Kristeva’s theories, and touches upon the possibility of ‘mourning the religious Sacred’. ‘Could Kristeva be nostalgic for the power of the old sacred?’ Not only her critics (e.g., Anna Smith), but Kristeva herself answers that her ‘materialist politics of radical negativity’ (Sjöholm) do not allow any nostalgia about ‘grace’. Just the opposite, *Tales of Love* (1983) was still a confident reaffirming of the need for a post-Christian orientation to question ‘the discourse that can take the place of this religious discourse which is cracking now.’ Yet, Oliver herself retains a degree of suspicion, as if in a side-remark: ‘In her best moments, Kristeva suggests that it means that psychoanalysis fills the cracks of religion. In her worst moments…she is nostalgic, mourning the death of God.’ My point is that what Kristeva’s feminist criticism misreads as her ‘worst nostalgic moments’ actually manifests a collective level of mourning, the post-Christian trauma of our culture. Kristeva is ‘the melancholy mourner’ of the lost ‘effective’ religious symbolism in Europe. *Murder in Byzantium* is the collective history of the ‘post-Christian subject’, that of post-metaphysical consciousness itself. Sebastian Chrest-Jones, the ‘post-modern Narcissus’, is the extraterrestrial of ‘Byzantium’, the lost place of origin:

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241 Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, p.132.
243 Rosalind Coward’s interview with Kristeva, in Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, 132.
244 Ibid., p.132.
‘You properly are if – and only if – you have a home that awaits you at the end of your voyage. But now? Who is he, Sebastian C/J, where is he if Santa Varvara is now everywhere – and what if he is a homeless person lost in Time?’

The theological reading goes even further on ‘homelessness in Time’ by stating that it is an ontological wound, which is not listened to in the Freudian framework. My point is that the theme of the self’s yearning for a stable identity serves as a basis for addressing together Kristeva’s materialism and her relation to the Christian tradition.

In the novels, the ‘ontological loss’ of the self, Christ /‘Tradition’ as the real other of the self, is an ultimate loss. It is this which results in the nostalgia of the self seeking to rediscover its origins. The latter, however seminally, is the underlying theme of Kristeva’s fictional writings from the first novel, The Samurai, onwards. From the perpetuated nostalgic yearning, which is a product of ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’, there is no possible reconnection of the ‘speaking being’ with his loss. This nostalgia has to be seen as a ‘semiotic’ counter-claim underneath the ‘symbolic’ surface of a confident materialism:

‘I also remember the heavy rose scents you find only in Florence, steeped in the burning but ever noble sun that warms up the sap like a skilful perfumer. Rosalba would pick huge bunches of roses, sometimes creamy white, sometimes crimson or scarlet, and we’d go and place them before the Virgin Mary. You must know about that – the magic of icons, the blissful little girl lighting her candle and waiting for the Madonna’s eyelids to open and the Mother of God look at her. But perhaps, not – you’ve probably always been super-rational.

(…)The roses laid before the Virgin Mary – so diaphanous, so sad, so regal too – were my resurrection. But only a temporary one… (…) I haven’t gone back to the church. Not yet. But I have looked through the Sermons of Saint Bernard, and in them I seemed to find my Fiesole again, my Rosalba, and the delicious faintness that used to overtake me when I imagined myself suffering the Passion in my own flesh – I hadn’t got an ounce of humility in my whole body! Anyhow, theology still strikes me as the only thing worth reading.’

In Thérèse Mon Amour (2008), an indefinable genre between fiction, autobiography and academic work, Kristeva gives voice to a collective loss which connects generations in the ‘shadow of icons’.

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245 Kristeva, Murder in Byzantium, p.175.
‘Autant vous le dire tout de suite, je n’ai pas la foi. Comme tout le monde, j’ai été baptisée, mais je n’ai jamais entendu parler de Jésus à table… une famille laïque classique comme il y en a beaucoup en France.’247

Kristeva’s ‘mourning’ for the Christian past of the subject is complemented by her monographs on women genii (Arendt, Klein and Colette). These studies constitute an intermediary genre between her theories and novels. I refer to them as supports from within Kristeva’s project that the ‘ontological mourning’ of the self should be taken seriously. Kristeva’s two main intellectual heroines, Hannah Arendt and Melanie Klein, are both presented in the monographs as ‘mourners’ of the Judeo-Christian past. Whereas in the novels we encounter an anonymous story-telling, in Kristeva’s trilogy the ontological pain of the self is named by her heroines, and is a historical one. Melanie Klein reveals that the prime-object of psychoanalysis is the identity crisis of the historical self:

‘Human beings are less “identities” than journeys, as they are always in transit between a memory that is repressed to varying degrees and a conscience that dominates to varying degrees, as Freud was patient enough to explain to us. Freud developed what some have called his personal novels when he proposed that, ever since the glaciation that stacked psychoses onto neuroses, homo religiosus has survived in the modern people that we are by journeying surreptitiously into our psychic structures, dreams, and symptoms.248

Kristeva’s ‘Kleinian-novel’ especially asserts that, beyond the psychoanalytical interest in the self as the uprooted migrant of history, we find the quest for the ‘lost face of the Father’. This is a quest for the ‘Loving Third’ on a collective level, as the lost epicentre of culture:

‘The Freudian vision has been influenced by the renewed loss of a settled way of life that humanity experienced during the twentieth century. Technology and politics have increasingly detached us from our natural habitats and have turned us into nomads once again. To persecuted political exiles are added the migrants of the global economy and the navigators who use satellite television or the Internet. Along with the questioning of authority, the law, and values – which has been interpreted as an attack on the role of the father – the loss of habitat that characterises our fate undermines the original place, assaults maternal support, and threatens to destroy identity itself.’249

It is worth bearing in mind that Arendt and Klein, in the context of modernity, also made central the problem of mourning for the lost religious past. I point to them in this connection

247 ‘I might as well tell you straight away, I do not have any faith. Like everybody else I was baptised but I never heard Jesus spoken about at table…a classic unbelieving family of which there are many in France.’ My translation from Julia Kristeva, Thérèse mon Amour, récit, Fayard, Paris 2008, p.17.
249 Ibid., p.195.
as Kristeva’s ‘religious-subtexts’. If we re-actualise their agenda in the post-modern context, the ‘mourning’ for religion by Arendt and Klein can be seen as a timely issue. They realised that coming to terms with their ‘Jewishness’ was essential, and attempted to integrate this loss. This integration was partly successful, partly unfinished. Arendt and Klein witness to the fact that the self’s lost religious past is a trauma which needs to be mourned. Their historical solution showed that the subject, when uprooted from its religious tradition, responds with the re-construction of its identity. In the case of Arendt and Klein, the response is internalising the ‘absent god’, the lost reference of their generation.\footnote{250} The point is that they confirm the presence of ‘expired’ religion as a hidden ground of the self.

‘It is entirely inaccurate to assert, as some have done, that psychoanalysis took the place of this absent god to whom Melanie was “converted” as were so many other secular Jews before her. On the contrary, it was by accompanying the catastrophe of meaning as reflected in psychoanalytic experience that Melanie Klein, like some others [Arendt], was able to articulate the fundamentals of nihilism and of religious belief and depression as well as reparation in an effort to deconstruct them all.’\footnote{251}

For our study, their historical reflection is important as they confirm that there is continuity between the self and the ‘God-question’. That is another matter, if Arendt’s and Klein’s intellectual mourning, similar to that of Kristeva, is a repression of the loss of God as an ontological trauma. For Arendt’s generation, on the one hand, it was a time for coming to terms with the ‘loss of religion’, on the other hand, when developing their answers, they were distracted by the confidence of their discourses. Neither Arendt nor Klein experienced the ‘exhaustion’ of modernity’s critical narratives which they articulated. Their agenda to understand their changed relationship with religion is continued symbolically in Kristeva’s novels. Their originating problem, ‘homelessness’ in culture and in their parent’s religion, reaches a new climax in the post-modern condition.

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To come to a conclusion, the novels reveal, closely connected with the ‘mourned’ Christian past, the ontological anxieties of the post-modern subject. It is a suffering in its own right which was not there in modernity nor in early post-modernity. As an objective suffering, in its particularity, it challenges both the syntheses that Kristeva and theology achieved regarding these past epochs.

\footnote{250}{See Chapter 1, ‘Jewish Families, European Stories’, in Kristeva, Melanie Klein, p.19.} \footnote{251}{Ibid., p.19.}
This non-assessed suffering, with its novelty, can bring Kristeva and theology onto a common platform. The challenge for Kristeva’s ‘closed’ materialism is as follows. In order to have access to the ‘ontological trauma’ of the post-Christian self,252 Kristeva’s psychoanalysis should revise its methodological principle. This founding principle says that ‘psychoanalysis needs to traverse religious experience and not remain within the original dynamics of faith’. My study argues that there is a new type of ‘God’ question and God-language emerging when sufficient attention is paid to the anxieties of the ‘post-religious subject’. This situation requires a genuine translation between the psychoanalytic ‘knowledge’ of psychic suffering and the ‘ontological-passion’ of the subject argued by theology. Psychoanalysis needs to make the effort to understand the reality of the self’s ‘ontic’ suffering, that there is a genuine metaphysical hunger for ‘remembering’ ‘graced origins’. The same applies to the religious position. That the self, uprooted from its Christian past, is a traumatised self has to be translated for the psychoanalytical position. However, on the side of theology, there has to be a parallel listening to the ‘post-Christian story’ (or ‘post-Christendom’ story) of the self, told by psychoanalysis. It is through this interdisciplinary listening that systematic theology is elevated from ‘theological monologism’ and transcends its ‘classic’ metaphysical discourses.

My suggestion is to make central the problem of the ungrounded post-modern self, which both ‘classic’ theological metaphysics and its Kristevan replacement have ignored, but both can share. In this way, theology will meet Kristeva’s ideal when ‘religion goes beyond religion without emptying out the “positive” content of the Judeo-Christian tradition’.253 But it should be true in reverse. A way needs to be found where psychoanalysis operates within the dynamics of faith, too. My conclusion is that it can lead to a dialectic exchange, when what Kristeva says of the ‘loss of the father’ in the psychoanalytical sense can also be raised as the loss of the ‘graced’ grounding of the self. This can lead to a theologically animated discourse when theology expounds its own discourse on the crisis: the loss of the post-modern self is not only that of the psychological father, but of the Father of religion, too. The novels suggest articulating this shared discourse through the metaphor of the ‘loving Third party’. It can be the common denominator between the different ‘ideological’ paradigms.

252 It is expressed brilliantly in the parallel Kristeva draws in Murder in Byzantium between the cultural ‘uprootedness’ of the crusaders and the terrorists of 9/11. All identities have already entered the new era of a cultural migrant.

253 Kołoszyc, Religion, Atheism, and the Crisis of Meaning, p.274.
2.3.3 ‘Mourning the Father’s Hope’ – The Loss of the ‘Graced’ Loving Third

It is possible to relate Kristeva’s ‘personal mourning’ to her early reflection on faith, the analysis of Holbein’s *Dead Christ* in *Black Sun* (1989). In a sense, this was Kristeva’s intellectual response to the loss of the religious horizon, supported by her early confident materialism. What was answered there by the adult mind, as Kristeva’s autobiographical reflections show, is the ‘loss of faith’ in the experience of the teenage self, and the loss of her father’s religious world.

‘My father, a faithful man whose beautiful voice added to the Saint Nedelia church choir, would bring me to the cathedral before dawn so that I could take communion without being spotted. I eventually rebelled, not because I was bothered by the dissidence of the act but because of universal reason, which is, I still find, harder to understand and to embody than faith is.’

‘I knelt before the icon of the Virgin that sat enthroned above my bed and attempted to gain access to a faith that my secular education did not combat as treat ironically or simply ignore. I tried to imagine myself in that enigmatic other world, full of gentle suffering and mysterious grace, revealed to me by Byzantine iconography.’

My point is that in the meditation in *Black Sun* it is not only the death of the individual that is faced. The novels shed light on the fact that Holbein’s *Dead Christ* is not only about making death approachable, but is also an attempt to mourn the (autobiographical) ‘father’s lost Hope’. Kristeva’s *Dead Christ*, in terms of an intense intellectual mourning, is an honest facing of the ‘ontological anxiety’ of the modern self. It shows ‘the other side of matter’, death. Here Kristeva is facing what was not reflected in her early ‘materialist’ linguistics, the subject’s radical exhaustion, death. Death for her ‘Marxist’ and Freudian regimes is the ultimate limit of all things. ‘The subject is prey to death.’ There is no transcendental hope for the ‘speaking subject’, neither is it available for Kristeva. In *Black Sun*, underlying Kristeva’s analysis of depression, one can sense the continuous threat of ‘death’, unanswered by her ‘revolutionary’ materialism. She attempts to develop an answer in her new Freudian framework, which she regards as more secure than the mere ‘dialectic of matter’. Strangely, death in Kristeva’s solution also remains totalised, though in a different way.

On the one hand, Kristeva’s Freudianism, when facing these ultimate questions, states the failure of the symbolism of the classic ‘materialist imagery’. Atheist humanism does not offer the language in which the subject’s final losses can be told. Feuerbach and Marx have no language of ‘mourning’ at all. Lash points out the absence in Marxist theory of serious

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255 Kristeva, *In the Beginning Was Love*, p.23.
consideration of the implications of the fact of individual and social mortality.\textsuperscript{257} Putting it in our context, the ‘materialist grand narrative’ cannot speak of the ultimate crisis of love. An example of the ‘great silences’ is Marx’s Paris Manuscripts where he ends up with the general statement that man can never arrive at a ‘genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being…between freedom and necessity, between individual and species.’\textsuperscript{258} Marx does not pay much attention to the personal anxiety of the subject. Rather, the promise of the transformation of history is a ‘denial’ of the problem.

This looming of the potential death and final silence of the subject is not fully answered in Kristeva’s Freudianism either. Her materialism excludes any account of ‘transcendence’ in explaining alienation. ‘Death’ is reduced to the victory of the Freudian ‘death drives’. Kristeva’s Freudian framework, as her Holbein interpretation shows, totalises death in the sense that there is no ‘graced’ alternative to the death drives. This early framework clearly echoes Freud’s premise: ‘religion is an illusion’. As an ontological statement, it deprives the speaking subject of his freedom for Transcendence. To put it bluntly, the early Kristeva condemns the ‘speaking being’ to being forever introvert, operating within his own psychic space, and creating ‘psychological symbols’. As there is no flight to Transcendence, the only option is within ‘linguistic transcendence’, the individual’s ‘aesthetical’

‘embracing Death, absorbing it into his very being, integrating it not as a condition for glory or a consequence of a sinful nature but as the ultimate essence of his desacralized reality, which is the foundation of a new dignity. For that very reason the picture of Christly and human death with Holbein is in intimate partnership with In Praise of Folly (1511) by Desiderius Erasmus, whose friend, illustrator, and portrayer [Holbein] became in 1523. Because he acknowledges his folly and looks death in the face – but perhaps also because he faces mental risks, the risk of psychic death – man achieves a new dimension. Not necessarily that of atheism but definitely that of a disillusioned, serene, and dignified stance. Like the picture by Holbein.’\textsuperscript{259}

The only way out is accepting the ultimate finitude of individual life. Psychoanalysis, at this point, compared with the incompetence of the failed Marxist revolution in the postmodern context, attempts to provide orientation for the subject. However, it provides only a ‘technique’ for accepting death. The offered immanent horizon is manifest most in the stoic ‘consolation’ which ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ can find in Holbein’s Dead Christ.

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid., pp.191-192
‘Holbein …invites us to change Christ’s tomb into a living tomb to participate in the painted death and thus include it in our own life, in order to live with it and make it alive.’  

Kristeva’s psychoanalysis goes to the limits of her system. Though it never raises the ‘ontological anxiety’ of the self openly, nor does it admit that the modern person in therapy is also struggling with his ‘religious crisis’ (often in the form of a post-generational trauma), it encourages the subject not to give up ‘symbolisation’. As a useful illustration of Kristeva’s ‘atheism without nihilism’, it is worth comparing her ‘speaking being’ with that of Samuel Beckett. His answer to anxiety is keeping the subject speaking. If they stopped speaking (‘symbolising’), the subject would die. What can be seen as a stoic act of resurrection through ‘writing’ and ‘self-analysis’ in Kristeva, in Beckett becomes a compulsory, perpetuated speaking. What renders Beckett nihilistic, compared with her, is the protest against how Beckett pessimistically fully exhausts the subject. Though Kristeva’s materialism by virtue of its nature does not allow the counter-narrative of after life, it offers a symbolisation of one’s own death. The person, compared with Beckett’s empty offer, can seek to identify himself with Christ as a silenced fellow ‘speaking being’. Technically, this act of ‘self-transcending’ is a substitute for the Christian doctrine of redemption. This world, as we saw it in the Old Man and the Wolves, is not accessible any longer for Kristeva. The ‘speaking being’, in the Holbein-scheme, is deprived of (not offered) identification with Christ’s Resurrection. To sum up, Kristeva’s Holbein-narrative, in a wider sense, speaks of the loss of the Father’s Hope, and also reveals the un-soothed existential anxiety of the subject.

In the years following the essay, ‘Dead Christ’, Kristeva moves to a characteristically new direction in answering the anxiety of the subject. She increasingly focused on the crisis of love. In a sense, it develops further the original Holbein-image and is a correction of the solution she had offered there. The discourse Kristeva develops focuses on identifying with ‘love alive’, when the psyche comes alive through the temporary resurrections that ‘amorous discourse’ offers. It is a focusing on the life-giving potential of the ‘Symbolic Father’, the ‘Loving Third’. This ‘speaker’ is the self’s ultimate support. Its disappearance would bring her Holbein project to a halt. Without the ‘Father’s’ presence, there is no expressive language, there is no narrative, there is no linguistic rebirth, the ‘dead Christ’ (the above program) becomes unnameable. Kristeva expresses the ‘ontological anxiety’ of the contemporary subject in terms of the ‘grave crisis of the oedipal ‘Father’’ in Europe.  

It is not only ‘motherhood’ or the feminine dimension of the ‘sacred’ (meaning) that is difficult

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to speak of. Representing the father’s love as the ‘loving Third party’ has become the utmost challenge. The loss of the ‘Symbolic’ centre of language or the unavailability of the ‘loving Third’, both in the religious and psychological sense, is the utmost burden for the post-modern subject. I present the desire in Kristeva to resuscitate the lost father as the ‘meta-text’ of her Holbein analysis. ‘God’ is dead, there is no other side of language, but there is a deep desire to see the Father’s love alive.

The problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ reveals how Kristeva is in search of a double centre of meaning. Her interest in the ‘existential’ exhaustion of the subject, however immanent this interpretation is, explains why in Kristeva’s theories the ‘semiotic’ or feminine sacred dominates whereas, in the novels, the missing ‘Father’ is the central theme. Both are re-constructions of the lost ‘transcendent dynamic’. Is it too daring to propose that the above meta-scenario, the loss of the ‘transcendent Father’, accounts for Kristeva’s ongoing retreat into the material body? If this is the case, her ‘semiotic resourcing’ can be seen as a substitution for the excluded ‘Father of grace’. Oliver highlights Kristeva’s ongoing retreat into the body: ‘Kristeva’s texts take us deeper and deeper within the maternal function, and thereby take us deeper and deeper into the maternal body.’

Oliver’s characterisation of Kristeva as ‘the melancholy mourner of the death of God’ can be intrinsically related to the evolution of her semiotics. If Oliver is right, Kristeva’s movement ‘towards the inside’, that is, back in time in language and body, is prompted by the need to find a counter-movement to ‘death’. Kristeva’s intense turn to ‘semiotic’ resources, however, leaves the subject with the lack of the ‘Father’. The problem of the death of ‘God’, which underlies Kristeva’s work since Revolution in Poetic Language, is responded to by a powerful, but rather impersonal, ‘semiotic ontology’. If Kristeva’s materialism indeed betrays a semiotic ‘introversion’, then the ‘mourning for the father’, which I pointed out in the novels, offers a counter-balance. A new personalism emerges in the Kristevan narrative. The novels show an implicit openness to recover the Father’s love for the subject.

2.3.4 The Need to Counteract the Violence of Culture

The ‘cultural mourning’ of the novels connects the themes of atheism, violence, suffering and nihilism, and the theological approach. It is from the outset the underlying conviction of my study that Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’ is a complex cultural symbol. It is more than a psychoanalytical and linguistic construct that is ‘valid’ only within her Freudian

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262 Oliver, Reading Kristeva, p.3.
regime. The novels confirm this symbolic level more openly than the theoretical writings. The unfinished mourning of the post-modern self is an important contact with ‘theological symbolism’. The novels defined violence as the lack of love, a lack of bonding. The aggression which harms the self is nihilism, directed against love itself. It is love, the reflexivity it creates, which alone can resuscitate the dissolving life of ‘Santa Varvara’. Kristeva’s theoretical writings, since Tales of Love, permanently confirm that the other side of perpetuated violence in culture is the ‘functioning’ ‘loving Third’, which is the most important support to the ‘psychic space’. The novels confirm the need to renew the symbols of love, ‘amorous discourse’ itself.

A moving symbolic expression of this need is the closing scene of Possessions. It is not a happy ending at all. But as a powerful cultural parable, it points to the economy of love from which the self and culture can be restored. In the novel, Gloria, the mother of a disabled child, seeks to find refuge in her son’s language. Her entire being is absorbed into the love of her son. But Jerry’s ‘handicapped’ speech is only a mirror, a parroting of set phrases and clichés. ‘Jerry never told his mother anything she hadn’t told him, anything she hadn’t expected, foreseen, programmed. Every word, phrase, or story was merely a kind of prothesis…’

There is no way out from the mother-child dyad. With no third party, the relationship between Gloria and Jerry can only be a destructive, devouring assimilation. The successful ‘translation of identity’ takes place between the handicapped son and Pauline who is Jerry’s speech therapist. What Kristeva presents is the psychological Passion of the ‘speaking being’. Its loneliness, its dependence on the other is emphasised in a moving way. As Nooy interprets it, Pauline provides a ‘loving third’ to the relationship between Gloria and her son. Jerry is also a ‘loving third’ for Pauline. For Jerry is a means for Pauline to recover symbolically her lost son-like brother, Aimeric. Through her love for Jerry and through Jerry’s speech, the speech therapist, Pauline, is finally able to name her loss, as a rebirth, as a ‘resurrection’. The ‘loving Third party’ emerges as a cultural symbol about the need of the community to re-relate once again to the ‘Other’ in spoken love.

As a cultural metaphor it confirms that new symbols are needed which name ‘violence’ and tell the needs of our wounded subjectivity. In the intimate drama in Possessions the violence of a nihilist culture is reflected. This culture prevents people from becoming a proper ‘loving third party’ for each other. It is this theme, the self living under the threat of a ‘violent culture’, through which theology is directly addressed and invited into a dialogue.

263 Kristeva, Possessions, pp.52-53.
264 de Nooy, ‘How to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs’, in The Kristeva Critical Reader, p.123.
265 Ibid., p.123.
What are the possible sources for experiencing again the Father’s love, the ‘loving Third party’? The joint task is to posit a discourse of healing, which responds to the struggle of the ‘speaking subject’ with cultural melancholy and depression. Kristeva confirms that ‘we are basically dealing with the image of a depression that integrates aggression but under the ruinous guise of an erasure of meaning.’

Theology states that it is the Father’s love that cultural depression hides aggressively as the replacement of the lost object of mourning. Without recovering the support of the Father’s ‘compassionate love’, ‘we are [indeed] exiting the era of the subject’.  

Koloszyc gives an important theoretical support to the idea that co-operation in recovering the symbols of love is possible. When Kristeva states the joint crisis of modernity and religion, it is also a positive attempt on her part to relate secular humanism with religion. With this, Kristeva attempts to overcome their dualistic opposition.

A theological reading of the novels, with the ‘ontological suffering’ which my study has pointed out, finds it a realistic prospect to start a dialogue on counteracting nihilism as an ‘ontological question’.

2.3.5 Summary and Conclusions

Against the above background, my critique concludes that the novels suggest that a dialogue about the ‘lost Father’ and the relationship between the self and its religious past is possible. A further agreement with Kristeva is that the ‘ontological mourning’ of the postmodern self raises the need to gain distance from the violent economy of culture. The source of this critical distance is the ‘Father’s love’ (as a supporting ‘loving third party’). This recognition addresses theology directly. When it presents the image of God to culture, it has to show an image of Love which is sufficiently counter-cultural and independent of the violent narratives of culture.

266 Keltner quotes Kristeva, in Keltner, Kristeva, Thresholds, p.136.

267 The cause of melancholy mourning is that the person cannot let the ‘lost’ maternal thing go. Instead of entering the new symbolic realm of language, the subject remained entrapped in the nostalgic mourning of the pre-lingual mother. In Julia Kristeva, ‘On the Melancholy Imaginary’ (pp.5-18), New Formations (Number 3 Winter 1987) p.5.


269 With this position, Koloszyc significantly corrects criticisms like that of Beardsworth, which do not pay sufficient attention to the complexity of the relationship between religion and secularism, which connection is central for Kristeva. See Ch 4 ‘Homo religiosus and the Crisis of Secularism’, in Koloszyc, David. Religion, Atheism, and the Crisis of Meaning, pp.294-296.
In view of the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’ and the ‘Christian’ mourning of the post-modern self, we can identify the following dynamic. The ‘exclusion of grace’ from post-metaphysical consciousness generates an ‘unconscious’ and unfinished mourning in the subject. (1) The exclusion of the religious ‘Sacred’ from Kristeva’s early model goes together with the desire for the ‘Father’. God is dead, there is no other side of language, but there is a deep desire to see the Father’s (lost) love alive. This ‘mourning’ underlies the development of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic symbols’. We could identify a twofold movement in this symbol building. The dominance of the ‘semiotic’ maternal imagery becomes balanced with the emergence of the meta-narrative of the ‘autobiographical father’ in the novels. Without paying attention to the ‘personal mourning’ in Kristeva’s fictional writings, it becomes easily overlooked that the symbolism of the father is just as important as the ‘maternal sacred’. It is this desire for the ‘Father’ to which theology can respond by offering a re-engagement with the ‘religious’ image of the Father.

(2) The dynamic of the mourning for the father potentially corrects Kristeva’s ‘semiotic retreat’ into the body and ‘matter’, which we saw in her ‘semiotic’ linguistics. Her ‘atheist mourning of the loss of God’ in the novels is a genuine attempt to relate the self to a real extra-self ‘Other’. Kristeva’s theoretical writings elaborate this new ‘extrovert’ orientation in terms of the theme of love; and also in the attempt to embed the subject into an ethic of compassionate love. Against the background of the points (1)-(2), theology needs to develop that narrative framework from which both forms of imagery can be addressed theologically: Kristeva’s ‘maternal’ and ‘paternal’ symbols of love, that is, the ‘feminine sacred’ and her personal anamnesis of the ‘Christian Father’.

My study stated that the self is in an unfinished ‘mourning’ over its lost Christian past. This inner mourning for the ‘lost thing’ raises ‘ontological’ questions in a new way. How does a generation of lost faith relate to the religious discourse of the previous generation? Put differently, can we restore a dialogue with the religious Symbols of the past generation? Kristeva attempts it in her intellectual mourning. What mourning can theology articulate in response? What symbolic elements of faith should theology propose as a common reference? Kristeva’s novels prompt this dialogue. The closing sections of Part One will have to give an answer as to whether the general development of Kristeva’s project allows this engagement.

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270 In *Black Sun*, analysing an excessive state of depression (‘melancholy mourning’), Kristeva identifies the cause of depressed speech in the inability to accept the loss of the original unity with the mother (the denial of losing of the “maternal thing”).
3. APORIAS AND RESOLUTIONS

The task of this chapter is to ruminate over the challenges which have arisen from situating Kristeva in relation to systematic theology. As a form of evaluation of Kristeva’s materialist horizon and of what my critique has achieved so far, I set in dialogue the aporias and their possible resolutions. It will be followed by an examination of the development of Kristeva’s relationship with religion, with a particular focus on her recent dialogical position regarding religion. The latter will open up the prospect for resolving the apologetic situation which the conflict with Kristeva’s materialism entails.

3.1 ‘Ontological’ Critique Justified

The points of contact already set out justify my suggestion to develop an ‘ontological critique’ of Kristeva. I regarded her semiotics as a discourse of ontological depth. The opening suggestion of my study, that Kristeva relates to mainstream secular humanism as making ‘ontological statements’ about the human being, I also feel to have been verified. Kristeva recognised that the identity crisis of the subject of modernity prompted a new elaboration of ‘origins’. She herself called the theoretical stance of ‘new post-Freudian rationality’ metaphysical.\(^{271}\) The psychoanalytical and linguistic resourcing of the self which Kristeva offered was based on the conviction that the subject has sufficient resources to live with a permanent crisis of meaning and identity. My critique pointed to the ongoing exhaustion of the subject, which makes it necessary to re-examine this self sufficiency.

Our analyses showed that Kristeva explored only the psychological dimension of the ‘ontic’ crisis of the self, the ‘loss’ of the ‘Loving third party’. My study argued, with the help of her novels, that there is a ‘theological’ dimension of this exhaustion which should not be overlooked. There is an obvious difference between the hermeneutical positions. However, prompting discourse to listen to the ‘ontological anxieties’ of the post-modern self as a suffering in its own right can lead to a dialogue about the reasons why the crisis of the ‘European self’ is unstoppable.

For a theological critique, it is most natural to situate this discussion in the classic problem of nature and grace. The self needs to be re-grounded in what theology traditionally calls ‘grace’. However, it is obvious that this engagement with Kristeva cannot be carried out

\(^{271}\) Kristeva, Desire in Language, p.ix.
in a traditional way. The problem that has been identified of the ‘exhausted subject’ can be that medium in which the ‘nature-grace’ relationship can be refashioned. Both the thematic development of Kristeva’s work and theological discourse on Love allow the making of statements about the ‘beginnings’. In this context, theological ‘ontology’ opens up the prospect of a genuine critical dialogue with Kristeva’s humanist and atheistic subtexts. On the theological side, the stake of reopening the nature – grace ‘debate’ in a new way is preserving ‘the ontology of the human person in relationship to the free, always surprising gift of God’s presence to the world of creatures’. This is a witness to theology’s perennial principle, namely that “grace” qualifies all divine/human relationship.

It is true, that the nature-grace relationship, for obvious reasons, never occurs in Kristeva’s model. The systemic exclusion of ‘grace’ by her materialism prevents this revision. However, to her focus on linguistic origins theology can reply by suggesting a language – ‘grace’ relationship in which the metaphor of the ‘Loving Third’ is made central. In this way, Kristeva’s main objection to theology, that it remained an ‘onto-theological monologism’, a discourse forever trapped in modernity, can be responded to creatively.

Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ synthesis indeed interrupts inward-looking, metaphysically or linguistically, ‘closed’ theologies in which there is no attempt to relate (the Father’s!) ‘grace’ with the anthropological reality of the person. Theology faces here a genuine soteriological dilemma. How can it come out of these ‘monologisms’, which is tantamount to a practical retreat from secular culture and its discourses, without giving up its unique reference, the ‘grace’ of the Cross? A refashioned nature/language – grace relationship raises questions to both ontological positions. To Kristeva: is language a sufficient internal support to the ‘psychic space’? To theology: can ‘grace’ (the Cross) be salvific if it does not speak directly to the person, particularly to its present state of ‘exhaustion’? In the same way, can theology make utterances on the self’s ‘mourning’ for lost religion, if at the same time it does not address the ‘atheistic’ narratives of modernity which, up until now, ground ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’? Kristeva has created the opportunity for developing a dialogue about the ‘Father’s love’. It is theology’s task to develop a ‘graced’ notion of the ‘loving Third’ and integrate the ‘ontological discourses’ of the two sides.

272 See section ‘3.6.1 A Thematic Overview of the Oeuvre (Areas for Theological Engagement)’
274 Kołoszyc, Religion, Atheism, and the Crisis of Meaning, p.298.
3.2 Addressing Kristeva’s ‘Atheistic Subtexts’

In this new ‘hermeneutical’ situation, Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’ are challenged in complex ways. Their ‘ontological’ validity is never questioned in Kristeva’s later project. ‘Feuerbach’, ‘Marx’, and ‘Freud’ remain fundamental references for her atheistic position. On the other hand, as the integration of the ‘Marxist’ and Freudian frameworks showed, Kristeva’s psychoanalysis also relates to her ideological subtexts as a ‘cultural mourning’. Kristevan psychoanalysis mourns important aspects of these atheisms. While developing her ‘semitics’ as the critique of dichotomising tendencies in ‘Cartesian reason’, Kristeva also corrects the heavy dualisms of her ‘ideological subtexts’. In the classic atheist programs, ‘man’ and God are set in a strong dualistic opposition. It is striking how ‘mechanistically’ they state the God-man relationship as a rivalry. Secular humanism seems to have taken over in an unquestioned way Feuerbach’s ‘founding myth’, which can be seen as an early variant of Freud’s murder-myth. ‘Even if it could be proved by mathematics that God exists, I do not want him to exist, because he would set a limit to my greatness.’ What Kristeva is dissatisfied most with in her ‘atheistic-subtexts’ is not so much their ‘external’ view of ‘God’, but so much more their view of the human person from without. Kristeva’s psychoanalytic viewpoint corrects the external view of history in ‘historical materialism’. In the latter, the particularity of the person was completely ignored and mechanistically subjugated to the ‘grand narrative’ of History. Dupré calls it a “historicist objectivism” or a “psycho-mathematical model”. They are the direct outcome of the subject conceived as the culmination point of nature. Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’ has made this extrinsic view of history ‘visible’ for theology. Theology evaluates this ‘extrinsicism’ as the source of reductive statements in Marx’s and Freud’s critique of religion.

These ‘atheistic subtexts’ are not only about the antagonistic ‘ontological’ conflict with theology. They remain important witnesses to ‘history’ and the historicity of the subject. They serve as a critical guide. The tension between the particularity of the ‘speaking being’ and the ‘abstractness’ or ‘ahistoricity’ of the theological concept of the person is not unrelated to the ‘anthropological criticisms’ of Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud. Theology, when responding to Kristeva’s anthropological program, necessarily has to engage with the motives of these ‘counter-ontologies’. A theological response to Kristeva needs to point out where her ‘atheistic subtexts’ expired. In other words, which are those areas in their critique of religion which need to be properly revised in secular humanism itself. Conversely, the

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relevance of ‘supernatural love’ is to be shown also within those historical dimensions of the self which Kristeva’s humanist resources confirmed.

3.3 The Problem with Kristeva’s ‘Semiotic’ Agents (The Evaluation of Kristeva’s Materialism)

This section refers back to the analysis of the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’. No critique can sweep under the carpet the conflict with the materialist resourcing of the self. However, by transforming the points of conflict into questioning about a sufficient resourcing of the self, they can take discussion further. Thus, theology’s main ‘ontological’ objections are as follows.

Kristeva’s resourcing of the self from within the self, from a theological point of view, is not convincing. The subject still remains confined to his own nature. In terms of the self’s grounding, her psychoanalysis does not offer a new paradigm: continuity with the Marxist philosophical view of man remains. The Kristevan self is self-redemptive. Kristeva retains the emphasis of dialectical materialism from Feuerbach, that ‘the essence of man is contained in community, in the unity of man with man.’277 The conflict with theology’s ‘classic’ Kierkegaardian model,278 which always speaks of the self’s transcendent grounding, is obvious:

‘The self is not established by itself but “has been established by an Other” [God].’279

‘The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can be done only through the relationship to God. To become oneself is to become concrete….Consequently, the progress of the becoming must be an infinitive moving away from itself in the infinizing of the self…’280

While the theological notion of the person emphasises the real distance between the self and God, Kristeva’s extends the ‘sameness’ of matter to the socio-psychological realm. That is, the essence of the subject is contained within the ‘social’ self. Culture, since ‘what the

278 For an overview see Appendix I.
280 Ibid., p. 30.
other side of language as metaphysics thinks of as origin is not a real origin, in the final outcome, is still the extension of the ‘dialectic of matter’. Owing to the ‘ideological’ continuity with Kristeva’s early materialism, a constraint is imposed on the ‘speaking being’ when he attempts ‘mourning’ for the lost ‘religious’ origins. The lost ‘Father’ cannot be mourned from within the materialist tradition. Dialectical tension, if it is the only force in the self, is also entrapping and exhaustive. As there is no alternative ‘way out’ from the self, in terms of opening up to Transcendence, Kristeva seems to fixate the subject in a permanent crisis:

‘This duality [of Freud’s life drives and death drives] allows us to account for a heterogeneous conflictual process... To preserve this duality is to obey a materialist methodological requirement that Freud always stressed... But Freudian theory is more than a theory of dualism, it is a theory of contradiction and of struggle: “These speculations seek to solve the riddle of life by supposing that these two drives [the life drive and death drive] were struggling with each other from the very first.”’

I also drew attention to the fact that the strong dualisms in Kristeva’s concepts (the dualisms of matter) later become more balanced, with love becoming her dominant theme. From the early rather bipolar relationship between the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘Symbolic’ in Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva arrives at their more organic relationship, and they attain a ‘ternary structure’. The concept of the ‘loving Third’ best shows this integration, where ‘maternal’ and ‘paternal love’ co-operate. Moreover, with the increasing emphasis on ‘maternal love’ it becomes a genuinely personal narrative. Since Tales of Love, the relational nature corrects Kristeva’s early, overtly abstract dialectic.

However, as a further major objection, the agents of renewal which Kristeva proposes even in this mature phase remain rather hypothetical and elusive. The ‘semiotic’ stories of love do not produce a ‘personal’ and universal imperative for her psychoanalytical ethic. Hanvey rightly raised in Kristeva the problem of the ‘semiotic isolation’ of the self. ‘We never escape from our woundedness. Indeed one of its principal effects is to prevent any

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‘flight to transcendence’ or denial [of its own ‘semiotic’ dialectics].\(^{284}\) The ‘speaking being’, in the final outcome, is trapped in a continuous flux between the semiotic and the Symbolic. In the context of the ‘ontological mourning’ of the post-modern subject, it means that the self is left without sufficient support. It cannot name its failed, or lost, or desired relationship with Transcendence. This subject, confined to the dialectic of matter, becomes a migrant without a promise of a real arrival. There is no arrival to the other side of language; the subject in his mourning cannot see further than the ‘thetic’ origins. This ‘thetic wanderer/migrant’, without rediscovering a ‘personal outside’ to the self,\(^{285}\) to use Kristeva’s idiom, indeed remains an ‘extraterrestrial, suffering for want of love.’\(^{286}\) Without a real companion, when the self’s ‘mourning’ is mirrored only by itself, the ‘speaking being’ cannot attain a stable identity. It is in this sense that my critique understands that Kristeva ‘exhausts’ the subject. By making the ‘dialectics of negativity’ the ultimate ontological reference, her ‘speaking being’ becomes a restless doubter in any metaphysical constant.\(^{287}\) In other words, in his ‘religious mourning’ he is left without support.

In the final outcome, it is Kristeva’s materialism with its ontological limits that ‘exhausts’ the subject. Is not this a sort of Beckettian ‘Endgame’? An illusion that we can keep the subject speaking and resurrecting for ever? Is the person capable alone of bearing the full weight of its psychic and collective history? Or, what happens if the ‘semiotic’ resources of language, the ‘chora’, language itself, get exhausted? Beckett, as a radical ‘inner’ doubter of the Enlightenment project, envisions this final, linguistic exhaustion of the ‘autonomous self’. In this case, is our ‘material origin’, as an impersonal law, a sufficient interlocutor to ourselves? Will there follow something of an equivalent of ‘re-centering’ the dialectics of matter later in Kristeva? It is against the background of these questions that the function of the ‘chora-thetic’, as a general program to renew meaning, needs to be evaluated.

3.4 The Problem of the Isolated Self

The problem of the ‘isolated self’ in relation to Kristeva’s model can be raised in a complex way. It refers to both the self’s insufficient resources for self-recovery and the way a self-referential psychoanalytical discourse overlooks this ‘isolation’.

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\(^{284}\) Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, p. 133.

\(^{285}\) Such as personal relationship, community, history, religious past.

\(^{286}\) Oliver, Reading Kristeva, p. 122.

\(^{287}\) Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 143.
It is true that Kristeva’s project at the level of therapy has never promised more than temporary psychic rebirths. However, there is a stark contrast between this and her ambitious objectives when her psychoanalysis is presented as the critique of culture. Theology warns that psychoanalysis is not a ‘full’ support to the human interior. Especially Kristeva’s early linguistics and psychoanalysis seem to be overconfident in this role. As a replacement of religion, Kristeva envisioned psychoanalysis as a ‘universally’ accepted ‘master narrative’ of culture. In practice, however, psychoanalysis does not have the desired ‘universal’ symbolism, nor does it enjoy a universal status. It does not occupy a central place in the secular canon of culture.288

My study fully agrees with Kristeva in that the psychoanalytic critique of culture, because of its critical synthesis of the Enlightenment project, offers a genuine analytical viewpoint. Yet, the disruption it aims at needs a widening of Kristeva’s resources. The reason is that language, through which the psychoanalytical critique of culture could reach the contemporary subject, is still fragmentary. It responds well to the subject’s yearning for love, but it cannot fully access the ‘religious mourning’ of the subject. Kristeva herself comes close to admitting the fragility of psychoanalytic symbolism in her monograph on Melanie Klein. She calls the psychic realm ‘our latest myth, eventually our last myth’.289 My point is that it is in the interest of Kristeva’s project to co-operate with religion. ‘Theological discourse’, even with its retreat amidst secularisation, is still more deep-seated in culture than psychoanalysis. This difference can be reflected apologetically. However, as the emerging points of contact with Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’ show, it raises the possibility of co-operation.

Kristeva rightly argues that psychoanalysis, as a critique of culture, at important points outperforms its theological counterpart. The psychoanalytical critique of culture, compared with culturally closed metaphysical discourses, is indeed in the position of a genuine analysis. What she seems to exclude is that the experience of faith, as a creedal system, is capable of a similar in-depth analysis (or ‘cultural mourning’). My study has addressed this position by forming the theological criticism that, despite the analytic potentials of her project, Kristeva overlooked the ‘exhaustion’ of the self as an ontological problem. I highlight two ‘direct’ aspects of this ‘ontic exhaustion’. These are the relationship of the self to the community and the need for a genuine extra-self Other. If the subject is not given support at these crucial points, Kristeva’s project ‘exhausts’ the subject. Theology’s claim is

289 Kristeva, Melanie Klein, p.198.
that these problems cannot be resolved outside ‘grace’. This theological term (the dynamic of grace) needs to be re-introduced as a genuine cultural and existential metaphor.

A generally raised objection against Kristeva’s ‘psychoanalytical ethic’ is that neither her early linguistic project nor her psychoanalytic healing allow for any effective ethical agent (Oliver290). Theological criticism makes the point that it has not provided the subject with the experience of fellowship either (Hanvey291). It is the support of the ethical community that can put the balance right: nihilism cannot be counteracted by the individual on his own. It entails that the communal dimension of the human self also needs to be worked out. Conjoined with the problem of ethical fellowship is the uncertain ‘universal’ imperative that Kristeva suggests for her ethic. The problem with her psychoanalytical ethic is never its objectives. It identifies crucial directions in the postmodern context. The problem is the elusiveness of Kristeva’s agencies. ‘Language’, the psychological image of the other in us, the ‘feminine sacred’ with the real experience of motherhood, and the universal ‘psychic’ relation to the ‘Loving Third’ are important aspects of the aimed at universal imperative. However, it is difficult to see how they function as a compelling categorical imperative and transcend the level of a Socratic ‘gnosis’.

It is true that the responsibility of the analyst to find ways to alleviate the suffering of his patients is inherently ethical, and the critical distance from the governing narratives is a major precondition of ethics.292 It is also true that psychoanalysis raises the possibility of widening the traditional resources and ‘methods’ of an ethics. It is also a pioneering recognition of Kristeva’s that, in view of the fundamental brokenness of the postmodern subject, psychoanalysis rightly proposes a non-normative ethics, that is, when its course is helping others and promoting life in a way that does not rely on laws and punishments.293 However, theology’s claim is also true; namely that a functioning ethics is always the radical interruption of the ‘Symbolic Order’. It always comes from a radically different Other, who fully shares human suffering, but at the same time transcend our existing ethical patterns. It still needs to be a compelling ‘authority’.

290 Oliver makes this criticism by drawing on the conclusions of Andrea Nye, Nancy Fraser, and Eléanor Kuykendall. (Nye: Kristeva does not allow for any relation between adults and lacks any account of interpersonal relationship. Fraser: Kristeva’s ‘split’ subject is insufficient in producing a feminist ‘political agent’. Kuykendall: Kristeva’s ethics does not allow for a ‘female agency’.) Oliver, Reading Kristeva, p.186.
291 An excellent exposition of how the fellowship is grounded in Trinitarian relations is in Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, pp.138-139.
292 Kristeva, Desire in Language, p. ix.
293 Oliver, Reading Kristeva, p.123.
The two strategic directions generate a tension which requires a creative solution. On the one hand, Kristeva challenges traditional notions of ethics that presuppose a unified subject who affirms only the ‘self-same’.\textsuperscript{294} Kristeva sets up the criteria for doing ethics in a globalised context in which pluralisms have to be tackled: ethics should be all-inclusive. It should speak also to those who are not ‘self-same’ and are on the margins of the ‘host culture’. This makes Kristeva the most timely engagement for theology and religious symbolism itself: how should they re-present the \textit{imago Dei} as inclusive Love?

The ‘missing fellowship’ raises most directly our second concern, the problem of the ‘isolated self’, when ‘isolation’ is understood in the theological sense. Theology’s criticism is that grounding language in ‘matter’ deprives the self of vital ‘extra-self’ resources. The ‘melancholia’ of the ‘speaking being’ (as shown in Kristeva’s novels) confirms that the isolation of the self deserves prime attention. As a critical direction and resource, I refer in brief to Robert Keller’s analysis of the ‘existential mourning’ of the self which is deprived of the ‘Loving Third party’. His is an experimental psychoanalytical case study, but my critique presents it as a useful model of ‘ontological mourning’. Keller analyses ‘Beckett’s infantile subtexts’. My point is that the struggles of Beckett’s characters ‘to be properly born’ reveal a suffering analogous to that of the postmodern self when the ‘religious past’ is unmourned. This model shows the motives of the theological mindset; on what grounds it reclains the ‘Transcendent’ grounding of the self. The analogy I suggest is between the relationship of the self and the mother, when the experience of love is prematurely interrupted, and the relationship between the self and lost religion, when God is never properly known. From Keller we can derive an excellent theological model for seeing the loss of the ground of the self (‘grace’) in terms of its consequences. The ‘self’ is to be understood also in a wider sense, as ‘culture’. An important theological support for drawing this analogy is Dupré’s \textit{Transcendental Selfhood}. Dupré convincingly demonstrates, in a dialogue with psychoanalysis, that the soul itself rests on a divine basis.\textsuperscript{295}

Keller reveals the vulnerability of the postmodern self at a ‘psycho-ontological’ level. He shows how vital a proper grounding in unconditional (maternal) Love is, which relationship is the seminal form of the ‘fellowship’ of love.\textsuperscript{296} The symptoms Keller describes show how the ‘speaking being’ is deprived of a proper future and is trapped in a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{294}{Oliver, \textit{Reading Kristeva}, p.188.}
\footnotetext{295}{Dupré gives an excellent theological account of when ‘transcendental selfhood’ is seen as fully ‘functional’, the way it expands beyond its ordinary empirical restrictions. The ‘mystical experience’ of ordinary life is based upon a healthy self – genuine \textit{Other} encounter, which Keller argues from a purely psychoanalytical point of view. Dupré, \textit{Transcendental Selfhood}, pp.93-104.}
\end{footnotes}
past-oriented nostalgia. I present these psychological symptoms as analogous to the ‘ontic’ or religious suffering of the postmodern subject when it is not properly ‘grounded’. These symptoms also show how a culture enclosed in ‘matter’ cannot produce the genuine Other for whom the self is yearning in a paralysing mourning. Keller’s model of the ‘exhausted self’ is also helpful in understanding the vulnerability of this ‘unborn (transcendent) selfhood’ in the context of consumerism. This is an important link with Kristeva’s criticism of the ‘society of the spectacle’, in which she also focuses on contemporary suffering. The symptoms of depressed speech are very similar to that of Keller’s description.

‘The depressive speech is... repetitive, monotonous, or empty of meaning, ...meaning appears to be arbitrary, evasive, uncertain, deficient, quasi mutistic...The denial (Verneinung) of negation [the necessary step of abandoning the original unity with the mother in order to enter into language] would thus be the exercise of an impossible mourning, the setting up of a fundamental sadness and an artificial, unbelievable language, cut out of the painful background that is not accessible to any signifier and that intonation alone, intermittently, succeeds in inflecting.’

This mutism is an acute description of the trauma of the postmodern self, uprooted from his previous cultural embedding. It is indeed true, as Kristeva recognises, that the last possession of the subject is his language. It is the ultimate means upon which he can rely. Theology also agrees with psychoanalysis in that the self is traumatised by a past loss. Religious experience claims, however, that this loss is more deeply seated than the traumatized language itself. There is an ‘ontic’ exhaustion beyond our postmodern language.

It is also agreed with Kristeva that this loss has to be mourned in order to become capable again of identifying with and trusting the other. What theology claims as a plus is to recognise that it is the unmourned loss of ‘grace’/God which does not allow the subject to

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297. The symptoms revealed by Beckett’s ‘infantile subtext’, according to Keller, are as follows. The entire bonding period is bypassed between mother and child. There is an ongoing yearning for connection in the subject. A feeling of primary disconnection manifests an alienation from other persons. The primary maternal object serves as a foundation of a vital, coherent psychic life. The feverish fantasy activity in the subject reveals the absence of a good maternal object. The subject’s belief that life is futile is a direct consequence of his difficulty in connecting to good and real external objects. ‘Watt’, the [postmodern] subject is delivered prematurely into the world, without love. As a consequence of primary rapture, the infant’s whole world is ‘pre-empted’, for he is merged with the mother only too briefly before separation. Being deprived of maternal love, he is forced prematurely into what he experiences as world of loveless exile. The result of this loveless, darkened internal exile is withdrawn passivity, an acceptance of submission. The subject is satisfied with existing in peace on the periphery of society [exiled into consumption]. It constitutes an enduring disruption in the ability to be with others in a meaningful way. There is an intense search for an emotional connection that the person has never known. As a consequence, the subject withdraws into an internal world and lives in a closed intrapsychic space in which words run on obsessively. Words are used as ‘autistic objects’, actual objects used by a child to soothe himself, replacing real interactions with persons. In Keller, *Samuel Beckett and the Primacy of Love*, pp.93-100.

transcend his entrapment. The ‘ontological’ critique of Kristeva also adds that the self-referential, ‘autonomous subject’ of the Enlightenment is in mourning for an unnamed loss, the loss of the Father as he truly is. This loss can even be regarded as a trans-generational trauma. God is lost for the postmodern subject before he could have known him, and he has been mourning him, unnoticed. Because this mourning is either suppressed by nihilism or hindered by inherited and unrevised ideological statements in culture, it is unfinished. As a consequence, the ‘late’ subject of the Enlightenment cannot ‘produce’ his missing Other. The postmodern subject, the melancholic mourner of the ‘death’ of God (and of his own self), is locked in the chain of symptoms described by Keller. The above can be applied to culture, too.

My point is that the dynamic of this ‘exhaustion’ should be paid more attention by ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. One of the reasons is the inadequacy of the classic materialist narrative (Feuerbach, Marx) to name the present historical alienation, particularly the subject’s inner suffering. In view of the Beckettian symptoms of ‘narcissistic mourning’, Kristeva and theology both face the challenge to liberate the subject from fixation on his narcissistic wound. Without a genuine ‘transcendent’ interruption to culture/nihilism, the subject is engulfed in this, in a sense self-imposed, narcissism. The ‘monologues’ of the self, as can be seen in Beckett, serve as fake companions; they become the subject’s only, though illusory and self-destructive, refuge. The postmodern subject bears the full woundedness of the ‘ungrounded self’ (Kierkegaard). Its trauma cannot be shared because there is no real listener. This subjectivity, in the absence of an authentic ethical example, is unable to listen to the co-sufferer either. The narcissistic self, doubled in the mirror of its own traumas, can speak only of his suffering, but not of that of the other (that of God included!).

It seems that traditional interruptions of the situation are not enough. Psychoanalysis is too passive to produce this disruption. Theology’s eschatological ‘Sermon on the Mount’ often sounds too distant when it loses sight of the ‘historicity’ of the subject. Actually, the postmodern self is in a more acute crisis than ‘mainstream’ theological and secular humanisms think. Moreover, by now, the self is deprived not only of its religious heritage, but also of its ‘Enlightenment past’. My point is that the ‘exhausted subject’ needs to be reintroduced again into both patrimonies. That is to say, it should undergo a twofold, ideally joint, cultural mourning. The stake is high. The postmodern self colonises the Kristevan image (‘Holbein’s Dead Christ’), or its original religious version, the theological image of

the Cross. The ‘exhausted subject’, without proper guidance, projects his narcissistically conceived suffering and devours the liberating message of what Kristeva’s stoic materialism or religion offers. There is a postmodern denial that there is a beyond to one’s own suffering. As a consequence, the ‘exhausted subject’, as an uprooted ‘ontological migrant’ (suspended between opposing ontologies), is trapped permanently in melancholy.

While Kristeva’s humanism was given support from a still structured cultural community, the postmodern self has no one to hold it. This subjectivity is not remembered by the isolated other; that is why he cannot trust the other. Kristeva’s ‘sceptical-subtext’, Beckett, does not comment on the causes but states the pain overlooked in ‘Enlightenment consolations’. In the changed context, ‘looking death in the face’ does not lead to a stable ‘new dignity’ such as Kristeva expects. The subject, underneath the Enlightenment narrative, remains inconsolable. Its inertness is only proportionate to the denial that he has no possession outside his wounded language. How can this deeply lost self be symbolised? What is that ‘passion-narrative’ which awakens the self and which the ‘exhausted subject’ identifies as his? Which tradition will mourn the subject? Who is the self’s ultimate interlocutor?

3.5 ‘Kristeva and Religion’: Kristeva’s New Dialogical Position

Solutions to the emerged aporias come from Kristeva’s work itself. In her relationship with religion Kristeva has recently arrived at a dialogical position. My study suggests this active dialogue with the ‘wisdom of religion’ as the third unifying element of the oeuvre. This new stance helps to solve the apologetic impasse which a critique of Kristeva faces. Kristeva’s approaches to religion, seen in a developmental pattern, confirm that the tension with her materialism can be responded to constructively. These criticisms underlie her dialogical position. The theological response to Kristeva’s work needs to be aware of them and has to address the problems they raise.

Kristeva’s relationship with religion constitutes the final aspect of situating her for theology. We can speak of Kristeva’s four approaches to religion: (1) her critique of religious fundamentalism or the political critique, (2) the semiotic critique of the male

300 See her post-structuralist resources, the ‘classic’ or modernist heritage of Arendt and Klein.
301 Kristeva, Black Sun, p. 119.
302 In our argument the first two were the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ and the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’.
imagination, (3) her ‘intellectual’ mourning of the Christian past in her theories and in her novels, and (4) Kristeva’s recent dialogue with religion.

3.5.1 Kristeva’s Critique of Religious Fundamentalism

The first layer of Kristeva’s critique of religion is the critique of religious fundamentalism. This can be called the political dimension of her criticism. This remains an active interest from her ‘revolutionary linguistics’ up to the present. This criticism is closely related to her linguistic period when Kristeva treated the disappearance of religion as inevitable and associated all religious discourse with the ‘monological’ or homogeneous model of language and knowledge.303 The context of rejecting religious fundamentalism is nihilism in culture. According to Kristeva, fundamentalism belongs to those erroneous responses which ‘shaken’ homogeneous identities give to the nihilist crisis. Kristeva’s recurring fear is to take refuge from the challenges of a globalised culture into ‘our most regressive common denominators: national origins and the faith of our forefathers.’304 This critique is a permanent warning that Christianity can act against its original mission to ‘metabolise’ fears and hatred in culture. She criticises Christianity’s aptitude to return to dogma, instead of facing the historical crisis and offering a proper analysis of it. From the mid-eighties up to the very present Kristeva refuses any revisionist understanding of the crisis. She wants to show an alternative to those who claim that ‘a return to [a dogmatic] faith is the last chance, our one and only possibility, face to face with the perils of liberty, of creating some sort of stability.’305

Kristeva’s concerns were given a fresh confirmation in the mid-nineties. She saw a similar danger in the return to dogma after the collapse of communism in central European countries.306 Most recently, she suspects a similar dogmatic turn when the need of a new ‘normative conscience’ was raised by Habermas and Ratzinger. What connects them, according to Kristeva, is the danger of becoming apologetic with culture at the cost of ignoring the complexity of the cultural situation and the actual state of the subject. My point is that Kristeva’s criticism from the outset is primarily ethically motivated, not ideologically. Seen in this context, her critique of religious fundamentalism sets up an important criterion for theology becoming a relevant discourse. Instead of an overtly defensive position, it has to

303 Kołoszyc, Religion, Atheism, and the Crisis of Meaning, p.401.
305 Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.26.
306 Julia Kristeva Interviews, p.223-224.
respond to the *complexity* of the changed conditions of culture and of the subject with a genuine *analysis*. In other words, theology needs to show that *orthodoxy* can present a genuine *analysis* of the crisis and the discourses it objects to.

Despite the conflict with her materialism, there are significant changes within Kristeva’s critical position. My critique agrees with Kołoszyc on the important alteration: Kristeva increasingly became aware of some impasses in her early literary critique of religion, which excluded religious experience. She acknowledges that the *religious* dimension of the self and certain forms of religious experience, because of their psychological relevance, cannot be excluded from the question of psychic ‘origins’. Kristeva, within the limits of her materialism, makes an important correction to her original ‘ideological’ stance. She admits that the subject remains inherently a *religious* subject.307 Christ, ‘the absolute subject’, manifests the essential psychic dramas of the process of individuation. Though this is a non-religious reading of the self and of religious experience, this development is a vital step. With it, Kristeva, in theory, opens up the prospect of getting into contact with a theological vision of the self, inasmuch as the latter has something relevant to offer. It is a ‘structural’ openness of her analytical position, even if co-operation with theology in practice was not expected on her part.

3.5.2 Kristeva’s Psychoanalytical Critique of Religion

The themes of Kristeva’s ‘psychoanalytical critique’ of religion are all important areas for theological engagement. If they are read separately from the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’, theology can easily take them as a confirmation of an apologetic approach. These criticisms, when ‘listened’ to and integrated, can intensify the complex engagement which the response to Kristeva requires. They are (1) Kristeva’s linguistic reading of the Cross, (2) her critique of the image of the ‘Virgin Mother’ as a product of the masculine imagination, (3) and her psychoanalytical reading of sacrifice.

Underlying these criticisms is Kristeva’s conviction that psychoanalysis offers a more comprehensive response to the nihilist crisis than religion. Because of this competence, it ‘replaces’ religion. Psychoanalysis proposes a new concept of reason, love and ethics, which responds better to the pluralistic situation of a culture which is governed by instrumental

reason, the market, and consumption. For Kristeva, this substitution takes place not only because of a better responsiveness to a ‘plural, non-homogeneous history’. First of all, in her opinion, psychoanalysis is more advanced in terms of exploring the complex internal structures of the psychic life which underlies this cultural topography. Objectively, critique needs to recognise that Kristeva operates in those ‘lower regions’ of ‘grace’, where theology with its ‘Platonic’ concepts is far less operative. These regions are where the transition between ‘biology’ and ‘culture’ takes place.

Kristeva’s linguistic reading of the Passion. In this writer’s view, the most significant direction that Kristeva takes is her psychoanalytical articulation of the *homo-religiosus*. In this context, crucial for my critique is her linguistic reading of the Passion. As a theme it occurred quite early in Kristeva’s works and its full elaboration took place soon after. I am restricted only to the essentials of her notion of Christ as ‘the absolute subject’. It is a ‘linguistic reading’ of the person of Christ. He is an archetypal figure who sums up the human person’s linguistic story. Language is seen by Kristeva as a kind of ‘proto-passion’. In Christ, the separations that build up psychic life are all symbolically enacted. My study will return to this concept in Part Two, when I engage with Kristeva’s recent reading of the Passion. What is implied in her ‘psychoanalytic image’ of Christ is that psychoanalysis offers a ‘fuller’ image of the human person, whereas in contrast, the person in theology’s presentation shows an anthropological shortcoming. The underlying ‘ontological rivalry’ in this position should not be overlooked. The other important aspect of *homo religiosus* that Kristeva elaborates is her correction of Freud when she states that ‘belief’ in the other is a perennial ‘pre-religious’ dynamic of the person, which is shared with religious discourse.

Kristeva’s critique of the masculine theological imagination. I single out a second major theme of Kristeva’s critique of religion. This is her ‘semiotic’ or ‘feminist’ critique of the masculine theological imagination. This constitutes a complex narrative itself, drawing on Kristeva’s linguistics, psychoanalysis, and materialism. This indirect critique of masculine theological symbol building is especially important for my critique. It will be an essential

308 See this historical responsiveness to the new situation of culture in Kristeva, Melanie Klein, pp.233-236.
309 Julia Kristeva Interviews, p.69.
310 Kristeva’s interest in the psychoanalytic conditions underlying language structures became dominant already in *Deisire In Language*, where the themes of the ‘the work of the negative’, birth, weaning, separation, and the frustration attached to the severance from the mother are fully articulated. Chronologically, this ‘passion’ will be combined with the symbol of Christ sacrifice, the Cross in *Tales of Love* (see chapter, ‘God is Love’ /pp.137-150/), *Powers of Horror*, and *Black Sun*. The full exposition of ‘Christ’ as an archetypal image of human language can be found in the chapter ‘Credo in Unum Deum’ (pp.36-44) in *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*. 
311 More details in *Appendix IV*. 

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resource to produce a renewed imagery of God’s love. The incorporation of this criticism will serve as a basis for a common ‘symbol building’ with Kristeva. This is a criticism of the ‘male narrative’ of motherhood, in the image of Mary as the Virgin Mother. In fact, Kristeva’s deconstruction of the image is an ‘ontological criticism’ of the classic imago Dei. Whereas its direct object is the mechanisms or the psychological motives of how the masculine imagination constructs motherhood, it can be read as a parallel criticism of the ‘paternal metaphor’ through which traditionally God is conceived. For my critique, the ‘maternal metaphor’ which feminist theology has developed will also be an important reference. Here, my study highlights what Kristeva potentially adds to the ‘maternal metaphor’ of God and the points of engagement she offers.

Kristeva’s ‘aesthetical’ or ‘feminist’ criticism was initiated in the essay ‘Stabat Mater’ (Tales of Love). We can recapitulate it as follows. The ‘Virgin Mother’ is a male construct. The dynamic of a ‘controlling Father’ is present in ‘masculine’ theological consciousness in terms of its fear of the female body. The masculine imagination cannot access either the biological or the psychological aspects of motherhood. The ‘masculine God’, in a ‘totemic’ fear of the feminine ‘body’, sidelines crucial aspects of maternal experience. Masculine theology, governed by a ‘masculine Father’, de-constructs the true historicity of childbirth and early care. The function of the images of ‘virginity’ and ‘virgin motherhood’, says Kristeva, is to control the fears of ‘maternal origins’. As a subtle theological construct, the image of the Virgin Mother has a complex social function. It calms the social anxiety surrounding the subject’s birth. It satisfies a male anxious about femininity. It also satisfies women anxious about their own femininity. The image of ‘sacred motherhood’ compensates women symbolically for their exclusion from the male canon. The image of ‘virgin motherhood’ – Mary as Queen of Heaven, satisfies ‘female paranoia’, the female desire for power.312 (See Kristeva’s recapitulation of the critical thrusts of ‘Stabat Mater’ from her The Feminine and the Sacred in Appendix II.)

This ‘semiotic criticism’ of the image, however indirectly, reveals a hidden polemic with a theology which speaks from within a ‘constructed’ Father-hermeneutics. The link is obvious, Kristeva’s analysis also points to the ‘centre’ from which this image is constructed, the inherently ‘Platonic’ masculine (and in the Roman Catholic context, celibate) theological imagination. The latter produces a similarly biased hermeneutics of the ‘feminine self’

312 The above recapitulation of Kristeva’s criticism is from Kristeva, The Feminine and the Sacred, p.75.
comparable to the Cartesian autonomous, disembodied rational self.\textsuperscript{313} The existential experience of motherhood, which Kristeva’s ‘Stabat Mater’ explores,\textsuperscript{314} can be an important correction of the ‘masculine’ perspective on God. Also, Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ ‘counter-narrative’ offers a critical dynamic through which the overtly abstract concept of the theological person can be further corrected.

Kristeva’s central thesis is that in our culture a proper discourse on \textit{motherhood} is still missing. The last coherent narrative offered to our civilisation was the Christian ideal of the ‘Virgin Motherhood’. Today, when Christian imagery (ethical, theological) becomes marginalised, culture faces a painful void. The lack of discourse on motherhood, in this situation, fundamentally contributes to the nihilist crisis. With the inability to name the ‘mother’ (and the ‘Father’), the ‘exhausted subject’ cannot find a proper orientation to come out from his or her crisis. By making the image of the ‘life giving mother’ central, in terms of this symbolic deficit, Kristeva addresses theology. What does it say about reinstating the feminine dimension of the ‘Sacred’? How can an authentic presentation of the ‘Father’ incorporate Kristeva’s problem and speak to the ‘maternal experience’ more directly through the God-image?

This dialogue with Kristeva’s ‘feminist’ critique of religion, I argue, becomes possible on a shared ground. Kristeva, as a practising psychoanalyst, observes that the postmodern subject deeply yearns for an all-inclusive ‘maternal’ love in terms of the experience of being unconditionally accepted. The experience of ‘being loved’ is witnessed to in both theological discourse and the psychoanalytical transference. The \textit{symbolic} co-operation lies in the working hypothesis that addressing the problem of the ‘feminine sacred’ can be made central to theological discourse. It is quite possible that the way back to the ‘Father’ of the ‘exhausted subject’ is through remembering the qualities of maternal love, that is, through the re-discovery of the ‘mother’.

Kristeva’s reformed Freudianism reinstated the ‘feminine’ or ‘maternal’ dimension into the sacred (‘meaning’) in her own regime, too. It is an important correction of the one-sided emphasis of Freud on the ‘Father’. It is through this correction that theology can respond to Kristeva’s Freudianism. Her position remains strictly ‘Freudian’ in the sense also that

\textsuperscript{314} In two vertical columns on the page, she sets next to each other her academic text and her personal account of pregnancy and childbirth.
Kristeva retains the *ontological* meaning of Freud’s statement that ‘religion is an illusion’.\(^{315}\) The original ‘ideological’ position of Freud needs to be addressed because Kristeva implies that the ‘masculine’ theological imagination has no resources to correct the image of the ‘Father’. Also implied in this position is that God, as an ontological reality, remains ‘dead’ in the sense that the concept does not respond to the anthropological and gender complexity of the ‘speaking being’. Kristeva here joins the general criticism of feminist theology that mainstream theology cannot internalise the excluded ‘maternal’ aspect of the self. This objection in her essays is not stated openly, but definitely underlies her critique of religion. Indirectly we can confirm it through feminist theologians like Beattie and Mercer.

Especially Beattie’s radical Catholic feminism urges an internalisation of ‘feminine’ and maternal experience into theological concepts. She urges a structural modifying of masculine theological symbolism. Beattie states that an unacceptable discrimination of these experiences takes place when sin and destruction are associated with feminine chaos, darkness and destructiveness.\(^{316}\) Mercer, in a way more open to dialogue with ‘masculine theology’, also confirms the relevance of Kristeva’s criticism. She posits her feminist approach as an unexpected contribution to theological dialogue.\(^{317}\) Mercer confirms that Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ perspectives contain ‘surprising’ resources for feminist theologians concerned about the gender-inclusive language on God.\(^{318}\) It is indeed possible to relate Kristeva’s ‘aesthetical criticism’ to praxis if we regard her program in ‘Stabat Mater’ as a specific critique of religious fundamentalism. The ‘return to dogma’ coincides with a nostalgic re-construction of God as an ‘external’ and ‘patriarchal’ authority of power. Indirectly, on a theoretical level, Kristeva proposes dealing with *otherness* in lived maternal experience as the correction of the ‘homogenising’ and oppressive cultural super-ego into which the idea of ‘God’ can deteriorate.

*Kristeva’s symbolic reading of the Christian sacrifice.* Another major thrust of Kristeva’s critique of religion is her evaluation of Christian sacrifice. Despite that it is a reductive reading of the original religious economy, Kristeva’s *appreciation* of the Christian sacrifice should not be overlooked. Though strictly in a psychoanalytical frame, she makes central ‘Christianity’s difference’. Jesus represents the apex of the inner development of religion, as he makes ‘sin’ and ‘abjection’ *spoken*. Kristeva emphasises that Jesus’ sacrifice is a bloodless one and the Christian sacrifice is predominantly verbal. The Son creates a new

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\(^{315}\) The ontological meaning of the statement is retained despite correcting this premise and presenting the ‘speaking being’ as a *homo religiosus*.


\(^{318}\) Ibid., p.244.
symbolic space. This space of love, ‘which counterbalances murder, becomes the place where all our crises [historical and individual] can be exploded and assimilated.’ The symbolic space created by the ‘Cross’ makes it possible for us to tell, in a psychologically relevant way, our deepest existential experiences. We can assimilate our unspeakable sufferings into His, and thus the human passion becomes ‘narratable’, named.

Kristeva’s reading of the sacrifice is a specific opportunity for developing a shared reflection on ‘violence’ in culture. Kristeva gives a psychological reading of the sacrifice, drawing on Freud’s premise that various forms of sacrifice enunciate murder as a condition of meaning. ‘You must be separated from your mother so that you do not kill anyone... You will displace your hatred into thought’. It is a clear-cut Freudian ‘faith hermeneutics’. Drawing on Freud’s genesis story of culture, the murder of the primordial father of the horde, Kristeva highlights the transformation of the aggression underlying the ‘bloody’ sacrifice. *Powers of Horror* states a displacement of murder into more sublime systems of meaning, from language to morality and culture. The appreciation of the Eucharist as a community which welcomes otherness should not be overlooked in Kristeva. The Christian celebration of the Eucharist continues the creation of the human interior. Kristeva says that, through identifying with Jesus’ death and resurrection, the person overcomes or ‘internalises’ the death drives. By eating the Son’s body, we identify ourselves with the Father who is the father of the Logos, meaning and Law, and not with the ‘chaotic’ libidial forces of chaos. In this way, we avoid the destructive forces of the death drive, the social manifestation of which is the refusal of the ‘Foreigner’. Narcissism (as the withdrawal from the other) is overcome by shifting ‘the death of the other’ onto Christ, and so it ceases to be narcissism. The *ekklesia* is a ‘community of foreigners’, an ‘ideal community’, a messianism that includes all of humankind. This community of verbal sacrifice is a transformed society.

Needless to emphasise how this appreciation of the Christian discourse on love can serve as further ground for dialogue. The ethical potential which Kristeva attributes to the Christian ‘interior’ is an important way out from the conflict with her materialism (‘the exclusion of grace’). That is why engagement at the ethical level, based on Kristeva’s appreciation of the ‘ekklesia of the foreigner’, is vital. Theology will have the opportunity to spell out the relevance of ‘grace’ in terms of being the source of this inclusiveness.

319 Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, p. 120.
320 Ibid., pp.119-120.
321 Ibid., p. 120.
322 This summary of the Pauline church is from Boer’s overview of Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror*, in Ronald Boer, ‘The Search for Redemption’, p.168.
3.5.3 Kristeva’s Recent Dialogue with Religion

Kristeva’s recent dialogue with religion gives the ultimate confirmation that a critique, not only at a theoretical level but also in practice, can take a non-apologetic direction. This development is an important caesura in her ‘ontological program’, which emerged with the work *This Incredible Need to Believe* (2009). My study submits it as the most important paradigm shift in the oeuvre. The change in Kristeva’s relation to religion is a paradigm shift not only in her hermeneutics of religion, but in her Freudian narrative, too. My critique submits her dialogical position as an important unifying element of her humanism. I limit myself to presenting the most essential elements of the change from *This Incredible Need to Believe* and *Hatred and Forgiveness* (2011), which comprise a unit. In these works, on the one hand, Kristeva integrates the special interests of her critique of religion. On the other hand, her traditional standpoint that ‘religion is an analysable given’ is complemented with an explicit interest in the ‘wisdom of religion’. This new co-ordinate relation far exceeds the ideological subordination of religion to her chosen discourses, Marxism and Freudianism, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974). The two main problems of the oeuvre, the ‘exhaustion of the subject’ and the ‘cultural mourning’ of modernity and post-modernity, culminate in this new dialogical position.

This change was anticipated by some of her feminist critics, but somewhat as a sudden surprise. O’Grady highlights the discomfort with the emerged ‘theological content’ in Kristeva. There is an embarrassment about her ‘endorsing God.’ These voices are obviously exaggerating in stating that Kristeva attempts a psychoanalytic explanation for the possibility of religious experience and ‘accepting the real existence of God’ (Cynthia Chase). There are others who go even as far as declaring that Kristeva offers a ‘Christian orthodoxy’ in place of psychoanalysis (Janice Doane and Devon Hodges). Others speak of her ‘veering’ towards metaphysics and risking ‘toppling over’ (Miglena Nikolchina), others go as far as emphasizing the ‘neo-religious dimension’ (Edith Kurzweil) in Kristeva’s writings. These protests against what they see as a theological component, however, show that there is indeed a genuine caesura which needs to be explained. The feminist commentaries to which I have referred observed a new direction in Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’. What they reacted to with ‘confusion, shame, or hostility’ (O’Grady) as early as 2002 has burst to the surface in

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323 Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p.70.
325 Ibid., p.43.
**This Incredible Need to Believe** (2009). Kristeva’s ‘dialogical feminism’, for the second time, is at loggerheads with ‘exclusive’ feminism for divinity, associated with patriarchal power in any form, is anathema to the feminist agenda.

The essays of *This Incredible Need to Believe* concurrently show Kristeva’s renewed interest in religion, the sudden correction of Freud, and the confirmation of previous materialist presuppositions. To do justice to her critics, the ideological correction of Freud that religion is *not* an illusion, while leaving Kristeva’s immanent references intact, creates a puzzling tension. If Kristeva’s project was a synthesis of the Enlightenment, then it is also true that, with this shift, she has created a tension with those secular traditions that her project gathered into a synthesis. Kristeva, although she never uses the expression ‘cultural mourning’, speaks of ‘psychoanalysis’s uniqueness in becoming a new model for thinking about social relations’, history, and culture.\(^{326}\) In the wider sense, the object of this ‘cultural mourning’ is the changing condition of the subject and culture in modernity and post-modernity. In the narrower sense, this ‘mourning’ manifests itself as a reflection on the crisis of Symbols, religious and secular alike, from these periods. Kristeva’s proposed new humanism is a ‘symbolic mourning’ in terms of proposing the renewal of the symbols of Love. My study in Part Two will take up the evaluation of Kristeva’s ‘ontological program’ in the context of this proposed new ‘symbol building’. Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ narratives will be responded to from a mutual re-reading of the Passion. My point is that Kristeva’s dialogical turn and the inner development of her work naturally suggests taking up this direction.

Kristeva’s hermeneutics of culture shows an important symbolic development. The first phase of the oeuvre formulated a self-referential materialist ‘ontology’ of the person. This materialism, indirectly, implied a critique of religious symbols. Kristeva’s new ‘semiotic symbolism’ was a mode of critique of religion. Its materialism was a response to the ‘ahistoricity’ of Christian metaphysics. Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ images of the ‘heterogeneous subject’ organically developed into ‘a psychoanalytic ontology of love’. Kristeva’s new position literally shows an ‘ontological openness’; her ‘new humanism’ invites *all relevant* observations on the subject. Metaphorically, this stance is an ontological discourse in the sense that it urges a revision of the ‘available’ symbolic narratives. It deliberately prompts a critical revision of ‘Tradition’, metaphysical and post-metaphysical, religion and the heritage of the Enlightenment.\(^{327}\)

\(^{327}\) Kristeva emphasised this program in her public lecture at the British Academy, ‘Is there such a thing as European culture? In conversation with Julia Kristeva’, 24 May 2010. This lecture is
The pivotal emphasis of *This Incredible Need to Believe* and *Hatred and Forgiveness* is the realisation of a *shared* crisis. The position of the ‘third’ Kristeva, in the essays ‘From Mozart to Jesus’ and ‘Suffering’, despite the critical tone, shows an explicit and positive cooperation with theology. In the latter essay, we see the author in an immediate dialogue with the Christian experience of ‘exhaustion’ and ‘rebirth’ when she gives a psychoanalytical-ethical account of Christ’s Passion. This dialogical shift is supported by Kristeva’s new hermeneutical viewpoint on the crisis. Of paramount importance with her corrections on Freud, Kristeva expresses the need for a change of the ‘secular viewpoint’. She claims a more inclusive *Aufklärung* by widening its resources. This is her response to Habermas’ observation that ‘something is missing’ in secular discourse. For her part, Kristeva urges a ‘theoretical risk-taking’, a co-operation among discourses previously unrelated or being in an explicit tension. Envisioning a ‘laboratory of new forms of humanism’ is an admittance that the Enlightenment humanism is in a borderline situation now where previous answers are not sufficient. It is in this context that Kristeva proposes a mutual dialogue on ‘Christianity’s difference’:

‘Would I dare to think aloud that Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, is not necessarily what one thinks it is? Because within ‘what one believes’ – about suffering, for example – astonishing progress has been made that might resonate in harmony with present preoccupations? And vice versa, the modern fields of knowledge may be able to interpret in a new way the wisdom that underlies traditional dogma.’

The other animating core of the shared reflection to which she invites theology is Kristeva’s ‘psychoanalytical’ correction of Freud. Religion is not illusion; the ‘speaking being’ is *homo religiosus*. In this new scheme, faith in the other, the capacity to identify with ‘love’, is a ‘primary constituent of identity’. ‘Unlike Freud, I don’t say that religion is merely an illusion or source of neurosis.’

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328 As a reminder, the chronological reading of her works showed revolutionary psychoanalysis as Kristeva’s ‘first’ phase, then psychoanalysis as her ‘second phase’.
329 The major essays of *This Incredible Need to Believe*.
330 Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p.28.
331 Ibid., p.78.
332 Ibid., pp.10-11.
333 ‘From Jesus to Mozart (Christianity’s Difference)’, Ibid. p.83.
This Incredible Need to Believe is a caesura and a new initiative also in the sense that it can be seen as a deliberate correction of the ontological closedness of her early materialism. This is tantamount to breaking the Habermasian prohibition: Kristeva now makes ontological statements on the human ‘being’. This norm-breaking is intrinsically addressing the symbolism of the Christian faith, the Passion, and makes it a real dialogue partner. This move is necessary as the early Freudianism of Revolution in Poetic Language cannot provide an adequate response to the ‘exhausted subject’. A critical exchange with religion, because of her engagement with Christian texts, was always there as a possibility in Kristeva. Yet, it was never realised as a dialogue because of the ‘materialist strait-jacket’ of her system. Now, with the ‘religious’ correction of Freud, despite remaining on the materialist horizon, new possibilities open up.

First of all, regarding the tension between the psychoanalytical and the theological points of view, a shared reflection on their historical ‘split’ becomes possible. This is that dimension of ‘cultural mourning’ in which my study is most interested. The first level of ‘cultural mourning’ was the historical reflection which took place in Kristeva’s psychoanalysis as a response to the changes that modernity and then post-modernity brought about in European culture. Kristeva’s ‘dialogical position’ reveals a level on which the previously separate reflections of psychoanalysis and theology can be brought into dialogue. It is a completion of the unfinished reflection on the intrinsic relationship between ‘declining theological images of person and society’ ‘and their displacement by predominantly psychological images’, which close connection Peter Homans states as a pivotal one.334 This second level of ‘cultural mourning’ stands for the reflection which can take place between Kristeva’s Freudianism and theology about the paradigmatic changes, which resulted in the ‘exhausted subject’.

My working hypothesis is that it is particularly a potential joint ‘symbolic reflection’ on the Passion which makes it possible to reflect on the ‘split’ between secular and religious humanisms. Of course, there is a lot to be ‘mourned’ as Kristeva does not hide her mistrust of having recourse to the irrational.335 Here, ‘irrational’ refers to the theological attitude which is closed in upon itself and operates from within an exclusive faith-hermeneutics. Here Kristeva poses a genuine challenge for theology. It has to decide if it remains a marginalised discourse, in the sense that it does not contribute to the collective

335 Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.26.
understanding of the crisis.\(^{336}\) If theology undertakes this task and offers an ‘inclusive’ re-actualisation of Christian ontology, my working hypothesis goes further, it gets into the position of *interrogating with relevance, in the context of a shared discourse, Kristeva’s atheistic subtexts.* Another important new possibility is revisiting Kristeva’s ‘feminist critique’ of religion. The latter can be prompted to revise its previous premise: what if theology can integrate the ‘maternal metaphor’ within the image of the ‘Father’?

A further connection is that *This Incredible Need to Believe* makes central the image of the ‘Loving Third Party’. Trust in the ‘loving Third Party’ offers an exit from the self’s isolation. ‘Faith’ and ‘belief’ offer a dynamism through which it is possible to come out from the state of the ‘exhausted subject’.

‘….There is the primal identification with the father of individual pre-history whose loving authority quiets primal anxiety and provides me with the conviction that “I am”. The “I” does not cease to seek out the primary constituents of its identity in its incredible need to believe.’\(^{337}\)

Kristeva’s dialogical position creates the possibility of spelling out the theological dynamic of the ‘Father’. Kristeva herself draws a parallel between the psychoanalytical and the theological readings of the ‘Loving Third’ in *This Incredible Need to Believe.* This is an important ground for dialogue which can be exploited, regardless of the ‘ontological difference’.

To finish, Kristeva’s dialogical position needs to be seen realistically. Theology has to be aware that, for a renewed critique of nihilism, she retains the leading role for psychoanalysis on the grounds that it has sufficiently internalised the ‘complexity of the Enlightenment humanism’, whereas this complexity has remained insufficiently perceived by theology.\(^{338}\) In other words, psychoanalysis is ahead of theological language in terms of a more advanced ‘cultural mourning’. In a sense, there is no change in the previous position that ‘psychoanalysis, and no longer faith, provides the optimal path toward self-

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\(^{336}\) See these apologetic Orthodoxy, exemplified in the theology of Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition,* and John Milbank’s program of the Radical Orthodoxy movement. Hanvey gives an excellent critique of the limits and strategic errors of Milbank’s apologetic program as an ‘exclusive’ re-actualisation of Christian ontology. See: John Milbank, ‘The Program of Radical Orthodoxy’ Ch.3 (pp.33-45), and James Hanvey, ‘Conclusion: Continuing the Conversation’, in *Radical Orthodoxy.*


\(^{338}\) Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe,* p.26.
knowledge." The significant ‘concession’ is that Kristeva admits that psychoanalysis does not at present have an unquestionable solution. All in all, it is worth accepting the challenge of responding to the underlying conviction of her critique of religion, that mainstream theology exhibits an ‘anthropological deficit’ when presenting the classic images of faith. This ‘anthropological deficit’, first of all, should be understood in terms of lagging behind in its ‘symbolic mourning’, that is, in incorporating and transforming leading discourses and key images associated with the ‘anthropological shift’ in culture. The ‘Catholica’ as a cultural dynamic is challenged by Kristeva’s dialogical position, which, realistically, sees theology still on the margins of contemporary discourses.

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3.6 THE WAY FORWARD

3.6.1 A Thematic Overview of the Oeuvre (Areas for Theological Engagement)

Having identified the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’ as a hermeneutical bridge, a thematic overview of Kristeva’s work can serve as an objective support for the claim that the systemic engagement that my critique aimed at is possible. This overview is also a helpful ‘map’ for engaging in Part Two.

If theology takes pains to explore the ‘systemic’ reasons for what separates Kristeva’s hermeneutical position from that of theology, a challenging field opens up for reflection. We can collect the following theoretically ‘sensitisable’ areas from Kristeva’s work, which may be potential fields of engagement and which theology needs to be familiar with. They are especially important for systematic theology to internalise and make part of its responses. They follow in the chronological order of their emergence and give an overview of the unfolding of Kristeva’s project.

(1) Kristeva’s post-structuralism, which grounded her concept of the ‘subject in process’. It states that the stable ‘ego’ of modernity is an illusion. The homogeneity of the subject is always challenged from its ‘semiotic’ ground by the sub-conscious level of language, memories, past, desires. (2) The dialectic between the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘symbolic’ constituents of language. (3) The integration of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ theories into an ethic. Their connection with Kristeva’s ‘historical materialism’. (4) The ‘semiotic’ as a regenerative source to renew Symbolic meaning (in poetic language, in therapy). (5) The ‘alchemy of love’ in individual pre-history, with special focus on the concept of ‘the loving Third’. (6) The psychological deconstruction of the threatening image of the Stranger. The premise of Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ethics is that ‘the stranger is within us’. Fear of the Stranger can be removed by pure self-reflection on the part of the self. The person must only revise his or her projections which lead to the exclusion of the foreigner. Theology can engage critically with this psychologically derived categorical imperative. God as the true Other to the self is theology’s alternative and can make Kristeva’s ethical ideal genuinely real. (7) A mother’s experience with her child. This is the ‘feminine sacred’, a specific knowledge of dealing with otherness. (8) Kristeva’s commitment to the psychic rebirth of the ‘wounded’ subject as a psychotherapist. It raises the need to compare the dynamic of psychic rebirths on the psychological horizon and the dynamic of rebirth that ‘grace’ offers. How do the two methods relate to each other when theology presents God as the narrative and the narrator of the self? (9) Kristeva’s critique of culture in defence of the subject’s particularity
over against a homogenising nihilism. (10) Kristeva’s critique(s) of religion. Here, a critique can highlight the following areas: Kristeva’s substitution of psychoanalysis for religion; the psychoanalytical account of ‘violence’ in religious fundamentalism; Kristeva’s critique of sidelined maternal experience in religion; ‘the Virgin Mother’ as a construct of the masculine theological imagination; Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ reading of the Cross; and her most recent ethical reading of the Passion. (11) Kristeva’s recent proposal of renewed humanism to combat nihilism in order to preserve European cultural identity. (12) Her inviting the ‘wisdom of religion’ to participate in this alliance. (13) Kristeva’s professional revision of Freud’s premise that ‘religion is an illusion’. The way she departs from Freud towards a shared ‘symbol building’ with Christians, while keeping her materialist presuppositions intact. This correction raises the need to evaluate Kristeva’s humanist and atheistic ‘subtext’ critically and in a non-polemical way.

3.6.2 Strategic Conclusions

The major areas of analysis such as the ‘exhausted subject’, Kristeva’s materialism as an ‘ontological program’, the ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject (the unfinished mourning for the self’s Christian past’), and Kristeva’s critique of religion were necessary for situating her for theology. Part One explored the major points of contact which ground a sound theological access to a diverse corpus.

The central thesis Part One argued was that the ‘exhausted subject’ is the underlying problem of the oeuvre. We learnt that ‘the exhausted subject’ is about more than the ‘subjective crisis’ understood strictly in psychological terms. This was theology’s finding. My critique arrived at this recognition by pointing to the consequences of the materialist grounding of the ‘speaking being’. The subject’s ‘exhaustion’ revealed two characteristically different models of the self, that of theology and that of Kristevan psychoanalysis. To put the ontological conflict simply, it was a tension between the ‘Kierkegaardian’ and the ‘Feuerbachian’ models of the self. In the first case, the self’s ground is God, in the second, the self (also as history) is self-grounding. The task of situating Kristeva for theology was also a task of re-situating this ontological conflict. That is why my study suggested deconstructing the static apologetic situation by relating Kristeva and theology through Peter Homans’ concept of ‘cultural mourning’. This is an objective situation which the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity, as a new historical reference for discourse, has created.
Approaching Kristeva’s project as an ontological narrative brought into focus the underlying humanist ‘narratives’ of her ‘speaking being’. These ‘subtexts’, predominantly ‘Marx’ and ‘Freud’, are important references for developing a ‘cultural mourning’ through which theology and Kristevan psychoanalysis can be linked in an organic way. The analyses showed that their conflict is not antagonistic but dialectic. Kristeva’s non-believer’s position is not an absolute break with the Christian narrative. A major conclusion of Part One is that there is sufficient ground for a shared reflection when the needs of the postmodern subject can be responded to. The ‘exhausted subject’ provides a ground on which to operate with the notion of a shared historical crisis. This can lead to a shared symbolisation in support of the wounded subject of post-modernity. The contextualisation of Kristeva for systematic theology can be brought to realisation best within this shared ‘symbolic mourning’.

The ongoing crisis of the subject has revealed the failure of secular humanism and the failure of religion to deal with the nihilist crisis. This situation makes it necessary to reopen an ‘ontological discourse’ on the ‘beginnings’ and on historical recommencements. My study emphasised that Kristeva’s criticism of rationalist humanism poses a genuine challenge to ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. Challenging Cartesian rationality from within the discourse on love showed a conflict with the ‘Habermasian position’. Kristeva’s immanent criticism of the humanist tradition prompts an ‘ontological discussion’ on the ‘origins’ in a new way. She confirms that an in-depth revision of the relationship between the subject and culture is inevitable. One of the major conclusions of Part One is that, paradoxically, there is more chance of reopening this ‘ontological dialogue’ with theology than with ‘mainstream’ rationalist revisions of the Enlightenment. That is why I suggested exploring the possibilities of a new way of speaking on ‘origins’. The crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’ makes it possible to revisit the classic ‘ontological interest’ of theology. The question of the self’s grounding in ‘grace’ can be integrated into the discourse on the crisis of the ‘speaking being’ and history. It offers a creative encounter with Kristeva’s ‘semitic ontology of love’ as the program of the self-transcending subject.

The analyses of Part One have shown that Kristeva’s psychoanalysis, as an ‘ontological program’, needs to be listened to and also challenged. Though the psychoanalytical viewpoint is necessary, yet it cannot be made exclusive. The intriguing paradox for psychoanalysis is to realise that it is just as much a discourse marginalised by a nihilist culture as is ‘Theologia’, the discussion of divine matters. As a form of cultural critique and healing it does not enjoy that canonical state which Kristeva attributes to it. In a sense, Kristevan psychoanalysis is more dependent on ‘theology’ than it accepts. However, as a
discourse, it is in a genuine position of analysis in areas where theology is not. These justify a closer co-operation.

My study identified as a central challenge for both discourses the problem of the resourcing of the person. I arranged the ontological conflict with Kristeva’s materialism around this problem. The theological evaluation showed how the materialist grounding of the self leads to a systemic exclusion of ‘grace’ from Kristeva’s model. My study raised a connection between the loss of a ‘Transcendent selfhood’ and the problem of the ‘exhausted subject’. With the help of Kristeva’s novels, I drew attention to the ‘ontological mourning’ of the ‘speaking being’. Kristeva’s founding materialism leaves the trauma of uprootedness from the Christian past unaddressed. This lack can be overcome only if psychoanalysis, when analysing religious experience, makes an attempt to remain within the original dynamics of faith. The dynamic of the ‘exhausted subject’ makes this unorthodox ‘leap’ necessary. Kołoszyc demonstrated that Kristeva’s methodology, by virtue of its nature, excludes this twofold operation. Urging psychoanalysis onto this ‘ontological mourning’ is the task of theology. To put it in a non-apologetic fashion, it is theology’s service to psychoanalysis, as it cannot make this leap by itself or only at the cost of violating its own methodological principles. That is why I suggest a co-operation in the medium of ‘cultural mourning’. ‘Cultural mourning’, in our specific context, denotes the objective need for a shared reflection on the paradigmatic changes in culture which have resulted in the ‘exhausted subject’.

This objective needs to put an end to the Habermasian prohibition of ‘ontological discourse’. The very fact that Kristeva articulates a semiotic ‘semi-ontology’ means that she can contribute to a ‘shared cultural mourning’ with her in-depth observations on the subjective crisis. The main conclusion of my study is that co-operation is necessary. Kristeva’s dialogical position was the final justification of this non-polemic direction for my critique. This claim is supported by Kołoszyc who convincingly argued that there is a far deeper structural connection between Kristeva’s immanent criticism of the secular tradition and religious discourse than academic research observes. My study stresses that within the psychoanalytical framework, Kristeva has a critical ideal of religious discourse itself. She assigns to it the task of overcoming ‘theological monologism’. That is, theology has to be able to present itself as a borderline or interdisciplinary discourse. In our context it means the capacity for participating in an ‘inter-symbolic’ encounter. This is a way of doing theology

when ‘Theologia’ itself attains an analytical position, when it goes beyond the unitary view of the world by acting as an uninterrupted metaphysics. The challenge is to revise the relationship between the self, religious language and orthodoxy in this dialogue.

The analyses of the ‘exhausted subject’ showed the need for the ideological horizon of the ‘exhausted subject’ to be examined. The humanist and atheistic subtexts of the ‘speaking being’ in this context attain a new significance. The relationship of the self to its religious past self necessitates a revaluation of the efficiency of these founding narratives. It can be rightly supposed that some of their answers have expired in the present situation. The historical examination of the problem in Kristeva’s works confirmed this critical direction. However, the ‘exhaustion’ of the postmodern self needs to be reflected upon in a new way. It means that the changed potential of Kristeva’s ‘ideological subtexts’ and the resources of theology have to be evaluated together. The same applies to previous strategies of theological modernity dealing with the crisis. Part Two brings them into dialogue with Kristeva’s ‘modernist resources’ (Marx, Freud, Arendt.)

I conclude with what my study regards as the most important strategic recognition. The direct ontological critique of Kristeva’s materialism is not possible. Any direct exchange between her Freudianism and theology would necessarily perpetuate an apologetic relationship. This is an objective impasse. That is why developing a critique also on a ‘symbolic’ level was necessary. Reading the novels in terms of the unfinished ‘mourning’ for the Christian origins of the self made this ‘transcending’ possible. The ‘loss of the Father’, both in a religious and psychological sense, allows a more flexible, ‘symbolic’ discussion than the theoretical discourse of the ontological conflict. The good news is that the conflict with Kristeva’s materialism can be revisited on a different level. In this case, the direct object of critique is not the conflict with Kristeva’s immanent horizon, but the crisis of the subject which makes this immanence visible. The historical needs of the subject make possible a genuine transcending of the apologetic situation.

My study identified the two most important needs of the subject. (1) The self needs to be grounded on love, which is the only sufficient counter-economy over against nihilism. (2) The inherited ideological narratives of the self, religious and secular, have to be ‘mourned’, that is, updated. The two together can lead to a new responsiveness of the subject (Kristeva’s ‘intimate revolt’). The comprehensive theological response to Kristeva has to accomplish both of these tasks.
The overview of Kristeva’s critique of religion confirmed that the crisis of the ‘speaking being’ situates secular and theological humanisms in a ‘Good Friday’ dialogue. The ultimate confirmation that raising the nature–‘grace’–‘language’ relationship is possible was Kristeva’s recently proposed new humanist coalition to combat nihilism, in which ‘religious wisdom’ is also included. For theology the time has come when tackling the challenges of secular culture (‘nihilism’ in focus) a new re-presentation of divine Love cannot be postponed. In an age which needs a ‘second’, post-Freudian criticism, theology has to offer an in-depth analysis of the relationship between God and the subject. The subtlety of Kristeva’s theories prompts critique on her to expound the complexity of ‘the amorous discourse’ of theology. That is, it should offer an alternative to the banal images of God with which culture operates. This complex language on God, indirectly, will have to show that the Kristevan horizon is not complete on its own. The ‘personalism’ that Kristeva exhibits, needs to be completed and challenged by the personalism that theology can spell out. That is, if theology wants to be relevant, it needs to offer a narrative which is capable of critically integrating Kristeva’s emphasis on the particularity or historicity of psychic suffering. It is a witness to the ‘intimate revolt’ of theology.

Situating Kristeva for theology in Part One suggests developing a response to the ‘passion’ of the ‘speaking being’ from the historical Passion of the ‘absolute subject’, Christ. My study in Part Two will take up the evaluation of Kristeva’s ontological program in the context of the proposed new ‘symbol building’. Her ‘semiotic’ narratives will be responded to from a mutual ‘symbolic’ reading of Passion. My point is that the inner development of Kristeva’s work, in view of her dialogical turn, naturally suggests taking up this direction.
(an illustration for the Semiotic Passion)
PART TWO: THE ‘SEMIOTIC PASSION’: A RESPONSE FROM THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Part One and Part Two relate to each other as exposition and conversation. Part One situated Kristeva as a potential dialogue partner for theology. The task of Part Two is to bring to realisation this dialogue. Its purpose is to show the relevance of developing a comprehensive response from within the specific theological genre, the theologia crucis.

Part Two initiates a critical conversation on the ‘ontic exhaustion’ of the subject, which Kristeva does not fully answer. Part Two completes the thesis Part One argued. The underlying problem of the ‘speaking being’ is the subject’s historical or ontic ‘exhaustion’ (Part One), and this ‘exhausted subject’ can be responded to best from the theology of the cross (Part Two). By now the meaning of ‘ontic exhaustion’ is clearly defined. It stands for the critical exhaustion of the resources of the self. The impasse of the subject of culture is so acute that theology makes the claim that in order to resolve this impasse it is necessary to speak again of the consequences of the loss of the ‘Transcendent’ resources of the self. Against this background, Part Two metaphorically can be seen as a ‘Good Friday dialogue’, as it invites Kristeva’s Freudianism to make ‘ontological’ statements on the self’s grounding together with theology.

That the theology of the cross can be seen as a synthesis of doctrine, analogous to Kristeva’s synthesis of the Enlightenment tradition, on its own, is not a sufficient reason for developing the response from the theologia crucis. Nor is it a sufficient explanation that Kristeva shows a genuine interest in the theme of the cross, or that her early apologetic view of religion ‘as repressive dogma’ is completely missing from her recent works. As Mercer said of her non-apologetic turn, the absence of apologetics hardly represents a conversation. This conversation needs to be built. Naming the ideological and ‘ontological’ differences, by themselves is not sufficient. Moreover, if discourse stops at this level, it generates only a sleeping apologetics, which easily gets reactivated. That is why my purpose is to integrate the tension with Kristeva’s materialism into a shared ‘symbolic mourning’. It aims at a new symbolic resourcing of the postmodern subject.

The argument of Part Two is as follows. (1) The ‘exhausted subject’ lives with the situation of the loss of the Father. The primary task is that this loss needs to be ‘mourned’. (2) This situation, my study argues, necessitates a specific form of ‘cultural mourning’. It is a common re-reading of the Passion with the Freudian tradition. This is an objective and necessary form of response to the situation of the ‘lost Father’. (3) Theology and psychoanalysis are both affected by the loss of the Father. Both approaches have to face the new cultural situation where love remains unrepresented.

(4) My study presents the ‘Semiotic Passion’ as the shared ‘symbolic’ mourning for the ‘loss of the Father’. I shall be concerned with the ‘updates’ both theology and Kristevan psychoanalysis have to make in order to recover the Father’s love. We find both traditions in a state of ‘unfinished mourning’ in terms of a fuller comprehension of the subject’s present state. My critique’s prime interest is where Kristeva’s response to the ‘exhausted subject’ remains incomplete. As Part One demonstrated, it is the ‘religious dimension’ of the subjective crisis. Theology argues that, in recovering the ‘Father’, it is necessary to ‘re-ground’ the subject in his religious past, which is ‘unmourned’. However, when theology submits this argument, it faces an incomplete ‘linguistic renewal’ in theological modernity. That is why, instead of presenting a one-sided critique, my argument necessarily takes the shape of a bilateral conversation.

(5) From this unfinished ‘cultural mourning’ my study singles out the problem of the Father-image of the theology of the cross, which theological modernity has inherited. The reason for it is straightforward. When critique challenges Kristeva’s immanentism by arguing that re-grounding the self in ‘grace’ is necessary for recovering the ‘Father’s love’, then, a critical revision of the Father-image at the heart of the Passion, which theology intends to present, is also necessary. My study ‘purifies’ the image of the Father by presenting the concept of the ‘Loving Third party’ as a theological image. This move is directly linked to Kristeva’s sophisticated ‘atheistic’ subtext, Freud’s criticism of the ‘Christian Father’. Resolving the underlying ‘ideological’ tension will pave the way for the ‘exhausted subject’ to return to the ‘Father’s love’. It will also ground a successful ‘mourning’ with Kristeva for the ‘ontological split’, explored in Part One.

(6) The second major area upon which Part Two focuses is the successful or completed elements of the ‘cultural mourning’ of theological modernity. My study argues that the theologia crucis has sufficient resources for a comprehensive response to Kristeva. This response addresses her psychoanalytic project in general, the ‘ontic’ or ‘unmourned’ needs of the postmodern subject, her ‘critiques of religion’, and particularly her dialogical turn with
her recent re-reading of the Passion. It will be a critical dialogue with her ‘atheistic’ and other humanistic resources. This dialogue, metaphorically, is a ‘Semiotic Passion’. We speak here of the ‘semiotic’ Passion because its language incorporates both Kristeva’s methodology and Christian doctrine.

(7) Having explored the potentials and limits of modernity’s theology of the cross, my study presents a ‘concrete’ version of the ‘Semiotic Passion’. This is a necessary theoretical proposal, as the situation of the ‘exhausted subject’ is far from being resolved in a reassuring way, either by her discourse or, in the Catholic context, by ‘mainstream’ ‘Magisterial’ theology. The Semiotic Passion, however sketchily, will signal those directions which my critique regards as necessary for presenting the Cross as a generative cultural symbol. This strictly theoretical proposal aims at revealing theology’s cultural mourning in relationship to the postmodern subject.

In terms of the thematic structure, Part Two presents three types of ‘cultural mourning’ related to the symbol of the cross. These readings of the ‘Passion’ are that of Freud, that of Kristeva in dialogue with religion, and that of the theology of the cross. They are three interrelated readings of the ‘Father’s love’. What is common in them is that the true object is the contemporary self or the ‘exhausted subject’ of culture. These analyses will examine systematically the underlying cause of the ‘exhaustion’: the loss of the Father’s love. In this way, my study relates the ‘exhausted subject’ with the ‘lost father’. As a comprehensive response to Kristeva, Part Two spells out the task of recovering this relationship as the theological dimension of the self in theology’s solution.

The three readings of the Passion will show three strategies to recover the Father’s love. At the endpoint of these strategies, in order to give a symbolic support to the ‘exhausted subject’, I argue, arriving at the Semiotic Passion is a natural outcome. My study presents it as the only logical resolution of the ‘ontological’ and ideological conflict with Kristeva. The Semiotic Passion as a theoretical proposal integrates not only the original Freudian and the Kristevan reading of the cross, but, in a wider sense, Kristeva’s atheistic and humanist subtexts. Thus, my study ends with a ‘post-Freudian reading’ of the Passion. It serves as a theological ‘bridge’ or model from which ground it becomes possible for theology to engage those forms of contemporary humanism which have or seek contact with religious discourse. In this sense, the Semiotic Passion is a ‘model of the secular’. It is a narrative framework which puts the non-apologetic stance, that my critique develops, into practice. As a real dialogue, it confirms the program of ‘gracing the secular’ (J. Hanvey). This confirmation is all the more important as, with the rise of aggressive secularism, there is a parallel rise of
neo-foundationalism both in theology and ecclesial policies, but also in some forms of secular humanism. Mark C. Taylor confirms that neo-foundationalism is a distinctively postmodern phenomenon and itself is part of post-modernity.\textsuperscript{343} Taylor, in his own context, also confirms that the program of Vatican II, to ‘grace the secular’ through dialogue with secular humanism is an endangered program. ‘Unquestioned religiosity and moralism are actually more dangerous than the beliefs and practices they are designed to resist.’\textsuperscript{344} That is why it is necessary for theology to separate itself from the obsession with condemning post-modernity and its discourses. The engagement with Kristeva, and particularly the \textit{Semiotic Passion}, offers a discourse in which theology can operate outside the hermeneutical wounds caused by post-modernity.

‘The very counterculture charged with leading society down the slippery slope of relativism and nihilism is actually a spiritual or even religious phenomenon, and the moral zealots who attack relativism in the name of absolutism are nihilists who reject the present world for the sake of a future kingdom they believe is coming.’\textsuperscript{345}

This warning of Taylor is an important guide for my \textit{Semiotic Passion}. It is against this background that I suggest a view of the postmodern situation and the postmodern subject, non-apologetically, ‘from within’; from \textit{within} ‘grace’.

\textsuperscript{344} Ibid., p.xvii.
\textsuperscript{345} Ibid., p.xvii
4 THE NEW SITUATION IN CULTURE: THE LOST FATHER

4.1 Why Develop A Response From The Theology of The Cross?

Part One started by situating Kristeva against her secular background. My study follows the same strategy when it situates the response it develops against the wider background of ‘mainstream’ theological discourses. Much of modern theology thinks it is responding to the crisis of the subject and is convinced that it has sufficient resources for understanding the ‘person’ in the nihilist crisis. In reality, it knows very little of the situation in the sense that it has no direct contact with the postmodern subject. We can distinguish two major strategies.

The ontological tradition, either in its theological or philosophical forms, seeks what is persistent in time and history, what is the ground of a constant ‘identity’.346 ‘Onto-theology’347 in general argues that personal and cultural identity should be defined from an ‘objectivity’ of a future, the eschatological world of God. We can call its different forms an ‘eschatological ontology’348 ‘Onto-theology’, when intensified as the Christian critique of culture, says that the answer to the crisis is a return ‘ad fontes’ or to the sources of faith. In other words, we need to return to the ‘clean spring of Christian metaphysics’. By reinstating these classic ontological principles, onto-theology expects Transcendence, doctrinal and liturgical orthodoxy will also be recovered. The crisis of modernity is cured by ‘going before the crisis’. In these ‘neo-orthodox’ approaches,349 the underlying universal crisis of culture is denied. In the ‘restoration model’, the crisis is not a general crisis of culture; instead, it is attributed only to the ‘Secular’ side. ‘Secularity’ becomes accountable, being identified as the cause of alienation from Transcendence. In this writer’s view, this is the very moment when the chance for a genuine analysis of culture is lost.

The second strategy is that of ‘postmodern theology’. This model recognises the need to engage with the secular structures of culture. Postmodern theology engages the linguistic structures of the subject. In this endeavour, the risk is that theology can go too close to the contemporary subject and lose sight of orthodoxy. Kristeva challenges both of these strategies. In a figurative sense, to neo-orthodox models she says, ‘your revisionist return to

346 Grenz, Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, p.267.
347 This is an extremely difficult umbrella term, which is widely used but never unanimously defined. For an overview of this theological tradition see Beyond Foundationalism, pp.266-273.
348 See the process philosophy of Alfred Whitehead, the eschatological ontology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, or its philosophical version, or the linking of the future to the self in Martin Heidegger. Grenz, John R. Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, pp.269. 272.
349 The examples are virtually unlimited. This denial is exemplified by David Torevell’s Losing the Sacred, Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform, T&Clark, Edinburgh 2000.
metaphysics is an illusion because you are implicated in the crisis of the subject as well. You cannot talk of God with relevance if your discourse is disconnected from a common history’. Kristeva also challenges postmodern theologies by saying that though they see the problem of the postmodern subject, yet, they can never fully ‘mourn’ its sufferings while staying outside this suffering and the actual ‘language’ of the subject. A ‘soft’ understanding of the subject, in terms of engaging only with the linguistic playfulness of the subject, is only a superficial response, and is a kind of patronising attitude to post-modernity. This is ‘postmodern theology’ at its worst. Instead, warns Kristeva, it is necessary to go underneath the language of this subject and understand the psychic roots of the crisis. The implied criticism is this: neither form of theology takes seriously the historicity of the subject. The postmodern subject, paradoxically, remains ‘abstract’ for ‘mainstream’ theologies operating in the postmodern period. They postulate postmodern experiences of faith, and attribute ‘religious’ anxieties to this subject, but actually never analyse ‘psychic suffering’.

Thence it follows that the ‘extrinsic’ view of the postmodern subject and culture has to be transcended. As for ‘onto-theology’, its classic narrative to re-ground the self in God is not sufficient any longer. It is the postmodern self, postmodern history, and not the self and history in general which need to be re-grounded. Theology needs to realise that the ‘theological subject’ or the subject of faith is also involved in the postmodern drama. The theology of the cross, understood in its original function, is a borderline discourse within Tradition, because it is always a borderline discourse with culture, being Tradition’s most exposed surface to the ‘Secular’. My study opts for the theologia crucis in view of its meaning recovered by Moltmann. That is, the theology of the cross is the very core of the ‘immanent’ criticism of Tradition. Its function is to prompt Christian reflection to interrogate the relationship between faith, orthodoxy, subject and culture. As a borderline discourse, it is always the avant-garde language of the Church which prompts the renewal of Christian

350 I refer to two forms of doing ‘postmodern theology’. The first is theologising in the modernist fashion, exemplified by the dialogical approach of Roger Haight. The second is postmodern theology in a narrow sense, when it internalises the linguistic sensitivity of the postmodern period. My example is Richard Kearney’s playful compassion for the postmodern subject. Haight, in order to make sense of traditional doctrine for ‘present consciousness’ ends up with inflating orthodoxy while talking to an imagined (theologically constructed) postmodern audience. Kearney engages this new listener through an intense theological playfulness, and shows a genuine interest in postmodern critical strategies, but he also does not let ‘postmodern suffering’ speak for itself. However, in stark contrast to neo-orthodox approaches and Haight, Kearney gives a genuine account of how postmodern suffering can be seen with empathy from within classic theology. See, Haight, Jesus: Symbol of God, and Kearney’s Levinasian reinterpretation of the persona, section ‘Persona as eschaton’, in Richard Kearney, ‘Transfiguring God’ (pp.369-393), in The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology, edited by Graham Ward, Blackwell, Oxford 2005. (First edition 2001)
identity and incites a fresh commitment to serve the suffering Christ in the world. Christ’s cross is a crisis of Christian identity, and this self-interrogation connects with the crisis of the alienated world. A theology of the cross, conceived in this way, has the potential to integrate the values of the above ‘mainstream’ theological approaches and overcome their limitations. The theologia crucis, as a borderline discourse, as the crisis-narrative of the believer and the ‘exhausted subject’, can also internalise Kristeva’s agendas.

The two protagonists of the Cross are the Father and the Son. In Jesus, as ‘absolute subject’ (Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’), the ‘exhausted subject’ is also present. It is this common ground that makes the ‘exhausted subject’ and the ‘Father’s love’ the focal points for a shared ‘symbolisation’. The content of Kristeva’s ‘psychic passion’ shows the theology of the cross as the most immediate ‘intertext’ of her ‘speaking being’. The following themes present the reasons why the ‘Cross’ as the passion of Love proves to be a comprehensive response to Kristeva in terms of overlapping with her themes.

(1) Kristeva emphasises the historicity of the subject, its historical uniqueness.

(2) The core of Kristeva’s linguistic model is the theme of love. Love as meaning is offered by the ‘loving Third party’: as parental love, or as love in psychoanalytical transference. Kristeva states that love, as the transcendent dynamic of the self, is alone redemptive.

(3) Kristeva exposes the ‘vulnerability’ of love. Meaning is always fragile. Love as a communication is always in a precarious state, human love is ‘exhaustible’. Her focus is psychic suffering.

(4) Kristeva’s psycho-linguistic soteriology relies on the resources of a renewed humanism. Her speaking subject in need of ‘healing’ reveals particular forms of ‘loss’. The ‘Stranger’, the culturally uprooted ‘Migrant/Foreigner’, and ‘unlistened to motherhood’ articulate important aspects of the ‘exhausted subject’. All these losses call for the counter-economy of love and genuine listening.

(5) To the ‘exhausted subject’ Kristeva offers linguistic rebirth: the renewal of identity in a foreign language, in another narrative, or in a new culture. In the background, there is the


352 For the overview of Moltmann’s formulation of this program of renewal for the theologia crucis of modernity see, Ch.1 ‘The Identity and Relevance of Faith’ (pp-7-31), in Moltmann, The Crucified God.
need to respond to ‘global uprootedness’. Kristeva clearly envisions the subject in the process of a complex ‘cultural mourning’, the aim of which is accommodation to ‘change’.

(6) Kristeva is mourning for the subject ‘exhausted’ by nihilism. Her project attempts to recover the Father’s Love through the ‘feminine Sacred’, which latter is spelled out as an alternative authority of love. Yet, this authority always refers to the Father and also is in need of support from it. This way, figuratively speaking, Kristeva sets up a ‘Trinitarian dynamic’, a narrative of mutual support.

(7) The ethics of solidarity which Kristeva is in search of turns towards the abandoned sufferer (abandoned by culture). Kristeva’s recent drawing on the Christian Passion as a source for a secular ethics explores further the meaning of ‘exhaustion’: handicapped people, identity conflict in the communities of second generation migrants (‘Muslim radicalisation’ against a host culture), and other forms of un-listened to identities.

(8) In order to reach a fuller understanding of the subject, Kristeva enters into dialogue with religion. She corrected Freud’s controversial premise. Religion is not an illusion. To believe in the other is our innermost psychic need. The archetype of the ‘speaking being’ is _homo religiosus_. Though this is not an ontological correction of Freud, Kristeva opens the door for religion to give its own view on ‘exhaustion’ and the Freudian narrative itself.

These points show that Kristeva attempts to mourn the postmodern subject in its full vulnerability. In theology’s idiom, the implied claim is that ‘psychic suffering’ needs to be incorporated into the ‘economy of the Cross’. Through the analyses of Part One, my study presents the ‘exhausted subject’ as a passion-narrative in its own right. Both theology and psychoanalysis are invited to listen to this wounded subjectivity. This postmodern passion as psychic and ‘ontological’ suffering is a crucial ‘bridge’ to Kristeva’s renewed Freudianism. If ‘exhaustion’ is ongoing, unstopped, then, psychoanalytic strategies which adhere to a ‘closed’ post-metaphysical consciousness need to be revised. The response to the ‘world of fragile things, fragile selves, fragile psyches and fragile love’\(^3\) can no longer exclude the religious contribution as Ruti, Kristeva’s follower, does. The ‘Habermasian position’, within psychoanalysis, must be revised. It is striking how ideologically unrevised Freudianisms can deny the ‘ideological’ limits of their regime: ‘I [Ruti] consequently suggest that we undermine our chances for happiness when we envision it in terms of …ascending to a transcendent realm beyond our daily lives.’\(^4\)

\(^{4}4\) Ibid, p.12.
situation’, not only the ‘exhausted subject’, but also of his ‘accompanying narratives’. In this ‘borderline situation’ Kristeva and the theology of the cross find themselves in the position of an ‘ontological’ dialogue about the nature of the crisis.

4.2 A New Situation in Culture: The Lost Father

This dialogue is given a definite confirmation in the ‘loss of the Father’. Coming to terms with this cultural condition sets up the major directions for my critique. The ‘loss of the Father’ is that objective cultural situation through which we can relate Kristeva’s Freudianism and theology most immediately. The ‘loss of the Father’ is not only a psychological situation but a sum of complex losses. Kristeva approaches this loss in terms of its consequences. Human beings have become ‘less “identities” than journeys’, transitory beings.\(^{355}\) Her psychoanalysis insists on overturning Marx’s notion of the ‘Heimat’ (authentic ‘homeland’ with un-alienated social relationship) by redefining this program in the present phase of nihilism.\(^{356}\) The term occurs in Kristeva’s own text.\(^{357}\) ‘Homeland’ in all its traditional sense is lost: ‘Technology and politics have increasingly detached us from our natural habitats and have turned us into nomads once again.’\(^{358}\) Kristeva states a drastic change in the state of the subject, which renders unviable all previous solutions of modernity to attain a ‘Heimat’. This contact with Kristeva’s ‘Marxian subtext’ is important for my study because theology faces a similar challenge. There is no direct return to modernity’s ‘redemptive’ ideals. The medium of history has been radically altered. Now it is collective, unreflected ‘Passion’, a history of the ‘migrants of the global economy and the navigators


\(^{356}\) The term in Kristeva’s use has a connotation with its original Marxist meaning. At its historical roots we find Marx’s political reflections to redefine German national identity. He sought a political solution to attain an ideal social transformation, overcoming social alienation. Later Marxist literature uses Marx’s *Heimat* ideal in a more general sense, as a summary of the ideal state or social space, when the proletariat (‘exhausted subject’) returns to his authentic existence, ‘homeland’. Kristeva’s *Nations without Nationalism* and her projects dealing with the otherness/foreigner can be linked to this originally Marxian agenda. It is worth drawing a parallel with the original historical problem to which the ‘Heimat’ referred. The ‘nation-state’, according to the Marxist criticism, hindered bringing to realisation the authentic existence of the citizens. I refer to this orginal problem because Kristeva takes it up in the context of globalisation and cultural pluralism, and also in the context of the ‘loss of the Father’. In the Marxist social critique of culture, ‘Heimat represents intimate and immediate spaces and relationships and is closely connected to the everyday life of ordinary people. As such, the idea of Heimat is the antithesis of the idea of the nation, the abstract idea that has organised life and thought in the modern world… Heimat and nation [as a homogenising identity] are contradictory terms…because the idea of nation is associated with conflict, that of Heimat is associated with Harmony; while the nation is a conglomeration of diverse and opposing groups, Heimat stands for tightly knit community, while perceiving the nation requires a process of generalisations and stereotyping, the Heimat embodies face-to-face human relations.’ In Alon Cafino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance, Promises and Limits of Writing History*, UNC Press 2006, p. 62.

\(^{357}\) Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, p.135.

\(^{358}\) Ibid., p.195.
who use satellite television or the Internet'.  

It is highly significant that Kristeva diagnoses at the heart of the crisis the disappearance of the Father as an all permeating cultural loss.

‘Along with the questioning of authority, the law, and values – which has been interpreted as an attack on the role of the father – the loss of habitat that characterises our fate undermines the original place, assaults maternal support, and threatens to destroy identity itself.’  

(Emphasis added.)

It should be noted that Kristeva speaks of the Father as the ‘Loving Third party’, in which the ‘feminine’ dimension of the sacred (‘meaning’) is also included. The erosion of this ground of the ‘historical self’ is also succinctly demonstrated in her important section on Arendt, ‘Superfluous Humanity’.  

This is the most detailed description of ‘exhausted history’. Here Kristeva makes the relationship between the self and history central, by relating the self/culture to the corruption of paternal authority.  

In the new cultural situation, one also has to see this crisis in terms of the perversion of the ‘Father’s love’. Consumerism deliberately presents the ‘Father’ in a corrupted form, in which its inerasable appeal from human consciousness, ‘the yearning for the Father’, is exploited. It is highly significant that Kristeva connects modernity and post-modernity as epochs which manifest the deterioration of the ‘Father’. Totalitarianism, by corrupting the ‘Father’s love’ (Nazism, communism), produced the fatal inability to trust in the historical ‘Other’. There is historical continuity between modernity and post-modernity, they manifest the destruction of psychic space. This ‘madness’, the loss of the genuine Father’s genuine love, has been passed on to our present ‘totalitarian massification’. The loss of the meaning of the Father runs in parallel with the ‘exhaustion’ of the subject. The Father’s love is evacuated from history, leaving the subject in the state of utmost disorientation:

‘Arendt creates a veritable anthropology, even a political psychology, of totalitarian massification by describing the destruction of the psychic space of humans under totalitarian regimes, proof of which may be found in the fact that when movements lose their power, their formerly fanatical supporters immediately stop believing in the dogma and throw themselves instead into the quest for another promising fiction.’

This situation manifests the ‘death of God’ in the sense that the ‘love of the Father’ cannot be reconstructed from a social memory which has been undergoing the most devastating ‘cultural forgetting’. The central question for religious and secular humanism is from which source can the ‘Father’s love’ be brought back to cultural memory? The concern is shared with Kristeva. However, in answering the challenge, the ‘ontological’ difference

359 Kristeva, Hannah Arendt, p.195.
360 Ibid., p.195.
361 Chapter 2 in Kristeva, Hannah Arendt
362 Ibid., p.137.
arises. Theology claims that the ‘exhaustion’ of historical consciousness has reached a point (or realistically, can reach), when from within the available social and political patterns of ‘human love’, the culture of Love cannot be recovered. It is in this situation, theology claims, that we realise that Love is revealed. With the corruption of love’s immanent grounds, reinstating the Transcendent ‘ground’ of love becomes necessary. Theology claims that it is the sole ‘archetype’ from which ‘love’ and the ‘human interior’ based on it can be recovered. Apart from the ideological difference, Kristeva agrees with the objective need to recover and re-learn the Father’s universal love.

This need to recover the lost universalism of the ‘Father’ is the moment for the theologia crucis. The Cross preserves the full ‘meaning’ of the Father. The story of love which the Cross reveals, theology claims, can be presented as the ‘Heimat’ or Homeland. There is a new spatial re-articulation of ‘home’ in terms of the Kingdom of God, which is the Father’s active presence in human history. Presenting this program is theology’s ‘cultural mourning’ or attempt to renew its core-symbols for the postmodern age. My study examines this unique potential of theology, while at the same time points out where this symbolic renewal is unfinished. As for Kristeva’s humanism, this revision of the theologia crucis reveals a conflict with her ‘atheistic subtexts’, Marx and Freud. My critique needs to reply to the claim they insinuate, namely that theology cannot produce a relevant ‘cultural mourning’ for the lost Father (‘home’).

In her analysis of Klein, Kristeva clearly distinguishes the psychoanalytic solution. Traditional ‘teleological’ narratives, including theology, in Kristeva’s view, attempt returning

‘to the origin, the ecology of the habitat, and the protection of the homeland. All of these seek to preserve the possibility of entering into a stable abode, a reliable arrangement, and a primordial religious meditation on the human experience that is contingent on a space that knows how to space itself out.’

The difference of the psychoanalytic approach lies in the strategy that instead of return, Kristeva states, we have to

‘familiarise [ourselves] with the locus of pain itself, that is, with the original uprooting – not to repress it in an effort to hastily rebuild [our] original habitat, but to “inhabit” the dehabitation and the primordial separation – provided the verb to inhabit is not too placid to describe the auscultation of the original wound.’ (Emphasis added.)

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363 Kristeva, Melanie Klein, pp.195-196.
364 Ibid., p.196.
Theology can fully agree with this policy of naming the pain in a situation in which the loss of the ‘Loving Third party’ implies the loss not only of cultural symbols, but primarily the loss of those communities that would generate functioning cultural symbols. Without these supports the being is a ‘catastrophic being’. Kristeva does not hide the fact that in this situation for the postmodern subject every language, every new identity is a ‘foreign language’ and a foreign identity. The radical novelty of the situation, as Kristeva emphasises, is that the ‘speaking being’ in all its temporary abodes recognises ‘the non-place where he situated himself’. In every rebirth and ‘cultural symbol’ ‘there is a foreign aspect to what is familiar, a maternal uncanniness that lurks beneath’, a ‘there’ where there is ‘nothing but sensory chaos, overload, dismantling’.366

It is in this state that Kristeva pronounces the need to develop a symbolism through which we can face the loss of the self and return to the habitat of the ‘loving Third party’. With her program, to explore the ‘inside’ of the ‘speaking being’ in order to reground his ‘wounded’ identity, theology can fully agree. There is only one way out from the crisis, if the ability to identify with the loving ‘Other’ is recovered.

4.3 The Loss of the Father’s Love: A New ‘Symbolic Mourning’

There is a wider ‘symbolic’ context which confirms that Kristeva’s theological critique should take the form of a shared symbolic reflection on love. The loss of ‘the Loving Third party’ as the genuine Other to the self is an objective situation of ‘cultural mourning’. More than that, if Kristeva’s critique of the present cultural state is correct, the underlying image of the ‘wounded’ Father indeed has to be made the centre of ‘cultural mourning’. This is the point where I would like to introduce a further element of Homans’ theory of ‘symbolic mourning’ and apply it to the situation of the ‘lost Father’. According to Homans,

‘Symbolic loss refers to the loss of an attachment to a political ideology or religious creed, or to some aspect or fragment of one, and to the inner work of coming to terms with this kind of loss. In this sense it resembles mourning. However, in the case of symbolic loss the object that is lost is, ordinarily, sociohistorical, cognitive, and collective. The lost object is a symbol or rather a system of symbols.’367 (Emphasis added.)

365 Kristeva, Melanie Klein., p.198.
366 Ibid., p.198.
The dynamic this loss generates fits perfectly in our context. The loss of a central symbol, the ‘Father’, to which the whole web of symbols of love is attached, incites a new symbolic quest in culture. Homans identifies the phases of the process. At its starting point, a ‘fantasy eruption’ in culture emerges in the wake of the symbolic crisis. This is an initial instability, a state of disorientation. New images and discourses arise without any symbolic coherence. With time, a gradual evaluation of these symbolic narratives takes place. Often these ‘fantasies’ become competing images. Within ‘cultural mourning’, we witness the following stages: cultural loss→fantasy eruptions→interpretation of these fantasies/mourning→new structure building.\(^\text{368}\) Homans originally developed this theory as an explanation of the Freudian shift. The psychoanalytical discourse was the feverish fantasy activity, a counter-reaction to an excessive rationalist turn in European culture (Cartesian rationalism). The symbols Freudianism created gave a new coherent view of the shaken self – culture – Transcendence – immanence relationship, with a special focus on the split between ‘love’ and ‘reason/authority’.\(^\text{369}\)

We can apply the scheme in the following way. The loss of the ‘Father’ was the ultimate loss of our culture which, as a process, took place overarching modernity and post-modernity. Critical reflection focused on the Father’s ‘authority’ in this loss. However, my point is that losing the Father’s love is the central event of the period. My study, in agreement with Kristeva, highlights that the loss of love underlies the loss of the authority of reason. Kristevan psychoanalysis and theology posit this ‘second loss’ as the big event of culture. The response to this loss is an unfinished business, dangerously unfinished. The loss of the ‘Father’s love’ necessitates a ‘second symbolic mourning’, analogous to the ‘Freudian turn’ which Homans analysed.\(^\text{370}\) This situation is an occasion for a new (symbolic) ‘structure building’. It is new in the sense too, that the split between the Freudian and Post-Christendom responses, with their opposing solutions to the crisis of culture, has to be incorporated into this shared symbol building and ‘mourned’ in this way.

In the postmodern context, the ‘loss of the Father’ is such a paradigmatic change that it necessarily creates a borderline state in culture’s symbolic imagination. It is a feverish transition period with many possible endings. At the first level, nihilism has created a void which is filled by ‘replicas’ or replacements of the Father. Consumerist culture manipulates


\(^{370}\) As a reminder, see Homans’ characterisation of the Freudian turn in culture in the General Introduction to the Thesis, p.10.
the images of love and ‘meaning’. On the level of critical reflection, a search has already started to ‘defend’ the images of love and make the loving ‘Father’ return. Kristeva’s mapping out a general crisis with the help of Arendt, Klein and her Freudian ‘semiotics’ has reached an openness which aims at building this defence around the subject as wide as possible. This objective need to keep discourse on love alive links the theological and the psychoanalytical critique of culture, in terms of their relevance and not in ‘competition’.

The cultural situation of the ‘silenced Father’ posits the following challenges for theology. They clarify further the questions already raised. How can theology address the new historical consciousness? Can it offer its visions of the Father (ethical, theological) to a subject who is deprived of any coherent symbolism of fatherhood? How can it translate the complex dynamics of faith, the hinge of which is the Father’s love, to a subjectivity which is uprooted from the religious narrative itself? What concept of history can theology offer to a self caught up in the constant flux of instant gratification? For the loss of the Father’s love is the loss of the sense of history itself. Furthermore, how can the present Father-language of faith address the speaking subject? In other words, how can theology reach the subject through its linguistic horizon? What ‘semiotic’ symbols can it offer?

The situation of the ‘lost Father’ challenges Kristeva’s project, too. What is the revolutionary ‘poetic text’ which would interrupt that ‘Symbolic Order’ the core of which, the ‘Father’, is removed? Can the Freudian narrative articulate a revolutionary ‘mourning’ of this loss? Also, is it possible to carry out this revolt without addressing the ‘religious’ exhaustion of the subject, as is the claim of theology? If the outcome of historical exhaustion is the atomised subject, what experience of the community (lost together with the Father as a unifying centre) can Freudianism offer? Is Kristeva’s Freudian-linguistic anthropology sufficient when attempting to hold a mirror to the ‘Fatherless subject’ for him to see his exhaustion?

In order to answer these questions, for critique it is unavoidable to re-contextualise the central conflict with Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtext’, Freud. Homans confirmed this conflict at the heart of modernity. Part One examined the ‘ontological’ dimension of this conflict. Now my study returns to this disaccord by examining what Freud actually objected to in Christian symbolism, before reading anew the Passion.
4.4 Freud’s Unfinished Cultural Mourning: The Need for Revising His Reading of the Christian Father

Kristeva rewrites Freud’s classic works on religion from the integrative perspective of her psychoanalytical and post-structuralist sub-discourses. That is why the recovery of the ‘Father’ has to start with revisiting Freud’s classic polemic about the Christian ‘Father’. Freud reveals a crucial dimension of what theology has to ‘mourn’ in its language on God. Kristeva’s critique of culture showed how the nihilism of culture is acted out as aggression against the ‘person’, which leads to psychic suffering. The whole business of recovering the ‘Father-symbolism’ is offering a counterweight to this suffering. The original Freudian narrative questions this ability of Christians because they fail to present their ‘Father’, claims Freud, as a source of universal acceptance and inclusion. This section looks straight in the face of the charge that the Christian Father is an ‘oedipal authority’.

I put Freud’s critique into a historical context in a twofold sense. I refer briefly to the actual historical situation in which he developed his critique of the Christian Father. I also relate his reading to a specific form of representing the Father, namely, the ‘bloody cross’ with the underlying images of atonement-theology. In view of these two aspects I re-situate the original debate in the present postmodern context. Responding constructively to Freud is the major precondition for resolving the apologetic deadlock with Kristeva’s materialism. Freud’s criticism will bring the traditional language on the Cross to the fore. Correcting the ‘bloody imagery’ is the gateway to entering into dialogue with Kristeva’s refined ‘semiotic’ symbols. This engagement with Freud will liberate theology to re-present the Father as a loving ‘Abba’. The theologia crucis needs to show that the image of God does not coincide with Freud’s reductive vision.

4.4.1 Freud as the Interlocutor of the Images of Atonement Theology

Freud’s critique of religion makes more sense if we identify the imagery with which he was in a historical dialogue. My point is that the underlying object of his criticism was atonement theology understood in terms of penal substitution. Freud’s hermeneutic of the

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372 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.96.
Christian Cross was restricted to and determined by the images of the Father which we find in this heritage. This historical context is generally overlooked on account of the theological aversion for Freud, but also on the side of secular humanism. We can say, in general, that the classic atheist critique since Feuerbach was in debate with the Father-image of atonement theology. Recent forms of secular criticism, not mentioning ‘aggressive secularists’ like Richard Dawkins, operate with banal images of God, which are derivatives of the ‘bloody cross’. As my response to Kristeva from within religious experience communicates through these central images, a critical distance from the underlying distorted message is crucial.

The necessary correction is widely raised in order to make sense of God’s love. Lorraine Cavanagh names the very source of why the atonement narrative lost direction. Christ’s atonement was severed from his resurrection, which is the prime interpretive centre of his sacrifice. The Christian idea of atonement makes God’s reconciliation with human history central. The theory of the ‘atonement’ understood in terms of penal substitution was the earliest understanding of Christ’s sacrifice. In a predominantly juridical mindset, it gave a coherent account of redemption from ‘fall to reparation’ with a special focus on the Father. One might say that this early ‘master narrative’ dominated pre-Enlightenment consciousness and the Enlightenment period itself, as this model culminated in both the renewed theologies of the Reformation and the Catholic theology of the counter-Reformation. This soteriological model, as an archetype, underlies theological language and concepts up to the present, regardless of denomination. It relates to the present language of faith as their ‘ground’. As today these archaic theological images are mostly hidden, one can also see it as an ‘unconscious’ language. My point is that everyday spirituality and ‘public’ theological imagination are still controlled by the archaic image of the Godhead of ‘atonement’.

Roger Haight gives an excellent critical overview of the development of atonement concepts in the Eastern and Western Christological and soteriological traditions from Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm to Luther and Calvin. (See Appendix III.) Revised or not, the atonement profile is part of God’s theological and historical persona. Whenever God is read from the outside, by other religions, secular humanism, or atheism, the ‘Father’ is ‘mediated’ primarily by the atonement narrative. Fortunate or not, the hermeneutics of penal substitution re-emerge time and time again. It is a strong, vigorous

374 In more conservative Catholic spiritualities, based on the return to the Latin Mass, this ‘unconscious’ surfaces more openly.
375 I have recapitulated the ‘primary words’ of atonement theology from Haight, Jesus: Symbol of God, See, Appendix III.
narrative on the Father. For some reason it still dominates over other more subtle images of God. Atonement theology, in brief, sets up a dualistic scheme. The God of history, because of the offence caused by human sin, has to be appeased. Mankind deserves punishment for sin on the grounds of divine justice. Christ offered the Father his death as an expiatory sacrifice. God accepted it and, instead of acting out his righteous vengeance on mankind, he accepted the suffering of the Son instead of and on behalf of mankind.

It is important to highlight that originally the Christian idea of ‘atonement’ was a revolutionary concept. It is far from being a concept to be demonised and thrown out altogether as Haight does. There are contemporary renewed readings which recover the original revolutionary potential of the tradition. Like L. Cavanagh, they emphasise the action of God’s redemptive grace as the agent, it is God’s compassionate nature which brings humans home from alienation to reconciliation. In reconciliation, the emphasis is shifted from ‘juridical rigidity’ to reconciling human beings with their true selves and with one another. Seen in these terms, Christians can recognise God (the active agent of salvation) as an internal need. Cavanagh rightly argues that redemption in these terms is comprehended as God who is intrinsic to history, who in Christ suffers with us. In accepting suffering, Christ as the image of the Father, is taking responsibility for the whole of the human race. In order to arrive at this more personalist reading, however, the language of ‘penal substitution’ has to be systematically revised, and changed.

Freud makes us realise that an unrevised atonement language is not an innocent, still less a harmless narrative. I am just raising the problem, but it would be worth examining whether the excessively juridical ‘penal substitution’ language played a role in the emergence of the overtly abstract theological concept of the person, and the associated problem of a ‘High Transcendent’ God. This latter, as Homans showed, led to a stark opposition between God and human nature, and God and history. My study admits a close connection.

4.4.2 The Image of the Father: A Historical Problem

Freud is not only an ‘ideological’ but also a historical subtext of Kristeva, mostly through his so called cultural texts. As such, Freud represents those historical and cultural objections which critique on Kristeva simply cannot ignore. Two aspects need to be

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378 Totem and Taboo (1913), Civilisation and Discontents (1930), and The Future of an Illusion (1927).
highlighted from Freud’s criticism, keeping to the fore Wahl’s thesis that the reception of Freud’s critique of religion is still an unfinished business in theology and in the life of the Church. These are (1) his criticism of the ‘God-image’ as the critique of culture (‘Christian history’), (2) and his understanding of the Father as an external authority to the community.

The first point to be made is that it is best to situate Freud as the prime interlocutor of the ‘bloody language’ of the Cross. My further point is that Freud is the internal discourse of early theological modernity. In the latter, the expression of faith culminated in a retrograde fashion (‘post-Vatican I period’). The radical distance between the God of ‘grace’ and the ‘profane’ world (Homans) was the basis of the refusal of a non-Christian, hostile culture. Freud has to be read within this ecclesial hermeneutics of ‘fear’. This apologetic attitude produced what Homans calls the ‘lower reading’ of Freud: when he is ‘a secularist or atheist, and his therapeutic work is an idolatrous substitute for the kind of self-understanding that comes only through revelation.’

In the ‘higher’ reading, Freud can be seen as the analyst of Christianity’s historical failure to unmask the perversion of the ‘Father-narrative’. He is a cultural critique of Nazism, refusing as he did its corrupted worship of ‘paternal authority’. It is Freud’s late historical environment, Viennese, predominantly Catholic society, becoming increasingly anti-Semitic, which shaped most of his critique of religion. This was the historical finishing touch to his ‘general’ critique of the ‘Father-religions’, Judaism and Christianity. To this ‘second criticism’, which is the real milieu of his cultural texts, is closely attached his psychoanalytical critique of the ‘Father’. His cultural criticism of Christianity (responding to ‘Nazism’) and his psychoanalytical criticism (‘the repressive Father’) merge in his sentence that God is an external authority for Christians.

Historically, Freud’s vision of the Father (of the ‘Cross’) corresponds with the repressive authority, religious and familial, which his patients experienced in Christianity or Judaism. The religious horizon of his contemporaries was the traditional ‘bloody Cross’ of the atonement. The ‘Father’ as the inflictor of the Cross coincided with their paternal image. Freud’s patients, with their neurosis, lived in the shadow of this ‘oedipal’ authority. My point is that the image of the killed Son easily confirms in culture the emphasis on ‘guilt’ that Freud observed. Freud’s patients, as far as religion was concerned, spoke an atonement language. It is not accidental that Freud first became popular among women in Viennese


society who suffered most from the authority of a ‘masculine’ (cultural) superego. The remnants of this ‘patriarchal’ narrative are still retained in Christian spirituality. Even recent theologies, such as the Catholic charismatic Cantalamessa, replicate the ‘guilt pattern’ by reminding us that ‘we killed Jesus’, ‘my sin killed him’. ‘My sin was also present at Gethsemane and it weighed on the heart of Jesus.’ On the part of theology, there is no point in denying a latent continuity with the ‘traditional’ language of the cross. Freud, intuitively touched upon primary words like ‘killing the Son’, ‘appeasing the Father’, ‘our guilt against God’, and ‘bloody sacrifice’. They are mirrored in the fear of the ‘omnipotent’ father in his case-studies. The Cross became the meta-image of the Father.

Freud’s critique of ‘Christian’ civilisation (of the 1930s) came to the conclusion that the ‘Father’ (of the ‘Cross’) is an external authority to Christians. The criticism he developed, if seen in Homans’ historical pattern of fantasy-activity, can be regarded as ‘re-ordering’ and explaining the emerging chaos in culture. In this context, Freud’s working hypothesis, the murder-myth, is an explanatory scheme rather than a genuine historical concept. It points to trends in culture that can be interpreted and ‘predicted’. Our present theological program of restoring the universal love of the Father is facing a serious ‘historical’ opposition from Freud. His criticism of the Christian community in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921) objected to the lack of this universality. Freud described Christianity as an artificial group held together by the external power of the Father which welcomes and discriminates:

‘He loves all the individuals in the group with equal love. Everything depends upon this illusion; if it were to be dropped, then [the] Church would be dissolved, so far as the external force permitted them to. …[Christ] stands to the individual members of the

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382 He can be regarded as a ‘mainstream’ theologian who speaks close to the Pope. Cantalamessa gave spiritual retreats several times to the Papal household.


384 See Freud’s famous case-study, the ‘Wolf Man’. In the centre of the neurosis Freud identified his patient’s fear of his father; the case-study of the ‘Rat-Man’ also could be mentioned. These reflections on his patients’ ruminations on religion were the base of Freud’s preoccupation with psychoanalysing religion. In ‘Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices’ (pp.429-436), The Freud Reader, edited by Peter Gay, Vintage, London 1995 (First published by Vintage in 1989), p.429. For the Case studies, Rat-Man’s case /1907-08/ (pp.309-350), Wolf-Man case /1910-14/ (pp.400-426)

385 Freud in Totem and Taboo (1913) laid down his theory on the origin and function of the sense of guilt. He regards religion as an expression of this archaic cultural function. This later writing, Civilisation and Discontents (1930), revisits the function of conscience and the theme of ‘external authority’. Freud examines the struggle between life and death drives in the historical context of arising Nazism. His third cultural text, The Future of an Illusion (1927) also needs to be read against this historical background. The ontological weight he attaches to the premise that ‘religious ideas are illusions’ to a large extent stemmed from his pessimistic view of European history. Though religion had contributed much to the preserving of civilisation over the centuries, in modernity, it has lost its authority. According to Freud, ‘death drives’ in civilisation can be less and less resisted.

group of believers in the relation of a kind of elder brother; he is their substitute father. All the demands that are made upon the individual are derived from this love of Christ. 387

His essay, ‘Artificial Groups: The Church and the Army’, conceives the cohesive force among the members of the Church as ‘intense emotional’ or ‘libidinal ties’. Freud envisioned only an externally structured Church with the following group dynamic. Authority is external to the individual. Love is mechanistically understood; as a form of trust, it is subjugated to the authority of the father-figure. When this trust disappears, the community collapses in ‘panic.’ We can do justice to Freud in two aspects. First, he touches upon the key phenomenon that secularisation theory observes, the rapid decline in religious observance. Freud seems to have a point when pointing to the particular crisis of ‘oedipal’ bonding with God as the root cause of ‘suddenly’ giving up the Christian ‘Father’. Second, however mechanistically, he aptly describes the distorted economy of love in religious fundamentalisms. My point is that this type of identity easily reproduces the meta-narratives of ‘atonement’. Preventing this return is the greatest challenge for the Church in the postmodern context. A nostalgic desire for the powerful ‘Father’, whose authority is manifest on the ‘bloody Cross’, is a tempting way to stabilise ‘shaken’ religious identity.

In what Freud observes, the dynamic of exclusion is clear. This is that inward-looking, painfully polemic attitude to which the aggiornamento of Vatican Council II responded with a radical correction in Catholicism. The economy of ‘exclusion’ is a timely issue again in our present context, when the genuine love of the Father is lost in culture. With this loss how can the mechanisms of ‘exclusion’ be counteracted? Or critically, to what extent can the mentality of ‘exclusion’ among Christians emerge from ‘external’ readings of the Father/Cross? Freud makes an important observation in this context. What happens when the authority of the ‘Father’/Leader is lost? If the leader of the soldier dies, fear spreads epidemically and the army easily disintegrates. Freud applies this observation to doctrine, community, and individual relationship. External authority, when it ‘disappears’, results in a weakening of religious observance. The dynamic he perceives corresponds to the apologetic Church of pre-Vatican II. These are important questions about the borders of a cultural community and its ‘inclusive’ or ‘exclusive’ attitude:

The phenomenon which accompanies the dissolution that is here supposed to overtake a religious group is not fear... Instead of it ruthless and hostile impulses towards other people make their appearance, which owing to the equal love of Christ, they had previously been unable to do. But even during the kingdom of Christ those people who do not belong to the community of believers, who do not love him, and whom he does not love, stand outside this tie. Therefore a religion, even if it calls itself the religion of love, must be hard and unloving to those who do not belong to it. Fundamentally indeed every religion is in this same way a religion of love for all those whom it embraces; while cruelty and intolerance towards those who do not belong to it are natural to every religion.... If to-day that intolerance no longer shows itself so violent and cruel as in former centuries, we can scarcely conclude that there has been a softening in human manners. The cause is rather to be found in the undeniable weakening of religious feelings and the libidinal [emotional] ties which depend upon them.\(^{388}\) (Emphasis added.)

On a more general level, Freud warns of degenerating into a ‘totemistic’ community which, as a response to the ‘loss of the Father’, attempts a recovery through ‘re-enacting’ the Father’s ‘lost power’ in terms of showing aggression to the ‘outside’. Instead of re-creating the Father’s love through the act of universal solidarity with the sufferer, a new ‘regulative authority’ can be canonised, and a yearning for it can be perpetuated. We can see Freud also as one who anticipates and unmasks the vulnerability of a post-modernity which accommodates itself to both technological power and, through these technological innovations, to the real powers and interests that instrumentally generate the new ‘industrial/technological revolution’ of consumption. ‘The Two Artificial Groups’ can be seen as a general cultural metaphor. Freud’s cultural mourning is continuous with our present time: a culture of post-religion, full of mistrust, has replaced Christianity.

Paradoxically, and that is why Freud’s texts on civilisation do not lose their power, ‘exhausted’ post-metaphysical consciousness and consumer culture have not been able to produce new cultural symbols. Only the ‘emptied’ Christian (and humanist) symbols of modernity are floating on the surface of culture. Their meaning, because of the loss of their original ‘ontological’ content, can easily be hijacked and re-assembled into new forms of a ‘Father-cult’. This specific form of nihilism is manifest in the ultimate faith in entertainment, in scientific advances severed from morality, or in the instant gratification offered by the ‘internet’, etc. In a post-religious post-modernity, new totemic communities of exclusion are constructed and sold shamelessly. In this context, Freud’s murder-myth can be read as an ethical interruption. His urging to return to the internalisation of love makes Freud a successful cultural mourner of the distorted forms of religion.

\(^{388}\) Freud, ‘Two Artificial Groups: The Church and the Army’ (pp.93-99) in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921), p.98.
Freud observed a Christianity which operated with ‘closed’ borders where love was not extended to the ‘outside’:

‘Every Christian loves Christ as his ideal and feels himself united with all other Christians by identification. But the Church requires more of him. He has also to identify himself with Christ and love all other Christians as Christ loved them.’

However, despite Freud’s general criticism, the intensity of love he observed reveals a genuine power of cohesion. That is why my point is that restoring the universalism of Christ’s sacrifice can extend this cohesion to the ‘outside’ and give a genuine orientation to culture. This is the significance of correcting the ‘totemic’ reading of the Cross. If Christ died for the whole world, Christians have to identify with those who are outside the visible community. The stake of witnessing to this universalism is very high. It is the only way to reverse that general mistrust which a culture which relies on external authorities necessarily generates. It is important to read the theological symptoms which Cavanagh observes as ‘cultural parables’. When the Father is seen as an external authority to the self, God is experienced as an external judgement, and with judgement the sense of guilt and condemnation appears. Fear of punishment, denial, or avoiding responsibility may occur. Avoiding responsibility may result in adopting the position of victim and an ethical passivity. It is close to its reverse, making others responsible and scape-goating the other. Fear can become the source of retribution, from God as well as from people [in the name of God, ‘democracy’, ‘our values’]. A culture of fear in conflict situations often applies to retributive punishment which is a major hindrance in promoting examples of peace-making. When the ‘Father’ is dead his ‘strength’ is celebrated instead of his ability to love. In the wake of melancholic mourning for the ‘dead Father’, which cannot let his ‘power’ go (our narcissistic image of him), the ethos of submission and obedience can become dominant. Religion can turn into its ‘exhausted form’ when it reinforces a rigid distance between God and his people. God’s holiness may become untouchable and ‘unknowable’. God becomes a distant God despite all the noble promises of his Revelation. According to Cavanagh, these are the ‘attributes’ of a spirituality which is based on unrevised atonement imagery.

To sum up the moral of Freud’s criticism of tribal Christianity, he assigns the following areas to be ‘mourned’ in theological language. When this correction is completed, then theology can communicate its own experience of being healed by ‘the father’s love’. It can witness to the fact that the Father, contrary to what Freud attributes to the Christian God, is

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389 Freud, ‘Postscript’ (pp.134-144) in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921), p.134.
390 I extracted the above symptoms and put them into our context from Cavanagh, Making Sense of God’s Love, cf. pp. 7-10.34.
all inclusive love. Thus, Freud’s major statements for a contemporary theology of the cross are as follows:

(1) The ‘we’– ‘they’, ‘native’ – ‘foreigner’ oppositions emerge when the Cross is seen as a ‘Father substitute’. On this cross, the powerful and authoritarian Father is ‘resurrected’. The cross, read in this way, is the cross of division. When the Cross is read as an ‘identity-totem’, the Father’s power is totalised: he is the restorer of lost Christendom’s confidence. As the double of our hunger for identity, ‘He’ marks out exclusive and definite borders for the community. The ‘blood’ on the Cross, as a hidden meaning, denotes our ambition to ‘restore the authority of the Father’ and reinvent a Christian cultural superego.

(2) Freud on behalf of secular humanism objects that this love fails to be universal. If love is not universal, it necessarily remains ‘tribal’ and, contrary to its nature, persecuting. To apply Charles Taylor’s idiom, ‘exclusive humanism’, we can also speak of an exclusive Christian ‘agape’. Representing its universalism is the greatest challenge to Christianity.

(3) ‘Artificial Groups’ concluded that the love of the Father is only a socio-cultural construct. It cannot become all-inclusive, as it is based on subjugation to a feared paternal (‘High-Transcendent’) authority. Christianity, in Freud’s judgement, cannot produce a notion of Transcendence that is not grounded in fear. Also implied is that ‘Transcendence’, as the extension of the fear of the father, is in denial of human freedom. Freud implies that demonising the outsider, the ‘other’, in a closed army-like fellowship’ is necessary to preserve the sense of freedom.

Freud’s historical hard talk radically challenges theology when it speaks of God and love. This criticism cannot be answered in the traditional apologetic way. My point is that Kristeva’s ‘Freudian subtext’ initiates a new ‘symbolic mourning’ in the present situation of lost ‘Paternal love’.

Freud’s critique of religion is more than an atheistic denial. My point is that he should be regarded as a permanent critical reference for theology. In a sense, Freud is the spokesman of the ‘exhausted subject’. He articulates its unbelief and mistrust. Jonte-Pace situated Freud’s writings as the anticipation of a psychoanalytical theory of the loss of religion and the absence of God.\(^{391}\) The significance of making Freud a central reference for the ‘Semiotic Passion’ is his anticipation of the ‘ontic’ suffering of the subject and the present cultural

conditions. Freud initiated ‘an analysis of religion in absentia, of Jewishness in the context of secularisation, and modernity’. It is this ‘absence of Transcendence’ which becomes a positive link with Freud, in the sense that his cultural mourning for this absence has remained unfinished. His ‘symbolic mourning’ can be completed only in our post-modernity.

As Marthe Robert suggests, it is possible to read Freud’s concept of the ‘oedipal father’ as a revolt against his father’s generation. This image, Robert points to Kafka’s observation, was an expression of the religious crisis of assimilated Jews who could not provide Freud’s generation with a satisfying orientation. The absolute break with the religion of his father is very different from that of Kristeva. In The Old Man and the Wolves, Kristeva expressed a gratitude and respect for her father’s faith and could appreciate it as a site of cultural revolt. Obviously, Kristeva is in a much better position of synthesis than Freud’s original model. Freud’s questions raised in modernity remain valid a cultural epoch later. Freud, according to Homans, directed his criticism against a politics and religion which was unable to mourn the lost past and produced the fantasy of denial. Kristeva shares these concerns. Homans argues that Freud’s historical criticism stated the failure of Christianity (and culture!) to accommodate itself to a new cultural situation. The reaction of Nazism was a denial of the painful psychological consequences of the social and historical changes. In Homans’ evaluation, Freud’s psychoanalytical movement, contrary to Nazism, developed the ‘ability to mourn’, that is, to respond to the changes in culture with self-questioning and a new inwardness.

The postmodern situation of the ‘exhausted subject’ is a similarly dramatic historical change. What is to be mourned is a similar experience of precipitous uprootedness from a religiously informed common culture and from the moral and psychological supports which such a culture confers. Today, we witness the failed symbol building of post-modernity, an analogous failure to that of Freud’s historical environment. Our culture, however surprising it sounds, is just as intolerant of the actual chaos of culture (and of other cultures and civilisations) as German Nazism was. Our ‘financial civilisation’, analogously, also seeks to reinvent with great rapidity and astonishing creativity a ‘total common culture’ (of progress, of an engineered future) which denies the actual changes underlying the ‘postmodern spectacle’. Postmodern consumerism or ‘economical growth’ as the telos of culture with the

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392 Diane Jonte-Pace, Speaking The Unspeakable, p.4.
395 Ibid., pp. 337-338.
396 Ibid., pp. 337.
same force denies finitude, individual fragility, and death, its own transience. Our post-Freudian culture has created a hyperactive superficial symbolism though, in practice, it only distracts its ‘exhausted subjects’ from their ‘ontological’ pain. Freud’s historical criticism of the crisis of culture runs as a counter-thesis to the strategies of denial which the postmodern subject and its ideologists accommodate. It is in this sense that Jonte-Pace presents Freud as the emerging ‘meta-discourse’ of post-modernity through his criticism of the religious crisis of modernity. Freud developed a discourse on the ‘absence of religion and the absence of God’. With the emergence of the ‘exhausted subject’, a primary form of speaking of love is indeed in the ‘negative’, we speak of love in its ‘absentia’. My point is that it is possible to mourn for the Freudian ‘mourning’ itself (his speaking of God in ‘absentia’). The theologia crucis, in a shared symbol building with Kristeva, can elucidate a positive religious symbolisation, which will speak of God in ‘praesentia’, as a new presence of God as a ‘loving Father’. The forthcoming discussions will incorporate Freud’s criticism into this symbolic dialogue.

4.5 Why Develop a ‘Semiotic Passion’? The Theological Program of Our Response

Freud challenges the theology of the cross with the task of deconstructing the ‘oedipal image’ of God. The challenge from Kristeva is to incorporate the historicity of the subject

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397 As an illustration of this, I refer to Anthony Giddens’ position, which can be seen as a postmodern model of culture. Giddens reasserts the secular utopia of the ‘self-sufficient’ postmodern self. As an ‘ideologist’ of the postmodern milieu he is a representative of the denial of the ontological or ‘ontic’ crisis of the self. He offers a ‘rivalling’ model to the Freudian, the Kristevan, and the theological evaluations of the crisis. The ‘exhaustion’ of the subject is not a real issue for the ideologies of accommodation. The freedom of the subject is in the service of economical growth, though this ‘metascenario’ is never told. What my study argues as the dangerous ‘exhaustion’ of the subject, for Giddens is an opportunity for ‘a new awareness of the self’. The self is merely to be re-discovered with its creative and inexhaustible potentials. The self discovers his own body and regenerates its freedom in his life-style choices. Giddens makes the claim, a Hudini-like escape, that the body itself becomes the site of identity. Giddens is an important example of how postmodernity, which ignores the task of ‘mourning’ for the self’s religious past, ends up with a shallow description of the crisis. The situation of ‘risk society’ where cultural identities and authorities are not fixed and stable any longer brings about the dynamic accommodation, a ‘new sense of the self’. Giddens calls this response a ‘reflexive mobilising of self-identity’ or the ‘reflexive project of the self.’ We need an ‘unhappy Freud’ who is not satisfied with the way these solutions erase the self – religious past relationship with ease. See, Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity, Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, Polity Press, Blackwell, Cambridge 1991, p.33.

The above model reinstates the ‘invincible’ subject of the Enlightenment. This is a reaffirmation of the ‘split’ between the self’s immanent and transcendent resources. Gidden’s main motive with this is to reactivate the subject over against the nihilism of culture by encouraging the self’s ‘innate’ potentials. This strategy is in a critical tension with Kristeva’s more realistic view of the subject, which is ‘exhausted’ and in need of psychic healing. It is worth noting that this reinstating of the self-redemptive potential of the subject resembles the position of the early ‘revolutionary Kristeva’, which position was about sidelining religion as an ineffective discourse. The point is, whereas in Kristeva an effective ‘cultural mourning’ of the subject took place, in postmodern ideologies, which abandoned the engagement with religion, it did not.
into theological language. The two together pose the challenge to bring the ‘exhausted subject’ and the image of God into an intrinsic dialogue. In order to meet the above challenge, my study attaches a specific theological program to the ‘Semiotic Passion’. Why is this particular strategy needed? The crisis of the postmodern subject is affecting deep layers of ‘individual pre-history’ in which the whole of the ‘psychic structure’ is involved. At the heart of the nihilist crisis Kristeva highlights our relationship with the ‘loving Third’. To this crisis of Homo religiosus only a form of the theology of the cross can respond which is aware of both levels of the crisis of the self, that is, when attention is paid to Kristeva’s ‘psychic suffering’ and to the ‘religious’ crisis of the post-Christian self. The ‘Semiotic Passion’ shows an interest in understanding the linguisitic crisis of the postmodern subject and connects it with the theological message of the Passion.

With the help of Tamsin Lorraine, I sum up the theological objectives which the ‘Semiotic Passion’ aims to achieve. My study has already expressed the conflict with Kristeva’s ‘materialist ontology’ in terms of two different ways of grounding the self. My reference was Kierkegaard’s Sickness unto Death, when the ground of the self is God. Lorraine developed a model in which Kristeva and Kierkegaard are in a positive dialogue. This model is a naïve reading of Kristeva in the sense that Lorraine envisaged her as if operating in the economy of faith (well before Kristeva’s dialogical turn). I revisit Lorraine’s program in brief in order to highlight the dialectical tension of agreements and disagreements between Kristeva and the faith based reading of the Passion. Lorraine’s synoptic reading is an important confirmation that re-opening ‘ontological dialogue’ with post-metaphysical consciousness is a genuine demand of our time. This overview is laying out the theological dynamic of the ‘Semiotic Passion’. These objectives of a ‘graced’ anthropology have to be implemented in response to Kristeva. This program serves also as the ground for the evaluation of the shared symbol building to which my critique arrives. If it brings these theological dynamics to realisation, it will justify ‘The Semiotic Passion’ as a ‘valid’ theoretical proposal.

The co-operation Lorraine envisages has very important insights. My critique follows this program when it argues for widening the Freudian ‘oedipal’ and Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ frameworks in order to arrive at a fuller expression of the Father’s love. I focus on the contents of a shared symbolic mourning.

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398 Kristeva’s metaphor of the ‘speaking being’: the speaking subject is grounded in ‘belief’ in the Other.
399 In this recapitulation I extracted and used Lorraine’s contextualisation of Kristeva for theology from Tamsin Lorraine, ‘Amatory Cures for Material Dis-ease, A Kristevan Reading of The Sickness
Despite the singularity of the relationship between the individual and God, in God we embrace an Otherness who listens to all the particularities of everyone. God accepts the diversity of the fragmented human realm, and thus he responds to postmodern fragmentation with all-inclusive love. God’s response is always a synthesis: we should not deny the various and contradictory aspects of our lives, nor despair of becoming more deeply ourselves. Faith in such an infinite Other leads to responding positively to the contemporary fragmentation of the subject.\footnote{Ibid., pp.106-107.} In short, Christians should not fear the postmodern condition or the ‘exhausted subject’. They have to show a genuine interest in this subjectivity, because it is not external any longer to religious identity. Love in this sense is our unbroken grand-narrative, which unites and enables us to recognise ourselves in the other. Christians have to learn to ‘project’ their own story on the secular subject without colonising it. Christians need to see ‘Christ’ in the ‘other’ in a genuine way. It is not only suffering which is common, as a consequence of the self’s becoming ‘ungrounded’, but Love is also shared, which gives rebirth. Love is indeed solely redemptive. This latter is the claim of Kristeva’s ‘ecce-ness’ program.\footnote{Kristeva’s reference to the ‘haecceitas’ of Duns Scotus is a symbolic recapitulation of her general objective to defend the subject’s particularity and uniqueness. For a detailed summary of this program, with the emphasis on the ‘genius of Christianity’ of which discourse on love first discovered the uniqueness and vulnerability of the person, see ‘This Incredible Need to Believe’ in Kristeva, \textit{This Incredible Need to Believe}, p.30.} ‘Love is the time and space in which ‘I’ assumes the right to be extraordinary... I am, in love, at the zenith of subjectivity.’\footnote{Kristeva, \textit{Tales of Love}, p.5.}

To the psychoanalytic appeal to attend to and incorporate the corporeal origins of psychic life, a transcendental understanding of the subject can be added. The religious appeal to the Father would facilitate the notion that we belong to a universal, ‘shared’ ethical community. Kristeva operates with a widened Freudian framework, the hinges of which are the ‘Loving Third’ and the ‘feminine sacred’. This hermeneutics of the narcissistic structure (the world of primary identifications) puts an emphasis on personal biography, which I termed ‘the historicity of the subject’. As Lorraine highlights, ‘Kierkegaard’s religious notion of a God-relationship can take us beyond this oedipal framework and unto Death’ (pp.98-109), \textit{Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity}, edited by Martin J. Matusistik and Merold Westphal, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis 1995.\footnote{Kristeva, \textit{Tales of Love}, p.5.}
shift emphasis to a self-in-world witnessed by an infinite Other without losing
the historical impetus of Kristeva’s work.\textsuperscript{403} To the historicity of the subject
theology’s response should be presenting ‘grace’ as historical. Kristeva’s
insinuated ‘theological’ claim in this dialogue has to be responded to, namely
that ‘psychic passion’ needs to be incorporated into the economy of the Cross.\textsuperscript{3}

The ‘Semiotic Passion’ has to answer Kierkegaard’s fundamental claim that the
’self’ has to overcome despair (‘exhaustion’). The self, according to
Kierkegaard, ends up in ‘despair’ if it is not \textit{becoming} a proper self, ‘itself.’ I
also refer here to Beckett whose speaking subjects, figuratively speaking, are the
‘nocturnal side’ of Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’. Beckett ‘totalises despair’. In
Beckett, in the relationship between the self and God, despair is all penetrating
and is expressed as an incurable loneliness. To this applies Kierkegaard’s
observation: human beings who become finite lose their selves.\textsuperscript{404} In Beckett,
this finitude is expressed in the endless speech of his characters. It is not
accidental that his dramatic personae follow Kierkegaard’s negative scenario:
‘To lack infinitude is despairing, reductionism, narrowness.’\textsuperscript{405} The Christian
reading of the Passion and the Father needs to offer a lasting companionship to
the ‘speaking being.’ Theology also has to argue that this loneliness is genuinely
interrupted by the Father’s love. If Kristeva’s ‘ecce-ness’ claim to take psychic
particularity seriously is listened to, this interruption needs to be spelled out as
close as possible to the human self.\textsuperscript{4}

In Kierkegaard’s (theology’s) model, the self does not collapse because it is
related to God. It is in this sense that Kierkegaard speaks of the ‘moral self.’ The
moral self does not collapse as long as it relates itself to God. This perennial
principle of theology compels the response to Kristeva to demonstrate a \textit{moral}
relatedness between God and the ‘speaking being’. This moral relationship
emerges as an ‘ontic’ relationship. The ‘Semiotic Passion’, as a constructive
response to Kristeva’s reading of the Passion and her correction of Freud’s
premise (religion is \textit{not} an illusion), needs to show how the ‘self’ and God can
become ‘transparent’ to each other in \textit{compassionate} love.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[404] Ibid., p.99.
\item[405] Ibid., pp.99-100.
\end{footnotes}
Both Kierkegaard and Kristeva follow a similar program in terms of the importance of the ‘loving Third’. One can become oneself only through relating the opposing aspects of oneself to a third party, to God as irreducible other, as we see it in Kierkegaard. In this sense, the self always exists before God. In Kristeva, the psychologically conceived ‘loving Third’ is also constitutive of personal existence. In her idiom, the self always exists inasmuch as it preserves its capacity to believe in the other. The self is always homo religiosus. Theology needs to show, transcending the strictly understood program of psychoanalytical rebirth, how God as ‘Father’ can be trusted, and how he enhances our trust in Himself. This implies a demonstration of how the horizon of faith differs from the psychoanalytic method. That is, theology needs to argue the relevance of connecting the ‘loving Third’ with the economy of Easter.

Kristeva, with her new dialogical stance on religion, has become open to discussing the above theological agendas in the specific context of the ongoing ‘exhaustion’ of the postmodern subject.

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Kristeva’s dialogue with religion was realised in a series of pivotal essays in *This Incredible Need to Believe*.⁴⁰⁷ In them, she responds to the new cultural condition, ‘the loss of the Father’s love’, with a new synthesis of her ‘semiotic’ project. Kristeva recollects her previous agendas and relates them to the Christian Passion-narrative. This is a realisation that the nihilist crisis requires re-situating psychoanalysis in order to enhance its analytical capacity. It coincides with a cautious recognition of the analytical potentials of theology: ‘The questioning of any and all entities, including belief and its objects, is one of Christianity’s most impressive legacies; and humanism, its rebellious child, must not be prevented from developing this legacy.’⁴⁰⁸ This new openness reveals a deep seated ‘cultural mourning’. I present the three levels where Kristeva’s reading of the Passion enters into dialogue with ‘religious consciousnesses’ about the ‘lost Father’. These are her linguistic, ethical, and ‘feminist’ readings of the Passion.

5.1 Kristeva’s ‘Symbolic’ Correction of Freud

Kristeva’s correction of Freud did not stop with the reinstating of *homo religiosus* into psychoanalytical discourse.⁴⁰⁹ The recognition that *faith* in the other is our innermost pre-religious need initiated a ‘cultural mourning’ in the Freudian tradition, which culminates in Kristeva’s re-reading of the Passion. The recognition of *homo religiosus* as a ‘pre-religious category’⁴¹⁰ radically alters the Freudian imagination. Kristeva goes beyond its prohibiting religious imagery and reintroduces a *direct* engagement with Christian symbols.

With Mercer, we can clarify that, in contrast to Freud’s negative understanding of illusion, Kristeva values ‘illusions’ as a place of play and imagination. Religious illusions can function positively. The person can learn to express his suffering and death by inscribing them into *Christ’s* Passion. Kristeva understands religion as the locus of constructing the much needed imaginary father.⁴¹¹ Whereas for Freud the Cross and the Father were external authorities, Kristeva envisions the ‘loving Third party’ within the very fabric of Christian

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⁴⁰⁸ ‘The Big Questionmark’ (pp.vii-xvi), in *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. ix

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Religion is not an illusion; belief in the other is our innermost pre-religious need’.

⁴¹⁰ Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p.1.

⁴¹¹ See Kristeva’s symbolic departure from Freud in Mercer, ‘Psychoanalysis, Parents and God’, pp.252-253
imagery. As she states, for the person of faith the desire for the ‘ideal Father’, in terms of identifying with a ‘listening’ loving Third, is much the same. Kristeva’s widening of the Freudian symbolic canon started as early as *Tales of Love*. That is why we can refer to Kristeva’s recent dialogue with religion in terms of a deep-seated ‘cultural mourning’:

‘Overcoming the notion of irremediable separation…Western man re-establishes a continuity or fusion with an Other who is no longer substantial or maternal but symbolic and paternal…This is perhaps what Christianity celebrates in divine love. God was the first to love, God is love…This fusion with God, which, to repeat myself, is more semiotic than symbolic, repairs the wounds of Narcissus.’

5.2 Kristeva’s Linguistic Reading of the Passion

Kristeva’s ‘symbolic’ correction of Freud goes as far as representing *homo religiosus* at the heart of Christian symbolism, the Cross. Imagining the ‘loving Third party’ in the very place of the Christian Father was unimaginable for her ‘atheistic’ sub-texts. With this, Kristeva’s departure from Freud’s one-sided hermeneutics of religion based on the ‘oedipal structure’ culminates. This started with her shifting emphasis from Freud’s ‘murderous desires’ centred on the father to the sub-psychic:

‘The crucifixion of God-made-man reveals to the analyst, always attentive to the murderous desires with regard to the father, that representation of Christ’s Passion signifies a guilt that is visited upon the son, who is himself put to death.

Freud interprets this expiation as an avowal of the oedipal murder that every human being unconsciously desires. But Christ’s Passion brings into play even more primitive layers of the psyche; it thus reveals a fundamental depression (a narcissistic wound or reversed hatred) that conditions access to human language… language begins in mourning…’

Kristeva gradually worked out the ‘psychological’ aspects of the cross as a *universal narrative*. Kristeva sees in the Creed the embodiment of ‘basic human fantasies’. (See

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412 From Kristeva’s *In the Beginning Was Love*, quoted by Mercer, ‘Psychoanalysis, Parents and God’, pp.252-253


414 See the chapter ‘God is Love’ (pp.137-150), cf. pp.144-145 in *Tales of Love*. Here Kristeva examines the psychological dynamic of identification in the Christian sacrifice. Also, her emphasis is on a psychoanalytical understanding of sacrifice through the lens of her interest ‘abjection’. See the chapters ‘Semitics of Biblical Abomination’ (pp.90-112) and ‘Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi’ (pp.113-132) in *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection* (French publication 1980). The theme of the linguistic Passion is already raised in Kristeva’s ‘Holbein’s Dead Christ’ (pp.106-141) in *Black Sun, Depression and Melancholia* (1989, French publication 1987). In it, Christ is shown as the ‘absolute subject’ in whom the many separations that build up the psychic life of individuals are enacted. The chief emphasis among them is the phenomenon of psychic depression, which is a result of the
Appendix IV.) The most detailed elaboration of the analogy between the passion of the ‘speaking being’ and the drama of the Cross can be found in a chapter devoted to the theme, ‘Credo in Deo Unum’, in In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith (1987). The essay, ‘Suffering’, brings Kristeva’s linguistic reading to full maturity. Though she repeats her previous statements, we can regard her ‘sub-psychic passion’ as an important anthropological and ideological purification of Freud’s ‘murder myth’. The human being is seen in the Son, just as the Son in the Father, not in terms of rivalry, but in common suffering. It is a final breaking away from Freud’s ‘meta-thesis’ that ‘religion is an obsessional neurosis’. As he put it, the Christian remembrance of the Passion ‘is essentially a fresh elimination of the father, an [obsessive] repetition of the guilty deed.’ Kristeva transformed this ‘oedipal reduction’ into a genuine linguistic quest for subjective origins. This hermeneutical shift liberates Freudian discourse once and for all for a co-operation with theology.

Kristeva’s new reading of the Passion comes quite close to its theological meaning in a way which Freud’s Totem and Taboo ab ovo made impossible. The added new element to the ‘negativity scheme’ of the early linguistics is that now Kristeva tells the ‘linguistic passion’ to a Christian audience. ‘Suffering’ was delivered as a Lenten talk at the Paris Notre-Dame. It is Kristeva’s effort to translate her psychoanalytical hermeneutics for the religious mindset. It is particularly psychic suffering which Kristeva stresses. The Father dying together with the Son is a summary of all psychic loss: ‘every one of us is the result of a long “work on the negative”: birth, weaning, separation, frustration.’

There is an implied anthropological claim in this translation. The narcissistic structure can be seen as part of the imago Dei! Kristeva demonstrates for theological sensitivity that the narcissistic structure is constitutive of our humaneness. The ‘linguistic passion’, she claims, is our deepest existential image. The whole of our psychic structure ‘anticipates’, metaphorically, what happens on the Cross. The pain of losing the original unity with the

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415 Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.39.
416 See the chapter ‘Credo in Unum Deum’ (pp.36-44), Julia Kristeva, In the Beginning Was Love, cf. p.40-41.
418 The text is the fruit of a lecture given at the Notre-Dame de Paris within the framework of a dialogue between faith and contemporary thought in which Julia Kristeva and Anne-Marie Pelletier discussed the theme of ‘Suffering’. This text was first published in the collection Voici l’homme (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2006). Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.87,p.108.
419 ‘Suffering’, Ibid., p.94.
mother pushes the subject towards the language of the Father. Jesus’ loss of the Father is a symbolic reminder that language is suspended above the ‘void’ created by the loss of the mother. Kristeva’s emphasis, and offer to theology, is that the death of the Son manifests the fragility of ‘Meaning’ over against nihilism. Language expressive of Love is permanently threatened: the ‘human logos’ can fall back into an entrapping ‘semiotic’ chaos. ‘Christianity brings to consciousness the essential internal dramas of each person’s becoming. It thus gives itself an immense...unconscious...cathartic power.’ 420

My point is that the re-connection of the sub-psychic proto-passion with the Cross can be made a source to narrow the gap between the psychological and the theological concepts of the person. This is an important missing link. In Homans, it was only a theoretical dialogue with Freud to correct the distant ‘High Transcendence’ of God. The common ‘anthropology’ proposed in ‘Suffering’ and ‘This Incredible Need to Believe’ was unimaginable in Freud. For him, Christian doctrine (dogma) was one-sidedly downgraded to the deepest desires of mankind. 421 Here Kristeva more intrinsically relates the psyche with doctrine. There is a common history between the speaking being and Christ the ‘absolute subject’.

The other crucial contact Kristeva makes is with the theme of the Resurrection. In terms of content, there is no novelty compared with her previous views. ‘Resurrection’ stands for psychic rebirth. The continuity with the program of the self-transcending subject is obvious. What makes Kristeva’s linguistic passion significant is that the emphasis is not so much on the self’s capacity to transcend, as on the means through which it takes place. She confirms the need for creating symbols which express subjective suffering. ‘Resurrection’, through telling the story of the self, is a universal need which unites human beings. This confirmation of homo religiosus is highly significant for our dialogue.

‘Jesus assumes human nature up to its most extreme physical (flagellation, the putting to death of the body) and moral (abandonment by God the Father, the loss of the Spirit) limits, the better to raise it up again in the divine, to reconcile human nature with the divine. Transposing this acceptance of his onto the anthropological plane, I would say that Jesus, suffering because desiring and thinking beyond the possible and the finite, offers an experience in which we recognise our own desires and thoughts, by definition without any possibility of satisfaction: forever unfulfilled, forever doubled by anguish, constituted in the process of incomplete maturation of the human by a series of separations, of prohibitions and renunciations, of modulation of the drives and of sublimation of the pleasures. Each of us suffers if and because we think “beyond”. Christ’s message seems to say, and I shall be more specific, through the “body”; which

420 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe., p.95.
implies that thought is an accompaniment and a traversal of the anguish. … Thought [is] co-present with pleasure, all the way to suffering. (…) ¹⁴²² (Emphasis added.)

This recalls the stoic accepting of human finitude from Kristeva’s early reading of Holbein’s Dead Christ. Here, however, an active drama is emphasised, the ‘symbolic’ struggle to speak. The shift is palpably there: the Son’s becoming one with the Father is ‘life-giving’, whereas in Powers of Horror identifying with one’s own death was central. ¹⁴²³ The present reading is much closer to the Christian dynamic of resurrection when the emphasis is on one’s rebirth. Though in Kristeva’s reading of Passion the fundamental difference becomes visible, yet it takes place in view of a common dialogue. It is Resurrection not in the religious sense, but in terms of psychic rebirth. However the dynamic is shared:

‘Hence I say that, for having emphasised, as never before, com-passion and kénose as doubles inseparable form “amorous intelligence”, the genius of Christianity promoted a formidable counterweight to suffering that is none other than its sublimation or its working through by psychic and verbal activity. “I”, suffering being because desiring/thinking, loving/loved, am able to represent my passion to myself, and this representation is my resurrection. My spirit, in love with the passion, recreates it in the creations of the loving intellect: thoughts, stories, paintings, music come out of this.’ ¹⁴²⁴

Though Kristeva’s reading stops at the psychological level, theology has a clear point from which to address the relationship between the self and the ‘Loving Third’. Kristeva conceives the union with the Father in terms of a temporary one. The self relates only to the ‘symbols’ that the Father passes on, language. Whereas Kristeva stops here, theology does not. The Cross (as our new language) is not a separation from the Father in terms of becoming ‘free’ again through re-possessed language. The Father is not a temporary ‘Loving Third’. Faith states the Cross as the highpoint of the union with the Father. Paraphrasing Heidegger, the subject is not Sein-zum-Tode or a ‘being toward death’, thrown back upon his own symbols. Neither is the human being facing an unknown, unnameable totality in the original Heideggerian sense. ¹⁴²⁵ For theology, the Cross is also the moment of a permanent hope, life, and rebirth, which are inexhaustible. Rebirth is not only sublimation of one’s suffering. The ‘loving intellect’ is created not by the self, all the more because it is primarily the Father, who is the source, which needs to be represented. This representation is coming from the Father, through the Son who alone can represent him. The Christian notion of rebirth is not about acquiring self-expression. In the dialectic of faith, it is through telling the

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¹⁴²² ‘Suffering (Lenten Lectures, March 19, 2006)’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, pp.92-93
¹⁴²³ See section 2.3.3 ‘Mourning The Father’s Hope’ in Part One, pp. 98-100. Textual reference: Kristeva, Black Sun, p. 113.
¹⁴²⁴ ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.96.
Son’s resurrection that the human self resurrects and becomes represented.

As a response to Kristeva’s linguistic reading of the Passion, the following points of agreement need to be highlighted for our dialogue. Representing resurrection (‘one’s desired rebirth’) is the prerequisite of the living ‘psychic space’. Kristeva’s says that the subject becomes sensitive to symbols through its own suffering. She confirms that the ‘exhaustion’ of the postmodern self can be mourned through Christian symbols. They are intrinsic to the self not only as a cultural memory, but also as the self’s psychological dynamic which they express. There is an innate desire for ‘rebirth’ which marks the postmodern self. In this sense, the primary narrative of homo religiosus is ‘Resurrection’. There is a fundamental ‘pre-religious’ desire to acquire sufficient language through which the self can be embedded in love. This language gives a name to Heidegger’s name-less and story-less ‘Dasein’. From a theological point of view, however, it also should be noted that despite this desire, the ‘exhausted subject’ has no proper symbols for fulfilling this need. The subject needs a symbolic support from culture, but the most active agent of this ‘symbol building’ has to be the contemporary subject itself.

5.3 Kristeva’s Ethical Reading of the Passion

It is Kristeva’s ‘ethical’ reading of the Passion that offers the most fertile connections for theology. It makes the ‘Loving Father’ central as the source of compassionate love. Kristeva addresses Freud in terms of radically deconstructing his ‘autocrat’ God-image. The ‘ethical’ re-imaging of the Father is also an important interrogation of the problem of ‘what is missing’ from secular discourse. Kristeva’s revision of the Christian Father is a radical leap similar to her ‘dialogical feminism’. Kristeva continues the correction of gender-dualisms in a theological context. This also is an important correction of her own feminist critique of the God-image from ‘Stabat Mater’. With this, her one-sided criticism of masculine theological imagination gets a right balance. This Father-centred reading of the Passion is a new peak in Kristeva’s engagement with Christian texts. It offers crucial ‘data’ for a common symbol building.

426 ‘Dasein’, Germ. ‘Being’. It is a central concept of Heidegger’s ontology of discovering man’s authentic existence in Being and Time. Dasein means man’s given state in the world, the everyday way of Being in which Dasein (Being) is not authentically who it is. This non-reflective mode of existence is expressed also in the term Das Man, the ‘They’. In Heidegger’s ontology, the person becomes a genuine Self by confronting and accepting existence in its finitude, as Being-unto-death. Jacques Tamniaux, ‘Heidegger’ (pp.32-60), in Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy, Routledge History of Philosophy Volume VIII, edited by Richard Kearney, Routledge, London and New York 1994 (First publication 1994), p.37.
5.3.1 The Father: The Sender to Love

The Father is shown as a regenerating source of ethics in terms of re-orientating human love. Kristeva’s interpretation of the Father’s love here has a twofold motive. Its immediate context is her dialogue with Christians. The other motive comes from within her project. Kristeva already made the critical observation in Tales of Love that ‘secularism’ does not produce a sufficient discourse on motherhood. The new emphasis, as a completion of this criticism, is that ‘secular humanism’ continues this erring by not paying sufficient attention to those marginalised in culture, especially the disabled. Kristeva repeatedly remarks that Christianity offers a compelling narrative of solidarity, while ‘secularisation’ does not. Work with suffering people in practice is more effective among Christians. She brings a concrete example by drawing on her experience as the president of the National Council for the Disabled (France): 427

‘...I am in the process of verifying that the discourse of Christian compassion, however infantilising and miserabilist it may be, is the most frequent and effective basis of the still-too-rare solidarity I am looking for in France along with disabled citizens. (...) Secularism will not withstand the impact of religions without this more complex humanism, capable of recognising suffering and giving people the chance for a better life, a life plan, a direction. Support for the disabled is part of this and perhaps offers a new, unprecedented opportunity itself. The sciences augment knowledge, but will we let them respond in a suitably ethical way? This, it seems to me, is the main concern of the secularism in place, well beyond political battles and the vagaries of geopolitics. 428

Solidarity with suffering clarifies concretely ‘what is missing’ (Habermas) from secular discourse. Kristeva urges a ‘cultural revolution’ within secular society to change the way the disabled are viewed. 429 In Hatred and Forgiveness, Kristeva points to the central trauma of ‘secularity’, the fear of the disabled person, the ‘disfigured other’. The disabled person/sufferer

‘opens a narcissistic identity wound in the person who is not disabled; he inflicts a threat of physical or psychical death, fear of collapse... And so the disabled person is inevitably exposed to a discrimination that cannot be shared.’ 430 (Italics mine.)

427 Autobiographical detail from the essay, ‘From Jesus to Mozart, Christianity’s Difference’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.77.
429 See the essay, crucial in this aspect, ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and ….Vulnerability’ (pp.29-45.), Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness.
430 Ibid., p.29.
Kristeva proposes psychoanalytic listening to suffering as a mode of removing ‘the abyss that separates the world of disability from the world of the able’.\(^{431}\)

This essay, ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and…Vulnerability’ is an important background to Kristeva’s reading of the Passion in ‘Suffering’. The two are in a structural dialogue with one another, and their interplay is crucial for a theological evaluation. Their underlying question is: what is the source of being sent to the suffering other? What dynamics, what discourse? What ‘categorical imperative’? What community? What ‘symbolism’? In This Incredible Need to Believe, the theological image of the Father is invited into the discourse, as this image has much to say to the exclusion of disabled people.\(^{432}\) Kristeva’s ‘theological turn’ is in dialogue not only with Christians, but also touches upon some uncertainties in her own regime.

Kristeva presents the Christian God as the sender to love the suffering other. Though the Father is presented only as a symbolic archetype for ethics, the theological dynamic is real. The Father of the Passion as ‘exemplary love’ makes the fellow human being visible and real for us in and through the Son. The coherence of the Christian narrative is unquestioned and shown as unprecedented. Kristeva presents specifically its loving Father as the one who sends to the suffering other with whom he identifies.\(^{433}\) It is the Father’s example that moves me out of my self to the other. Kristeva clearly shares the dynamics: the Father removes our fear of the otherness of the wounded. It is the loving Abba, who is reflected in Christ ‘the absolute person’, who makes the ‘narcissistic identity wound’ in us visible. He puts Himself in place of our wounds and in this way he redefines the previously impenetrable borders between us and the ‘wounded’. The Father who invites us to an imitatio Patris (imitation of the Father) restores solidarity with the ‘world of disability’.

The Christian God in ‘Suffering’ emerges as the real Other to the self. The Father-Son relationship empowers the subject to act in some way which, by himself, he is incapable of. This act of sending, or showing compassion, restores and generates a genuine selfhood. In compassionate love, the other is reflected as the one to whom the person can now relate in love. Both are active: the Father who sends by responding to the Son’s innocent suffering with compassion, and the Son, in his innocent suffering, by taking upon himself all human

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\(^{432}\) The essay ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and… Vulnerability’ recapitulates her reflections on disability in France. Kristeva contributed to the report by the National Council on Disability (November 2002) to the French president (Open letter to the president of the Republic on citizens with disabilities, for the use of those who are disabled and those who are not.)

\(^{433}\) Theology can refer here to a series of healings in Mark, which marks the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry: Mk 1:21-27 /driving out evil spirits/, Mk 1:35-39 /healing many sick with various diseases/, Mk 1:40-45 /healing the man with leprosy/, and especially Mk 2:1-12 /healing the paralytic/. The latter introduces Jesus’ apology of the Father’s universal will to heal all, regardless of the Sabbath day.
suffering. But the Father-Son can only universalise his suffering because of serving. In this way, theology argues, Jesus is more than symbolic or representative. It is literally his compassion that restores the full capacity of the self in us. Kristeva reads the innocence of Christ’s suffering as the assertion that suffering is inherent in the reconciliation of the human with the divine; and it is also inherent in the life of the speaking being. 434

‘Innocent, absolved of guilt, flesh bruised and spiritually wanting (“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” [Which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’435] Mark 15:34) – what solitude has not been haunted by this cry and this silence! – Christian suffering is shareable: this is the first way in which Christianity has effected a revolution in the approach to suffering. Shareable, first of all, between humans and Christ, who, in assuming it, confers upon it extraordinary dignity, at the interface of the human and the divine; shareable next, and consequently, among human beings themselves, who only allow themselves to look for a way to relieve it on the condition that they can look it in the face, give it a name, and interpret it.’ 436

This is Kristeva’s elucidation of the transcendent dynamic of the self on the level of ethics. We can refer back to her program of the self-transcending subject. This reading of the Passion is a completion of the program, and here Kristeva offers a genuine point of contact with theology. The self opens up and rises above himself when the suffering of the other is named. It is not the representation of ‘my’ suffering, but that of the other, who is genuinely outside of the self. With the thought of giving representation to the passion of the fellow human being, Kristeva’s program of self-transcending, the temporary resurrection through self-representation, reaches a genuine peak. This ‘transcendent selfhood’, the dynamic of which de-centres the self, is absolutely shareable with humanism. Here we can attach an ethical meaning to Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’. Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’ comes out of its inertia when listening to the silent suffering of the other. This silence of ethical charge is a borderline state of language, a genuine ‘beyond’. Theology witnesses to this silence: when human beings have no name for the suffering Other, God’s epiphany takes place. This historical ‘silence’ is an important and very precise common formulation with Kristeva of what the ‘exhausted subject’ means. ‘Exhaustion’ stands for the inability to name the suffering Other.

This muteness of the ‘isolated self’ becomes manifest in ‘an impasse that threatens all countries’, when ‘secularisation [is] supplanting the compassion of our world’, when ‘there

434 ‘From Jesus to Mozart (Christianity’s Difference)’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.80.
435 Translation from the Compact NIV Study Bible, Hodder &Stoughton, London, Sydney, Auckland 1998 (First published 1987 by International Bible Society), p.1499. If not stated otherwise in my work this translation is used. King James Version is referred separately.
436 ‘Suffering (Lenten Lectures, March 19, 2006)’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, pp.90-91.
is no place for vulnerability’. 437 Theology argues that it is not we who name vulnerability, but He, who presents his own wound as ours. This can lead to a common ‘naming’ with secular humanism, because we recognise in the Son a ‘universal wound’ on behalf of all unnamed sufferers. What Kristeva raises in the final outcome is the need to express this universality. She confirms, that this ‘symbol’ comes from a historical dialogue with the ‘father’s love’.

‘There is no act of love susceptible of consoling suffering if it is not preceded by speech, by imagination, by transference/counter-transference between consoled and consoler. This is what Christianity tries to do when it recognises the desperate orientation (this version) toward the ideal Father of psychic suffering, which aggravates all other kinds of suffering; this is what Christianity tries to do especially when it transforms this père-version into creativity, into sublimation, into the art of living.’438 (Emphasis mine.)

However much reduced to transferential love this dialogue is in the psychoanalytic encounter, Kristeva confirms history as the medium of the epiphany of love. She also confirms that representing the Father’s love is life-giving. With this, for theology, the opportunity occurs to witness how history and the ‘historicity of the subject’ are addressed by grace. Against this background we can sum up Kristeva’s ethical reading of the Passion as revealing a ‘narcissistic’ identity crisis of the postmodern subject. Tackling this crisis draws attention to the need of presenting to him the Father’s compassionate love as the archetype of ethics. This solidary love, by virtue of its nature, transcends the level of individual encounters. It is equally important to present the Father’s love as trans-historical love, which is intimately connected to individual suffering throughout history. This demonstration will make the Father’s love truly universal and will interrupt postmodern fragmentation.

5.3.2 The Immanent Reading of the Father’s Kenosis

Kristeva confirmed the Passion as our universal ethical narrative from the ‘sub-psychic level’. This complemented her earlier strategy of responding to the loss of paternal authority from within the ‘semiotic’. 439 By re-reading the Passion, her ‘semiotic’ imagery culminates in a genuine synthesis. To the ‘semiotic’ symbols of love the missing ‘Paternal love’ is added in a complementary way. As a high-point of Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’, this

437 Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.40.
438 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.96.
439 It ‘gets to the point where some analysts, like me, are then faced with the necessity of thinking and identifying the figure of the mother. For the mother is definitely not just a genetrix; instead, she takes on a symbolic and civilisational function that our culture goes gooey over, but says little about, because we are so busy saving the father.’ In Kristeva, Revolt, She Said, p.28.
authority is recovered from the Christian cultural memory of the ‘Father’. In her dialogical position, theology is rediscovered as a current resource for humanism. This can be seen as a further step in deconstructing Freud’s closed ‘oedipal iconography’ of the Father. Kristeva’s dialogue with theological economy is a genuine transcending of the reduction of ‘God’ to the paternal image, whose consoling function is to overcome existential fears.

Kristeva’s reading of the Passion, contrary to Freud’s original critique of religion, made the Father’s kenosis a pivotal ethical reference. With this, she set up a creative tension, as it is directly addressing the theology of the cross through its core-concept, which Kristeva borrows. This making a direct reference to Balthasar’s kenosis-theology of the ‘hiatus’ in God is the crucial contact point which connects theology with Kristeva as an ontological discourse. My study highlights Kristeva’s use of kenosis as her most important epistemological leap (innovation). With this, her relationship to Christian texts, despite the materialist position she maintains, becomes intrinsic. Kristeva’s ‘semiotics’ and theology, through this, can be linked as genuine ‘inter-texts’. This means that making theological statements is not external any longer to her original ontological program. They incite a genuine ‘cultural mourning’ which can be shared.

‘Christ’s suffering on the Cross – which cannot but strike you, and me, during this period of Lent, which holds human beings in thrall at Easter, preceding the Resurrection – Christ’s suffering, therefore, is neither of the same order, nor as mysterious as that which faith confronts when it touches upon the virgin birth of the Man God, nor that other mystery, which touches upon faith, of the Resurrection. Between these two poles of the Incarnation (Immaculate Conception of Marie by Anne, her mother, and virginal birth of Jesus by the grace of the Holy Spirit), and of the Resurrection of the Son of God on the Father’s right hand, and the promise of the resurrection of all bodies, the suffering of Jesus, however paroxysmal it may be, is nonetheless sharable and, in this sense, common.

Kristeva’s reading of kenosis remains purely psychological. The reference to Balthasar remains also unelaborated as, from the theme of the Father’s kenosis, she switches to the psychological dimension, her usual field of sublimation. The ‘death of God’, in terms of the

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440 An important observation of the existential, universal desire for a renewed Father image in culture is Kristeva’s early remark on the ‘resurgence of the sacred’. ‘Look at those crowds at World Youth days in search of a good father, kneeling before the Pope who enables millions of people (even in a country like Cuba, ravaged by dictatorial paternity) to “fix fatherhood”, i.e. to console themselves in the shelter of a paternal figure who is neither absent nor tyrannical but simply present and loving.’ Kristeva, Revolt, She Said, p.23.
442 Her two references are to Urs von Balthasar, La gloire et la croix [Glory and the cross], vol. 3,2, “La Nouvelle Alliance” (Paris: Aubier, 1975), in ‘Suffering’, and ‘From Jesus to Mozart’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.83 and p.94.
443 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.88.
suffering of the human self, is seen as a condition of rebirth through thought. Suffering is transcendenced and expressed in the deployment of art.\textsuperscript{444} The ‘consoling Christ’

‘identifies with the malaise of men and continuously offers them the mirror of his suffering onto which to project their own. It is indeed in the revolving door of this sharing, by dying like a man for men, that Jesus removes their sin and Evil from the world.’\textsuperscript{445}

Besides the theological meaning, Kristeva highlights the moral reading of God’s kenosis:

‘(…) Com-passion brings about a historically unprecedented moral solidarity with vulnerable humankind. For two thousand years, right up to the most recent Christian humanism, Christian morality comes to drink at the source of this compassion, and one can only salute the generosity of the works that put this compassion into practice. I have seen for myself, notably in the care for the handicapped, the extraordinary vitality of Christians, and Christian institutions dedicated to compassion, that courageously supplement the weaknesses of legislator and politics.’\textsuperscript{446}

Though Kristeva, in ‘Suffering’, does not engage in a theological discussion, her psychological elucidation of kenosis points to the suffering of Christ and the Father as a problem which still poses questions within theology. This reference is important for my critique as it will return to dealing with this ‘borderline’ region:

‘It is through this co-presence of the absolute-and-the-nothingness of desire that Christianity reaches the limits of the religious. I would therefore say that with kénose we are no longer confronted with the religious but with the sacred, understood as a traversal, via thought, of the unthinkable: nothingness, the useless, the vain, the absurd.’\textsuperscript{447}

Or,

‘However, in only attending to the humanist − as I would call it − aspect of Christian suffering, one overlooks other advances that revolutionise even metaphysics itself.’\textsuperscript{448}

‘Does Jesus in his suffering speak only to human nature? Son of God, but allowing himself to be annihilated, does he not turn the divine itself to nothing? Theological debates leave the question open. Is it possible to take it up again today?… The question remains: is the suffering to death only due to Christ’s humanity, or does it affect the very nature of his divinity? And thus of Divinity? After the Last Supper, and right before the Passion, doesn’t Christ tell Philip: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” Protestants and Orthodox apparently attend more closely to this “descent” (of the Father himself) “into the lowest earthly regions”.’\textsuperscript{449} (Emphasis mine.)

\textsuperscript{444} ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.89.
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid., p.91.
\textsuperscript{446} Ibid., pp.91-92.
\textsuperscript{447} Ibid., p.95.
\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., p.92.
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid., p.93.
Kristeva highlights the most difficult theological question to be answered, the theme of suffering in God. Her purely humanist treatment should not be seen as a lack of theology. Her stance is explained by her materialist agnosticism. Rather, Kristeva shows the importance of the Father’s suffering, and this is the very point at which the question of God’s suffering becomes a resource. Rediscovering the Father’s suffering is perhaps our last chance as a culture to hold a mirror to our collective suffering. Responding to the Father’s compassionate love revealed on the Cross is the last chance to awaken individual and collective responsibility for this suffering.

My response from the theologia crucis will articulate the theological dimension of the Passion which Kristeva has left untouched. In her reference to Balthasar’s ‘descent-theology’, the kenosis narrative of theology is addressed: how can we make the Cross become again the icon of the Father’s love? Kristeva’s support for this endeavour is not negligible at all. She confirms that the postmodern subject is interested in the ‘suffering of the Father’. If this interest is indeed there, then, through his own ‘psychic passion’, the ‘exhausted subject’ can relate again to his lost religious (predominantly Christian) past.

5.3.3 Recovering the Father through the Maternal Metaphor

Kristeva’s re-reading of the Passion is so fresh that there is still no theological engagement with it. The importance of this text is the shared terminology with theology. It makes a response relatively easier than before as the ‘Father’ is at the heart of theological sensitivity. In the work which followed upon This Incredible Need to Believe, Kristeva has taken up again the problem of the ‘Father’ and the ‘Passion’ through the lens of her previous agenda, the feminine sacred. In Hatred and Forgiveness, the essay ‘The Passion According to Motherhood’ occupies a central place. It is the second major offer for a theological engagement. It continues her correction of Freud in terms of recovering the ‘Father’s love’ through the mother. This piece also continues the ‘maternal metaphor’ from Tales of Love. What is added is the dialogue with the masculine theological imagination. Here Kristeva theorises the unrecognised experience of the mother in terms of showing the contribution of the feminine ‘sacred’. Kristeva submits the maternal passion as the prototype of passion and ethics. ‘The Passion according to Motherhood’ speaks of motherhood, since the moment of conception is an experience of living with the other ‘inside’. For Kristeva, life with the child, from the ‘narcissistic unity’ to allowing the child to become an autonomous ‘speaking being’, is an archetype of ethics, ‘preparing for ethics’. The ‘Mother’, just as the Father of the Passion, is a sender to love (‘amare’). Kristeva’s central thesis is that it is in this maternal
experience that ‘ethics’ for the first time is inscribed into us human beings. A mother’s unconditional love for the child grounds the moral self. In other words, the ‘Mother’ is our first ethical memory; the sense of morality is the gift of the mother. Maternal love is the prototype of human passion and com-passion.450

Because of the limited space I can only recapitulate the ‘theological’ dynamic of the ‘Passion According to Motherhood’. Re-intensifying the ‘Loving Third’ with the underlying ethics is a fundamental need for our culture. This recovery takes place through remembering a mother’s love in their particular ‘Passion’. The link for theology is the demonstration that the Christian God-image is a vital resource in this recovery. The ‘maternal metaphor’ is also present in God, the theology of the cross can liberate the suppressed ‘maternal’ side of the image of Father. Kristeva’s ‘maternal Passion’ can be a useful source for presenting the Christian Abba as the Father of compassion. Through presenting this enhanced God-image, theology enters into an ontological dialogue with Freud’s criticism. It is a non-polemic response by proving that God is capable of unconditional love, of ‘maternal kenosis’. The Father’s kenosis for man can be seen as an archetype of these ‘non-oedipal’ qualities. Demonstrating this is also an important counter-economy to deconstruct the language of ‘atonement theology’.

Kristeva’s ‘maternal Passion’ highlights the fact that the mother’s identity is renewed through the unconscious re-learning of her mother-tongue while teaching her child to speak.451 Thus, Kristeva insinuates, mothers have a specific relation to ‘Tradition’. They have more of a tolerance toward the canon of culture than men do. ‘Men’, as history shows, are ready to eliminate difference, even at the cost of ‘killing’ for the canon. A mother’s re-learning of her mother tongue can be seen as the archetype of an inclusive attitude to cultural difference. A mother internalises this tolerance through her internal journey in the child’s language and ‘evolving’ culture. The stabilisation of her shaken identity in pregnancy (Who am I? Am I two or one?) also takes place with the support of the ‘father’s love’. In other words, her ‘sacrificial’ love needs a support. This dependence of the mother, Kristeva implies, is the archetypal experience of fellowship. The mother has to learn that her love for the child and for the father comprise a unity. The way the mother detaches herself from ‘her’ doublet to allow the child to be an autonomous being,452 is the birth of the sense of community, a regained equilibrium of love. She realises that her love for the child is always directed to the father. The mother loves the ‘father’ through her child; she loves the child

451 Ibid., pp.89-90.
452 Ibid., p.86.
through her love for the ‘father’. As an analogy, this can be seen as the ‘Trinitarian dynamic’ of becoming the ‘loving Third’. This ‘Trinitarian’ direction is another important link with theology.

5.4 Conclusions for Theological Engagement

Kristeva has brought Freudian imagery to breaking-point. Her Freudian narratives came close to the original theological dynamics of the images borrowed from religion. The analyses showed that Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ innovations exhausted all the inner possibilities that her immanent regime permits. The dialogue in ‘Suffering’ may be transitory, but its theological potential can be exhausted. It is theology’s turn if it can live with the opportunity.

Kristeva’s three readings of the Passion (linguistic, ethical and ‘feminist’) culminated in the theologically relevant problem of kenosis. It seems a viable concept for both psychoanalysis and theology. Kenosis, in its original theological context, says much about God’s self-emptying, which Kristeva does not examine. But this dynamic concept is also expressing the existential cries of the human person as a ‘lack of being’. Kristeva states that recognising this lack in us builds up empathy towards our fellow human beings.

‘…My fear of castration, narcissistic injury, defect, and death, repressed until now, is transformed into attention, patience, and solidarity capable of refining my being in the world. In this encounter could the disabled subject become not my analyst but my analyzer?’

That is, who gives meaning to my life? Theology argues that it comes from the ‘inexhaustible God’, who has become ‘disabled’ (‘handicapped’) for me in history, on the Cross. He is so close to me that I should not fear him. Theology argues that the underlying discourse of psychoanalytic listening to vulnerability is always the full meaning of the Christian Passion. If theology takes up this ‘shared symbol building’, it needs first to present a genuine historical reading of the Passion in the sense of re-reading it for our particular, present history.

Back to our Homansian context of shared symbol building. Kristeva’s reading of the Passion can be seen as an attempt to find the narrative which can integrate the ‘fantasy activity’ triggered in culture in the wake of the ‘death of the Father’. My point is that the oeuvre needs a confirmation from theology that this project should be developed further. The

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453 ‘Thinking About Liberty in Dark Times’, in Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.44.
Passion is not one among the possible references of Kristeva’s project but is the central context of her work. Put it differently, the Christian Passion is the principal ‘intertext’ of Kristeva and the hermeneutics for approaching her ‘semiotics’.

The Cross, if it reveals the ‘absolute subject’, Christ, in the theological sense, also reveals a genuine self-image of the subject. The Cross can be presented as the ‘absolute narrative’ of the self. Participation in the Christian Passion is the unnamed desire of our culture. Christ’s Cross confronts the person and his communities by shedding light on what is ‘irremediable’ in us on our own, from within our resources.\(^{454}\) The theology of the cross challenges secular discourse by confronting it with the ‘exhaustible’ resources of the autonomous self. ‘Yet the analysand who has not confronted the irremediable in himself has not completed his journey to the end of the night.’\(^{455}\) The Cross is an honest discourse about the transformation of this ‘irremediable’ into a conversation about the meaning of life and history lived together with God. This conversation, if it wants to deconstruct the closedness of ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ necessarily has to take place in the borderline region of human history, the Resurrection. This is theology’s strategic way to recover the ‘Father’s love’. It assigns the direction for my critique to argue that the experience of the Cross has to be made a motivation for the postmodern self, an object and source of desire to return to ‘meaning’ and human bonds. The concept of *kenosis* and Kristeva’s reinstating belief as a ‘pre-religious category’ makes possible theology’s translation of faith experience.\(^ {456}\) Now it is theology’s turn to give witness to that statement: ‘Whether I belong to a religion, whether I be agnostic or atheist, when I say ‘I believe’, I mean “I hold as true”.’\(^ {457}\) This is the recovery of the notion of our particularity (individual, communal) in Christ, who is our ‘absolute memory’ of the Father.

Theology needs to admit that Kristeva’s strictly psychological reading of the Christian agape is very difficult to access as its references are independent from faith.\(^ {458}\) On the other hand, themes like the ‘Eucharist’ as the remembrance of the Cross, or the sacrifice which sustains the Christian fellowship, have to form part of the response of theology. Kristeva’s revision of Freud allows theology to engage with her in the context of the ‘Loving Third party’. Objectively, the need to recover the ‘Father’s love’ over against nihilism also requires widening the psychological dynamic of the ‘Loving Third’. Kristeva’s re-reading of the

\(^{454}\) ‘Thinking About Liberty in Dark Times’, in Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, p.44.
\(^{455}\) Ibid., p.44.
\(^{456}\) Analogous to Kristeva’s translation of her psychoanalytical approach for Christians in ‘Suffering’.
\(^{457}\) Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p.3.
\(^{458}\) Like identifying the underlying dynamic of the Eucharist in ‘a relief of the oral sadism directed at the archaic maternal body’. In ‘God is Love’ (pp.137-150), in Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p.148.
Passion makes the central role of the ‘Loving Third party’ more accessible for theology. Though the theme in her early ‘reductive’ readings had already occurred, because of epistemological and methodological differences it was less accessible. After her dialogical turn, certain aspects of Kristeva’s early reading of religious sacrifice can be revisited and completed with their theological meaning. The *theologia crucis* will offer these ‘completions’ with a special focus on ethical fellowship. In this endeavour theology can build on Kristeva’s appreciation of the Christian sacrifice. She highlights that identifying with the Father is a sublimation of violence: agape builds psychic space, through which one can reach out to include neighbours, foreigners, and sinners.

Theology when engaging with Kristeva’s recent reading of the Passion will have to address her previous Freudianism. The task of *ontological critique* remains. Kristeva’s ‘Freudian subtext’ is especially manifest in the essay ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity… and Vulnerability’, which confirms psychoanalysis as the privileged hermeneutical horizon for the critique of culture. The central preoccupation of the third millennium, Kristeva asserts, is ‘what meaning to give the limits of life: birth, death, deficiencies? Will advanced democracies have the means to support life with its limits and shortcomings, soliciting and favouring the subject within them?’ As a source for answering these questions, Kristeva assigns listening to the unconscious of our culture. Psychoanalysis’ perennial principle is that this disturbed unconscious speaks honestly of the loss of meaning.

The loss of meaning is indeed a shared concern with Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ‘resourcing’. However, the essential vulnerability of the speaking being is expressed most profoundly by the event of the Cross. As for ‘what is missing’ (Habermas), that is, the symbol of the Cross, it is now in the unconscious of our culture. The meaning of love it reveals is deeply exiled from culture. The vulnerability of the speaking being to which the analyst listens to today is revealed most accurately in the crucified incarnate Logos, in Jesus as ‘speaking being’. A contemporary exposition of the Passion needs to argue the Cross as an existential image, which reveals the ‘essential vulnerability of the speaking body’. Implied in it is the historical suffering not only of psychic space, but that of the human soul. Theology needs to argue that the human soul is the fullest expression of historicity. Also, theology needs to spell out that this fundamental vulnerability arises not only at the

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459 Like ‘abjection’ or ‘defilement’. See the chapters, ‘Semiotics of Biblical Abomination’ in *Powers of Horror* (pp.90-112) and ‘Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi’ (pp113-132).
460 See ‘God is Love’ (pp.137-150), in Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, cf. pp.146-147.149.
462 Ibid., p.41.
463 Kristeva’s emphasis on the particular suffering of the person. Ibid., p.41.
intersection of biology and language, but also at the intersection between ‘language’ (nature) and revealed faith (Revelation). The capacity of ‘thinking/representing beyond’ needs to re-establish a relation with this ‘future dimension’ of history. It might be true that ‘psychoanalysis is the quintessential intimate experience’. However, theology claims this quintessentially for the encounter with God who is the radical other to history, while also being a radical intimacy to the human self. This is where theology’s ‘Semiotic Passion’ begins.

Therefore, theology aims at completing Kristeva’s objective: ‘how do we find a way to inscribe in the concept of the human itself...the constitutive part of the destructivity, vulnerability and imbalance that are integral parts of the identity of the human race, and the singularity of the speaking subject?’ This is the utmost theological challenge: how can we represent the faith narrative of the Cross within the human self? There is an important link with Kristeva’s project, particularly her Arendtian emphasis on re-commencement in history. The Incarnation has already inscribed the Passion within the human self. Theology says that from this standpoint the person of Christ unites Kristeva’s Arendtian program and her ‘semiotic’ quest for subjective re-beginning. The central event of the Cross is God’s speaking to us in Jesus Christ. His revelation through the Cross-Resurrection is our new life, a new subjective and collective re-commencement. The ‘Semiotic Passion’ in this sense will spell out the ‘missing’ fellowship of grace.

Kristeva’s ‘symbolic mourning’ that produced her ‘Semiotic Passion’ was a natural development in her work. My study identified the major motives of this evolution. The inner possibilities of her regime (the ‘semiotic directions’ of her materialism), the necessary corrections of Freud’s ‘Father-narrative’, her previous engagement with Christian texts, and her realisation of the ‘exhaustion’ of the subject together prompted Kristeva to spell out a new humanist reformulation of the Passion. My critique from the onset highlighted the ‘ontological’ cause of her moving towards a ‘semi-theological’ symbolism. The problems of the materialist grounding of the self, the isolated self, its unmourned religious past, especially contributed to ‘deconstructing’ Freud’s closed hermeneutics of religion. All these together resulted in an explicit conversation with Christian faith.

The whole trajectory of the oeuvre shows that Kristeva’s Freudian hermeneutics is not a

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465 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.92.
466 Kristeva, Hatred and Forgiveness, p.41.
467 Ibid., p.42.
closed system. In the light of the later development which led to her dialogue with religion, Hanvey’s treatment is limited. The *absolute* closed nature of Kristeva’s hermeneutics of religion can no longer be stated. We have seen a definite move away from the ultimate reduction of religious meaning. Kristeva’s psychoanalytical conversation with faith is an objective situation, in which theology can submit its own ‘Semiotic Passion’ as a comprehensive response.

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469 Hanvey ‘Other than Stranger’ (pp.121-142), p.134.
6 THEOLOGY’S ‘SEMIOTIC PASSION’: RENEWING THE IMAGE OF THE FATHER FROM THE THEOLOGIA CRUCIS

The closing interrelated chapters of my work (Ch 6-7) bring to realisation the prime objective of my critique: a comprehensive response from systematic theology to Kristeva’s ‘semiotics’. The ‘Semiotic Passion’ addresses the points of contacts with her work. In a narrow sense, it is a response to Kristeva’s dialogue with religion, particularly her reading of the Passion.

This chapter argues that the ‘Semiotic Passion’ completes Kristeva’s ‘symbolic mourning’ in a way that helps us to arrive at a better understanding of the ‘exhausted subject.’ This demonstration aims to show that facing the conflict with Kristeva’s humanist subtexts actually brings about a closer co-operation with her humanism.

I present the ‘Semiotic Passion’ in two steps. First, I demonstrate what the theology of the cross can achieve from its existing resources (Ch 6). Then, in view of what is missing from it, my work offers the Semiotic Passion (Ch 7), which is a theoretical proposal. It is a theoretical anticipation of when Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ anthropology and theology would be fully engaged together. Despite its narrow ‘semiotic’ focus, this theoretical proposal will be presented as an integrating centre of my study.

The two levels of the ‘Semiotic Passion’, as a clarification of the theological position, but also as a translation of Kristeva’s ‘semiotics’ for confessional theology, contribute to Kristeva’s participation in the Vatican dialogue with agnostic atheism, which is the wider, practical context of my study.470

6.1 A Hermeneutical Remark

The most important questions are always raised when conflicting positions are forced to operate on their margins. The critique of the immanantism471 of Kristeva’s regime is such a

470 In an interview, following the press conference after presenting the project of the Court of Gentiles at the Vatican, Cardinal Ravasi emphasised two things which shows the endeavour in a borderline situation. First, dialogue is necessary. Second, it listens to what non-believers say. (18 March 2011). In Frédéric Mounier, ‘Le grand défi n’est pas l’athéisme, mais l’indifférence’, La Croix online version, 24/3/2011, accessed 29 Aug. 11 (www.la-croix.com/Religion)

471 i.e. when the source of existence is immanent in the world and in the individual
borderline situation for theology. Her correction of Freud and her immanent criticism of the Enlightenment project have also pushed Kristeva to the limits of her system. It is in this ‘borderline’ that her dialogue with religious wisdom has emerged.

The event of the Cross by virtue of its nature creates a ‘borderline situation’ for both theology and secular reason. Moltmann points out that the Cross addresses the very core of Christian identity from this scandalous ‘periphery’. 472 Thus, addressing Kristeva from within the theology of the cross guarantees a genuine ‘systemic’ engagement.

Choosing the Passion as the hermeneutics for a non-religious thinker compels theology to re-learn its mother-tongue. In this limit-situation, in which the cultural mourning of the two sides is equally involved, we can expect questions that previously have not been raised. In the sense of Jasper’s ‘limit situations’, these questions are the most vital ones, as they can bring about a paradigm shift in such an important area as the unmourned conflict with that atheism which hugely defined modernity, and its inherited form, post-modernity. A ‘full interface critique’, which addresses the ontological aspects of Kristeva’s materialist ‘semiotics’, makes it necessary to abandon the ‘classic’ security of orthodoxy. This new theological self-knowledge, in the Jasperian sense, will be the precondition for penetrating those regions of secular humanism where the latter is also compelled to abandon the ‘classic’ security offered by materialism. The task of the ‘Semiotic Passion’ is to meet Kristeva at those ‘borderline-points’ where the two regimes coincide. As there is no epistemological correspondence, theology needs also to produce the linguistic contact.

472 See Moltmann, The Crucified God.
473 My study regards the ‘cultural mourning’ of the conflict with atheism as a ‘boundary situation’. It reveals of Tradition and authentic Christian existence something essential to a contemporary faith. Understanding the ‘split’ with ‘atheist humanism’ is revelatory for theology as it liberates it for a renewed symbolisation, which transcends impasses in its previous language. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers ascribed central status to these ‘limit situations’ (Grenzsituationen) or ‘disclosure-situations’. ‘Limit situations are moments, usually accompanied by experiences of dread, guilt or acute anxiety, in which the human mind confronts the restrictions and pathological narrowness of its existing forms, and allows itself to abandon the securities of its limitedness, and so to enter new realm of self-consciousness.’ In Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ‘Karl Jaspers’ (First published Mon Jun 5, 2006; substantive revision Wed Jan 12, 2011), Internet (accessed 07.02.2012), http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/jaspers/ ‘We become ourselves by entering with open eyes into the boundary situations…This happens in a leap: a mind which otherwise merely knows about boundary situations may, in historic, singular, non-interchangeable fashion, come to be fulfilled. The boundary thus plays its proper role of something immanent which already points to transcendence’. Karl Jaspers, Philosophy, Volume 2, Translated by E.B. Ashton, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1970 (Originally published in 1932 as Philosophie by Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg), p.179. For Jaspers’ understanding of the revelatory dynamics of the ‘boundary situation’ see Chapter 7 in the volume (pp.177-222).
So far my study has developed the point that theology is in dialogue with Kristeva most directly through her ‘atheistic sub-texts’. The gateway to the ‘speaking being’ is through a response to the underlying materialist ontology. My study identified Kristeva’s ‘Marxian’, ‘Freudian’, ‘Lacanian’, ‘Arendtian’, and ‘Kleinian’ subtexts. It is also true that Kristeva is most accessible for theology through her recent reading of the Passion. But it works only if one does not spare taking pains to contact her materialism and face the apologetic tension with it. The two layers of access, tension and dialogue together, have created the unique chance for a non-apologetic direction, a shared symbol building. In this way, it becomes possible to accommodate Kristeva’s materialism itself not as a static regime but as a complex ‘symbolic mourning’.

I highlight two important references for a theological response. Both refer to the present postmodern context of the ‘exhausted subject’. The first denotes the specific environment for doing theology in the postmodern context. I present it as the ‘verticality of the Cross’. The second ‘guide’ is a contemporary theological strategy from Rowan Williams which connects the therapeutic point of view of psychoanalysis and theology. Setting up these ‘updates’ is important as I develop my response by drawing on the results of theological modernity.

6.1.1 The New Situation of the ‘Verticality of the Cross’

It is the postmodern subject through which the theology of the cross has to respond to Kristeva. What theology needs to realise is that the ‘exhausted subject’ is the new general condition of culture; it is not only the crisis of the ‘secular subject’. Postmodern woundedness is present also in the Church at the core of its activities. It is a new cultural sensitivity with new reactions to ‘meaning’. ‘Exhaustion’ is not simply about losing a tradition. The ‘exhausted subject’ primarily stands for the emergence of a new type of interlocutor of the Cross. Here an important metaphor needs to be introduced to denote the new situation for the Christian kerygma. Theological modernity, in a well structured world, spoke to the relatively ‘un-exhausted’ subject of modernity. Community cohesion, interpersonal relationships, and the support of the individual by culture were strong. (See

474 For one account of the confirmation of the paradigm shift and its effects on theology, see See Ch1 ‘Beyond Fragmentation: Theology and the Contemporary Setting’ (pp.4-27), in Stanley J. Grenz, John R. Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky 2001. Since this realisation of the postmodern condition for theology we have arrived at a next phase in the relationship between theology and postmodern culture. My point is that the competing theological strategies which Franke describes can only reach an agreement (‘syntheisis’) if the crisis of the subject and the latter’s healing are made a priority.
The cultural canon was relatively unfragmented. 'Authority', religious, secular and moral, was respected and unquestioned. This is what can be called the 'horizontality of the Cross'. The theology of modernity operated in a rather 'linear' way. The recipients and the contesters of the message were easily recognisable. Doing theology in the 'horizontality of the Cross' meant that the relationship between 'grace', subject, and culture was conceived in a rather dualistic way. Theological modernity operated with the program that the recovery of secular culture was to take place through the latter's unilateral conversion to the culture of the Church. The 'secular community', opposed to the Church as 'contingence', was to relate to a non-contingent fullness. In this scenario, a self-sufficient, 'immaculate plenitude' of orthodoxy communicated with the 'sinful' unorthodox entities. The offer was a full recovery by re-joining the 'Mystical Body' of the Church.

The new interlocutor of the Christian message, however, inhabits the postmodern situation. Metaphorically, when theology responds to this new listener, it is operating in the 'verticality of the Cross'. This opposes, or rather completes 'the horizontality of the Cross'. The postmodern situation necessitates the 'vertical' reading of the Cross, that is, the translation of the Christian message for the 'exhausted subject', and the in-depth understanding of this subjectivity. In this 'verticality' it needs to be realised that the prime interlocutor today is literally the 'speaking being', the former 'person of faith'. This subjectivity is structured by 'lack'. It inhabits, or suffers the world of isolated individuals, the lack of structures and fixed roles, and transitory relations. The 'exhausted subject' seeks orientation on a secularist horizon with the self at the centre, amidst a competitive individualism.

This subject has as a last possession his own language and 'psychic history'. The main message of our metaphor is that in the 'verticality of the Cross' no longer can a division be made between the psychologically understood subject and the 'person of faith'. The 'horizontal' and the new 'vertical' dimensions of the Cross must enter into


476 As a background of the image, the Papal Encyclical Mystici Corporis (1943) by Pius XII summed up the ‘sacred’ hierarchical view of the church. The divisions between the Ecclesia sufferans (the members of the Church suffering in Purgatory), Ecclesia militans (the Church in its members struggling against the world), and the Ecclesia triumphans (the Church triumphant is the Church in Heaven) was also an apologetic model of the ‘Secular’. This division between the ‘Sacred’ and the ‘profane’ proved an archetypal image, which deeply marked theological modernity.

477 Kristeva, New Maladies of the Soul, pp.124-125.

478 This characterisation is from Douglas’ description of the transition from capitalist modernity to consumerist postmodernity (Grids B-C). Gallagher SJ, Clashing Symbols, cf. p.27.
dialogue. This dialogue between theological modernity and postmodern theology produces a ‘cultural mourning’, the outcome of which is a renewed theologia crucis. I call this new responsiveness to the contemporary subject the ‘Semiotic Passion’.

The emergence of the ‘verticality of the Cross’ or the changed sensitivity of the ‘hearer’ was already anticipated in the central metaphor of Vatican II. The new self-image of the Council, the ‘pilgrim people of God’, anticipated a new cultural dynamic. The metaphor assigned the task to critically revise the isolation of the church from the modern world. The Church expressed this new ‘Exodus position’ in the dialogue with secular humanism. Conversely, this shift also meant the realisation of a previous ‘lack of Exodus’. Previously, the Church had reflected on the changing dynamic of culture only within herself. Now the task was to detect an ‘unmourned’ Christendom ‘within’ and open up to the encounter with new cultural paradigms.

The situation of the ‘verticality of the Cross’ shows another important change in the condition of the subject of faith. The ‘pilgrim people’, as a metaphor, referred to a collective identity, the emphasis was not so much on the individual ‘pilgrim’. The Church of modernity operated with a strong social ethos. From this state she gradually arrived at the situation, without realising it, of the culturally uprooted ‘migrant’. This is the cultural milieu which Kristeva describes. The subject of the age is ‘a bruised and battered person’ who has to create a ‘second’ language. This painful re-birth requires a new awareness of the subjective interior. It is in this context that an important change in theological language applies to the ‘verticality of the Cross’. To the emerging ‘migrant’ the new linguistic modality of ‘prayer’ corresponds. The dynamic of historical development is as follows: pilgrim/fellowship → migrant/woundedness → personal story telling/prayer. This dynamic shows that instead of making ‘doctrinal statements’, the understanding of the world takes place through prayer. Ruti confirms this secular version when she says that subjective singularity is less a matter of ‘knowing’ the essence of one’s being than it is of feeding the inner spark that sustains one’s aptitude for self-transformation. Consequently, abstract theological statements, instead of being mere indoctrination, have to become ‘prayers’. That is to say, the primary mode of communicating ‘doctrine’ is making it an essential part of self-knowledge. The Church needs

481 Ruti, A World of Fragile Things, p.32.
to take pains to translate its message, as a new *preparatio evangelica* (preparing for the Gospels), into the *linguistic sensitivity* of the subject as identity today is constituted on this ‘last property’.

This communication with the changed listener requires a *renewed imagery of the Passion*. Kristeva showed how the yearning for the ‘loving Third party’ is an objective psychic and cultural need. This is an encouragement for the theology of the cross as the need for the ‘Father’s love’ is a universal ‘pre-religious’ need. On the other hand, it is a task of ‘re-imaging’ the Christian Father for the *uprooted* person, in his specific needs. Christianity is challenged by Kristeva’s recognition that temporary rebirths are an objective support when the person encounters nihilism. Because external defences are lost (the safety-net of cultural groups, family, religion, humanist policy, etc.), Christianity needs to prove that it provides symbols which speak to this ‘inner exhaustion’. We can see the dialectic that the situation sets in motion for a symbolic response. The ‘verticality of the Cross’ has to address the self in its isolation. Yet, on the other hand, it has to re-construct this self by arguing that it cannot remain enclosed in its particularities because its innermost need is the experience of *fellowship*. Theology becomes relevant again only if it offers this genuine ‘outside’.

The questions raised by the ‘verticality of the Cross’ prompt a succinct dialogue between Kristeva and my theological resources. In order to facilitate this discourse, I outline the second reference for the *theologia crucis*.

### 6.1.2 A Postmodern Reference Point for Evaluation: The Lost Absolute Other

My chosen representatives of the theology of the cross belong to modernity. Kristeva’s work is an analysis of both modernity and post-modernity. That is why presenting the linguistic renewal of theology has to incorporate the symbolic sensitivity of both periods. As Catholic reflection still operates from within the mindset of the theological modernity of Vatican II it is worth listening to advice from ‘postmodern theology’. There are certain preconditions for making the Father *recognisable* in this culture. Rowan Williams in *Lost Icons* gives an account of ‘what is missing’ from traditional theological discourse. His account updates its linguistic responsiveness.

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The first strategic recognition is the need in the postmodern period to communicate with the psychoanalytic point of view. In the essay ‘Lost Souls’, Williams gives a non-polemic, highly dialogical criticism of psychoanalytical healing. He points out where the Christian experience of God’s otherness *transcends* the psychoanalytical method. Making Williams’ critique of the psychoanalytical horizon a reference is an important step in continuing the ontological critique of Kristeva.

Williams is helpful in understanding the new dynamics of ‘exhaustion’. The postmodern self suffers the loss of the ‘absolute Other’. Having lost its proper grounding, he says, the contemporary subject is a ‘panicking self’. Our culture of consumption generates continuous responses to a changing environment (‘panic’). Consumption is attuned to the instability of the exploited psyche, and creates newer and newer occasions of desire to be reacted upon. These panic reactions **blot out longer-term memories**, the mental world. This nihilism suppresses meditation, literally depriving the self of a genuine experience of time and interiority. In our context, we can add, these are the preconditions for creating and using ‘symbols’.

Williams emphasises the need of *conflict* as the ground of genuine selfhood. Theology agrees with the psychoanalytical principle that the person needs a confrontation with the image of his own self. The role of the therapist is to oppose and contradict our self-image based on our desires. ‘I desire peace, I desire to be at home with myself’. The therapist as the ‘Other’ to the self becomes the *critique* of my self and puts it ‘in question’. The purpose is to re-open the gap between (my) desire and reality. Genuine inwardness and self-knowledge develops not by escaping or resolving the conflict between the self and the ‘real’ but by deepening the conflict. The painful element of therapy is the act of self-questioning, and removing what is illusion in the person. It is the same with culture. Both are in need of an honest Other, helping to realise ‘meaning’. The therapist prompts us to become genuinely reflective and come to terms with reality.

However, the difference with the psychoanalytical horizon also should be noted. Williams when speaking sympathetically of the role of the analyst who stays outside my story in practice is describing the theological notion of the Other. He highlights the fact that the Christian sense of selfhood is radically unlike what can be constructed from the resources of culture. Building the Christian self means ‘refusing to cover over, evade or explain the

483 Williams, *Lost Icons*, p.145.
484 Ibid., p.146.
pain and shock of whatever brings the self into question.\footnote{Williams, \textit{Lost Icons}, p.149.} In the therapy of divine Love we realise that no one completes me, in the sense that no \textit{thing} completes me.\footnote{Ibid., p.151.} The Christian amplification of the therapeutic method is expressed in the plus which we denote with the term, ‘soul’. Theology witnesses to the fact that the only Other who can refuse all attempts to be reduced to simply answering my needs, who does not cease to be the Other, is divine Love. This love confronts me, with ultimate authority, as genuine ‘Transcendence’, as God radically stays outside my colonising desires. This Love is a truthful recogniser of my own limits and incompleteness. This otherness, however, is ‘radical enough to allow me to be other, to be distinctive, to be the this-and-not-that of temporal particularity.’\footnote{Ibid., p.154.}

With Williams, we can define the ‘transcendence’ of the self further. Encountering the ‘radical Other’ brings to life a different kind of selfhood, which is grounded on \textit{gratitude}. The self learns to exist beyond the sphere of mutual need. Genuine personhood means the ability to live beyond the norms of the competitive world which defines the self according to its ability to compete, and thus reduces it to an object. The counter-economy theology offers is ‘grace’, which presupposes \textit{relations} as the ground that gives the self room to exist, not as an object of desire, but as a joy and as the gift of being contemplated by the other. This turning to us, which Williams highlights, is the source of re-orienting the ‘exhausted subject’ in terms of providing him with the lost \textit{telos} of history. For the ‘post-religious’ subject, as Peter L. Berger observes, the reaffirmation of the \textit{ultimate goodness} of the world is needed. It is an act of ‘faith’, not unrelated to the Christian Creed. The ultimate validity of joy over human existence is at stake.\footnote{Peter L. Berger, \textit{The Questions of Faith, A Sceptical Affirmation of Christianity}, Blackwell, London 2004., p.6.} The ground of this confirmation is God’s counter-cultural love which is a genuine alternative to nihilism. Williams stresses the Judeo-Christian conviction that it is only something outside the world of ‘negotiation’ that makes possible the abrogation of rivalry [which blurs joy, the \textit{telos} of history]. This God cannot be reduced to a tangible sameness with which we ‘can’ negotiate, as we do with other contingent ‘others’.\footnote{Williams, \textit{Lost Icons}, pp.160-162.} It is in this sense that Williams calls this challenging otherness as \textit{the non-contingent Other}, or \textit{absolute Otherness}.

Williams reconnects the discourses of psychoanalysis and theological modernity in a pivotal way for my critique. What links Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’, the postmodern crisis of the subject and \textit{faith} is the historical crisis of the God-image. Williams sets up a
dialectical process in which all parties are affected. With his help, one can clearly see the distortion in the image of the Father. A ‘counter-thesis’ to this distortion is God’s gratuitous otherness. Williams’ pivotal insight is that Christianity failed when it colonised the radical otherness of God and made him part of the cultural superego. God became a ‘negotiable otherness’, our double, a contingent fact among the phenomenon of the world. This ‘passage of our speech about God into silence’ resulted in that the ‘self-criticism of all doctrinal utterance’ went silent. Self-criticism about this God-image was replaced by that lack of reflection, into which Protestantism and its critical twin, the Enlightenment project, burst as a deliberate disruption. This silenced God was experienced by the Enlightenment as ‘a this-worldly other that claimed other-worldly sanction’. The Enlightenment, in reality, revolted against hijacking genuine Otherness. Before it crystallized into an atheistic narrative, it was a genuine claim to restore ‘an Other outside the systems of need and desire; something else to find that your identity is prescribed, pre-scripted, by the presence and the gaze of an Other who is in fact as historical and contingent as you are.’

Kristeva’s non-nihilist humanism is fuelled by this protest. She put her ‘atheist subtexts’ into the service of preserving subjective particularity. Williams’ phenomenological description is also an apt background for the criticism of ‘atonement language’. The ‘bloody cross’ reduced to an exclusive ‘totem’ was the central image of a Christianity which gradually became ‘silent’ towards culture. As a malfunctioning symbol, it became a ‘buffering zone’ with secularity itself becoming the source of ‘split discourses’.

As a wider critical background of the psychoanalytical approach, Williams points to the crisis of its founding narratives. The secular Enlightenment ended up in losing the Christian discourse on Transcendence. The project itself collapsed at critical times, observes Williams, under the aspiration of replacing this Transcendent Other. It produced its own version of discourses to control identity. The ‘universals’ based on autonomous reason produced their own historical failures (World Wars I and II, Auschwitz, and our narrower context, the ‘society of the spectacle’). Now, Williams argues, a time has come when we can reflect on the loss of the ‘soul’ as our shared cultural bereavement. His dialectical scheme above confirms that Kristeva’s humanist narratives, Freudianism, Marxism, and feminism can be seen as past and present contributors to this mourning. The problem of the God image can be reopened. If today, when all genuine otherness is compromised, Christians witness to the radical historical otherness of God, they make a significant cultural contribution.

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490 Williams, Lost Icons, p.163.
491 Ibid., p.163.
492 Ibid., p.163.
493 Ibid., p.164.
The task of the forthcoming sections is to show this witness in the *theologia crucis*. We will see that theological modernity *has* initiated a ‘symbolic mourning’, through which the ‘exhausted subject’ can converse with the ‘non-contingent Other’ as a historical God.

### 6.2 A Response to Kristeva: The Theologia Crucis as a Resource for ‘Symbolic Mourning’

This analysis confines itself only to an essential synthesis of my chosen theological authorities. The comprehensive response to Kristeva necessarily has to integrate the projects of Rahner, Moltmann, Metz and von Balthasar for the following reasons. To start with, one can find more up to date theologies then theirs. Yet, their viewpoints need to be privileged because they write from a state which is just between theology’s ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ positions. We find them precisely at the intersection of the two theological attitudes, the ‘horizontality’ and the ‘verticality of the Cross’. Their generation was the first to start the ‘cultural mourning’ the end point of which is the present crisis of post-modernity. These voices are contemporaries of Kristeva’s atheistic and humanist subtexts.

Drawing on my chosen theological classics, I demonstrate that the theology of the cross has significant resources for a response to our present cultural situation. My specific focus is exploring how they answer the needs of the ‘exhausted subject’ and contribute to a better understanding of the nihilist crisis. The theological concern will be how these solutions correct problematic aspects of the image of the Father and the theological notion of the person that Kristeva’s humanist subtexts raised. My critique lays a particular emphasis on developing ‘textual bridges’ with Kristeva for systematic theology.

#### 6.2.1 Karl Rahner: Anticipating the ‘Anonymous Sufferer’

The best starting point is Rahner who first anticipated the conversation between the ‘horizontality’ and the ‘verticality of the Cross’. He stated the crisis of the symbolisation of faith at the heart of modernity. In a very brave way Rahner conceived the situation of faith in history in terms of ‘lack’, particularly as the lack of language:494

> ‘We may think we find in and around us too much of the spirit of the world and too little of the Spirit of the Father. While these impressions may frequently be valid, there is usually something false in them, too. Something false, I say, because the human eye

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494 It is a stunning contrast with the paradigm of the 'Ecclesia triumphans' (the glorious Church). This self-image of the Church enjoyed an undisturbed canonical status at the time of the publication of Rahner’s meditation ‘Pentecost’ (1953!).
cannot detect the Spirit in us and in the Church….. We must not interpret our experience of life falsely, and think that the Spirit of God has become distant and weak. Rather, we must learn from these experiences that we are always seeking him in the wrong place and in the wrong way, that we are always ready to confuse him with something else. If we reflect in this way, then we shall perceive over and over again with trembling joy that the Spirit is there, that he is with us.  

Rahner stated more than the symbolic crisis. His main message is that, though the theological language and the love of the Church for the world meet with difficulties, nevertheless, the ‘loving Third party’, as Triune love, is always there, awaiting us. Rahner’s anthropological sensitivity which reclaims history as God’s loving epiphany is pivotal for my critique. His concept, the ‘anonymous Christian’, makes it possible to narrow the gap between the ‘psychological man’ (Homans) and the theological person. My focus is the ‘cultural mourning’ it expresses. My point is that the concept can have a second renaissance and a fuller recognition against the background of the ‘exhausted subject’. Rahner’s ‘anonymous Christian’ is a real bridge concept. With it not only those who are on the margins of ecclesial socialisation can identify, but also those with a definite ‘secular’ identity. Rahner defined this new consciousness as follows:

‘We prefer the terminology according to which man is called an ‘anonymous Christian’ who on the one hand has de facto accepted of his freedom this gracious self-offering on God’s part through faith, hope, and love, while on the other hand he is absolutely not yet a Christian at the social level (through baptism and membership of the Church) or in the sense of having consciously objectified his Christianity to himself in his own mind (by explicit Christian faith resulting from having hearkened to the explicit Christian message). We might therefore put it as follows: the “anonymous Christian” in our sense of the term is the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, who lives in the state of grace through faith, hope, and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is oriented in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ.’

Rahner, in the theological segment of culture, observed a dynamic similar to Kristeva’s ‘subject in process’. He gave expression to an identity which became separated from the ‘homogeneous’ consciousness of modernity. The project of the ‘anonymous Christian’, which was fully confirmed in Grundkurs (1977), time-wise strikingly coincides with Kristeva’s critique of modernity in her doctoral thesis (Revolution in Poetic Language, 1974). Beyond the concept one has to see the

497 English translation: Foundations of Christian Faith. It was a new kind of introductory course for those who in post-war Germany were questioning whether they were believers at all. Daniel Donovan, ‘Revelation and Faith’ (pp.83-97), in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner, p.92.
presence of the emerged Marxist and Freudian generations. What the theological
contesters of the concept overlooked is the underlying complex ‘cultural mourning’.
The image of the anonymous Christian also contains the experience of the
theological generation of the First World War writing about ‘shaken foundations’
and their efforts to find a new symbolic orientation: ‘Never before have we
experienced that everything became so strange to us and we stood in God’s presence
naked and alone.’ (Bultmann) 498 It is an early account of the ‘exhausted subject’ of
modernity, when the ‘consciousness of Christendom’ or post-Reformation
confidence is put on an ultimate trial.

We find references in Rahner that his re-imagining of the Father’s love was also in
dialogue with psychoanalysis. Rahner’s emphasis on the correction of the guilt-complex
clearly shows that the concept of the ‘anonymous Christian’ initiated dialogue with the
generation of Freud too:

‘We should even know when to regard a patient as a patient for a psychotherapist
and send him to one. But we possess one word which no psychotherapist can say: the
word of God, which forgives. The psychotherapist says a word which is meant to cure
illness; we say a word which forgives sin in God’s sight. Even if we cannot remove
illness − heavy burden though it is in many cases − we can, however, take away the
death in illness, the despair in it and the guilt.’ 499

The basic logic of Rahner’s theology is to ‘name’ the subject who is coming from
secular experience. In Catholic theological modernity, for the first time, he made central
what happens on the peripheries. In this sense, we can say that Rahner anticipated the faith-
crisis of the postmodern subject. He assigned as a central task for theology to ‘mourn’ the
Church’s troubled relationship with secular identity. His vision of the human self in the
context of grace is also an important support to the ‘exhausted subject’. Its ‘ontological
thirst’ for resources is given a genuine offer. If the deepest need of the postmodern self is re-
grounded identity, Rahner, in a non-apologetic way, reintroduces ‘graced origins’.

The concept of the anonymous Christian enters into dialogue with both Kristeva’s early
‘revolutionary’ critique of modernity and her turn to the ‘exhausted subject’ which focuses
on psychoanalytical healing. As a description of the subject of culture, the ‘anonymous

498 Rudolf Bultmann, Existence and Faith, Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann, Translated by
Schubert M. Ogden, Collins 1964, p.33.
499 Karl Rahner, Ch 14 ‘Problems Concerning Confession’ (pp.190-206), in Karl Rahner, Theological
Investigations, The Theology of the Spiritual Life, Vol. III, Translated by Karl Hugo Kruger and
Christian’ was a construct of theological modernity. The concept reflects the relatively ‘un-
exhausted’ subject of the period. Roughly, it coincides with Kristeva’s ‘bourgeois subject’ in
Revolution in Poetic Language. His ‘anonymous’ living of basic Gospel values made him
the potential bearer of the Word. Thus, as a historical snapshot, Rahner described the early
state, as it were, the ‘first generation trauma’ of losing the ‘name of God’. The whole of
Grundkurs echoes the conviction that the modern subject, despite having fallen out of the
Christian tradition, can still be brought back by the language of the Christian kerygma. It
reminds us of the strategy Kristeva followed in her transition period. 500

Today, in place of the one-time ‘anonymous Christian’ we find the anonymous sufferer.
This ‘exhausted subject’ is anonymous in the sense that he cannot name his suffering
properly. ‘Grace’, in the original Rahnerian framework, is still offered in the same way, but
it is now the unrealised ‘grace’ of the Cross. The postmodern subject has no explicit
knowledge that it is his relation to the Cross that best enlightens his state. What theology
argues today, together with Rahner, is that the Father’s compassionate love is reaching out
for him in a way which is not external to his existence. It should be noted that for the Church
of modernity, which focused on doctrinal orthodoxy and could only envision stable borders
for the community, Rahner’s vision of ‘anonymous faith’ was a dubious model. The
participation in Salvation ‘without explicit knowledge’ of God’s self-communication for
all501, living in hope, love, and faith anonymously,502 yet participating in God’s permanent
offer of grace through man’s ‘supernatural existential’, that is, the permanent capacity to
respond to God’s self-bestowing love503 are concepts without which it is very difficult to
relate the postmodern subject to the Cross. (The latter, otherwise, is the centre of all
orthodoxy.) The post-Christian self (see Kristeva’s novels) cannot be tackled without seeing
in the person an ontological dynamic and openness towards God. Without Rahner’s
ontological narrative it would be very difficult to speak with the postmodern subject about
the realm of ‘grace’.

‘Man should be able to receive this Love which is God himself; he must have a
congeniality for it. He must be able to accept it (and hence grace, the beatific vision) as
one who has room and scope, understanding and desire for it. Thus he must have a real
‘potency’ [supernatural existential] for it. He must have it always. He is indeed always

500 As a reminder, see section 2.1.1 ‘Transition From Modernity to Postmodernity: Exhausted Subject
or Exhausted Narratives?’, cf. pp.50-53.
503 Karl Rahner, ‘Relationship Between Nature and Grace’ (pp.297-317), in Karl Rahner, Theological
Investigations, God, Christ, Mary and Grace, Volume I, Translated by Cornelius Ernst, O.P, Darton,
addressed and claimed by this Love... The capacity for the God of self-bestowing personal Love is the central and abiding existential of man as he really is.\textsuperscript{504}

The enormous potential of Rahner is that with his help we can extend the ‘anonymous Christian’ to the wounded postmodern psyche. As such it becomes a central concept for our ‘postmodern’ \textit{theologia crucis}. In the ‘verticality of the cross’, the transformed sufferer of modernity can be seen as synonymous with the ‘new maladies of the soul’ in Kristeva. In this case, the ‘supernatural existential’ emerges as a theological refashioning of the ‘loving Third’. Telling the Passion to ‘anonymous suffering’ presents the Father’s love as that graced horizon from which every ‘speaking being’ gets support in his passion. Envisioning the ‘secular’ subject on the horizon of grace is a useful framework also when arguing that there is an ‘other side’ of human language, not only the biological drive origins. With Rahner, we can do it in a way in which the ‘anonymous sufferer’ is seen as possibly closest to God’s ‘grace’, and correspondingly, to the Cross.

Recalling Rahner’s Pentecostal witness is fundamental in this context. ‘We shall perceive over and over again with trembling joy that the Spirit is there, that he is with us.’\textsuperscript{505} Rahner’s grounding of redemption in Pentecost has an immediate anthropological relevance for my critique. The theology of the cross stresses that it is through the wounded postmodern psyche that the person converts to the Father’s love. The Rahnerian reading of the Passion is the revaluation of the suffering self. The very fact that the Father speaks through this woundedness restores the dignity of ‘anonymous suffering’. From this follows that Pentecost compels us to see the world as an ‘anonymous convert’, and the human self as a full bearer of the Father’s love, capable of conversion and joy.

A further point where Rahner proves to be a useful source is his theology of the Sacred Heart. Using his reflections, the \textit{theologia crucis} can offer an important theological analogy of the role of the ‘semiotic’ in Kristeva. The essays, ‘Behold This Heart!: Preliminaries to a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart’ and ‘Some Theses for a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart’\textsuperscript{506}, help in developing the ‘maternal metaphor’ in God. In ‘Behold This Heart!’ we can see the human heart of Jesus as the graced \textit{chora-thetic} through which God communicates ‘rebirth’. This \textit{depth} is ‘the most profound of all the mysteries of the Passion, in fact the source of them all.’\textsuperscript{507} Rahner’s mysticism produced here a metaphor, which

\textsuperscript{505} ‘Pentecost’, in Rahner, \textit{The Eternal Year}, pp.109-110
\textsuperscript{506} Chapters 21 and 22 in Karl Rahner, \textit{Theological Investigations}, Volume I, (pp.321-330) and (pp.331-352)
\textsuperscript{507} Rahner, ‘Behold This Heart!’ (pp.321-330), Ibid., p.321.
offers an analogy, the relationship of the mother and the child, similar in dynamic to Kristeva’s ‘passion according to motherhood’.

‘Only a lover is able to pronounce the word “heart” with understanding, and only one who is lovingly united to the crucified Lord knows what is meant when the “Heart of Jesus” is spoken of. But even the word “heart” itself opens up to the lover new paths for his love which can never love enough.’

The ‘heart’, in terms of introducing us into speaking and responding in love, is analogous to the ‘Loving Third’ which incorporates maternal love. In Rahner’s metaphor the full dynamics of meaning, the ‘semiotic’, the function of the ‘chora-thetic’, the presence of the ‘Loving Third’, and the Symbolic Order (‘Law’) as the destination, are all represented. ‘The “heart is the name we give to the unifying element in man’s diversity.”’ Also, there is a link with Kristeva’s program of ‘ecce-ness’, the defence of the subject’s particularity: ‘A man’s uniqueness, his individuality, is his heart.’ Where the theologia crucis can draw profoundly on Rahner is the witness that the source of our particularity is ‘that the centre of our hearts has to be God… And the name of his heart is: Jesus Christ!’ Rahner confirms that the human self (‘heart’) is grounded in God’s unconditional ‘maternal’ and ‘loving and caring fatherly’ love. In Rahner’s striking metaphor, the Father is ‘the unfathomable womb, in which everything shines brightly.’

These examples show that there is a potential in the theologia crucis to enter into dialogue with Kristeva’s Tales of Love (‘Stabat Mater’). Rahner’s mother-mysticism in God is the proof that the masculine imagination can enter into dialogue with a mother’s unrecognised Passion. Though the image of a ‘maternal heart’ is not in a fully developed form, the theological intention is clear. Rahner’s maternal analogy is a powerful source for the correction of the God-image distorted by atonement theology. Indirectly, the corrected image of the loving Abba in Rahner is an important contribution to the ‘ontological’ criticism of Freud’s mechanistic God-image.

Rahner’s theology of grace also provides the theologia crucis with a concept of history. Drawing on his ‘personalism’, the critique of Kristeva can turn to her historical subtexts. It is a genuine historical program as grace is always oriented towards the human self. Rahner makes the work of the Holy Spirit central in human history: the Spirit purifies history by

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509 Ch. XIV. ‘Sacred Heart’ (pp.121-128) in Rahner, The Eternal Year, p.121.
510 Ibid., p.122.
511 Ibid., pp.126-127
512 Ibid., p.124.
communicating God’s self-bestowing love. It represents and gives Christ as a gift to human history from within: ‘The chalice of the Holy Spirit is identical in this life with the chalice of Christ.’\textsuperscript{513} This theology of ‘grace’ completes Bultmann’s attempt to renew the relationship between history and God. The work of the Spirit resembles Kristeva’s ‘semiotic horizon’ from which the meaning of God can be experienced again as fresh and revelatory. Rahner brings to completion a deep seated ‘symbolic mourning’ in European theology:

‘God’s Spirit has begun his work in our hearts, to open our eyes…We have learned to pose questions to destiny in a complete new and more profound sense… “The Spirit of God searches everything, even the depths of God.” Because it is knowledge of the Spirit, it is not a knowledge that rests on conclusions and proofs and that every man can understand. Each of us must be ready to bow before the hidden God in reverence and humility, so that his heart will be open for God’s Spirit and his eyes will learn to see the God who is revealed – the God who endlessly reveals himself.’\textsuperscript{514}

With Rahner, the theologia crucis shows to post-metaphysical consciousness that ‘ontology’ can be spelled out in terms of a genuine ‘symbolic openness’ or linguistic openness. The critique on Kristeva’s atheistic subtexts has to show how Rahner introduced a new complexity into the God image, in which history is emphasised as an integral part of divine Love. History justifies Rahner against his objectors who saw in the ‘supernatural existential’ a dangerous compromising of God as ‘Wholly Other’. What his opponents overlooked was that the ‘emptying of God into anthropology’ was not the denial of His Glory\textsuperscript{515} but showing this radical otherness in the Son, in whose image man was created. Rahner spelled out in a pioneering way the ‘Wholly Other’ in the vulnerability of the person. With this, he opened up the way for the de-eschatologising of core theological concepts: ‘grace’, ‘person’, ‘history’, and ‘God’.

As a conclusion, the theological response to the new humanist coalition which Kristeva proposed can draw with confidence on Rahner. He taught Christians how to take secularity seriously as a source for theology.\textsuperscript{516} If the theologia crucis is grounded on Rahner’s dialogical position, it can hold tradition and openness together.\textsuperscript{517} Rahner provides my critique with a genuine model of the ‘secular’. The lasting value of this approach, according

\textsuperscript{513} ‘Reflections on the Experience of Grace’ (pp.86-90), in Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume III, p.89.
\textsuperscript{515} For a detailed textual analysis of Balthasar’s critique of ‘obediental potency’ and the ‘supernatural existential’ see Marc Oulet, ‘Paradox and/or supernatural existential’ (pp.259-280), Communio 18 (Summer, 1991.), cf. pp.268-271.
\textsuperscript{516} Philip Endean, ‘Has Rahnerian Theology a Future?’ (pp.281-296), in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner, p.293.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid., p.294.
to Philip Endean, is the critical synthesis of the transcendent and immanent horizons. Rahner’s relation to orthodoxy makes him a genuine ambassador in constantly challenging humanism when it simply subordinates the Christian truth of revelation to a secular analysis.\textsuperscript{518} What makes a ‘Rahnerian’ \textit{theologia crucis} credible is his adamant refusal of what religious fundamentalism does in reverse. His correction of the God-image responds constructively to the criticism of atheistic humanism not only of the nineteenth century, but also of the twentieth century. It has two important elements for the dialogue with Kristeva. The first is the appreciation of the cognitive and ethical gains that came from the Enlightenment, \textit{and} the parallel criticism of how the natural-scientific models of truth taken as normative have distorted Christianity and falsified the reality which is God-among-us.\textsuperscript{519} Secondly, it is Rahner’s claim for the presence of God in human experience which, as Endean puts it, is an implicit opening up to the linguistic structures of human experience.\textsuperscript{520}

My overview of Rahner as a resource does not state that he and Kristeva could be linked directly. However, the ontological horizon Rahner draws on \textit{can} accommodate the ‘ontological’ critique of the ‘speaking being’.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textbf{6.2.2 The Cross as the Hermeneutical Centre of History in Moltmann and Johannes Metz}
\end{enumerate}

Jürgen Moltmann (born 1926) and Johann Baptist Metz (born 1928) contribute to the response to Kristeva from a different direction from Rahner’s. They spell out important elements of the anthropological turn he envisaged. Mentioning Moltmann, the Reformed theologian, as a resource is unavoidable.\textsuperscript{521} His theology of the cross provided seminal directions for contemporary Catholic theology and anthropology (political theology, liberation theology), but most importantly for the \textit{theologia crucis} of Metz.

Rahner’s theological anthropology is too abstract in itself to ‘communicate’ with Kristeva’s psychoanalytical anthropology. The historical realism of her subtexts requires a theological version of her immediacy with history. In this respect, Moltmann and Metz provide a crucial link. The primary task is to bring closer to each other the historical subject and the Father’s love. In Metz and Moltmann, Rahner’s abstract ontology gets more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{518} Endean, ‘Has Rahnerian Theology a Future?’, in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner}, p.294.
\item \textsuperscript{519} Ibid., p.282.
\item \textsuperscript{520} Ibid., pp.284. 292.
\item \textsuperscript{521} He writes in the German Lutheran tradition.
\end{itemize}

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balanced. They significantly contribute to the ‘de-eschatologisation’ of the traditional theological notion of history in which ‘this world’ is devaluated over against the coming transformation. Metz and Moltmann spell out the ‘God among us’ in the medium of real history. The point I argue is that in theological modernity there is a genuine demand to overcome the dichotomies of metaphysics (soul/body, physical/psychical, history/Transcendence) which Kristeva also objects to. The Cross in these theologies appears as the hermeneutical centre of history, which itself is a critique of the dualisms of Christian metaphysics. It is from this Cross (love) that a proper ‘re-eschatologisation’ of history takes place.

6.2.3 Moltmann: The Passion as Shared Identity with the Suffering Secular

There is a symbolic relationship between Kristeva and Moltmann. Their seminal works were developed in the same period and reached the public at the same time. Moltmann’s *Crucified God* (1973) and Kristeva’s doctoral thesis, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) are more than passive contemporaries. At two different points of culture, their hermeneutics of culture shows striking similarities. What most relates them is their critique of modernity. Moltmann, in the theological setting, develops the critique of a ‘homogeneous’ Christianity, which runs parallel with Kristeva’s *Desire in Language*, in terms of producing a renewed, more ‘heterogeneous’ notion of Christian identity. The Cross in Moltmann responds to the particularity of the subject, in terms of its critical freedom.

6.2.3.1 Grounds for an Eschatological Anthropology

Christ’s cross in Moltmann is the source for theological anthropology. The Cross exhibits a similar ‘invisibility’ to that of the ‘semiotic’ in Kristeva. It ‘resurfaces’ from beneath the ‘Symbolic Order’ of culture: it shatters the ‘body’ of history from within. Moltmann’s theology is helpful in presenting divine Love as a ‘graced’ regenerative centre or ‘chora’. It is against the background of Kristeva’s ‘linguistic transcendence’ that Moltmann’s preface to *The Crucified God* is especially significant. It sums up a complex dynamic that embraces human history, including human language, and at the same time, transcends it. It is an important ‘re-translation’ of Transcendence for history, when ‘grace’ is presented as history’s self-transcending.

‘…I intended to show, the theology of the cross is none other than the reverse side of the Christian theology of hope, if the starting point of the latter lies in the resurrection of
the crucified Christ. As I said in *Theology of Hope*, that theology was itself worked out as an eschatologia crucis. *Theology of Hope* began with the resurrection of the crucified Christ, and I am now turning to look at the cross of the risen Christ. I was concerned then with the remembrance of Christ in the form of the hope of his future, and now I am concerned with hope in the form of the remembrance of his death. The dominant theme then was that of *anticipations* of the future of God in the form of promises and hopes; here it is the understanding of the *incarnation* of that future, by way of the sufferings of Christ, in the world’s sufferings.\(^522\) (Emphasis added.)

With Moltmann, the *theologia crucis* concentrates on how to present the Father’s love and justice as the internal dynamic of history and a genuinely transcendent love.

There is an element of Moltmann’s reading of the Cross, the theme of historical suffering, which makes him a pivotal resource for the response to Kristeva. Moltmann explicitly made contemporary suffering, Rahner’s ‘anonymous sufferer’, the interlocutor of the Cross. He extends Christ’s suffering to history. A major achievement of his ‘cultural mourning’ is connecting the themes of suffering, history, and identity. According to Moltmann’s famous thesis, ‘the suffering of Christ is not confined to Jesus...Jesus suffers in solidarity with others’.\(^523\) This directly addresses Kristeva’s historical subtexts, particularly Arendt. On a general level, Moltmann’s ‘graced’ notion of history emerges as a well targeted counter-thesis. Christianity is not an ‘opiate for the people’ (Marx), God is not an oedipal doublet of man (Freud), nor is He the immanent essence of man (Feuerbach). *Alienation* in history, Moltmann highlights, is a central concern for religious consciousness.

Moltmann initiates a critical dialogue on history with its secular notions. *Hope*, his well elaborated concept, is a radical challenge to Kristeva’s early materialism. *The Crucified God* from the dimension of faith directly addresses her post-structuralist linguistics in *Revolution in Poetic Language* and *Desire in Language*. Moltmann’s confirmation of an eschatology closely related to history challenges Kristeva’s retreat into the self, into language, the ‘maternal body’, or literary works. This is a genuine offer of Transcendence to get the balance right and open up the subject. Unlike recent apologetic solutions from the Radical Orthodoxy movement, which condemns secular ontologies as ‘parodies’ of the Christian notion of community, and despises the anthropologies of Hobbes, Spinoza, Hegel, Freud and

\(^522\) Moltmann started the Introduction of *The Crucified God* by explaining how it relates to the previously written *Theology of Hope*. He felt the need to explain that the final state of man(kind) is not removed from history. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p.5.

Lacan, because they reduce the self to an isolated monad, Moltmann’s position is genuinely dialogical with secular humanism. Highly symbolic is the fact that The Crucified God dedicated the closing chapter to Freud, in this way initiating an ‘ontological dialogue’ with secular humanism.

Drawing on Moltmann, theology makes the claim that language should be ‘open’ to God’s language. It is God’s eschaton as the ‘loving Third party’ to history that introduces us into the new language of the Kingdom. Another important ‘systemic’ parallel is the emphasis on God putting human history into crisis. It is a dynamic similar to Kristeva’s conception of the self as a ‘heterogeneous contradiction’. The theology of the cross, with the help of Moltmann, articulates it on the ‘collective’ level of the psyche, which is history. ‘The modern consciousness of history is a consciousness of crisis.’ It is this collective level of Hope which ‘interrupts’ the ‘melancholic mourning’ in culture for the death of God.

Through the theme of eschatological hope, the theologia crucis can enter into the most constructive dialogue with Kristeva’s psychoanalytical horizon. The theology of hope that Moltmann elaborated offers a criticism of the psychoanalytic method inasmuch as it is confined to the dynamic of the individual self. Moltmann argues the collective dimension of the person. It can be read as spelling out a ‘graced’ therapeutic language. The central claim is that the human person is also, as it were, in need of rebirth from an ‘eschatological therapy’.

‘What he is and what he can do is a thing he will learn in hopeful trust in God’s being with him. Man learns his human nature not from himself, but from the future to which the [Christian] mission leads him… The real mystery of his human nature is discovered by man in the history which discloses to him his future.’

The underlying dynamic of healing is hugely significant. Theology argues that there is no full psychic rebirth without identifying with the eschatological God as the companion of the ‘speaking being’. This identification, on a personal and cultural level, mobilises energies (‘desire’), which through self-contemplation cannot be achieved. Correspondingly, the Christian community is a community of desire, God decentres this ‘desiring self’, and this opening up to the ‘real’ is a precondition for overcoming ‘depression’. The genial insight of Moltmann is in offering a ‘graced’ alternative for recovering desire in the self. The ‘graced’

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526 Ibid., p.286.
equivalent of ‘re-sexualising’ language in Kristeva’s therapy\textsuperscript{527} is joining in God’s kenosis. This is healing through participating in the love offered to the world. This communication between the individual psyche and the Father’s love is realised through joining in the Christian mission. The paralysed ‘particularity’ of the person and culture is rediscovered in the fellowship:

‘…Man is hidden from himself, a homo absconditus, and will be revealed to himself in those prospects which are opened up to him by the horizons of mission. The mission and call do not reveal man simply to himself, with the result that he can then understand himself again for what he really is. They reveal and open up to him new possibilities, with the result that he can become what he is not yet and never yet was.’\textsuperscript{528}

Now we can locate the ‘anonymous sufferer’ on the very horizon where his healing, the recovery of the ‘collective dimension’ of the self, takes place, in service done to others. In this approach, the plus is that individual therapy is completed with a ‘collective rebirth’. However much this language reminds us of that of modernity, what Moltmann states is that salvation history is a regenerative encounter for the individual. ‘That is why according to Old and New Testament usage men receive along with their call a new name, a new nature and a new future.’\textsuperscript{529}

Introducing eschatological hope into the image of God is a crucial correction in many aspects. The ‘Abba-Father’ is a far more complex ‘name’ than its reduction into an oedipal authority, either in Freud or in atonement theology, or in other mechanistic readings (especially Feuerbach). The theologia crucis shows to the humanist critique of religion that there is a complex inwardness in ‘God’. Hope reveals a deep kenotic desire in God for man/history, but also in his image, the human person for God. This active imago Dei as kenosis is pivotal for my critique. It challenges the universal ground of the self, the ‘sub-psychic’ in Kristeva’s solution.

‘The concrete humanity disclosed by the Christian mission must therefore enter into debate with the universal definitions of humanity in philosophic anthropology, and for its part also outline general structures of human nature, in which the future of faith shines as a foreglow of the future of all men. The gospel call is addressed to all men and promises them a universal eschatological future…A Christian anthropology will always insist that a general, philosophic anthropology understand human nature in terms of history and conceive its historic character in the light of its future.’\textsuperscript{530}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[527] Kristeva, \textit{New Maladies of the Soul}, p. 36.
\item[528] Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, p.286.
\item[529] Ibid., p.286.
\item[530] Ibid., p.287.
\end{footnotes}
Kristeva welcomed the symbolism of self-emptying (‘kénose’). In her reading of the Passion, the move from the previous narrow ‘sub-psychic’ focus towards universalising solitary love makes Moltmann’s hope a promising medium of discussion. The gospel call ‘is delivered “in all openness” and must therefore also assume open responsibility for its hope for the future of man.’ Keller’s analysis of the ‘unborn self’ in Beckett also attains a new meaning in this context. Keller stated the need for a ‘Transcendent other’ to the self, who is genuinely real outside the self. Moltmann’s eschatological anthropology spells out the claim that it is God’s love which invites history to be ‘properly born’. This statement forms an ‘ontological critique’ of Kristeva’s retreat into matter. The ‘speaking being’ cannot be confined to a ‘semiotic’ nature. There is an alternative dialectic which transcends and completes material-linguistic origins:

‘The comparison with nature and with the animals, or the comparison with other men in the present and in history, does not yet bring out what man’s nature is, but only the comparison with the future possibilities which are disclosed to him from the direction of his life [the ‘graced’ Loving Third]… Man has no subsistence in himself, but is always on some expected future whole.’

This is a constructive dialogue with Arendt’s concerns about a superfluous humanity. Moltmann articulates a powerful counter-thesis to the ‘fabrication of soulless men “who can no longer be psychologically understood” because their psyche is destroyed before their bodies are destroyed.’ Moltmann resolves the Arendtian dilemma of historical recommencement by proposing an alternative freedom for history, without which, he states, it necessarily fails.

‘Hoping in the promised new creation by God, man here stands in statu nascendi, in the process of his being brought into being by the calling, coaxing, compelling word of God.’

‘To this end it is necessary to take man in his selfhood along with, and not in abstraction from, the present constellation of human society, in order to subject the whole of present human reality to the future of Christ and to the possibilities of the mission that moves towards his future.’

Despite Moltmann’s repetitive dialectics, Hope emerges as the new Symbolic Order of ‘grace’. It transforms the paralysed language of culture by offering for imitation the mutual

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531 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, pp.93-94.
533 Ibid., p.287.
534 See Kristeva’s reference to Arendt’s reading of the isolated historical self in section ‘Imperialism…. and Totalitarianism’ (pp.129-143), in Kristeva, *Hannah Arent*, p.139.
536 Ibid., p.288.
love between the Father and the Son. With this, Moltmann laid down an important strategy to bring the ‘apocalyptic’ Father and the ‘Son’ much closer to history. Though, critically speaking, the historicity of divine love for the postmodern subject can be problematic if the eschatological focus is not balanced with a genuine anthropology, Moltmann’s strategic direction is correct. The unexpected confirmation comes from Habermas, whose engagement with the theology of Auschwitz affirms the significance of rethinking eschatology in theology. Habermas appreciates Moltmann’s attempt to correct the Christian account of time which has become too ‘ahistorical’ under the influence of Hellenistic metaphysics. Habermas recognises that the correction of the ‘ahistorical’ notion of time and history is a pivotal achievement in the ‘cultural mourning’ of theological modernity.

6.2.3.2 The Foreigner/Stranger: The Revised Borders of the Church

The second major theme where Moltmann offers an intense contact with Kristeva is the problem of the Foreigner/Stranger. As a reminder, according to Kristeva’s criticism, when religious identity is constructed dogmatically, a ‘homogenising’ Christianity fails in dealing with cultural and creedal otherness. Moltmann particularly touches upon this field. He raises the need to correct the ‘social principle of likeness’, which organised the life and theological thinking of Christian communities in the past. Moltmann’s analysis of Christian community cohesion is a direct response to Freud’s reading of the Father as an ‘external authority’. Moltmann shows a significant correction of the ‘tabooistic’ or tribal reading of the Father’s love. ‘Christendom’, he states, totalised the ‘principle of likeness’, that is, when ‘like is known only by like’. Christian theology adopted it and introduced the principle of ‘analogy’ into its doctrine of the knowledge of God. In brief, those who share the Creed are similar and recognised; those who stay outside the Creedal community are outsiders, ‘heretics’, and are experienced as a threat. In this dynamic, we can identify what Kristeva objects to in religious fundamentalism.

Moltmann identifies this cultural pattern as the root of the Church’s apologetic relation to culture. The notion of a ‘separate’ Christian culture can easily reject the ‘migrant’ who is uprooted from religion. There is a dangerous element in this denial. The nostalgia for a

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537 Habermas is familiar with the theological projects of Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann. He knows of Moltmann’s groundbreaking work through Metz’s Auschwitz theology, and there is a significant academic engagement from his part with Metz. He is interested in their affirmation of history. Habermas’ is an important account as it confirms my critique on theology’s distance from the ‘historicity’ of the subject. In Nicholas Adams, Habermas and Theology, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006 (First published in 2006), p.191.

‘homogeneous’ and consequently homogenising Christianity produces a defensive attitude which Levinas characterised as ‘Christianity’s hubristic claim to be the exclusive path of salvation: ‘Outside the Church there is no salvation.’ These associations of Christianity with this ‘meta-narrative’ show that the problem is real.

Kristeva’s theory of ‘abjection’ is addressed here through the problem of the ‘boundaries’ of the Church. Moltmann warns that retreating into a pure creedally defined ecclesial self gives only a temporary stabilisation of identity and risks the ghettoisation of the Christian message. That is why Moltmann contrasts the principle of likeness with the ‘dialectical principle of God’, revealed in the Cross. His proposal is a dialectical understanding of Christ’s unconditional love, in which dialectic an anthropological thrust surfaces. Christ reveals a universal likeness in us, which is the likeness of suffering and vulnerability. Christ’s cross, as the manifestation of the Father’s love, connects all sufferers. This ‘dialectic anthropology’ reflects on the problem of the unwelcomed stranger in a historical connection. The ‘foreigner’ or the ‘cultural migrant’ necessarily emerges at the crossroads of the ‘horizontality’ and the ‘verticality’ of the Cross, at the time of the ‘split’ between modernity and post-modernity. I draw attention to the constructive exchange between Moltmann’s historical approach and Kristeva’s sub-psychic approach. Though she overestimates the capacity of her psychoanalytical soteriology, Kristeva rightly assigns the self as the place for talking about cultural borders:

‘Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognising him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns ‘we’ into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bounds and communities.’ (Emphasis added.)

Moltmann warns religious consciousness of the ‘lack of sensitivity to others’ and ‘the inability to see ourselves in others’. In his solution, when the other is seen in suffering, and the ‘we - they’ opposition is transformed into the common image of the suffering Christ, fear is removed from the ‘other’. The suffering Son connects me with the suffering

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540 Hanvey warns that Kristeva’s project is always essentially unstable. ‘Insofar as it relies on the recognition of unheimlich it can never be secured: “transference” and “recognition” can never be guaranteed and it is precisely the presence of the “uncanny” which not only discloses the wound but is an element in it, that ensuring that it stays open. ... It is always a constructed relation.’ Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, p.133.
541 Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, p. 1.
‘Foreigner’ who is my true image. The ‘Foreigner’ is also the true likeness of the Father, who co-suffers with the Son. The coincidence of these images becomes complete when the Father sends me to respond to suffering with compassion.

‘He revealed his identity amongst those who had lost their identity, amongst the lepers, sick, rejected and despised, and was recognised as the Son of Man amongst those who had been deprived of their humanity. (…) One must become godless oneself and abandon every kind of self-deification or likeness to God, in order to recognise the God who reveals himself in the crucified Christ.” (Emphasis added.)

Though Moltmann does not supply a sufficient anthropology to his overwhelming dialectics, nevertheless he successfully reverses the logic of ‘abjection’. Moltmann relevantly and directly addresses Freud who judged Christianity as being incapable of coming out from the ‘tabooistic’ reading of the Cross. ‘In origin Christianity is not a father-religion…. it is a son-religion, namely a brotherly community in the situation of the human God, without privileges and without the rebellions that are necessary against them.”

(Emphasis added.)

6.2.3.3 Evaluation

In view of Kristeva’s humanist reading of the Passion, Moltmann’s ‘symbolic mourning’ takes forward my critique in the following ways.

a/ Moltmann’s theologia crucis urges a hermeneutical-iconographical renewal. The universal likeness of Christ cannot be spelled out fully, neither within his heavy dialectics nor within the traditional ‘bloody’ representation of the cross. Moltmann in The Crucified God ends up with dialectic variations (repetition) of his statements. To a great extent, this systemic limit is owing to the incomplete revision of the underlying images of atonement theology. There is an objective need to revise these images in the presence (‘wounds’) of the historical subject, which he rightly assigns.

From a critical point of view, Moltmann’s Passion remains detached from the secular experience of suffering. Moltmann recognised the need to revolt against an inward looking ‘bloody imagery’, yet he was unable to create a common iconography with secular humanism. The main reason was the lack of an elaborated anthropology. The repetitions of

543 Moltmann, The Crucified God, p.27.
544 Ibid., p.307.
his dialectic indirectly reveal (and anticipate) unsettled intra-theological debates between the
dialogical and the apologetic models of the ‘secular’. In this way, Moltmann’s theology of
the cross points to the linguistic gap between Church and culture.

Making a genuine connection with history, as Levinas points out, necessarily leads to
tension with a Christianity based passively on right adherence to doctrine. Here faith is
exclusively ‘creedal’; the emphasis is on the affirmation of correct doctrine.\(^5\)\(^4\)\(^5\) The
unfinished project of *The Crucified God* recognises the need for theological risk-taking in
order to resolve this situation. What the *theologia crucis* learns is to accept the conflict
which the renewal of theological images unavoidably brings about.

b. The Father’s love is the source of ethical community. This is the radical counter-
image to Freud’s ‘oedipal community’ centred on a jealous God. Moltmann witnesses to the
potential of the Cross to reveal this regenerative love and accommodate otherness. The
conflict between the ‘symbolic mourning’ of theological modernity and Freud’s critique of
religion is so tense that it still assigns to the *theologia crucis*, as a central task, to ‘mourn’
this ‘split’. As a first step, the exhaustion of the postmodern subject requires removing all
*violence* from the image of the Father. When the postmodern subject is most vulnerable it is
most exposed to ‘violent’ narratives in culture. As M. Callagher warns, the isolated
individual can easily be seduced by a ‘strong identity’. This seductive ‘power’ gives an
instant gratification to shaken postmodern-identity.\(^5\)\(^4\)\(^6\) In this very fragile cultural situation,
when submission to a totalitarian ‘power voice’ (technological, political, or religious) is a
genuine danger, a radical counter-image of Love is needed. It should be a genuinely ‘intra-
self’ narrative, which is not manipulatable by cultural ideologies. In order to bring to
realisation this God-image, a further correction of the ‘banal’ images of God is needed.

There is a complementary dimension to this task. Theology, it seems, first has to produce
a breakthrough in the God-image in order to be able to make an anthropological
breakthrough. That is why my study now turns to Metz, who elaborates further directions for
theological anthropology. With him, addressing Kristeva’s historical subtexts attains a really
secure position.

\(^5\)\(^4\)\(^5\) This is Levinas’ reservation against this, what he regards as, one-sidedness in the Christian

\(^5\)\(^4\)\(^6\) See the cultural dynamics Gallagher attributes to the cultural phase under ‘Grid D’ in (*Appendix
V.*) This cultural climate facilitates the emergence of sect-like collectivity, authoritarian regimes,
fundamentalisms, and a strict separation of insiders/outsiders. Gallagher SJ, *Clashing Symbols*,
pp.27.30.
6.2.4 Metz: The Cross as the Hermeneutical Centre of History

In contrast to the mechanistic God-image of the masters of suspicion, Metz offers a highly complex Father narrative. The general background to making him a pivotal resource is Kristeva’s dialectical and historical materialism in Revolution in Poetic Language. Metz makes the Cross the hermeneutical centre of history. He demonstrates that theology can address historical alienation in a way which far excels the ‘linear’ teleological view of history like that of Marxism, that of scientific progress, or that of consumerist capitalism.

We can evaluate Metz’s trans-illuminating of history as a parallel dynamic with the ‘semiotic’ constituent of meaning in Kristeva. Metz shows that theological modernity in terms of ‘ethical mourning’ produced a heterogeneous view of history. Metz gives this correction by extrapolating the inner divisions of the subject onto the level of history. What corresponds to the denied ‘subconscious’ memories and desires is the ignored realm of the victims. With Metz, we can present the Cross also as the hermeneutic centre of the human self. I draw attention to his most forward looking concepts for making this connection, the ‘dangerous memory of Christ’, ‘conversion’, ‘mystical prayer’, and the ‘eschatological interruption’ of history.

Theological modernity, in Metz, brought an anthropological closing of the gap in terms of elaborating the collective dimension of the ‘anthropological’ approach to culture. Building on this communal dimension, my critique articulates a significant counter-claim to ‘psychoanalytic listening’. With regard to the nihilist crisis, to the disrupted historical situation and the threatened survival of the subject, only radical conversion can offer any hope. Metz sets up a critical stance with Kristeva’s Enlightenment viewpoint which, according to Hanvey, still builds on the vision of the human person as self-redeemed through reason, education, and social progress. The paradigm of metanoia, as a re-centring of the self on an extra-self dynamism, interrupts this program.


550 Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, p.133.
6.2.4.1 The Collective Dimension of Anthropology

Metz provides the ‘Semiotic Passion’ with a fundamental insight. He aimed at an anthropological revolution by raising the questions: ‘To whom does the world belong? To whom do its time and suffering belong?’ 551 The emphasis on the collective within anthropology is just as an important challenge as Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ is to the Symbolic Order. In the ‘verticality of the Cross’, it can be an important counterbalance to the individual dimension which postmodern strategies emphasize. Responsiveness to the postmodern situation can be developed further when the ‘dangerous remembrance’ of Christ is revived for the postmodern subject. Metz helps to reinstate the classic paradigm of conversion if we refashion his opening question. What type of Cross is it, to which the postmodern subject is being converted? In what sense can we speak of conversion? What is the doctrinal content which can motivate this conversion? What memory brings about the conversion of the ‘exhausted subject’?

Postmodern theologies of the cross are tempted to be lost in the individual.552 As a way out, Metz warns, the Father has to be imitated. Metz always reminds us not to forget the collective dimension of conversion. With this, he sets up an important criterion which evaluates the ‘iconographical response’ to Kristeva, which my study develops. If the renewed representation of the Passion is prompting a genuine conversion, it will be a proof that it is not a theological myth which concedes passively to Kristeva’s sub-psychic anthropology. Neither is it a ‘passive’ counter-myth to Freud’s murder-myth. On the contrary, the theology of the cross takes its own initiatives to deconstruct some of the myths of the self-sufficient postmodern self. This Metzian Passion, in R. Williams’ words, ‘is not just there as an object of our investigation, but is a challenging and unsettling fact for all of us, interrogating us without mercy, questioning our understanding of God and ourselves. The truth is that God is the only real and authoritative iconoclast.’553

The first important element of an anthropology grounded in the ‘collective’ is the rediscovery of a shared human nature. For Metz, this comes from the anamnesis of a common history. The ‘dangerous memory’ of Christ draws attention to forgotten victims in

551 Quotation from Metz’s Theology of the World, in Rebecca S. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p.77.
552 Rowan Williams’ theology exemplifies the struggle not to be lost in ‘translation’. His writings themselves reflect how difficult it is not having been caught up in repeating postmodern sensitivity and conceding to it. This game is not always won by postmodern theology. See Williams’ ‘Metzian’ yearning for the history of God in the sermon, ‘Different Christs?’ (pp.105-111), in Rowan Williams, Open to Judgement, Sermons and Addresses, Darton, Longman & Todd, London 2004 (First published 1994), cf. pp.109-110.
553 Ibid., p.110.
this collective history. Kristeva’s attempt in *Strangers to Ourselves* was to ground a new universalism in the fragility of the individual self. In ‘Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner’, she gives a moving account of uprootedness and losses, and the rejection by an unwelcoming host culture or individual of what constitutes the ‘Foreigner’. The whole being of this ‘Stranger’ is that of the ‘vulnerability of the Medusa’. It is a striking correspondence with the absolute woundedness of Metz’s victims, who are *forgotten* in history:

‘Not belonging to any place, any time, any love. A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the present in abeyance…. This means that, settled within himself, the foreigner has no self. Barely an empty confidence, valueless, which focuses his possibilities of being constantly other, according to others’ wishes and to circumstances.’

Metz articulates a collective responsibility for this uncanny ‘Other’. The ‘Stranger’ is recognised not as a psychological image ‘in ourselves’ but from *History*, which is purified from the mythical time of the God-lessness of our late modernity (‘polymythicism’). The ‘Foreigner’ is responded to through a radical conversion to the Father of history. The lost universalism of the Enlightenment is to be regained not from psychic history as in Kristeva’s attempt, but from *external* history. This ‘radical conversion’, which Metz critically highlights, takes place against the fiascos of the Enlightenment. For his theology of the cross the categorical imperative is *failed* history itself: ‘Everything has to be measured by [the possibility of] Auschwitz.’

In the ‘verticality of the cross’, actualising the statement, everything has to be measured by individual suffering. The interesting contrast, compared with Kristeva, is *where* theology emphasises individual particularity. Self-consciousness, ethical renewal, arises from the recognition of the silenced particularity of the victim. The implied criticism of a self-sufficient Enlightenment is the way Metz replaces the lost universal, compromised ‘autonomous’ reason, with the eschatological scandal of the forgotten victims. This is a very important opening up to the time experience of the self from the present to someone else’s *past*, the past of one who is my silenced *brother*. It is liberation from self-indulging psychic-

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555 Ibid., pp.7.8
nostalgia, which Part One identified as the predominant time-dimension of the isolated self.\textsuperscript{558}

This liberation is my ethical future, a forward-looking responsibility. This future, thus turns out to be grounded in love, which enhances Kant’s ‘categorical imperative’ with historical anamnesis. ‘Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.’\textsuperscript{559} What makes this law universal after Auschwitz is love, which does not do to the neighbour what was done to the victims of the past. ‘The starry sky above and the moral law within’, which inspired genuine awe in Kant, is replaced by the memory-lit sky of the victims of the past, and seen as God interrupting human morals from without. In the positive, the Logos (Word) who animates this repentance corrects reason. Instead of compromised human reason, it is apocalyptic time or apocalyptic consciousness that transforms history: ‘To whom does the world belong?’ To whom does my love belong? By sharing this answer with secularity, Christianity contributes to a second anthropological revolution, as these questions bring about a genuine distance from the postmodern situation. In post-modernity, when the sense of history is eclipsed, Metz remains a non-negligible source.

The hidden agency of suffering clearly resonates with Kristeva’s model of language. The latter showed that it is the ‘semiotic’ depth, the ‘maternal thing’, or the ‘void’ above which the edifice of language is erected. In Kristeva’s model this was the zero point of language. My point is that the hidden suffering of the victim can be seen as God’s hidden suffering. The agony of forgotten victims, which is integrated into God’s Passion, presents Him as ‘a semiotic chora’. There is another side to language/suffering which is unconscious. In Kristevan terms, the invisible story of the victims needs to be (re)inscribed into the ‘Symbolic order’ of History. Also, analogously, this past suffering is just as sidelined and unlistened to as a mother’s knowledge of dealing with otherness. Whereas psychoanalysis somehow implies a conversation with one’s own self, Metz departs from this introvert logic. Kristeva says:

‘To give meaning to suffering and begin the associative speech that will transform malady and death into a narrative of life, a new life: this is how the value of analytical interpretation as pardon can be defined. If you prefer, you can call this experience a healing. An endless one.’ \textsuperscript{560}

\textsuperscript{558} Section ‘3.4 The Problem of the Isolated Self’
\textsuperscript{560} Kristeva, Intimate Revolt, p.24.
My critique argues that the extrovert movement that Metz introduces does not eliminate self-reflexion, but transforms it. Analytic listening is to be completed by the historical transformation in the Father (‘conversion’). The psychoanalytical relevance is that there is a connection between my psychic traumas and history. Not only that, through deciphering the images of the unconscious, I can realise the traumas of other ‘victims’, but also that, through realising the pain of my individual psyche, I become aware of the chain of persons and events that inflicted this trauma upon me: history is real. To complete the web, my individual wounds are also reminders of my own complicity in this ‘external’ history. I myself, in other circumstances, am an active inflictor of pain on others. Metz reminds us of our historical responsibility.

Becoming solidary with others’ pain is also a therapeutic energy. This is the beginning of a non-oppressive and non-controlling morality. This happens when ‘grace’ is perceived as a universal, reaching out for the whole of history. This conception of ethics responds to Kristeva at two points. First, the theologia crucis spells out its ‘non-repressive ethics’, when divine love re-grounds human law. It is true that in Metz the intimacy of this love is not elaborated. But the otherness of this love as non-negotiable commitment is clearly stated. Secondly, it is a genuine counter-thesis to the ‘dolorisme’ or patronising attitude to suffering that Kristeva objected to in ‘Suffering’.

‘I have even perceived the limits of this approach, with its attendant risk of infantilizing people who are thus excluded from social history as suffering objects to be looked after. One can understand, then, that, starting with Diderot and his 1749 Lettre sur les aveugles à l’usage de ceux qui voient [Letter on the blind for the use of those who see], men and women of handicap, and their families, refuse the charitable and compassionate attitude and involve themselves in a political struggle that demands equality as a political right for everyone. All the same, realising this political solidarity requires mental solidarity between those who have been relatively spared….

….We are, however, forced to admit that Christian humanism, when it does not lock itself into redemptive suffering [dolorisme], prepares the believer to acknowledge this vulnerability in himself, the better to share the political struggles of those who suffer.’

Metz and Kristeva at this point are in a significant approximation on moral forgetting. The ‘disabled’ can become an existential metaphor of ignored presence. The Passion is

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561 Of which Kristeva laid foundations in ‘Stabat Mater’ (Tales of Love). See the conclusion of ‘Stabat Mater’, in Kristeva, Tales of Love, pp.262-263.
562 In Kristeva the source of non-repressive ethics is the ‘maternal passion’, a mother’s experience of dealing with otherness.
563 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.92.
presented in both readings as the interruption of the narcissistic claim for ‘self-redemption’ or narcissistic-suffering.

“‘I’ exist if, and only if, I suffer; the feeling of pain alone makes me exist; it is pain that makes my existence meaningful; without it my being would lack employment, utter boredom.”

The question indeed emerges as a non-negotiable interruption: to whom does my love belong? Metz prompts psychoanalysis to ask, to whom does the human self belong? How does the self relate to God’s ‘eschaton’? Most importantly, to whom does my suffering belong?

6.2.4.2 Radical Conversion to the Father: The Significance of Mystical Prayer

With Metz, the cross introduces ‘heterogeneity’ into history in a way which corrects Freud’s charge of the ‘violent Father’ and the charge of atheist humanism that God is external to history and is a mere extension of human power aspirations. The Love of the Father in history creates a special mode of ‘therapeutic’ speech: mystical prayer. This healing space is generated by the divine rupture of history.

Metz’s central recognition is that the meaning of existence is conceived via narratives. Christian prayer forms an existential narrative. It connects the stories of the self with the stories of God and, through God’s interest in history, with the stories of the victims. Christians assess history through this mystical union. Those who join in this communion understand that ‘prayer is the only form of language that can express our lives and feelings adequately.’ What in Kristeva’s model is missing, for understandable reasons, is ‘praying the self through’. Christian spirituality states it as the primary mode of the self’s becoming.

These recognitions enter into a structural dialogue with Kristeva’s revolutionary phase. In Revolution in Poetic Language the critique of the bourgeois subject was centred on the question of human agency as the source of social transformation. Metz reinstates prayer as an autonomous modality of human language. It has an analogous function to Kristeva’s ‘revolutionary praxis’ through poetic language: prayer first transforms the self. Then, it capacitates the person to become an active agent of history. The theological dynamic is clear:

564 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, p.91.
this potential is the result of conversion, which we can now define further as ‘revolt’ against the inertia of the self. The result is ‘mystical prayer’ which, in Metz, is the purification of ‘bourgeois’ consciousness. In order to constitute genuine human subjectivity, prayer must be free in form, uninhibited by linguistic constraints, expressive of emotions. It must heighten the sense of the ineffability of suffering.\(^{567}\) Language, when being transformed into prayer, becomes the medium of healing. It is never self-healing by itself. Human language becomes therapeutic always in relation to ‘sufferers’ and God. The responded to suffering of the victim and the responded suffering of God are the source of renewal.

This point also addresses Kristeva’s mature psychoanalytical program. Part One showed how the transition from ‘revolutionary aspirations’ of changing the world into healing psychic inertia was a realistic change. My position was that there is no need to refute the early ‘semiotic’ solutions by the later ones, and that the early insights can attain a new relevance in the postmodern context.\(^{568}\) The same applies to the Metz of theological modernity. The genuine need to restore a loving authority makes Metz’s emphasis on the authority of God’s ‘eschaton’ relevant for our context. The contact point with Kristeva’s later program is her suggestion of renewal through ‘self-translation’. Possessions saw the only chance of the ‘exhausted protagonists’ for renewal in the absorption of one’s life into another’s. This is Kristeva’s general psychoanalytical strategy for the postmodern self; to change language is a new way of signifying. She warns through the example of her protagonists that the postmodern self can be lost in translation, stranded in meaninglessness.\(^{569}\)

Metz offers the identity of the victims, their narratives, into which to be reborn. This ‘radical otherness’ provides the permanent dynamic for self-translation. The reality of the victims as the reality of historical suffering sustains the self with a permanent task. The subject, because he is so indebted to their presence, can never be lost. It is a double identification: with the historical other, and with the Father’s love which is the source and animator of this self-translation. With this, the theologia crucis responds to the significance of the narrative in Arendt. Here theology proves more ‘Arendtian’ than Kristeva’s one-to-one psychoanalysis. The question of connecting subsequent generations in history, to remember their continuity, is dealt with as a central problem.


\(^{568}\) See the ‘eschatological fellowship’ of Kristeva’s early revolutionary program in section ‘2.2.1.3 The Materialist Grounding of The ‘Chora-thetic’, pp.80-81.

\(^{569}\) de Nooy, ‘How to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs’, in The Kristeva Critical Reader, p.123.
A further contact in this line is the difficulty of ‘revolt’ that Kristeva harps on as the core of the postmodern challenge. She states, especially in *Sense and Non-sense of Revolt*, that when limits are lost, when there is a power vacuum and an invisible law, the self cannot be mirrored. It is not confronted with a genuine otherness, the precondition for ‘revolt’ (or ‘critical reflection’). Yet, despite the self-emptied state of postmodern culture, Kristeva clings to the premise that revolt is absolutely vital, ‘a continual necessity to keep alive the psyche, thought and the social bond itself’. The problem is that psychoanalysis as a critique of culture cannot provide the subject with this lost, confronting Other. Secular humanism, just like the whole of our culture, struggles with the loss of radical otherness. That is why Metz’s ‘eschatological horizon’, despite the overtones of the confidence of modernity, is an important resource to be rediscovered.

‘Again, and again prayer is a cry of lament from the depths of the spirit. But this cry is in no sense a vague, rambling moan. It calls out loudly, insistently. Nor is it merely a wish or desire, no matter how fervent. It is a supplication. The language of prayer finds its purpose and justification in the silently concealed face of God. Hence the lament, supplication, crying and protest contained in prayer, as also a silent accusation of the wordless cry, can never simply be translated and dissolved into a discourse.’

‘Crying’ is a powerful metaphor. It would be worth developing it as one of the central images of theology’s ‘postmodern’ reading of the Passion. It is not forcing it to relate it to the ‘semiotic’ state of language under formation in Kristeva’s model. ‘Crying contained in prayer’ can be seen when the ethical language of a culture is being formed. It recalls, from Kristeva, language being in ferment, the struggle to mature into expression, when ‘love is neither merely semiotic nor merely Symbolic’ (Oliver).

‘In a semanalytic interpretation, it would amount, for the amorous and/or transference discourse, to a permanent stabilisation-destabilisation between the *symbolic* (pertaining to referential signs and their syntactic articulation) and the *semiotic* (the elemental tendency) of libidinal charges toward displacement and condensation, and of their inscription, which depends on the incorporation and introjection of incorporated items; an economy that privileges orality, vocalization, alliteration, rhythmicity, etc.)

The metaphor of crying, if taken up, has a tremendous anthropological potential and a ‘personalist’ charge. I just hint at the possible link with Kristeva’s program of *jouissance*, the other key dimension of her non-repressive ethics. Her ‘ecstatic postmodernism’

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570 de Nooy, ‘How to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs’, in *The Kristeva Critical Reader*, p.115.
572 Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, p.122.
articulates freedom in terms of an ultimate orientation to joy and ecstasy, and desire as a way of relating to the Other. In ‘crying’, the joy and jouissance of the victims is ‘mourned’. This remembrance gives expression to their freedom to live and to be remembered. In ‘crying’, in a symbolic way, joy (jouissance), suffering, prayer, the ethical variants of the ‘semiotic’ (sub-lingual) and the ‘Symbolic’ (conscious reflection), are merged. With the help of Ricoeur, we can define further the ‘cultural mourning’ which is underlying the language of love. Its task is to universalise particular historical suffering. ‘We must remember because remembering is a moral duty. We owe a debt to the victims. And the tiniest way of paying our debt is to tell and re-tell what happened at Auschwitz.’ In other words, crying reveals what could have happened in place of ‘Auschwitz’ as joy.

In Metz, ‘crying and protest contained in prayer’ connects the pain of past victims, the pain of the Son, and the pain of psychic rebirth. But in view of the above, it is also important to emphasise that ‘crying’ also connects the joys (‘jouissance’) of the victims, and the joy of the Son, and the joy of the Father. Metz’s version of Ricoeur’s ‘second naïveté’ is, as it were, our second ‘apocalyptic naïveté’. It scandalises and interrupts the banality and boredom of bürgerliche Religion. What once interrupted modernity is interrupting post-modernity too. For post-modernity, from the Metzian point of view, can be redefined as the acceleration of modernity’s forgetting. With the alienating practices it produces through consumerism, post-modernity indeed can be seen as the intensification of victimisation. The freedom and joy of the ‘victims of the present’ is to be paid utmost attention, and care.

I conclude for the Semiotic Passion that if the victims are invisible, their Cross is also invisible. Therefore, Metz confirms in the postmodern context that, literally, a new visibility of the Cross is desirable. What makes the difference between authentic and inauthentic existence is the ability to sense the suffering of the other. Also, it is the ability to ‘see’ the Cross. This recognition by Metz prompts the kerygma to enter into a new solidarity with the ‘post-Catholic’ audience. The secular environment of the Church should be seen as the unremembered freedom of the successors of the victims. With Metz, the theologia crucis develops further Moltmann’s vision of the ‘open Cross of Christ’. The consequence of the Metzian opening up to history is that instead of indoctrination, the linguistic modality of mystical prayer should be offered. This new modality of language corresponds to the state of

576 Morrill, Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory, p.42.
the ‘migrant’. Thus, after Rahner, Metz also confirms our opening proposal that in the cultural condition of the ‘verticality of the cross’, language to the ‘exhausted subject’ (the inheritor of the exhaustion of past victims!) is healing and listening, instead of an old fashioned ‘catechising’. At least, Catechesis should offer, among its first approaches, a sound knowledge of who the ‘exhausted subject’ is.

To Metz’s eschatological personalism Kristeva might say that the anthropology it offers is not sufficient. Spelling out the ‘communal’ element in anthropology in the postmodern context is not enough. The ethical dimension of history does not cover the whole of history. Indeed, the sub-psyche level, as the personal dimension of anthropology, is missing from the Metzian ‘grand-narrative’. Without reaching ‘intra-psychic history’, without communicating the ‘eschaton’ to the full self, Christianity does not cease to be a colonising narrative. This criticism has relevant points. Metz’s ‘symbolic mourning’, to a great extent, still belongs to the world of theological modernity. He has never engaged fully with the postmodern subject. On the other hand, Metz’s ‘unfinished mourning’ significantly contributes to achieving the above objective. His is indeed a grand narrative, in the fashion of modernity. But this is a grand-narrative on behalf of the victims, and it makes a difference. To answer the above criticism, theology will have to bring even closer to each other the ‘eschaton’ and history.

6.2.4.3 Metz’s Mystical Prayer as a Restoration of the Mysticism of History

Metz’s most significant achievement is the correction he made to the mystical tradition, which I highlight as the precondition for reconnecting ‘nature’ and ‘grace’ (the self and history and God) in a satisfying way. The extension of our eschatological future, when All are gathered together, into our present brings about a fundamental change. Metz reversed the introverted nature of ‘modern’ Christian mysticism. In this context, we can speak of the introvert nature of Christian ‘symbolic language’. From the Metzian eschatological viewpoint, a painful, sadly often overlooked, historical retreat becomes visible. The critical analysis of this event also has to be at the heart of dialogue with Kristeva’s humanistic subtexts. It is, my study claims, a major precondition for recovering the Father’s love for our postmodern history.

So, what was this ‘retreat’ or introvert symbolism? Since the Enlightenment, the conflict with the secularising dynamic of modernity led to the notion of a ‘High Transcendent God’, as we saw in Homans. The conflict with natural sciences, and then notably with Freud,
resulted in a retreat into the ‘theological person’. In terms of spirituality, it resulted in a retreat into the ‘mystical self’. Different versions of secular criticism pointed to it as an isolation from reality. As an un-admitted defeat by the secular Enlightenment, mastery over external history was cut off from theological reflection. This isolation sheds a fresh light on Dupré’s critical remark on culture’s secular shift: ‘The abandonment of the transcendent source of meaning [was] responsible for a crisis in European consciousness.’

With the help of Metz, we can see in a clearer way the Christian complicity in the abandonment of the ‘eschatological’ dimension of Transcendence which, as a result, accelerated intra-church secularisation. It was not only secular humanism that ‘abandoned the transcendent source of meaning’. Because of the Christian turn away from external history (the secular dynamics of culture), an important part of history was cut off from the realm of Transcendence. Rahner, being also a great twentieth century mystic of history, claimed its re-integration. What was abandoned and left to secular sciences needs to be re-inhabited. Metz’s theology spelled out this re-bonding in order to make history shared and reflected on again as the common mystery of man and God. The whole of nouvelle théologie was a witness to this missing Christian presence in culture as a crisis in its own right. As a model we can propose that it was the undisturbed realm of mysticism from which Christian spirituality attempted to restore the lost self-confidence of the pre-Enlightenment period. Our mystics need to be urgently re-read, or we need to admit with honesty that their reflections are insufficient sources for re-engaging history. Critically speaking, many generations of Christian mystics, together with the spirituality of our Catholic seminaries and religious communities, fell victim to this dangerous retreat. Historical time, real interest in ‘gracing’ secular history was removed from ‘mystical time’. However paradoxical the statement might sound, the post-Enlightenment Church lived in a ‘proto-post-modernity’. Their division between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’ history was the first anticipation of the postmodern fragmentation (a loss of a sense of history).

It is in the above context that we can speak of a paradoxical ‘feminisation’ of mainstream Christian spirituality. The male priesthood (also in retreat from reality), having lost its male intelligentsia, was left with a predominantly female congregation. Male audience and lay interest in history was lost (or un-listened to), including first rate authorities in sciences and humanities. No wonder that in this vacuum emerge, as ‘the’ current critics,

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578 Dupré, The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture, p.15.
579 See the different aspect of the policy of closing the gap between ‘nature’/history and ‘grace’ in Ressourcement.
‘undergraduate atheists’ like R. Dawkins.\footnote{Mark Johnson’s term, ‘undergraduate atheists’ (Richard Dawkins, Cristopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris, e.g.). In Mark Johnson, Saving God, Religion after Idolatry, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2009. p.39.} I deliberately magnify the dynamic, but Kristeva’s ‘feminist’ criticism of the masculine theological imagination in interpreting the Virgin Mary makes much sense in this context. The retreat from the ‘anthropological complexity’ of the human condition can have a connection with the above ‘feminisation’. Within the closed hermeneutical circle where a male priesthood was talking to the needs of a female audience, a one-sided construction of the female imagination started. Female spirituality, predominantly introvert and centred on ‘bonding’, amplified the dynamics of introversion.

Metz restored the ‘external’ or the ‘real’ to the mystical self. Since then, theology can communicate without any inferiority complex with the Feuerbachian and Marxist critique of religion and their later versions. Metz is a powerful resource in contexts where the Christian formation of history is involved. His theology, as a whole, blends with Kristeva’ interest in the Christian ‘revolt’. In her latest book, The Severed Head (2012), her appreciating remark on the theme of ‘Christian revolt’ shows a contact with crucial tenets of Moltmann and Metz. Kristeva reads Mary’s famous Magnificat in dialogue with their historical horizon.

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” This hymn, whose Latin version, Magnificat anima mea Dominum, will live on in Christmas Vespers, bears the perfect libertarian message of Western humanity: divine grace is going to re-establish justice for the poor and aid its servant Israel. Deposuit potentes et exaltavit humiles proclaims the tenor, thus prefiguring the spirit of revolt and hope that animates our civilisation, now two thousand years old. It is useful to remember that this glory originated with the Elizabeth and Mary, John the Baptist and Jesus duets.\footnote{Ch 6 ‘The Ideal Figure: Or, a Prophecy in Actuality, Saint John the Baptist’ (pp.65-73.), Kristeva, The Severed Head, p.67.}

Revolt, as an ethical evaluation of history, remembrance, the past of the victims, and the need to reanimate ‘wounded’ history are together in Kristeva’s recent ‘cultural mourning’ expressed in Christian symbols. Kristeva’s new ‘anamnetic style’ in The Severed Head, as a new relation to Christian texts, should be noted. The essay quoted is more than an explanatory, unusually detailed, re-telling of the stories of the gospel. My point is that it is about more than (re)introducing Christian history and theological concepts to a secular audience. My study responds to this by raising the idea that Kristeva’s ‘new accuracy’ with Christian texts, almost in the fashion of a ‘documentarian’, can be read theologically. This ‘mourning’ reveals that among the forgotten victims of history we find the forgotten words of Jesus. Seen in this context, Kristeva’s extensive drawing on Christian texts itself is a form

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of ‘mourning’. It brings to consciousness the forgotten ‘primary words’, through which religion can be re-approachable by ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’.

Now I turn to my third resource, von Balthasar, whose ‘symbolic mourning’ revisits the most cherished core-concepts of ‘theological consciousnesses’. The *theologia crucis* posits them as necessary elements for the ‘ontological discourse’ with Kristeva to be reopened within the ‘self’.

### 6.2.5 Hans Urs von Balthasar’s ‘Meta-Anthropology’

My critique presents Balthasar as a surprising dialogue partner of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ anthropology. Balthasar can be seen as the answer of ‘theological humanism’ to secular humanism. Namely, without remembering the Trinitarian dynamic of the self, the ‘exhausted subject’ can never transform postmodern history into his ‘home’, that is, a place of anticipation of our final rebirth (psychological and theological). It is the borderline situation of Balthasar’s theology which makes him the most ‘heated contact’ with Kristeva’s post-structuralist psychoanalysis. On the one hand, Balthasar is the classic discourse of Catholic theology: he is the ‘face’ of doctrinal orthodoxy. On the other hand, his ‘modernity’ points well beyond itself. Balthasar represents not only the ‘Symbolic Order’ of orthodoxy, but also its ‘semiotic’ or ‘sub-doctrinal’ dimension, the mystical tradition. In his neo-orthodox synthesis there is an anthropological potential which has been overlooked.

Balthasar as a resource confirms for the *theologia crucis* that in post-modernity a deep-remembering of Tradition is possible and vital. He completes Metz by stating that we remain victims of the present if we do not remember our most expressive anthropological image: God’s Triune love. Balthasar’s orthodoxy presents this Love as the theological cognate of ‘home’, as the ultimate object of postmodern desire. Bouma-Prediger defines this ‘Trinitarian’ yearning: ‘a home is made of memories and stories and relationships: a place of mere residence versus a place of indwelling.’

This eventful home for Balthasar is the Redeemer’s *kenotic* love. He conceives Divine Revelation as our ‘anthropological’ homecoming, when humaneness reaches its fulfilment. In other words, the only way out from the crisis of the ‘isolated self’ is to live again in the mystery of the indwelling of God. The ‘Mystery’ is God’s *inexhaustible* life. For Balthasar, ‘mystery’ is an imperative to learn

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how to dwell, and this ‘mystery’ as kenosis (giving through self-emptying) is also a teaching of this indwelling. The ‘mystery’ of indwelling, Balthasar teaches from within theological modernity, encompasses postmodern sensitivity. Indwelling is ‘to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for.’ Balthasar’s reply is that the ‘exhausted subject’ is capable of reflecting God’s cherishing, protecting, preserving, and caring.

Balthasar anticipated the postmodern hunger for the symbols of love and suffering. In terms of the use of ‘symbols’, Balthasar excels his contemporaries from theological modernity and many ‘abstract’ (overtly theoretical) postmodern theologies. He exhibits the postmodern playfulness of colourful story-telling. Balthasar offers rich, overflowing theological imagery, a combination of theological imagination and the discipline of orthodoxy. Needless to say, this has an enormous therapeutic potential as he offers an intense ‘symbolic listening’ to the self. It is a powerful support to the subject who suffers from impoverishment of fantasy. On a more general level, underlying Balthasar’s renewed orthodox imagery, we find the feverish fantasy activity of a shaken Catholic culture (modernity). Balthasar’s linguistic and visual hyperactivity can be well read in the already familiar scheme from Homans. (Cultural loss → fantasy eruptions → interpretation of these fantasies/mourning → new structure building.) Balthasar also anticipated the situation of the ‘verticality of the Cross’ as in his work was manifested the effort of the Church of modernity to stabilise its traditional images. Balthasar’s is an unfinished ‘symbolic mourning’ and this makes him interesting in our context. The most intriguing element of his theology is that he simultaneously re-confirms the traditional ‘paternal metaphor’ of God and, with the same intensity, also elucidates the ‘maternal metaphor’ in the Father. Balthasar offers his own correction by submitting breath-taking metaphors on God’s ‘motherhood’ within a Trinitarian framework. I focus on his contribution to the dialogue with Kristeva’s atheistic and anthropological subtext.

6.2.5.1 A Trinitarian ‘Meta-Anthropology’

Despite the opposite expectations, there is a profound anthropological thrust in Balthasar. In striking wording, he states that, with the crisis of old ecclesial metaphysics, a new ‘meta-anthropology’ is needed. This anthropology grounds the person in God’s

583 Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought, p. 180
584 Seeing Balthasar in a debate with Rahner’s anthropological turn is a standard contextualisation. See Outlet, ‘Paradox and/or supernatural existential’, cf. pp.268-271.
sacrifice. Balthasar articulates the anthropological dynamic of the human person through God’s self-emptying for us.

‘The ultimate answer the Church has to offer to the Enlightenment is, beyond all reasoning, the simple witness which the apostles and saints have borne in the past, and which the persecuted Church is bearing now... She [the Church] exists in direct imitation of her Lord, who being the Word of God, did nothing but witness to him who uttered it, and because of this, was persecuted and crucified.'(Emphasis added.)

Balthasar offers a new synthesis of doctrine by emphasising the necessary process of learning from the modern world. Critics often overlook Balthasar’s profound commitment to dialogue with secular humanism. My point is that he lays down the grounds for this dialogue in terms of a theological anthropology. This is an anthropology ‘from above’, expressed in Balthasar’s famous question: if transcendentals are banished ‘what will happen to Being itself?’

In Balthasar’s case, we cannot speak of anthropology in the traditional sense. His is a ‘meta-anthropology’, which underlies the explicit theological narrative. I highlight this as a crucial resource for the ‘ontological’ critique of the ‘speaking being’. In Balthasar’s solution the communal dimension of Triune life and the historicity of the subject are presented together. Emphasising the ontological origin of the person in the ‘fellowship’ of the Trinity is an important step in re-centring Kristeva’s ‘semiotics’ in two senses. Balthasar’s ‘meta-anthropology’ offers a distance from the dialectic of matter. Also, it is an alternative to the ‘lonely’ agent of Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ethic which has to rely exclusively on the inner resources of the self. The ‘imaginary Father’ of her theories also attains the missing historicity for, theology argues, when love becomes communal, it becomes genuinely historical. The anthropological potential of the Trinitarian approach lies in that it makes the ‘speaking being’ an active member of an ethical fellowship. The experience of koinonia (the ethical and moral communion of joy), we can argue, is also a dimension of the ‘imaginary Father/Loving Third’.

Perhaps the most successful element of Balthasar’s ‘linguistic mourning’ is the re-gained emphasis on sharing as the central dynamic of the Incarnation. As for the classic

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586 Balthasar, Test Everything, p.31.
587 Ibid., p.13.
atonement theology, this is a crucial point where the theology of the cross goes beyond the legalistic mindset. In Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday, in the visio mortis, Jesus/the Son takes upon himself the pain of being deprived of the vision of God as an ‘act of sharing’, as com-passio, as co-suffering. The anthropological emphasis that Balthasar introduces here is crucial. The self-alienation of the divine Son is governed by his solidarity with the creatures of his Father, who are created in His image (the Son’s). In Balthasar, Christ’s sharing in the experience of the dead completes God’s kenosis in history. The goal of the Incarnation is this ultimate act of solidarity with Creation and Creator, the Cross.590

‘Do you know what you have chosen, Lord? Are you quite clear of the consequences of your obedience?’ … ‘You call into the void: Father! The echo returns… The Father no longer knows you… He has gone over to the side of your enemies… Father, your will be done for them (human beings) and for me. Your loving will for them…’. (Heart of the World)591

This dynamic of sharing separates from the ‘dynamic of violence’, which we objected to in the language of expiatory sacrifice. In the positive reading of Balthasar’s visio mortis one should not forget that, despite Balthasar’s undeniable dependence on atonement idioms, the primary word in his kenosis theology is not God’s ‘wrath’, but God’s life giving glory. ‘One will see this beauty only when the core of everything is recognised to be the free love of God that justifies man’. 592 It is this dynamic of always seeking the other’s well being and redemption which grounds a ‘non-violent’ representation of the Father. This Trinitarian sensitivity fully ‘counteracts’ not only Freud’s critique of the ‘bloody cross’, but also the androcentrism of his oedipal analysis of religion.593 The Trinitarian kenosis in Balthasar, by showing the anthropological orientation of grace, also responds constructively to Kristeva’s dialogical reading of the Passion. (1) It completes the ethical role she attributes to the Father as the sender into compassionate love. (2) It also gives a creative parallel to Kristeva’s ‘maternal passion’. The origin of ethics in us is our being grounded in the image of God.

With this, we arrive at the heart of Balthasar’s ‘meta-anthropology’. Presenting the relationships in the divine kenosis is the theological solution of introducing heterogeneity

590 Pitstick, Light in Darkness, p.96.
591 Quoted from Rowan Williams, Ch 4 ‘Balthasar and the Trinity’ (pp.37-50), in The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar, edited by Edward T. Oakes and David Moss, Cambridge 2004 (First published 2004), p.39. (Even the ‘Your wrathful will for me’ with which the quote finishes reads as giving emphasis to this ultimate solidarity.)
593 Jonte-Pace, Speaking The Unspeakable, p.7.
into the subject. This is a very subtle strategy for grounding this ‘heterogeneity’ in the
*narrative of the divine self*. Man is the image, the imitation of this unfolding story in history.

I recapitulate this ‘meta-anthropological program’ from Balthasar’s text, ‘The
Momentum of the Cross’. Triune life is governed by relations of selfless love. This
calculated *kenosis* is the basis of everything in Creation. In Balthasar’s account, in
salvation history, the first act of Trinitarian kenosis is the creation of the world when the
creator gives up a part of his freedom to the creature, sharing his freedom and intelligence.

From a Christological approach, Balthasar embeds the human being in ‘divine origins’ as
deeply as possible. The ground of the self is not God in general, but our particular image, the
Son. The subject of *kenosis* is not the Son who became man, but the *pre-existent Son*. This
kenosis as the surrender of the ‘form of God’ becomes the decisive act of the love of the Son.

He translates his being begotten by the Father into creaturely obedience. This
anthropological dynamic points to the Son’s obedience as the ultimate archetype of human
ethics. Also, it is the ultimate ground of our humanness. Being *human* is the ability to obey
in freedom and love when obedience is transformed into serving others. The source of this
freedom is the second act of God’s *kenosis* (self-emptying), the Incarnation of the Word.

‘The Incarnation has no other ultimate purpose than the Cross… Jesus is the unique
bearer of the world’s sin, and because the source of his obedience is his unique relation
to the Father. …The whole Trinity remains involved in this act, the Father by sending
out the Son and abandoning him on the cross, and the Spirit by uniting them now only in
the expressive form of separation. Thus the cross of Christ is inscribed in the creation of
the world from the beginning… Christ does not himself load on to himself the burden
that is destined for this existence… but is only ready to let this burden be loaded on to
himself in the “hour” that the Father has determined… the deepest abandonment by God,
which is vicariously real in the Passion, presupposes an equally deep experience of being
united to God and of life derived from the Father, an experience that the Son must have
had, not only in Heaven, but also as a man… [This is] the kenotic readiness of the Son
for the Father’s will.’

Thus is a pivotal emphasis in Balthasar. To speak of the Incarnation is already to speak of
the Cross. The whole Trinity remains involved in this act, the Father by sending out the Son
and abandoning him on the Cross, and the Spirit by uniting them. Thus,

‘the Cross of Christ is inscribed in the creation of the world from the beginning, as
this is shown in the Johannine theology of the ‘Lamb of God’ (Jn 1.29.36): the Lamb is
‘slain before the foundation of the world.’ (Rev 13,8.)

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595 Ibid., pp.212-213. 216.
596 The above recapitulation is an extract from Balthasar’s from Ch.5, ‘The Momentum of the Cross’. Ibid., pp.212-214, closing quote: p.214.
The underlying anthropological dynamic is an important resource for the critique of Kristeva’s semiotic ‘ontology’. We can argue that when we speak of the cross it is always a witness to the ‘speaking being’. Here we can recall how Kristeva read the Cross as the symbol of the genesis of the subject. Christ, ‘the absolute subject’, reflects our linguistic passion, the pains of separation in primary processes through which the subject is ‘resurrected’ in language. Balthasar’s synthesis of classic soteriology shows that theology can offer a similar in-depth reading. What is underlying the Cross is the genuine anthropological dimension of divine Love, made manifest in the Incarnate Son. This theological dimension of the human self is a genuine ‘ontological’ vision. With it, the theologia crucis attains a real critical potential. The theological view of the person, through transforming metaphysics into the Narrative of Love, can go beyond the materialism of Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’. It spells out love as the ground of matter and personhood.

This ‘meta-anthropology’, with its subtlety, also deconstructs the logic of ideological reduction. The latter up to the present is un-mourned in ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. The kenosis of God with the paradigm of sharing addresses not only the classic Feuerbachian agenda, but its ‘aggressive secularist’ versions, too. Divine kenosis quite simply cannot be read as opposing human nature. On the contrary, Balthasar reveals a ‘Trinitarian agape’, which literally nourishes human beings with self-giving life. This overcome dichotomy is shown by Moltmann:

‘In their struggle against each other, theism and atheism begin from the presupposition that God and man are fundamentally one being. Therefore what is ascribed to God must be taken from man and what is ascribed to man must have been taken from God.’597 (Moltmann’s reference to Feuerbach)

Instead, the inner life of God, both as immanent Trinity (‘divine self’) and economical Trinity (‘acting in history’), invites the human being to participate in love. Underlying this invitation is a correction of the ‘absolute substance’ and the ‘absolute subject’ in which Western theology, and Cartesian rationalism, traditionally conceived God. With Balthasar, the theologia crucis confirms that it is an erroneous description of the Christian God when his ‘distance’ from man expresses his power. Just the opposite, his power is manifest in his radical closeness as Resurrected Lord (as ‘Kyrios’) when the radical Otherness of Easter is experienced as Emmanuel (that is God is with us).

598 Moltmann, The Crucified God, p.249.
Feuerbach’s extrinsic view of God, which is strikingly ‘proto-Freudian’ in terms of the oedipal rivalry, is challenged further by two concepts, in which the theologia crucis of modernity culminates. My study, referring back to Moltmann, highlights the *imitatio Trinitatis* and ‘open friendship’, and connects them with Balthasar. They are historical manifestations of his ‘meta-anthropology’.

6.2.5.2 *Imitatio Trinitatis, Open Friendship as the Completion of Balthasar’s ‘Meta-Anthropology’*

Moltmann’s concept of *open friendship* completes Balthasar by emphasising the socio-anthropological dimension of the Trinitarian kenosis. The inner drama of self-giving love among the Three Persons brings about a fundamental change in history. The order of transformation is similar to what we see in Kristeva’s poetic-texts. Triune life sends among us God’s ‘revolutionary Word’ which initiates a ‘revolutionary praxis’. God emerges, as it were, as the generative *chora* of ethics. Triune Love is always a correction of corruptible human love. God’s *kenosis* creates a messianic fellowship (Moltmann) which is a re-enactment of authentic human communities. The source of this ‘open friendship’ is described by the *perichoresis* in the Triune God (co-indwelling, co-inhering), which concept Moltmann takes over from Eastern theology:

‘By virtue of the love they have for one another they exist totally in the other... Each Person finds his existence and his joy in the other Person. Each Person receives the fullness of eternal life from the other.’

The relevance of this ‘open friendship’ for our critique is that it is an opening up of the ‘isolated self’ to the Other. ‘Open friendship’ implies the claim that the self needs to be re-centred on the freedom of the Other. ‘[God’s] freedom therefore lies in the friendship which he offers men and women, and through which he makes them his *friends*.’

Because the Trinitarian fellowship creates human beings to be its partner in fellowship, we can speak of this God not only as ‘free in love’ but also as the God who ‘frees in love.’

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600 Ibid., p.56.

Kristeva, from within her materialism and prior to her dialogical stance, had already made an ‘anthropological offer’ to theology. She confirmed the anthropological relevance of the ‘metaphor’ of the Trinity. Kristeva outlined the fundamental psychic dynamics of opening up to the other, as witnessed in therapy:

‘The Trinity itself, that crown jewel of theological sophistication, evokes, beyond its specific content…the intricate intertwining of the three aspects of psychic life: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.

To the analyst, however, the representations on which the Credo is based are fantasies, which reveal fundamental desires or traumas but not dogmas. Analysis subjects these fantasies to X-ray examination. It begins by individualizing: What about your father? Was he “almighty” or not? What kind of son were you? What about your desire for virginity or resurrection?\(^{602}\)

Now the theologia crucis, in view of the ‘open friendship’, can fully take up this anthropological reading in its own field. It repeats the questions by re-instating their original theological emphases. Who is the father for the person, what kind of sons are we, what is our desire for resurrection and identification with the story of the divine Other? But the fundamental question is: to what fellowship do you belong? Theology does not simply argue the relevance of ‘grace’. Most importantly, Kristeva’s immanent reading invites a critique to spell out ‘grace’ as bonding and connectedness within psychic history. The context of ‘open friendship’ also confirms that the elaboration of the personal dimension is unfinished in the theologia crucis.

The ‘open friendship’ is also linked to the question of narcissism and the question of the Stranger. Kristeva herself highlighted these topics when she was asked about her preoccupation with the religious texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition.\(^{603}\) Kristeva connects Christian love and primary narcissism:

‘Love your neighbour as yourself… To become capable of loving our neighbour as ourselves, we have first of all to heal a wounded narcissism. We must constitute narcissistic identity to be able to extend a hand to the other… Thus: heal your inner wounds, which as a result will render you then capable of effective social action, or intervention in the social plane with the other. …We must heal our shattered narcissism [our ability to identify with the other] before formulating higher objectives.’\(^{604}\) (Italics mine.)

My critique claims two things here. First, the task of healing inner wounds is beyond our ‘intra-self’ capacity for self-healing. It requires our ‘lost listener’, God, who is a ‘faithful

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\(^{602}\) Kristeva, *In the Beginning Was Love*, p.43-44.


presence to hear my narrative and who X-rays my narcissistic structure. Theological modernity here reminds both Kristeva and postmodern theological sensitivity of the communal nature of healing. McDougall highlights in Moltmann the dynamic of healing which transforms the self. Accordingly, theology has to depart from the static notion of an ideal primordial state that has been damaged or lost in the Fall then restored to grace. Paradise lost and regained needs to be seen as our eschatological destiny instead of as our lost origin. It is rather a process of theosis (deification, imitation). Theosis, McDougall suggests, reintroduces the theology of the cross as a project fully compatible with contemporary anthropology. The equilibrium between ‘anthropology’ and ‘eschatology’ takes place in ‘open fellowship’. Theosis is a process of becoming open and inclusive through learning the fellowship with God, who can be seen as our extended ‘process of individuation’ (‘narcissisti structure’). The emphasis is on the future capacity to ‘accept’ and ‘welcome’. It is a forward-looking freedom. The example of the community completes my freedom to make this ‘divine’ welcome to the Foreigner: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ (Mt 11:28)

What happens in this ‘open fellowship’ connects the themes of healing and the Foreigner. As a ‘graced’ alternative to Kristeva, the challenge today is a new honesty to make the Church an ‘open fellowship’ of healing which invites all forms of ‘exhaustion’. ‘All’ means that homosexuals, the divorced and those on social margins, unemployed, refugees and economical migrants, also have to be included. The precondition of this inclusiveness is letting the Father appear as he is. Balthasar’s Trinitarian meta-anthropology and the image of God as ‘open friendship’ serve as the ground for this renewed image. The closing chapter of my work, the Semiotic Passion, will have to demonstrate the theological dynamic of God’s ‘open friendship’ when the Father is governed by the desire to recover personal dignity and resurrect all that belongs to Life.

What we learn from this Father is the most active form of forgiving. The apex of imitating Triune life is when we are able to mourn together with the Stranger. The ‘social messianic fellowship’ (Moltmann) becomes most intense at this point. We can speak of welcoming the Stranger only if the fellowship extends also to the losses of the Stranger. The Christian community, when it is able to respond to the historical losses of the ‘Foreigner’, only then turns the ‘other’ fully into ‘Brother’. The completion of the Balthasarian pattern of kenosis is when the imitation of the Son is fully realised in history. That is, we are fully

605 Williams, Lost Icons, p.166.
607 Ibid., p.188.
608 from the King James Version
ourselves and fully in the fellowship of Christ when we become generous enough to mourn the wounds and the dead loved ones of the Other. This is the mystery of the radical otherness of the Cross. The situation of exile, when there is no place that offers itself as home, ends when Christianity is a participant in the Stranger’s ‘cultural mourning’. From the Trinitarian program of theological modernity this categorical imperative emerged as the ultimate message of the theologia crucis for the ‘verticality of the cross’. This program of reconciliation answers Kristeva’s critical observation on the Pauline Church:

‘For the Christian, in short, the foreigner was not excluded if he was a Christian, but the non-Christian is a foreigner Christian hospitality cared little about… As a foreigner, I must attest that I am a Christian, for the right to hospitality is mine only if I can show a Christian passport.’

The tension between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, which Kristeva observes, is the utmost challenge to rethink the image of the Church today (as the manifestation of the Father’s love). It has to be done when the whole culture, including the church, manifests a universal woundedness through cultural dislocation. My point is that theology has the resources to redefine in postmodern culture the relationship between Christ and the ‘Foreigner’. The difference with the situation of the Pauline ecclesia is that today, after a long post-modernity, we are facing the situation of the ‘post-Christian past’ of Europe. This past, as the story of functioning or disfunctioning host-cultures, is about the presence of migrants from ‘other cultures’. The theology of the cross as ‘cultural mourning’ opens a window on our present as the situation for grieving with the foreigner. This co-mourning is the precondition of future rejoicing with the Foreigner; with whom we are turned together into inhabitants of the Kingdom of God. The witness of theology is that there is no unifying narrative outside the Kingdom-paradigm, which is grounded in Christ’s universal sacrifice. The full dynamic of this Passion has to be recovered in our ‘post-Christian’ culture.

We can fully understand the grief of the ‘migrant’ (for lost homeland, lost beloved ones, or killed as ‘soldiers of an oppressive/rival regime’), because we have seen the loss of the Father when his Son became a non-identity among us. A culture which is unable to mourn the losses of the ‘enemy’ is dead. It cannot call itself Christian or ‘humanist’, nor even ‘democratic’. This ability to mourn the ‘unburied dead’ is the only exit from the cycle of violence in which our civilisations have been trapped. The challenge of this task makes us realise our inner divisions as subject and culture. The Cross of Easter reveals what is beyond the self, what is beyond ‘our time’, what is beyond our contingent autonomy. A hiatus, a

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609 Ch 4, ‘Paul and Augustine: The Therapeutics of Exile and Pilgrimage’ (pp.77-93), in Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, pp.86-87
false autonomy is pointed out. We realise that the self is unable to achieve similarity to God, the ability to ‘reconcile’ with the Foreigner, from its own resources. This *metanoia*, the admittance of our limits, builds up the missing tolerance of the Stranger.

The Father’s love revealed on the Cross is the ultimate unmasking of our false autonomy. We can kill the Son, the Foreigner, but we cannot bring him back to life. The Resurrection, as pointing to the gap between us and the Stranger (whom we were not able to welcome in Christ) has a profound anthropological realism. This realistic view of the self is an important answer to Kristeva who, in *Hatred and Forgiveness*, states that ‘violence’ and ‘hatred’ cannot be eliminated from human nature. She is critical of the religious illusion which attempts to suppress ‘violence’ and ‘hatred’, which are permanent features of the psyche. Kristeva’s Freudianism does not believe in this reconciliation on the grounds that the permanent condition of psychic life is conflict, and only a certain element of conflict can be relieved, soothed, or pacified. The dynamic of ethical fellowship, even if it cannot undo the difference of opinion, however, can offer an approximation. Theology does not deny the conflict as a permanent feature of the psyche and ethical life (R. Williams). The theology of the cross, by virtue of its nature, is a confirmation of the conflict at the very being of the subject when it draws attention to the relationship between the self and ‘sin’. More importantly, it draws attention to the fact that trust in the Stranger requires a permanent investment. It is literally a self-sacrifice. The subject has to go against his instinctive mistrust of the other, *and* against Christ’s demands upon the self. Theology gives its own version of the permanent conflict when it elaborates the therapeutic dynamic of forgiveness. The imitation of the forgiving God can be a field where Kristeva’s above-mentioned objection can be creatively tackled. For is there greater ‘anthropological realism’ than realising that the self is literally grounded in conflict with divine *kenosis*? When the Cross lays claim upon the human self to mourn *all* the joys, pains and losses of the Foreigner?

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6.3. Evaluating the Theology of the Cross as a Resource

My chosen authorities contributed from different directions to a comprehensive theological engagement with Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’. They revealed the *theologia crucis* as an important form of ‘cultural mourning’. They responded with relevance to the ‘symbolic mourning’ which takes place in Kristeva’s project. My study has emphasised that the object of this ‘mourning’ is the ‘exhausted subject’. I highlighted the ‘religious dimension’ of the postmodern self and showed why its mourning can be called ‘ontological’. My governing thesis was that the problem of the crisis of love, the problem of the self’s relationship to its religious past and *history* have to be addressed together.

In theological modernity, we can rightly speak of an ‘anthropological shift’ which responds to Kristeva. Rahner, Moltmann, Metz, and Balthasar spelled out a genuine emergence of a ‘theological anthropology’, according to their specific interests. The first conclusion of my study is that they successfully confute the criticism that theology has an *absolute* ‘anthropological deficit’. This criticism is particularly implied by Kristeva’s early ‘atheistic subtexts’. Instead, theological modernity shows a genuine interest in history. It has sensitively responded to an *existing* anthropological hiatus in theological concepts, with significant results. The theology of the cross has sufficient resources for a genuine *analysis* of ‘secular culture’.

Theology fully agreed with Kristeva on a symbolic deficit in culture. We have lost those *universal* ‘symbols’ which make us genuinely human. This loss constitutes the present nihilist crisis. The good news is that there is no absolute break between theology which wants to counteract the nihilist crisis from the orthodoxy of faith, and Kristeva’s ‘post-structuralism’ which criticises this approach. The two strategies, recovering the image of the Father as a loving Father, and renewing the images of the subject, are not mutually exclusive, just the contrary. My study stated their approximation in terms of an intertwining ‘cultural mourning’ on both sides.

By presenting the *theologia crucis* as a resource, my study wished to demonstrate that the correction of the God-image proves to be a crucial bridge with the anthropological turn in culture. This is not inflating doctrine at all. While theology attempts an understanding of the *motives* of the anthropological shift in culture and its critique of religion, it also communicates doctrine to ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’.
My study outlined those fundamental strategies through which theology can respond to the points of conflict with Kristeva. My intention was also to put the problems into a context which can lead to a common reflection on the nihilist crisis. My chosen representatives demonstrated an anthropological reading of divine Love. Through the Son’s historical kenosis, the Father became an Emmanuel to us. We imitate this ‘God with us’ in Christ, who is indeed the ‘absolute subject’. The imitation of God’s ‘open friendship’ addressed all the major problems we raised in Part One, (1) the problem of the source of a communal ethics, (2) the problem of the foreigner/Stranger, (3) and the problem of the isolated self. Of course, these solutions were only seminal initiatives. But they confirmed that the theologia crucis is the best ‘mediator’ between Kristeva and systematic theology.

The anthropological developments of Rahner, Moltmann, Metz, and Balthasar together formed sufficient ground for the ‘ontological’ critique of Kristeva’s materialism. The general theological argument is that the materialistically conceived self needs to be opened up to ‘grace’, which was excluded from Freud’s project. These theological voices argued the reversal of the ‘retreat into the self’ in a non-polemic way. The theologia crucis argued that the postmodern person should be re-grounded in the Father’s love. To Freud’s criticism my critique responded by showing the relevance of the Father in history. Relating the self to God’s ‘eschaton’ and the dynamic of kenosis in a Trinitarian framework offered a real engagement with Kristeva’s ‘heterogeneous subject’.

A major conclusion of my work is that a shared symbolisation of the Father’s love is possible. It requires bringing the sensitivity of the postmodern subject into a dialogue with the Passion. It assigns the task of bringing the Cross close to the ‘psychic space’ itself, possibly representing its narrative within the psyche. This is what I suggest as re-opening of ‘ontological discourse’. Surprisingly, theology offers an in-depth engagement compared with the Habermasian rationalist position which forbids ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ to make ontological statements. Classic metaphysical discourse can be refashioned in terms of speaking on the crisis of Love – as the ontology of love.

Postmodern theologies like R. Williams and R. Kearney confirmed that the eschatological horizon is deeply responsive to the crisis of the postmodern self and to its quest for a ‘non-contingent Other.’ I especially highlight Kearney’s support which envisages Christ as the dialogue partner of the ‘exhausted self’. ‘It is in the carnal giving of his persona – the trans-substantiation of his persona into an embodied giver of nourishment – that the
transfigured-resurrected Christ reveals his identity.\textsuperscript{611} Our transfigured historical persona is Christ. Postmodern theological interest confirms that Christ is the unrecognised nourishment in our ‘exhaustion’ on the postmodern roads of Emmaus.\textsuperscript{612} Kearney also confirms the diagnosis of my chosen resources. Namely, that the need of the postmodern subject is primarily eschatological, not merely historical. Consequently, a new type of eschatological grounding of the self is needed.

My chosen resources indirectly raised the critique of an exclusive psychoanalytical resourcing of the self. Moltmann, Rahner, Metz, and Balthasar all confirmed that the subject needs a renewed historical (and theological) consciousness. They offered important historical paradigms. The concept of the ‘anonymous Christian’ (Rahner), past and present victims of history (Metz, Moltmann), God’s kenotic self offering (Balthasar) spelled out historical dimensions of the ‘Loving third party’. It responded as an ontological completion of, and correction to, Kristeva’s ‘loving and caring father’. The dynamic of the loving Third is the theoretical platform from which the traditional atonement imagery can be corrected.

The theologia crucis of theological modernity has already made important corrections to the ‘mechanistic’ images of God. It gave sufficient answers to the criticism that Kristeva’s original atheistic narratives posed (Marx-Feuerbach-Freud). However, in the context of the ‘exhausted subject’, these corrections are not sufficient. As a further step, the theologia crucis needs to speak directly to the identity quest of this subjectivity. Critically, it has to be seen that Kristeva’s ‘semiotic anthropology’ still remains unconvinced by the ‘anthropology’ of theological modernity. The ‘symbolic mourning’ of theological modernity has remained unfinished. On the one hand, doing theology in the ‘verticality of the cross’ has to be grounded on these theologies (Moltmann, Metz, Rahner, and Balthasar). They serve as ‘translators’ between orthodoxy, the subject of modernity, and the present postmodern sensitivities. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that the ‘personal dimension’ of their theological anthropology is not developed enough. Specifically, what is missing is a symbolic anthropological narrative, equivalent to the subtlety of Kristeva concept of ‘chorathetic’. If theology could address this ‘semiotic’ core of Kristeva’s project, then, our critique could speak of a genuine comprehensive response. With this challenge, my study has arrived at the Semiotic Passion. This theoretical proposal attempts to bring about a dialogue between the God-image and Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ narrative.

\textsuperscript{612} Ibid., p.386.
7 THE ‘SEMIOTIC PASSION’: THE LINGUISTIC IMAGERY OF THE FATHER

This closing chapter submits a theoretical proposal which brings into a synopsis all the focal points of my study in the form of the Semiotic Passion. It can draw attention only sketchily to those theological dynamics which make possible this synthesis. I emphasise the experimental nature of the ‘semiotic’ reading of the Passion.

7.1 The Semiotic Passion as a Comprehensive Response

The Semiotic Passion completes the argument of the previous chapter, namely, that Kristeva’s ‘speaking being’ can be best responded to from within the theology of the cross. In the first instance, it completes ‘what is missing’ from modernity’s theologia crucis: a psychologically sensitive, personal dimension. In this way, the Semiotic Passion integrates Kristeva’s critique of religion by running a counter-thesis against her early position which implied that theology is an ‘anthropologically mute’ discourse in a secular culture. The Semiotic Passion will also bring to realisation the ontological critique which Part One initiated in the form of re-opening ‘ontological statements’ on Love. This objective corresponds with Kristeva’s own objective to map out fully the crisis of the subject, going as deep as ‘sub-psychic origins’.

My working hypothesis is that an actual theological engagement with Kristeva has to take a different form from that to which systematic theology is accustomed. It cannot be a discourse on doctrine. Instead, it has to be a symbolic story-telling which speaks directly to the ‘exhausted subject’. It addresses the postmodern subject through his last possession, language. My proposal enters into dialogue with Kristeva’s model of language in the theological setting which my critique has worked out, the correction of atonement language. The central task of the Semiotic Passion emerges at this very point. It should present a narrative, which addresses from ‘within’ the religious mourning of the post-Christian subject. My working hypothesis is that, if this dimension of the postmodern identity crisis is revealed to ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’, it can start communicating with the ‘lost Father’ again. The Semiotic Passion will be a comprehensive response to the systemic overlapping of Kristeva’s historical materialist (‘Marxist’) and Freudian frameworks. It argues that in the situation of the ‘exhausted subject’ the God-image has to be recovered as the comprehensive ground of the self. The imagery that this reading of the Passion develops will also be an important answer to Freud’s judgement that the ‘Father’ is only an external authority. Presenting God as an internal authority to the postmodern self will offer a way out
from the impasse of the classic atheist – theist debate on the God-image. In the widest sense, the ‘semiotic’ reading of the Cross shows that it is possible to speak of the Passion with ‘ontological relevance’.

My theoretical proposal emphasises the continuity with the theologia crucis. Making the emphasis of my theological resources on the relationship between history and ‘grace’ a permanent reference will preserve the Semiotic Passion as a genuine alternative to Kristeva’s ‘semiotic retreat’ into the body (Oliver). The incorporation of the ‘maternal metaphor’ into God, which is at the heart of my proposal, will show the Semiotic Passion in a structural dialogue with Kristeva’s particular ‘feminist’ position. Responding to the areas mentioned above, the Semiotic Passion brings to realisation a shared symbol building with Kristeva.

The Semiotic Passion becomes a truly comprehensive response if it speaks with an awareness of theology’s linguistic (symbolic) crisis. The exegete José A. Pagola’s critical reconstruction of the radical otherness of Jesus’ message confirms the underlying conviction of my study that there is an unfinished cultural mourning of the God-image within Church-culture. The Semiotic Passion recognises that a contemporary image of God, in the time of cultural transition, must be an ‘open mourning’ and an inclusive discourse (see Rahner’s intention). What is at stake in taking further the symbolic renewal of theological modernity is the flexibility of theological language. That is, when the language of the Church is experienced as a genuine struggle for attaining a new ‘universality in culture’, and when it is also a genuine dialogue about our universal inability to speak of Love in culture. When the Church exhibits its own linguistic passion, then, it again becomes credible and attractive. A mutual dialogue with Kristeva’s dialogical turn is possible only in this linguistic medium. My point is that this ‘linguistic passion’ provides the Church with a new visibility. This new visibility in culture necessarily manifests itself in risk-taking, theological innovation, and in revisiting the most problematic areas with ‘secular culture’. When the ‘Passion of orthodoxy’ is shown, it will generate cultural interest. Pagola’s parable points to these birth-pangs of Tradition:

‘Everything happens in the synagogue [‘everything happens within the old imagery’], the place where the Law is taught officially as interpreted by authorized teachers. It is Sabbath day, the day on which practicing Jews come together to listen to the explanations of their leaders. It is in this context that Jesus begins to teach for the first time…. All of a sudden a man possessed by an evil spirit cries out interrupting his

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teaching. He cannot bear to hear what Jesus is saying. He is terrified. "Have you come to
destroy us?" That man felt quite well when listening to the teaching of the scribes. Why
does he feel threatened now? 614

My study identifies the structural cause of both theology’s melancholy (frustration) in
culture and culture’s own melancholy in the unopened discourse about the Cross. It is more
than un-mourned atonement imagery (the chief theological direction of my study), though it
should start with it. The final challenge is to make the discourse on the Cross a public
discourse again and internal to culture. In this writer’s view, today it is the mourning for the
‘lost religion’, the second major hermeneutical thrust of my work, which would create a new
‘symbolic space’ for critical reflexion.

7.2 The Need to Complement the ‘Bloody Imagery’ of the Cross

The general objection that we can raise against the ‘bloody imagery’ of atonement
language is that it can re-emerge as a counterproductive meta-narrative, and not only in the
theological field. That this type of hermeneutical presence is real is well argued in the essays
of Consuming Passion, Why the Killing of Jesus Really Matters. 615 These criticisms highlight
that atonement language permanently generates banal and oversimplified images of God, not
only in Christian spirituality, but also in culture. As a distorting ‘cultural subtext’, the
‘atonement program’ reduces the richness of God’s love and the richness of God’s sacrifice.
As Chalke points out, this ‘banalisation’ leads to the reduction of ethics. It insinuates instant
forgiveness without challenging basic day-to-day moral behaviour; also, it separates
salvation from discipleship. The reductive reading of the Cross downgrades the Gospel to a
single sentence: ‘God is no longer angry with us because Jesus died in our place.’ Penal
substitution also tends to nurture a simplistic understanding of sin. Most importantly, the
atonement scheme does not resolve the conflict between God’s great love which motivates
him to send his Son and his ‘wrath’ and need to be placated, which remains the driving force
behind the need for the cross. 616

614 Pagola, Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, pp.82-83.
615 For the Semiotic Passion I highlight the essays, Steve Chalke, ‘Redeeming the Cross From Death
to Life’ (pp.19-26), Stuart Murray, ‘Rethinking Atonement After Christendom’ (pp.27-35) in
Consuming Passion, Why the Killing of Jesus Really Matters, edited by Simon Barrow and Jonathan
Bartley, Darton & Todd, London 2005. See also Cavanagh, Making Sense of God’s Love. Cavanagh
argues from within spirituality. She examines the problem why many people are put off Christianity
by the idea of God’s punishing his Son for our sin. Writing in an Anglican context shows that it is a
problem for contemporary consciousness independently of Christian denomination.
616 The above is a summary of Chalke’s position. In Chalke, ‘Redeeming the Cross From Death to
The banalisation of divine love, however, is not only an internal affair of theology. The secular banalisation of God is not unrelated to the above ‘Christian reduction’. Unrevised ‘atonement language’ in its ‘secular’ derivative emerges as the myth of redemptive violence. Walter Wink confirms my point that the ‘old’ vision of the Cross is the meta-narrative of the postmodern subject. ‘Atonement language’, because of its re-emergence in the images of popular culture, can be regarded as a cultural metaphor.  

The correction that the *Semiotic Passion* offers makes it a priority to deconstruct the ‘banality’ of the God-image. René Girard confirms that a ‘theological resourcing’ of a critique of nihilism is a genuine contribution. His central thesis is that the death of Christ surpasses all other ‘sacrificial religions’. The sacrifice of Jesus is a radical break from making the sacrifice of a scapegoat, the sacrifice of which would temporarily channel accumulated aggression in culture. According to Girard, ‘sacrificial religions’, as also our culture, do not sufficiently unmask violence. He also highlights the fact that modern agnosticism and atheism also contribute to perpetuating ‘scapegoat mechanisms’ by keeping them invisible. The nihilist narratives of consumerism, we can add, openly build on this strategy. My point is that a culture which is based on artificially generated desires, in order to maintain consumption and economic growth, necessarily has to rely on ‘scape-goating’. ‘Instrumental democracies’, which are hijacked by the compulsory need to maintain the growth of the market, have to channel the accumulated tension, which the exploitation of the human interior (‘community’) generates. Girard convincingly argues, for our context, that it is only the imitation of Christ, as an example of self-giving love for the other, which has the capacity to deconstruct ‘the imitation of violence’. As we saw, Kristeva also confirmed Jesus’ sacrifice as a cultural resource. The new symbolic space of the Eucharist, which the Son created, the ‘bloodless’ and predominantly verbal re-enactment of the Passion, ‘counterbalances murder’. As Kristeva highlights the Cross is a cultural narrative in which, through personal ‘suffering’, the nihilism of culture can be named.

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618 Though he never refers to Kristeva’s work, however, the post-structuralist criticism of Kristeva’s formative masters, Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes, had an important impact upon Girard. In 1966, in John Hopkins University, Girard was one of the organisers of the conference *Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, which was to have a significant impact on the emergence of critical theory in the United States. In Andrew O’Shea, *Selfhood and Sacrifice, René Girard and Charles Taylor on the Crisis of Modernity*, Continuum, New York, London 2010., p.3.

619 The above summary of Girard’s program is from the chapter ‘A NonSacrificial Reading of the Gospel Text’, from *Things Hidden*, In *The Girard Reader*, p.177.

620 Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, p. 120.
7.3 Three Options for Correcting ‘Atonement Language’

There are two main ‘established’ directions for correcting the old ‘atonement language’. The first is to expound the Trinitarian relationship in God. This offers a much more nuanced exposition of God’s act in the sacrifice than the ‘juridical’ approach of Anselm.621 This approach introduces the theme of love. Presenting love as a fellowship shows how self-giving love, as the kenosis of the divine persons, is organising the drama of Redemption. The theme of love indeed offers a healthier equilibrium to legalistically conceived ‘subjugation’ and ‘obedience’ to divine will. Our representatives of the theologia crucis showed how history is taken seriously on this Trinitarian horizon. Deconstructing the ‘banal’ clichés of God, which culture uses, requires their ‘symbolic mourning’ to be taken further. Mainstream theologies still show a linguistic and iconographical dependence on atonement theology. This criticism also applies to classic Trinitarian solutions. Moltmann himself detected a subordinating ethos that underlies classic Western Trinitarian doctrine. Pitstick warned of the ‘weak anthropology’ of Balthasar’s ‘descent theology’, which resulted in a sort of monophysitism, the devaluation of human nature in both objective and subjective redemption.622 It can be seen as a general criticism of the ‘Platonising’ nature of classic theological concepts and language.

The second characteristic way to correct the ‘bloody imagery’ emerged from feminist theology. It is worth re-reading the pioneering essays of the Concilium 206, Special Column, dedicated to the theme of ‘motherhood’, ‘Motherhood: Experience, Institution, Theology’ (1989). The early boom of feminist theology launched a radical correction of the ‘patriarchal image of God’. The essays of the cited volume show a strong dualism in the correction of the God image. This polarisation appears between the ‘maternal metaphor’ they developed and the contested ‘patriarchal representation’ of God. The maternal metaphor convincingly points to the violence residing in ‘atonement language’, yet it does not offer a sufficient theological, anthropological, and epistemological alternative. In these interpretations the gender conflict remains. The lack of a sufficient anthropology led to a sentimentalised maternal representation of God. The images of mainstream feminist theology, because of the unsolved dichotomy between the ‘maternal’ and the ‘paternal’, remain external images of God. The previously masculine God now became a ‘Mother’. Even recent works, such as Beattie’s, repeat a gender-biased feminism.623 The question is how can the non-violent

621 See Appendix III. ‘Anselm’.
622 Pitstick, Light in Darkness, p.343.
623 Her metaphoric excesses betray this bias, e.g., when comparing the stongly ‘masculine’ imagery and dynamic of God’s creative activity, God’s kenosis in Creation, to ‘male ejaculation’. She
qualities which feminist theology has elaborated through the ‘maternal metaphor’ be truly internalised in the image of God.

As a third way, I propose to introduce the ‘linguistic metaphor’ in representing God’s love. It aims at an integration of the above two strategies, and it draws on Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ model of language and also on her notion of the ‘feminine sacred’. Her concept of the ‘loving Third party’ offers a breakthrough to resolve the above deadlock in feminist theology. The Semiotic Passion argues that introducing the ‘loving Third party’ as a theoretical concept for reading the Passion is a genuine paradigm shift in important fields. It successfully undoes the dichotomies between the ‘maternal’/’paternal’ and the ‘feminine’/’masculine’. Most of all, by introducing the ‘maternal metaphor’ into God in a fresh way it brings to realisation a co-operation with Kristeva in representing the ‘Father’. Representing God as a ‘Loving Third’ within the self not only updates the classic theological images of the Father, but, retroactively, spells out a constructive critique of Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’. Positively, to refer back to the agenda of Part One, it integrates the epistemological and hermeneutical dynamic of Revolution in Poetic Language. By this integration, the Semiotic Passion presents a symbolic narrative which is indeed a comprehensive response to the oeuvre, ‘synchronously’ (responding to her themes) and ‘diachronically’ (responding to the ideological and intellectual development of her humanism).

7.4 Introducing the ‘Semiotic’ Economy of love

The purpose of the ‘linguistic imagery’ of the Father is to counteract the rightly raised objections to the implications of a God who needed satisfaction, who needs to punish, or would send his Son to suffer. As Haight points out, self-sacrifice and submission to an authoritative Father distorts the ethos of the Gospels. My proposition is given support by Cardinal Schönborn who suggests correcting ‘atonement violence’ by re-emphasising the

counteracts this image of kenosis with the image of ‘child birth’, which would balance Balthasar’s ‘masculine imagery’. In Beattie, New Catholic Feminism, p.221.

624 the integration of pre-oedipal paternal and maternal love, or ‘parental’ love
625 This solution is fresh also in the sense that it chooses a different strategy from Witt’s in Engaging Powers, who restores the non-violent character of Jesus’ sacrifice from the Bible. However much the image he recovers is an authentic and positive representation of God, in this type of approach a ‘contemporary ontology’, a genuine interest in the subject’s cultural conditions, is missing. The latter is a precondition for translating the restored image for the secular public.
626 Haight, Jesus: Symbol of God, p.241.
presence of love in the Passion. ‘The blood poured out on the Cross is not the only cause of our salvation.’ Christ’s sacrifice ‘is not conceivable apart from his infinite love for us.’

Presenting the theological image of the Father of the *Semiotic Passion* takes place against the background of Haight’s important critical remarks on the present language of theology on God. This intra-theological criticism has to be answered in a constructive way. The link with the changed ‘linguistic’ horizon of the subject is obvious. Haight comes out with a very harsh judgement about the old sacrificial language:

‘The language of Jesus suffering for us, of being a sacrifice to God, of absorbing punishment for sin in our place, of being required to die to render satisfaction to God, hardly communicates meaningfully to our age. These concepts do not intersect at all with present consciousness... More seriously, the images associated with this talk offend and even repulse postmodern sensitivity and thereby form a barrier to a salutary appreciation of Jesus Christ.’

(Italics mine)

The *Semiotic Passion* is very cautious with Haight’s total refusal of the ‘old imagery’, for several reasons. It would be a hermeneutical illusion to remove such an archaic layer of our cultural memory; even if it indeed contains erroneous elements. This violent sacrificial language seems to be a lasting part of us. It is a constant reminder of who we are; that we are ‘born of violence’. If there is a timely meaning of what we call original sin, it is such a one. My position, contrary to the linguistic ‘iconoclasm’ of Haight’s *Symbol of God*, is realistic. Making the old imagery *a permanent reference*, without demonising it, is an important element of the dialogue with ‘present consciousness’. That is why the ‘semiotic’ understanding of sacrifice is proposed as a *correction* of the old imagery. A mechanistic castration of its ‘oedipal tone’ would make that part of the Christian and postmodern self that should be healed invisible.

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629 I highlight the potential of the *Semiotic Passion* (that of its theological direction) to mediate between intra-theological debates on the language of the kerygma. In his later reflections on the official objections against *Jesus: Symbol of God*, Haight retains his point on the inadequacy of inherited christological language. In order to settle the debate, the church needs hybrid-narratives like the *Semiotic Passion*. This and similar constructs offer a ‘shared symbolic mourning’ which opens up a new direction instead of purely dogmatic answers or their Haightian rejection. Haight clearly retains his position that mainstream (Magisterial) theology is in a linguistic crisis. Haight’s recent work, *The Future of Christology* confirms the direction that my study develops: there is a genuine need for linguistic innovation and a non-apologetic, *dialogical* model of the ‘secular’. ‘Christian theologians are more and more called upon to address the world beyond Christianity’ on the premise that they will address the thinking members of their own church only in the measure in which they succeed in addressing those outside it.’ (Italics mine.) From ‘Jesus: Symbol of God: Criticism and Response’, in Roger Haight S.J, *The Future of Christology*, Continuum, New York, London 2005, pp.213-214. The linguistic impasse is also confirmed in the essay in the same volume, ‘Notes for a Constructive Theology of the Cross’ (pp.75-102)
Unlike Haight, the *Semiotic Passion* wishes to preserve the Cross as a central reference. For the *theologia crucis*, through the engagement with Kristeva’s project, it is possible to spell out ‘sacrifice’ within a different, more positive, and non-oedipal economy. In order to achieve this, my solution incorporates observations from postmodern experience, and takes over the ‘feminine’ correction of sacrificial language. The strategy is not replacing one iconography with another, but a widening of the iconographical canon. I build on the recognition that mothers’ and women’s experience can be made a source for dealing with violence in society and culture (Beattie).\(^{630}\) More closely, I especially draw on Kristeva’s model of language from the perspective of *lived maternal experience*.

The three ‘narratives’ which the *Semiotic Passion* integrates are as follows. In points (a)-(b) I recapitulate these themes which Part One already touched upon in detail.

(a) **Kristeva’s semiotic model of language and ethics.** Kristeva’s theory gives an account of how we arrive into language from the original unity with the mother. She maps out the pre-oedipal phase of individual pre-history. In it, the mother-child dyad, through what she calls the ‘alchemy of love’, is opened up by a loving ‘Third Party’. The loving and caring Father draws the child into language. In the process, the child is *severed* from the mother *in love*. Yet, on the part of the mother, this detachment, when she is ‘letting the child go’ and become an autonomous being, is a sacrifice. Kristeva calls it the ‘maternal Passion.’ It covers a very intimate relationship between the mother and the child, for it is a mother’s most intimate memory: how, literally word by word, the child was introduced into language. This memory stays for ever. It is also a deep transformation in the mother. Mothers *learn* through their sacrifice to become ‘a subject of sharing and reflexivity’. They attain an unprecedented capacity of opening up to tolerate otherness, and to tolerate plurality.\(^{631}\)

(b) **Kristeva’s indirect, semiotic critique of the masculine theological imagination.** Kristeva outlined an autonomous ‘maternal metaphor’ based on the experience of motherhood, which stands in its own right.\(^{632}\) In the essay ‘Stabat Mater’ (*Tales of Love*), she showed how this maternal suffering remains ignored, inaccessible, and ‘feared’ by the ‘male’ Symbolic order. She calls this complex experience the ‘feminine Sacred’, or lived feminine knowledge of *meaning*. In ‘Stabat Mater’, Kristeva set up an important ‘missing’

\(^{630}\) Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism*, p.256.
\(^{632}\) See, ‘Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini’ in *Desire in Language*, the image of the holy Virgin in ‘Stabat Mater’ in *Tales of Love*, and ‘From Madonnas to nudes, A Representation of Female Beauty’ in *Hatred and Forgiveness*. 

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anthropological dimension for theology. She argues that the image of the ‘Virgin Mother’ is a male construct, which attempts to ‘control’ the bodily and psychological reality of motherhood. She emphasises that the theological images of motherhood, ‘Mother and Virgin’, to a great extent, accommodate ‘male’ religious projections. The ‘Passion according to motherhood’, that is, having a child within and that in the most intimate closeness, remains a formless ‘semiotic’ story for male consciousness, and consequently, inaccessible to the Symbolic regime of theology. I suggest identifying this ‘masculine imagination’ at work in the ‘Father’ of atonement language. The story of the linguistic journey with the child that mothers can tell will help to articulate the ‘sacrifice’ in a different logic from the theory of satisfaction (atonement).

Kristeva’s criticism can also indirectly point to an underlying cause of the ‘weak’ anthropology of theological concepts. The Church is still afraid of listening to the ‘desires’ of the female body on its own account. My point is that this can be an important source of the linguistic gap (linguistic isolation) between church and culture. One should not forget that our ‘father-less’ culture has also lost the ability to name genuine ‘maternal’ qualities. The way back to the Father is through rediscovering ‘maternal compassion’, that is why it would be important to re-tell the Passion through the sensitivity of the ‘missing mother’. The Semiotic Passion indirectly points to this problem. Incorporating the ‘maternal metaphor’ into God may lead to a liberation of theological language in terms of enunciating the missing anthropological images. Articulating the Church’s ‘suppressed’ or unlistened to feminine side, which is not controlled/constructed by the ‘Roman celibate’ imagination, we can presume can lead to a paradigm shift in the way Catholics talk about the ‘body’ of the Church, including the institutional-organisational-doctrinal directions which this Body should take. Introducing the maternal metaphor into God is a dangerous affair as it can give voice to agendas which are indeed suppressed, and can bring about a paradigm shift within Church politics.

(c) Balthasar’s ‘maternal metaphor’ of God. Balthasar prepares this line of correction when he recognises that the ‘paternal’ is not the only dimension of divine love. Though his elaboration of ‘femininity’ in God is far from being satisfactory, his confirmation of

633 John Paul II’s pioneering interest in the theology of the body still represents a masculine perspective, predominantly from celibate experience. The problematic element of this magisterial approach is the ‘a-priori’ doctrinal suppositions from a male-priestly horizon. From ‘the revelation of the theological dimensions of the body’ the experiences of the female identity, on its own account, is missing. See, John Paul II, Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body, Pauline Books Media, Boston 2006. (Originally published in 1986)

634 See the highly critical chapter ‘Redeeming Fatherhood’ (pp.200-217) in Beattie. She evaluates Balthasar’s image of God, his role in the sacrifice of Jesus as a classic patriarchal model of divine
‘motherhood in God’ gives support to a ‘theological-semiotic’ reading of the Passion. Beattie, who is almost excessively critical of the presence of violence in Balthasar’s language, draws attention to the positive contrast which his theology of motherhood offers. ‘His theology of the motherhood of God is remarkable for its lack of violence and its implicit openness to a new understanding of the significance of maternal symbols and relationships for theology.’635 My study reads this linguistic shift in Balthasar as realising, from within ‘classic’ systematic theology, the need to correct the masculine ‘bloody imagery’.

Balthasar’s seminal insight is that feminine responsiveness to the world is inherent in God as Trinity. Balthasar repeatedly refers to God’s activity in creating and sustaining life in maternal terms.636 ‘God’s relation to the world is not only masculine, as Deus Faber, but womb-like and feminine, achieving the redemption of the entire universe through pain.’637 The re-reading of the Passion through the ‘maternal metaphor’ is given further support by the radically courageous image from Theo-Drama II. The human person is ‘being born, together with the Son, from the generative primal womb of the Father.’638 Balthasar also suggests in Theo-Drama III that this ‘fatherhood’, like ‘motherhood’, is giving away everything that the Father is.

‘We begin to discern the meaning of “fatherhood” in the eternal realm when we consider the Son’s task, which is to reveal this Father’s love (a love that goes to ultimate lengths, for example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son or of the Vineyard): such “fatherhood” can only mean the giving away of everything the Father is, including his entire Godhead (for God, as God, “has” nothing apart from what he “is”); it is a giving away that, in the Father’s act of generation – which lasts for all eternity – leaves the latter’s womb “empty”: in God, poverty and wealth (that is, the wealth of giving) are one and the same.”639 (Emphasis added.)

Balthasar’s emphasis on ‘hearing’ offers an analogy with Kristeva’s ‘maternal passion’. A mother’s intimate listening, obedient receptiveness to her Other (the child), contrasts with the self-sufficient potency of the ‘male’ ‘Symbolic Order’. In the metaphors of ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’, a mother’s self-giving is opposed to an ‘oedipal’ possessive attitude.

footnotes:

635 Beattie, New Catholic Feminism, p.216.
636 Ibid., p.220.
637 Ibid., p.221.
‘Through the [masculine] eye, the world is our world, in which we are lost; it is subordinate to us as an immeasurable dwelling space with which we are familiar.’\(^{640}\)

‘Only [the] voice [of maternal compassion] discloses the inner mystery of that which lives… it is not we ourselves who determine on our part what is heard, which is heard comes upon us [a child’s voice as an unconditional demand/ or that of God], without our being informed in advance.’\(^{641}\) (Emphasis added.)

This dynamic of the ‘pre-lingual’ illustrates that in classic theology there is a deep thrust towards intrinsic images of God. My analysis focuses on the above insightful program: Christ as ‘speaking being’ is coming from the womb of God. This ‘surprising’ theological dynamic in Balthasar gives space for elaborating qualities in the Father which the atonement imagery (‘redemptive violence’) and the mechanistic critiques of religion vastly overlook.

7.5 *Stabat Pater?* \(^{642}\) The Linguistic Imagery of the Father as Response to the ‘Ontological Yearning’ of the ‘Exhausted Subject’

The *Semiotic Passion* outlines a theological alternative to both the traditional attempt to correct atonement language, by emphasising love in the sacrifice (Schönbörn, Balthasar), and Kristeva’s reading of the Cross as an archetypal image of the ‘speaking being’. Thus, it demonstrates that the desirable anthropological shift is possible in the *theologia crucis*. The two theoretical proposals of the *Semiotic Passion* are as follows. First, the ‘linguistic representation’ of the Passion spells out a ‘non-bloody’ imagery of the Cross. What it highlights is the dynamism for a new humanist turn in the critique of culture. The second theoretical proposal is the new analogy of ‘suffering’ which, as a *theological metaphor*, offers a new access to ‘God’ for the postmodern subject. The image of the ‘mourning Father’ is my alternative to the ‘maternal metaphor’. The renewed imagery of the Christian Father takes place against the background of our opening problem, the ‘exhausted subject’, and Kristeva’s cultural critique. Its underlying questions are the following. In a cultural climate where the ‘autonomous subject’ is replaced by the world of the autonomous image,\(^{643}\) what ‘image of love’ can offer a genuine interruption? What synopsis of human and divine love prevents the self from becoming dangerously ‘external’ to itself and uprooted from compassionate love?

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\(^{641}\) Ibid., p.475

\(^{642}\) A paraphrase of the title of the Latin thirteenth century hymn ‘Stabat Mater’, it means ‘the Mother was standing’. See in *Appendix VII*.

\(^{643}\) Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, entry 1, p.8.
7.5.1 The ‘Loving Third party’ as a Theological Hermeneutics: A ‘Linguistic Representation’ of Christ’s Suffering

This model focuses on the suffering Christ, but in a very different way from the ‘bloody imagery’. Deploying Kristeva’s theory of language, the focus is shifted onto Jesus, the absolute speaking being. I am responding to Kristeva’s anthropological subtlety from within traditional doctrine. However, my interest is in how the ‘anonymous Christian/sufferer’ can relate himself to Jesus’ Passion as his deepest existential narrative. That is, from what ‘ground’ can the postmodern self build up the lost relationship with the ‘Father’ of religion, to whom the moving ‘bloody’ images of the suffering Son point, in the ancient Latin hymns of Passiontide? Is there a form of the Passion which answers the postmodern ‘ontological’ yearning for the lost Transcendent Other?

For a better visualisation of the scene to be refashioned, the setting of the Crucifixion from Western and Eastern art can be recalled, especially from the Latin Pietà type. This ‘virtual’ illustration responds to both the postmodern sensitivity to images and to an important element of Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’. Byzantine iconography, with the images of the Virgin Mother and Christ, is a dominant cultural and personal ‘memory’ in her novels.

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644 I am paraphrasing Kristeva’s metaphor, ‘Christ, the absolute subject’. The pre-existent Son, who is the image of Creation and man itself, is the ‘archetype’ of the ‘speaking being’.

645 See the hymns, Stabat Mater, Vexilla Regis Prodeunt (Royal Banners Forward Go), Lutris sex qui iam peractis (Thirdy Years Among Dwelling) in Appendix VI.

646 The Pietà presents Mary as a model for compassion for Christ, and also as an object of compassion herself. The Pietà as a form of devotion develops further the Passion in the sense of the continuation of Mary’s “passion” after the crucifixion. Christ’s suffering ended by his death. Theologically, he is already the triumphant victor. But Mary continues to be the sorrowing mother, lamenting over the dead body of her son. ‘With the Gothic period, the emphasis was increasingly placed…on Mary’s uncontrollable sorrow…’ As examples of the Pietà-type which we can associate with the Semiotic Passion, I suggest the following representations. Matthias Grünewald’s Crucifixion from the Isenheim Altarpiece (Musée d’Unterlinden, Colmar, France). On this piece the sufferings that Christ has undergone are not merely emphasized, but intensified. Rogier Van der Weyden’s Descent from the Cross, 1436, (St. Pierre, Louvain-Leuven, Belgium). On this piece the figures of Jesus and Mary are portrayed in the same focus and light. The body of the fainting Mary is visually parallel to her son’s body being lowered from the cross. Their co-suffering and a mother’s mourning are given a particular emphasis. The above description of the Pietà type is extracted from Richard Viladesau, The Triumph of the Cross, The Passion of Christ in Theology and The Arts From The Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008. pp.85-86, and p.74, p.87. The third type of illustration could be the Eastern icons of the Crucifixion scene. For the iconographical description of the type, see Lossky and Ouspensky. (Leonid Ouspensky, Vladimir Lossky, The Meaning of Icons, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 1982, pp.180-184.) Because of the limited space, I can only refer to the icons. This is an important symbolic connection, which Kristeva’s autobiographical references confirm.
In a personal meeting in 2010, I outlined to Professor Kristeva my plan to apply her model of the development of human language to Christ’s ‘dying language’ on the Cross. She was interested in the theological application of her ‘semiotic’ model of language, and found the idea interesting. Now I present the outcome of that initiative, also as an illustration that my work is not a mere hypothetical dialogue. My model interprets the scenes of the Crucifixion and the Pietà as follows.

The divine Word, God’s eternal Logos, the Father’s wisdom became manifest through ‘human lips’. Self-expression through language is the dominant activity in the teaching ministry of Jesus. The doctrine of Chalcedon, according to which Jesus Christ is ‘true God and true man’, also means that he truly acquired human language. It is a real language acquisition in the sense of Kristeva’s model. The point the Semiotic Passion emphasises is that in the dying Christ we see our human language in a reversed journey. The centre of my hermeneutics is this event. The fully functioning beautiful language of the Logos, who speaks as Emmanuel among us, is silenced prematurely, and violently. Jesus’ language and his human psyche undergo a full physical destruction. The classic atonement narrative records the cruelty of this historical drama. Its violence conveys a historical truth. It tells of the shock of the scandal that this beautiful ‘Language was killed.’ Jesus’ language, which was fully expressive of the Father, deteriorates before our eyes.

Kristeva gives an account of how the person arrives from the ‘zero point’ of language, from the child’s unity with the maternal container or ‘loving embrace’ (Winnicott), to the symbolic language of the ‘loving Third party’. The Cross forces us to face the reversal of the story. Reading the Passion in this way establishes a very personal hermeneutics. A further element of the new hermeneutics is that we can approach the Son’s suffering by recalling our own arrival into language. The concept of the ‘Loving third party’ emerges as the unifying framework for this linguistic approach.

In this symbolism, all protagonists of our linguistic birth are represented in the Passion. (1) The love of a mother who, with the father as ‘loving Third’, helped us into language

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647 An informal meeting at the Oriental Mandarin Hotel at Knightsbridge (London, 24 May 2010), before her lectures at the British Academy, ‘Is there such a thing as European culture? In conversation with Julia Kristeva’ (24 May 2010), and at Queen Mary College, ‘The forces of monotheism confronting the need to believe’ (25 May 2010).

648 ‘Dear Sir, Thank you for your letter and and for your faithful reading of my work and for the "translation" of my texts into your theological meditation. I would indeed be delighted to discuss all these subjects with you when we both have more time and could continue a correspondence. I would also like to respond to your letter about my upcoming trip to England. I’m invited to London by the British Academy on May 24 and 25, 2010 in conjunction with my friend Marian Hobson's project. Best wishes, JK’ (e-mail correspondence, 16.10. 2009)
(‘Mary’). (2) The ‘Son-child’ who acquired Symbolic language is also present. He is the protagonist of the drama; not a secondary figure, he is also our ‘alter ego’ as a ‘speaking being’ (‘Christ’). (3) The love of the father (the ‘Father’), who severed us from the mother, is also an active protagonist in this drama.

The Semiotic Passion suggests a creative engagement with Kristeva’s concept of the ‘loving Third’. When the stages of nascent language are seen in a reversed order, the function of the ‘loving Third party’ to initiate into language appears in the negative. Seeing the process of initiation backwards, an important counter-point to this introductory role emerges. This is the act of ‘mourning’. Kristeva’s model does not investigate this function of the ‘loving Third party’ when parental love, as the ‘mourning Loving Third’, is in the state of losing its ‘Other’, the ‘child’. However, she comes strikingly close to it in her own readings of the Passion:

‘The suffering and the death of the Man of God are charged with a complexity that the history of Christianity has not ceased to ponder, and at the same time refine, and that does not fail to amaze the modern human being that I am.’ (Italics mine.)

Kristeva herself makes a connection between Christ, the ‘speaking being’ with the Father as his ‘Loving Third’.

‘For the interruption, even momentary, of the bond that links Christ to his Father and to life, this caesura, this “hiatus” offers not merely an image but also a story for certain psychic cataclysms that lie in wait for the presumed balance of each individual and, because of this, make a dressing for them [les pansent]. Each and every one of us is the result of a long “work of the negative”: birth, weaning, separation, frustration. For having staged this rupture as the very heart of the absolute subject, Christ, for having presented it in the figure of a Passion, as the other, supportive side of the resurrection. (Emphasis mine.)

Kristeva elsewhere proposes that the relationship to the ‘Loving Third’ party is not restricted to individual pre-history. The dynamic of identification with the Other is a permanent constituent of identity:

‘Intrinsic to Christianity is an unshakable faith in the existence of an Ideal Father and an absolute love for this loving Father, who would be, simply put, the foundation of the speaking subject.’

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649 As a reminder, see p.243.
650 ‘Suffering’, in Kristeva This Incredible Need to Believe, p.89.
651 ‘Suffering’, in Julia Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, pp.94-95.
The *Semiotic Passion* brings into focus the Father’s involvement in Christ’s drama in terms of representing him as a *mourning* ‘Loving Third’ party. My point is that the ‘Loving Third’, when witnessing the death of the ‘Son’, reveals an important existential narrative. This ‘mourning’ can be posited as a genuine theological dynamic. The semiotic analysis of the Passion makes divine Love, seen ‘in the negative’, central. We can call the Father’s ‘mourning’ the re-intensification of the ‘Loving Third’ in his relationship to Jesus’ humanity. Perhaps we should speak not only of Triune life as ‘immanent Trinity’ (internal divine life) and ‘economical Trinity’ (Triune life interacting with history), but we should also introduce Triune life as ‘psychological’ or ‘anthropological Trinity’, as a specific relationship of the Father to the very history of the ‘speaking being’.

The Father’s ‘mourning’ reveals what happens when ‘language’ is lost, when his Son, as an incarnate ‘speaking being’, is lost. Christ, as ‘thirty years among us dwelling’, undergoes the drama of losing the Symbolic Order of human language. Following the reversed Kristevan pattern, Jesus experiences a falling back into the ‘semiotic’ formlessness of language. Christ is gradually engulfed by pre-lingual, unarticulated rhythms to the point of losing consciousness, and death. I emphasise, that the formless language to which Jesus arrives is not ‘childhood elements of language’. Yet, it is not unrelated to it as we see it in Kristeva’s model. It is

‘a different language, the unconscious “language” found in children’s echolalia before the appearance of signs and syntax, and especially in the discourse we receive as aesthetic (poetry, literature, painting, music)... The semiotic is not independent of language, but underpins language and, under the control of language, it articulates other aspects of “meaning” which are more than mere “significations”, such as rhythmical and melodic inflections....This “semiotic” trans-verbal aspect...is connected to the archaic relation between mother and child and allows [us] to investigate certain aspects of the feminine and maternal in language, what Freud used to call “the black continent”’.

The *Semiotic Passion* makes a parallel between a child’s language under formation and Jesus’ deteriorating language that is gradually is reduced to the ‘basics’. This is a state when the ‘Loving Third’ is withdrawn from language and is out of reach. Symbolically, it is the shared vulnerability of the ‘speaking being’ in the crib (in the Incarnation) and of Christ on the Cross. It is the wounded Son-child who is now unable to form words, or even gestures, or the simplest rhythms. ‘Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.’ (Mt 27:50) In the Gospel account both the ‘loud voice’ and the ‘yielded up the ghost’

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653 His involvement in this loss.
654 Latin hymn from Passiontide, *Thirty Years Among Us Dwelling* (Lustris sex qui iam peractis), in *The Monastic Diurnal or the Day Hours of the Monastic Breviary in Latin and in English*, Saint Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2004, pp.236-237
are significant. The latter can also be seen as an audible, ‘formless’ sigh, moan, or groan. It is the absolute ‘beginning’/’ending’ of human language, hardly audible, suspended between breathing and the first/last ‘vocalised’ expression. The apex of Jesus’ negative journey, I suggest, can be seen indeed as His being engulfed by ‘pre-lingual silence’. Symbolically, this is the sum total of unrepresented drives, of an unrepresentable ‘semiotic drive eruption’ of human history. Killing the Innocent, depriving God, the ‘Metzian victim’, of all dignity, name and truth is indeed the full eclipse of the Symbolic Order. (‘...To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world’. Pilate saith unto him, ‘What is truth?’ John 18:37-38)

Religious imagination, based on the program of a victorious redemption, here usually ends up in a ‘baroque’ triumphalism. The ‘bloody cross’ becomes an expression of a theologia gloriae. In contrast to the ‘semiotic’ Passion, the baroque scenario likes to show the last sentences, even words, of Jesus as masterpieces of oratory. Contrary to the realism of ‘suffering language’ which the Semiotic Passion presents, the words of the suffering Christ are touched up to be the high points of a glorious scenario. The Logos remains an unshaken, confident Logos. On the classic theological tapestry, everyone, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, play their roles according to a premeditated divine plan (‘the Father’s will’). If unrevised, this is a dangerous scheme of ‘redemptive violence’, where all is subjugated to the ‘oedipal’ authority of the Father. To recall Freud’s criticism, in this dynamic the Father is fully shown as an external authority to our history. Critically speaking, this ‘gloriously’ envisaged program of expiation discloses the cruel sadomasochism of a distorted atonement narrative. Despite the magnificence of the unfolding drama, God’s goodness and his satisfaction through the willed death of the Son remain in an irresolvable tension. We are left with a God who is bound by his own word that sin must be punished. ‘It is impossible for God to lose his honour’. This Father is compelled by his own justice. In Anselm’s words, ‘God needs to act like God’. And He does so in ‘majestic’ suffering.

The ‘semiotic’ reading deliberately breaks with the symbolism of triumph. Instead, it wants to exploit the realism of Kristeva’s anthropology.

The cross is still a working symbol in Europe. It may be that as religious symbolism it is being increasingly forgotten. Yet, and this is of strategic importance in the cultural situation of the ‘verticality of the cross’, it is still possible to relate the ‘secular subject’ to the Cross as to his own linguistic drama. In this sense, we can speak of the ‘passion according to the

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656 See Appendix III, ‘Anselm’.
postmodern self’. The Cross speaks of people’s suffering in a profound way, in an archaic language. There is no other image present in our culture which would better help to reflect people’s unnamed pain. My point is that this attraction is more deeply rooted than is the strictly doctrinal understanding of the Cross. Unconsciously we all respond to the Passion: through our own linguistic drama. Here Kristeva’s linguistic reading has a point: the ‘work of the negative’ is a proto-Passion which opens us up to the historical Passio:

‘But Christ’s passion brings into play even more primitive layers of the psyche; it thus reveals a fundamental depression (a narcissistic wound or reversed hatred) that conditions access to human language. The sadness of young children just prior to their acquisition of language has often been observed; this is when they must renounce forever the maternal paradise in which every demand is immediately gratified. The child must abandon its mother and be abandoned by her in order to be accepted by the father and begin talking.\(^657\)

The ‘reverse’ story of language manifest in Christ incites this deep remembrance in the contemporary listener. Facing the Cross, we realise in us the presence of the ‘child’ who once started his or her journey into language. Not only in us, but in the Son, our ‘son-hood’ is shared and recognised. The anamnesis of Jesus’ deteriorating language brings our relationship to ‘the Loving Third’ into consciousness. Our reaction to the Cross, where we see our ultimate ‘disability’ somewhat strikingly, is not the same as when we encounter a disabled person. Kristeva describes the fear we feel in relation to the latter as a narcissistic identity wound, which the ‘otherness’ of the disabled person opens up in us; in reality, it is the fear of our physical and psychical death.\(^658\) This archaic fear, in the case of the wounded Christ, is overcome by our compassionate solidarity. He is our ‘hidden’ twin-brother/sister, who ‘coincides’ with us. As a result, we do not reject him as ‘Stranger’, which we might do with a person suffering from a disability. The point is that this profound anthropological dynamic of the Crucified should be paid more attention in the way theology deals with post-modernity and ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. Christ transcends all disability and all its associated fears. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.’ (John 20:26) He can penetrate closed systems. That is why He can reconcile the self with itself and reconnect it with others through the ‘collective memory’ of a shared origin. Our linguistic birth becomes a shared universal, realised before the Cross.

The Semiotic Passion spells out that remembering our universal relationship to the ‘loving Third party’ is an important source to counter ‘violence’. Undergoing the remembrance that the Cross makes alive in us is a renewal of our ‘original’ faculty to

\(^{657}\) Kristeva, In the Beginning Was Love, pp.40-41.

respond to the other (our ‘Loving Third’) in peace. The adult psyche remembers the experience of being unconditionally responded to and accepted in peace by the ‘loving Third party’. Also, it is a recollection of our becoming responsive to the Father’s love with reciprocal trust and openness. At this point, we can refer to Kristeva’s ‘poetic language’, the function of which is to renew the Symbolic Order of culture. The death of Christ, as a deep-remembrance of our ‘semiotic’ beginnings, is a similar interruption on a personal level. His Passion de-stabilises the ‘Symbolic’ in us, both as a personal and as a cultural identity. In front of the Cross, somewhere deep down, deeper than the rational level, we enter into ‘mourning’ over our ‘semiotic’ past, and also over our symbolic or cultural heritage. This is the protest of the ‘beloved child’ in us that our whole being, our whole culture is fragile. All this vulnerability is mirrored by Christ, ‘the absolute subject’. He emerges as the ‘absolute wound of history’: that of the ‘sub-psychic’, that of the psyche, and that of culture.

The Semiotic Passion takes its own initiative to develop further the ‘Loving Third party’ as a theological hermeneutics. It contributes to a shared symbol building with Kristeva by a symbolic reading of ‘baptism’. It is not only the Cross that can be given a ‘linguistic reading’, as we saw in Kristeva. Baptism also can be read as a symbol of language acquisition. The symbolism of death in baptism, as rebirth in the Christ-Father, offers the analogy of our being transformed into the Symbolic Order of language, or the ‘story’ of the Loving Third. ‘As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”’ (Mt 3:16-17) ‘Coming up out of the water’, ‘voice’, ‘from heaven’, the ‘descending dove’ ‘lighting on him’ manifest the dynamic which raises the ‘speaking being’ from the pre-lingual ‘void’, or the unnameable ‘thing’ (see Kristeva’s model). This metaphor is an offer theology can make to develop further Kristeva’s ‘linguistic metaphor’ of the Cross.

Symbolically, our baptism in the ‘loving third party’ points to a universal value horizon, to a common humanism. What the postmodern ‘uprooted’ subject is in need of most is to regain the meaning of words. The human self in these times of apocalyptic distraction simply needs to recharge its language ‘with love’. This is what we can regard as the therapeutic momentum of the Cross. Just as the mother undergoes a renewal of identity when she relearns her mother tongue with her child, in the ‘semiotic Passion’ something similar happens. It puts us into relationship with, literally, the primary words of love, that is, with their very origin, the Father. ‘The acquisition of language by the child is a re-acquisition of language
by the mother.' The acquisition of the language (meaning) of the Cross is a re-acquisition of the Father’s love, as our primary, universal language. There is a profound practicality involved in this theological vision. Through the regained ‘psychic’ presence of the Father, the postmodern subject can enter into contact with the Father of the Gospels. The psychological ‘loving third’, as the conveying icon of the ‘graced’ Loving Third’, the Abba, is the bridge to external history. Recovering the ‘father’s love’ bears a transcendent dynamic for the ‘exhausted subject’. Here we can re-actualize Kristeva’s proposal to heal ‘wounded narcissism’ first, in order to reach external history: ‘heal your inner wounds, which as a result will render you then capable of effective social action.’

As we can see, the ‘linguistic correction’ of the language of atonement theology extends the meaning of the Cross in a new ‘epistemological’ direction yet preserves it as the event of history. It is at this very point that my solution radically departs from that of Haight. He dismisses the historical Cross as the central symbol of Christian faith in the sense that he does not regard it as a central linguistic element of faith. With this, Haight inflates the Cross in his dialogue with post-modernity. For him, the Cross is always equated with ‘atonement language’. He regards the centrality of the death of Jesus in the Christian imagination as an erroneous fixation. ‘…Perhaps Jesus’ death as a criminal was such a shock to the first disciples that apologetic discussion became focused here, and the ideas which were generated took on a life of their own.’

My linguistic imagery argues that there is something more going on than a ‘fixation on death’. The atonement language might well be erroneous in its emphasis on the Father ‘deliberately’ sacrificing the Son. Yet the traditional attraction to the ‘bloody imagery’ betrays a profound, underlying anthropological interest. Just as unexplained as children’s fascination about the crib at their first visits to ‘Bethlehem’, it is our ‘origins’, personal and religious, that excite us in the Cross. The homage is paid not to the ‘bloody imagery’ but to the ‘beyond.’ We would like to enter into a deeper intimacy with the Father than the ‘oedipalism’ of the ‘bloody cross’ offers.

The French contemporary painter, Michel Ciry, can be referred to as a confirmation of the ‘personal hermeneutics’ that the Semiotic Passion develops. Ciry developed a representation of the classic scenes of the Old and New Testament in which

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661 Haight, Jesus, Symbol of God, p.241.
faith is told at two levels, that of faith and that of the ‘psychic’.

Ciry confirms the interplay between the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘symbolic’ constituents of language in the visual realm. The event of faith is represented without any external reference to the Biblical narrative. The story is told in the most archaic ‘semiotic’ registers, through pre-narrative expressions, the face, the eyes, and the hands. The human face with its silences bears the most complex narrative of faith, the Passion of Christ.

This ‘trans-creedal’ nature makes the ‘semiotic’ Cross a profound anthropological narrative for the ‘secular subject’. Potentially, it reconnects him with the Father of Jesus. The ‘semiotic’ Cross is a challenging anthropological narrative for Christians, too. It reconnects us with the secular subject as – now we can use the metaphor – it reveals our ‘common baptism in language’. The ‘anthropological’ reading which the Semiotic Passion urges is a correction, and not a dismissal of the classic imagery of ‘sacrifice’. Contrary to Haight, if we dismiss the ‘sacrificial death’ of Jesus Christ as a central event, we dismiss perhaps the most profound contemporary image of the Christian Father.

7.5.2 The Mourning Father – ‘Stabat Pater’: The Theological Dynamics of the Metaphor

Reading the Passion from the perspective of the ‘loving Third’ enhances the understanding of the Father’s kenosis. In a narrow sense, applying the analogy of the ‘mourning Loving Third party’ to the Father internalises the maternal metaphor into God. Through this we can spell out further the claim that there is no cruelty in Him as a protagonist in Christ’s sacrifice. Representing Jesus’ Father in ‘mourning’ (losing his Son) is a crucial aspect in deconstructing the banal images of God circulated in culture. The analogy of ‘mourning’ in the Father, this is my working hypothesis, is the beginning of recovering the ‘theological memory’ of the postmodern subject. In what follows I sum up the theological dynamics that the image of the ‘suffering Father’ brings up.

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663 Mentioning Ciry is all the more an apt illustration of ‘semiotic remembrance’ as he is a late representative of the French ‘avant-garde’ painting, referring back as far as the late cubist-symbolism of Georges Braque. Kristeva’s main reference of the ‘semiotic’ dimension of language was French avant-garde literature. Ciry’s journals witness to a close intertwining of the ‘pre-verbal’ power of music and the visual-representation in painting. The entries of La Passion de l’amitié (1986-87) reflect the parallel emergence of his religious themes and the diarist’s growing focus on the human interior. See entry La Bergerie, 22 heures, pp.163-164. In Michel Ciry, La Passion de l’amitié, Journal 1986-87, Plon, Paris 1987. For his paintings consult www.museemichelchiry.com
The Father ‘takes us up into his inner divine nature and causes us to be reborn from his eternal womb.’\(^{664}\) The ‘womb’ symbolism of classic theology can be taken up with a new relevance, in view of the new ‘linguistic sensitivity’ of the subject and Kristeva’s discourse on motherhood. Linking the un-listened to maternal experience of dealing with otherness and the loving Abba losing the Incarnate Son brings into a creative dialogue the ‘maternal’ and the ‘paternal’ metaphors of God. This shared economy of ‘mourning’ shows the ‘High Transcendent God’ from a radically different perspective.

The birth-giving mother with her unrecognised knowledge of otherness offers a symbolic parallel with the God who is un-listened to on Good Friday. I highlight the significance of making this connection for the reason that it develops the analogy (‘Stabat Pater’) and is a response to Kristeva’s ‘maternal metaphor’. It also makes clear that the Son himself is rejected, together with the ‘womb’ of the Father (Balthasar) who, in the Spirit, has a unique knowledge of dealing with ‘God’s Other’, man and history. This saving wisdom is unrecognised, even actively rejected. Presenting this is an important response to Kristeva, as her mistrust in the ‘masculine’ image of ‘virgin motherhood’ is repeated recently in Hatred and Forgiveness:

‘Christianity is a religion of triumph and glory, a religion of heaven, beyond infernal passion, because it is based on this temporality of beginning – a religion of birth and its repetition through the resurrection. But this experience of temporality [the capacity of beginning, to re-begin, to start anew] can be frozen in a formidable paranoid horizon in which the maternal unconscious is engulfed, caught in the vertigo of manic omnipotence: the figure of the Virgin, after being Mater Dolorosa, is a regal figure, Queen of Heaven and the Church, who, for two thousand years, has encouraged [this] female paranoia.’\(^{665}\) (Emphasis added.)

There is a complex criticism beyond this. Kristeva rejects the image of the ‘virgin mother’ on the grounds that it suppresses the experience of motherhood in its bodily and psychological aspects. Instead, as a compensation, a symbolic participation is offered in terms of ‘masculine power’. The disquieting imbalance between nature (biology) and ‘masculine’ culture is resolved by fully absorbing the ‘maternal body’ into man’s ‘Symbolic Order’. The ‘mother’ becomes similar or self-same by being invested with the main requisite of the masculine obsession with power, the ‘throne’.

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Presenting the *unrecognised maternal perspective of suffering* within God is the correction of the triumphalist hermeneutic to which Kristeva rightly objects. The latter is still present in much ‘neo-orthodox’ theology. The elaboration of the maternal metaphor as a historical narrative is very important for scrutinising the ‘masculine-priestly imagination’ which fundamentalist theologies, not accidentally, take as a reference. When this ‘abjests’ or rejects the bodily and spiritual reality of motherhood as it is, it betrays a similar mistrust towards the ‘secular’. ‘Priestly imagination’ offers an analogous constructed ‘virginity’ (behaviour) for culture, expecting secular discourse to accept it in the same way as the manipulated discourse of motherhood was received. Re-imaging the Father outside the ‘priestly imagination’ is a crucial resource for combating the overlooked ‘nihilism’ of fundamentalist theologies. My point is to emphasise the significance of ‘hybrid narratives’ like the Father image of the *Semiotic Passion*. The *Semiotic Passion* has an important critical function. An honest ‘ideological’ response to Kristeva’s atheistic subtexts requires carrying out this immanent criticism of theological language.

A further theological dynamic of the metaphor of the ‘mourning Father’ is the renewed focus on the Incarnation. Doctrinal commonplaces turn out not to be fresh, intriguing questions. No matter how painstakingly laborious it is, theology needs to learn to become ‘audible’ where ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’ forces Tradition to explain doctrine anew and prompts it to become ‘bilingual’.

The first ‘intriguing’ mystery of the image of the ‘mourning Father’ is that, from the moment of the Incarnation of the Word, *Jesus speaks a human language, with all its

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666 That is, an ideal or ‘unconditional’ (uncritical) opening up to ‘grace’.
667 As an important illustration of this strategy of making the ‘secular’ an abject is David Torevell’s revisionist approach. Torevell nostalgically restores the priestly theological imagination, working in a ‘splendid isolation’ from contemporary anthropological reality. The *Semiotic Passion*, as a critical narrative, points to this attitude as doing theology in an ivory tower. It should be noted that a position like his is also a restoration of ‘priestly power’. ‘…It was simply an annual cycle of priestly-led repetitive acts of salvation, with the most important being a bloody act of sacrificial ritual – the Mass. But crucially, the order and meaning of the world was maintained by such an annual cycle of salvific rites. The sacrificial cult, conducted by the priestly office, set in place by the authority of apostolic succession, was also responsible for securing a clear understanding of social organisation inside and outside the Church. (…) However, a change in the sacrificial role of the priest was less emphasised at the Second Vatican Council… The unique sacrificial role of the priest was being eroded.’ In Torevell, *Losing the Sacred*, pp.91-92.
668 This work, in a sense, takes up the borderline situation of Paul Tillich’s theology in a postmodern context. In the Lutheran tradition, Tillich realised the need to re-translate Tradition for modern (American) culture in the way in which the Church expresses herself through a genuine linguistic rebirth. His was a heroic and unfinished attempt. The reason I refer to him is that the emergence of postmodernity posits an even more radical ‘linguistic challenge’ of self-translation. Concerning the linguistic tension in which the church with her ‘cultural mourning’ lives, see the sermon ‘We Live in Two Orders’ (pp.12-23), in Paul Tillich, *Shaking of the Foundations*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1953.
implications. In support of relating the Father as ‘loving Third party’ to Jesus, it is necessary to refer to the exegetical solution of Joachim Jeremias. He pointed out that the most important ‘theological’ word that Jesus used was the expression of his full humanity. He addressed God in the way a four year old child addresses his father, as *Abba*. My probing point is that, in this addressing him as ‘daddy’, a whole ‘semiotic’ dynamic is present. In the name *Abba* (deeply reminiscent of *Ima*, the short Hebrew word for addressing the mother as ‘mom’) the childhood rhythms of language, linguistic playfulness, and an intense memory of the ‘psychological’ ‘Loving Third’ reverberates. It opens up a whole new perspective for working out a theology of language, in concrete dialogue with the anthropological realism of Kristeva’s ‘semiotics’, which is deeply attentive to the bodily and psychic reality of the ‘speaker’. My ‘model’ unites these discourses by emphasising that God is not an external entity to *human* language. It finds it important to refashion the theological situation, when God is not a ‘meta-physical’ or meta-lingual presence outside of this segment of history. From the very beginning, from the moment of the message of the Archangel Gabriel and in Jesus’ relationship with Joseph and Mary, the Father is *internally present* in this ‘linguistic’ communication.

Also part of the theological dynamic of the image is that traditional doctrine has to inhabit this situation. My point is that theology has to find a way of incorporating the anthropologically fine-grained vision of the person, and their dynamics, into the narrative of faith. Without a ‘shared’ anthropological realism, dialogues on macro-level, like the crisis of the subject and culture, will always be limited. That is why my study highlights the dialogical direction that the *Semiotic Passion* has taken. It brings to the fore the realisation that it is also part of the mystery of the Incarnation that the Father, as a genuine ‘Loving Third party’, is a *historical* experience for Jesus. It prompts systematic theology to explain

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669 One of the *ipsissima verba* or the original ‘very’ words of Jesus in the Gospels identifiable with certainty is his addressing the Father as ‘Abba’. This contact point between the human and the divine needs to be taken seriously. Jeremias’ exegetical solution is not a sentimentalising image, but a substantial theological insight. Jeremias’ biblical exegesis of Jesus’ understanding of the Father as loving *Abba* in the Lord’s Prayer is a helpful background for the *Semiotic Passion*. Jeremias, from a biblical perspective, confirms the fundamentally ‘non-oedipal’ nature of divine love. He argues that ‘Abba’ as an address to God was the *ipsissima vox Jesu*, and shows a *very unique understanding* of God. It expresses an emphatic [‘semiotic!’] state as Jesus’ ‘Abba’ is derived from children’s speech. In the pre-Christian world, *abba* was a respectful address to an old man. (It should be noted that in its use, the ‘loving respect’ and the tender care, exclude any ‘oedipal’ rivalry between the Father and the Son!) Jeremias argues that small children used to call their father *abba*, expressing their trust and love in him. It is an untranslatable intimacy, perhaps the closest meaning is ‘daddy’. Grown up children cease to address their father in this way. It is important to see the contrast which Jeremias suggests. In Jewish prayer it was unimaginable to call God ‘Abba’ in this way. *When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.* (Rom. 8:15b-16) The cry, ‘Abba’, is beyond all human capabilities and is only possible within the new relationship with God given by the Son. In Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, SCM Press, London 1967 (first German publication 1966), pp.54-64.
the relationship between the human language of Jesus and divine ‘language’ within the
Trinity. This questioning can be made an important part of revisiting the relationship
between nature and grace. This ‘narrative’, if worked out, is an important bridge to ‘post-
metaphysical consciousnesses’.

The **Semiotic Passion** simply records the fact that in his prayer, through language, Jesus
experiences the Father as *Emmanuel* (‘God is with us.’). In a positive sense, the ‘semitic’
reading of the Passion posits that the *Abba* gives birth to the Son’s human language, too.
Since the drama of the Incarnation, *God is not outside the process of Jesus acquiring human
language, nor how he uses it*. The classic Christological dogmas of Chalcedon (451) can be
revisited in this ‘postmodern context’. In whatever form this clarification takes place, Jesus’
genuine human language is part of his genuine human nature, and should, virtually, be added
to the key features of his humanness.\(^670\)

The **Semiotic Passion** offers a way out of the paradox that Mark C. Taylor observes in
*After God*. On the one hand, it is not possible to engage with the anthropological mindset of
our age through the classic epistemological apparatus of Chalcedon.\(^671\) On the other hand, he
argues, contemporary ‘secular thought’ originates from the Christological solutions of the
great church councils of the fourth and the fifth centuries.\(^672\) Taylor convincingly
demonstrates (re-constructs) the emergence of *anthropological discourse* as a cultural shift
from the doctrine of the Trinity.\(^673\) He gives a theoretical confirmation that the conflict
between transcendence and immanence, which cannot be settled from the classic
Christological formulations today, can only be resolved by developing an *anthropological discourse*
closely related to the doctrine of the Trinity. In our idiom, the theological meaning
of ‘True God – true man’ needs to be retold in the ‘verticality of the cross’, where language
is the prime reference of identity. The question is, how can we relate present consciousness
to the Incarnation of the Son of God?\(^674\) In order to answer this question, classic
Christological language and post-Kantian philosophies alike need to develop a new notion of

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\(^670\) *Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin.* ‘Chalcedon’ by Ivor J. Davidson, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Ian A. McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, and Iain R. Torrance, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011 (First published 2011), p.92.


\(^672\) Taylor, *After God*, p. xvi.

\(^673\) See chapter 3 in *After God*, cf. p.133-134.

\(^674\) See the doctrinal overview of the Incarnation and the theological development leading to Chalcedon in the chapter ‘The Incarnation of the Son of God’ (pp.110-165), in Schönborn, *God Sent His Son*. 
the ‘modern subject’. The *Semiotic Passion* aims at challenging both positions from the ground of the ‘exhausted subject’. For secular humanism it states that constructing this new notion is far from finished. For systematic theology, the ‘semiotic imagery’ raises the need to make theoretical proposals in order to become more effective in the still emerging anthropological network of culture.

The *Semiotic Passion* relates the classic doctrine of the Incarnation to our present ‘anthropological condition’. The ‘Loving Third party’, it argues, though originally it is not a theological concept, introduces the missing anthropological dynamic into theological concepts, especially with regard to our notion of the Father of the Trinity. Deploying the concept confirms the ‘particularity’ of Christ as a historical subject, and through him, a ‘new historicity of the Father’. This ‘historicity’ can hardly be accessed from within doctrinal debates like the *patripassianism* and the *theopaschite controversy*. I just highlight the fact that the Father who ‘suffers’ through his mourning as a ‘loving Third’, touches on highly sensitive doctrinal areas. By revealing a ‘doctrinal vacuum’ it immediately creates a resistance from within canonical discourse. I also stress the fact that my concern is not the doctrinal implications of the ‘semiotic’ imagery of the Father. A direct evaluation from ‘orthodoxy’ would only show an anthropological deficit in canonical approaches. The *Semiotic Passion*, being a theory in the sense of Rizzuto, does not have to comply with established doctrinal solutions. But it does not mean that as a theoretical proposal our metaphor does not spell out important aspects of classic doctrine. As Rizzuto puts it,

> ‘It should be remembered, however, that theory exists to assist in the understanding of complex reality: it is not reality itself. Theory is a tool, a shorthand, a vocabulary, to identify an aspect of human perception for oneself and for others. It does not create entities, whether they are called self or God. Theory provides a way of talking about observable phenomena in order to understand them. Theory is never completely true, only partly true to what we say and see. Therefore theoretical considerations must be taken with a grain of salt: insofar as they help us to understand the phenomena, they may be accepted, not as truth but as the best explanation so far of what we see.’

The ‘mourning Father’, as an experimental concept, is an opportunity to relate the Christian *Abba* with the core of postmodern sensitivity. A God who is unable to ‘suffer’ and

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676 See these entries in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, p.375. and p.504. The two doctrinal discourses which can be related to the *Semiotic Passion* are ‘Patripassianism’ and ‘Theopaschite’ debates. In order to illustrate the ‘hermeneutical gap’ with the classic body of doctrine, I refer to them in brief in *Appendix VIII*. They illustrate the contrast with the new doctrinal and epistemological space which the encounter with Kristeva has opened up.

‘feel’ compassion simply cannot be meaningful for our contemporaries. The *Semiotic Passion* argues for renewing the analogy of suffering in God in order to initiate a conversation, and if possible, a breakthrough. The Father of the ‘eschaton’ is not an abstract historical entity, but must always be expressed through the ‘narrative of love’. In a sense it is a completion of the eschatological program of Metz and Moltmann.

The *Semiotic Passion* indeed offers a non-banal image of a compassionate God. The suggested linguistic analogy presents the co-suffering of the Father and the Son through the story of Christ as a ‘speaking being’. The image of the suffering Father draws on a mother’s suffering which is expressed in the image of the *Mater Dolorosa* (Mother of Sorrows). If the Father in the life of Jesus can be seen as the presence of the ‘Loving Third’, then Mary’s mourning beneath the Cross, analogously, coincides with the Father’s loss. A mother’s grief over her child is also ‘the passion according to the loving Third.’ Through Mary’s suffering the ‘maternal metaphor’ can be made internal to God as Father. Here our analogy puts an emphasis on the *Father’s* ‘mourning’ as a ‘loving Third’. Envisioning Mary’s linguistic journey with Jesus as a shared remembrance with the Father makes it is possible to relate the Father, as ‘immanent Trinity’, to the human language of the Incarnate Son. For the postmodern subject the main problem is establishing a link with this ‘immanent’ life of the Trinity, re-telling the Passion in terms of a linguistic journey introduces an alternative logic to the understanding of what the Father’s *kenosis* is. The only definitive theological claim is that the linguistic analogy makes it possible to speak of the *Father’s suffering outside the traditional metaphysical framework*.

The theological dynamic of our metaphor has a profound personalist thrust. Seeing a mother crying over the death of her child is the most elementary experience which incites solidarity. It is an archetype of ethics in itself; perhaps its most archaic origin. The loss of her own child mobilises the deeply buried memories of a mother when she had first ‘lost’ him or her at the very beginning of language formation. To recall Kristeva’s model, psychologically the mother necessarily goes through the following phases. The narcissistic joy in the original unity with the child → the pain of loss when the child is severed from her as a maternal container → when ‘her other’ is given over to the father’s language → and finally, the joy when the child can express his love by *naming* her as Mother and becoming aware of her *kenosis* for him or her. In Kristeva’s model, this closing stage is a new communion between the mother and child.

This journey is also a child’s shared memory with the mother. This linguistic bond to a great extent clarifies our *never explained* attachment to our mothers. Usually, this relation is
never consciously remembered. The ‘rationality’ of the ‘Symbolic Order’ does not pay attention to the suffering of the mother who carries the story of language. A mother loses the one to whom she gave not only biological life but also psychical life, ‘language’. Strangely, ‘men’, though they equally act as ‘loving Third’, do not have this remembrance as intensely as a mothers do. In the case of mothers, the shared genesis of language always remains in them. It is on this residual knowledge that Kristeva can state maternal love to be the prototype of human passion and ethics. This journey runs from the first happy exchange of glances, through the first pre-lingual rhythms, vocal cathexes and melodic fragments into love fully expressed in language. This memory, unless masculine consciousness enters its own story as ‘Loving Third party’, remains forever a mother’s second un-listened to story. (A mother’s mourning can be just as unrecognised as her ‘first’ motherhood.) Only in the moments of the Passion are we given insight into it. It is worth observing that crying is a rapture of our being from a ‘Symbolic Order’ of language into this ‘pre-lingual realm’. The world of human tears is probably when we get closest to the lost terrain with the mother (who is our hidden, ‘absolute Loving Third party’ strangely hiding behind the face of our ‘loving Father’). In the intense moments of mourning, our language collapses into this deep remembrance of the lost, beloved person who belongs to us; who belonged to us; who had belonged to us. This story of the tears of the ‘mourner’ is the same in the case of Mary who is losing Christ; Jesus is being mourned within the full economy of the ‘maternal Passion’.

The theoretical suggestion of the Semiotic Passion is that this ‘maternal passion’ iconically points to the Father’s unique presence in the Passion scene. The Father is never represented on Eastern icons, according to the theological principle that no one has seen the Father except the Son, who alone can express Him. Western religious art, however, gives representations of the Father. Western theology develops an anthropological sensitivity: we want to see the Father in the drama of ‘grace’. This dynamic of the Father’s ‘giving’ his image to the Son, that is, that the Abba expresses himself through the suffering Christ and

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679 Perhaps, it is a personal remark, we humans understand a mother’s love for the child most when we witness our father’s ‘dying language’. This is a profound realisation of who the ‘Loving Third’ is for us, of whose image and love we were created. In the person of the suffering Christ on the Cross, we seem to contemplate the dying language of the ‘Father’: that of our own loving father.
680 Orthodox theology teaches of the ‘iconic knowledge of God’. The tangible categories of the world, time, space, colours, the human body, and especially the human face are icons pointing to God’s Kingdom. Lepahin Valerij states that language, as part of the human face, is an icon of God and points to him. ‘Iconically’ they represent, that is, make the life of God present in our material reality. See, Valerij Lepahin, ‘Basic Types of Correlation between Text and Icon, between Verbal and Visual Icons’ (pp. 20-30), In: An International Journal of Religion, Theory and Culture., Literature and Theology, Oxford University Press, Volume 20, Number 1, March 2006.; and Valerij Lepahin, Az óorosz kultúra ikonarcúsága (a Hungarian publication, it translates as ‘The Iconic Naure of Ancient Russian Culture’), JATE Szláv Filológiai Tanszék, Szeged 1994.
deliberately wants to emerge through his Son, together with the orthodox rule of not representing the Father directly, is already combined in the ‘womb’ metaphor in Balthasar:

‘In some way that is beyond our comprehension, the Father himself is simple too; he does not hoard his omniscience but recklessly gives it away, so to speak: “All things have been given to me by my Father”, says Jesus. God does not cling to himself; the Father’s womb is empty once he has generated the Son, so we must seek the Father in the Son, and only in him.’

The *Semiotic Passion* adds the emphasis of the linguistic imagery to this, namely that the Father emerges through Christ as our ‘absolute linguistic icon’. If we take the economy of the Incarnation in language seriously, the Father is present in the Passion, and is representable. However brave and inaccurate the analogy of the ‘mourning Father’ might be, language represents Him. The mourning for the ‘speaking Son’ represents genuine historical pain. It is the Father’s complex relationship to the Son which makes speaking of the Father’s Passion legitimate. (‘Mary/The Father’ stood in sorrow weeping/ When her/His son was crucified.) Within this analogy, it is possible to speak of ‘suffering’ in God. The Father as a historical ‘Loving Third’ to Jesus experiences ‘pain’ and ‘suffering’. As such, the Father is manifest as ‘economic Trinity’ in history.

7.5.3 The Peaks of Mourning: ‘Becoming a Virgin’ (A Spiritual Re-reading of the Metaphor)

The *Semiotic Passion* makes the claim that there is a genuine legitimacy for preserving the image of ‘Virgin Motherhood’ in the context of the Passion. The linguistic reading of the Passion restores the original theological dynamic of the ‘Virgin Mother’ by representing it as *Mater Dolorosa*, which ‘merge’, to recall Kristeva’s charge of female paranoia, is void of power aspirations. The balance is restored by shifting the emphasis from ‘virgin motherhood’ to the mourning mother. To demonstrate further the relevance of developing the maternal metaphor in God the Father, the *Semiotic Passion* suggests an alternative reading of ‘virgin motherhood’.

In the ‘anthropological exchange’ that the semiotic Passion brings out, the Father is a witness to Mary’s ‘linguistic drama’. In her unarticulated and uncontrollable weeping at the

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681 Balthasar, *You Crown the Year With Your Goodness*, p.175
682 See *Stabat Mater* in Appendix VII.
683 I emphasise again that the ‘linguistic passion’ has no intention of revisiting the debate that God in his essence or divine Nature cannot experience suffering. The purpose is to make ‘ontological statements’ again in a new way, outside the metaphysical framework, *within the story of love.*
foot of the Cross as *Mater Dolorosa*, Mary is carried back to her first words to the Child. First, the Mother of God is brought back to ‘linguistic severance’, when the ‘father’s’ language severed her child from her. Before this there had been no words. But Mary’s ‘mourning’ goes even further back, to the very beginnings of her ‘maternal passion’, that is, to the conception of her Son, when there had been only a silent expectation ‘in the womb’. A mother’s mourning goes back even beyond pregnancy. Mary remembers the absolute silence of the Son/child. This was the time before the annunciation, the time before conception (‘pre-annunciation’). This is the time before conception. The very memory of conceiving her Child sets her apart from this period of ‘being alone’. Becoming a mother, retrospectively, assigns the preceding time of ‘virgin- hood’ as ‘futility’. Having a child is a gift, a ‘plus’. Mary’s becoming fertile, her actualised and fulfilled motherhood marked out the time of maternity as ‘sacred time’, as *kairos*.

Going back, forcibly, into the childless state, is to lose this *kairos*. In her ‘mourning’ Mary is brought back to the memory of being ‘not yet a mother’ (or not yet a father as we can universalise the pattern), but of being a person who is in search of the ‘Other’ from whom she would conceive. She is in the state of waiting, which is the state of not yet being a ‘Loving Third party’ to the *other*. It was the time of expectation when Mary’s ‘destiny’ was being shaped to reply when the moment came: ‘*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*’ (Lk 1:38) In Mary’s case, her ‘maternal passion’ beneath the Cross brings her back to the point when she was a ‘virgin’ in the sense of being without a child. Our analogy has no intention of spiritualising this remembrance of pre-birth. Yet, the ‘semiotic’ reading offers the understanding of seeing Mary ‘as becoming a Virgin Mother under the Cross’. This becoming a ‘Virgin’ expresses the total loss of the Son-Child, to the point of accepting the irreversibility of this loss. To recapitulate the anthropological dynamic which my study has argued, the Father, from the moment Mary heard the voice of the Angel, is not outside this journey and endpoint.

A mother’s grieving for the *prematurely* lost child is our deepest ‘anthropological’ drama. When witnessed, this is perhaps the most intense triggering of human solidarity. Seeing the mourning mother is the re-birth and the re-*confirmation* of all ethics. The *Semiotic Passion*, I suggest, is applying this ‘journey’ backwards to the Father of the Incarnate Son. This Incarnate Son, theological correctness agrees, suffers death in his human nature. Putting aside the Christian doctrine that in the Incarnation Jesus’ human and divine natures were united in the second divine Person, in our ordinary, ‘non-theological’ language we simply say: it was the death of a ‘real man’. In this case, what does the ‘maternal *kenosis*’
of the *Abba* tell us, how do we respond to it? My study submits the ‘mourning Father’ as a source for a new, non-restrictive ethics that Kristeva is urging.

In a narrower sense, the reading of ‘Virgin Motherhood’, when related to the function of the ‘Loving Third party’, is a response to Kristeva’s critique of the masculine theological imagination. This imagination can be attentive to a mother’s passion. In a wider sense, relating Mary (motherhood) and God in an intrinsic way raises the question: can we make the ‘Virgin Mother’ speak again? Can we make the *Mater Dolorosa* a significant source of the aimed at ‘non-restrictive’ ethics? Balthasar supports this intention. He shows that classic doctrine, including his own theology, has the reserves to recover the ‘lost universal’ from *maternal compassion*. Balthasar presented Mary’s ‘virginity’ as an archetypal experience of dealing with otherness, as it were, an ‘open’ existential metaphor.

‘Mary, by bearing and giving birth to her Son, the Head of the Church [Christ the ‘absolute’ speaking being or the *language* of the Church], encloses all Christians within herself and brings them forth from herself along with their experiences of faith, and this in a relationship with them which is somehow physical… Mary’s physico-personal experience of the Child who is her God and her Redeemer is unreservedly open to Christianity. Mary’s whole experience, as it develops from its earliest beginnings, is an experience for others – for all…Mary’s experience of God has her virginity as its foundation – her exclusive and spiritual readiness for God [the ‘mourning Father’]…A human mother, with all her maternal feelings and experiences, joys and especially sorrows, is taken into God’s service in order to bear the mystery of the Incarnate God and the Redeemer of the world. Everything about her faith will, therefore, become incarnate in her natural and, at the same time, graced motherhood; everything will be drenched in the blood of human experience, down to the very foundations of the body [the semiotic ‘chora’], of the womb [the first emergence of the ‘loving third party’].

It should also be noted that the postmodern subject is in need of recovering the image not only of the Father, but that of the ‘Mother’ too. A successful re-presenting of the Father’s love also means recovering the *remembrance* of maternal love. Is it not unquestionably our ultimate universal? Or, even in the forthcoming world of ‘bioengineered lives’ without real mothers, is this memory of the mother not our universal desire? The image of the ‘Virgin Mother’ can be confirmed as an ontological metaphor, when the ‘loving third party’, as the grounding orientation of our humanness, first emerges. And this love is grounded, as Mary’s particular case shows, in the Father’s *inexhaustible* Love.

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7.5.4 Completing the Metaphor: God’s Inexhaustible Love

The theological dynamic of the ‘mourning Father’ cannot be complete without a reference to Easter. Mary’s ‘becoming a Virgin’ or her mourning for the loss of the Son, at a decisive point, is different from that of the Father. A mother can mourn the child but she cannot give life again to her lost child. Jesus’ Abba, faith informs us, has that ‘power’. To illustrate my final points, I refer to Kristeva’s Eastern icons. With their colour symbolism, they herald this potential in the Father. In the symbolic language of the icon God, as represented by the ‘gold’ background, embraces the ‘human self’. The gold background tells us in our context that all ‘speaking beings’ are covered by the compassion of the Father. Beyond his ‘mourning’, we find his resurrecting joy. To quote Rahner, ‘He is the unfathomable womb, in which [everyone] shines brightly.’ 685 We find the first manifestation of this resurrecting joy in the words of the Annunciation: ‘And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women...Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.’ (Lk 1:28.30.) 686 A further revealing of this life-giving joy and promise is the scene of Jesus’ transfiguration, which foretells his forthcoming Passion and echoes the words which the Father said over the baptised Son. In the scene of the baptism, there took place the Father’s first ‘encouragement’ as a ‘Loving Third party’: ‘And a voice came from heaven said: ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’” (Mt 4:17). In the Transfiguration, this audible, historical voice sounds again, now as a confirmation of the Son in his mission. The charge is given by the Father as an inexhaustible source of renewal. He speaks as Jesus’ abundant ‘loving Third party’: ‘In thee I am well pleased’. ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ (Mt 1:5)

This unfolding dynamic of Easter faith is expressed in the colour symbolism of the icons. Their representation of the Father’s voice builds on the specific nature of gold: its light is not external, but comes from within. 687 The ‘silence’ of the golden background expresses the nature of the ‘Loving Third’ which, while being the ‘external authority’ of the Father, is fully internalised by and in the ‘speaking being’. In this way, the speaking subject becomes the true image of the ‘Loving Third party’, the language of the Abba. 688 The ‘golden’ presence of the ‘Loving Third party’ (expressing the Father’s love) tells us that ‘salvation’ and ‘sacrifice’ are not outside history but address us ‘from the inside’ as

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685 ‘Sacred Heart’ (pp.121-128) in Rahner, The Eternal Year, p.124.
686 Original emphasis from the King James Version.
688 This is the event of becoming the verbal icons of our father and mother.
‘speaking beings’. This reference to icons from Byzantine iconography is not arbitrary as these are Kristeva’s icons, with their ‘enigmatic other world, full of gentle suffering and mysterious grace’.\(^689\) This enigmatic world of ‘semiotic light’ is emphasised in the icons of the Crucifixion. There, the body of Christ and the background (‘God’) radiate in gold against the dark background of the cross. In our Semiotic Passion, this contrast tells us that the Father’s attention never leaves the Son ‘forsaken’. To this ‘mourning’, metaphorically, we can apply Kristeva’s ‘central metaphor’, the interplay between the ‘semiotic’ and the ‘symbolic’ constituents of language. In the Father’s ‘mourning’ we find the genuine ‘mourning’ of the ‘historical’ Loving Third, which we saw in Mary’s human mourning. But from beneath this compassion for the human love in grief, which cannot bring the loved one back to life, there also emerges the exclusive potential of God the Father: to recreate lost particular existence. God does not allow Jesus (or our selves) to fall back for good into pre-semiotic ‘no-meaning’. In our analogy, the Father’s ‘mourning’ already anticipates the Resurrection of the Son. This is what we can see as the final emergence of the ‘graced Symbolic Order’ of the Kingdom.

It is important to emphasise that the ‘Semiotic Passion’ does not stop with Good Friday. As such, the ‘mourning Father’ becomes a comprehensive ontological response to Kristeva’s atheistic subtexts and to nihilism. The Cross is not a tragic terminus of life itself which makes existence, in the Beckettian sense, absurd. Neither does it leave us with a stoic overcoming of despair as Kristeva’s early Holbein analysis did. There is more left to us than the ‘shortening’ time of psychic-rebirths. Easter, in the Christian witness, is a genuine interruption of all anthropology, psychoanalysis, and existing theological language (metaphors) itself. The dynamic of Easter warns that ‘grace’ and our present history should be connected. It assigns as the task for the present to take (the particularity of) history seriously. This task prompts both humanist and theological discourses to revise the ‘scope’ of what they understand as ‘psychic and ethical rebirth’.

The Father’s ‘golden silence’ may answer the opening problem of our analogy. The Father, presented within the ‘linguistic economy’, is not a cruel, satisfaction thirsty God. His ‘mourning’ runs counter to the sadomasochistic demand for expiation, which the ‘murder imagery’ of the atonement scenario manifested for Freud. The ‘mourning God’ is not the God who is outside human history in the Marxian reading either. The Father’s ‘waiting’ from Good Friday to Easter morning is a real ‘work of mourning’: a genuine intra-historical experience. From the moment of the Incarnation, when Christ became the ‘absolute subject’,

\(^{689}\) Kristeva, In the Beginning Was Love, pp.23-24.
God as Father cannot stay outside the economy of ‘divine mourning’, when history is ultimately permeated by forgiveness.

To bring our metaphor to a close, in the ‘fellowship’ of mourners, whom we see at the foot of the Cross, undoubtedly the most important event is the way the dying Son ‘mourns’ the loss of his Father. There is an unsurpassable depth in his final cry: ‘And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Mark 15:34) It is indeed true that it was a calling, but not for Elijah as the bystanders understood. ‘And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah.’ (Mark 15:35) Despite the horror of the moment, the dying Jesus was calling for Love. It was a call from the ‘semiotic’ depths of his identity, addressing the Abba, the Father, as ‘Loving Third’ to whom he belongs, but also addressing the (psychological) ‘loving third party’ in us, which connects us to him. Symbolically, is this cry not the endpoint of human language and already the very first words of a new creation? Suspended between the ‘maternal void’ (our present history) and the new symbolic order of God’s Kingdom, Christ becomes ‘absolute subject’ in this borderline situation, in between the two realms of language. This reading re-embeds Kristeva’s image of the Cross as the genesis story of language into the horizon of Transcendence. This is the completion of the Semiotic Passion. In the ‘Loving Third party’, to whom Jesus cries, who is ‘inexhaustible Love’, who is the ultimate ‘loving Third’ of the self, already our ability to respond in love is there too.

We do not know how, but the Father ‘having completed his mourning’ emerged as Resurrection for the Son. It is impossible to separate the Resurrected and the Resurrector. Just as it is impossible to separate the Son of the Father from ourselves as ‘prodigal sons’, whom he welcomes with the same intensity. The Resurrection of Jesus suddenly, and ultimately, coincides with the life of the Father. Joining in this relationship (‘interpreting’ this mystery) is our renewed language in culture. This renewal links our metaphor most profoundly with the central thesis my work argued, namely, that the ontic ‘exhaustion’ of the ‘speaking being’, as a ‘religious mourning’, needs to be answered. Theology’s Semiotic Passion cannot but witness to the recognition of faith that God is the resource, who tirelessly speaks as ‘Loving Third’ to the ‘exhausted subject’. This ‘speaking embrace’ or genuine human love ‘expressed’ in the Son is the fulfilment of the self’s ontological yearning:

690 Here I paraphrase Donald Winnicott’s image of the mother when, in a full ‘loving embrace’, she is holding the child. See: Donald Winnicott, The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment, Karnac Books and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London 1990, pp.48-49, and Donald Winnicott, Babies and Their Mothers, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Wokingham 1987, (pp.10-12. This ‘maternal care’ is an expression of unconditional love and attentiveness to the
For the Son, as Jesus here calls himself, is the unique, incomparable Person whose life is exclusively a coming from and going to the Father; he draws weary men into this cyclic rhythm in order to free them from their heavy and often totally unnecessary burdens, to save them from inner stagnation. He wants to draw them into the fluid, eternal stream of love that circulates between the Father and the Son, where the burdens of the temporal dimension hardly seem to weigh anything at all.

7.5.5 The Semiotic Passion – A Metaphor in Its Own Right?

The Semiotic Passion has kept its promise: it offers a more intimate reading of Christ’s sacrifice. More than this, it proposes that the image of the ‘mourning Father’ is a theological metaphor in its own right. The theological dynamic it reveals shows that the Semiotic Passion is more than a ‘counter-myth’ to Freud. It develops the notion of sacrifice within the medium of ‘maternal experience’. The ‘independence’ and the usefulness of the analogy are shown in the following areas.

The image of the ‘mourning Father’ may offer a better revision of the economy of ‘violence’, which seems to remain unchallenged in the traditional readings of the cross. My proposal has sketchily outlined that this economy of non-violence exists within traditional doctrine. As a model, it offers an effective way to depart from the epistemology and hermeneutical dynamic of the classic atonement narrative.

The image of the ‘Mourning Father’ has prepared a strategic access point to the religious sensitivity of the postmodern subject. It addresses the ‘anonymous Christian’ of a post-Christian culture. A different, anthropologically more sensitive piety can emerge, the ‘spirituality of closeness’. In it, the cooperation of discourses is also included. The linguistic imagery presents the Christian Abba within history. Because it internalises the anthropological thrust of Kristeva’s Freudianism, it offers a good ground to integrate other humanist approaches to the subject. Closing Tales of Love, Kristeva says that in the postmodern age we have all become ‘extraterrestrials with a prehistory bearing a wanting for needs of the child. It is from this archetypal or first act of love, which takes place in the ‘original unity’ between the mother and the child, from which the whole later development of the person unfolds. From the underlying dynamic of Winnicott’s image, we can draw and explore a theological analogy of the Father. Analogously to the loving mother who is in the service of the child’s unfolding freedom, the Father (loving Abba) as ‘speaking (loving) embrace’ is capable of embracing us with a full ‘motherly’ and ‘fatherly’ love. In it, the ultimate ‘Order’ of the Kingdom is also expressed as the full presence of Love, as an initiating ‘maternal’ act, as the nourishment which initiates us into a new world of freedom. The loving Abba nourishes us and, as ultimate freedom, at the same time respects our needs towards the ultimate freedom, which is the ground of our self.

The analogy of the ‘mourning Father’ connects God with this ‘prehistoric’, which had become the only real contact with history in our postmodern age. If this ‘exhaustion’ in history is real, and if Kristeva psychoanalysis rightly claims to ‘extend’ the Passion to the psychic space, then the deepest yearning of the postmodern self is for the all-inclusive love of the lost Father. In response to the critique of religion implied by Kristeva’s ‘humanist subtexts’, my study identifies this yearning as the need for a non-oedipal, all embracing Father who sustains the psychic space:

‘Are we concerned with rebuilding their own proper space, a ‘home’, for contemporary Narcissus: repair the father, soothe the mother, allow them to build a solid, introspective inside, master of its losses and wanderings, assuming that such a goal is attainable?’

The _Semiotic Passion_ presents an image of God which is ‘home’ for the contemporary Narcissus, the extraterrestrial of Love (God). The ‘linguistic’ reading of the Passion offers an ‘interruption’ of the banal images of God which classic orthodoxy does not provide. This is the unprecedented closeness of the Father to the human self. Classic doctrine must be completed with a contemporary re-reading of the _Emmanuel_.

The _Semiotic Passion_ presents the radical closeness of the Father as the interruption of the ‘narcissistic discourses’ of post-modernity. In the context of ‘postmodern exhaustion’, the experienced closeness of the _Emmanuel-Father_ is the deepest motivation for freedom. The _Semiotic Passion_ offers a model of opening up to this closeness. It speaks directly to the subject living in a nihilist culture by presenting a theological experience of freedom. This is God’s _ultimate_ solidarity with the human self. A God who is capable of mourning our ‘exhaustions’ is the deepest possible encouragement to love. This dynamic is not only anthropological but also theological. The image of the risk-taking God, who takes upon himself the full story of the human being, and who chooses the fragility of human language for self-expression, provides the ground for making the Father relevant to postmodern culture. Post-modernity is not interested in tradition-based faith, but it is interested in the ‘self’. The _Semiotic Passion_ makes a connection between the two. Its Father image is a support to the subject in a culture which, as a ‘risk society’ (Giddens), permanently urges risk taking as a means of controlling the future, but totally ignores what happens within the subject.

At the same time the ‘mourning Father’ is a counter-image to ‘God’s impassible

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692 Kristeva, _Tales of Love_, p.382.
693 Kristeva, _Tales of Love_, p.379.
694 Contrary to the ‘neo-optimist’ argument of Beck and Giddens this is not ‘risk taking’ through which a culture becomes reflexive. This reflexivity comes from the level of a personal reflection when the ‘Father’ as the very source of _origins_ (psychic, cultural, religious) is revisited. See Ulrich Beck,
wholeness’, which is our static, ever tempting, metaphysical construct. By correcting the disembodied notions of God in the way the Semiotic Passion does, doctrine becomes accessible again in the dynamic of the Incarnation. Its metaphors give a ‘post-modern’ interpretation of this dynamic. The images of God’s unprecedented closeness interpret reconciliation, the central event of Redemption, in a fresh way. The Father as Emmanuel is not a theological cliché. All banal associations concerning God are challenged, including the banal association of reconciliation. There is more involved in it than a legal pact between divine Justice and fallen mankind. This is a genuine drama of Love.

The fact that the ‘mourning Father’ is a theological metaphor in its own right is shown in the way it refashions the classic debate on nature and grace. The analogy offers a contemporary solution to what Duffy observed as an unfinished program. ‘The problem of nature and grace is the problem of finding a bridge across the abyss separating God and humanity, of locating the image of God in the human person, and of discovering how the human person makes its way back to God.’ My Introduction deliberately situated the encounter with Kristeva in this wider theological context. The Father-image of the Semiotic Passion intentionally aims to socialise us out from the God-image which led to the abstract concept of a ‘natura pura’, or pure human nature, as an ideal. My analogy profoundly agrees with the Rahnerian conviction that human existence cannot be seen without being involved with grace. Instead of stating the gap between human nature and ‘grace’ as the motive for conversion, the Semiotic Passion intends to show a ‘risk-taking God’ who enters, fully and not passively, into human history.

In this way, the analogy also makes a non-apologetic counter-offer to Kristeva’s Holbein analysis that ‘there is no other side of language.’ The Christian God in the Semiotic Passion


696 This tricky concept is assigned to the specific early twentieth century theological debate on the relationship between nature and grace in nouvelle théologie. We see a reopening of the debate from contemporary revisionist neo-Thomism. As a theological counter-reaction to the ‘risk society’, a neo-orthodoxy emerges which shows an alarming denial of bringing ‘nature and grace’ closer to eachother, which de Lubac and his Conciliar generation achieved. The danger is a new re-absorbing of the person into metaphysics under the weight of a God-centred natural law. The risk in this type of neo-Thomist discourse is a revisionist extension of ‘High Transcendence’ to human nature by over-emphasising its ‘spiritual dimension’. In our context, Stevan’s approach confirms an anti-anthropological shift within theology. In a wider sense, the danger is a revision of Vatican II’s policy of dialogue with secular humanism and the undermining of the potential of this dialogue as a resource for a contemporary anthropology. The Semiotic Passion is deliberately opposes the re-confirmation of the metaphysical God-image which speaks with ‘power’ from a ‘splendid isolation’ from the particularities of history. See, Stevan A. Long, Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace, Fordham University Press, New York 2010.
appears on the ‘hither side’ of language, on our side. Because of the Son, the Father cannot stay outside language/nature. The Father becomes most expressive in human language through the Son; in his teaching, in his passion and in his Resurrection. This ‘God-realism’, as an answer, was implicitly claimed by the ‘biological realism’ of Freud.697 From within God’s ‘metaphysical isolation’ from the particularities of history, where He is presented as a totalised ‘super-nature’, atheism and postmodern scepticism cannot be addressed structurally.

The Semiotic Passion offers a personalism which integrates previous theological discourses. This capacity is a very important means to see the Father-image as a theological metaphor in its own right. The paradigm of ‘radical closeness’ spells out ‘the God above the God of theism’ of which Paul Tillich spoke. The Semiotic Passion as theology of the cross has transcended those forms of theism in which God

‘deprives me of my subjectivity because he is all-powerful and all-knowing. I revolt and try to make him into an object… God appears as the invincible tyrant, the being in contrast with whom all other beings are without freedom and subjectivity… The God of theological theism is…seen as a self which has a world, as an ego which is related to a thou, as a cause which is separated from its effect, as having a definite space and an endless time. … This is the deepest root of atheism.”698

The image of the Father, who is compassionate towards the human self, actualises in the present the ‘cultural mourning’ of previous theological generations. Moreover, Tillich’s generation was an important interlocutor of ‘Freudian’ humanism. The existentialist theology of modernity emphasised the need for a personal imagery of God. Tillich’s ‘linguistic mourning’ is unsurpassed in its claim to re-introduce the lost intimacy of the God-image. The analyses of my work have deliberately hinted at the ‘historical layers’ underlying my critique. This drawing on the past makes the renewed image of the Father a resource, when the way Freud saw the Cross is properly ‘mourned’. The theological generation to which I have referred gave a response on behalf of the human self abandoned by the God of ‘high theism’. ‘If the self participates in the power of being-itself [unconditional acceptance of the Father’s love] it receives itself back.”699 Tillich’s pioneering meditation, The Courage to Be, strikingly anticipated the image of the ‘compassionate’ Father who, through the Son’s sacrifice, is intrinsic to the human condition. The Father in the Semiotic Passion gives courage to the self to look upon its source. The linguistic analogy is in search of a renewed

699 Being-itself is ‘the God who transcends the God of religions’, ibid., p.188.
‘existential iconography’. The continuity with the ‘theological avant-garde’ of the past is obvious. The *Semiotic Passion* showed a similar ‘borderline situation’ for theological language, which

‘is without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. (…) It is the Church under the Cross which alone can do this, the Church which preaches the Crucified who cried to God who remained his God after the God of confidence had left him in the darkness of doubt and meaninglessness.’\(^{700}\)

God’s coming close to the postmodern self, sharing his story as *Emmanuel* revealed on the cross, offers ‘a participation in something that transcends the self’.\(^{701}\) The consequence of the Father’s radical closeness is ‘the acceptance of God, his forgiving or justifying act.’ This ‘is the only and ultimate source of a courage to be.’\(^{702}\) This acceptance takes away the ‘ontological’ anxiety of guilt, death, and fate, passed on by modernity to post-modernity. The ‘loving Father’ of the *Semiotic Passion* takes away the fundamental anxiety of our age which stems from the un-bridged distance between the postmodern self and its unnamed God.

The *Semiotic Passion* offers an important ‘theological paradigm shift’, owing to moving from the ‘blood-narrative’ to the ‘bloodless’ linguistic imagery. This is a renewed sense of universalism. The *Semiotic Passion* has introduced the ‘Loving Third’ as a universal narrative which connects the ‘speaking being’ (the subject of history), Christ the ‘absolute subject’, and the Father. I highlight a particular form of this seemingly theoretical ‘cultural mourning’. This universalism through the ‘speaking being’ has a powerful potential to correct the hidden ‘theological anti-Judaism’ which was attached to the ‘historical’ reading of the Passion, when the blame for killing Jesus was put on ‘the Jews’.\(^{703}\) I firmly emphasise here the positive deconstructive potential which the anthropology of the *Semiotic Passion* introduces into theological concepts. The *Semiotic Passion*, at this highly practical level, can be made a resource for dealing with historical forms of discrimination.

A further justification of the ‘linguistic metaphor’ is the ethical *fellowship* which the event of the Cross creates. It is in this community that compassionate love evolves. The

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\(^{701}\) Ibid., p.165.
\(^{702}\) Ibid., p.166.
\(^{703}\) ‘Here are the enemies — if we may so judge — in ascending order of guilt: the soldiers, the crowd, Pilate and Herod, the Jewish leaders, Judas… But these people, whose behaviour will be so savage and inhuman, are not in any degree responsible for the Passion. They are obeying orders; they think they are doing no wrong in carrying out a sentence passed jointly by the Jewish authority and by that of Rome. These two powers assume all responsibility — the external execution of their commands might be regarded as nothing more than an innocent co-operation.’ In A. D. Sertillanges, O.P, *What Jesus Saw From the Cross*, Clonmore & Reynolds, Dublin 1948 (Original publication 1937), p.112.
Father’s compassion as ‘Loving Third’ reveals a whole community of mourners in the ‘semiotic’ scene of the Passion. The participants of this fellowship included the following: (1) Symbolically, ‘John’ as the ‘speaking being’ in us whose compassionate response to Christ we examined; (2) ‘Mary’ as the ‘loving third party’ symbolising a mother’s solidarity with the ‘Son-child’ and with the ‘Father’ who is also losing the child; (3) the Abba who is most intensely involved in this ‘mourning’ over Christ’s suffering. In this way, the Semiotic Passion draws attention to the communal dimension of ethics, which my critique objected to as not sufficiently developed in Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ethics. The ‘semiotic’ reading points to the root of this fellowship from a new perspective. It re-actualises, in a postmodern context, Barth’s emphasis on the creative Word of God as the origin of fellowship. The intimate suffering of the Father that the Semiotic Passion presents is just as generative as God’s ‘powerful’ voice in Creation. This is the New Testament dynamic of ‘power in powerlessness’ or Saint Paul’s voice for post-modernity: ‘But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.’ (2 Cor 12:9) This is a powerful revaluation of the postmodern subject: brokenness can ground the fellowship.

The linguistic metaphor of God is a theological statement. It confirms that there is no recovery from the ‘death of our language’ without responding to Transcendence as our ‘Loving Third’. To put this conclusion into context, my study is well aware that the Semiotic Passion has always to keep the theology of the cross as a reference. There is a special dialectic between the ‘linguistic imagery’ of the Father it has introduced, and the doctrine underlying the classic representation of the Cross. The theology of the cross of theological modernity has not given an exhaustive response to Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ anthropology. Without the personal direction of the Semiotic Passion, we cannot speak of a comprehensive response to Kristeva. However, it also has to be emphasised that the Semiotic Passion would remain a theological myth without the orthodoxy and theological approach of Rahner/Metz/Moltmann/Balthasar. This ‘Balthasarian’ orthodoxy itself confirms the reciprocity between ‘man’ and God in the ‘maternal metaphor’, upon which dynamic I grounded my experimental reading of the Father:

‘The heart, man’s centre, where soul and body are one, must decide to become a womb for God’s seed. Here the heart, the most secret and yet most vulnerable, the most central and yet most exposed part of man, has the power to open or close itself.’

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705 von Balthasar, You Crown the Year With Your Goodness, p.194.
‘The good will is ‘received’, accepta, as the seed of God and of eternal freedom in the womb of human freedom, and the ‘opening’ of this womb to God – as obedience – is precisely the reception of freedom.’

‘…Man becomes the womb that receives the word that is initially foreign to him. This word is sown in him, and he bears this seed to birth – not for himself, but for God, since it is a divine seed. And he gives back to its possessor the fruit that has reached its term, which belongs to God and yet is also the product of the womb. Man is expropriated a first time, when God lays claim to him as a field for his seed, and a second time, when the fruit that is borne is taken from him so that it may be brought into God’s granary (Mt 3,12). But in the midst of all this he is endowed at a deeper level with creative force that is able to respond to the requirement to bear divine fruit; indeed, he is endowed with a divine principle of fruitfulness that is the very word of God that has been sown in him: the seed makes over to the womb the appropriate form of fruitfulness, so that – in the image of the vine – the logic of relationships is inverted: Christ becomes the womb that bears, the fruitful vine-stock, and the believers become the branches that it produces without in any way being released from the obligation to produce grapes, which is the ultimate concern of the owner of the vineyard.’

Elucidating the theological potentials of the ‘linguistic’ representation of the Passion has to comply with the ultimate theological criterion: there is no replacing of Jesus as access to the Father with either ‘Mary’ or with any anthropological insight. It is the Son, exclusively, who reveals the anguish of the Father. However, there is an important dialectic between the theophany (appearance) of God and human language. Man’s involvement in love, our common origin with Jesus from the ‘Loving Third party’, the ‘loving and caring father of individual pre-history’, is revelatory of ‘God’s interior’. Human love discloses and recognises, as a response to his self-revelation, what happens in the divine interior as ‘absolute Love’.

The theological dynamics, which I have summed up, present an image of God which actually communicates with Kristeva’s materialist regime. The Semiotic Passion also communicates with the Trinitarian approach which Hanvey’s groundbreaking reading of Kristeva assigned for her theological critique.

‘The being, life, truth and beauty that are ensured by God’s being are the therapeutic chora; metaphysics is not a superstructure but the deep grammar of the goodness of what is. [Augustine] places the becoming of human subjectivity within the dynamic of longing and desire, under the salvific force of the pondus amoris, for the other who is God: we are not so much governed by the fear of dissolution and death in the sea of finitude but

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drawn, searching and thirsting for life and the integrity of our being – the stable ordering of desire and love – the supreme beauty that is God’s compassionate love.’

The *Semiotic Passion* has translated this ‘Trinitarian’ program in a non-apologetic way. It has spelled out a ‘comprehensive response’ to Kristeva’s intention to bring about a new ‘intimate revolt’ in culture. It has to start with a new *intimate* reading of the Christian cross and the post-Christian self.

8 SUMMARY OF THE THESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The two major objectives of my work were to offer a theological critique of Kristeva and present her as an important dialogue partner for systematic theology. Part One set up the framework for realising these objectives, which Part Two completed by relating the theology of the cross to Kristeva’s project. My work argued the thesis that the central problem of Kristeva’s work is the ‘exhausted subject’ of modernity and post-modernity, and that this ‘ontic’ crisis can only be resolved through a theological engagement, namely, through the ‘Semiotic Passion’, which is a comprehensive response from the theology of the cross. It is this which provides the best ground for developing a systemic engagement.

The three levels of engagement which my study established were as follows. The apologetic relationship, the inter-textual relationship (potential dialogue), and the ‘intra-textual’ relationship (actual co-operation). These corresponded to the critique of Kristeva’s materialism (Part One), engaging her through representatives of the theologia crucis, and the image of the Father in the Semiotic Passion (Part Two). These levels have translated Kristeva’s project into a theological dynamic. Theology has learnt that the secular experience of suffering is a passion narrative in its own right; and it has to be seen within the economy of Christ’s cross. Kristeva spelled out these two claims.

Part One posited the ‘speaking being’ as an ontological vision of the postmodern subject, based on materialism. Kristeva’s response to the changing conditions of the subject from modernity to post-modernity showed the ‘speaking being’ as a complex humanist program. The ‘semiotic’ vision of the person from the outset was intertwined with Kristeva’s critique of religion. She defined her psychoanalytic viewpoint as a necessary substitution for religious discourse. In an increasingly secular culture, she argued, religion does not pay sufficient attention to ‘psychic suffering’. For her, it is psychoanalytic anthropology and ethics which fulfil this task and keep discourse on love alive. This stance, however non-polemic in intention, has set up an apologetic relationship with theology. A major task of my work was to tackle this tension. Part One explored the ‘ontological’ background of Kristeva’s position in order to see clearly the motives of her project. I made a ‘structural analysis’ of the tension by pointing to her ‘humanist subtexts’ at work. In line with the classic approach of theology, first I gave a critique of the grounding of the ‘speaking being’ in materialism. The theological critique of Kristeva, I argued, has to start with this ‘ideological’ response.
Focusing on Revolution in Poetic Language, my study pointed out the intrinsic connection between the program of the self-transcending subject and Kristeva’s early materialism. Identifying the systemic exclusion of ‘grace’ was an important step in developing a theological reading of Kristeva’s work. The other major access point was pointing out the ‘exhausted subject’ as the main problem of the oeuvre. Kristeva’s materialism and the development of her work from revolutionary post-structuralism to healing in a postmodern culture suggested a specific historical approach. From the analysis of Kristeva’s ‘historical program’, I concluded that it is possible to see Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ account of the relationship between the person and culture as a complex ‘ontological program’ which, at the same time, is a correction of traditional metaphysics.

The analyses of Part One identified important points of contact between Kristeva and religion. Her critique of religion, her use of Christian imagery, her substituting psychoanalysis for religion gave support to engaging with her ‘semiotic soteriology’. Part One primarily focused on the ‘ontological tension’ with Kristeva’s semiotic strategies, and pointed out the limits of her immanent resourcing of the self. At the same time, with regard to the ethics she developed, I also sought a dialogue between her objectives and theology. I concluded that theology has to recognise her as a valuable anthropological resource for approaching the subject in a postmodern culture.

Identifying the ongoing ‘exhaustion’ of the subject was pivotal in finding an alternative to the ‘apologetic criticism’, which the ideological tension ‘automatically’ suggested. The challenge of the ‘exhausted subject’ brought into critical dialogue the psychoanalytical and the theological resourcing of the self. The emphasis was shifted from difference to a cooperation. In view of the objective need to give support to the endangered ‘person’, my study developed a sympathetic reading of Kristeva’s synthesis of the resources of the ‘Enlightenment’. I suggested reading her Freudianism in terms of a complex ‘cultural mourning’. This ‘cultural mourning’ revealed an inner revision of resources within secular humanism. My critique posited at the heart of this ‘cultural mourning’ the Habermasian agenda that ‘something is missing’ from the secular understanding of the Enlightenment project and modernity. My work articulated the ignored religious dimension of the self as ‘what is missing’. I explored the paradoxical situation that a dialogue between Kristeva and theology is a more realistic prospect than between her Freudianism and neo-rationalist humanisms.

In view of the conflict with Kristeva’s materialism, my work made central the ‘ontological exhaustion’ of the subject. I identified it as an unfinished mourning for the lost
Christian past. Kristeva’s novels revealed this unacknowledged suffering of the postmodern subject. Though Kristeva did not regard the lost Christian past as an ‘ontic’ exhaustion of the subject, nevertheless the ‘post-Christian self’ has became her recent focus. This shared historical concern with her made it possible to raise the critique onto a symbolic level. That Kristeva’s ‘cultural mourning’ on behalf of the Freudian tradition is not unrelated to religion was confirmed by her recent dialogical position with Christians. This dialogical turn offered a real resolution for the aporias which, within a traditional critique of her materialism, could not have been resolved.

Given the objective tension with Kristeva’s founding materialism, my strategy was to continue my critique by responding positively to her ‘cultural mourning’. In this way, it became possible to evaluate her ‘ontological’ utterances in a fresh way. The critical questions which Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’ posed to religion revealed that theology itself is in the process of ‘mourning’ for the past (cultural and symbolic). As the outcome of the interaction of the two ‘symbolic mournings’ (Kristeva, theology), my working hypothesis was that it is possible to reopen the ‘ontological discussion’ which Habermas forbade.

Part Two linked the two ‘symbolic mournings’ to the situation of the lost Father. I arrived at a common denominator by making central the loss of the ‘Father’s love’. This loss offered a dynamic which could be shared between psychoanalysis and faith. The dynamic of love described analogously the loss of the psychologically understood ‘loving third party’, and when this loss is understood as the lost relationship with the Christian Abba. The cultural role of the ‘loving third party’ was raised onto the level of a genuine cultural metaphor. Evaluating its support in recovering meaning was actually again making ontological statements about the human being. This solution has repositioned the Kristeva-Habermas relationship, the opening image of my study. The crisis of the ‘exhausted subject’, as the intensification of the nihilist crisis, made it necessary to develop an in-depth description of the situation. The common ground for a non-metaphysical approach to origin was an understanding of the crisis ‘from within’, which rightly can be termed the ‘ontology of love’. The crisis, Kristeva fully agreed, can be explicated best through the lens of the regenerative dynamic of love. My study presented three ways of reading the Passion, that of Freud, Kristeva, and that of theology.

Highlighting Kristeva’s Freudian subtext was significant because it raised the question of the quality of the God-image. In this critical dialogue the motives of the two types of humanism interacted, rather than their ‘ontological’ and ideological statements. Having made the God-image central in this way, it became a unifying centre of my critique. The
emphasis was shifted to the objective quest to counteract the nihilism of culture. My study identified this counter-cultural economy, in agreement with Kristeva’s critique of culture from a sub-psychic viewpoint, in ‘non-violent’ and all inclusive love. This cultural dynamic made it possible that, instead of a metaphysical and onto-theological epistemology, the image of the Father could be presented as a narrative which grounds the genuine humanism of the self and that of culture.

Freud’s historical critique of the ‘bloody imagery’ of the Cross and the underlying ‘oedipal’ nature of a God which he read into it, I argued, was a critique of a distorted atonement theology. The latter has never been fully revised in modernity. Under full revision, I also understood the potential for co-operation with secular humanism to resolve the problem. My working hypothesis was that, if this revision takes place, a whole new symbolic dialogue opens up between our ‘split’ discourses. As a result, an effective partnership to preserve the ‘European subject’ can be brought to realisation. That is why Part Two brought into dialogue all the relevant major narratives about the God-image and the person. These were Freud’s reading of the Cross, Kristeva’s correction of Freud’s approach to religion, her critique of religion and culture, her recent reading of the Passion, and the theologia crucis.

Kristeva’s Lenten meditation on ‘Suffering’ could be singled out as a direct point of contact. Her secular reading of the Cross not only expressed a dialogical position, but also made the Cross an internal reference within her system. Kristeva’s interest in the crisis of the symbols of love showed the Cross as the Symbol which can be shared with her ‘immanent’ regime. This offered a point of contact with her notion of Christ as the ‘absolute subject’. In the essay, ‘Suffering’, Kristeva recapitulated her semiotics as an ethical project. She made her important ideological correction of Freud in reference to the Cross, the central symbol of Christianity. Religion for her, faith in the other, is not an illusion but our innermost pre-religious need. Kristeva rehabilitated the ‘Father’ in her psychoanalytical ethics too. The Father was presented as the source of compassionate love and solidarity with the sufferer. With this correction, Kristeva made it possible to establish an ‘inter-textual’ relationship with my theological sources. The heart of making these connections was the theme of divine kenosis. My study submitted a comprehensive response which I termed theology’s ‘Semiotic Passion’. This argued that the theologia crucis has sufficient resources for a response to Kristeva. My central concern was pointing out that it has already undertaken a ‘symbolic mourning’, from which ground an anthropologically and theologically relevant dialogue can be started with Kristeva’s humanism in the present.
The synopsis of my chosen resources (Rahner, Moltmann, Metz and Balthasar) had firmly in view Kristeva’s psychoanalytical critique of religion and the problems that her system as a whole raises for religion, particularly for theology. As a response to her most recent reading of the Passion, my study developed a particular interest in the psychological dynamic of ‘idealisation’. Kristeva’s concept of the ‘Loving Third’ as the ‘centre’ of love allowed for the possibility of tackling constructively the Freudian critique of religion and Kristeva’s claim to incorporate the ‘feminine sacred’ into the ‘meaning’ (of life). The other area to which I wished to respond was Kristeva’s psychoanalytical interest in history. The relationship between the self and culture, my sources argued, should not be seen only as an ‘individual’ relationship. I presented Metz’s concept of eschatological solidarity with the sufferers of the past, and Moltmann’s notion of the suffering Christ present in secular culture as resources for bringing out the collective dimension of anthropology. I presented Balthasar’s Trinitarian kenosis theology as a ‘meta-anthropology’ which helps in recovering the sense of external history. I found their contributions indispensable for opening up the ‘isolated’ self. I presented these authorities as especially essential in our postmodern culture, in which the sense of history has been erased. Opening up the self to the future is an important defence against culture’s ‘melancholy’ which locks us into the present. Moltmann masterfully explained that the Cross of the suffering Jesus is the cross of the risen Christ. Christ’s Passion is the incarnation of the future of God with humanity. Together with Metz, they gave a real historical weight to Balthasar’s ‘meta-anthropology’.

The closing part of my study presented the Semiotic Passion. It was the culmination of the aim to bring into a synopsis the major themes of Kristeva and the theology of the cross. Despite its narrow focus on the scene of the Passion, it proved to be a ‘master-narrative’ in terms of a shared hermeneutical centre. The Semiotic Passion ‘updated’ my chosen resources by making divine kenosis internal to the postmodern self. I presented it as the contribution of theology for recovering the Father’s love in the postmodern context. The linguistic or ‘semiotic’ imagery of the Cross, I argued, is a theological metaphor in its own right. It brought to realisation a shared symbol building with Kristeva.

My critique focused on establishing textual links between Kristeva and the theology of the cross. As there is no established response from systematic theology, it was a meticulous task to build up these textual ‘dialogues’. I presented them throughout the full course of my work as bridges. These textual gateways can be developed into fully articulated dialogues. A theological reading of Kristeva could not be based on the sporadic engagements of secondary literature. This is why I have concentrated mainly on dialogue with primary texts.
What did my critique achieve, particularly the *Semiotic Passion*? The response to Kristeva’s ‘historical subtexts’ required drawing on theological resources not only of the present but also of the past. My study deliberately referred, however briefly, to works of previous theological generations who worked in the shadow of the Church’s ‘apologetic epoch’. In the context of theology’s ‘symbolic mourning’, we can say that the ideological failures of the older generations are also useful in understanding the present situation. Their struggle to overcome the weighty apologetics of the past through their pioneering discourses (e.g., Barth, J.A.T Robinson, Tillich, Brunner) has a continuity with the present. Today it is easier to remove what was ‘fear’ or mistrust in their work. Their apology of faith can also work positively. They can unmask naïve expectations in present dialogues with ‘post-modernity’. Deliberately pointing to voices beyond my immediate resources was meant to show that, in a theological context, the ‘post-structuralist principle’ should not be feared. Language [theology] is a process, and meaning is always multi-layered. Past agendas can be integrated, and they can enhance analysis. A further dialogue with Kristeva could include the solutions of theologians who were contemporaries with Freud, Melanie Klein and Arendt.

The *Semiotic Passion* can be regarded as a response to all major groups of questions that the ‘exhausted subject’ and Kristeva’s project have raised. To theology, the answer is that it is possible to present Christ’s sacrifice outside the language of the atonement. To Kristeva’s critique of nihilism, the response is that it is possible to present the Christian Father as a counter-cultural image which counteracts ‘violence’. The close relating of ‘God’ with the human self showed the Christian Father not simply as ‘counter-cultural’ but as an *intra-cultural image*. The classic theological program of ‘interrupting culture’ can be maintained, but from a different angle. Today God as an *intimate interruption* of our age has to be spelled out. To the humanist critique of religion, the answer is that theology can learn from the ‘psychoanalytical shift’ in culture, and represent God *within* the self, particularly for the postmodern subject. To Kristeva’s wider context, ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’, the *theologia crucis* presents the Trinitarian theology of divine *kenosis*. There is a *communal* dimension of reason, ‘anthropology’ and ethics which is missing from secular discourse. In other words, what is missing is the ‘mourning’ of the subject’s religious past. This is the self’s yearning for its genuine communal Trinitarian grounding.

My study demonstrated a co-operation between psychoanalysis and faith in a similar logic to the way Charles Taylor related secular humanism with theology. According to his thesis, there are certain elements of Christian truth which could not have developed within the religious framework of Christendom. There are authentic developments of the Gospel which took place within the secular Enlightenment to the extent that ‘some of the most
impressive extensions of a gospel ethic depended on the breakaway from Christendom. It is this ‘borderline situation’ in which my study envisages Kristeva as a lasting dialogue partner of theology. I am convinced that the bridge-narrative of the ‘mourning Father’ can integrate Kristevan psychoanalysis, which is centred on the ‘autonomy’ of the self, with theology, which ab ovo questions this self-sufficiency and the immanent resources of the self. My metaphor is not an easy synthesis as it recognises that between psychoanalysis and faith there always remains a tension.

The common symbolic mourning has resulted in the possibility that theology can make some legitimate requests. First, it asks psychoanalysis to revise as much as possible its ideological premises concerning ‘theology’. The Semiotic Passion also legitimately asks of the psychoanalytical hermeneutic of culture to revise its fears of the symbolic language of faith. Referring back to Kristeva’s position in post-metaphysical consciousness (Habermas), there is an important common platform with her. Ricoeur showed that the main challenge that Western civilisation faces today is the general loss of sensitivity to symbolic language. He firmly criticised both Cartesian rationality and the late masters of suspicion, Freud and Marx, for their ‘demystifying hermeneutics’. Kristeva fully agrees with theology about the need to return to symbolic language. This ‘unverifiable’ medium was a main cause of her departure from Habermas’ rationalism. The ‘monologism of reason’ is unable to ‘symbolise’ and let reason dream of love. The Semiotic Passion, in this context, aimed at offering an image of the Father which can dispel the fear that the use of religious symbolism might endanger the competence of Enlightenment reason. In my work I found it important to address constructively these ideological fears in Kristeva’s ‘atheistic subtexts’.

The Semiotic Passion as a mode of ‘symbolic mourning’ aimed at correcting the reductive view of religion which underlies secular humanism. This fundamental conflict for theological critique cannot be avoided as the ontological statements of theology inevitably point to the latent ‘Feuerbachian’ ground of ‘post-metaphysical consciousness’. ‘They still accuse us, and all transcendent language users, of “false consciousness”.’ I regard as the main achievement of the Semiotic Passion that it initiated a shared symbolisation with ‘secular’ anthropology. It showed the Cross as an important ‘reality detector’ in our postmodern world. The symbol, including the religious symbol, is a ‘reality detector’ which

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711 Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, p.35.
enables us to discern a human possibility that could not be discerned in any other way.\textsuperscript{713} As Ricoeur puts it, ‘through these “detector” representations, man tells the origin of his humanity.’\textsuperscript{714}

From a dogmatic point of view, there are questionable parts in the ‘semiotic Passion’. But nevertheless, I emphasise, it is a model. That there may imprecise doctrinal formulations is obvious, as the ‘semiotic Passion’ touches on a long unvisited theme, ‘suffering in God’. Since the heresy of ‘Theopaschism’ up to the present, there is no satisfying solution as to what it means that ‘God has suffered’.\textsuperscript{715} I have indicated the doctrines this imagery touches on, but they were not my main concern. Yet I posited the ‘maternal metaphor’ of God as an important internal subject for theology. I argued its spiritual potential. It prompts a fresh reflection on the meaning of the cross for the ‘exhausted subject’ who is always an ‘anonymous Christian’. Can we re-phrase Tertullian by raising the question if ‘cultura naturaliter Christiana est’, that is, if European culture is naturally Christian.

A major conclusion of my research is that it is no longer possible to reflect on faith today while staying outside the Freudian critique of religion. Where the image of the ‘mourning Father’ can prove especially useful is the encouragement that Christians should not be frightened away from the thought that there are projections in their religious language.\textsuperscript{716} The Semiotic Passion highlighted our common anthropological drama with the Father. God, as it were, took a serious risk in the Incarnation when he opted for revealing Himself in images based on ‘identification’ with the parental imago. But what else could he do? If our primary experience of love is expressed through this ‘parental’ imagery, there is no other way for Him and for us but a shared human language. We cannot become extraterrestrials to our anthropocentric images.

The biggest difficulty is not to fall back into Kristeva’s own immanentism, i.e. Christianity providing another range of symbols for what is essentially an internal subjective drama. If these remain only at the psychic level they will eventually suffer the same fate of ‘exhaustion’ as the human psyche. What added riches Christianity brings are the historical rootedness of Redemption, its ‘facticity’, and its capacity for transcending time and space while being rooted in it. In other words, it is the challenge and the possibility, the shock of the real Other. Moreover, the other dimension of this Christian Other is that there is a

\textsuperscript{713} Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation, p.7.
\textsuperscript{714} Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, p.540.
\textsuperscript{715} Cantalamessa, Life in Christ, p.94.
\textsuperscript{716} See Rizzuto’s attempts to dialogue with the Freudian critique of the Christian God-image, Rizzuto, The Birth of The Living God.
redemptive community created by this otherness in which we are inscribed. My study repeatedly asked the question if this is what is essentially lacking in Kristeva’s psychoanalytical ethics. In other words, the ‘Semiotic Passion’ had to show that it represents the full dynamics of the Passion and that it offers more than a psychological liberation. That is why I presented the linguistic imagery as a complementary image of the Passion. I emphasised that the link should be retained with the ‘orthodox imagery’ of my chosen resources.

It is putting the ‘Semiotic Passion’ into a wider context that answers the question whether the ‘semiotic’ Father is a theological myth or not. This wider context is post-Conciliar Trinitarian theology. This is the most important source for demonstrating God’s inexhaustible love. The Semiotic Passion understood the imago dei as the ‘imitatio Trinitatis’. There is an analogy between our dynamic (personal and social) and the Trinity. In so far as we enter into this dynamic, this is the moment of salvation. Where the Semiotic Passion departs from the position of a non-believer is in choosing this imitation of the Trinity as the self’s ultimate reference. In order for us to be the true image of God, fulfilling the self’s potential, we have to love and actualise (‘perform’) his image in us. This is a movement into a salvific economy when God’s own life becomes the norm. My critique followed Hanvey’s Trinitarian imperative: ‘We must come to understand that we are not self-grounding but given. Until we grasp this we are exiles in a land of self-alienation, not Narcissus but Sisyphus, caught in the limitless futility of self-healing and self-construction.’

The image of the ‘Loving Third party’ in the Passion makes sense only if the Father really points to the ‘graced’ Symbolic Order of the Kingdom. In order to meet this criterion the Semiotic Passion harmonised the Kristevan and the Kierkegaardian notions of the self in this context. We can evaluate the ‘semiotic’ reading of the Passion as a more realistic and critical synopsis of the two programmes than the one suggested by Lorraine. The linguistic imagery of the Passion joined Kierkegaard’s program by arguing that the psychic economy of love has a ‘beyond’, which is faith in the infinite Other. Fellowship with the ‘mourning Father’ translates quite well both Kristeva’s emphasis on the subject’s uniqueness and Kierkegaard’s notion that the self’s uniqueness is grounded in God’s universal and eternal love. That is why the Semiotic Passion presented the Father’s ‘suffering’ as the anticipation of Easter. I imagine a continuation of the ‘semiotic’ Passion as a conversation with the ‘celebrating Father’ who rejoices in the self’s resurrection, psychic and ontological. It could

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717 Hanvey, ‘Other than Stranger’, p.139.
be a reinterpretation of Kristeva’s program of *jouissance*, the joy over our historical ‘incarnation’ in the body. This possible direction unfolds perhaps the most important strategic recognition of my study. Namely, that in the fragmentation in which theological and humanist discourses live, their new integration becomes possible only with a new ‘subjective turn’. That is when the suffering of the ‘exhausted subject’ becomes their central and common reference.

In this writer’s view, the future of the Church in Europe will depend on the dialogue with secular humanism or ‘atheism’. This is a borderline situation which alone can bring about a ‘revolutionary’ renewal of the language of faith. The encounter with Kristeva was such a linguistic encounter. This encounter revealed the dialectical structure of my study. That is to say, Kristeva made her corrections of Freud’s critique of religion in reference to the Cross; the *Semiotic Passion* corrected the atonement language of sacrifice in reference to Kristeva’s semiotic symbolism. As we have seen, this dialectic became alive in refashioning Rahner’s metaphor, the ‘anonymous Christian’. My ‘Good Friday dialogue’ identified him as the ‘anonymous sufferer’ or the ‘exhausted subject’ of our post-Christian and ‘post-Enlightenment’ culture. The engagement with the ‘speaking being’ has led theology and secular humanism to a crucial recognition. The postmodern self is always a post-Christian self, deeply marked by its own (un-reflected!) Christian past. This ‘exhausted subject’ bears a heritage which neither he nor our culture can sufficiently name.

The *Semiotic Passion* showed an example of the linguistic innovation which such a ‘Good Friday dialogue’ can bring about. The stake is very high: theology has to re-learn its language and that of the world. For it is through such encounters that the ‘mystical language’ of the Church can again open up to contemporary history. As the metaphors of the *Semiotic Passion* aimed to show, a dynamic can emerge where the ‘Mystery of God’, understood in the human interior, can be offered to the secular quest for love and meaning. It is a retroactive learning process.
Appendix 1.a

KEY HERMENEUTIC TERMS OF THE THESIS

Inter-textual relationship, ‘inter-textuality’

‘Inter-textuality’ is a major concept of Kristeva’s post-structuralist linguistics, coined by her. ‘Inter-textuality’ means interpreting texts as crossing of texts. The meaning of a text is never fixed, it is always in relation to other texts and traditions. I apply the term to denote the internal dialogue between Kristeva’s Freudianism and theology.

‘Inter-textuality’ is ‘defined in La Révolution du Langage Poétique as the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position’. In the specific context of our study, ‘inter-textuality’ is closely related to the process of ‘cultural mourning’.718

‘Cultural mourning’

‘Cultural mourning’ or ‘symbolic mourning’ is the underlying hermeneutical principle of my work. Drawing on Peter Homans, my method is to reconnect the ‘split discourses’ underlying Kristeva and theology. We can approach her work as an intense reflection on a ‘lost’ Christian past and how its heritage is preserved in secular humanism. Theology, on its side, also develops a ‘symbolic mourning’ when it reflects on the conflict with secular humanism. Through this concept my study brings Kristeva’s materialism, Freudianism and theology into a constructive dialogue.

‘Sub-text’, Kristeva’s ‘sub-texts’

The term refers in general to Kristeva’s formative traditions, such as her Marxism and Freudianism, as her atheistic or humanist sub-texts. Their importance is that while these ‘sub-texts’ are never direct objects of Kristeva’s investigations as ‘ideologies’, they remain effective. My critique also develops a dialogue with the ideological dimension of these ‘sub-texts’.

The ‘exhausted subject’ and ‘ontic’ exhaustion

The ‘exhausted subject’ is the central and most frequently recurring term of my thesis. As a hermeneutical concept, it denotes what historically has happened to the subject of modernity and post-modernity. The crisis of the subject is a central problem for critical theories. My study, while being attentive to these findings, is primarily interested in the theological aspects of the crisis. ‘Exhaustion’ in my use is always linked with the regenerative dynamic of ‘grace’. When used in this sense, its synonymous meaning is the ‘ontic’ or ‘ontological exhaustion’ of the subject. ‘Ontic’ or ‘ontological exhaustion’ emphasises the fact that the crisis affects the whole being of the person.

718 Roudiez’s definition from the ‘Introduction’ to Kristeva’s Desire in Language, p.15.
'Good Friday dialogue'

First, the metaphor ‘Good Friday dialogue’ refers to the actual borderline situation of engagement with Kristeva. It makes the theological problems that her psychoanalytical horizon generates central. ‘Good Friday dialogue’ has a second symbolic meaning: it brings together the themes of common interest to Kristeva and theology, such as language, the person, love, suffering, and Christ.

‘Split discourses’, ‘shared crisis’

I use the term ‘split discourses’ to denote the historical conflict with Kristeva’s major formative traditions (‘Marx’, ‘Freud’). There are two standard ways of relating to the ‘split’. The first actively accepts the division. This is the ‘apologetic approach’. The second way is bringing the opposing positions closer by understanding their historical motives. My preference is for the latter. The novelty of my approach is that whereas the promoters of dialogue with secular humanism on the religious side (e.g., Charles Taylor, William Meissner, Peter Homans, Louis Dupré) do not operate with the notion of a shared crisis of the subject, my study makes it central. The term ‘split discourse’ will always refer to the lack of a shared approach to the crisis of subject or culture. Operating with a shared crisis of the person in a shared culture, facing a shared nihilism forces the secular and the religious positions to revisit their ‘unshared past’.

‘Semiotic Passion’

The ‘Semiotic Passion’ expresses a dialogue in which theological critique does not remain extrinsic to Kristeva’s psycho-linguistic system but has a thorough understanding of her system (which is called her ‘semiotics’).
Appendix I.

KIERKEGAARD’S GROUNDING THE SELF IN GOD

‘The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can be done only through the relationship to God…. Consequently, the progress of the becoming must be an infinitive moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self… But if the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows or not.” (Sickness unto Death) 719

‘But this self takes on a new quality and qualification by being a self directly before God. This self is no longer merely a human self but is what I, hoping not to be misinterpreted, would call a theological self, the self directly before God. And what infinite reality the self gains by being conscious of existing before God, by becoming a human self whose criterion is God!... But what an infinite accent falls on the self by having God as the criterion! The criterion for the self is always: that directly before which it is a self, but this in turn is the definition of ‘criterion’…. So everything is qualitatively that by which it is measured, and that which is its qualitative criterion is ethically its goal.’ 720

‘The self is intensified in relation to the criterion for the self, infinitely when God is the criterion. In fact, the greater the conception of God, the more self there is; the more self, the greater conception of God. Not until a self as this specific single individual is conscious of existing before God, not until then is it the infinite self. …’ 721

720  Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death, p. 79.
721  Ibid., p. 80.
Appendix II.

THE HERMENEUTICAL PRESENCE OF A ‘MALE’ GOD IN KRISTEVA’S CRITIQUE OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERHOOD AS A ‘MALE CONSTRUCT’

The controlling function of the constructed male image of the Virgin Mother:

I am not unaware of the traps that this sacra woman has set to snare our femininity for the last two thousand years: the body reduced to the ear and to tears; concealment of the sexuality I would not look at, under all the draping possible and imaginable by the best painters, and by the rest; sanctification of suffering and sorrow and, only afterward, the recognition of an incomparable power. 722

Because the birth of Jesus was without sin, should not that of his mother, in a certain way, also be free from the same sin? Logical coherence requires it. Saint Bernard still bristled at celebrating the conception of Mary by Saint Anne and Saint Joachim, thus trying to check the assimilation of Mary to Christ. 723

‘A clever construction, all things considered, which calms the social anxiety on the subject of birth, satisfies a male being anxious about femininity, and also satisfies a woman, no less anxious about femininity.’ 724

On the one hand, she satisfies women’s aspirations to power: I told you, she flatters our latent paranoia – every woman who finds her reflection in the Virgin is implicitly destined for the same glory…. But, at the same time and on the other hand, she bridles them when she does not bully them: on your knees, ladies, you are only a place of transition, look after the children and the sick, no sex or politics, the ear and understanding are worth more than a sexed body, you can never be told often enough. 725

The unrecognised real experience of motherhood:

‘The Orthodox Marian cult has feminized the men, it may have virilized the women, but it does not seem to have contributed toward bringing recognition to the particular ways a woman feels and thinks.’ 726

Primo, from the Nativity to the Pieta, and including the Mater Dolorosa and the Regina Caeli, the Virgin is nothing like a lover: she is exclusively the devoted mother. The ‘good mother,’ as Melanie Klein would say, who gives herself body and soul to her son, to the extent that, without her, the dear son would have no body, since that god is a man, precisely, only by the grace of his journey through the body of Mary ‘full of grace.’ That grace is an extraordinary apologia for obblative motherhood, on the brink of primary narcissism: the origin of the love every human being needs to proceed. And the deficiency of same is the sinister source of all depression, if not psychosis. In short, Mary rehabilitates that primal bedrock of our identities, which modern analysts call ‘mother-baby co-excitation. (…)’ 727

722 Kristeva, The Feminine and the Sacred, p.73.
723 Ibid., p.74.
724 Ibid., p.75.
725 Ibid., 2011, p.79.
726 Ibid., p.74.
727 Ibid., p.76.
An expression of sublimating the death-instinct and destructiveness of bodily drives underlying language and psychic life:

The desire to devour and murder remain, however, underlying every baby and every mother in their co-excitation, even if it is serene: you don't have to be a psychoanalyst to know that. But, via a strong cathexis of the breast – oh, the holy breast of the Virgin! – and the valorization of sorrow - oh, the sobbing of our Queen! – the aggressiveness inherent in that archaic link is obliterated, and we are saturated solely with the being of serenity. Which we miss so much, right?, an indelible fantasy!  

The image of the Virgin is the meta-narrative of the genesis of language. Language is suspended above the maternal ‘void’, that is, the linguistic moment of being severed from the mother:

Within the Word, two things will come about: on the one hand, part of the Son’s trajectory toward his Father and, on the other, the rationality of Christianity, which will permit it to rediscover Aristotle and to clear its name through Descartes’ cogito, before opening the way to modern philosophy. Well now, the Word, in fact, revolves around Mary. ‘The hole of the Virgin, says Sollers, by which he means – I’m simplifying, how can you help it? – that it is around an empty space left for Mary that the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost revolves.  

729 Ibid., p. 78.
Appendix III.

Classic sacrificial language as the standard hermeneutical code to the Cross. A collection of doctrinal statements of classic Eastern and Western soteriology:

EASTERN SOTERIOLOGY:
IRENAEUS:
– the primary words of ‘atonement’ are already present
– emphasises the obedience of the new Adam
– this obedience reverses the whole tide of sin and disobedience in history
– Christ’s death is salvific because it is the supreme test of obedience
– Jesus saves ‘by his blood’ means the degree of his commitment to the Father’s will
– for his obedience Jesus is raised from the dead into glory
– he stresses the goodness of this world, we are saved not from the world, because creation is good,
– there is an emphasis on the bodyliness of Christ
– there is a permanent presence and closeness of God to history
– Jesus saves by becoming incarnate and revealing as the pre-existent word incarnate

ATHANASIUS:
– Incarnation Christology: ‘The reason of his coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving kindness of the Word’ (On the Incarnation of the Word)
– With sin humanity lost its knowledge of God and was pursuing a course of corruption and death
– the true word of God restores human existence to its previous state
– with him emerges the fundamental tension between God’s goodness → ← and God’s justice: God had to be true to the promise of death if human beings disobey the original commandment; yet, on the other hand, it was against God’s love to allow human existence to be destroyed after God created it
– Jesus Christ saves by incarnation
– the divine Word undergoes a sacrificial death: the divine Incarnate Word surrenders his body to death in our place
– this death is sacrifice; the idea is substitution or representation; as head of humanity Jesus represents all, he undergoes death for all of us, and thus pays the debt or the ransom (with Athanasius in a diffused way to God, to Satan, and to death)
– critically: Jesus is not for Athanasius a human

WESTERN SOTERIOLOGY: AUGUSTINE
– emphasis on divinisation: ‘God became human so we would become divine’
– the motive of the Incarnation is God’s love, but this redeeming love of God is not as total and universal as in Origen or Gregory of Nyssa;
– there is a considerable reference to God’s wrath and anger;
– salvation is being cleansed from sin
– Jesus’ work is sacrifice, the sacrifice is offered to God
– the logic of history lies in making satisfaction to God
– Christ, the innocent victim reconciles us with God’s justice
– developed substitution theory: the sacrifice is offered on our behalf, for us, and in our place
– Christ is a priest who offers the definitive sacrifice for sin
– sacrifice is a transaction between God and God, done on our behalf
– within the Trinity it is the divine Word who is the subject of Jesus’ action
– it is a redemption through ransom
– meta-scenario: human beings, because of sin, are given over to power of Satan; sacrifice is performed and ransom paid to overcome sin: ‘Christ was the price given for us in order that we might be loosened form his chains’

ANSELM:
– is operating within the Augustinian tradition. He presents the satisfaction theory, which became the basis of western soteriology.
– original sin is an infinite offence against God, the consequence is infinite debt towards God → therefore it requires either eternal punishment or satisfaction.
– repay + and repair
– God saves: through the act of surrendering his life freely for the sake of justice, he chooses his own death
– Jesus acts as a representative of human beings (Cur Deus Homo)
– the will of every creature should be subjected to the Creator and any failure is sin
– “It is impossible for God to lose his honour”: God is compelled by his own justice

"God must do what is God like"

ABELARD:
– In Jesus Christ God demonstrates his love for...
being like us.

- the actor in history is God or the divine Word who was defined as consubstantial with the Father of Nicea: his body and flesh is an instrument through which divine being, in effect God, is the subject or actor in history.

REFORMERS:

LUTHER

- shows the intensification of the atonement scheme
- we are saved from sin and the wrath of God
- the larger framework for understanding God is God’s love and mercy
- the logic of Christ’s work is substitution and satisfaction
- the Logos or Word of God, Christ, becomes incarnate and takes the place of sinful human beings: "Christ became a sinner"
- "Despite being divine, experienced himself as sinner": Luther maximizes the pain and suffering of Christ, especially internally
- Christ, in substituting for all human beings, and being our representative, is obedient to death in our place
- for Luther satisfaction takes place through punishment
- after Jesus Christ, God no longer regards the sinfulness of human beings, but only looks upon the righteousness of the representative
- a cosmic battle between the forces of evil and good (→ we see it again in Balthasar)
- a duel between the incarnate Logos and a whole series of personified forces: sin, death, God’s curse, God’s wrath, the Law
- but Christ the innocent, obedient, holy, and divine one overcomes and defeats all of these forces
- although he accomplished this in his humanity, it was the work of divinity
- the place where this duel took place is within the person of Jesus Christ
- the appropriation of Salvation is the wonderful exchange: what is Christ’s becomes mine, his innocence and righteousness, just as what was mine becomes Christ’s, that is, sinfulness, fear, condemnation by the law, being the object of God’s wrath and curse.
- how people were included in Luther’s story: the believer clings to Christ in faith
- Luther attributes nothing to human freedom, the act is attachment to Christ ("sola fide")
- strong antithesis between the Gospel and the Law

humankind

- Jesus Christ binds human beings to God in love and by being God’s love towards us and enkindling our love of God and neighbour in return

CALVIN:

- Law is positive, it is a guide to the Christian
- takes over God’s wrath, substitution, obedience, satisfaction
- Christ is a sacrifice, he substitutes for us, and by his obedience to death, he satisfied God’s anger and wrath against sin
- we must appease God because God’s wrath and hostility is upon our sins
- our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God: we must above all remember this substitution
- it is God’s righteous vengeance, which the Son has taken upon himself, still hung over us
- Christ was offered to the Father in death as an expiatory sacrifice that when he discharged all satisfaction through his sacrifice, we might cease to be afraid of God’s wrath (Institutiones)
- Calvin finds an aspect of salvation in every aspect of the narrative of Christ’s life
- he distinguished purification and justification: once justified, the Christian should lead a holy life in the world, guided by Law → salvation is played out in society
Appendix IV.

Kristeva’s Linguistic Reading of the Cross, Christ the ‘Absolute Subject’:

‘But Christ’s passion brings into play even more primitive layers of the psyche; it thus reveals a fundamental depression (a narcissistic wound or reversed hatred) that conditions access to human language. The sadness of young children just prior to their acquisition of language has often been observed; this is when they must renounce forever the maternal paradise in which every demand is immediately gratified. The child must abandon its mother and be abandoned by her in order to be accepted by the father and begin talking. If it is true that language begins in mourning inherent in the evolution of subjectivity, the abandonment by the father – the symbolic “other” – triggers a melancholy anguish that can grow to suicidal proportions. (…)

The “scandal of the cross”, the logos tou stavron or the language of the cross, which some, according to Saint Paul, call “foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18 and 1:23; Gal. 5:11) and which is indeed inconceivable for a god as the ancients understood the term, is embodied, I think not only in the psychic and physical suffering that irrigates our lives (qui irrigue notre existence) but even more profoundly in the essential alienation that conditions our access to language, in the mourning that accompanies the dawn of psychic life. (…)

Christ abandoned, Christ in hell, is of course the sign that God shares the condition of the sinner. But He also tells the story of that necessary melancholy beyond which we humans may just possibly discover the other, now in the form of symbolic interlocutor rather than nutritive breast.’

And:

‘For the interruption, even momentary, of the bond that links Christ to his Father and to life, this caesura, this “hiatus” offers not merely an image but also a story for certain psychic cataclysms that lie in wait for the presumed balance of each individual and, because of this, make a dressing for them [les pansent]. Each and every one of us is the result of a long “work of the negative”: birth, weaning, separation, frustration. For having staged this rupture as the very heart of the absolute subject, Christ, for having presented it in the figure of a Passion, as the other, supportive side of the resurrection, Christianity brings to consciousness the essential internal dramas of each person’s becoming. It thus gives itself an immense…unconscious…cathartic power.’

731 Kristeva, In the Beginning Was Love, pp.40-41.
732 ‘Suffering (Lenten Lectures, March 19, 2006)’, in Kristeva, This Incredible Need to Believe, pp.94-95.
‘Grid A’ corresponds most to the ‘horizontality of the Cross’, and gives an apt description of the subject – doctrine relationship in the Church of modernity. Community cohesion, interpersonal relationships, and the support of the individual by culture were strong. The cultural canon was relatively un-fragmented. ‘Authority’ – religious, secular, and moral – was respected and unquestioned. I highlight that theological modernity is deeply rooted in the world of pre-modernity. The theological concepts with which modernity operates still heavily reflect this ‘world before change’. Its characteristics are: order, balance of hierarchical society, sense of belonging + plus stable relationship with the other. ‘Grids’ (B-C-D) describe the situation of the ‘exhausted subject’, the transition from capitalist modernity to consumerist post-modernity. This is where a new linguistic sensitivity to faith and religious narratives emerges, the ‘verticality of the cross’. The main danger at the endpoint of the process (D) is the emergence of sect-like collectivity, authoritarian regimes, fundamentalisms, and a strict separation of insiders/outsiders.

Appendix VI.

HYMNS ON CHRIST’S SUFFERING FROM PASSION TIDE

a. / The Royal Banners Forward Go (Vexilla Regis Prodeunt) \(^{734}\)

The royal banners forward go,
The Cross shines forth in mystic glow,
Where He in flesh, our flesh made,
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

Where deep for us, the spear was dyed,
Life’s torrent rushing from His side,
To wash us in that precious flood
Where mingled Water flowed, and Blood.

Fulfilled is all that David Told
In true prophetic song of old:
Amidst the nations, God, saith he,
Hath reigned and triumphed from the tree.

O Tree of beauty! Tree of light!
O Tree, with royal purple dight!
Elect on whose triumphal Breast
Those holy limbs should find their rest.

On whose dear arms, so widely flung,
The weight of this world’s ransom hung;
The price of humankind to pay,
And spoil the spoiler of his Prey.

O Cross, our one reliance, hail!
This holy Passiontide avail
To give fresh merit to the saint

b. / Thirty Years Among Us Dwelling (Lustris sex qui iam peractis) \(^{735}\)

Thirty years among us dwelling,
His appointed time fulfilled,
Born for this, He meets His Passion,
For this He freely willed;
On the Cross the Lamb is lifted,
Where His life-blood shall be spilled.

He endured the nails, the spitting,
Vinegar, and spear, and reed:
From that holy Body broken
Blood and water forth proceed:
Earth, and stars, and sky, and ocean,
By that flood from stain are freed.

Faithful Cross! above all other,
One and only noble Tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peers may be;
Sweetest wood, and sweetest iron!
Sweetest Weight is hung on thee.

Bend thy boughs, O Tree of glory!
Thy relaxing sinews bend;
For awhile the ancient rigor,
That thy birth bestowed, suspend;
And the King of heavenly beauty
On thy bosom gently tend!

\(^{734}\) The Monastic Diurnal or the Day Hours of the Monastic Breviary in Latin and in English, Saint Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2004, pp.233-234*.

\(^{735}\) Ibid., pp.236-237*
And pardon to the penitent.

To Thee, eternal Three
in One,
Let homage meet by all be done:
Whom by the Cross Thou
dost restore,
Preserve and govern ever
more. Amen.

Thou alone wast counted
worthy
This world’s ransom
to sustain;
That a shipwrecked race
for ever
Might a port of refuge gain:
With the sacred Blood
Anointed
Of the Lamb for sinners
slain.

Glory be to God, and
honour
In the highest, as is meet,
To the Son, and to the
Father,
And the eternal Paraclete,
Whose is boundless praise
and power
Through the ages infinite.
Amen.
Appendix VII.

STABAT MATER, **hymn, 13th century, Latin**

**STABAT MATER**

At the cross her station keeping,  
Mary stood in sorrow weeping  
When her Son was crucified.

While she waited in her anguish,  
Seeing Christ in torment languish,  
Bitter sorrow pierced her heart.

With what pain and desolation,  
With what noble resignation,  
Mary watched her dying Son.

Ever-patient in her yearning  
Though her tear-filled eyes were burning,  
Mary gazed upon her Son.

Who, that sorrow contemplating,  
On that passion meditating,  
Would not share the Virgin's grief?

Christ she saw, for our salvation,  
Scourged with cruel acclamation,  
Bruised and beaten by the rod.

Christ she saw with life-blood failing,  
All her anguish unavailing,  
Saw him breathe his very last.

Mary, fount of love's devotion,  
Let me share with true emotion  
All the sorrow you endured.

Virgin, ever interceding,  
Hear me in my fervent pleading:  
Fire me with your love of Christ.

Mother, may this prayer be granted:  
That Christ's love may be implanted  
In the depths of my poor soul.

At the cross, your sorrow sharing,  
All your grief and torment bearing,  
Let me stand and mourn with you.

Fairest maid of all creation,  
Queen of hope and consolation,  
Let me feel your grief sublime.

Virgin, in your love befriend me,  
At the Judgment Day defend me.  
Help me by your constant prayer.

Savior, when my life shall leave me,  
Through your mother's prayers receive me  
With the fruits of victory.

Virgin of all virgins blest!  
Listen to my fond request:  
Let me share your grief divine

Let me, to my latest breath,  
In my body bear the death  
Of your dying Son divine.

Wounded with His every wound,  
Steep my soul till it has swooned  
In His very Blood away.

Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,  
Lest in flames I burn and die,  
In His awe-full judgment day.

Savior, when my life shall leave me,  
Through your mother's prayers receive me  
With the fruits of victory.

While my body here decays  
May my soul your goodness praise,  
Safe in heaven eternally. Amen Alleluia.

*The Collegeville Hymnal*  
Appendix VIII.

DOCTRINAL DEBATES WHICH CAN BE RELATED TO THE IMAGE OF THE ‘MOURNING/SUFFERING FATHER’ IN THE SEMIOTIC PASSION: PATRIPASSIANISM AND THE THEOPASCHITE CONTROVERSY

What is known as the theopaschite controversy (Greek, theos /God/ and paschein /to suffer/) was a debate on the implications of using a theopaschite language which had been used from the beginnings of Christianity. The theopaschism brought into theological discourse that the divine Logos (i.e., the second Person of the Trinity) suffered on the cross. The how of this suffering was at the heart of the debate. Initially the ‘movement’ was a polemic reaction to positions which opposed Jesus’s full humanity (like Nestorius /ca 385-ca 450/ who denied that Mary truly could be called Theotokos (‘Mother of God’), he coined the abusive term ‘theopaschite’.) In the debate theological aspects of the suffering of God in Christ were raised, and the theopaschite formula, after many difficulties, became part of orthodoxy. The orthodox teaching on Jesus’s suffering was formulated at the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinaple (533), which is called the theopaschite formula. ‘Divinity as such (i.e., the triune Godhead) does not suffer. It affirms rather that the hypostasis of the Logos (i.e, the second Person of the Trinity), by virtue of the Incarnation, suffered “in the flesh” (i.e, carne or secundum carmem or ‘in the flesh’). In short, the formula asserts that the human nature of Jesus suffered, and the second Person of the Trinity suffered by virtue of entering into a hypostatic union with that nature, but not that the divine nature of Jesus suffered.’

Patripassianism was a Trinitarian heresy. Tertullian who accused Praxeas of teaching that the Father himself suffered on the Cross coined the nickname. (The term is derived from the statement, Pater passus est, ‘the Father suffered’.) Praxeas’ position in reality was not erroneous. ‘He distinguished between the Son, that is, the flesh of the man Jesus, who suffered on the cross, and the Father, identified with the Holy Spirit, God, or Christ. The Father did not suffer himself, but suffered with the Son. Tertullian rejected this attempt to safeguard divine impassibility (the doctrine that God cannot suffer), arguing that because compassion is a form of passion Praxeas implied that the Father himself suffered. Patripassianism is, formally speaking, a Trinitarian heresy, because proponents refused to make strict distinctions between the Father and the Son, on the grounds that this would compromise the unity (monarchia) of God. For them, the Son was a mode of appearance (modus) of the Father."

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737 Extract and quote from the entry ‘Patripassianism’ by Marcel Sarot, Ibid. p. 375.


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