

EDDA WOLFF

Liturgical Non-Sense

*Religion in
Philosophy and Theology*

Mohr Siebeck

Religion in Philosophy and Theology

Editors

HELEN DE CRUZ (St. Louis, MO) · ASLE EIKREM (Oslo)

THOMAS RENTSCH (Dresden) · HARTMUT VON SASS (Berlin)

HEIKO SCHULZ (Frankfurt a. M.) · JUDITH WOLFE (St Andrews)

114



Edda Wolff

Liturgical Non-Sense

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

Mohr Siebeck

Edda Wolff, born 1986; studied Theology and Philosophy in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland; PhD at the University of Durham; ordained minister in the Church of England; priest in the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe (Frankfurt and Paris); currently working at Boston College and the University of Cologne, for a postdoctoral fellowship on Mysticism and Political Activism.
orcid.org/0000-0002-5208-7270

ISBN 978-3-16-159952-1 / eISBN 978-3-16-159953-8
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-159953-8

ISSN 1616-346X / eISSN 2568-7425 (Religion in Philosophy and Theology)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2021 Mohr Siebeck Tübingen, Germany. www.mohrsiebeck.com

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was printed on non-aging paper by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen, and bound by Buchbinderei Nädle in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

Viatoribus.

Acknowledgements

This book is based on my PhD thesis, which I completed at the University of Durham, UK, in 2019. The process of writing a PhD thesis and committing to a large piece of academic work is a unique opportunity for intellectual and personal development. In the case of my project, the engagement with liturgical questions has, additionally, had a significant impact on my spiritual life and my understanding of my vocation to ordained ministry in the Church.

I am enormously thankful for all the support I have received during this journey.

First, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Marcus Pound and Professor Chris Insole, for their encouragement and regular feedback. I am also very grateful for the input and support of Professor Emil Angehrn, whose foundational approach to negative hermeneutics inspired this thesis.

I would also like to thank my Westcott House tutors, Drs Paul Dominiak, Eeva Johns, and Jeff Phillips for their support. I would like to thank Dr Alison Grey for her commitment in the early stages of my project.

My sincere thanks go to Drs Earl Collins and Ayla Lepin for their profound feedback and inspiring conversations.

Also, I would like to thank everybody who supported me with proofreading, translating or practical advice, in particular Dr Jenny Harris, and to Senan Furlong OSB for his support with the section on the liturgy in Glenstal Abby.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Charles Damian Ledbetter for his patience and encouragement in the last stages of the project.

I am very grateful to the anonymous donor who covered the printing costs of this project.

Victoria, 28th of March, Palm Sunday, 2021 - *I acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.*

Edda Wolff

Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Liturgy and Negative Hermeneutics.....	5
1 Starting Points for a Hermeneutic of Liturgy – A Methodology	5
1.1 Liturgy as Object of Research	5
1.2 Hermeneutics of Liturgy.....	15
1.3 Methodological Deepening – The Dialectical Criticism of Andrea Grillo	24
2 Negative Hermeneutics.....	31
2.1 Constellation of Negative Hermeneutics	31
2.1.1 Place Within the Philosophical-Hermeneutical Discussion	31
2.1.1.1 Rootedness in Classical Hermeneutics	31
2.1.1.2 Specificity of Negative Hermeneutics	34
2.1.2 Critique and Impulses from other Disciplines	35
2.2 Basic Concepts – The Dynamic of Understanding	38
2.2.1 The Place of Understanding	44
2.2.1.1 Understanding of Sense (Subject-Relatedness of Sense)	44
2.2.1.2 Self-Communication (Sense-Relatedness of the Subject)	48
2.2.2 Limitations of Understanding	50
2.2.2.1 Formal	52
2.2.2.2 Content -Related	54
2.2.2.3 Dealing with Negativity	56
2.3 Status of Negative Hermeneutics – The Sense of Self-Communication	58
2.3.1 Object	58
2.3.2 Method.....	60
2.3.3 Critique	61
3 Negative Hermeneutics of Liturgy: Theory and Potential	65
3.1 Methodological Pre-Thoughts	65

3.1.1 Givenness.....	68
3.1.2 Transformation.....	71
3.2 Conceptual Unfolding	76
3.2.1 Language	77
3.2.2 Subject.....	79
3.2.3 Sense.....	80
3.3 Liturgical Hyperbole?.....	83
Chapter III: Liturgy of Holy Saturday.....	89
1 Methodological Preliminaries.....	89
2 Holy Saturday as an Object of Study	93
2.1 Theological Framework.....	93
2.2 Liturgical Framework.....	96
2.2.1 Historical	98
2.2.2 Systematic-Theological.....	102
2.2.3 Practical/Pastoral	105
2.3 Negative Hermeneutic of Holy Saturday	108
2.3.1 Language/Writing	109
2.3.2 Subject.....	111
2.3.3 Sense.....	113
2.4 The Dynamic of Reading Liturgy	115
3 Case Studies	116
3.1 Holy Saturday with the Iona Community	120
3.1.1 Setting.....	120
3.1.2 Liturgy	125
3.1.2.1 Framework.....	127
3.1.2.2 Analysis	129
3.1.3 Conclusions	133
3.2 The Liturgy of Holy Saturday in the Church of England	137
3.2.1 Framework.....	137
3.2.2 Text Hermeneutics	142
3.2.2.1 Principal Service.....	142
3.2.2.2 Offices	145
3.2.3 Conclusions	149
3.3 Holy Saturday at Glenstal Abbey.....	153
3.3.1 Framework.....	153
3.3.1.1 Background.....	153
3.3.1.2 Context.....	156

3.3.2 Text Hermeneutics	158
3.3.2.1 Morning Prayer.....	160
3.3.2.2 Midday Prayer	162
3.3.2.3 Evening Prayer	163
3.3.3 Conclusions	164
3.4 Holy Saturday in the Orthodox Church in America	169
3.4.1 Basis	169
3.4.2 Liturgy	175
3.4.2.1 Matins.....	177
3.4.2.2 Vespers	180
3.4.3 Conclusions	183
3.5 Conclusions and Evaluation of the Case Studies	187
Chapter IV: Conclusion and Outlook	191
1 Anthropological – A Utopic Void.....	198
2 Theological – A Messianic Hyperbole	202
Bibliography	208
Index of Ancient Sources	225
Index of Authors	228
Index of Subjects	231

Chapter I

Introduction

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

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

Nietzsche’s twist on the opening verses of John’s Gospel substitutes ‘logos’ for ‘nonsense’. This is a powerful reversal of what we are used to reading in John’s Gospel as the ‘word’, the ‘sense’, and ‘God’ Himself. However, far from the radical atheistic framework of Nietzsche’s work, this study will look at nonsense as a starting point for the study of liturgy and at its theological potential. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive for a theological study. How could it be anything but provocative, if not blasphemous, to talk about the ‘non-sense’ of liturgy?

This study will show how a more subtle and nuanced understanding of ‘non-sense’ can enhance our knowledge of liturgy and how, in a sense, it lies at the very centre of liturgical studies and its contribution to a wider theological interest. For this purpose, this study takes ‘negative hermeneutics’, a philosophical concept developed by Emil Angehrn, as a starting point for a methodological deepening of systematic liturgical studies. Negative hermeneutics is a philosophical method that focuses on the role of non-sense and a lack of meaning in the process of understanding and communication. This study will analyse the methodological implications and practical impact of negative hermeneutics for liturgical studies. It builds on the tradition of a dialogue between liturgical studies and the philosophical disciplines,³ and more specifically, its engagement with hermeneutics.⁴ The original contribution of this work consists in its application of negative hermeneutics to liturgical studies and its implementation through case studies. This study will present to

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, all too human*. Translated by Reginald Hollingdale; with an introduction by Richard Schacht (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), aphorism 22.

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

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

⁴ E.g. Bridget Nichols, *Liturgical hermeneutics: Interpreting liturgical rites in performance* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Lang, 1996).

the reader a specific philosophical method and, on this basis, outline its potential for a more comprehensive interdisciplinary dialogue between liturgical studies and other academic subjects.

This approach is based on the presuppositions of explicitly Christian theology and liturgy celebrated in the context of Christian communities. Some of its methods and questions will, however, build an exciting basis for further studies within an interfaith context. It will prove that applying a negative hermeneutics' perspective helps to deepen the systematic-theological understanding of liturgical methods and develop a unique and significant perspective on liturgical commentaries and case studies. It will go beyond a simple 'application' of a method by asking what liturgical studies can contribute to the undertaking of hermeneutics and what this shows about their fundamental theological potential.

This study understands itself as a venture in methodological hybridity, which explores the resonant silence of Holy Saturday through the lens of a negative hermeneutic. It is based on two main pillars: a theoretical groundwork and an application of the liturgy of Holy Saturday through four case studies. The first part gives a detailed outline of the liturgical starting point for a dialogue with philosophical concepts. This preparatory work is necessary to build a shared understanding with the reader while drawing from the Anglo-American as well as the Continental-European tradition of liturgical studies. As a specific source for (meta-)liturgical methods and terminology, Andrea Grillo's work on systematic perspectives on liturgical studies will be consulted. His studies on the dynamics of mediation and immediacy build a suitable liturgical link for the focus of hermeneutic studies and their rootedness in dialectic philosophy and social sciences.⁵ Since the works of Angehrn are not available in English, the presentation of his arguments will be detailed and provide context for a further application and critique of his methods. This two-pillar approach will deliberately create some tension and a potential gap between methodological expectations and the concrete reality of case studies. Including case studies as an established method of liturgical studies is significant for the scope of this work as this study understands itself as a liturgical study, i.e. as an attempt to hold theological questions and concrete liturgical expression together. Thus, it draws on traditional liturgical methods attempting to sharpen the perspective and to show new and unexpected layers through the dialogue with a non-theological discipline. It will open a unique perspective on the importance of gaps and the significance of imperfection, and the importance of laughter in the liturgy.⁶ The iterative character of liturgy aims

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

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

at the next celebration and is thus an interpretative challenge. The paradox of every liturgical study, as a non-literary approach to texts, will be intensified by the (meta-)hermeneutic consequences of this approach. On this basis, this study will analyse the potential of negative hermeneutics to articulate the dynamic of anabatic and katabatic elements in the liturgical act more clearly.

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

It is, therefore, part of the methodological approach of this study to give a detailed philosophical and theological analysis of context, methods, and traditions, but at the same time to encourage the reader to reflect on how the dynamic of theological mediation and liturgical immediacy plays out in the details of each layer. It intends to give a reliable and profound basis for theological creativity and a playful engagement with texts ('homo ludens' and 'Deus ludens'⁷). The negative hermeneutics approach of rediscovery and re-creation of sense, through the experiences of gaps and immediacy, becomes a starting point for the methodical introduction of the reader to profound reflection and a process of wrestling with the experience of non-sense.

The challenge is not to simplify and reconcile the language and philosophical depth of the philosophical-methodological aspects, nor to pass over the concrete and confrontational immediacy of the liturgical question (i.e. the question of how liturgy can be a function of theology). So, for whose 'gaze' is the study written? Its methodological hybridity draws from different sources and engages with a variety of traditions. While it is rooted in the tradition of liturgical studies, it intends to encourage a dialogue between disciplines and so to raise different questions for different readers.

The selection of case studies will illustrate different approaches to Holy Saturday and its representation in the concrete liturgical celebrations. All liturgical examples are taken from an English-speaking context, while the theoretical background (in hermeneutics as well as in liturgical studies) of this study is deeply rooted in the continental academic tradition. On the one hand, this reflects the experience of the author, and on the other hand, it is the

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

expression of interest in the process of a ‘translation’ or ‘transliteration’ of academic methods in diverse fields and language contexts and the potential this might open. At the same time, the reality of a text (in contrast to video analysis of the celebration or detailed interviews with participants) shapes a formidable counterpoint to a purely theoretical approach on the one side and the desire for purely ‘empirical data’ on the other side. It is not simply a further explanation of the ‘use’ of a negative hermeneutic approach but its application and exposition in this wrestling with the specific text and its gaps. The case studies provide a frame and a starting point for a deeper understanding of continuity and discontinuity in the liturgy and broader theological reflection on Holy Saturday. Thus, the exploration of the text will be primarily descriptive, nevertheless critical, as it aims to highlight gaps and hidden layers in the text. This project does not attempt to provide a comparative liturgical study that contrasts different liturgical traditions with each other but rather engage their gaps and tensions in a playful and creative dialogue.

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

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

Chapter II

Liturgy and Negative Hermeneutics

1 Starting Points for a Hermeneutic of Liturgy – A Methodology

1.1 Liturgy as Object of Research

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

The project is particularly interested in methods that do not only offer a systematic approach in writing ‘about’ liturgical studies as a discipline but consider the reach and potential of philosophical and fundamental theological engagement with liturgical texts. A leading dialogue partner will be the Italian scholar Andrea Grillo who, with concepts of postmodern philosophy, rethinks the creative and challenging potential of liturgical studies. His methodology builds a starting point for establishing a fundamental hermeneutics of liturgy.

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

First of all, it is not at all obvious how and why liturgy should be the *object of theology rather than of social sciences*,¹ nor why it needs a separate discipline among the traditional theological core subjects (‘Fächerkanon’) rather than leaving its study to other disciplines such as church history or

¹ Cf. Nathan Mitchell, *Liturgy and the social sciences, American essays in liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999) and Kieran Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy: Representations of the holy* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

pastoral theology. What does theology have to ‘gain’ from an engagement with liturgy? How is a theological interest in liturgy shaped by a more general perspective on the relationship between theology and other academic, scientific and cultural studies? The methodological framework for this dialogue, which underlies this study, and the justification of choices of methods and concepts will be developed in chapter II.2 and given as a résumé in chapter II.3 after critical concepts and methodological principles have been established.

Etymologically, the word ‘liturgy’ comes from the Greek word *leiturgia* (λειτουργία), a term used in the context of the ancient Greek polity to describe the public and cultic work and service of citizens. It found its way into the Septuagint as a specific term for the cult in the temple (Hebrew: שרת / עבודה). Subsequently, it is used 15 times in the Second Testament; it is used for the worship of the First Covenant (e.g. Luke 1:23) but also for the ‘service’ which Christ and his angels perform (e.g. Hebrews 8:2 and 1:17). Nevertheless, only in Acts 13:2 is the term used to talk about the worship of the Christian community².

In the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Church, it continued to be used as a term for sacred rites and especially the Eucharist, whereas in the West, it reappeared only in the 16th century as a synonym for the Mass. Under Pope Gregory XVI, the term was used only for other forms of worship.³ Even today, the understanding of the word ‘liturgy’ is not at all homogeneous among different schools and writers. It instead reflects a complex of themes and aspects, from traditional questions of a ‘correct’, ‘faithful’ celebration of liturgical rites to critical studies on the sociology of worship.⁴ The mutual mediation of an externally mediated cult and the theological postulate of a transcendent faith in the liturgical celebration will thus be the basis for a liturgical hermeneutic.

² For the Christian cult the word *λατρεία* is usually used.

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

⁴ Cf. Kieran Flanagan, *Sociology and liturgy*.

Liturgical studies are the theological discipline that studies these texts and movements insofar as they are expressions of the Church as a praying community.⁵ For the historical development of liturgical studies as an original theological subject, the ‘crisis of faith’ and a growing estrangement from church traditions at the beginning of the 20th century was a crucial impulse. The term ‘liturgical studies’ (‘scienza liturgica’, ‘Liturgiewissenschaft’) was first used in a German-speaking context by Romano Guardini to describe the purpose and method of an emerging theological discipline in relation to the humanities (‘Geisteswissenschaften’).⁶

This new discipline was distinguished from the traditional study of ‘rubrics’ (‘Rubrizistik’) which explains the normative ‘meaning’ of liturgical texts based on a purely historical or canonical understanding. Whereas a purely ‘rubrical’ approach to the liturgy was interested mainly in the question of ‘how’, celebrated liturgical studies rediscovered the aspects of ‘why’ and ‘what’.⁷ From the very beginning, these were situated between historical-systematic studies, social and cultural sciences, and pastoral studies.

A certain ambivalence between the visible expression of liturgy and its understanding as a ‘spiritual’ reality is displayed in the broad and heterogeneous views on the *purpose and method* of liturgical studies. Its first and most general inquiry is whether a view on Christian worship as a cultural and ritual praxis is legitimate and, therefore, to what extent the study of it can draw on concepts and methods of anthropology and cultural studies. A ‘Christian’ view on liturgy can either stress the difference between divine salvation and creation and oppose the human ‘ritualisation’ faith based on the principles of revelation and conversion or focus on the incarnational dimension of human expressions and needs as an integral part of salvation. In the context

⁵ Cf. Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, “Liturgy,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 14.

⁶ Romano Guardini and Franz Henrich, *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (Mainz et al.: Grünewald, 2007).

⁷ Cf. Andrea Grillo, “‘Intellectus fidei’ und ‘intellectus ritus’: Die Überraschende Konvergenz von Liturgiethologie, Sakramententheologie und Fundamentaltheologie,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 50 (2000): 149, Andrea Grillo and Michael Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie: Zur Theorie des Gottesdienstes und der christlichen Sakramente* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 27 and 222. Andrea Grillo compares, in this context, the crisis which the emerging liturgical studies caused in theology at the beginning of the 20th century with the radical challenge which the developing human sciences posed to philosophy, cf. Andrea Grillo, “Aspetti della ricerca filosofica e agire liturgica: Consonanze e dissonanze tra due campi del sapere (e tra due esperienze) del XX secolo,” in *Liturgia e scienze umane: Itinerari di ricerca atti della XXIX Settimana di studio dell’Associazione professori di liturgia Santuario di Vicoforte*, 26–31 agosto 2001 (Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2002), 85s. The distinction between liturgical studies and liturgics is sometimes based on a similar demarcation between the academic study of liturgy and the application and exercise in a concrete Church context. More recent publications tend, though, to use both terms synonymously, cf. Louis Weil, “Worship,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*.

of Catholic liturgical studies, a possible answer is given based on *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,⁸ describing liturgy and its ritual character as part of the ‘economy’ of salvation; not only as a legitimate expression but as *culmen et fons* in the life of the Church. The fact that the paschal mystery as liturgical key event presents itself as a ‘ritual’ urges theological consideration to enter a phenomenological-hermeneutic inquiry discerning the fundamental unity and tension between anthropology and theology.⁹ The understanding of liturgy as a revelation in the form of a celebration (*sub specie celebrationis*)¹⁰ therefore opens up a perspective on the relation of faith to its ritual expression that will serve as the starting point for this study.

In the context of liturgical studies, the question of the dynamic between *cultural anthropology and theology*, considered in a theoretical way by a fundamental theological inquiry, is articulated in an even more radical way since these must justify their existence as a genuine theological subject.¹¹ An ‘objective’ concept of liturgy, as presupposed by the Catholic and Anglican liturgical movement in the early 20th century,¹² cannot be assumed anymore, neither as a basis for critique nor a source of theological dogmatic.

It is, therefore, an inevitable task for current liturgical studies not only to think through the modern assumption of a subjective and personal faith but also to further engage with a postmodern inquiry towards a possible reintegration of exterior bodily practices and experiences in the theological discourse.¹³ The concept of ‘anthropology’ in this context cannot be reduced to a positive scientific project but instead needs to be in dialogue with a cultural and phenomenological-descriptive definition of the human nature that is open to

⁸ Second Vatican Council. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4th December 1963). In *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Marianne L. Trouve, 47–83 (Boston: Pauline Books, 1999).

⁹ Cf. Alceste Catella, “Theology of the liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*. Volume 2. Fundamental liturgy, 16.

¹⁰ Alceste Catella, “Theology of the liturgy,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies*. Volume 2. Fundamental liturgy, 17.

¹¹ The different approaches to the understanding of liturgy, from a primarily anthropological point of view to a primarily theological point of view, are already present in the very early stages of the liturgical movement, especially in the dialogue between Guardini and Casel; cf. Martin Klöckener, Benedikt Kranemann, and Angelus A.O. Häußling, “Liturgie verstehen. Die Herausgeber des Archivs für Liturgiewissenschaft im Gespräch,” in Klöckener; Kranemann; Häußling, *Liturgie verstehen*, 17.

¹² Bryan D. Spinks, “The Liturgical Movement: 2. United Kingdom,” in Bradshaw, *The new SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*.

¹³ Cf. Albert Gerhards, “Gottesdienst und Menschwerdung: Vom Subjekt liturgischer Feier,” in *Markierungen: Theologie in den Zeichen der Zeit*, ed. Mariano Delgado and Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl (Berlin: Morus, 1995), 283–86.

engaging with a symbolic dimension.¹⁴ The hermeneutical interest in the concrete human experience builds the bridge to the ritual and symbolic aspect of liturgy.

A key area for the dialogue between liturgical studies and humanities is, therefore, the dimension of ‘ritual’ and ‘symbolic’, a concept that began to attract academic focus in the 19th century through the development of ritual studies, which was based on the rising interest in religious and cultural rites. In dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical studies started to rediscover the principle of ‘rite’, which supplanted the concepts of ‘symbol’, and ‘sign’, which had been predominant in liturgical discourse since the Middle Ages. The understanding of sacraments as signs (*in genere signi*) had shaped the dogmatic debate as well as the dialogue of fundamental theology with epistemology or hermeneutics.

The reference of symbols to a ritual context shifts the focus from a merely theoretical understanding of ‘meaning’ to the decentred analysis of ‘bodily’ and ‘collective’ expressions.¹⁵ Thus, symbols become an authentic expression of an oscillating phenomenon between ‘meaningful’ language and an ontology of the ‘ineffable’. This perspective emphasises that the human being is the image of God even in its brokenness; on this basis, the ‘theological potential’ of critical anthropological disciplines can be explored; e.g. the dialogue with modern analytical psychology¹⁶ shows the potential of using a language of ritual experience that leaves space for an interpretation of a ‘symbolic difference’.

This project is interested in the hermeneutical implications of the ritual and symbolic dimensions of liturgy, as it is, for example, laid out in Andrea Grillo’s

¹⁴ Cf. Aldo Natale Terrin, “Antropologia culturale,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, ed. Domenico Sartore and Achille M. Triacca (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1984), 72–74.

¹⁵ Cf. Stephen Buckland, “Ritual, Körper und ‘kulturelles Gedächtnis,’” *Concilium* 31, no. 3 (1995): 215. Therefore the distinction between ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’ varies among different traditions: traditionally ‘sign’ was understood as a conventional element representing an instruction, operation, or concept, cf. Maurice Waite, “Symbol,” in *Paperback Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Maurice Waite, 7th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Today the concept ‘sign’ is often understood as pictorial stand-in for words (e.g. no smoking), whereas ‘symbol’ has a surplus that cannot be identified or described with precision; at the same time, the symbol does not refer only to a fixed unit but rather makes it present in a mediated fashion. In the context of liturgy, the celebration can be described as the process of symbolisation; accordingly, symbols come into view rather as an act of ‘placing together’ (συνβάλλειν) than a ‘simple’ signifier, i.e. as verb rather than as noun; cf. George Guiver C.R., “Sign and symbol,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 33; and Crispino Valenziano, “Liturgy and symbolism,” in Chupungco, *Handbook for liturgical studies. Volume 2. Fundamental liturgy*.

¹⁶ Cf. for example Andreas Odenthal’s liturgical studies based on self-psychology in Heribert Wahl: *Andreas Odenthal, Liturgie als Ritual: Theologische und psychoanalytische Überlegungen zu einer praktisch-theologischen Theorie des Gottesdienstes als Symbolgeschehen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002); and Heribert Wahl, *Narzissmus? Von Freuds Narzissmustheorie zur Selbstpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985).

analysis of the ‘second anthropological turn’. The ability to communicate and understand through symbols provides an essential skill for the individual as well as for any community. The understanding of humans as ‘symbolic beings’ (*animalia symbolica*) forms the basis for a dialogue with ritual studies as well as contemporary philosophical approaches to anthropology. This perspective on liturgy as a process of symbolisation turns even more radical as it is applied to the idea of *ritual action*.

The liturgist Paul Bradshaw defines rituals as actions performed for their symbolic value and repeated in a social group.¹⁷ Between transformation and stabilisation, ritual facilitates the experience of ‘community’ in everyday life as well as in an exceptional moment. For this study, the understanding of ritualisation as a fundamental human reaction to the experience of lack and abyss, and at the same time, the possibility of understanding the nature of the symbol as deeply allocentric, is the most significant aspect of this dynamic.¹⁸ The human reaction to the experience of lack and negativity is, as we will see in section II.2.2.2c “Dealing with Negativity,” a key area of negative hermeneutics. On this basis, the following study will explore how a fundamental-hermeneutical approach to liturgy can help to understand the theological potential of a second anthropological turn.

After these considerations of the relationship between liturgical studies and non-theological disciplines (*ad extra*), the question needs to be asked: How does liturgical studies justify its existence as an original and independent *theological subject* (*ad intra*)? How does it relate to the overall dynamic and the systematics among the traditional theological core subjects?¹⁹ What is its original contribution to the study of theology as a whole?

The way different scholars view liturgical studies and its relationship to other disciplines are linked to their general understanding of its purpose and scope.²⁰ A schematic comparison of more ‘systematic’ and more ‘practical’ approaches will help clarify underlying dynamics and outline the potential of liturgical studies as a theological core subject as well as the envisioned contributions and challenges of a negative hermeneutical approach.

¹⁷ Cf. Paul F. Bradshaw and Katharine E. Harmon, “Ritual,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 21.

¹⁸ Cf. Gerard Lukken, “L’“autre côté” du rituel humain: Reconsidération à partir de la phénoménologie et la sémiotique sur des couches anthropologiques et théologiques dans le rituel chrétien,” *Questions Liturgiques* 83, no. 1 (2002): 81–86.

¹⁹ A certain scepticism towards the ‘locus’ of liturgical studies within theology seems to exist, especially in the context of ‘continental’ theology, and it’s often a more systematic and traditional perspective on the theological core subjects, cf. Robert S. Taft, “Holy Week in the Byzantine tradition,” in *The celebration of Holy Week in ancient Jerusalem and its development in the rites of East and West*, ed. Kidane Habtemichael and Antony G. Kollamparampil (Roma: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano – Edizioni Liturgiche, 1997), 244.

²⁰ Cf. Andreas Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual*, 27.

The ambivalence of the relationship between liturgical studies and various social sciences is mirrored in the intra-theological discussion about the ambivalence of a Christian use of symbols. The British liturgist George Guiver talks in this context about the ‘irony’ of Christian symbols: “Unlike a religion where given idols are identified with the gods, in Christianity that ultimate identity is not there.”²¹ The ambivalence of the symbolic character of liturgy manifests in the fact that liturgical studies as a theological subject are situated between systematic and practical theology. These different dynamics will be outlined in the following. This study will not be able to present a comprehensive analysis of different approaches to liturgical studies. The distinction between “systematic-theological” and “practical-theological” approaches is somewhat schematic as it intends to clarify fundamental dynamics in the understanding of the theological value of liturgy.²²

1. Approaches stressing the *systematic* character of liturgical studies tend to emphasise the normative and prescriptive aspect of liturgy. Liturgy is analysed from the perspective of a deductive and theoretical interest in the liturgical act. Prosper of Aquitaine’s dictum *lex orandi lex credendi* is often cited to justify liturgy either as a source for theology (theology of or from liturgy) or as theology itself. Prosper, a Christian writer in the 5th century, uses this expression in his work *Auctoritates de gratia*²³ to fight semi-Pelagianism. Referring to 1. Timothy 2:1.2,²⁴ he argues that the prayer founded on a biblical basis is an expression of the faith of the universal Church as well as of the individual congregation.

Traditionally, this quote was used to justify liturgical texts as a basis for dogmatic theological statements. The strength of this view is undoubtedly a broad and integral understanding of theology, which sees the value of liturgy

²¹ George Guiver C.R., “Sign and symbol,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 36.

²² For a more detailed outline of the discussion between systematic and practical approaches within theological studies, cf. Albert Gerhards and Birgit Osterholt-Kootz, “Kommentar zur ‘Standortbestimmung der Liturgiewissenschaft,’” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 42 (1992); and Martin Stuflesser and Stephan Winter, “Liturgiewissenschaft – Liturgie und Wissenschaft? Versuch einer Standortbestimmung im Kontext des Gesprächs zwischen Liturgiewissenschaft und Systematischer Theologie,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 51 (2001).

²³ Cf. Prosper of Aquitaine, *Praeclatorum sedis apostolicae episcoporum auctoritates, de gratia dei et libero voluntatis arbitrio*, ch. 8. PL 51, col. 0209c.

²⁴ “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” New Revised Standard Version containing the Old and New Testaments and the Deuterocanonical Books. Edited by Coogan, Michael David et al. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: An Ecumenical Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). More recently liturgists like Paul de Clerck have conceded that the quote does not ‘favour’ one side or the other but rather underlines the dynamic and mutual interpretation of theology and liturgy, cf. Paul de Clerck, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique,” in *La liturgie, lieu théologique*, ed. Paul de Clerck (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999), 129–133.

as an irreplaceable expression of faith that cannot be reduced to intellectualistic concepts.²⁵ Systematic theology is forced to engage with contingent and concrete liturgical expression as a source of theological truth. Taking this approach earnestly urges theology to connect arguments of systematic theology and the individual expression of faith on a fundamental theological level.²⁶

From this perspective, the role of liturgy for theology culminates the idea of a present eschatology within the liturgical celebration: the liturgy of the Church as the image of the eternal heavenly liturgy. Therefore, theology as a whole is understood as a doxological endeavour, and the possibility of a ‘re-translation’ of theological assumptions in the language of corporate prayer becomes a criterion for its integrity.²⁷ Here the third aspect of liturgy comes into focus: the confessed faith needs to prove its value in the everyday life of the Church. The *lex agendi*, the pastoral and ethical (‘diaconal’) truth of the Church, is simultaneously the continuation and critique of liturgy.²⁸ British theologian Bridget Nichols speaks in this context about the “eschatological imperative of prayer”²⁹ as a mirror to the worship in heaven and at the same time an objection against the uncritical dogmatisation of traditional liturgical forms.

A negative hermeneutic approach will, however, point out that this perspective carries a particular danger of losing the critical and ‘nonconformist’ potential of the single liturgical celebration in favour of a focus on the ‘law’ of a united Church without the distinction of ‘theology’ and its ‘object’. Thus, the dialogue with other theological disciplines, and especially the critical dispute with the human and social sciences, is necessary to prevent a one-sided ‘pan-liturgism’ that mixes the ideal of an abstract *leiturgia*, as the culmination of the Christian life, with the necessarily limited and specific celebration.³⁰ A less close conjunction of liturgy and theology has to deal with the fundamental ‘gap’ and tension and incommensurability between both disciplines and therefore has to enter a phenomenological-hermeneutic inquiry and discern the fundamental

²⁵ Cf. Gerard Lukken, “La liturgie comme lieu théologique irremplaçable: Méthodes d’analyse et de vérification théologiques,” in Lukken, *Per visibilia ad invisibilia: Anthropological, theological, and semiotic studies on the liturgy and the sacraments* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 244–46.

²⁶ This dynamic is particularly important for the study of Holy Saturday as the link between theology (*lex credendi*) and liturgical year (*lex orandi*) during the Arian struggles provided a basis for anti-Arian bishops to teach about the two natures of the Son without risking the paradox of Patripassionism, cf. Martin Connell, *Eternity today: On the liturgical year* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 114–17.

²⁷ Cf. Reinhard Messner, “Was ist systematische Liturgiewissenschaft? Ein Entwurf in sieben Thesen,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 40 (1998): 267–72.

²⁸ Cf. also *lex vivendi* in Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and text: Method in liturgical theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 311–46.

²⁹ Bridget Nichols, “Prayer,” in Day, *The study of liturgy and worship*, 52.

³⁰ Cf. Andrea Grillo and Michael Meyer-Blanck, *Einführung in die liturgische Theologie*, 226.