## *'A local habitation and a name A Kristevan reading of human growth in religion, with a reference to John and Charles Wesley'*

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'A local habitation and a name' is from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: V.i:

> 'And as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination
> That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
> Or in the night, imagining a fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear?'

It relates to the verbalisation and symbolisation of otherwise incomprehensible chaotic and fragmented contents of the inner world: this is a recurrent theme throughout the thesis. It is prominent in Klein, post-Kleinian analysis, and Kristevan theory; and also in religion through religious symbols, sacraments, narrative, hymns, and poetry.

## Declaration and Copyright

The material in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university, and is my own unaided work. It conforms in length (119,233 words) to the requirements for the degree of PhD, with the concession granted by the Faculty of Arts (24 October 2008).

## Abstract

This study is concerned with the concept of human growth and change: it juxtaposes processes of growth and change in psychoanalytic therapy and those in a religious context. In both situations the relationship between growth and development and the idea of becoming 'good' is considered.

Kleinian, Post-Kleinian and particularly Kristevan theory is used to elucidate facilitators of change in psychoanalytic therapy and in the context of Christian faith. The emphases in the theory used here differ from those of more traditional developmental theorists in the study of religion, which rely heavily on ego-psychology and self-psychology, and focus on the autonomous ego and the degree of maturity of forms of religion. By contrast, the emphases here are on the split self, on unconscious drives, phantasies and affects, and on the non-cognitive apprehension of truth.

Through an examination of the lives of John and Charles Wesley, the thesis examines the possibility of growth occurring in the context of so-called 'immature' forms of religion, the means by which this might occur, and the extent to which change is governed by an individual's mental structure and psychological defences.

The Kristevan reading allows a less cognitive, 'ego-driven' study of the growth to 'goodness' than does that of the developmental theorists. It thus questions the validity of traditional classifications of forms of religion. It elicits differences between the historical subjects, which demonstrate the importance of personality factors in facilitating or hindering growth. Finally, it enables an exploration of Charles Wesley's hymns which reveals evidence of erotic and imaginary elements, and the possibility of triadic openness in what some would see as an 'immature' form of belief. This examination also questions Kristeva's own assertion that religious symbolism cannot adequately 'sublimate' the 'abject'.

**Acknowledgments**

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I should like to thank several people: David Jasper and Alison Jasper in the early stages; David Watson; John and Henrietta Batchelor; and Gareth Lloyd of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, for helpful discussion and support. I am grateful to Ralph and Carol Waller for the discussion of ideas and the hospitality of Harris Manchester College, Oxford, and its library; to Charles Lund for undertaking to scrutinize the thesis from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, and for being most helpful and encouraging; and to Jennie Brockington and Alexandra Russell, who provided IT and moral support. Elizabeth and Rachel Watson have showed unflagging tolerance and loving encouragement of the preoccupations of their aged parent. Dick Watson has lived with this thesis for more than six years, and in spite of having Kristeva for breakfast, dinner and tea, has never lost patience; without his consistent love and encouragement this thesis might never have been completed.

## Abbreviations

**IBL:** Julia Kristeva (1985), *In the Beginning was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith,* translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1987).

**TL:** Julia Kristeva (1983), *Tales of Love,* translated by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1987).

**PH:** Julia Kristeva (1980), *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* translated by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1982).

**BS:** Julia Kristeva (1987), *Black Sun; Depression and Melancholia,* translated by Leo S. Roudiez, (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1989).

**MK:** Julia Kristeva (1999), *Melanie Klein,* (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001).

**Telford :** John Telford (ed.) *The Letters of John Wesley A.M.*, (Standard Edition, London: Epworth Press, 1931)

**BES :** *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial Edition), vols. 1-4, *Sermons*, ed. Albert C. Outler, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-87).

**BEJ :** *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial Edition), vols. 18- 24, *Journals and Diaries*, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P.Heitzenrater, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988-2003).

**BEL:** *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial Edition), vols. 25-26, *Letters*, ed. Frank Baker, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980-82).

**Schmidt:** Martin Schmidt (1953-66), *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, three volumes, translated by Norman Goldhawk et al., (London: Epworth Press, 1962-73).

**Rack:** Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, (Third Edition, Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2002).

**PW:** G. Osborn, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, thirteen volumes, (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868-72).

**CW:** S.T. Kimbrough and Kenneth G.C. Newport (eds.) *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.,* (Nashville, Kingswood Books, 2007-8).

**SW:** Charles Wallace (ed.), *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

## Use of Pronouns

In this thesis, masculine and feminine third person pronouns and possessive pronouns are used on a random basis. They are mainly necessary to refer to a developing child in relation to an adult, a patient in relation to a therapist, or a human being in relation to God. The individual nature of these relationships makes the use of the individualized pronoun inescapable, but it is thought that random use of pronouns is the least biased method in terms of gender and the power differentials of the relationships.

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John Wesley carried up into heaven. Unknown artist, 1791. The John Rylands University Library, Methodist Images Collection.

# PART I Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 Origins

This thesis is concerned with ideas of transformation and change in individuals in psychoanalysis, or in psychoanalytic psychotherapy,[1] and in religious contexts[2].

The author worked as a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist in an acute hospital setting. In this clinical setting patients often made contact with the service at times of crisis. This meant that the old-fashioned luxury of being able to select people as 'suitable' for psychotherapy, for instance as having enough 'ego-strength', being 'psychologically-minded' and articulate, and being in a supportive situation, was not usually available. Many of them had severe personality disorders, addictions or psychosomatic disorders and included a high proportion of people likely to be resistant to psychotherapy, who had 'borderline' or 'narcissistic pathology',[3] and some who might be termed 'difficult to reach'.[4]

The thesis was initiated by two observations from clinical practice, which at first glance seemed not to be linked:

1) often patients in the groups just described, if they were engaged psychotherapeutically, were able to begin to change only after a prolonged struggle with intense and negative feelings towards the therapist. Often there was a sense, for both patient and therapist, of being pushed to the brink of catastrophe, a sense of a life and death battle.[5]

2) there were people who saw themselves as deeply committed Christians, who espoused the Christian ideals of love and forgiveness, but who were unable to give up destructive behaviour towards themselves and/or others. They would either

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[1] Psychoanalytic ideas are held in common by practitioners of both these treatments, but there are significant differences in the nature and practice of the treatments themselves. In this thesis, in the main, examples and processes are described as occurring in 'psychotherapy' (indicating psychoanalytic psychotherapy), and 'therapist' is used in preference to analyst, as the clinical experience of the author is as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

[2] The religious context is limited to a Christian one, as this was the religious background of the author and the majority of her patients.

[3] Otto Kernberg, *Severe Personality Disorders: Psychotherapeutic Strategies,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,1984).

[4] Betty Joseph, "The Patient who is Difficult to Reach", in eds. M.Feldman and E. Bott Spillius, *Psychic Equilibrium and Psychic Change,* (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1989), 75.

[5] Joseph, "The Patient who is Difficult to Reach", 127-138.

turn a blind eye to the effects of their behaviour, or attempt to legitimate it by invoking God's will. Their actions were felt by them to be good and morally right, and as a result they saw no necessity for change.

The two observations are in fact closely connected, as both relate to difficulty in accessing unconscious conflicts, wishes and motives; this difficulty raises a series of questions:

a) When change does occur, what are the elements in therapy with patients in the first group which are necessary to enable change?

b) can religious experience ( 'experience' here used to include all forms of interaction of an individual with his or her religious belief and practice) lead to similar change by facilitating access to unconscious material? If so, are there processes in religion that can be compared to the facilitating elements in (a); are there processes that would lead to increasing insight into difficult truths and therefore to freedom to act in more loving ways?

c) how do any processes in (b) relate to prevalent psychoanalytic views about what constitutes a 'mature' or 'non-defensive' form of religion, and what constitutes an 'immature' or 'defensive' form, bearing in mind that the implication of such terminology is that non-defensive forms promote change and defensive forms hinder it?

The thesis attempts to explore these questions through a Kristevan re-reading of the psychoanalytic concepts about change and the application of these concepts to religious studies. The interaction of an individual with his or her faith is clearly a complex one, and the work of Julia Kristeva (French psychoanalyst and professor of linguistics), is used in order to elucidate some of this complexity, through an examination of the lives of John and Charles Wesley: in particular whether her thought might a) add to the understanding of how personality factors affect an individual's response to his or her beliefs and practice, and b) add to the thinking about how forms of religion can be classified.

### 1.2 Why Kristeva?

In considering the interface of psychoanalysis and Christianity, the first impulse would customarily be to turn to C.G. Jung. He was rare among early analysts in giving

religious experience its own authenticity;[6] he emphasised the integrating function of symbols, and much of his work was related to processes of spiritual growth and transformation. Dourley's *The Psyche and the Sacrament* attempts to bring together transforming processes in religion and psychoanalysis by juxtaposing Paul Tillich and Jung[7]. He concludes that the eschatologies of both require a conscious confrontation with the 'powers, demons and divine' in the individual psyche and that the 'psychological task and religious task' are one. Since Jung, and in the theory used here, more detailed attention has been given to very early experience, including the development of the moral sense and the capacity to symbolise. It is hoped the use of these new insights will enlarge the understandings of such comparisons.

### 1.2.1 Klein and Kristeva

One reason for deciding on a Kristevan reading of these processes is related to the need to understand patients such as those referred to in the first observation above, whom Freud would have seen as not susceptible to analytic treatment. Kristeva has a strong affinity with the work of Melanie Klein. Klein was a child psychotherapist, writing between 1920 and her death in 1960; she made a huge contribution to the understanding of such patients and to ways of working with them. In her book on Klein, Kristeva describes them as suffering from '[n]ew maladies of the soul: borderlines, psychosomatics, substance abusers, vandals and so forth.'[8] She sees Klein as having been crucial to progress in psychoanalysis, through her revolutionary methods in the analysis of children.[9] Klein did not depart from Freud's drive theory, but she also emphasised the child's drive to form relationships, and so was at the beginning of object-relations theory. She described the Oedipus complex as occurring in the first months of life, much earlier than Freud's Oedipal period (3-5years). Klein described a child's unconscious phantasy as comprising drives, sensations and acts, in addition to words, and as becoming evident in play. She had a capacity to interact deeply with children, opening her own unconscious to that of the child, so that there

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[6] Roger Brooke, "Emissaries from the Underworld" in eds. P. Young-Eisendrath, and M.E. Miller, *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality,* (London/Philadelphia: Routledge, 2000),145.
[7] John P. Dourlay, *The Psyche as Sacrament,* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981).
[8] MK, 202.
[9] MK, 11.

was an interaction between the two. She accepted Freud's death drive as of central importance, though saw it as more psychological than biological. It manifested itself in destructiveness towards the self or the object, and was the reason for the early fear of annihilation.[10] Phantasies were interpreted by Klein in the light of the death drive and the Oedipus complex.

For Klein, empathy was not merely a supportive, compassionate therapist stance but involved a recognition of the negative aspects of the transference, the hate, aggression and envy. It was not the therapist's job to protect the patient from unpleasant truths about the self, such as aggressive impulses, or even from their enjoyment of aggression. If change was to be achieved, it was necessary to confront these impulses and to work with them as they were manifested in the negative transference to the therapist, whatever the pain and suffering along the way. To neglect the unconscious conflicts giving rise to these feelings and the consequent resistances, would have been seen by her as colluding with the patient's conscious wishes for gratification. Similarly, Kernberg, who has written about and worked extensively with similar 'narcissistic' patients, has critiqued 'self-psychology', which was developed from ego-psychology in the United States, and which is associated mainly with Kohut, and which emphasises empathy rather than a struggle with the negative aspects of the transference. He believes that techniques involving the latter are required to help such patients and suggests that avoidance of the negative not only colludes unhelpfully with the patient, but may even be used as a way of shoring up the therapist's theory thus gratifying the therapist rather than the patient.[11]

Klein has been strongly criticised for her focus on the negative, on destructiveness, sadism and envy, and many would prefer to focus on her work on reparation and creativity. However, envy and gratitude were both aspects of her work, and it was her ability to confront but be 'merciful' with destructiveness, together with her capacity to relive the child's early experience with him or her, that opened the way for post-Kleinian analysts to extend her theory and use her techniques.[12] In addition, Kristeva sees her as 'our contemporary' because, like Lacan and herself, Klein's subject remained ever-changing, 'the *one* (the identity) never manages to be'.[13] Unlike

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[10] MK, 29
[11] Kernberg, *Severe Personality Disorders*, 240.
[12] MK, 240.
[13] MK, 44.

Lacan, who *relies* on the verbalisation of unconscious phantasy (and although Klein did indeed verbalise phantasy), her ability to work deeply with the child, through her own phantasy and that of the child, was remarkable. Kristeva describes it vividly as her capacity to work *on* the child's 'imaginary' and *in* the 'imaginary' of the analyst, so that there was a 'deep and intense' interaction between the two 'imaginaries', focussing on bodies and their acts, as if 'digging into our guts'. Klein's use of her own phantasy, and of bodily imagery in her interpretations, led Lacan to describe her as 'an inspired gut-butcher'.[14]

Kristeva shared Klein's emphasis on affect, acts and bodies, and her work on the 'abject'[15] is concerned with torn bodies, bodily fluids, desire, hatred and death. While she regrets Klein's relative neglect of the father in a child's development, Klein was influential on the development of her own ideas about the separation of the child from the mother, the entry of the child into the 'symbolic realm' and the importance of aggression.

Klein was seen as a genius by those who followed her and despised by those who did not. She worked at a time when psychoanalysis had its 'geniuses' and where different 'schools' were in bitter dispute. Since then there has developed what Kristeva calls a psychoanalytic 'ecumenism', where ways of working with particular sorts of patients and particular symptoms may involve theories from a variety of sources, though many of these theories are developments of Klein's ideas. In addition, psychoanalysis has become more open to social and cultural influences.[16]

It is in the spirit of this 'ecumenism' that this thesis explores the processes of change in therapy and religion. It cannot be a Kristevan metanarrative, as contributions from Klein, Bion, Winnicott, and contemporary analysts such as Bollas and Britton, who also add valuable insights, have to be included if a comprehensive picture is to emerge. Kristeva is however the most prominent theorist. This is in part because of the extension of Klein's work into her theories on the dynamics of the archaic triangle, on melancholia, and the 'abject', but also because Kristeva applies her thought to religious symbolism and its place in stabilising or transforming the

[14]MK, 148.
[15]See 3:3:2.
[16]MK, 245.

individual. Like Klein she was criticised for concentrating on the negative, and as with Klein this has been attributed to her own depression. Indeed, Kristeva suggested as much herself in her book on melancholia, *The Black Sun*, where she wrote, 'for those who are wracked by melancholia, writing about it would have meaning only if it sprang out of that very melancholia'.[17]

### 1.2.2 'French feminist?'

Kristeva is often described as a 'French Feminist', but she was born and brought up in Bulgaria in a Roman Catholic family under communism. This and her subsequent 'exile' to France were very influential on her work. Morny Joy suggests that, for her, religion would have been associated with vivacity and richness, rather than narrow-minded dogmatism. Her suspicion of metanarrative, even of feminist metanarrative, would have stemmed from her own disillusionment with Marxism.[18]

The intersection of 'the symbolic' (the term she uses to describe the realm of words, symbols and rules) and the 'semiotic' (the realm of affect, image and the body), and of the known with the unknown, is central to Kristeva's work, and is a further reason why her ideas are used here. Much of the work on transformation involves the accessing of unconscious material, and her engagement with the question of whether Christian symbols can adequately symbolise unconscious contents is crucial to its understanding. In addition, while she contributes new post-structural and linguistic perspectives to pre-existing theory, her approach to psychoanalytic ideas is pragmatic and eclectic. She describes a need to know what Freudian, object-relations and other theorists believe, so that there is a 'psychoanalytic Babylon', which raises hopes of arriving at a 'pertinent synthesis'.[19] This is a familiar approach for a clinician who uses theory as a framework or an internalised set of tools, which help in the thinking about an individual patient.

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[17] BS 3, see Dawn McCance, "Kristeva's Melancholia: Not Knowing How to Lose", eds. Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady, Judith L. Poxon, *Religion in French Feminist Thought,* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2003), 131.

[18]Morny Joy, "Julia Kristeva" in eds. Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady, Judith L. Poxon, *French Feminists on Religion,* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 86-7.

[19]Diane Jonte-Pace, "Julia Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic Study of Religion" in eds, J.L. Jacobs, Donald Capps, *Religion, Society, and Psychoanalysis,* (Boulder, Colorado and Oxford: Westview

Kristeva's early writings were in the field of linguistics, where her interests were in the nature of subjectivity, the ambiguity of signs, intertextuality, and poetic language. In the 1970s, she became interested in psychoanalysis and trained as an analyst. In her subsequent work, she combined her linguistic interests with psychoanalytic understandings of early child development and applied her theory to religion, which had always fascinated her.[20]

While reference is made to her early work on linguistics, the foundation of her thought, her works from this later period are the main primary sources on Kristeva in this thesis:

*Powers of Horror* (PH, 1982), which is a rereading of Freud's *Totem and Taboo,* is mainly concerned with the child's struggle to separate from the mother. Kristeva describes how the boundary between mother and child becomes a place of 'abjection', which induces a sense of repulsion, and therefore facilitates separation. She considers the measures taken in society and religion to exclude the 'abject'.

*Tales of Love*, (TL, 1983) and *In the Beginning was Love* (IBL, 1985) also concern the separation from the mother, but here the emphasis is on the child's entry into the realm of language and law, through a loving identification with a paternal function. Similar identifications in art, religion and psychoanalysis are explored. *In the Beginning was Love* is a re-working of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion.*

In *The Black Sun* (BS, 1989), Kristeva is concerned with melancholia, which is experienced as a loss of all sense of hope or meaning, and as a sense of abandonment. There is a failure to mourn, through symbolising, what is lost. The melancholic subject 'knows not how to lose'.[21]

*Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) refers to Freud's *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1961), which addresses the problem of living together in society in the face of human instincts for aggression and hostility. Kristeva sees the answer in the discovery and acceptance of the unconscious, the 'otherness within', which she believes can becomes the basis for acceptance of the 'other', the stranger, or the foreigner in the world.[22] A later collection of essays, *New Maladies of the Soul* (1993) continues the theme of psychoanalysis and religion; and her more recent work,

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Press, 1997), 248.
[20] Joy, "Julia Kristeva", 83-90.
[21] McCance, " Kristeva's Melancholia" , 135.
[22] Jonte-Pace, "Julia Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic Study of Religion", 262.

*Melanie Klein* (2001), illustrates Klein's strong influence on Kristeva but also the points at which they diverge.

Partly because she is such a prolific author, but also because of the nature of her writing, which is often 'poetic', opaque, and open to a variety of interpretations, a great deal of valuable explication of her texts has been carried out. Beardsworth has explicated aesthetic, ethical and political as well as psychoanalytical concepts in Kristeva and this work has been drawn upon in the thesis.[23] The other main sources of exposition are Oliver, Jonte-Pace, Taylor, Crownfield, and McNelly Kearns.[24]

The description of Kristeva as 'feminist', as well as French, is also problematic: while embracing many feminist ideals, she does not consider herself as part of a feminist group and is regarded with suspicion by many feminists. Her ideas on the 'abject' could be seen as complicit with the denigration and fear of the sexual woman in patriarchal systems; however, she sees herself as describing rather than condoning patriarchal institutions. As Oliver suggests, her critics 'blame the messenger for the message'.[25] While Kristeva is concerned about the plight of women in patriarchal societies, she nevertheless re-examines Freud and retrieves those concepts she sees as valuable from his theories, and from other 'patriarchal' systems. She regards all human beings, male and female, as having to negotiate a painful struggle to separate from the mother. Her concern is with the individual, and she is aware that the tendency of some feminists to think in terms of *groups* of women risks the overriding of subtle individual differences.[26] While she acknowledges that the 'symbolic' realm of words and rules is essential for subjectivity and meaning, and while her subject is in a process of constant change, unlike Lacan's subject Kristeva's is more than a network of 'floating signifiers'. The unconscious has somatic and affective elements rather than being entirely structured from linguistic devices. Such a

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[23]Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

[24]Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double Bind,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Diane Jonte-Pace, "Julia Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic study of Religion", (1997); Diane Jonte-Pace, "Situating Kristeva Differently" in ed. David Crownfield, *Body/ Text in Julia Kristeva,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Mark C.Taylor, *Altarity,* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, (1987); David Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Cleo Mc Nelly Kearns, "Kristeva and Feminist Theology in eds. C.W.Maggie Kim, *Transfigurations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[25]Oliver, *Reading Kristeva,* 155.

[26]Kristeva in interview with Elaine Hoffman Baruch in Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva,* 371-382.

subject, in whom agency and the taking of responsibility are important, but who struggles also with somatic and affective disturbance, is in tune with the present author's clinical experience.

Oliver has graphically outlined the divided views of feminists on Kristeva: there are those who see her as essentialist and others who see her as undermining essentialism; her view of maternity is variously criticised as 'essentialist', and as limiting women to their reproductive function, or as 'indeterminate'; she is accused of promoting anarchy, or being conservative; her theories either promote change or encourage 'closure'.[27] She has been labelled homophobic[28], and been defended against such charges.[29] In her turn, Kristeva has many criticisms of feminist theories, for instance she sees some as recapitulating the male urge for 'phallic power' and as concentrating on sexual difference to the exclusion of concern for intolerance and oppression of other forms of difference.[30]

Kristeva's relationship with religion is ambiguous and her work often appears self-contradictory. While she frequently explores in depth the capacity of Christian symbols to represent unconscious material, and thus to perform a psychologically valuable function, she also appears to indicate that only through art and psychoanalysis can this function be performed adequately in the contemporary world.[31] However, many scholars have found her ideas, which involve not only psychoanalysis but art, literature and linguistics, a rich means through which to read theological concepts (for instance, O'Grady, Jasper, Ward, McNelly Kearns, Jonte-Pace, Graybeal, Edelstein, Crownfield, Reineke and Beattie).[32]

Feminist views on her work on religion are as divided as those on her relationship to feminism. This relates to the ambiguity of her writings, to what O'Grady describes as 'the typology of estrangement ... a foreignness that is presented metaphorically in narrative doubling, linguistically, through semiotic word play,

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[27] Oliver, *Reading Kristeva,* 1-7.
[28]Butler, Judith, "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva" *Hypatia,* 3, no. 3, (1989), 104-118.
[29]Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva,* (1993), 81.
[30]*Reading Kristeva,* (1993), 2.
[31]TL, 379-83.
[32]Kathleen O'Grady, "The Pun or the Eucharist?", *Literature and Theology* 11,no.1, (1997),93-115. Alison Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John's Prologue.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Graham Ward, " Kenosis and Naming", in *Religion, Modernity and Post-Modernity,* ed. Paul Heelas, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Marilyn Edelstein, David Crownfield, Martha Reineke, Jean Graybeal and Diane Jonte-Pace in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva;* Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

genre-bending and fluid discipline boundaries and finally, theoretically with a subject who slips between identity positions she can never call "home"'.[33] Kristeva describes instances in which she sees religion is oppressive and limiting, and others in which she sees it as liberating and enriching. As described by Jonte-Pace, she is neither an apologist nor an attacker, but rather takes an analytic or hermeneutic stance.[34] Some of Kristeva's work on religion is in the form of a re-examination of Freud's work, but while she agrees with Freud that religion is 'illusionary' and fulfils universal human wishes, she disagrees with his denigration of 'illusion' and with his view that religion has a negative effect on believers. Instead of 'illusion' being seen as a distortion of reality, Kristeva sees it as 'enlivening' and 'creative'. She does not advocate religious faith, but neither does she promote atheism, as Freud does. She sees it as able to offer support, and to be 'effective, valuable, and even therapeutic'.[35]

> The abandoned Christ, Christ in Hell, is of course the sign that God shares the condition of a sinner. But He also tells the story of that necessary melancholy beyond which we humans may just possibly discover the other, ... [thus] Christianity ... supplies images for even the fissures in our secret and fundamental logic'.[36]

However, she sees psychoanalysis or art as the remedy for her 'new maladies of the soul' rather than religion.

O'Grady has listed examples of criticism of Kristeva's work on religion, from some critics who have taken seriously other aspects of her work. For instance, her writings on religion have been described as 'nostalgic', 'embarrassing', 'tantamount to accepting the real existence of God', and 'veering towards the metaphysical'.[37] Oliver is suspicious of Kristeva's importing of religious metaphors into her descriptions of psychoanalytic processes, accusing her of seeing psychoanalysis as a new religion, in which Oliver suspects 'a dangerous ethnocentrism is on the prowl'.[38] Others, however, regard her theories as offering possibilities for changes which would

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[33]O'Grady, "The Pun or the Eucharist?", 98.
[34] Jonte-Pace, "Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic Study of Religion", 249.
[35] "Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic Study of Religion", 256-7.
[36] IBL, 41-2.
[37]Kathleen O'Grady, "The Tower and the Chalice" in eds. Joy et al., *Religion in French Feminist Thought,* 85-89.
[38]*Reading Kristeva*, (1993), 131.

be beneficial in religious practice.[39] Kristevan thought, including her writings on the lives of 'exemplary' women (Arendt, Klein and Colette) are seen by Beardsworth as potentially instrumental in the development of a changed notion of ethics. [40] Oliver also points out opportunities for a 'reconceived ethics' throughout Kristeva's work. This is based on her belief in the 'divided self', where a capacity to embrace the 'stranger within', leads to a capacity to embrace the marginalised.[41]

There is appreciation of her thought on the 'semiotic' aspect of language, which is seen as offering an opportunity for the female to be represented in 'poetic language'. Beattie suggests that Kristevan theory invites new explorations of liturgy and sacramentality, which might include space for both male and female (sexual as well as maternal) bodies.[42] Jantzen however struggles with Kristeva's association of entry into the symbolic realm and the gaining of subjectivity with sacrifice, violence and matricide, and, like Arendt, prefers an emphasis on the symbolic meaning of birth in this context, where 'natality' is the central metaphor.[43]

### 1.3 Post-Kleinian Developments

The use of Kleinian and post-Kleinian theory in the thesis allows certain new emphases in psychoanalysis to be highlighted. With Klein came a shift in psychoanalytic theory from its empirical/deterministic origins to a more subjective, imaginative approach. There has been more emphasis on the gaining of knowledge by means other than the cognitive, through interpersonal processes, on the importance of value and paradox, and on the intersection of the known with the unknown. All these elements rely on subjectivity and are difficult to measure, but they are important in Kristeva's work and they are also central concerns of Christianity. The thesis brings together these elements in post-Kleinian (especially Kristevan) theory, and similar elements in Christianity, in what is hoped will be a productive juxtaposition. However, when these emphases become central in the therapy process, questions are

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[39]Martha J. Reineke, " Our Vital Necessity: Julia Kristeva's Theory of Sacrifice", in eds., Joy, et al., *Religion in French Feminist Thought,* 114.
[40] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva,* 274.
[41]*Reading Kristeva,*(1993), 8.
[42] Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism,* 291.
[43]Grace M Jantzen, "Death, Then, How could I yield to it?" in eds. Joy et al., *Religion in French Feminist Thought,* 117-130.

raised about the status of the psychoanalysis concerned: can it still be seen, as Freud saw it, as a science? These emphases and the question of status are considered here.

Freud's view of psychoanalysis as a science had been associated with the Enlightenment view of rationality and the need for proof from the accumulation of sensory data. However, Figlio, in his critique of the use of scientific methods from other fields to examine psychoanalysis, reminds us that this entirely rational cause-and-effect view of science had already changed in Freud's day, and that Freud's attitude reflected this change. A 'sceptical empiricism' had supervened, where concepts were regarded as probable and temporary rather than as definite proofs. Figlio quotes Freud in a letter to Ferenczi, 'I consider that one should not make theories. They should arrive unexpectedly in your house like a stranger one hasn't invited'.[44]

Figlio links the process of theories erupting into the mind with experiences in therapy, when interpretations suddenly arise in the therapist's mind (his description is reminiscent of Kristeva's description of Klein's technique). He suggests that they are events which are not the product of careful cognitive work or of a cause-and-effect chain. He describes them as events occurring in a 'gap' and as the product of 'imaginative apprehension', an 'unconscious understanding across the barrier between conscious and unconscious'. He calls them 'moments of freedom', which contrast with the determinism of conscious, common-sense experience, and he believes that they depend on the fact that the psyche is 'dialectical'. That is, its functioning depends on a dynamic relationship between the internal and the external, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the pleasure and reality principles, and between narcissism and object relating.

This, Figlio claims, is the paradox of psychoanalysis: 'we might consider what psychoanalysis has contributed to the philosophy of nature, in posing precisely the paradox of irrationality as part of a rational account of mental processes and indeterminacy as part of a determinate account of nature.' He stresses that the 'moments of freedom' are more than mere increases of complexity but that they offer a 'shift'. They are intrinsic to the idea of the psyche as dialectical and 'only another

[44]Karl Figlio, "Science, Transference and the Unconscious", *British Journal of Psychotherapy,* 13, no.1, (1996).

dialectical psyche can receive a dialectical communication'. [45]

A further element which threatens the scientific status of psychoanalysis, and which is associated with Klein, is the importance of the capacity to appreciate the 'higher values'. According to Black, the central place in psychoanalysis of 'values' which are necessary for psychological growth, rather than for survival and reproduction, renders psychoanalysis difficult to measure in a scientific way. The development of this capacity in Klein's work on the shift from the 'paranoid/schizoid position' to the 'depressive position' will be discussed later. It depends on a process which is affective as well as intellectual, facilitated by a loving relationship with the other. This necessity for a special kind of attention from a loving other, in healthy human development, and the application of the same principle in psychotherapy or analysis, is an aspect which, like Figlio's 'dialectic psyche', is impossible to measure by external study.[46] Arden puts her finger on the central reason why psychoanalysts retain their attachment to the older methods. This is that science alone cannot cope with paradox, and the irrational demands a holistic approach which combines scientific and non-scientific ideas into a single world-view. The paradox to which Arden draws attention is that of attempting to understand in a scientific, cause-and-effect way, a discourse which is largely concerned with the unconscious and the irrational, with dreams, with 'primary process' thinking, and with processes which occur between the subjectivities of two people.[47]

In understanding psychoanalysis and in training others, it is therefore important to observe, measure, test out and track those phenomena which can be dealt with in a scientific way. However, it is also important to think about and describe in detail interactions in therapy, including what Figlio described as 'experiences in the gap' and the subjective responses of both therapist and patient. Describing the patient's narrative with an incorporation of subjective elements allows an affective and cognitive response from the reader or listener, so that it is understood, internalised and 'known' in ways which are not entirely intellectual. It remains difficult, when using

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[45] Figlio, "Science, Transference and the Unconscious" 76-78.
[46]David M. Black, "Abiding values and the Creative Present: Psychoanalysis in the spectrum of sciences", *British J. of Psychotherapy,* 12:3, (1996), 315.
[47]Margaret Arden, *Midwifery of the Soul: A Holistic Perspective on Psychoanalysis.* (London/New York : Free Association Books, 1998), 70-80.

such a method, to refute the charge that ideas will be used selectively to confirm particular theories, and the risk of this has to be borne in mind. Although efforts can be made to avoid this, it has to be accepted that it is flawed as a scientific method. This perception is clearly demonstrated in the current emphasis in psychiatry and medicine on 'evidence-based medicine'. Case studies are denigrated as anecdotal and a pride is now taken their exclusion from journals. As the editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* wrote in 2003 'I hastened the demise of the case report, to exclude what I see as psychiatric trivia'. [48]

However, it is a mistake to see psychoanalysis only as 'bad science'. An important question is whether it can be seen as an art, or a science, or both. The interaction between the patient and the therapist has an affinity with the experience of a reader with a text or an observer with a dramatic performance. The knowledge gained is through a response of the imagination and affect as well as the intellect, through the unconscious as well as the conscious. These are features in common with aesthetic or religious experiences.

Many of the processes described are concerned with the attitude and receptivity of the therapist to the patient's unconscious and they resonate with the descriptions given by religious thinkers of the response of the self to the transcendent. The language used is often similar and the parallels are striking. The concern of both is to apprehend a truth which cannot become known only by cognitive effort. The experiences they have in common, particularly the centrality of the relationship with the O(o)ther, which allows and facilitates development and change, suggests an underlying commonality.

This period of change in psychoanalysis has coincided with the increase in what is described as 'postmodern' thinking in art, literature, philosophy and theology. What is understood by the ubiquitous term 'postmodern' has been rehearsed elsewhere;[49] it is used here in Ward's sense of its describing a philosophical position which is critical of modernism and suspicious of metanarrative. As Ward has described, from the seventeenth century onwards, there have been people who have been suspicious of metanarratives: in that sense 'postmodernism' has always been

[48]Greg Wilkinson, "Fare Thee Well - the Editor's Last Word", *British Journal of Psychiatry*, (2003), 183, 465-6.
[49]Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), xxiv-xxvi.

with us, and he contrasts this with 'postmodernity' used to describe the cultural conditions existing over a certain period of time. He describes three theological/ethical horizons opened up by post-modern thinking:

> First, the role of the unsayable and unpresentable as it both constitutes and ruptures all that is said and presented. Secondly, the self as divided, multiple, or even abysmal, and therefore never self-enclosed but always open onto that which transcends its own self-understanding (rather than simply being an agent and a *cogito*). Thirdly, the movement of desire initiated and fostered by the other, that which lies outside and for future possession, the other which is also prior and cannot be gathered into the rational folds of present consciousness. The place in which these three horizons interlace is the "body".[50]

Ward draws attention to a questioning of old dichotomies, such as 'body/soul, body/mind, form/content, sign/signified' and the recognition that the meanings of words are determined by their situation in the text, the cultural setting and the response of the reader. There is an awareness of layers of and shifts in meanings, and in this sense postmodern thought can be seen as restoring a sense of mystery which had been lost due to the emphasis on the 'logic' and rationality of modernity.

Waugh describes this shift in literature to a 'form of non-conceptual embodied representation which can avoid the violent totalisation of abstract thought'. There is emphasis on style and 'embedded particularity', with novels and poetry offering the 'possibility of the imaginative exploration of human sympathy and empathy as a basis for social/political solidarity, not available in the "grand narrative"'. As in Romanticism, the aesthetic and the value of the imagination are foregrounded. There is emphasis on the 'changing subject' and the 'sacred beyond'.[51]

These descriptions of non-cognitive ways of apprehending the 'sacred beyond', resonate with the descriptions given by the mediaeval mystics. A vocabulary creeps in which attempts to portray what is impossible to put into words. As Jasper writes, referring to Heidegger, we no longer 'do' theology or philosophy but 'become'; 'we are not called to deal with it [the encounter with God or Being], but to allow ourselves to be dealt with'; a response of 'letting be', of 'thanking' rather than 'thinking,' is required. The subject is no longer self-enclosed but open to a

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[50]Graham Ward "PostmodernTheology" in *The Modern Theologians,* ed. David F.Ford, (Oxford: Blackwell, Second Edition, 1997), 588.
[51]Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism: A Reader,* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), 6, 198-9.

relationship with what is beyond.[52] Similarly, for Kristeva, completeness can never be achieved, the abject can never be fully repressed and the self remains divided.

There is an emphasis on the subjective, on the attitude of the 'openness' required, and the use of faculties other than reason to apprehend that which is beyond what can be known through the senses. These experiences cannot be rationalised and are beyond verbal description; and what emerge are many parallel descriptions in aesthetics, theology and, recently, in psychoanalysis. Many of the descriptions include ideas of attentiveness, of the need for the giving up of preconceptions and expectations, of a responsiveness to the other, in order to experience what is real within the other.

Both Waugh in the context of literature and Ward in the context of theology acknowledge the ways in which postmodern thought can 're-imagine' the world, and lead to an opening-up of ideas; but both advocate that the pressure towards nihilism and fragmentation implicit in postmodernism should be resisted. There is also an awareness that the perception of the postmodern, as a philosophy in itself, could be seen as another form of modernism. This is the charge Ward addresses to those he describes as 'liberal postmodern' theologians. On the other hand, of 'conservative postmodern' theologians, who are opposed to 'nihilistic', 'monist' liberal a/theology, Ward writes :

> In completing the postmodern project of overcoming metaphysics this theology does not deny or ignore the importance of philosophical analysis. Rather, current key metaphysical questions (of time, subjects, desire, phenomena, perception, language) are read critically in terms of a theological agenda.[53]

In a similar way, by the use of concepts which have much in common with these postmodern ideas, with Ward's three horizons, psychoanalysts have sought to open up and examine more deeply and critically the processes occurring in therapy and the metapsychological framework. This has involved a focus on the position, attitude and attunement of the therapist, on intersubjectivity rather than the study of the patient as object, and on the nature of empathy. All these areas of focus involve attempts to

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[52]David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Literature, Art, and Culture,* (Oxford : Blackwell, 2004), 21-23.
[53]Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God,* (1997), xliii.

understand how the patient's truth can be arrived at by means other than the purely rational or cognitive.

This development can be clearly shown in the change which has been undergone in the notion of 'countertransference'. This term was first used to describe the feelings arising in the therapist during a therapy, which were due to the therapist's neurosis. These feelings were regarded as an obstacle to treatment and the therapist's own analysis was aimed at enabling the therapist to abolish or deal them. However, a paper by the Kleinian analyst Paula Heimann in 1950 brought about a change. The possibility arose that countertransference might be used as a tool rather than an obstacle.[54] After Heimann, psychoanalysis was seen much more as a two-person relationship and the therapist's feelings, stirred up in the therapy, as a useful source of information about the patient's feelings and internal world. There was a shift from seeing the patient as a sealed unit to seeing two individuals with feelings and responses, open to each other. The therapist was no longer a competent analysing machine but a person in a process which involved his or her personal identity.

Wilfred Bion, who extended Klein's ideas, explored these interpersonal exchanges in detail. In the early phase of his work, he struggled to express the therapeutic processes in mathematical terms but found that the concepts most difficult to elucidate were best expressed using terms and ideas from philosophy, mysticism and aesthetics. He began his book *Attention and Interpretation* by intimating his suspicion of reason and the limitations of words: 'Reason is emotion's slave and exists to rationalize emotional experience. Sometimes speech is to communicate experience to another; sometimes it is to miscommunicate experience to another'. He regretted the inadequacies of everyday language to describe some experiences and felt that poetic and religious expressions were more able to portray human experiences beyond time and space.[55]

Bion understood the process of therapy as a means by which the unknown psychic truth of an individual is understood by the therapist, and through the therapist by the patient. Bion described the source of such truth as 'O':

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[54]Paula Heimann, "On Countertransference", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 31,(1950) 81-4.
[55]W.R.Bion, *Attention and Interpretation: A Scientific Approach to Insight in Psycho-analysis in Group,* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970),1-2.

> I shall use the term 'O' to denote that which is the ultimate reality, absolute truth, the godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself. O does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be 'become', but it cannot be 'known'.[56]

For Bion, the experience of gaining understanding through the relationship of two people required an 'ultrasensual' method, which included a language which was sensitive to an intuitive exploration of the external and internal worlds and could incorporate states of uncertainty and unknowing. Although he was not a religious man, he saw religious ideas and language as best suited to fulfil this function. In therapy, he saw the truth of the internal world as arrived at through attention, intuition (what he calls 'unconscious consciousness') and often through the 'reverie' of the therapist or the patient, facilitated by the drive for truth. The search is for emotional truth, not for knowledge, and it requires a particular instrument to search it out.[57]

In Bion's words:

> The analyst must focus his attention on O, the unknown and unknowable ... the psychoanalyst can know what the patient says, does, and appears to be, but cannot know the O of which the patient is the evolution: he can only 'be' it. ... No psychoanalytic discovery is possible without recognition of its existence, at-one-ment with it and evolution. The religious mystics have probably approximated most closely to expression of it. Its existence is as essential to science as to religion.[58]

Through this process of at-one-ment, the truth brought by the patient is understood by the therapist and 'metabolised' or thought about and symbolised, before being offered back to the patient. It is a process likened to that which occurs between mother and baby. A mother holds and contains what feel like unbearable distressing feelings for the baby. They are made sense of and offered back in a more bearable and comprehensible form, and the feelings then can be 'borne' or 'suffered' rather than expelled, '[the analysand] upon this acceptance of the *knowable truth,* allows it to be transformed into wisdom, personal O'.

Some incomprehensible truth, from the unknowable part of the self, which could not be faced by the patient, has been transformed in this process and is reinternalised by the patient. It has become meaningful and is now accepted and

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[56] Bion, *Attention and Interpretation,* 26.
[57] James S.Grotstein, "The Seventh Servant", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 85: 5(2004), 1092.

owned. A transformation of the self has occurred. The *Absolute Truth* is transformed into *tolerable emotional truth.* There is emphasis throughout on *becoming* O, *at-one-ment* with O, and *incarnating* O to describe a process occurring in a relationship which results in an understanding and acceptance of a *personal truth.* There is a gradually increasing awareness by the patient of his inner world. [59]

In order for the therapist to respond to the patient in this way, Bion describes a necessary state of attention, which he compares with Keats's 'negative capability'. Keats's wrote: 'I mean *Negative Capability,* that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable searching after fact & reason'.[60] In order for O to evolve, Bion advocates that 'memory' and 'desire' be abolished. This seemingly impossible state of mind has to be achieved by 'a positive discipline of eschewing memory and desire. I do not mean that "forgetting" is enough. What is required is "faith" - faith that there is an ultimate reality and truth - the unknown, "formless infinite"'. There has to be a willingness and openness to know but without an insistence on knowing. Memory and desire, Bion claims, are 'ready formulated': they derive from experience gained from the senses, so that they tend to impose their own meanings. This results in an interference with the capacity to be receptive to the present experiences, to the shifts and new meanings in the here-and-now of the relationship, in the process of which O is evolving. There has to be a giving up of certainties, past beliefs, predictions and expectations, [61]

Williams uses the work of Bion and Meltzer to explore whether psychoanalysis is most appropriately seen as an art or a science. She concludes that it is both and uses some of the elements of Bion's work to suggest that the *practice* of psychoanalysis is best regarded as an art form. She quotes Milton's *Paradise Lost* as an important influence on Bion. Milton, who becomes blind and can no longer gain knowledge from his books, has to rely on the 'celestial light' to irradiate his mind, so that he can see 'things invisible to mortal sight', so that 'the natural scientist is replaced by the religious artist'[62]. The image is that of imaginatively creating an idea,

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[58]Bion, *Attention and Interpretation,* 27-30.
[59] Grotstein, "The Seventh Servant", 1087.
[60] John Keats, "Letter to George and Tom Keats", (21,?27 December1817) in ed. Elizabeth Cook, *John Keats,* (Oxford : Oxford University Press,1990),370.
[61]*Attention and Interpretation,* (1970), 125-133.
[62]Meg Harris Williams, "Psychoanalysis: An Art or a Science? A Review of the Implications of the Theory of Bion and Meltzer", *British Journal of Psychotherapy,* 16:2 (1999), 127-35. The reference is

rather than acquiring knowledge and logically trying to work out what is 'right'. In order to 'tell of things invisible to mortal sight' the cognitive struggle to gain knowledge has to be suspended, and glimpses of truth can then be received in an experience which has much in common with the aesthetic experience of contemplating a work of art. Bion's method of intuiting the patient's truth by putting aside memory and desire and 'becoming O' is compared to such an aesthetic experience. Understood in this way, psychoanalysis can be seen as an art form, involving processes similar to those through which the mystics related to the transcendent. However, the subsequent *conscious* thought about the new truths arrived at in this way leads to a modification of existing knowledge, and this use of them to extend or change current theory can be seen as a 'descriptive science'. The combination of the *process* of analysis as an aesthetic experience, and the *results* as a descriptive science, is suggested by Williams as necessary to investigate the complexities of the mind

These unmeasurable aspects of psychoanalysis mean that science concerned with cause and effect and with controlled trials, so-called 'linear science', is inadequate to examine or describe psychoanalysis. The intersubjective experience in therapy is better understood by comparison with a religious experience of the transcendent or an aesthetic response to a work of art. The descriptions of the processes involved are reminiscent of those given by the Romantic poets of their subjective interaction with their subjects through the imagination. Brown details the complicated relationship between imagination and reason and their role in understanding the scriptures. Several of the characteristics of the role of the imagination to which he refers ( the making of new images not present in nature through metaphor and thinking laterally; the results of these connections, which may not make obvious sense but may still be illuminating; the mediating process of the imagination between objectivity and subjectivity), are reminiscent of the therapist's use of his or her subjectivity to understand the inner world of the other.[63]

His description is very similar to Bion's description of the 'evolution' of emotional experience :

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to *Paradise Lost,* III. 55.

[63]David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 350-354.

> the coming together, by a sudden precipitating intuition, of a mass of apparently unrelated incoherent phenomena which are thereby given coherence and meaning not previously possessed ... there emerges, like the pattern from a kaleidoscope, a configuration which seems to belong not only to the situation unfolding, but to a number of others not previously seen to be connected and which it has not been designed to connect.[64]

The emphasis on the imaginative and intuitive in psychoanalysis in recent years has led to its being valued as an art form. It is these aspects of it that are particularly attuned to the unconscious, with what Kristeva called the 'semiotic' and what Freud called 'primary process thinking'. The conscious mind on the other hand is involved in 'secondary process thinking' (concerned with rationality, logic, and cause-and-effect), the realm of Kristeva's 'symbolic'. Both primary and secondary processes make up the human psyche, and both imagination and reason are necessary to understand it and to interact with it therapeutically. 'Descriptive science', Freud's method, is necessary, for all its limitations, to maintain a metapsychology which holds provisional meaning and provides a framework, but it has to be held critically under review. Statistical/quantitative science can measure certain aspects of psychoanalysis and these add to the understanding of it, as do the insights of other scientific disciplines such as neuroscience. However, since the discovery of relativity and quantum theory scientists have been cognisant of the importance of subjectivity and are suspicious about the proposing of certainties. Arden writes of the need for both freedom and rigour in psychoanalysis and of Freud's adherence to 'scientific' methods as an awareness of the need for rigour.[65]. Psychoanalysis perceived as an art can be seen as offering freedom. Bringing together art and science, rigour and freedom, the symbolic and the semiotic in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, offers the best hope of a deep understanding of the human psyche.

The effect on the scientific validity of psychoanalysis of this conjunction of the subjective and the objective has been considered in philosophical terms by Gomez. Through an examination of critiques of psychoanalysis by Aldolf Grünbaum, Thomas Nagel and Jürgen Habermas, she concludes that neither empirical science nor Habermas's 'hermeneutical' science (he describes a form of scientific thinking based

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[64] W.R.Bion, *Second Thoughts,* (London: Heinemann, 1967),127.
[65] M. Arden, *Midwifery of the Soul,* (1998),71.

on intersubjectivity, shared meaning and the interpretation of symbols), is adequate to describe psychoanalysis; it requires both.[66]

## 1.4 Psychoanalytic Attitudes to Religion

### 1.4.1 Developmental approaches.

In addition to the above changes in theory and technique in psychoanalysis, a further change has occurred in the attitude of many analysts to religion. Freud's view of religion as illusory wish-fulfilment, which encouraged infantilism, was taken up by many in early psychoanalytic circles; but theorists more recently have emphasised the positive aspects of religion, seeing religious belief as a possible way of achieving emotional, moral and spiritual maturity, comparable with a similar process in psychotherapy or analysis.[67]

Erikson's 'ego-psychology'[68]comprises a concept of human development in a form analogous to 'epigenesis', a term used in embryology to describe the physical development of the embryo. He famously described stages of development, in each of which specific necessary tasks were negotiated.[69] These ideas were evidenced in his psycho-biographical work on Gandhi and Martin Luther;[70] they were also incorporated into Fowler's faith development theory. This described stages of faith of increasing maturity, each of which offers an enduring 'emergent strength' but also potential hazards.[71]

In Meissner's 'dialogue' between psychoanalysis and religion, he incorporated

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[66]Adolf Grünbaum, "Critque of Psychoanalysis", pp. 109-137; Thomas Nagel, "Freud's permanent Revolution", pp.138-153; Jürgen Habermas, "The Scientistic Self-misunderstanding of Metapsychology", pp.154-173 in Lavinia Gomez, *The Freud Wars: An introduction to the philosophy of psychoanalysis,* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005).

[67]Rachel Blass, "Beyond Illusion" in ed. David Black, *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century,* (London: Tavistock Publications, 2006), 23.

[68]E.H.Erikson, (1950) *Childhood and Society,* Second Edition (New York: W.W.Norton, 1963).

[69]David M. Wulff ed., *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views,* (New York: Chichester: John Wiley, 1991), 371.

[70]E. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-violence,* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1969); E, Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History,* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1962).

[71] J.W.Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning,* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

ideas from 'ego-psychology' (Erikson, Hartmann and Rapaport) and from self-psychology (Kohut) in juxtaposing psychoanalytic and theological perspectives of development. He described five modes of religious experience based on Kohut's concept of evolving narcissim. He used Erikson's work on 'creative regression' aimed at growth towards achieving personal integrity, and Rizzuto's research on the changes in a believer's image of God which takes place as development proceeds. He followed Winnicott in describing religious activities as occurring in 'transitional' space, that is in the realm of illusion. Illusion here was seen not in the sense of being false or delusional, but as existing between subjective and objective experience.[72]

In juxtaposing psychoanalytic and theological perspectives of development in these ways, the believer could be described as having an 'immature' or 'mature' image of God, or as relating to a religious object in an 'immature' or 'mature' fashion. Meissner suggests that the whole range of development parameters are found well distributed in all forms of religious groups and traditions, and does not label particular traditions as 'mature' or 'immature'; but he raises the question as to whether there are preferred modalities in particular traditions which are adhered to and idealised. His concluding challenge is a demand for research aimed at understanding the level of interaction between the influence of a particular modality and the developmental needs of the individual. [73] It is hoped that this thesis will shed some light on this question.

Since the 1980s, there has been an explosion of work which juxtaposes psychoanalysis and religion, but Blass questions whether this superficially friendly attitude to religion is actually preferred to Freud's open antagonism, by Christian believers. Many of the authors concentrate on the interaction with religious objects as 'transitional' phenomena, that is as 'illusional' and as neither entirely subjective or entirely objective. She suggests that when these phenomena are viewed as 'transitional', then Freud's question about whether or not religious claims are actually true becomes irrelevant. She asserts that the apparent increased toleration of religion

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[72]W.W.Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience,* ( New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1984); H. Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problems of Adaptation,* (New York: International Universities Press, 1939); D. Rapaport, *The Theory of Ego Autonomy,* (New York: Basic Books, 1957); Heinz Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14 (1966), 243-72; E.H.Erikson, *Childhood and Society,* (1963); A.M.Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

among analysts coincides with a shift in the nature of both psychoanalytical theory and in the kind of religion they tolerate. The psychoanalytical shift, already mentioned, is from 'drive' to 'relationality' and to an emphasis on the 'transitional'; and the forms of religion of which they are tolerant are those stressing 'interpersonal or cultural relatedness' and the 'illusional' nature of religious phenomena; or, in her words, one which does not demand a 'belief that what religion posits is really true'. There remains a tendency to denigrate organised religion and to value a 'personal, self-determined mysticism, devoid of history, ritual, authority, obligation and mediation, a kind of westernised Buddhism'. Many Christians, she suggests, while reassured that their beliefs are not 'infantile', would not be reassured that truths of their claims were irrelevant. They would prefer an honest argument with Freud.[74]

Jones, who has written prolifically about religion and psychoanalysis, draws on object-relations theory and the self-psychology of Kohut. He attributes the capacity of religion to inspire great selflessness, or violence and terror, to the idealisation within it. He explores the possibility of a religion without idealisation and offers the 'via negativa' as such an alternative, thus supporting Blass's point[75]. Similarly Jonte-Pace suggests that Jones's object-relations model is 'perfect' for interpreting the developmental foundations of God images 'within the liberal, humanistic, non-authoritarian, ecumenical religions' but worries that this applies to a limited number of theologies and experience. There is little about the *praxis* of religion, the 'material reality in rituals, texts, icons, liturgies and communities'. She describes Jones's use of object relations as mainly conscious and intellectual, and calls for it to be pushed further into the unconscious.[76] The repudiation of institutionalised, traditional religions occurs repeatedly in those authors who see themselves as sympathetic to religion. However, ideas of achieving autonomy, trust, a sense of identity, integrity, and a capacity for wisdom are almost ubiquitous. They are seen as goals of healthy development, psychological treatment, or a religious journey.[77]

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[73]Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience,* 159.

[74] Blass, "Beyond Illusion", 27-29.

[75]James W. Jones, *Terror and Transformation: The Ambiguity of Religion in Psychoanalytic Perspective,* (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002).

[76]Diane Jonte-Pace, "In Defence of an Unfriendly Freud", *Pastoral Theology,* (1999) 47: 3, 177-8.

[77]H. Guntrip, "Religion in Relation to Personal Integration", *British Journal of Medical Psychology,* 42, (1969), 323; David H. Rosen, and Ellen M.Crouse, "The Tao of Wisdom: Integration of Taoism

### 1.4.2 Hazards of developmental approaches

As Wallace warns, one danger in the juxtaposing of developmental concepts of ways of relating, with theological understandings, is a tendency to 'collapse' 'rich and complicated present day adult behaviours, motives and meanings, into their infantile precursors'. For instance a numinous experience may involve the experience of trust originating in infancy, but this is not necessarily evidence of infantile dependency.[78] Similarly, there is an assumption among some psychoanalytic theorists, who have examined the representations individuals hold of God in terms of maturity, that 'immature forms' imply defensive forms of relating: for instance, an idealised, anthropomorphic God, who punishes disobedience, will be related to in a defensive way which precludes change.

A second hazard is that the stress on 'empathy', in the developmental theories used, is an element which tends to situate change in religion in a private and individual space. Kohut's self-psychology, which will be considered in chapter two, emphasises the importance of empathy and it is intrinsic, for instance, to Meissner's thought on religion. As Gorday outlines, Kohut conceives of all pathology as resulting from a failure of early empathy; his 'Tragic Man' has a 'damaged, deficient core' (unlike Freud's 'Guilty Man', who is struggling to control aggressive and sexual 'id' drives, and to resolve Oedipal conflicts). For Kohut, 'salvation' depends on re-establishing 'empathic closeness to self-objects'. He believed in a 'foundational capacity of the psyche to integrate and synthesise experience in the service of robust aliveness, and the developmental source of the highest values of western culture', given adequate empathy. He saw the image of God as a source of such empathy for a believer. Change would occur in the context of this inner and private experience. There is no need for the communal aspects of religion. As Gorday suggests, for Kohut, empathy is overloaded, as a magic solution for everything: it is made 'to carry the same load as the term "grace", when the latter describes the whole work of God in

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and the Psychologies of Jung, Erikson and Maslow" in *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality*, (London and Philadelphia: Routledge, 2000); Jeffrey B.Rubin, 'Psychoanalysis and Spirituality' in ed. David Black, *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century*, (2006).

[78]Edwin Wallace, "Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Religion", *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 18, (1991), 274-5.

salvation', and that 'well-being, via empathy... is a thinly veiled form of religious eschatological utopianism'.[79] There is an emphasis on the conscious and the intellectual, and a relative de-emphasis on the need to struggle with deep unconscious negative feelings in the transference.

Some would see this as a misunderstanding of Kohut's empathy. He claims that the verbalising of the patient's experience is enough to provide the 'optimal frustration' which he believes is adequate to effect the necessary transformation of the therapist from an idealised figure to a 'mature' replacement.[80] But experience of treating patients, together with Kernberg's experience referred to earlier, suggests that more complicated involvement with negative aspects is required.

The tendency of psychoanalysts to sanction private, individualised, non-anthropomorphised forms of religion is linked with Carette's assertion that the psychoanalytic study of religion insulates itself from wider cultural and economic influences; and his work reinforces what has been said about some of the studies in this field. He delineates two forms, two 'political orders' of the study of religion. The first is 'the order of the *same*' which he associates with 'dominant American readings of psychoanalysis' (which would include Meissner, Erikson and Kohut). Through the failure to accommodate political and economic influences *within* both psychoanalytic and theological discourses themselves, this 'increases disciplinary specialism, reduces the political value of the study, sustains traditional thought, and thus supports late-capitalist orders'; it is ego-driven and individualistic. On the other hand, 'the order of the *other*' (which he associates with European psychoanalysis and the voice of the oppressed in America) is focussed on unconscious drives and social identity. The first order separates self and society, and the second unites it. The first is seen as colluding with post-war affluence and ideas of freedom, which conceal and ignore the oppressed. It is regarded as allowing itself to be linked with, and therefore as justifying, profitable 'spirituality' movements, which emphasise individual development and the 'American dream'. He laments the separation of American psychoanalysis from Freud's reading of the unconscious.[81]

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[79]Peter J.Gorday, "The Self-Psychology of Heinz Kohut: What's It All About Theologically?", *Pastoral Psychology,* 48: 6, (2000), 450-65.
[80]Gorday, "The Self-Psychology of Heinz Kohut", 462.
[81]Jeremy Carrette, *Religion and Critical Psychology,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 104-9,130-1.

In spite of her introduction of the importance of early relationships, Klein remains closely associated with Freud's reading of the unconscious, with her acceptance of bodily phantasies, biological drives and destructive impulses. Similarly Kristeva's emphasis is on the 'divided self', the persistent abject, the intersection of the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic', and the need in society for opportunities to symbolise 'semiotic' elements of the psyche. Both can be seen in Carette's terms as associated with the second political order of the study of religion: the 'order of the other'.

Early Methodism is the form of religion to be studied in this thesis. It involved a belief in an idealised, anthropomorphic (either punishing or forgiving) God. Good and evil were polarised, and fanaticism or 'enthusiasm' could occur. In Meissner's or Erikson's terms, such a God representation would be expected to result in 'immature', dependent relating, with associated primitive psychological defence mechanisms. The question addressed here is whether a Kristevan reading of transformative factors in development and religion, when applied to John and Charles Wesley's experience of religion, would tend to confirm this expectation of immature relating, or whether it would elicit additional, unanticipated, processes of change. Does a Kristevan reading of the experiences of the Wesleys allow the understanding of change within religion to become a discourse of the other? By studying religion through Kleinian, post-Kleinian and Kristevan eyes, it is hoped that some of the hazards associated with developmental theory will be avoided and the process of exploration itself will be less 'ego-driven' and more receptive to unconscious factors

**1.5 Caveats.**

An attempt to understand the inner worlds of individuals who are long dead has well-known hazards. While this study has the advantage, unusual at this distance, of access the extensive writings about the Wesleys' early lives, by their mother, Susanna, as well as their own personal journals and letters, the information available is inevitably fragmentary. In addition, while the psychoanalytic theories in this study emphasise an 'intersubjectivity' between patient and therapist, rather than an observation of the patient as 'object', unfortunately at this distance that is unattainable. Ideas and speculations cannot be checked out repeatedly with the subject, as would happen in

therapy, and there can be no information gained from non-verbal, projective or counter-transference sources. Information from the records of a wide range of interactions with family, with others, with work, and with religious and cultural elements has to be relied on to lend support to the suppositions made from subjective writings, in order to provide some coherence to the narrative. That is not to say that the examination of written sources is fruitless: Freud found significant material for the understanding of 'paranoia' from the diaries of Judge Schreber.[82]

### 1.6 Plan of the Thesis

The thesis is in three parts:

Part I (chapters 2 and 3) outlines psychoanalytic understandings of an individual's growth to emotional, mental and moral maturity. It is concerned mainly with mechanisms of change in the early life of an individual and in psychotherapy.

Part II (chapter 4, four sections) looks at opportunities for change in a religious context. It also examines some forms of religion which in conventional terms might be expected to encourage defensiveness rather than growth. The concepts outlined in Part I are used to understand these processes psychoanalytically

Part III (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) tests out the theoretical expectations of change or defensiveness discussed in Part II in the lives of John and Charles Wesley. It examines the lives and work of John and Charles Wesley in the context of their political, social, religious and family backgrounds, in order to ascertain whether the degree of growth or defensiveness was consistent with the expectations raised in the theory? They professed the same faith, and were from the same family, political, cultural and religious background, but they responded to encounters with religion differently.

Part I

Chapter 2 is concerned with the search for 'goodness' and 'maturity' in religion and in psychoanalysis. It examines what is meant by 'growth' in both these discourses. It is

[82] Sigmund Freud, "Psychoanalytic notes on an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia", in *Case Histories II,* Pelican Freud Library, 9, (Harmondsworth: Penguin books), 138-220.

particularly concerned with the relationship between ideas about 'growth' or 'development' and ideas of the 'good'. The work of Waddell is cited. She suggests that the one is identified with the other in psychoanalysis (to strive to grow is to strive to become good), and that this identification has its roots in Plato's belief in the human being's innate quest for truth and the longing for self-transcendence.[83] She sees growth as occurring through two fundamental processes:

1) in the interaction with an emotionally available object;

and 2) through the finding out of the 'deep truth' about the self. This is achieved in the repeated confrontation with truth in the ordinary interactions with others in life, or in the particularities and detail of therapy.

These two facilitators of change are used as a framework to re-examine important psychoanalytical ideas about development. The rest of this chapter is concerned with first of these facilitators: it outlines ideas about the development of the moral sense in the context of a relationship with a good object, as they have evolved through Kleinian, object-relations, and self-psychology theory. It also addresses the degree and type of 'regression', which can occur in relationships with 'emotionally available' objects, and its role in facilitating or hindering change.

In Chapter 3, the second of Waddell's facilitators is explored more fully. This relates to the search for increased awareness of the truth about the self. Bion describes truth as food for mental growth, but accessing the 'deep truth' about the self is no easy matter. It depends on the capacity to symbolise, including the capacity to think and to verbalise.

Material is repressed because it is felt as unacceptable and threatening to the conscious self, and in therapy the help of the therapist is required to verbalise, and to present in manageable form, what has to be faced. This chapter looks at ways in which the use of symbols can facilitate the search for 'deep meaning'.

The term 'symbolisation' is used in psychoanalytic theory to include the conceptualising and verbalising of unconscious content, as well as the use of material symbols and rituals. The first part of this chapter concerns the development of the capacity to 'symbolise'. It considers the change from dyadic to triadic relating, which is necessary for symbolising and creativity, and for the creation of a triadic space for

[83] Margot Waddell, "On Ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal' in George Eliot's novels and Post-Kleinian Psychoanalytic Thought", *American Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 59:3 (1999), 280-1.

reflection and of mental freedom.

The second part introduces Kristeva's understanding of very early infantile development, and her view that culture (religious or secular) must provide opportunities to symbolise disturbing unconscious contents arising from pre-verbal experiences if an individual is to grow and develop. Her thoughts on the entry into the 'symbolic' realm of words and rules, through identification with a loving, supportive object, which facilitates separation from the mother/child dyad, adds another layer of understanding to the more conventional ideas about the relationship with a good object already discussed. Her emphasis on the need for a dialogue between the 'symbolic' and 'semiotic' (the realm of the body, of sensation and fragmented affect) are important for the study of how religion might promote growth. This is discussed in Part II.

Following the analysis of processes of change in chapters 2 and 3, four elements emerge which facilitate the process of growth. They are all important in the work of Kristeva and can be understood in her terms:

1) opportunities for triadic relating;

2) opportunities for interaction with an emotionally available (or transforming) object;

3) opportunities for intersection of the symbolic and the semiotic;

4) the availability of symbols which can symbolise the semiotic;

These four facilitators are considered in relation to religion in Part II.

Part II (Chapter 4)

This is divided into four parts coinciding with the four facilitators elicited above. It examines ways in which religion might encourage growth by providing spaces for helpful relating, for reflecting, and for the use of symbols.

Section 1) Triangular or triadic images: these are not uncommon in Christianity. Examples are given of triadic structures in Christianity which might offer psychic spaces of security and opportunity for reflection and mental freedom.

Section 2) Opportunities to experience intersections: between the universal and the particular, the known and the unknown, the human and the divine, the

apophatic and the cataphatic, or the symbolic and the semiotic. The descriptions of the early mystics, and particularly Denys the Areopagite, of the apophatic and the cataphatic, are used as examples of this intersection.

Section 3) Interactions with transforming objects: firstly, the experience of a loving, forgiving God as 'transforming object', including an exploration of the place of regression; secondly, interactions with other objects which act as transforming objects: either objects of beauty, or more 'ordinary' objects responded to in a particular way. Schleiermacher is referred to here.

Section 4) The use of religious symbols, narratives, sacraments and rituals to symbolise the semiotic: this section is mainly concerned with Kristeva's thought on symbolism and ritual and the 'abject'. This is compared with the work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas on ritual, which demonstrates similar integrating processes, and with Ricoeur and Tillich's writings on Christian symbolism. It discusses Kristeva's concern that religious symbols fail adequately to symbolise unmanageable, disturbing unconscious material (the 'abject'), when the religion is based on a transcendental ideal.[84]It also addresses Crownfield's assertion that the capacity of a religion to function as means of transformation depends on the availability for open, 'triadic' relating within it.[85]

Part III

The third part of the thesis considers the similarities and differences in the responses of John and Charles Wesley to their religious faiths, with particular interest in whether they were able to relate to their beliefs and practices in a way which allowed them to change and develop.

Chapter 5 examines their cultural and religious heritage and their family background. An examination of the sermons and the character of their maternal grandfather, Dr. Samuel Annesley, an eminent dissenting preacher, gives evidence of the beliefs, values and expectations which they 'inherited', many of which appear in their writings and those of their mother. The writings of Susanna Wesley, are the

[84]Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva,* 73.
[85]David Crownfield, "The Sublimation of Narcissism in Christian Love and Faith", in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Krsteva,* (1992), 63.

source of a considerable amount of information about their immediate family, early experience and education.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the individual lives, relationships and spiritual journeys of the Wesley brothers. Using psychoanalytic theory, and particularly Kristevan theory, an attempt is made to understand their mental structures and psychological defence mechanisms from their own writings, and from the writings of others close to them, and to explore ways in which these affected their response to the religious faith they shared.

Chapter 8 explores the theological differences between the Wesleys. It relates them to their psychological needs.

### 1.7 What does the thesis seek to do?

The conclusions relating to issues addressed by the thesis are set out in chapter 9. These consider:

1) the degree to which growth and change relate to personality factors;

2) the ways in which individuals select out 'transformative' elements from so-called 'immature' religions;

3) Kristeva's assertion that Christian symbols do not adequately elaborate the 'abject', considered through the examination of Charles Wesley's hymns;

4) the presence or absence of 'triadic openness' in early Methodism;

5) the usefulness of classifying religions as 'mature' or 'immature'.

Overall, the thesis offers: 1) a fresh interpretation of the religious journeys of the Wesley brothers; 2) added insights into Kristeva's thought on symbolisation in religion through the application of her ideas to two historical figures; and 3) new perspectives on the psychoanalytical perceptions of the potential for change in different forms of religion.

Ricoeur regarded Freud's psychoanalysis as iconoclastic and the hermeneutics of symbols in the Freudian mode as 'regressive', and while he resisted the total rejection of 'Freudian iconoclasm', he also advocated avoiding the 'eclectic' trap of seeing psychoanalysis as merely another model; he attempted to integrate its thinking

with his own in the hope that both modes of thought might be mutually enriched[86]. I want to promote this aim by using psychoanalytic concepts, not as a metanarrative which attempts to give a complete explanation of the religious processes described, but in the hope of an enlightened understanding of both.

The fear associated with 'reductionism' is that by explaining a phenomenon in more fundamental terms it is robbed of its mystery, liveliness and possible transcendental significance. This has been a common anxiety since the Romantic period, as Keats's words show:

> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine-
> Unweave a rainbow, ...[87]

Smith suggests that when people try to describe psychological phenomena (and I would add religious experiences and practices) in a more 'scientific' way, the hearers feel robbed of their humanity (or their belief in the transcendent).[88] He suggests that this 'stem[s] from a puzzling (narcissistic) desire to situate ourselves outside nature'; and that it is an attempt to deny the fact that, because we are human, we must experience things through psychobiological means. He quotes Dunnett who describes 'good reductionism' and 'greedy reductionism' - the first, which retains the complexity of the phenomenon under examination, and the second, which is over-zealous and leads to falsification of the original.[89] It is not in the spirit of 'greedy reductionism' but in the hope of Ricoeur's mutual enrichment that the two modes of thought are brought together here.

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[86]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy,* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1970), 549.
[87]John Keats, "Lamia", [Part II, lines 234-237].
[88]David L. Smith, "Should Psychoanalysts Believe What They Say?" *British Journal of Psychotherapy,* 13:1, (1996), 66-67.
[89]D.C. Dunnett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life,* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1995), 82.

# Chapter 2 - The Search for the Good.

## 2.1 Development and 'Goodness'

A study of the growth and development of John and Charles Wesley must be set in a context of what is understood as spiritual and psychological 'maturity' in psychoanalysis and in Christianity. The psychoanalytic theories in this and in the next chapter, are included not only to elucidate aspects of growth, but also because they comprise the tools necessary to understand the historical figures.

In the course of this task, the evolution of psychoanalytic ideas as discussed in chapter 1 is apparent. This present chapter includes the shift from Freud's 'mechanistic-individualistic' theories based on biological drives, to Melanie Klein's emphasis on the mother/child relationship and the beginnings of 'object relations' theory. The late twentieth and early twenty-first century analysts included in chapter 3, have further extended these early ideas. In their work, there has been more willingness to consider the 'ineffable'.[1]

The present chapter is concerned with the relationship between the idea of development and the idea of the 'good'. It involves exploring parallels between psychoanalytic ideas of a 'mature' individual, and biblical aspirations to a Christian identity. Philosophers, theologians and psychoanalysts, among others, have been preoccupied with the necessary or desirable elements required in becoming a 'good' person and in leading a 'good' life. In this context, many authors use the terms 'morality' and 'ethics' interchangeably. But as Wright points out, Paul Ricoeur differentiates them: for him ethics refers to the 'aim for an accomplished life', while morality is 'the articulation of this aim in norms characterised by the claim to universality and by an effect of restraint';[2] or in Wright's words, 'ethics is the striving for the good in all spheres of life, and morality is the constraint upon that striving imposed by the demand of others for justice', so that morality is encompassed by ethics. It is with a striving for good in Ricoeur's 'ethical' sense that this chapter is concerned: so that it relates not only to *behaviour* towards others, but to responsibility

[1] Josephine Klein, *Jacob's Ladder: Essays on the Ineffable in the Context of Contemporary Psychotherapy,* (London: Karnac, 2003), 159-201.
[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1920), 170.

to the self and to an individual's aspiration to be a certain kind of person.[3]

The emphasis on personal change as well as behaviour is found in philosophical, religious and psychoanalytic understandings of the 'search for the good'. The moral philosopher Iris Murdoch, for instance, seeks to expound a 'religious depth of morality'.[4] Antonaccio has written of the undermining, in modern and post-modern thought, of the notion of the individual as an intentional subject, and of the idea of morality as 'grounded' in a transcendental reality, with suspicion that concepts of moral value are used by the powerful, for their own, sometimes oppressive ends. Murdoch attempts to undermine a reliance purely on the 'will' and to reinstate the self as 'moral centre of substance',[5]as an opaque and complex individual who manifests 'a darker, less fully conscious, less steadily rational image of the dynamics of the human personality'.[6] This view of the personality led to Murdoch's assertion that 'the idea of the good' was a 'transcendental moral ideal', with an absolute claim on human existence and that the 'transformation of the egoistic consciousness [was] the central task of ethics'.[7] Thus the emphasis was on inner change rather than acceptable behaviour.

However, Murdoch has difficulty in rescuing the 'depth' of value and goodness without resorting to a religious foundation. Although she was an atheist, Murdoch's thought about religion shows a great deal of ambivalence.[8] While she saw the moral life as a struggle from illusion to realism, she also saw the human need for images, and myths, which were a vital part of religion:

> high morality without religion is too abstract. High morality craves religion. Religion symbolises high moral ideas which then travel with us and are more intimately and accessibly effective than the unadorned promptings of reason. Religion suits the image-making human animal.[9]

As Antonaccio points out, Murdoch saw human consciousness as in a constant relationship with 'the good as its ideal', but nevertheless located the good *within*

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[3]Dale S. Wright, "Human Responsibility and the Awakening of Character in the Buddhist Film Mandala", *Literature and Theology,* 18, 3, (2004), 317.
[4]Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 484.
[5] *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals,* 153.
[6]*Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals,* 43-44, quoted in Maria Antonaccio, "Iris Murdoch's Secular Theory of Culture", *Literature and Theology,* 18:3, (2004), 278-280.
[7]Antonaccio, "Iris Murdoch's Secular Theory", 280.
[8] "Iris Murdoch's Secular Theory", 281-3.

human consciousness rather than in a transcendent God. She saw the moral life as based in the ordinary struggles of everyday life rather than in speculative philosophy.[10]

These emphases on inner rather than behavioural change, and on the 'moral life' as based in quotidian interactions rather than metaphysical speculation, persist in the following accounts of Christian and psychoanalytic understandings of moral growth.

**2.2 Christian goodness.**

A full appreciation of Christian 'excellence' would, of course, require a survey of ethical thought from Plato to contemporary Christian ethics. However, it is possible to draw out some features held in common on the search for goodness in Christianity and psychoanalytic thought, with reference to Rowan William's work on New Testament ethics[11] and Ellen Charry's writing on the salutarity of Christian doctrine.[12]

In both theology and analytic thought, a loving relationship is central to the development of a capacity for 'goodness' and for loving others, and it is the working out of love which leads to 'moral' action. 'Good' actions and attitudes, such as concern for others, a capacity for tolerance, forgiveness, and for a realistic assessment of the self, and a lack of arrogance, are common to both as manifestations of maturity. In neither discipline, however, is 'goodness' judged merely by behaviour; freedom *from* sin is central to Christianity, just as freedom *from* entrenched destructive patterns of behaviour is central to psychoanalytic change; but both also emphasise the need for freedom *for* a richer engagement with life: ' I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10). The letting go of sin or repetitive destructive actions and relationships allows for a fuller and more loving engagement with new relationships.

Rowan Williams dismisses the commonly held belief that an individual's 'good' or destiny is to be found in a unique, hidden, authentic self of integrity, which is free from self-deception. For him, true self-perception and 'what is good' for the

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[9] Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*,(1993), 484.
[10] Antonaccio, "Iris Murdoch's Secular Theory", 284,276.
[11]Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
[12]Ellen T.Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

self, has to be worked out in conversation and negotiation with others; in this way the self 'grows ethically'. However, such growth can only occur when the self is free from engaging in competition, rivalry and jockeying for position. There must be a 'non-competitive other'. This other is God as offered by Christ: a God who is accessible to all, irrespective of privilege or position, whose actions 'do not occupy the same moral and practical spaces, and are never in rivalry' with the believer, who is not reactive, but whose actions are prior to human activity, and who is 'gracious'. Because the believer is 'authentically other' there is no need for a defensive strategy.[13] This description of a relationship with a 'non-competitive other' is reminiscent of psychoanalytical descriptions of the nourishing relationship with a loving early object.

Williams suggests that not only the teaching of Jesus but the narrative of his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, mediates the 'non-negotiable and therefore non-competitive presence 'before which ethical discourse is conducted'. In this context there is an ongoing process of formation, with the assurance that failure and disaster are not final, and where there is always the opportunity for forgiveness and restoration:

> What God's regard, as pronounced by Jesus, establishes is my presence as an agent, experiencing and 'processing' experience. I continue to be a self in process of being made, being formed in relation and transaction.[14]

Williams goes on to explore the ways in which the Christian narrative can provide a framework for an 'ethic and an anthropology', not based on human argument and rivalry. Drawing on Charry, he examines primary Pauline literature, the letter to the Ephesians and the Gospel of St. Matthew, in terms of their approach to ethics and spirituality. He draws out the paradox in these texts, that while Christian behaviour is that which can be seen as manifesting the nature of God, as seen in Christ (the 'imitation' of Christ), it is not merely the successful performance of behaviour that manifests God. 'Failure' which is recognised and accepted can also be seen as mirroring God, in his kenotic gift in the Incarnation and subsequent crucifixion.[15]

Williams sees this 'ironic strategy' as central to the role of these texts as they might influence the development of a Christian ethic. Generosity, mercy and welcome

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[13] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 241-250.
[14] *On Christian Theology*, 244-249.

manifest God as he was seen in Jesus, and this manifestation results in joy and delight in the beauty of God; however, failure, inadequacy and vulnerability also mirror God's giving up control, his 'dispossession'. Williams consequently advocates a scepticism towards successful performance. Both the Pauline and Matthean texts are seen as avoiding the idea that a success in good behaviour is the means of forming the Christian identity; rather it is based on a relationship with God as portrayed in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes do indeed urge virtue, which mirrors the nature of God and gives delight, but they also describe situations of vulnerability, which require a Christian response. Such a response, for Williams, is neither one of passive acceptance, nor of militant resistance, but a working with the situation in order 'to show the character of God'. Rather than offering a code of morals, such a reading of the sermon offers pointers and requires careful thought for every situation.[16]

Williams describes ethical growth as based on a relationship with the loves and resistances of the world, and held by the love and forgiveness of an ideal object; within this context a wish to emulate the object develops. As such, unlike an adherence to a moral code imposed by a punitive father figure, it is a characterological change based on love.

This idea of the relationship with God, of the individual's 'knowing and loving God' as the basis of the development of Christian excellence, is also the theme of Charry's work. She demonstrates its development in New Testament texts and in pre-modern theology. She also shows how Christian doctrine might be seen as what she calls 'aretegenic', or 'conducive to virtue', and as performing a salutary function; how 'the imitation or assimilation to [God] brings proper dignity and human flourishing'.[17] As with Williams, the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount are seen as models for emulation rather than as rules, so that an 'alternative interior purity' is offered consisting of 'aggressive self-scrutiny, compassion, integrity, selflessness and, finally, love of enemies, traits which are essentially limitless in application'.[18] Again, knowledge and love of God together with the practice of virtue, through the imitation of God as seen in Christ, form the path to excellence. Charry points out that 'knowing', as understood by the patristic bishops, was not merely a cognitive process,

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[15] *On Christian Theology*, 254.
[16] *On Christian Theology*, (2000), 255-259.
[17] Charry, *By the Renewing of yourMinds*, 18-19.
[18] *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 76.

but also involved the emotions, so that a connection was formed between the knower and the known, and goodness and flourishing were not divorced from truth. It was this 'sapiential' knowledge of God, which involved, desire, love and enthusiasm, which was seen as transformative.[19]

Examining Paul's letters, Charry emphasises the dramatic transformation of the self which involves intellect and emotion and which Paul repeatedly describes: 'be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom12: 2). She enumerates the many images and vivid metaphors in Pauline and deutero-Pauline texts to describe this 'participation in Christ'. Changed behaviour (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and peace (Col 3:12) follows as the new self is moulded into the image of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Christian 'goodness' here is seen as the striving towards the image of God, in the living out of these virtues, through the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[20] While the 'imitation of Christ', the adherence to ways of behaving which manifest the nature of God, forms a crucial part of Christian moral codes and guides to Christian spirituality, the process of transformation as understood by Charry and Williams emphasises inner change. It draws out the formative power of a relationship of trust, truth, acceptance and forgiveness; there is a struggle with a God of justice and mercy, towards a continuously changing but 'better' self.

Charry suggests that 'modern psychology', unlike the pre-modern theologians she examines, separates happiness from goodness, and therefore is 'ill-equipped to judge Christian aretologies'.[21] It is not clear what kind of modern psychology she is referring to, but in psychoanalysis at least, as the rest of this chapter will show, the two are not separated and many of the processes described in Christianity by Williams and Charry are mirrored in psychoanalysis.

### 2.3 Psychoanalytic understandings of a search for the good

Waddell has written of this search to know 'how a person may be enabled to grow up

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[19] *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 132-3, 229.
[20] *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 3, 46-50.
[21] *By the Renewing of your Minds*, 30.

in the inside as well as the outside', and she points out how, for psychoanalysis, this 'growing up' becomes identified with goodness: 'implicitly development is good'.[22]

Waddell bases her study on the characters in George Eliot's novels. This may seem an odd place to begin such a discussion, but as Waddell explains, Eliot's characters 'incarnate' her ideas, so that 'emotion becomes linked with particulars, and only in a faint and secondary manner with abstractions'.[23] This is a similar 'incarnation' to that which occurs in individual lives, including those described in the case-histories of analytic patients; Eliot's works provide what Riceour would describe as a laboratory of selfhood, providing imaginative variations on individual development.[24]

Like Murdoch, Eliot's struggle was to find, in the absence of orthodox religion, an individual expression for a sense 'of spiritual transcendence, of goodness, or of teleological purpose in human affairs that could be consonant with the most complex strata of human consciousness, that is, with some kind of realistic account of human relationships' Waddell is concerned with the difference between a 'good', which may be humanly attainable, and the 'ideal', which is beyond human striving; the difference between a knowable good and an unknowable ideal. She notes the difficulty of integrating a 'good life', as a real possibility, with 'yearnings toward quite other "ideal" representations of the nature of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty'.[25]

Two main elements essential to the process of individual teleological change to mental, emotional and moral maturity emerge from Waddell's exploration of Eliot's characters:

1) the transformational capacity of a relationship with an 'emotionally available' object in infancy.[26] She describes relationships with similarly emotionally available objects later in life, which may allow development, even in the face of early deprivation.

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[22]M. Waddell, "On Ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal'", *American Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 59: 3, (1999), 271-2.
[23]George Eliot, "Worldliness and other-worldliness: The Poet Young", *Westminster Review,* 66, (1857), 1-42, quoted in Waddell.
[24]Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time", in ed. M. Valdez, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination,* (Toronto: Toronto Univerity Press, 1991), 350.
[25]Waddell, "On Ideas of 'The Good' and 'The ideal'", 275-9.
[26] Freud originally used the term 'object' to describe a person or thing towards which an instinct was directed. Its later use has become more generalised to include a wide range of entities e.g. another person or part of a person, or a part of the self, a thing, an attainment or status, or an idea or belief, which a person relates to externally or to its internal representation. It is in this wider sense that the

2) the importance of a capacity to bear the truth about the self. Coming to understand the deep truth about the self is an essential component or 'food', which provides the means by which an individual grows towards maturity. In her discussion of the importance of truth, Waddell explores the difference between the 'ideal', as a source of hope and the 'idealised' as a distortion of the truth. She compares the way both psychoanalysis and literature engage with the role of 'truthfulness in the growth and development of an individual'. Drawing on Bion, Waddell says 'the mind grows through being fed with truthful experience but withers in the grip of falsehood'. The often unpalatable truth about the self is not denied but painfully addressed; it has to be 'genuinely suffered', rather than avoided. She emphasises that this coming to the truth occurs within the minutiae of human relationships, and may be compared with the engagement of the therapist with the complex details of the patient's material in therapy. The concentration on the particular in a detailed way often over a long period of time and involving many interactions, allows the subject's truth to evolve and to become real for the subject.[27]

As awareness of the deep truths about the self increases, there develops a widened vision, with reduced ego-centricity, an increased capacity to appreciate what other people feel, and an ability to see the self as part of a wider universe. Overall, there is an increased awareness and enjoyment of beauty; according to one of Eliot's heroines, Romola, the 'highest happiness' can only be gained by having what she calls 'wide thoughts'.[28]

There is a further element in individual development which is portrayed by Eliot in her characters, to which Waddell does not specifically refer. This is the development of a capacity to be less bound by external codes of behaviour, so that moral judgments can become based on love rather than fear of punishment. As Brown comments, Eliot through her heroine (Romola), portrays a moral system which constrains purely selfish impulses, but without relying on authoritarian abstractions; and for her this path depends on love, notably the love of close relationships, particularly close family relationships[29]:

She felt the sanctity attached to all close relations, and therefore, pre-

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term is used, except when specified.

[27] "On ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal'", 272,285.

[28]George Eliot, *Romola,* ed. Andrew Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 547.

[29]Andrew Brown, "Introduction" to *Romola,* xviii.

> eminently to the closest, was but the expression in outward law of that result towards which all human goodness and nobleness must spontaneously tend;[30]

For Romola, at the beginning of the novel, there is an identification with her father, a man who relies almost entirely on intellect and on the strict adherence to rules. Through experience and through her relationships to others, there evolves a capacity to value feeling and to allow herself to become immersed in the physicality of caring for children. She has not stopped using her mind, but there has been a move to involve the whole of her being in her judgments: affect and intellect, body and mind, unconscious and conscious, material and spiritual.

This is the kind of morality, with a participation in mutual responsibility, towards which Romola moves when she becomes involved in the lives and needs of other people at the end of the novel. She becomes aware of the previously unconscious unpalatable truths about herself, leading to a concern for, a recognition of and a reconciliation with others. There is an involvement in ordinary considerations and actions, and responses to the needs and feelings of others, rather than grand gestures aimed at self-gratification.

### 2.4 Interaction with an 'emotionally available' object

Waddell's first element for change, the child's relationship with its first 'emotionally available', or 'transforming' object, usually the mother, forms the basis of a great deal of psychoanalytic theory. Waddell draws on Klein in understanding these processes. Aspects of Kleinian and Post-Kleinian theory, which are relevant to this study are outlined here, including psychoanalytic understandings of the development of a moral sense.

Waddell's second element, the searching for 'deep truth', which includes relationships with subsequent 'transforming' objects, is explored in the next chapter. The psychoanalytic theories in both chapters are included, not only to shed light on aspects of growth, but also because they comprise the tools necessary to understand the historical subjects examined in the third part of the thesis.

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[30] *Romola,* 244.

### 2.4.1 Klein

#### 2.4.1.1 Post-Freudian development

Klein accepted orthodox Freudian theory regarding the development of conscience and the control of behaviour. She agreed that there were mental structures (the 'super-ego' and the 'ego'), which had a capacity to manage instinctual drives and that the development of these structures related to the resolution of the Oedipus complex (Freud's Structural and Drive theories). In 'The Ego and the Super-ego', Freud outlined his understanding of the development of the super-ego, which develops from the ego.[31] In his description of the functioning of the super-ego, he included all its prohibiting, censoring, and controlling aspects, as well as the standard-setting and the ideal-inspiring aspects which have been separated off by later theorists, and attributed to the 'ego-ideal'. It is well known that, for Freud, the super-ego was the 'heir to the Oedipus Complex'. In the Oedipal situation, as Coltart puts it:

> the strong libidinal attachment to the parent of the opposite sex, and the accompanying hostile rivalry of the same-sex parent have to be surmounted and changed.[32]

The child deals with this by identifying with the parent of the same sex and taking into himself parental values creating the super-ego. Coltart stresses that a significant part of the super-ego is unconscious, that it is closely related to the id, which is a source of instinctual energy, and that:

> it [the super-ego] uses all the power the parental figures had, reinforced by the child's own aggressive power, now turned in on himself, to keep his drives, wishes, intentions and behaviour in order.[33]

Klein benefited from Freud's understanding of the unconscious. Freud's awareness that part of the super-ego was unconscious was important in understanding how a harsh and irrational guilt or a need for self-punishment can arise. Guilt may be

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[31]Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* Pelican Freud Library, 11, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 368-374).
[32]Nina Coltart, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem,* (London: Free Association Books, 1992), 50.
[33]*Slouching Towards Bethlehem,* (1992), 52.

consciously experienced but it may also be unconscious and show itself as physical symptoms, psychological symptoms, or a strong resistance to getting better from an illness. Freud described a process of 'defusion' which could occur in association with the internalisation of early ('archaic') relationships with parents. He believed that, normally, destructiveness and aggression (arising from his innate 'death instinct') were 'bound' by loving or erotic impulses (arising from 'Eros' the instinct for life, creativity, including sex, and self preservation) but that in some circumstances they became defused and released onto the ego in the form of a harsh, unyielding, cruel super-ego, which was harsher than the original parental figures:[34] 'Kant's Categorical Imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus Complex'.[35] The super-ego however, because it is partly unconscious, has an effect which is outside awareness and so is not synonymous with conscience, whose dictates can be followed or ignored.

In addition, although Freud originally equated the ego with consciousness, he came to recognize that part of this too was unconscious; in Colthart's words:

> anxiety and guilt although *experienced* in the ego, can be deeply *un*conscious, as huge dynamic interactions take place in the recesses of the mind.[36]

For Freud, the struggle for an individual to be morally good was between the super-ego and the id. Thoughts, ideas, or urges from the unconscious id which were unacceptable to the super-ego would be transformed into more palatable form before they could appear in consciousness. They could then appear as day-dreams, dreams, creative works or illness. The emphasis was on biological instincts and drives, and on the struggle to suppress them or to erect some defensive structure against them, so that the super-ego could be placated and the individual feel more comfortable and act in a way which felt acceptable and appropriate. Freud invoked his theories of castration-anxiety and penis-envy as integral to this process, so that obedience to the parental rule resulted from anxiety: this was a morality based on fear.

Klein concentrated on the child's very early experience, in the 'pre-Oedipal' period. While she accepted the 'death drive', believing that aggression was innate and

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[34]*The Ego and the Id,* 396.
[35]Sigmund Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism,* The Pelican Freud Library, 11, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 422.
[36]*Slouching Towards Bethlehem,* (1992), 47.

of extreme importance in development, but she also saw the impetus for development as inextricably bound up with the vicissitudes of the child's early relationships. She described a process of internalisation of aspects of very early relationships and the affects and defences they involved - what she called 'positions'. In introducing these 'positions', she made the assumption that human beings were 'moral in their *very nature*'. According to Waddell, Klein describes the 'evolution of essentially moral categories as the *criterion* for normal personality growth: from narcissism and self-interest to concern for the well-being of others'.[37]

### 2.4.1.2 Paranoid schizoid and depressive positions

This section outlines how the development of a moral sense is intrinsic to Klein's conceptualisation of her 'paranoid/schizoid' and 'depressive' positions. Like Freud, she explored the origins of guilt and the super-ego. She concluded from her work in child analysis, that the child's primary fear is of annihilation (as opposed to castration anxiety), and she attributed this to the inborn aggression and destructiveness of the 'death instinct'. The aggression is felt to threaten the early ego, which lacks cohesiveness, with fragmentation and annihilation. Klein believed that there was an immediate projection or pushing out of these feelings into an external object (here the breast/mother) which was then felt as persecutory because it was full of the infant's frightening feelings. She described a process of splitting in the infant's view of the world:

> In states of gratification love-feelings turn towards the gratifying breast, while in states of frustration hatred and persecutory anxiety attach themselves to the frustrating breast.[38]

The good is exaggerated as a safeguard against the persecuting breast which is not only frustrating but experienced as containing the child's projected hate and aggression. The child's wish is for unlimited gratification and the *ideal* breast is phantasized as the answer to this wish. There is a strong sense of omnipotence, of being able to deny the persecutory breast and to create the ideal breast. It is necessary

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[37] "On ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal'", 283.
[38] Melanie Klein, "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms", in *Envy and Gratitude, and other works, 1946-1963,* (London: Virago Press, 1988), 7.

to split not only the objects but also the ego to achieve this. This splitting into good and bad is an essential part of the infant's early attempts to make sense of a bewildering world, and omnipotence and denial of reality are normal features of early mental functioning.

This early position of the child in a world polarised into good and bad according to whether the child is frustrated or gratified, where bad feelings are projected, where good and bad objects are introjected with associated splitting of the ego into benevolent and persecutory internal objects and where there is omnipotent denial of reality, is designated the 'paranoid schizoid position'. In the paranoid-schizoid position the child's main anxiety is due to fear of persecution: persecutory or paranoid anxiety.

In the second three months, Klein believed that a process of integration begins. The good and bad aspects of the breast/mother come closer together and there is a gradual increase in awareness that the feeding and frustrating object is the one and the same. This awareness is associated with an increased fear of loss and the development of feelings of guilt linked to the knowledge that the good mother has been attacked in phantasy. This stage is called the 'depressive position', as it is associated with feelings of depression and mourning. There is decreased splitting in the ego, with a less polarised view of the world, a clearer understanding of reality, decreased omnipotence and a desire to make reparation out of concern for the previously hated object. This concern and reparation improves relationships, which in turn promote further integration of the ego. There is a reduction in idealisation and denigration of objects, and a consequent reduction in persecutory anxiety. The predominant anxiety at this stage is 'depressive anxiety', which is a fear that the infant's internal hate and aggression will destroy its objects. It is Klein's view that the child's success in negotiating these positions is affected by external conditions: particularly consistent, empathic mothering without traumatic loss or disappointments too great to be managed at that stage (where the mother is an 'emotionally available' good object). Success leads to an ability to tolerate ambivalence, to have concern for others, and to relate to others as whole people rather than as sources of gratification. There is less need for polarised thinking and a capacity develops to tolerate unpleasant feelings without having to project them out immediately into others or to act impulsively to discharge them. Rather there is an ability to own less acceptable

feelings, thoughts and wishes; in other words, a capacity to accept the truth about the self.[39] Thus this move to the depressive position can be considered as leading to more mature behaviour and attitudes, so that a 'natural' morality based on concern for the welfare of others is achieved.

Waddell stresses the difference, for Klein, between the 'ideal' and the 'idealised' object. The 'ideal' breast is seen as the focus for all the infant's desires, and forms the core around which its development occurs. It is the 'foundation for hope, trust and belief in goodness'. This 'primary good object' is the prototype for future emotional experiences which are felt as ideal or boundless, and the child's love and gratitude towards the good object includes not only physical pleasure but emotion. The *idealisation* of an object, on the other hand, is seen as a defensive response, which distorts the original object or 'perverts the truth'. In the face of early experiences of deprivation, the 'ideal' object is *idealised* and clung on to beyond the 'developmentally necessary stage'. Because there are unrealistic expectations that such an object will fulfil all the subject's desires, it will inevitably disappoint and there will be repeated disillusionments. [40]

It is clear, then, that the successful negotiation (or not) of this stage of development will have a profound effect on an individual throughout life. In general, a state of affairs exists in which people function for much of the time in the depressive position, but at times, particularly when under pressure or threat, or when traumatised, they retreat to the paranoid-schizoid position.[41] Many, however, will function largely in a paranoid-schizoid mode. People who are described as narcissistic function largely in this fashion. They are self-related and form only part-object relations with others.[42]

Likierman suggests that, in health, there is an evolution beyond both the paranoid -schizoid and what she describes as the 'tragedy' of the *early* depressive position, where the infant experiences a sense of loss of the loved object, which has

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[39] "Notes on schizoid mechanisms", 14-16.

[40] "On Ideas of 'The Good' and 'The Ideal'", 282-3.

[41] G.Adshead, and Cleo van Velson, "Psychotherapeutic work with victims of trauma" in eds. C. Cordess, and M.Cox, *Forensic Psychotherapy*,( London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publications,1996), 259-260.

[42] To relate to a person as a 'part-object', is to *use* them *to* satisfy a need, rather than to recognise them as a person in their own right, with their own set of feelings, e.g. when the mother is regarded only as a breast or source of nourishment.

been destroyed by his own aggression, and feels guilt, anxiety, grief and sorrow. Initially these feelings are acute and intense, so that they are overwhelming and described by Klein as 'psychotic'. It is these primitive fears that have to be overcome, partly by the child's reparative urges towards the object she has the damaged in phantasy, and also through continued consistent, loving, maternal care. There does, however, remain an underlying fear of inflicting damage, which stimulates the impetus for continuing reparative impulses and actions.[43]

This fear is of *internal* aggression which has been understood as being capable of damage, rather than fear of an external punitive father, or an internalised primitive father figure as described by Freud. This is the basis of a more mature morality based on self-knowledge and self-awareness and, if it has developed, it tends to negate the need to identify with an external figure or system of rules, as a source of control. George Eliot describes this change to a state in which the thinking self makes moral decisions, as 'the soul act[ing] on its own warrant'.[44] Britton, a contemporary author and analyst, has denominated it an 'emancipation of the superego'.[45]

As has been seen in the work of Klein, it is within the relationship with the mother that the infant's earliest experience of transformation, the birth of the self, is situated. According to Bollas, it is the 'memory of this early object relation [which] manifests itself in the person's search for an object (a person, event, ideology) that promises to transform the self'. For the infant, 'the mother is less significant and identifiable as an object than as a process, that is identified with cumulative internal and external transformations'. Subsequent relating to 'transformational objects' occurs when the adult seeks out a repetition of this experience with an object recognised as potentially transforming. This search for potentially transformational objects continues through life, and Bollas suggests that a psychosomatic sense of recognition and 'fit', sometimes a sense of the 'uncanny' or the numinous, is evoked by the resonance with the previous experience. The promise of change inspires a sense of reverence and the subject then 'tends to nominate such objects as sacred'.[46]

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[43] M. Likierman, "Loss of the loved object: tragic and moral motives in Melanie Klein's concept of the depressive Position", *British Journal of Psychotherapy,* 12:2, 147-159.
[44] *Romola,* 442.
[45] R.Britton, *Sex, Death and the Superego: Experiences in Psychoanalysis,* (London/ New York: Karnac, 2003), 103-116.
[46] Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known,* (London: Free Association Press, 1987), 14-17.

Bollas describes the need for a new term to define this evoked archaic, unconceptualised material, and he coined the phrase the 'unthought known'. It cannot be processed, except in the same way as that in which it developed, that is, in relationship with an other: 'It is *only* through the subject's use and experience of the other that mental representations of that experience can carry and therefore represent the idiom of a person's unthought known'.[47]

### 2.4.2 Fairbairn

Like Klein, Fairbairn described the formation of the basic endopsychic structure as developing before Freud's Oedipal stage and the core of normal development as the child's relationship with a good mother. He based his 'object-relations' theory on a belief that the child's search for social relationships was its *primary* need, thus extending Klein's understanding of the importance of early relationships. Unlike Klein, he rejected Freud's theory of drives and saw negative feelings (hate and aggression), as resulting from insult, frustration or deprivation arising in relationships, rather than as innate. So that for him, 'bad' internal objects came into being, in the unconscious, only as a defence against insult or deprivation and as a way of dealing with the resulting anger and hatred. Fairbairn believed that parts of the child's ego, which related to these internal objects, were split off from the central ego and were engaged with them in the unconscious. These split-off parts of the ego were in effect 'frozen' and not available to relate to new events or objects in the external world.[48]

Fairbairn saw healthy development of a solid sense of the self, as achieved by the integration of the 'frozen' parts of the ego into the central ego and the elimination of internal 'bad' objects. The greater the amount of ego, which was split off and engaged with the bad objects, the more the individual was prone to struggle with and re-enact early conflict and the less capable he would be of responding flexibly to new experience and of learning from it. In other words, when much of the ego is engaged with 'bad objects', a 'narcissistic' structure exists.

Integration is necessary before the child can develop an internal image of a reliable mother, which is necessary to enable him to deal with separation. In early

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[47] *The Shadow of the Object,* 280.
[48] W.R.D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality,* (London/Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 116-8.

infancy, the child has not attained this capacity for 'object constancy', so that if the mother is briefly absent, the child fears that he has been abandoned permanently.[49]

In Fairbairn's terms, where large amounts of ego are engaged with 'bad objects', the individual's morality is dominated by these split off parts of the ego, in league with the repressing action of the central ego. This hostile prohibitive force ensures a morality based on fear. With increased self-knowledge, through therapy or other experiences, there is increased integration into the central ego of the parts of the ego previously engaged with bad objects, and a letting go of internal idealised or denigrated objects. The subject is then freed up to relate to other objects in a fashion no longer dominated by previous bad experience. This achievement is described by Fairbairn as the achievement of 'mature dependence'. It is compared by Clarke to the Augustinian idea that evil is a 'privation of being'. In Fairbairn's case, the privation is the loss of power resulting from the engagement of parts of the ego with bad objects, while the letting go of such object allows for an increased ability to overcome 'evil'. Clarke also points out similarities with the ideas of the philosopher, John Macmurray, who saw morality in terms of the need to react to objects 'as they really are, and not in terms of our subjective inclinations and private sympathies'.[50] Only an individual who has achieved 'mature dependence' is able to interact in this way.

Change occurring in religious conversion is helpfully understood in these 'object-relations' terms and this theory is employed for this purpose in chapter 4.

### 2.4.3 Kohut and Winnicott

For Kohut the development of a mature moral sense was intimately connected to the evolution of narcissism and he believed that idealisation and its vicissitudes were central to whether or not a narcissistic structure developed. Klein saw idealisation as a defensive response to a failure of progression from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position but Kohut had a more optimistic view of it. The presence or absence of idealisation in a form of religion was seen by Jones as crucial to whether it would be used defensively or non-defensively,[51] and Kohut's work on idealisation and

[49] M.S.Mahler, F.Pine, A.Bergman, *ThePsychological Birth of the Human Infant,* New York: Basic Books, 1975).
[50] Graham S. Clarke, *Personal Relations Theory,* 156.
[51] See 1.4.1

on the evolution of narcissism was important in Jones's work. In addition, his concept of 'object hunger' is a useful one for this thesis.

The child's early or 'archaic' experience of the mother was one of idealisation. The earliest experience is believed to be 'I am perfect, you are perfect, but I am part of you', so that the mother is a 'self-object', one that is not felt as separate and independent of the child.[52] For development to proceed well, the mother/child relationship should be what Winnicott calls 'good-enough'. By this he meant that the child needed a mother, who did not have to be perfect, but could be empathic and responsive to her child's gestures and feelings. She provided a mirror for the child; she was a mother who could 'meet the omnipotence of the infant and to some extent make sense of it. She does this repeatedly.'[53]

There is then a gradual process of de-idealisation of the mother and a recognition of her as a separate, ordinary person and a concurrent de-idealisation of the self, which is now experienced in a more realistic light. At the same time, the 'good-enough' maternal image, as opposed to the *idealised* one, is internalised. This enables the child to develop a psychological structure which provides a capacity in the child to care for (or mother) itself and to 'build up a belief in a benign environment'.[54] Here Winnicott is describing a similar process of integration to that described by Fairbairn and Klein. In favourable circumstances, in adulthood, though idealisation persists, it is tempered with reality, and a state of what Kohut calls 'mature narcissism' exists, which enables relationships characterised by freedom, spontaneity, empathy and realism.[55]

Kohut also describes a further modification of narcissism, into what he calls 'cosmic narcissism'. This corresponds to the 'wide thoughts 'of Eliot's heroine. There is a 'shift in narcissistic cathexis from the self to the concept of participation in a supra individual and timeless existence'. This enables one to achieve " the outlook on life which the Romans called *sub specie aeternitatis...* " which is characterised not by "resignation and hopelessness but a quiet pride".[56] Jones cites Kohut, Kohlberg and

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[52] Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self,* (New York: International Humanities Press, 1971), 27.
[53] D.W.Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* (London: Karnac, 1990), 145.
[54] Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes,* 32.
[55] James W.Jones, *Terror and Transformation: The Ambiguity of Religion in Psychoanalytic Perspective,* (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2002),23.
[56] Jones, *Terror and Transformation,* quoting Heinz Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of

Fowler, who regard a transition from individual narcissism to a 'cosmic' or transcendental view of the universe, with the self as a finite part of it, as a feature of a psychological development towards maturity facilitated by religion.[57]

If at this early stage, there is a loss of the mother, or too sudden or too large a disappointment in her, then the process of disillusionment is unmanageable. The process of internalisation of the good mother is hampered and a longing for the original 'archaic' experience with the ideal mother persists. According to Kohut, the self then feels empty, depleted and depressed:

> [the ego] has to wall itself off against the unrealistic claims of the grandiose self, or against the intense hunger for a powerful, external supplier of self-esteem and other forms of emotional sustenance in the narcissistic realm. Objects are striven for as a substitute for the missing segments of the psychic structure.[58]

This state of affairs persists into adulthood, so that the adult is susceptible to relationships where there is extreme idealisation of the other in an attempt to recreate the archaic relationship, and a tendency to use drugs or alcohol for self-soothing. There is a searching for people, philosophies or religions to idealise and identify with as a source of increased self-esteem and confirmation of goodness. Such objects are not valued for their own qualities but because they fulfil a need. This is what Kohut describes as 'object hunger' and it recalls Klein's description of a prolonged *clinging* to an 'idealised' object.

Such individuals are often superficially confident, self-assured or arrogant, but this exterior forms a rigid but brittle crust which protects a self which lacks structure and fears disintegration. There is often a persistent sense of futility, emptiness and depression. Alternatively, there may be no subjective distress and an aura of charisma and success; however, there is a risk of the protective, brittle edifice crumbling if there is a narcissistic insult such as an abandonment or failure.

When individuals fail to develop adequate psychological structures, there is an inability to empathise with others and to tolerate ambivalence or ambiguity. Kohut was interested in the effect of this on an individual's approach to religion. 'Object

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Narcissism", in ed.P.Ornstein, *The Search for the Self,* vol.1, (New York: International Universities Press,1978), 455-6.

[57] Jones, *Terror and Transformation,* 30-1.

[58] Kohut,*The Analysis of the Self,* 30-1

hunger' would lead to difficulty in embracing a philosophy or religion in a way which involved examining its good and less good aspects, or in considering the possible good aspects of other philosophies or religions. In order to fulfill its function as an archaic object, the discovered substitute must be idealised and unquestioned. Such is the power of the fixation on, and the need for, the archaic self-object, and the heady increase in self-esteem when such an substitute object is engaged, that a thoughtful, realistic consideration of associated moral issues or of any inadequacies of the object or the self is not possible. Differences are denigrated and unpleasant affects projected.

### 2.5 Regression: benign or malignant; gratification or recognition

Psychotherapy involves making the darkness conscious. Defensive processes, which have developed throughout the lives of individuals in response to unfavourable circumstances and/or constitutional factors, are interfering with their ability to function in relationships or in work, and there is often a resulting sense of dissatisfaction or lack of fulfilment, with feelings of emptiness, anxiety, or depression. Therapy offers an opportunity for change in the context of a relationship, with the therapist as a new 'emotionally available' object. Such a relationship, because it evokes previously early relationships, involves a degree of regression, as do relationships with objects which facilitate change in a religious context. Regression, however, does not always promote change; it is necessary to appreciate in which circumstances regression can be seen as promoting growth and development of the personality, or as encouraging rigidity and the repetition of defensive actions.

In psychiatry, the term 'regression' tends to be associated with pathology and often has derogatory connotations; it is usually used to describe infantile or immature behaviour occurring when a child or adult is not capable of coping with his/her current situation. It suggests a retreat to something more familiar, comforting and manageable or which seeks out experiences replicating more primitive past experiences and relationships. There is a tendency to resort to *actions*, which are more primitive than words, rather than to think about or verbalise unmanageable feelings. In this sense there is implied a pathological failure to confront and deal with conflict; such *acting out,* as it is called, presents with a variety of manifestations. There can be impulsive behaviour such as self-harm, often expressing feelings of frustration and anger, or the

resorting to substance abuse, which blots out uncomfortable feelings and the need to confront painful conflicts. The repetition of involvement in exciting but destructive relationships, in an unconscious attempt to replace or rectify previous ones, and the seeking out of intense emotional or risk-taking behaviour in an attempt to overcome feelings of emptiness, deadness or unreality, are instances of this kind of regression. They are repetitive and lead to a maintenance of the status quo, rather than to change, and are regarded as defensive, unhelpful and often pathological.

Balint writes of the types of regression occurring in the transference relationship with the therapist[59]. Freud saw the regressed transference as an obstacle to treatment, as a potent form of resistance.[60] He described the 'death instinct' as an urge to return to a previous state and therefore saw the regressive, repetition of elements of previous relationships in the transference as manifestations of this instinct, and likely to hinder progress rather than promote it.[61] Balint accepts that regression in therapy can act either as resistance or as a therapeutic tool. In the latter case, he talks of the return, in the transference, to a new beginning, where a re-experiencing of ways of relating can lead to

> a changed relationship to the patient's objects of love and hate and, in consequence, to a considerable diminution of anxiety ... going back to something 'primitive', to a point before the faulty development started, which could be described as a regression, ... discovering a new, better-suited, way which amounts to progression.[62]

This kind of regression can be therapeutic and can lead to character change; Balint calls it 'regression for the sake of progression' or 'benign regression'. The patient is allowed to experience a relationship which involves a 'harmonious interpenetrating mix-up', evocative of very early relationship experience, with a 'pliable' but 'indestructible' therapist, which allows for a new beginning.[63]

Balint distinguishes this 'benign regression' from a more problematic regression, which is difficult to manage and which he describes as 'malignant'. This second form involves an insatiable, intractable urge for gratification in the patient,

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[59]Michael Balint, *The Basic Fault: Therapeutic Aspects of Regression,* (London/New York: Tavistock Publications, 1968).
[60]Sigmund Freud, "The Dynamics of Transference" SE xii, 1912, 97-108.
[61]Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"in *On Metaphysics,* Pelican Freud Library, 11, (1920), 308-11.
[62] Balint, *The Basic Fault,* 132.

with a seeking for an external object to satisfy her instinctual needs. There is a passionate hope that the therapist will *act* to satisfy these needs. Balint describes this as a 'regression *aimed at gratification'* in contrast with the benign form which is *'regression aimed at recognition'*. In benign regression, the patient is permitted to use the relationship with the therapist and this allows her to be able to 'reach' herself, to be recognised and to recognise herself. This demands understanding and tolerance of the patient, but not gratifying action on the part of the therapist. The patient retains her ego functioning and can think and reflect, so that she can recognise what is happening in her inner world and there is potential for change. In malignant regression, the wish is to gain gratification and to repeat any gratifying experiences in an addictive way; there is a mood of desperation and passionate clinging to the object, with an 'unending spiral of demands and needs' and pressure on the therapist to gratify them.[64] It involves the wish to repeat and replace an earlier experience rather than to change internally. These are qualities of a merged dyadic relationship reminiscent of Kohut's 'object hunger'.[65]

Balint compares these understandings of regression in therapy to the work of Ernst Kris on regression in creativity.[66] Kris distinguishes between 'regression in the service of the ego' and 'regression which overwhelms the ego'. He sees the first as a mature capacity of the ego to be in touch with, control, and use creatively, some more primitive unconscious aspects of the psyche. It has similarities with Balint's benign regression. On the other hand, when there is less ego strength, the ego becomes overwhelmed by the regressive experience, and there are varying degrees of loss of contact with and judgment of reality. In extreme states, when the ego is totally overwhelmed, contact with reality is lost and confusional or psychotic states supervene.[67]

These differences will be important in examining the transformative effects of experiences in religion in Part II of the thesis.

## 2.6 Summary

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[63] *The Basic Fault,* 132-6.
[64] *The Basic Fault,* 147.
[65] Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self,* 17.
[66] Ernst Kris, *Psychanalytic Explorations of Art,* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).
[67] *The Basic Fault,* 143-156.

There are important differences between the psychoanalytic authors mentioned in this chapter, in their understanding of the vicissitudes of the child's relationship with the early 'emotionally available' object and comparable experiences in therapy. Freud and Klein believed in innate destructive, aggressive impulses (the death instinct), while Fairbairn and Kohut attribute the infant's rage and aggression to its response to failures in the environment, particularly in the mother/child relationship. For Freud, moral behaviour is subject to a rigid paternal law, internalised as the superego, and results from fear; in Klein and Kohut, the development of a more mature conscience depends on the internalisation of a reliable parental object, which is not idealised, but is more like Winnicott's 'good-enough' mother. Klein describes a capacity for moral behaviour arising from guilt and concern for good objects, while Kohut relates it to an identification with the 'ego ideal'. Fairbairn describes a morality based on an increased freedom, as integration proceeds, to relate to objects in an undistorted and empathic way.

The elements shown in Eliot's characters to be intrinsic to the capacity to lead a 'good life' have appeared in the work of the above authors, as have the defensive responses to unfavourable circumstances. When the latter, particularly splitting and projection, predominate, and when there is no integration of split-off parts of the ego, there is an avoidance of awareness of inner feelings, and the perception of inner and outer reality is distorted. As a result, moral judgments depend on an placating an external law-giver, and the emphasis is on self-justification or achieving the moral high ground, rather than on any attempt to accept and manage feelings which are felt as bad. The defensive processes and the internalised relationships with 'bad' objects are unconscious: in Jung's terms the 'shadow' is outside consciousness. In his essay 'The Philosopher's Tree' quoted by Beebe[68], Jung writes:

> Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic feature of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.[69]

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[68] John Beebe, "The Place of Integrity in Spirituality", in eds. Polly Young-Eisendrath, and M.E. Miller, *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality,* (London: Routledge, 2000), 15.
[69] C.G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 265.

In describing the more mature conscience, Kernberg writes, 'By contrast with the basic rigidity of these primitive internalized rules, is the mature conscience, based on identification with generous and beloved, yet strict, clear and consistent parental figures, that determines stable ethical behaviour'.[70] After Freud, the emphasis was on internal change rather than obedience to moral codes: on love and concern rather than fear, and on freedom to relate to others pleasurably and flexibly, in other words to flourish. All these features mirror those 'aretegenic' features of Christ's narrative and teaching referred to earlier.

The themes of the present chapter are elegantly brought together by Arden, who sees the transformation enabled by psychoanalysis, a relationship with an emotionally available object, as consistent with Christian spirituality: 'For me, the transformation produced by insight in the consulting room is symbolically equivalent to the spiritual journey towards enlightenment'. She sees it as a new version of an ancient theme, 'the loss of illusion, the giving up of attachment to a false reality, the inevitable suffering and expiation, are all present in psychoanalysis'. The destructive and defensive processes, which have been built up over a lifetime are an attempt to protect the 'inner child, who is capable of love' but they constitute a false self and disguise the deep truth of the individual. Jesus's saying, 'Unless you become like little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven' is seen by Arden as 'a marker of the true self'.[71] It can be interpreted as an acknowledgment that only through coming to know the truth about the self, including its 'dark side', and understanding the inner child, can the need for destructive defences be diminished and a process of integration occur, with the development of a mature ethical sense, and a wider vision of the world and the subject's place in it.

The next chapter considers further this coming to know the 'dark side'.

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[70] Otto F. Kernberg, "Sanctioned Social Violence: A Psychoanalytic View", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 84:4, (2003), 961.
[71] M.Arden, *Midwifery of the Soul: Holistic perspectives on Psychoanalysis,* (New York/London: Free Association Books, 1998), 4-5.

## Chapter 3 -The Search for Deep Truth through Symbolisation

### 3.1 'Symbolising'

This chapter is concerned with the second element essential for growth which emerged from Waddell's examination of Eliot's characters in Chapter 2: the search for the deep truth' about the self. The child with its mother, the patient in therapy, or the Christian believer, must learn to make sense of otherwise chaotic feelings and impulses, so that they can be thought about and reflected upon, rather than merely acted on. Psychoanalysts see this making of meaning out of chaos as depending on the individual's capacity to 'symbolise'. Bion's description of the discovery of deep truth through the recognition of, at-one-ment with, and 'evolution' of 'O', has already been referred to (1.3). Through 'at-one-ment' with 'O', an individual's phantasy and affect can be thought about and put into words, or 'symbolised'. It is a process which takes place at the boundary between the self and the other, and between the known and the unknown; Josephine Klein has pointed to 'mystical' elements in some of Bion's work.and similarities to Jung.[1] She suggests that Winnicott was the first to give 'non-Jungians' permission to consider experiences at the 'intersect'; that is, experiences in which the 'boundaries of the self were felt to blur'. The work of the post-Kleinians discussed in this chapter is important in this area and in the understanding of creativity. Jung had considered many of these themes much earlier, but Kleinians and post-Kleinians had struggled with his ideas about archetypes and the collective unconscious, and with his attitude to religion.

But 'symbolisation', as it is used in psychoanalytic writings, requires elucidation, and this is one function of this chapter. It also considers the processes involved in the development of the capacity to form and use symbols in Kleinian, post-Kleinian and Kristevan theory and the problems which arise if this capacity fails to develop. It examines Kristeva's views on whether religious symbols can elucidate unconscious desires and imaginings, and hence promote growth and change. The bringing together of all these theories comprises Kristeva's 'psychoanalytic ecumenism.'

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[1]Josephine Klein, *Jacob's Ladder*, 175-6.

The reasons for relying on Kristeva have been laid out in chapter 1. The outline of her work here introduces her perception of the role of love, loss, the 'abject' and 'jouissance', and her insights into the function of Christian symbols. Thus she further extends the theories of the post-Kleinians.

### 3.2 The capacity to symbolise

The capacity to use symbols is closely related to the way an infant familiarises herself with the world and endows it with meaning and also with how she makes sense of her own inner world. Meltzer points out that, for Klein, 'meaning' became a central focus of her work, so that there developed an emphasis 'on emotions and on symbol formation as the means by which emotions become available for thought'.[2] Provided the child has been lucky enough to have a 'good enough' mother,[3] and to be the object of what Kohut describes as the 'gleam in the mother's eye',[4] she becomes secure enough to turn her attention to the world.

Such a secure and confident infant begins to encounter other objects and people and to endow them with personal meaning. Objects are met with in particular situations, and when the child is in particular mood states. She is able to project the feelings occurring at that specific time (joy, fear, anger, sadness) into objects, so that they are endowed with significance for her, and then to introject these meaningful objects into her inner world. The process of projection and introjection continues throughout life, so that the outer world becomes populated with meaningful objects and the inner world with equally meaningful representations or 'imagos' of them.[5] The internal world continues to be enriched, with layers of meaning added, but *early* experiences of objects make them particularly powerful and evocative.

In psychoanalytic theory, this endowing of objects with meaning is intrinsic to

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[2] Donald Meltzer, "Foreword" in Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul-making: The Post Kleinian Model of the Mind and Its Poetic Origins*, (London: Karnac, 2005),xiii.
[3] See chapter 2, 15 and D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 145,
[4] Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self*, (New York: International Humanities Press, 1971), 27.
[5] Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and self-experience*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 33-46.

their use in the negotiating of the inevitable losses involved in a child's achieving independence. Some objects acquire particular significance, and those on which special meaning has been conferred are then used to represent objects, particularly people and relationships, which it has been necessary to renounce. As the infant progresses from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position[6], there is a gradual separation from the mother, and objects which have been endowed with some feeling relating to the mother's presence, are used to symbolise her, e.g. a teddy-bear or piece of rag. They provide help in negotiating a renunciation, which is necessary if development is to proceed. They retain their own qualities. The child does not mistake the teddy-bear for the mother but is comforted by what it represents. Such objects of special significance are designated 'transitional objects' by Winnicott. At the time of the gradual separation of the child from the mother, Winnicott describes the development of a 'transitional space'. This is a potential space between the mother and child where the boundary between subjectivity and objectivity is blurred, so that it functions as a place of 'illusion'. Here, when the maternal care offered is adequate, the breast will be presented at the moment at which the child needs it and at the same moment at which the child is imagining it or 'creating' it in her mind. In this area of illusion, between subjectivity and objectivity, there is no pressure to differentiate between what is a product of phantasy and what is objectively real. In Winnicott's words:

> Transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong in the realm of illusion which is at the basis of initiation of experience. This early stage in development is made possible by the mother's special capacity for making adaptation to the needs of her infant, thus allowing the infant the illusion that what the infant creates really exists.[7]

As weaning occurs, there is a gradual process of *dis*illusionment, which must be at a rate which is bearable for the child, so that the task of accepting reality can be achieved. Transitional phenomena were described by Winnicott as occurring in infancy; but he believed that an individual never manages to accept objective reality completely and that there is always a struggle to separate the subjective from the objective. Transitional space persists and is an area where there is freedom from this struggle to differentiate between

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[6]See 2.4.1.2

them. He describes children's play and adult art, culture and religious practices, as occurring in transitional space. It is a space where experimentation, reflection and playing with ideas, images, symbols and material objects can occur. 'Illusion' is not used here in the sense of something being distorted or false, but as a product of creativity with elements of both the subjective and the objective and as offering an opportunity for growth.[8]

### 3.3 Symbol formation and maturity

#### 3.3.1 Symbolisation and the depressive position

Hannah Segal, a Kleinian analyst, sees symbol formation as an attempt by the ego to cope with the anxiety that occurs in its relationships with its objects, 'primarily the fear of bad objects and the fear of the loss or inaccessibility of good objects'.[9] Symbols *represent* the feared, bad object, or the lost or inaccessible one. Their formation is affected by the degree of maturity in the relationship. She relates the degree of success in the use of symbols to the amount of projection an individual is using. Projection is massive in the early stage of development (in the paranoid-schizoid position), and also in some psychotic states, but the degree to which individuals in general use projection is variable. When there is a great deal of projection, aspects of the self are projected into an object to such an extent that it *becomes* something else. It loses its own characteristics because it has become, in the observer's eyes, what has been projected into it. The object then is not a true symbol but what Segal calls a 'symbolic equation', and it retains the same ability to cause anxiety as does the original object.[10]

When the subject is functioning in the more mature depressive position, he is able to relate to another as a whole person and is more aware of the good and bad aspects of the self and the object. With more concern for the object, and fear and guilt about

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[7] D.W.Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* ,(Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971),16.
[8] *Playing and Reality,* 15-16.
[9] Hannah Segal, "Notes on Symbol Formation", in ed. Elizabeth Bott Spillius, *Melanie Klein Today: Mainly Theory,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988, 160-177 (p.163)).
[10] "Notes on Symbol Formation", 164-5.

damaging it, there is a struggle to repair, internalise and retain the object. In order to achieve this it is necessary that primitive urges to merge with and possess good objects and annihilate bad objects should be modified. Segal sees this state of affairs as a powerful stimulus for the formation of symbols. These represent the original object and are needed to 'displace aggression from the original object and in that way to lessen the guilt and fear of loss'. Unlike the effect of the 'symbolic equation', there is less guilt and anxiety caused by relating to a 'true symbol' than by relating to the original object. It is seen as a representation and not as the object itself.

According to Segal, whereas true symbols are helpful in evoking a lost object and in sublimating and overcoming a necessary renunciation, 'symbolic equations' are delusional attempts at replacements. They *become* the lost object and are used to deny the loss. Therefore, they do not aid renunciation and future development. She describes how true symbols help in negotiating loss by being internalised as a way of repairing and preserving the original object symbolically:

> The capacity to experience loss and the wish to re-create the object within oneself give the individual the unconscious freedom in the use of symbols. And as the symbol is acknowledged as a creation of the subject, unlike a symbolic equation, it can be freely used by the subject.[11]

There are parallels between this use of symbols, which occurs in a setting of loss, and the use of religious symbols. The object used retains something of its own qualities but contains and represents something of the presence of the renounced object; just as a religious symbol retains its own material attributes but also contains a sense of the presence of another ungraspable reality, which is evoked for the observer. The religious symbol and the reality it represents, like the psychoanalytic symbol and the remembered maternal presence, are brought into a close relation to each other. However, one does not *become* the other. If this distinction is lost, in the realm of religion, the object becomes an idol, or in Segal's terms, a 'symbolic equation'.

For Segal, not only material objects but words function as symbols. They are the means by which feelings and phantasies can be verbalised, and communicated externally,

[11] "Notes on Symbol Formation", 167-9.

but also the means by which thought is verbalised internally, as a way of understanding the self. She understands the use of symbols as facilitating a process of integration:

> The word 'symbol' comes from the Greek term for throwing together, bringing together, integrating. The process of symbol formation is, I think, a continuous process of bringing together and integrating the internal with the external, the subject with the object, and the earlier experiences with the later ones.[12]

### 3.3.2 The internalised 'combined object', and triangular structures

Segal's linking of the capacity for symbol formation with the move to 'depressive' functioning is pursued in Bion's work and the writings of Meltzer, Harris Williams and Britton. They see it as depending on the formation of an internalized, parental, sexual couple, a 'combined object'. This was a concept first described by Klein, who saw its appearance as coinciding with the development of the depressive position and with a successful negotiation of Oedipal struggles (bearing in mind that, for Klein, primitive Oedipal struggles arose prior to the period suggested by Freud's classical Oedipus complex).[13]

Bion suggests that the prototype of this combined object is the mouth/nipple, the focus around which the new-born infant feels gathered up and held, after its dramatic entry into an apparently unbounded and frightening space. Subsequently, in favourable circumstances, it evolves into the 'container/contained' relationship of the mother and child, and eventually into the internalisation of the parental sexual couple.[14] The 'container/contained' relation is that described by Bion and outlined in chapter one: the child's distressing feelings are contained, thought about and 'metabolised' by the mother; they are returned to the baby in manageable form, and the child feels understood and affirmed. This 'symbolising capacity' is eventually internalised by the baby, who learns to deal with his own feelings by symbolisation. Britton has written about the effects of a

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[12] "Notes on Symbol Formation", 171.
[13] Melanie Klein, "The Oedipus Complex and Early Anxieties" in ed. Ronald Britton, *The Oedipus Complex Today,* (London: Karnac, 2004), 63-82.
[14] Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul- Making,* (London/New York: Karnac, 2005), 202.

failure of this containment, which result in the child's primitive fears becoming more terrifying, instead of less, and manifesting themselves as a sense of 'nameless dread'.[15] This is discussed in more depth later with reference to John Wesley.

Meltzer describes a 'passionate' relationship of the child at the breast, with the mother's eyes as a 'sanctuary in which the passionate yearnings towards the beauty of this new world can find the reciprocity which makes it bearable.' But as the formation of the 'combined object' has involved a negotiation of the conflicting feelings of the child's early Oedipal struggles and rivalries, its internalised presence indicates a capacity for the toleration of the tension between the 'love of beauty' and the 'hatred of desire'. According to Meltzer, in the context of this tension, curiosity develops, initially about the combined object:

> This capacity for passionate contact, with its consortium of love for the beauty-of-the-world, hatred for the chains of desire felt in the flesh and on the pulses, and thirst for knowledge of the enigmatic object in its combined form as breast/nipple, mother-and-father, fuels the development of the soul: that interior, private core of the personality. At the nucleus of this private core is the mysterious, sacred nuptial chamber of the internal objects, to which they must periodically be allowed to withdraw to repair and restore one another.[16]

Bion saw this interlinking of love, hate and knowledge in the context of the internalised combined object as crucial for the creation of the symbols necessary to draw meaning out of unsymbolised, unconscious material. Harris Williams compares the combined object, which contains the emotional tension of contrary feelings to the 'Muse', which offers inspiration in creative work. She quotes Blake's use of 'marriage of contraries' and Milton's use of 'hateful siege of contraries' to describe their sources of inspiration.[17]

Feldman describes the process of the development of the capacity for symbol formation in slightly different terms: a healthy outcome to the Oedipal situation, resulting in the internalisation of the parental couple linked in intercourse, provides an internal

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[15]Ronald Britton, *Belief and imagination: Explorations in Psychoanalysis*, (London/ New York: Routledge, 1998, 56.
[16] Donald Meltzer, "Foreword", in Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul Making*, (2005), xviii-xix.
[17]Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul-Making*, (2005), 6-7.

model for the linking of thoughts, which in turn is necessary for the formation of symbols. Thoughts can interact in healthy intercourse. As Feldman comments, if there is too much anxiety associated with the idea of parental intercourse, then the process of symbol formation and creativity will be interfered with.[18]

The adequacy of containment in the mother/child dyad and the subsequent successful negotiation of the Oedipal situation, leading to the internalisation of a good parental sexual couple, are linked. Britton suggests that unless the infant has established a 'securely based maternal object', then the capacity to negotiate the hates, rivalries and fears of abandonment of the Oedipal situation will be adversely affected. This will interfere with the child's capacity to accept and internalise the linked parental couple. He outlines a further benefit which results from the child's acceptance of a link between the parents. It provides what he describes as the appearance of a 'third position' from which object relations can be observed. The child can observe the parents and can be observed as a separate subject. This, Britton suggests, is a prototype for a new kind of relating, as 'a witness and not a participant'. It introduces the idea of being observed and provides 'a capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves'.[19] This 'triangular' space, is described as a place of 'mental freedom', which forms a 'limiting boundary' for the internal world and a necessary basis for a 'belief in a secure and stable world'. As will be seen later, this thinking about triangular structures can be linked with the Christian understanding of the Trinity.

Several authors[20]quote from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in order to help to put into words this process of symbolisation which allows the subject to make sense of his inner world, and to be able to manage fragmented and disturbing experiences and feelings:

And as imagination bodies forth

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[18] Michael Feldman, "The Oedipus Complex: manifestations in the inner world and the therapeutic situation", in ed. Britton, *The Oedipus Complex Today*, (2004), 125.
[19] Ronald Britton, "The Missing Link: Parental Sexuality in the Oedipus Complex", in ed. Britton, *The Oedipus Complex Today*, 85-7.
[20]Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul Making*, 1; Ronald Britton, *Belief and Imagination*, 120; Kevin Fauteux, *The Recovery of the Self: Regression and Redemption in Religious Experience*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1994),175.

The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.[21]

Here it is the poet's pen which can symbolise the 'things unknown' but it also describes the way the mother contains the child's fragmented, 'sensory-somatic' experience and converts it to 'something more mental', which can be used for thought or stored in the memory'.[22]The poet, the mother or the therapist, who is attempting to 'become O', are all striving to provide 'a local habitation and a name' for these fragmented, chaotic and conflicting elements. A poet who succeeds in giving 'airy nothing a local habitation and a name', can be seen as having a particular facility in accessing these deeper parts of the self, and giving them meaningful form. At the opposite extreme from the poet are individuals, already described, who were not well contained as infants, in whom the capacity to symbolise has not been internalised, and in whom their own symbolising capacity is therefore compromised; then uncomprehended, distressing affects and experiences must remain walled off in the inner world, like a foreign body, and erupt into consciousness as a disturbing sense of 'nameless dread'.[23]

### 3.4 Lacan and Kristeva.

Kristeva is interested in the extent to which Christian symbolism can elucidate unconscious material. Her work on the very early relationship of the child with the mother complements the ideas just described. She also stresses the importance of the love of the parental couple and the dynamics of the pre-Oedipal triangle in the development of the capacity to think, reflect and verbalise. In order to make a description of her work comprehensible, brief reference is made to Lacan, some of whose concepts she adopted, but from whose theory she significantly diverged.

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[21] "A Midsummer Nights Dream", V. I. 14-17.
[22] Britton, *Belief and Imagination*, 22.
[23] *Belief and Imagination*, 56.

### 3.4.1 Lacan.

Like Klein, Lacan addresses the early period of development, during which, in favourable circumstances, there is a change in the subjectivity and psychic organisation of the child. He describes three levels of subjectivity, which he calls the 'real', the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic' registers. The use of the terms 'imaginary' and 'symbolic' by Lacan is different from the conventional use of the terms.

By 'real', Lacan is describing the infant's original experience of itself as a fragmented and chaotic accumulation of drives, feelings and experiences. It includes experiences of the external and internal world, which the individual has not been able to make sense of. It persists but can only be inferred, not described. It is beyond words. Incomprehensible and particularly traumatic experiences occurring at any stage, which cannot be narrativised, are located in the 'real'. Similarly, it is likely that overwhelming experiences, described as 'mystical', are held there. Although the subject moves forward from the 'real', Lacan does not give it a negative connotation, but sees it as an 'iconoclastic' force, which tends to disturb, to resist closure and to prevent the reification of symbols.[24]

The development through these three stages, according to Lacan, depends on two major influences, which profoundly affect the child's relationship with, and separation from, the dyadic relationship with the mother. The first, at about six to eight months, he calls the 'mirror stage'. Prior to this, the infant has no sense of identity but is the fragmented bundle of drives and experiences just described. Now, by catching sight of itself in a mirror, or encountering another child of about the same age, there crystallises out an image with which the child identifies. Here, the beginnings of the 'I', the ego, are formed, but Lacan stresses that the image the infant sees is not in fact the 'real' self but an image of the self. Hence it is described as the 'imaginary register'. There is an alienation from the 'real' and henceforward therefore the self is split between its self-perception (the image) and the inaccessible 'real' self.

There is 'the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity'.[25] This

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[24] James J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud: Religion, Culture and Psychoanalysis,* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990),40.
[25] DiCenso, *The Other Freud,* 46.

experience of a dualistic relationship with the image, contains the characteristics of the 'imaginary'. It is a rigid, mimetic, narcissistic, unthinking form of relating with possesses a powerful attractiveness. Although a less sophisticated form of relating than subsequent ones, it is necessary before further development can occur, and like the 'real' retains a vital significance throughout life.

The second major influence on the mother/child dyad is that of the intervention of a third agency. Lacan postulates an active role for the father in separating the infant from the mother. This is necessary in order to introduce it to the 'symbolic' register, the world of the 'Law of the Father', of language and rules. Lacan incorporates Freud's theories about the resolution of the Oedipus complex, but he adds further complexity: he does not see the individual's main motivation for the acceptance of the Law of the Father as a fear of castration. The prohibitions of incest and murder described by Freud persist in Lacan's 'non/nom du père': the 'non', barring the child from its exclusive relationship with the mother, where the child had felt omnipotent and the experience was unsymbolisable and 'imaginary', and the 'nom' representing the child's entry into the 'symbolic' register of words and meaning. Although designated 'father', this third agency is for Lacan a paternal *function*, rather than an actual father or even a third human figure. This entry into the 'symbolic' realm is necessary if the child is to be able to make sense of the world, symbolise feelings and experiences in words, and become a subject capable of relating to others as a separate being. As described by Beardsworth, 'This [paternal] function lies in the *fact* of language as what separates the subject from the thing (from pleasure fused with nature), which henceforth becomes the "real", an impossible domain that the speaking subject is cut off from, so that the negation of language threatens chaos'.[26] For Lacan, the child's response to the paternal prohibition, is to *identify* with the father. This achieves a 'registration of the self through relativization'. The child is now separated from its object of desire but is able to symbolise this desire, this 'lack'. The desire for the mother is repressed ('primal repression') and substitutes are sought out:

> [the child] enters into a quest for objects which are further and further removed

[26] Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 66.

> from the initial object of his desire. Parallel to this, he follows a dialectic of identifications in which his Ego constitutes itself and in which the ideal of the self takes shape'.[27]

This displacement of desire from one replacement to another is described in Lacan's linguistic language as being 'metonymically displaced from signifier to signifier'.[28] As will be seen, this acquaintance with the 'symbolic' driven by desire for one 'signifier' after another (suggestive of the replacement of one word by another, as in a metonymy), is a fundamental difference from Kristeva's understanding of the move to the 'symbolic', which she sees as a 'metaphorical' shift, driven by love rather than desire. For Lacan:

> The encounter with and internalisation of cultural authority are impelled by desire; that is the need for others and for love relationships. The de-literalisation of the Oedipus complex symbolises this dynamic of desire, restriction , internalisation and subjective transformation. It therefore represents, *mutatis mutandis*, a core constellation in the development of subjects as cultural, speaking beings.[29]

In the 'symbolic' register, the child enters the world of words, systems, values and principles which will shape its view of reality and, when internalised, will transform its personality. Like Segal, Lacan is describing the use of words as symbols to mediate between the subject and the object. People, ideas and objects are related to in a 'symbolic' way that allows for thought, reflection and the creation of narratives, in order to make sense of the world. There is an awareness of the other as a separate, thinking, feeling person, and many relationships can be sustained simultaneously and differentiated in their complexities. For Lacan, a further important element of 'the lack', which results from the separation from the mother, is an acceptance of finitude. This involves a relinquishing of omnipotence and, as a result, a more realistic acceptance of human limitations.[30]All this is achieved at the cost of the loss of the intense, dyadic relationship with the mother; and this loss persists as a sense of lack and as a persistent desire to recreate a reunion with the archaic mother, which can never be achieved: 'Every thing 'begins' with a catastrophic change. The mother slips away when the child learns to

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[27] Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 83,87.
[28] Lemaire, *Jaques Lacan* , 88.
[29] DiCenso, *The Other Freud*, 27.
[30] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva*, (2004), 27.

speak 'in the name of the father'.[31]

> The memory of the archaic mother is repressed. In Lacanian terms:
>
> The unconscious is the 'desire of the other', the 'language of the other'. The unconscious is radically other; it is God and it is also, for Lacan, eternally feminine. Centering on otherness, alterity, absence and lack, Lacan makes 'woman' the privileged metaphor for this alterity.[32]

### 3.4.2 Julia Kristeva

#### 3.4.2.1 The 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic'

While adopting Lacan's use of the 'symbolic', Kristeva uses the term 'semiotic' in an idiosyncratic sense to describe the means of the child's relating to the world, prior to the acquisition of language. At this early stage, the child responds to the sound and rhythm of words and to other sensory and bodily experiences. The 'semiotic' ways of relating and communicating precede 'the symbolic', but also coexist with it. The child gradually becomes more dependent on more structured, organised, meaningful language, but 'semiotic' remnants remain in the *form* of language and in other sensory and bodily experiences. The 'semiotic' is associated with ideas of the flesh, the body, the maternal, devouring drives, and the unconscious. According to Kristeva, the 'semiotic' can be inferred from or erupt into consciousness in one way or another. It erupts into the realm of the symbolic and is expressed in the form or style or rhythm of language, its silences, shifts, metaphors, metonymies, ironies, paradoxes, illogicalities or slips of the tongue and in the tone or quality of the voice of the speaker rather than its meaning. According to Kristeva, the semiotic is in dialogue with the 'symbolic', rather than in opposition to it.[33]

#### 3.4.2.2 The archaic triangle

Kristeva explores in depth the merged, dyadic relation with the mother, which she

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[31] Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity*, (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1987), 88.
[32] Diane Jonte-Pace, "Situating Kristeva Differently", ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, 19.
[33] Marilyn Edelstein, "Metaphor, Meta-Narrative, and Mater-Narrative in Kristeva's "Stabat Mater"", in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, (1992), 31.

describes as the 'maternal chora'. 'Chora' is a term she borrows from Plato, 'Plato, recalling the work of the atomists, spoke in the *Timaeus* of the *chora,* an ancient, mobile, unstable receptacle, prior to the One, to the father, and even to the syllable, metaphorically suggesting something nourishing and maternal'.[34]

Kristeva draws parallels between this 'pre-historic' relationship and the child's reaction to its image in the 'mirror stage' and she examines the myth of Narcissus to shed light on the processes involved.[35] The shattering of the illusion, which occurred when Narcissus recognized the image as himself, is paralleled by the separation from the dyadic relationship with the archaic mother. As with Narcissus, the attraction is dazzling and very powerful, but if the child has to enter the world of meaning and have its own psychic space for thought and reflection, it has to be resisted. There must be a move towards the paternal function. This is consistent with Britton's description of the achievement of the 'third position'.

Kristeva expands Freud's understanding of 'Primary Narcissism' by attempting to tease out a series of changes, which form part of a process, within the initial mother/child dyad. She questions Lacan's assumption that narcissism is left behind as the individual moves into the symbolic realm. For Kristeva, a relationship of idealising identification is crucial to this process and she sets out to show that such a relationship is not merely a self-deception, as implied by Lacan in his description of the mirror stage. For her, the 'illusion of love', the idealising 'transference' love is more complicated than self-deception (this has resonances with Kohut's ideas about the changes in and importance of narcissism throughout life).[36] This project requires her to show that changes occur *within* the primary narcissism of the mother/child dyad and that there is an 'absolute otherness that arises within the narcissistic structure itself'.[37]

Like Lacan, she accepts that there is a need for a paternal function to introduce the child to the 'symbolic' realm, but according to her, it arises and acts *within* the mother/child symbiotic relationship, rather than as external agency that breaks up the dyad. She describes a third party which is 'supplementing the autoeroticism of the

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[34] IBL 5.
[35] TL 104.
[36] See 2.4.3

mother/child dyad'.[38] This process involving the third party takes place before the mirror stage, and at this stage the child is not yet an object, as there has been no separation. Kristeva appropriates Freud's idea of a 'father in individual pre-history' and his description of a very primitive form of identification.[39] Freud differentiates between a later form of identification, where the subject makes a choice of the father as 'object' (where the object is that which the subject would like to *have*), and this more archaic identification (where 'one's father is what one would like to *be*'). He describes this identification as the 'earliest and original form of emotional tie', 'already possible before any object choice has been made'.[40] This 'father of individual pre-history' is portrayed by Kristeva as a loving, understanding father, to be distinguished from Lacan's prohibiting rival of the Oedipus complex.[41] This paternal image, the 'imaginary father', is used to describe a *function* which exists in the mother/child dyad, which is available for an idealising identification; an identification, in which the infant becomes *like* the 'non-object'. Freud description of this archaic identification includes ideas of orality and of incorprating the other. For Kristeva, this 'being like' involves, '[an] incorporating and introjecting orality's function [which] is the essential substratum of what constitutes man's being, namely, language'. The physical urge to devour is sublimated in 'the joys of chewing, swallowing, nourishing oneself ... with words. In being able to receive the other's words, to assimilate, repeat, and reproduce them, I become like him: One. A subject of enunciation. Through psychic osmosis/identification. Through love'. The 'imaginary father' is described by Kristeva as a 'strange father if ever there was one', existing, as it does, prior to the awareness of sexual difference and therefore the same as both parents.[42]

Her description suggests maternal, paternal and infantile elements within a matrix, where the infant has not yet become a discrete object. The maternal elements relate to

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[37]Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva,* (2004),64-5.
[38]TL 22.
[39]Sigmund Freud "The Ego and the Id" in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis,* Pelican Freud Library, 11, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books,1984), 370.
[40]Sigmund Freud, " Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego", in *Civilization, Society and Religion,* Pelican Freud Library, 12, (1985), 135-7.
[41] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva,* (2004), 66.
[42] TL, 26.

skin contact, care of sphincters and feeding, while paternal aspects relate to symbols and verbalisation. She offers a reminder that the baby's first vocalisations are usually in interactions with the mother, so that, while the use of words is seen as a 'paternal' function, it is initiated within the maternal matrix, 'the identification as being always, already within the symbolic orbit, under the sway of language'.[43]

### 3.4.2.3 Mother's love for the Not-I

For Kristeva, the initial separation of the mother and child begins with the mother's desire for another, usually the father. A mother who does not have such a desire becomes, what Kristeva describes as a 'clinging mother', whose demands on the child for love, adversely affect the child's capacity for loving and the development of her psychic life. The mother's love in this case becomes a devouring kind of love. The child cannot 'hatch from such an egg'.[44] When the mother does desire a third party, the child is loved by the mother 'in respect of the other'. The child is discussed as 'she' in the discourse between mother and father. This represents the beginnings of her becoming a separate object. Such a child is freed to love an other because she has been loved in a way different from the fused, devouring love, which would have left her restricted only to searching for maternal substitute, 'who would cling to his body like a poultice - a reassuring balm, asthmatogenic perhaps, but nevertheless a permanent wrapping'.[45] This is reminiscent of the previous discussion of the development of an internalised combined object and the development of a 'third position'.[46] It is a subjectivity developed in a triadic setting, a 'triadic subjectivity'.

It is the mother's desire for a third that remains important. According to Kristeva, the mother's desire for the paternal phallus is a 'godsend' for the child. It is this desire that assists the child in understanding that the mother's entire function is not consumed in responding to her needs. It is the mother's gift to the child, who identifies with it, with the 'mother-father conglomerate'. The importance of this for the child is the realisation

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[43] TL, 27.
[44] TL, 34.
[45] TL, 35,

that the mother is not complete, she *wants* something beyond the mother/child dyad. Kristeva refers back to Freud's famous question 'what does woman want?' and she suggests that what the child must conclude is that at any rate the mother wants 'not I'. She writes, 'And it is out of this "not I" (see Beckett's play with that title) that an Ego painfully attempts to come into being.'[47] The awareness that the mother's want is for 'not I', which initiates the child into the symbolic, is associated with feelings of pain, emptiness and loss. The child is supported in managing these feelings by the identification with the 'imaginary father'. The emptiness is preserved and tolerated rather than magically abolished. The child is held over the emptiness and pain, which 'in the sight of the third party', is 'calmed' and turned into 'a producer of signs, representations and meanings'.[48] The identification, the 'being like' the strange 'father in pre-history', is described as an 'amatory identification', a loving identification, which is 'loaded' with pre-verbal and 'drive-affected' elements. In the light of this, she describes the object (or strictly the not-yet-object) of this identification, as a 'metaphorical object'.

O'Grady has elucidated the meaning for Kristeva of this 'metaphorical object'. The move towards the 'imaginary father' is not one of 'possession or need', but an '*amatory identification*', a move which is 'not a motion to *have* but a gesture toward *being like* that is a *metaphoric* identification. ... The identification, a conglomerate of the archaic trinity (mother-father-child), is drive laden, bubbling with heterogeneous forces which simultaneously disperse and unify the (not-yet) subject. Kristeva's new triadic pattern restructures primary narcissism, and places a *metaphorical identification* at the heart of the subject'.[49] This is a metaphoric process driven by love, unlike Lacan's metonymic process driven by desire. The 'metaphorical object', like a metaphor, strives to signify the unrepresentable: '*Metaphor* should be understood as a move towards the visible'.[50] It brings together the symbolic and the semiotic. For Kristeva, 'transactions' based on metaphor require a 'flexible and plastic subjectivity'. In O'Grady's words, 'This

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[46]Ronald Britton, "The Missing Link" in ed. Britton, *The Oedipus Complex Today*, 87-9.
[47]TL, 41.
[48]TL, 42.
[49]Kathleen O'Grady, "The Pun or the Eucharist?: Eco and Kristeva on the Consummate Model for the Metaphoric Process", *Literature and Theology*, 1:1, (1997)102.
[50] TL, 30.

polymorphous subjectivity, fuelled by the metaphoric process, is a merging not only of images and ideas, but of time, memory and space. It is a fusion of contradiction and paradox in a single term, assaulting the subject "like a bolt of lightning."' Here metaphor is a linguistic device, which can articulate the 'archaic thing (that sublime space that cannot be articulated). It is reaching the unnameable.'[51]

This 'imaginary father' remains a 'not-yet object', an 'enigma'. 'He' is seen as having a 'drawing power' towards the symbolic realm and as introducing the 'possibility of metaphoricity'. By this Kristeva is describing an impact of the symbolic as sparking the identification with the 'Godsend' but the child's identification with the mother's love for the 'not-I', 'the "metaphor of love", is what fills discourse with meaning'.[52]

### 3.4.2.4 'The abject'

Once a degree of separation has been achieved, the individual is struggling with feelings of loss and grief. There is a loss of omnipotence and the child becomes aware of her internal emptiness and that she is merely a fragile imitation of her objects. To be in this place of balance is uncomfortable, and is likened to being suspended on a thin net of words, symbols and rules over an empty void, with an awareness of the 'splitness' of the self and in lonely possession of one's own mind. The identification with the 'idealised father' is a support in this, but if this function is inadequate, then the only paternal function remaining is that of the prohibitive Oedipal rival. The child has to achieve some balance between the attraction to the 'maternal chora' and the attraction to this father. To regress to the maternal is to arrive in a place without words or discernible meaning, while to merge with the Oedipal father is to be dominated by, and unquestioning of, the paternal law, where words are interpreted in a fixed, rigid way, or idolised. The attraction of a return to the maternal chora is strong but also felt as dangerous - a place of chaos, meaninglessness and madness. It is to be avoided and hence has become associated with ideas of filth, defilement and death, and described by Kristeva not as the object, but the 'abject'. The 'abject' is a place of ambiguity and exists at the point of separation between

[51] O'Grady, "The Pun or the Eucharist," 104.

mother and child. It is part of the struggle for individuation. According to Beardsworth, 'abjection' is the first, and most unstable, attempt to establish an inside/outside boundary'.[53] The abject creates repulsion in the subject and hence is a protection from being pulled into meaningless madness. It is associated with filth, waste, bodily fluids and corpses:

> As in no true theatre, without make-up or masks, refuse or corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty on the part of death. There I am at the border of my condition as a living being.[54]

The abject incorporates blood, including menstrual blood, and has associations with blood loss at birth, the painful, traumatic separation of the child from the mother. It is therefore linked with the maternal and with abhorrence of the maternal. Unlike Freud, who saw religion as repressing primal parricide, Kristeva relates some religious practices to repression of a primal abhorrence of the mother.[55]She sees the rituals of defilement and purification, which occur in many religions, as a means of dealing with the fear of regressing and sinking back into the 'abject.' She compares the 'abject' to a phobia, which is the overt symptom, a fear of one particular object, into which are usually condensed a variety of underlying, unconscious fears of sinking back into the maternal. Jonte-Pace quotes Taylor in suggesting that all philosophical, religious, social, economic and political systems are attempts to defend against such a fear.[56]

As Taylor writes, Kristeva identifies the 'abject', 'the unthinkable, unsayable transcendence of the other', not only with the feminine but with the sacred. She understands the 'sacred' as comprising opposites and therefore ambiguous: 'pure and impure, proper and improper, holy and filthy ... attractive and repulsive'. The struggle to be a 'proper' subject, to be pure and undefiled, and to keep the unclean beyond its boundaries, is a vain struggle, as the pollution is within, coexisting with its opposite. Kristeva sees rituals of purification and defilement as portrayals of this struggle. In pagan

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[52] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva*, 69.
[53] *Julia Kristeva*, 83.
[54] PH, 3.
[55] Diane Jonte-Pace, "Situating Kristeva Differently" , in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, 10.

ritual, excrement represents external pollution, while menstrual blood represents internal pollution. 'Eros and Thanatos mix in the blood and blood finally represents the taboos of incest and murder'.[57]

As Kristeva has suggested, a balanced state of affairs, in which some separation from the maternal is maintained, is facilitated by a father who is supportive, loving and admiring, rather than critical and punitive. If this balance between mother and the 'imaginary father' can be maintained, there will be 'triadic openness', which will obviate the need to regress into a dyadic relationship with the maternal, or, in the absence of an idealisable, 'imaginary father', into a dyadic relationship with the only available father, the prohibiting Oedipal father. The first leads to a persistent searching for merging experiences which replace the maternal, and the second to a rigid attachment to words, reason and rules.

### 3.4.2.5 The need for symbolic forms

How then, in the midst of all the hazards and terrors of the 'abject' and the severity of the 'Law of the Father', is it possible to maintain the balance necessary to create one's own psychic space, to tolerate the knowledge of the split self stoically, the underlying fragile emptiness, and to resist collapsing into a dyad?

Beardsworth argues that Kristeva's discovery of the need for an idealisable 'imaginary father' is itself not an adequate solution for the healthy development of an individual or a culture. It is necessary also that the culture should provide *symbolic forms* which can symbolise presymbolic affective dynamics and which are also available for idealising identification, symbols which can represent the 'imaginary father'. Otherwise the individual is left to struggle unsupported in her efforts to deal with uncomprehensible 'unmetabolised' feelings of devouring, loss, grief and emptiness '. For Kristeva, Christianity offers such a 'construction of psychic space in connection with an Other, which supports a confrontation with emptiness'.[58] Kristeva uses the term *agape*

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[56] Taylor, *Altarity*, (1987), 167.
[57] *Altarity*, 167-70.
[58] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva*, 72-3.

synonymously with 'primary identification',[59]and O'Grady suggests that the conception of agape, as unconditional love, offers a 'spiritual enactment' of the archaic love in the pre-Oedipal triad: 'I am never autonomous, but always structured by the gift of love from another. I am always already the 'subject of the other' and it is this love that makes me a subject and thus grants meaning to my speech'. The overflowing of divine love is the Christian response to feelings of loss and emptiness induced by the mother's loving 'not-I'. Similarly the Eucharist is seen as a dramatisation of the archaic 'metaphoric' identification with the 'imaginary father'. There is a bringing together of the physical and the psychic, the human and divine, 'a sacred moment encompassing the real, imaginary and symbolic. It is an identification from the body and return.' Because it is a *metaphoric* identification, there is no loss of heterogeneity within and this retained difference within the subject becomes the basis for an ethical response to difference in the world.[60]

Kristeva also sees Christianity as attempting to deal with many of the basic dreads, and fears of the 'abject' in a series of ways, some of which she believes help to promote the desired 'triadic balance'. While in paganism, the maternal is warded off in purification rites, and in Judaism there is a separating off from the maternal symbolically, by circumcision, in the New Testament, the 'threatening heterogeneity of the maternal principle', the 'abject', is interiorised as the sinning flesh[61]:

> Threatening, it is not cut off but reabsorbed into speech. Unacceptable, it endures through subjection to God of a speaking being who is innerly divided and precisely through speech, does not cease from purging himself.[62]

According to Kristeva, the speaking being, who symbolises his 'abject' (including unconscious phantasies of devouring and murder) by internalising it, finds catharsis in the Eucharist, which 'tames cannibalism':

> Body and spirit, nature and speech, divine nourishment, the body of Christ, assuming the guise of a natural food (bread), signifies me both as divided (flesh and spirit) and infinitely lapsing. I am divided and lapsing with respect

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[59] TL, 50.
[60] "The Pun or the Eucharist", 105-8.
[61] Martha Reineke, "The Mother in Mimesis", in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, 79.
[62] PH,113.

> to my ideal, Christ, whose introjection by means of numerous communions sanctifies me while reminding me of my incompletion... The Christian subject is no longer a being of abjection but a lapsing subject.[63]

She cites the suffering Christ as a figure with whom the split, wounded self, traumatically torn from the maternal chora can identify, and be rewarded like Christ with identification with God, with immortality and with the receiving of a name (language). The punitive God of the Old Testament has become, in the New Testament, the God who loved us first, and so is more like a loving supportive figure who forms part of the archaic triad. He encourages endeavour and reflection, in the use of words and other symbols, and in the response to rules and laws. In *In the Beginning Was Love,* Kristeva writes of the symbolism of Christ's passion, as bringing into play 'primitive layers of the psyche'. The abandoned Christ tells the story of the 'necessary melancholy beyond which we humans may just possibly discover the other, now in the form of symbolic interlocutor rather than nutritive breast'.[64] These parallels have been explored by Graham Ward and will be discussed further in chapter 4. The symbolism involved is intimately related to the symbolism of the Trinity, and these connections have significance for the theological differences between the Wesley brothers.

In her 'Stabat Mater', Kristeva suggests that Christianity equates femininity with maternity and that the characteristics attributed to Mary, the mother of Christ, are successful in allaying primitive anxieties about the semiotic. Mary is reassuring to both men and women. She is important and powerful, as interceder, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Church, but she is 'alone of all her sex' and so not 'abject'. The product of an immaculate conception, she is sinless, and remains a pure virgin. Her body, apart from the breast, is always covered, so that the breast, the sob, the understanding ear, are substituted for the sexual body and she is immortal. As a result, anxieties about the sexuality of women and about death are not stirred up. But eroticism is replaced by milk and tears, which are also semiotic (non-speaking) expressions of feeding and sadness, and are evidence of the return of the repressed. She postulates that, in 'Eia mater, fons amoris', man(kind) is overcoming unthinkable death by substituting

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[63] PH,118.

maternal love, or regression to archaic relating. Here then is a symbol with features of the 'real' (tears and milk), the 'imaginary' (return to the archaic mother) and the 'symbolic' (Queen of Heaven, Mother of the Church), which is likely to be meaningful at many different levels and likely to promote balance. Kristeva has of course reservations about what effect this portrayal of the Virgin Mary has on any possible narrative for sexual women.[65]

While a non-believer, Kristeva describes these various ways in which religious beliefs and symbols can promote harmony and stability, and the development of psychic space for thinking, reflecting and experiencing. However, as Beardsworth points out, Kristeva believes that much Christianity as practised in the present-day Western world, no longer adequately 'sublimates' narcissism ('sublimation' is used here to mean a symbolising of the 'semiotic'). Beardsworth suggests that, for Kristeva, this failure occurs when religion "forgets' that it 'rumbles over emptiness' ... the deformation of the Christian God-relation arises because the religion of salvation overreaches its deepest source. It founds itself, instead, on the transcendent ideal.'[66] When this occurs, there is a lack of opportunity to symbolise the 'pre-symbolic' experience, which includes the idealising transference to the 'imaginary father' as well as the pain, loss and emptiness of separation, and the melancholia of the 'abject'. Kristeva's hope is that, when religion forgets its affective and bodily roots, the metaphoric processes of art and literature will be able to fulfill this symbolising function.

As Beardsworth suggests, Kristeva suspects the Christian interiorisation of the impure (the 'abject') as 'sin' in the speaking subject, when, through repentance and remission, it becomes the *very origin* of spirituality. In Kristeva's words:

> Meant for remission, sin is what is absorbed - in and through speech. By the same token, abjection will not be designated as such, that is as other, as something to be ejected, or separated, but as the most propitious place for communication - as the point where the scales are tipped toward pure spirituality.[67]

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[64] IBL, 40-41.
[65] TL, 234-263.
[66] *Julia Kristeva*, 73.
[67] PH, 127.

Here Kristeva sees Christian symbolism as inadequately identifying the true horror of the 'abject', as if the deep evils of humanity are somehow minimised or avoided. Beardsworth describes the abject here as 'displaced' rather than 'elaborated'. It is either denied or becomes the 'very site of spiritualisation'. In this way it is not fully symbolised; the subject is left with it, the unsymbolised 'abject', a 'fearsome ineradicable evil, an "inexorable carnal reminder."'[68]

This is connected with Kristeva's belief that the split self can never be healed. The swallowing of the abject does not lead to assimilation or 'incorporation'. It is not 'transmuted' but retains its own qualities. The self remains split or 'heterogeneous'.[69] There is a '*coincidentia oppositorum*': for Kristeva, the 'flesh', original sin and the serpent always remain. But this divided self is not a cause for despair, but for stoicism or '*jouissance*'. '*Jouissance*' is used by Kristeva to describe an intense physical, as well as mental celebration of ambiguity. Graybeal translates and interprets it as 'joying in the truth of self-division'.[70]

In the light of these perceived inadequacies in religion, Kristeva turns to art. Beardsworth quotes from Kristeva's *Black Sun* and describes how she uses Holbein's *Dead Christ* as an example of a work of art which is able to symbolise the semiotic, and in which there are powerful resonances with archaic experiences of loss of meaning, separation and death:

> Holbein's 'composition in loneliness' is an act of mercy for our own death, giving form to depression, and so to the psychic imprint of the fragile and unstable exposure to separateness, loss, and death. The psychoanalytic conception of imaginary identification, thus points to the *actual effects* of the image of the dead Christ. The image is 'a powerful symbolic device that allows him [man] to experience death and resurrection even in his physical body'.[71]

Kristeva's description of the portrayal of isolation and melancholia in the picture, suggests that it achieves a connection with the observer at a deep level, giving accurate

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[68] PH, 120, quoted in *Julia Kristeva*, (20040, 139.
[69] *Altarity*, (1987), 175.
[70] PH 89, and Jean Graybeal, "Joying in the Truth of Self-division", in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, 131.
[71] BS,134, in *Julia Kristeva*, 149.

and meaningful form to unverbalisable feelings, through a 'metaphorical' identification, which can be compared with the identification with the 'imaginary father'. It can be contrasted with her description of religion, when it 'overreaches its deepest source', and when the archaic, narcissistic feelings are not dealt with. This is a stark contrast, and the effect of the picture is similar to the very powerful portrayal of separation, loss, isolation and despair in the more recent art of Francis Bacon. Yet it seems not unlikely that some, at least, of the power of the *Dead Christ* derives from the observer's knowledge of the Christian narrative on which it is based, which allows the believer not only to experience death and despair, but resurrection and hope.

Kristeva is concerned that in the present 'secular age', that there is less and less psychic space and an increasing turning to narcissistic alternatives. She sees poetic writing, art and music as alternative sources of experience which involve both the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic'; but she questions whether they will be able to 'bear the burden' without religion. She is concerned about those she calls 'survivors of primary narcissism'. How can they continue as 'subjects in process', open to growth and transformation? If not through religion, can it be through poetry, art, music or psychoanalysis?[72] And if through religion, which kinds of religious understandings and what forms of response to beliefs, rituals, sacraments, experiences or symbols are likely to tend to preserve the psychic space, and which are likely to abolish it?

Some of the instances in this chapter have shown how Christian sacraments and narratives provide opportunities for the bringing together of the symbolic and the semiotic, which Kristeva sees as essential for integration and growth. It seems likely that while indeed, there are some kinds of religious beliefs and practice, which do not adequately *designate* the 'abject' in their symbolism, there are others which do: those in which the Incarnation (the word made flesh), the crucifixion, the wounded Christ, the sacraments, and the acceptance of the divided self and of difference are held central. Crownfield points out that illusion, fantasy and transference do not disappear in psychoanalysis; instead they are 'unmasked' but continue to be used and then (often) recognised. The presence of illusion in religion does not invalidate it. Even with its

[72] TL,377-81.

illusions, 'Christianity has long provided a public, interpersonal semiotic of identity and desire that has sustained and continues to sustain many lives'. He suggests that whether or not Christianity can continue to fulfill this function will depend, not on whether or not it involves illusions, but whether it exists in a form which offers 'triadic openness' or one which offers narcissistic alternatives.[73]

### 3.5 Conclusion

As discussed, 'symbolisation' here includes the putting of emotions into words, as well as the use of material symbols. In order for unconscious contents to be given meaning, emotions have to become available for thought' through symbolisation. The psychoanalytic theory discussed suggests that in order to relate to symbols in this complex way, a degree of psychological maturity must have been achieved. It indicates that if a subject continues to use projection massively, to relate in a 'hungry', dyadic way to objects, and not to have entered securely the 'symbolic' realm or achieved some balance between the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic', he will have difficulty in relating to the symbols, liturgies, metaphors and narratives of Christianity in a way which allows for a 'sublimation', of unknown psychic material. He may embrace such a religion but relate to the symbols involved as if they were idols, for instance by interpreting the words of scripture in a literal and rigid fashion, and not as objects which provoke reflection or evoke something beyond themselves; or, the symbols come to be seen merely as meaningless and ineffective, and not as an opportunity for the expansion of awareness.

Kristeva's work on the importance of an 'idealised identification' with the God of *agape*, in the movement into the symbolic realm, raises the question whether Christian symbolism can offer a *replacement* for an inadequate archaic experience of the 'father of individual pre-history', or whether an individual must have had a 'good enough' early experience to be able to relate in a triadic way to such a symbol. If the latter is the case, an individual without such an early experience would tend to resort to dyadic alternatives.

This same question is expressed differently by Forsyth in discussing the

[73]David Crownfield, "The Sublimation of Narcissism in Christian Love and Faith" in ed. Crownfield,

relationship between human and religious growth. He refers to St. Thomas Aquinas's description of the reciprocal effect of nature and grace. Not only does 'grace presuppose nature' (*gratia praesupponit naturam)* but grace perfects nature (*gratia perficit naturam).* If the capacity to use religious symbols as a means of 'sublimating' unknown psychic contents and achieving change depends on a 'good-enough' early experience, this would imply that only the former (*gratia praesupponit naturam)* were true, and this might well be seen by believers as limiting the power of God. This is the position adopted by some developmental psychologists, but not by Meissner, who sees the relationship between human and religious growth as reciprocal.[74] The examination of the Wesley brothers should shed light on whether grace perfects as well as presupposes nature.

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*Body/Text in Julia Kristeva,* 63.

[74] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.2, art 2 and II, q.1, art 8. (Quoted in James Forsyth, *Faith and Human Transformation: A Dialogue between Psychology and Religion,* (Lanham/NewYork/ London: University of America Press, 1997), Introduction, xv-xviii.)

## PART II

# Chapter 4: Resonance: Psychic space in a religious context.

### 4.1 Opportunities for growth

Based on the psychoanalytic understandings previously described, this chapter explores elements in Christianity which the theory suggests might offer an opportunity for growth and transformation.

The word 'resonance' is used in its title, to draw attention to the frequent use of 'resonate' to describe the perceived association between theological and psychoanalytic concepts. It often appeared to be the only word possible to describe the 'connection' between the two discourses, and its frequent presence betrays the nature of the relationship between them in this context. 'Resonance' also describes the complex connection between the archaic material evoked in religious contexts and the stimuli that evoke it. Its use portrays a 'metaphoric' relationship, rather than one described in terms of metonymy, or of exact parallels or analogies. As Ward suggests, 'analogy is concerned with spatiality, hierarchical relationships, and universality' and with the fixity of signs[1]. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, a *metaphoric* transaction is more fluid. It demands a more complex, flexible response. It can have a striking effect on the subject[2] The processes elicited in the last two chapters are conveniently divided into four sections, though there is inevitably considerable overlap between them:

Section 1 explores opportunities which provide a framework for triadic relating, where there is space and mental freedom for reflection, creative thinking and self-observation.

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[1]Graham Ward, "Kenosis and Naming: Beyond Analogy and towards Allegoria Amoris", in ed. Paul Heelas, *Religion, Modernity and PostModernity,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 253.

[2]Kathleen O'Grady, "The Pun or the Eucharist?: Eco and Kristeva on the Consummate Model for the Metaphoric Process", *Literature and Theology.* 11, 1, (1997),104

Section 2 examines 'spaces', similar to Kristeva's place of balance, where the semiotic and the symbolic co-exist or intersect and which might facilitate the opening-up of a deeper self-awareness.

Section 3 explores opportunities for relating with a 'transforming object' and the processes involved.

Section 4 concerns the use of Christian symbols (Christian figures, narratives, doctrines, rituals or sacraments) to symbolise unconscious material. In order to provide an anthropological comparison with the psychoanalytic view, Mary Douglas's work on ritual is included at this point.

### 4.2 Section 1: Transitional and 'triadic' spaces.

An examination of Christian belief and practice suggests that there are points of intersection and tension, where the symbolic and the semiotic meet, which are spaces of particular potential, which can offer opportunities for an opening out of awareness and a gaining of knowledge and meaning. They have some features of Winnicott's 'transitional space', the potential space within the mother and child dyad.[3]

This point of intersection and balance, for Kristeva however, takes place in a *triadic* rather than a *dyadic* psychic space, and we have seen previously that the French analysts and others have explored the importance not only of the mother-child dyad but of triadic relationships in promoting growth and change. Parsons suggests, that even prior to the father's intervening very obviously in the child's life, he is nevertheless present as a third party in the mother's mind - a symbolic father prior to the feared jealous father of the classical Oedipus complex. The triangle has been present from the beginning, and there is no end point; triangularity is important throughout life in facilitating growth and development[4]. As has been shown, Britton also subscribes to the view that this place of

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[3]D.W. Winnicott, *Playing And Reality*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987),115-6. See also chapter 3, 1-2.

[4]Michael Parsons, *The Dove that Returns, The Dove that Vanishes*, (London & Philadelphia: Routledge, 2000), 114.

creative thinking is 'triangular'. The entry of the 'third' results in Britton's 'triangular space'[5]; and for Bion, Meltzer and Harris Williams, the triad is formed by the infant's relationship to the 'combined object'.[6]

Although the most central image of triangularity in Christianity is the Trinity, there are other images which provide potential triangular frameworks. Among them are the triangular structure provided by God the Father, the Virgin Mary and the Son, and a triangle created between the maternal aspects of God (compassion, forgiveness), the paternal aspects (prohibitory, limiting), and the believer.

### 4.2.1 The Trinity

One way of thinking about the mind in relation to the Trinity is reflected in Augustine's description of the self, the animus, the interior powers of the rational mind, as being in the image of the Trinity. Of the interior powers of memory, intellect and will, memory is the source of pre-reflective (pre-verbal) self-knowledge, and the intellect has the power to reflect upon (and verbalise) what memory generates. There is a mutual seeking out of memory and intellect, a mutual loving, and it is the 'will'which constitutes this relationship. 'In the same way does the Father love the Son and the Son the Father. And the mutual love is the Holy Spirit. The cataphatic and the apophatic meet'[7]. The implication is that the mind itself has a 'trinitarian' or triadic structure, in which the 'will' or Spirit has a unifying function and therefore that the 'triadic' is of 'natural' and profound significance for human beings. Indeed Jung quoted this text and related it to his view that the mind worked according to a Trinitarian dynamic.[8] In fact, he went so far as suggesting that, 'Arrangement in triads is an archetype of the history of religion, which in

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[5]Ronald Britton, "The missing link: parental sexuality in the Oedipus complex" in John Steiner, ed., *The Oedipus Complex Today,* (London: Karnac Books, 2004),86-7. See also Chapter 3.
[6]Donald Meltzer, "Psychoanalysis acknowledges its poetic forebears and joins the artistic family" in Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul-making: The Post-Kleinian Model of the Mind* ,(London: Karnac,2004), xviii-xix. See also Chapter 3.
[7]Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 95.

[8]J.P. Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament,* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981), 52-4.

all probability formed the basis of the Christian Trinity"[9]

For Tillich, the Trinity comprises a unity in which the unnamable God of the Abyss and the Son (logos) are linked by the Spirit, the essence of their relationship. The father generates self-knowledge, which is articulated by the Son (logos) and the polarities of 'power' and 'meaning' are united by the Spirit[10].

In chapter 3 Kristeva's understanding of the dynamics of the archaic love of the pre-Oedipal triad and its symbolisation in the Christian narrative were explored. In *Tales of Love,* Kristeva concentrates on the New Testament God, as God of love, whose unconditional, undeserved, fatherly love is a 'disinterested gift.' It is the a*gape*, 'the agape of the Cross', the gift of a God who is the first to love. Nevertheless, this 'inaugural gift' is accomplished by means of a death, and consists in the sacrifice of a body: 'The gift of love through sacrifice is the reversal of sin. Authority woven of Law and sin is replaced with abundance, wealth, and generosity of grace ... love asserts itself in its polemic with sin and the Law, as an exchange, a settling, a merging, a *reconciliation'*. By 'immersion of the faithful in Christ', believers die with him and so are resurrected with him[11]. Through what Kristeva calls this 'identification-reconciliation with the supreme ideal, believers living by 'grace and not by Law' (Romans 6, 14), die to their 'lustful bodies', but recover through resurrection, the 'body in its integrity, but completely invested in the ideal'. Thus any passion, leading to death, is a gift of love, which allows meaning to manifest itself; it creates meaning rather than being a consequence of the Law. It is this sequence that, for Kristeva, symbolises the pre-Oedipal triad. The loving, forgiving New Testament God, the God of agape, represents the father of pre-history. The believer's identification with Christ in his agony in the garden and in his time of desolation in his last moments on the Cross, represents symbolically the loneliness of the child of the archaic triad, at the initiation of the separation from the mother, 'the fearsome beginnings of otherness'[12], with the awareness of the mother's love for 'not-I', and struggling with the basic dreads and fears of the 'abject'. The child's 'metaphoric' idealising

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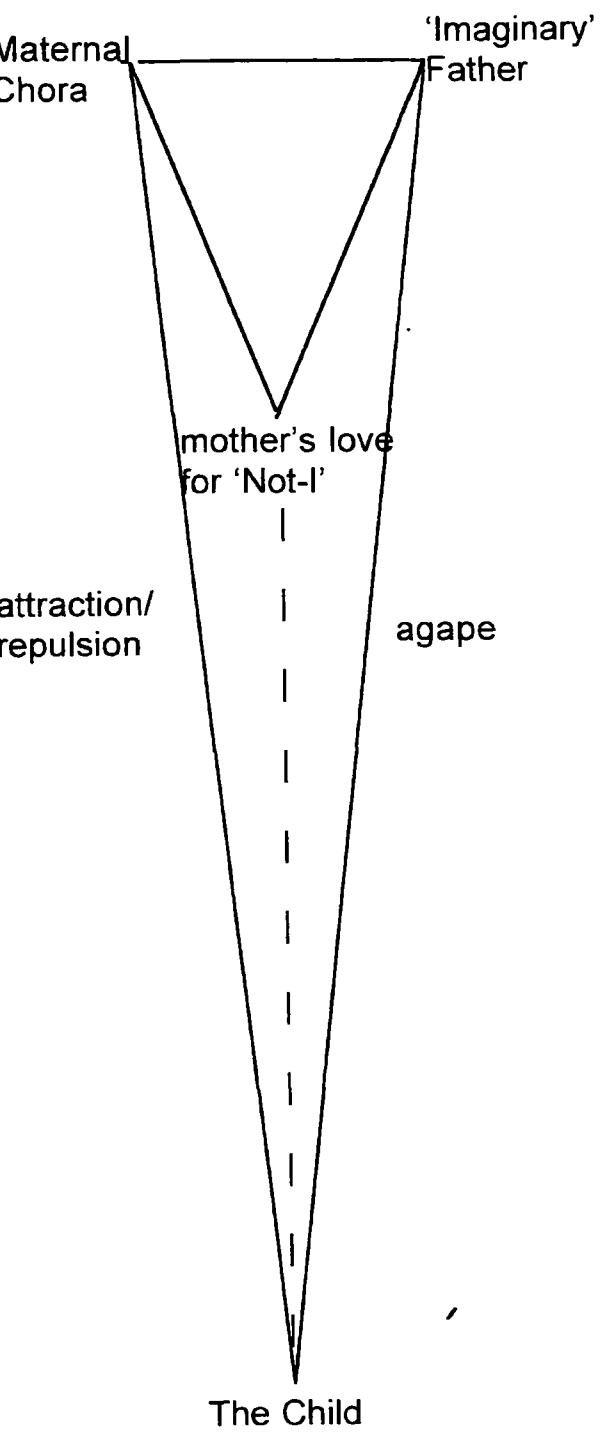
[9]C.G. Jung, "A Psychological approach to the dogma of the Trinity", *Collected Works,* 11, para.173.
[10]Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* I, (Chicago: University of chicago Press, 1951-63) 250-1.

[11] TL, 141-2.
[12] Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: psychoanalysis and modernity,* 83.

**Kristeva's Archaic Triangle**




**The Trinity**

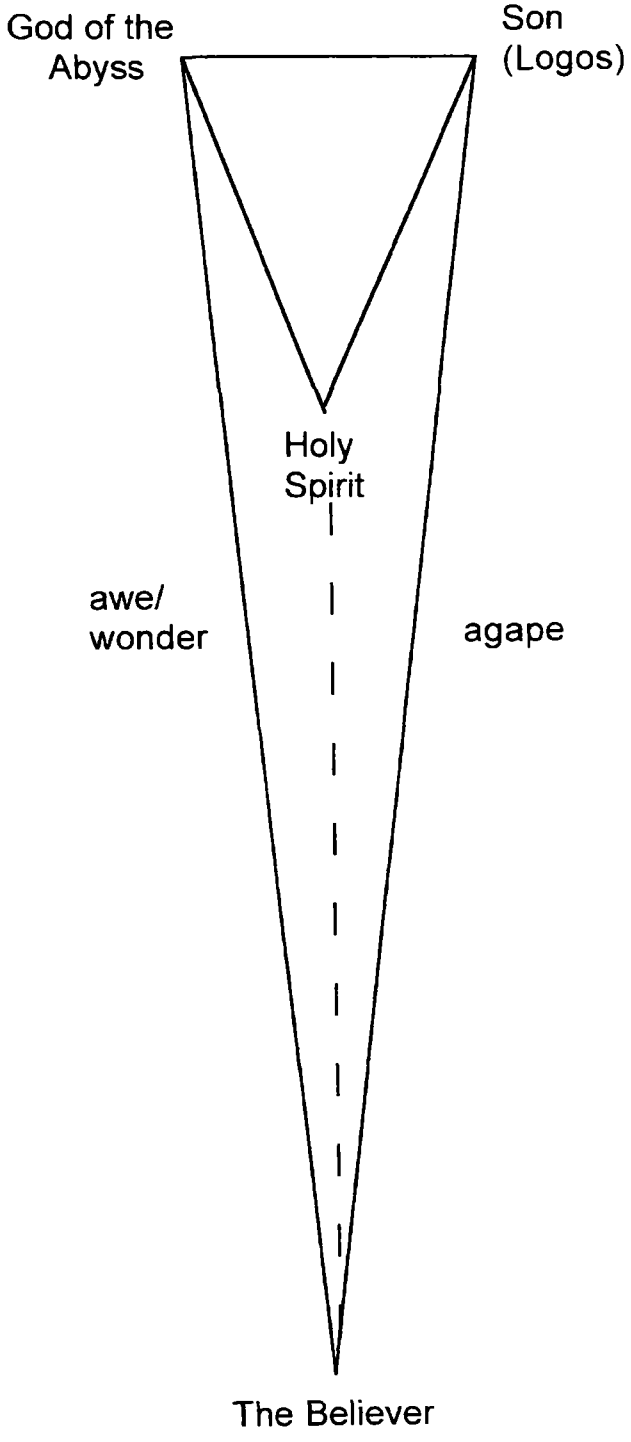



Diagram 1

identification with the father of pre-history, as a support at this point of separation, like any idealising identification, involves the 'murder' of the loved object and of the self. But Kristeva suggests, that for the believer, these killings are 'crystallized, brought to the fore and immediately fastened to the experience of Christ and him alone'[13]. In this sense, Christ's death symbolically represents that of the infant, already wounded and torn from separation from the mother, as it identifies with the imaginary father. In this symbolic sense Christ died 'in our stead'.

One way of highlighting the parallels between the Christian narrative and the pre-oedipal triad is to juxtapose the triangular structures formed by the archaic triad and that of the Trinity. The first shows the orientation of the child in the archaic triangle and the second the orientation of the believer to the Trinity, as understood by Tillich. Because of the unconscious resonances, such a 'metaphorical' connection would offer 'sapiential' knowledge, rather than purely intellectual understanding of the dynamics of love in both triangles. As has been seen, O'Grady refers to Kristeva's mother-father-child triad as an 'archaic Trinity'.[14]

The parallel is most easily shown diagramatically: see figure 1.

In the archaic triangle, the separated child is balanced between the forces of attraction and repulsion in relation to the maternal chora on the one hand and the supportive, affirming love of the 'imaginary' father on the other. Its entry into the 'symbolic' realm is facilitated by identification with the mother's love for the father, for the 'not-I'. It is a triadic form of relating, where dyadic fusion with either maternal chaos or the 'Law of the Father' are avoided and subjectivity and meaning are approached. Similarly, the believer relates in a triadic way to both the God of the Abyss, in 'awe and wonder', or fear and fascination, and is affirmed by the forgiving, accepting agapeic love as revealed in Christ. The separation, suffering and death of Christ is the process through which an identity (a Name) is gained and true meaning is found. The believer is 'indwelt' by the Holy Spirit, the love between Father and Son, just as the infant identifies with the mother's love for the 'not-I'. Both are triangles where erotic, kenotic and agapeic love circulate.

In the diagrams, the conventionally male God of the Abyss corresponds with the chaotic

[13] TL, 140-146.

'maternal chora', and the source of agape is the 'imaginary' *father,* while in Christianity it is often associated with a maternal aspect of God. Of course for Kristeva this whole 'archaic' process occurs before the child can differentiate sexual difference, and Kristeva describes maternal and paternal 'functions' rather than sexually differentiated mother and father, but the juxtaposition of the two triangles is enlightening. Seen in this light the Trinity embodies love, kenosis, triadic relating, and the role of separation and loss in the search for meaning, and no longer excludes the female.

This understanding of the Trinity is reminiscent of the inner triadic space described by Bion and Meltzer, where there is space for reflection and mental freedom: just as the internal 'combined object' acts as a Muse in artistic creativity, or in more quotidian life as an inspiration for reflection, symbolisation and creative thinking, the Holy Spirit, the essence of the loving relationship between un-nameable Father and the incarnate Son (logos), 'dwells within us' and similarly inspires creative thinking and living.

The symbolism of the Trinity is closely linked to the symbolism of 'kenosis', which is considered later in this chapter. It is also important in part III of the thesis, where the differences in the theology of the Wesley brothers are considered.

### 4.2.2 Father/God, Mother/Mary, Christ/Believer.

Triangularity is also present in the paralleling of the Oedipal triangle with the triangle created by God, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus himself. The suffering Christ, represents suffering humanity, with whom the believer can identify. However, as Crownfield suggests, in Christian communities which have Patriarchal structures, the Father/God in this triangle would represent the phallic, Oedipal, prohibiting Father, while the female would be 'abjected'. This he suggests 'reactivate[s] the original terror and rage in the form of the abjection of mother', rather than tending to ameliorate archaic experience'. If however, the Father can seen as the loving, forgiving ('imaginary') Father, and Mary as Virgin and Mother, then these figures can provide and have provided a

[14]O'Grady, *The Pun or the Eucharist?,* 102.

stabilizing structure for many, in spite of what Kristeva would see as a defensive use of Mary.[15]

### 4.2.3 Maternal/paternal aspects of God and believer/ Christ.

A similar triangular space formed without the cost of 'abjecting' or defensively transforming the feminine, is one created between the maternal and paternal aspects of God, and where the believer is identified with Christ. Here the physical suffering and desolation of the crucifixion represents and resonates with the giving up of powerful attachments to early figures, ideas or defences, and the toleration of consequent anxieties in the face of the unknown. There is support from the 'imaginary father', the God of agape, but also an awareness of the paternal law and logic.

In all these triadic spaces there are resonances with Kristeva's description of the infant painfully torn away from the union with the maternal, uncomfortably balancing over a void, 'alone with [its] own mind', resisting the powerful regressive pull to a dyadic relationship with either maternal or paternal objects but tolerating the consequent anxiety and uncertainty. This place of balance also recalls Tillich's description of courage in the face of anxiety over the threats of fate or death, meaninglessness and doubt, condemnation and punishment, and the need for self-affirmation in spite of these threats[16]. For Tillich, the capacity to affirm oneself in the face of anxiety is seen as arising from divine grace. In Kristevan terms, the infant is supported over emptiness by the 'father of pre-history', and the believer by his successor, the God of agape.

## 4.3 Section 2: A dialogue: the interaction of the'symbolic' and the 'semiotic'.

In the writings of the early mystical theologians about the intersection of the apophatic and the cataphatic, there is a noticeable emphasis on 'wrestling' and 'struggling'. The cataphatic struggle in the realm of the symbolic involves a stretching of the intellect to its

[15]David Crownfield, 'The Sublimation of Narcissism in Christian Love and Faith", in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva,* 60.

limit in trying to comprehend the nature of God, and the struggle in the apophatic, beyond the intellect, becomes that of tolerating uncertainty without despair. This struggle also resonates with the struggle described by Kristeva to maintain balance.

In his study of the thought of four writers, Augustine, Denys the Areopagite, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing and John of the Cross, Turner describes them as 'mystical theologians' and distinguishes this use of the term 'mystical' from its later use, where it comes to be associated with certain kinds of religious *experience*, where there is emphasis on the affective aspects and the esoteric nature of the experience[17]. Turner describes some shift towards this latter emphasis in John of the Cross, but earlier authors, where 'mysticism' is seen as an intrinsic to the whole of their Christian practice, retain intellectual struggle and the Platonic dialectic in their journey towards God. This intellectual struggle is at first cataphatic: it uses words to name God, which can never be adequate, so that affirmations are made but have to be denied. Eventually the denials too are inadequate and in turn must be denied. This denial of the denial leads to an opening out beyond logical thought, to something new.

An example used by Turner is the affirmation that 'God is light'. This is inadequate and must be denied - so - 'God is darkness'. But finally the negation between darkness and light must be negated and becomes, 'God is a brilliant darkness', metaphorically transcending both previous metaphors.[18] As Turner suggests, this is not merely an artful form of language. It is deliberately paradoxical, a collapse of affirmation and denial into 'self-subverting' and disordered language, which is disturbing and leads to apophatic silence beyond the limits of language. The 'cataphatic' struggle with words gives way to what Turner calls 'this characteristic apophatic self-subverting utterance'[19]. This is expressed in different terms by de Certeau. In describing the texts of the Gospels, he suggests that they point to a 'movement of transcendence'which is produced by the way the stories are organised. The dialogues are not based on binary structures. The logic involved is not 'the one or the other', nor is it 'the one and the other', but it is often 'neither the one nor the other'. The examples de Certeau gives are

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[16]Paul, Tillich, *The Courage To Be,* 171.
[17] Turner, *The Darkness of God*, Ch.11.
[18] *The Darkness of God,* 22 and 38.

> Neither Jewish nor heathen; neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, but spiritually circumcised; neither clean nor unclean, but pure in heart; neither the tradition of the Pharisees nor the power of Pilate, but the reference to another kind of 'truth'; ...[20].

This, he explains, creates a new, open, unfixed hypothesis. It is not dogma or law, but permits 'spiritual action'. There is an openness about it and it involves risk because the outcome is uncertain, but it also involves an aliveness. It is similar to what Turner describes as self-subverting language, which also involves risk. It is not known where the second order 'negation of the negation' will lead. Both lead to a place beyond words and logic.

This description of persistence in the face of risk and uncertainty is reminiscent of Bion's concept of 'faith', which he regards as necessary for the symbolising function. This idea is linked to his thoughts on the difference between 'pain' and 'suffering'. As the therapist struggles to 'metabolise' the patient's conflicting feelings, there are 'premonitions of catastrophic anxiety' which can be 'almost unbearable'. If this pain can be 'suffered', i.e. contemplated rather than acted upon, then meaning will emerge, but in order to bear the pain of these conflicted feelings (love and hate), there must be 'an act of faith' which involves the denial of memory and desire[21].

The apophatic is a realm of loss, beyond the limit of language, where bewilderment has to be accepted, ideas given up, and 'possessive' desire, the desire to own or use, has to be relinquished[22]. Such a description mirrors Bion's analytic stance and it is not surprising that he borrowed some of the terminology of the mystics to describe processes which are difficult to describe in psychoanalytic terms.[23]
In the early mystics, the cataphatic, intellectual struggle gives way to or intersects with this apophatic uncertainty. Turner's study leads him to conclude that the apophatic cannot be conceptualised or experienced:

> The apophatic ... is intelligible only as being a moment of negativity within

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[19] *The Darkness of God*, 45.
[20]Michel de Certeau, "How is Christianity thinkable today?" in ed. Ward, *The Post-Modern God*, 154.

[21]Meg Harris Williams, *The Vale of Soul-Making*, 192-3.
[22]*Darkness of God*, 184.
[23]See Chapter 1,12-13.

> an overall theological strategy which is at once and at every moment both apophatic and cataphatic. If these things are so, then theology in so far as it is theology is 'mystical' and in so far as it is 'mystical' it is theology[24].

An interaction with the apophatic is to be distinguished from a peak experience. It is embedded in religious practice, in liturgy and sacrament. Although the apophatic moment involves loss, tension, unknowing, and anxiety, rather than intense emotional experience, there is however a possibility of celebration:

> To experience *jouissance* is to suffer loss - the loss of desire that exposes the impossibility of satisfaction. This impossibility is the wisdom concealed in the Cloud of Unknowing.[25]

Kristeva describes two possible responses to being in a similar place of not knowing, between the symbolic and the semiotic, suspended over an abyss, where contradictions can never be reconciled, and one's own dividedness has to be faced. One involves resorting to dyadic alternatives. The other is celebration or *jouissance*. Tillich's theology includes a description very similar to Kristeva's second response. Writing about Seneca, he describes joy as the response to the 'affirmation of one's essential being in spite of desires and anxieties': 'It is not the joy of fulfilled desires to which he (Seneca) refers, for real joy is a 'severe matter'; it is the happiness of a soul which is 'lifted above every circumstance'.'[26]

The early mystics are used here as examples because what their authors describe as 'apophatic' has similarities with Kristeva's realm of the semiotic, which 'erupts' into the 'symbolic'. Although it is described as 'not experienced', it is a place beyond words, beyond thinking, of uncertainty, of boundlessness, of potential, of risk and of 'aliveness'. It has to be apprehended in some way, through a continuous interweaving of apophatic and cataphatic, just as Kristeva calls for an intersection of, or dialogue between, the semiotic and the symbolic.

There are many Christian narratives which lead to a place of uncertainty,

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[24] *Darkness of God*, 264.
[25] Taylor, *Altarity*, 113.
[26] Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 25-6.

unknowing and risk, but the central one is the narrative of the incarnation. 'The word was made flesh and dwelt among us', is at the same time a revelation, an example for human living, and a source of transformation. Sheldrake explores the varieties of meaning of the verb ' to dwell', which implies commitment, staying with, stability and being in a particular place. There is a tension between God's incarnation and engagement with place, his 'dwelling' on earth, and his placelessness, his being beyond place. The place in which he lived was a pointer to elsewhere, symbolised by the empty tomb: 'He is not here, he is risen'. He is 'perpetually elusive' and the tomb is a place of 'perpetual departure'.[27] Through the Christian narrative, there is a disturbance of ordinary logic and an opening of the mind to new experience and to the possibility of change.

It is in the Eucharist that many intersections of the existential and the essential come together. 'Kairos', a moment of significance, meaning and integration, intersects with 'chronos', the continuation of ordinary temporal experience. The immanent, the elements taken into the body, intersect with the transcendent, the body and blood of the risen Christ. What Duns Scotus calls the *Haecceitas*, the thisness, the particular individuating, unique properties of the bread and the wine, intersect with the universal[28]. In the Eucharist, the material is embedded in the language of the liturgy, which adds 'symbolic' meaning to the semiotic.

The reading of Biblical texts, religious poetry and liturgy, and the singing of hymns, are further opportunities for the intersection of the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic'. Kristeva has written extensively about the eruption of the 'semiotic' into the 'symbolic' realm (the realm of words, sense, sanity, categories, boundaries and grammatical rules), in literary texts, and particularly in poetry, in what, using Roland Barthes' term, she calls *écriture*.[29] It appears in the form and rhythm of the text, in paradox, irony, gaps, shifts and silence, in polysemic language and in language evocative of the body, of emotion and of pain.

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[27]Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, (London: SCM Press, 2001) 28-9.

[28]Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 206.

[29]Cleo McNelly Kearns, "Kristeva and Feminist Theory" in eds C.W. Maggie Kim, S.M. Smith and S.M. Simonaitis, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 63-70.

McNelly Kearns draws attention to Kristeva's work on a wide variety of figures, including Thomas Aquinas and Bernard of Clairvaux, and to her examination of biblical texts, for instance the Song of Songs. In this work Kristeva does not deny the 'rational aspects' and what McNelly Kearns describes as their 'dogmatic repressions', but seeks out a 'more hidden, perhaps more sensual and salvific face'. In spite of the broad differences in time, culture and belief between Kristeva and Aquinas, there is a common emphasis on the body. Aquinas understands a human being as a conjunction of soul and body and not as a duality, so that the world and the possibility of salvation have to be understood and experienced through the physical, psychological, social and spiritual being. In McNelly Kearns' words, 'imagination and fantasy are 1) linked to somatic and physiological aspects of our being, 2) necessary to apprehend the universal-in-particular, the quiddity, of ourselves and of others alike'[30].

Kristeva similarly sees human beings as a composite of body and psyche, of semiotic and symbolic, and describes how both of these can be represented in the text. As described by Taylor, 'elusive semiotic processes cannot be translated into clearly articulated symbolic, syntactic, and semantic structures' but poetry can open language to the 'dreadfully ancient'; it can evoke pre-verbal experience, by disrupting logic and rationality.[31]

This disruption can occur only where there is an interweaving of the semiotic with the symbolic. It is brought about by *style:*

> The stylist inflicts violence in an effort to '*resensitize language,* so that it *throbs* (palpite) more than it reasons.' The alternation of such throbbing or palpitation results in what Kristeva calls 'desemantization'. The desemantization of language reduces discourse to the state of 'pure signifier,' in which the structures of representation and narrativity are fatally cracked. By evoking 'a *heterogeneity of signification',* the 'elliptical' words of the writer become the inscription of the impossible. In different terms, the impossibility of writing 'is' the writing of the impossible.[32]

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[30] McNelly Kearns, "Art and Religious Discourse in Aquinas and Kristeva" in ed. David Crownfield, *Body/ Text in Julia Kristeva,* 111-5.

[31] Taylor, *Altarity,* 180.

Kristeva's understanding of the human being as a composite of the flesh and the word echoes Merleau-Ponty's writing about human existence as carnal. He particularly emphasises the 'unsealedness' of the body, the body as a 'gaping wound', which 'creates a cleavage in the subject that faults self-consciousness' ... 'the living body resists closure and necessarily remains open to what is other than, and different from, itself.'[33]

Kristeva's essay, 'Stabat Mater', can be seen as illustrating an *interlacing* of the semiotic and the symbolic [34]. She divides the page into two by using two columns of text. The left-hand column describes the subjective experience of a mother as she gives birth to her son. She uses vivid language to describe internal and external bodily experiences and the painful or joyous emotional responses which accompany them. There are images of death, wounds, bodily fluids, touching, tearing, illness and pain. The text is fragmented, the syntax disrupted and the language often sensuous and evocative of bodily experience. The right-hand column is more abstract, analytical and logical. It gives one account of the place and meaning of the Virgin Mary in Western Christianity. As Edelstein points out, in 'Stabat Mater' Kristeva produces a *dialogue* between the symbolic and the semiotic, not a *dialectic*. The two forms of text are not competing but are interacting with each other.[35]

There are occasional elements of the semiotic appearing in the right-hand column (milk and tears) and the left-hand column tends to become more cerebral and analytical as the discourse proceeds. The contrast between the semiotic and the symbolic is brought out both by the form of the text and by the content. In addition, the whole work illustrates the fundamentally split subject - both in the split female body, opened up in the delivery of the baby, and the split between the cerebral/analytic Law of the Father and the 'maternal chora'. This has been seen by some to be an very unsubtle demonstration of the interaction of the symbolic and the semiotic in a text, or even as a parody of feminist writing, but it demonstrates clearly the interlacing of one kind of writing with the other

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[32] *Altarity*, 179.
[33] *Altarity*, 69.
[34] TL, 234-263.
[35] Marilyn Edelstein, "Metaphor, Meta-narrative, and Mater-narrative in Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater'" in ed. Crownfield, *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva*, 36

and the different and combined responses in the reader.[36]

The coming together of the symbolic and the semiotic is for Kristeva a healing process. McNelly Kearns describes the negotiation between them as a *movement* between the two, between the 'patriarchal theologian' and the 'rebellious daughter', not without pain but without 'violent extinction' or 'sacrifice of one or the other': 'an identity hard to imagine, much less establish, but the struggle for it is the struggle for healing, both in the individual and in the collective as a whole'.[37]

Kristeva sees the provisional, changing, mortal subject, the '*sujet en proces*' as helped by two practical strategies in this struggle to bring together the symbolic and the semiotic. These are 'analytic listening' and 'aesthetic practice'. 'Analytic listening' involves hearing the 'unspoken in all discourse' and attending to whatever seems new, disturbing or unsatisfied and so tending to disturb 'the mutual understanding of the established powers.' 'Aesthetic practice' is the practice of 'speaking or communicating in a way which allows discourse to resonate on symbolic and semiotic levels.' (This is similar to de Certeau's description of the organisation of the Gospel stories which leads to 'moments of transcendence'.) McNelly Kearns stresses that these are not only academic pursuits, but take place in ordinary experience:

> whenever we weave on the loom of common experience - birth-struggle, passion, epiphany, adolescence, friendship, madness, parenthood, illness, separation, mourning and death - our unique texts of beauty, and pain, power and authenticity.[38]

The semiotic also erupts into the symbolic in silence, when the limits of language have been reached. Steiner *celebrates* the limitations of language:

> But it is decisively in the fact that language does have its frontiers, that it borders on three other modes of statement - light, music, and silence - that gives proof of a transcendent presence in the fabric of the world. It is just because we can go no further, because speech so marvellously fails us, that we experience the certitude

[36] Edelstein, " Metaphor, Meta-narrative, and Mater-narrative", 27-42.
[37] McNelly Kearns, "Kristeva and Feminist Theologians" in ed. C.W.Maggie Kim, *Transfigurations*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 67.

[38]Cleo McNelly Kearns, *Transfigurations* ,(1993), 67-9.

> of a divine meaning surpassing and enfolding ours. What lies beyond man's word is eloquent of God.[39]

Silence can disturb and disrupt, as does what Bataille calls 'le mot glissant'.[40] This is a word such as 'silence', which in being said, unsays itself and is similar to Turner's 'self-subverting utterance'.

Taylor writes, drawing on Kierkegaard, that while paradox and the 'absurd' cannot be made sense of or grasped by reason, neither can they be reduced to nonsense.[41] They disrupt ordinary logical thought and lead to an opening-up, an expanding of consciousness. Similarly, poetry, music and dance can powerfully evoke pre-verbal experience and a sense of the ineffable, but in addition, the semiotic can more dramatically erupt through changes of style, key, and rhythm and in discord. Although the language varies, there is common theme in all these writers, that through disruption, at the intersections and interlacings of the symbolic and the semiotic, there is a possibility of change and there may be glimpses of the transcendent - the God of the gaps in a Lacanian sense, the God who breaks out of the closed system and crosses boundaries to include what is marginalised and different.

### 4.4 Section 3: Transforming relationships

The child's earliest transforming relationship with a 'transforming object' (the mother) was considered in chapter two. Bollas associated the recognition of a subsequent potentially transformational object with something familiar, or uncanny, (often described as 'sacred' or with sense of 'numinosity'), which he believed resulted from a resonance with previous experience of the mother as 'transforming object'. The evoked, archaic material, Bollas's 'unthought known', which *arose* in the context of a relationship with another, can only be processed in a relationship with another.[42] When Bollas writes of

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[39]George Steiner, *Language and Silence,* (London: Faber and Faber,1967),58-9.
[40]Taylor, *Altarity* (1987), 143.
[41]Taylor in Altarity, 344
[42]Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known,* (London: Free Association Press, 1987), 15-17, 280.
This concept parallels Augustine's description of two types of knowledge referred to earlier. 'Pre-reflexive'

processing the 'unthought known' through relating to a transformational object, he includes experience occurring in aesthetic, religious or therapeutic settings.

### 4.4.1 God as transforming object.

Experiences of God as transforming object are very variable and wide-ranging. They cannot be covered in depth here, but two groups will be examined, in which powerful emotion and a degree of 'regression' are usual. Where there *is* a degree of regression, it is of interest to understand whether or not the regression involved is of a kind which would be anticipated to promote growth[43]. Many of the experiences referred to here are reminiscent of those found in the writings of early Methodists, which describe conversion experiences.

Kris's concepts of 'regression in the service of the ego' and Balint's 'benign regression', 'regression overwhelming the ego' and 'malignant regression' are helpful in understanding religious experience. The characteristics of the regression hindering or promoting change in therapy are likely to have a similar influence on whether the experience is predominantly transformative or stultifying. For instance, does the experience represent a search for a replacement for previous lost or unmet needs, or does it involve a relationship with a 'transforming object' which can allow a new beginning?[44] Balint describes therapeutic techniques used by the therapist which minimise the chances of a regression becoming malignant.[45] This chapter suggests that there are features of religious practice which might be expected to minimise or encourage it and hence facilitate or hinder change.

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self-awareness, which is always present, is not a conceptualising kind of knowledge but is 'experiential'. The second kind of self-knowledge is reflective and thoughtful. Augustine's eventual 'finding of God' is described in terms of a *re*cognition of God, a returning to something familiar, something which had always been known: Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God, 83.*

[43] There is no attempt here to judge these experiences as 'healthy' or 'pathological' in psychiatric terms, but a considerable amount of research has been carried out in an attempt to distinguish between these two types. Relevant conclusions from this research are briefly outlined in Appendix I.

[44] Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object,* 14.

#### 4.4.1.1 'Peak' experiences

The term 'mysticism', after the decline of the apophatic tradition, came to describe what Turner calls a 'two-term, anti-intellectualist, experientialist, voluntarism', where metaphors previously used to attempt to describe a state of unknowing became associated with psychological/emotional *experiences* and therefore (he thinks) were potentially misleading[46]. But the presence of 'experience', in the positive sense, in emotional, perceptual or bodily terms, has been and remains widespread, and has a central place in many religious contexts. These experiences encompass a wide range of extraordinary, extreme forms with florid phenomena, such as visions, auditory and tactile hallucinations, intense feelings and bodily sensations, which might more usually be classified as psychotic. Also included are Rudolph Otto's powerful experience of the numinous, (*mysterium tremendum et fascinans)*[47]and 'Pietist' experiences of intense loving feelings towards God in the 'religion of the heart', experienced by the Moravians and the early Methodists; and more everyday emotional responses occurring in explicitly religious settings, or where quotidian or symbolic events result in an emotional response, interpreted as of religious significance. Many are associated with the psychological shifts which occur in conversion experiences.

William James described many such experiences, and they were for him the core of religion. He judged experiences not by their particular contents but by their 'fruits', the lasting effects on the lives of the subjects.[48] The transformative experiences he described occurred mainly in those he called 'sick souls'. These were individuals who had a sense of their own dividedness. Their search for wholeness was through suffering, self-knowledge and struggle, until they experienced a final self-surrender to something beyond the conscious self. This could be expressed, according to James, either theologically, as due to the 'direct operations of the Deity' or psychologically, as a

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[45] See 2.5
[46] Turner, *The Darkness of God,* 272.
[47]Rudolph Otto, (1917) *The Idea of the Holy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, second edition, 1950).
[48]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature,* (Centenary Edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 237

consequence of an interaction between the conscious and the 'subconscious' parts of the personality.[49]

Rambo, in his writing on religious conversion, outlined this familiar sequence: there was some kind of internal or external crisis, resulting in a fragmentation of the self, with a heightened awareness of 'sinfulness, a sense of humiliation, of having no personal resources and of needing grace for healing.' It involved a 'bringing to brokenness' and a 'joyful rebirth through the power of God.' The relief of giving up the struggle, the wrestling with conflicts, resulted in feelings of joy, contentment, and of things falling into place, with the releasing of energy and a sense of empowerment and hope.[50] The affective element of these experiences is described as different in quality from ordinary, everyday emotional responses. They are felt as having deeply personal and religious significance and as coming from beyond the self: the supernatural erupting into the natural. There is a sense of ineffability and often a sense of union with something other than the self. They have a noietic quality, and the extent to which the subject feels overwhelmed is variable.

The language used varies, but there are countless examples in both Roman Catholic and Protestant, particularly Puritan, religious lives, which repeat these themes of conflict, surrender, experience of union, consolation and change. There is an overwhelming of self-consciousness and of the sense of involvement in everyday relationships and events, and a suspension of analytical thought, which are temporary. There is a blurring of boundaries between subjective and objective, and between the conscious and the unconscious. While feelings of union, peace, contentment, acceptance and forgiveness are common, there is a recognition of the 'dark side' of the self and of the world, as typified by James's 'sick souls'. Sinfulness and inner badness are known about and attended to, or 'suffered' and are often associated with feelings of guilt, hopelessness and unworthiness. While pleasurable feelings associated with feelings of union occur and are suggestive of a regression to an early experience of blissful fusion with the archaic mother (a dyadic state), or a primary narcissistic boundaryless state, there is no compulsive urge repeatedly to seek out the experience itself, in order to meet a need or

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[49] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 210-1.
[50] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religion and Conversion*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 132-6).

replace a lost object. These experiences are usually reported as short-lived and provoked by a chance stimulus, and cannot be deliberately self-induced. The emphasis is on transformation rather than gratification. Meissner explains that, although there is a sense of fusion, which suggests regression to infantile states, the regression differs from a psychotic regression where the sense of identity is lost; on the contrary, the sense of stability and integration is increased. He compares it to the capacity to transcend the boundaries of self, which occurs in a passionate human sexual relationship, 'so that the self becomes immersed in the object or conversely is subsumed by the loving presence of the object, in this instance the object of divine love'. This crossing of boundaries and emptying out of the self in 'the loving embrace of the object', he claims, need not be regressive.[51] I would suggest that it does indeed have regressive elements, evoking earlier experiences of merger, but that the regression is of a 'benign' rather than 'malignant' type. This 'benign' regression is 'in the service of the ego'. There is a temporary letting go of ego functioning, with suspension of its observing capacity but a rapid resumption of reflection upon and examination of the experience in the light of reason. The experience involves an openness to unconscious phenomena and to emotional and bodily reactions, in other words to the semiotic, and individuals who undergo such experiences can be seen as sufficiently secure of their ego function to relax it temporarily.

### 4:4:1:2 Emotion in the fundamentalist, revivalist tradition

The contemporary scene includes a wide range of groups who espouse fundamentalist beliefs and who accept or reject 'charismatic' elements. Though there is great variation in detail, there are elements in common which are important for our purpose here. They include Christians who tend to be suspicious of individual 'mystical experience' but for whom emotional experiences form a vital part of their worship. I have chosen to use Martyn Percy's work on John Wimber, a fundamentalist in the 'revivalist' tradition, to examine these forms of religion. (Percy's book, *Words, Powers and Wonders*, provides a

[51] W.W. Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*, (New Haven and London: Yale University

detailed exploration of the emotional effects of the religious practices and interpersonal dynamics within that tradition). By following Percy in examining one form of worship which is widespread, it is hoped that the overall picture will not be distorted, as it would be if there were a concentration on extreme forms, but that observations made on this movement will have implications for some other fundamentalist groups.[52] For those groups, and there are many, which demonstrate the characteristics described by Percy, there are conclusions to be drawn about the degree of regression and the potential for change. However, it is important also to remember that there are many variations between groups and that these conclusions cannot be applied to all of them.

Percy's observations of the worship practice of Wimber's movement lead him to conclude that the power and fatherhood of the leader are often conflated with the power and fatherhood of God, and that emotional states are provoked in the congregation, which reduce the capacity for critical thought. As a result, there is a conscious or unconscious manipulation of the worshippers, by the use of various techniques, in the cause of securing increased power for the leaders of the institution.[53] There is an expectation by the participants, who have previously experienced this kind of worship, that at each service it is likely that particular emotional responses will be induced in them. If experienced as rewarding, they can be sought out repeatedly. Percy makes a convincing case that the use of repetitive songs (which include metaphors which tend to be infantilising, primitive and magical, and which stress intimacy and identification with an idealised, powerful God) induces states of feeling which can be overwhelming.[54] The characteristics of these states, feelings of bodily bliss, of surrender, of specialness, of being merged and filled up, and of empowerment, are suggestive of a regressive, merged, dyadic experience. Such an experience could fulfil a need by providing a substitute for a relationship with a lost object, which has not been adequately mourned and given up. Individuals who tend to seek out objects to fulfil such a need, that is, those who

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Press), 151-2.
[52]Martyn Percy, *Words, Powers and Wonders: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism*, (London: SPCK, 1996), 13-15.
[53]Percy, *Words, Powers and Wonders*,23-42.
[54]*Words, Powers and Wonders*, 61-66.

demonstrate 'object hunger', might well be drawn to this kind of experience.[55]

During the emotional, 'merged' experience there can be no sense of the persistence of a functioning, observing, reflecting ego, which would create a triadic space and allow a *controlled* entry into the 'semiotic' realm. 'Experiences' are labelled and repeated, rather than reflected upon and examined, and there is also an expectation that rigid dogma will be accepted, rather than thought about.

Percy writes of an interesting evolution which has occurred in Wimber's movement and in other fundamentalist and revivalist churches. This comprises a gradual change from an emphasis on experiences of 'joy, celebration and love', which involve bodily expressions of emotion, to a concentration on holiness. Again Percy interprets this in terms of power, seeing it as a necessary transition, if the power structure is to be maintained. If the church is to be a powerful force in the world, its members must be seen as pure, strong and successful, demonstrating God's power, so that there is little tolerance of weakness and none of sexual aberration. This frequent association of, on the one hand, ecstatic and physical experiences, and on the other, rigid rules, particularly about sexual matters, could be interpreted differently: in Kristevan terms, it suggests a flicking between a dyadic experience of the 'maternal chora', and a dyadic adherence to the paternal text and law. It is as if the second develops as a protection from the first, which is felt as too exciting and dangerous; as if there is a retreat to the 'Law of the Father', rather than a balance or dialogue between the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic'. Percy writes: it is ironic that movements that often begin by embodying joy, celebration and love in community life, end up finishing with disembodiment and legalism.[56]

There are important features described by Percy which are likely to reduce the potential for facilitating change:

1) there is relentless emphasis on an almost magical, powerful, instantaneous transformation from weakness to wholeness, and on human dependence. This undermines separateness, agency and responsibility. There is a feeling of surrender to God out of passivity and passion, so that then He can assert an 'inward order (control) which can counter the external forces (chaos) of sickness, evil, dissipation and

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[55]See 2.4.3

impotence'.[57] Though there is reference to 'need' or 'sickness' or 'sin', there is no real acknowledgement of inner dividedness and ambiguity; instead there is a sudden switch from powerlessness and weakness, to being whole and healed by an identification with and yielding to, God's power, which is 'utterly irresistible and almighty'.[58] The use of words and music induces an emotional state of 'transportation' away from the messy business of sinfulness and the realities and particularities of the world, and blissful feelings of closeness and worth are substituted;

2) there is encouragement of high levels of certainty, and lack of critical thought, with intolerance of questioning and stress on adherence to rules designed to keep purity within, and weakness and difference without;

3) theologically, there is emphasis on the majesty of Christ, the omnipotence of God and the lack of individual responsibility for change. There is a relative lack of prominence given to the human suffering and weakness of Christ, or the Trinitarian nature of the divine. Percy claims that the 'individuality and corporate nature of the Trinitarian personhood (which might include distinctiveness in identity, functionality, space and time, yet mutuality and relationship) is dissolved';[59]

4) there is difficulty with paradox, particularly the paradox central to the doctrine of the Incarnation : 'strength made perfect in weakness'. Percy suggests that this is partly because such ideas undermine the need to preserve 'omnipotence against pluralism and liberalism', and partly because of the dualism implicit in beliefs about healing; one is either ill or well;[60]

5) in the lack of use of sacrament, symbol or individual 'mystical' experience, which are seen as 'threaten[ing] the autonomous power of words alone'.[61]

These are all missed opportunities for bringing Kristeva's 'symbolic and 'semiotic' into dialogue. These all have features characteristic of dyadic relationships, either reminiscent of fusion with the 'maternal chora' (non-verbal, affective, physical), or

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[56] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 114.
[57] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 63-66.
[58] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 125.
[59] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 61.
[60] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 128.
[61] *Words, Powers and Wonders,* 16.

with the word and law of the father; there is little evidence of a triadic space for recognition, reflecting and change. Primitive defences, such as splitting and projection, predominate, with the polarisation of good and evil, an identification with an idealised object, and a projection outwards of what is felt as 'bad'. These features, and the subject's expectation and hope of the experience being repeated, is more suggestive of 'malignant' than 'benign' regression. The techniques used can be seen as capitalising on an individual's needs to use religious beliefs and experiences defensively, to maintain a form of stability, rather than to promote growth.

The analysis of these experiences in these two groups (4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.2), should not suggest that are distinct, either in their practices, in the responses of believers, or in their effects. For instance, many of these 'revivalist' characteristics would have occurred in early Methodism, as well as the 'peak' experiences previously described. There is considerable overlap but the individual features themselves will lend themselves to the kinds of interaction described, in whichever context they occur.

As will be seen, the relative importance of all the five features drawn out by Percy, but especially the Trinity, paradox, symbolism and 'mystical' experience, emerge as crucially different in the religious lives of the Wesley brothers.

### 4.4.2 Other transforming objects

Having considered some of the ways a relationship with God can be transformative, this section examines transformative interactions with other objects.

#### 4.4.2.1 Aesthetic experience

Certain objects of beauty, both in nature and in works of art, poetry or music, have the capacity to evoke a sense of the ineffable, which resonates with something internal that is deep and archaic. They have a capacity to disturb, which is associated with resonances with the past, with the eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic, and they can be an important element in transformation either within a specifically religious context, or

outside it. Christian worship is a rich space within which to interact with the transforming capacities of music, icon, biblical text and poetry.

As Josephine Klein suggests, transformation can occur in response to the beauty of nature, to music, to art, to a material object, or to another person, but only if there is a particular *active* experiencing on the part of the subject. Klein quotes Buber in his description of a child exploring a teddy-bear with its hands and other senses: 'lovingly and unforgettably aware of the complete body. It is a creative act by which the baby calls the object into being'.[62] It is recognised and related to: it is no longer an 'It' but a 'Thou'. As for Bollas, this is a form of relatedness which involves recognition and 'fit': ' ... some process exists by which we can reach out from ourselves and ... if we are lucky, or if we are blessed, this may lead us to find a form answering to our own subjectivity.'[63] But this form of relating is to be distinguished from a regressive form, where there is such a sense of merging that there is a loss of sense of self. Here the self feels more itself, more real, more fulfilled in the presence of such an object.

Monti writes of this engagement with a transforming object, for instance a piece of music or a picture, in slightly different terms.[64] He compares the need for a 'detachment' necessary for an aesthetic experience, which involves a letting go of quotidian distractions with the 'detachment' of religious experience. There is an achievement of 'stasis' or 'stillness' and a capacity to view the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is a feeling not centred in the self but in the Other. It is similar to Kohut's 'cosmic narcissism'.[65] This however is a temporary state of affairs, and is followed by a regaining of the 'enhanced' self. The self is enhanced by a sense of delight, freedom, knowledge, clarity, and of acquaintance with reality and truth. Delight here is not used to mean merely pleasure, but to refer to a sense of knowing something clearly and with certainty. It can be gained from finding new meaning from a tragic drama, as well as from a beautiful picture. This echoes Tillich's view of 'joy' as a 'severe matter'. Monti

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[62]Josephine Klein, *Jacob's Ladder: Essays on Experiences of the Ineffable in the Context of Contemporary Psychotherapy,* (London and New York: Karnac, 2003), 189.
[63]K. Wright, "Looking after the Self", in ed. V. Richards, *The Person Who is Me,* (London: Karnac, 1996), quoted in Klein, *Jacob's Ladder,* 190.
[64]Anthony Monti, " Types and Symbols of Eternity: How Art points to Divinity", *Theology,* cv, no.824, (2002), 122-3.
[65]See 2.4.3.

suggests that such an engagement, involves more than logical inference. It requires also what he calls an 'intuitive apprehension'.

Umberto Eco, writing about Thomas Aquinas, ascribes to him a similar process, in which intellectual effort is emphasised, but which goes beyond it:

> ... aesthetic pleasure is total and complete because it is connected with a cessation of the efforts of abstraction and judgment. It signifies not an *absence* but a *cessation* of effort. It is a sense of joy and triumph, of pleasure in a form which has been discerned, admired, and loved with a disinterested love, the love which is possible for a formal structure.[66]

This description of a transforming apprehension of a work of art, which involves strenuous intellectual struggle, but also a cessation of this effort, has similarities with the description by Denys the Areopagite of his struggle to understand the nature of God.

#### 4.4.2.2 The Holy within the Ordinary

It is not only through objects of beauty that an individual can experience and know God, but through a particular contemplative response to 'ordinary' objects. For Schleiermacher:

> The contemplation of pious men is only the immediate consciousness of the universal being of all finite things in and through the infinite, of all temporal things in and through the eternal. To seek and to find this infinite and eternal factor in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all action and passion, and to have and to know life itself only in immediate feeling - that is religion.[67]

Importantly he does not separate the experience from other aspects of religion. The religious consciousness he describes depends on a response to an object in the world, by means of what he describes as 'perspectivity' and feeling. He describes these two faculties coming together when an object is first attended to. The subject is temporarily and briefly identified with the object, and the process of 'beholding' and feeling come

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[66]Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 200.
[67]F. Schleiermacher (1821), *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. T.N.Tice, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1969), 79.

together briefly as an experience, an experience of 'the universal being of all finite things in and through the infinite'.

These experiences, though vital and meaningful, are not described as overwhelming. They are transient, and constantly fade and return:

> This moment passes so swiftly that it is scarcely in time at all. ... not really a separate moment at all. The penetration of existence within this immediate union ceases as soon as it reaches consciousness.[68]

Almost immediately, the image and the emotional reaction to it separate out. Perspective and feeling become separate and the moment of unity is only a memory: 'an old sage told you that knowledge is recollection'. For Schleiermacher, 'perspectivity' and 'feeling' are in constant 'interplay', as a person responds to the environment, constantly coming together and separating; so that he is not describing a peak experience but an ongoing responsiveness to the created world.

While the experience Schleiermacher describes is not an overwhelming dramatic emotional response, neither is it entirely intellectual. As Sykes points out, he describes attempts to express belief in God in terms of systematic theories and moral activities, as involving an active *grasping after* the being of God; his form of contemplative religion emphasises 'receptivity' rather than 'activity', and an experience of being *grasped by* God. For Schleiermacher, such a receptivity, which is possible in a relation with the Other, leads to feelings of '*absolute* dependency'.[69]

Clements differentiates the feeling of 'absolute dependence', as described by Schleiermacher, from the feelings of 'awe' and 'wonder', which were Otto's response to the numinous. There is no sense here of a dramatic breaking through of the supernatural into the natural world; the interaction is with ordinary objects in the everyday world. Neither is this an esoteric experience; Schleiermacher sees religion as a communal activity and religious emotion as unlikely to survive outside a human fellowship.[70]

Although there are clear parallels drawn between the initial maternal experience

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[68]Scheiermacher, *On Religion*,87-88.
[69]S. Sykes, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, (Bath: Lonsdale and Bartholmew, 1971), 25-9.
[70]Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology*, (London: Collins, 1987), 38.

and subsequent engagements with transforming objects, there is a distinction between them: in the later transformative experiences, the 'oceanic' feelings are temporary and transient; they *evoke* previous feelings of being merged but there is a regaining of the sense of self or even an enhancement of the sense of self and a continued awareness of reality and of separateness from the object. Just as the sense of reality and the self are preserved, so the awareness of the 'dark side' is maintained or enlarged; the struggle with it always continues, and growth and change are facilitated.

The degree to which the subject is overwhelmed by 'oceanic' feeling is naturally variable, and this balance can be lost particularly in loving relationships and religious experiences; but it is the balance between merging and separateness that facilitates change.[71]

### 4.5 Section 4: Symbolising the Semiotic

The interactions in the last section overlap with those described here. In the former, the emphasis was on the evocation of a sense of the ineffable and an enhanced sense of self, while in this section, the emphasis is on the interpretation and meaning of symbols for the individual. The psychoanalytic understanding of the use of symbols has shown them to have particular meanings, which resonate with archaic material, and make emotion and phantasy available for thought. Public or private Christian worship offers a space within which to interact with symbols in this way. When symbols are examined by theologians, it is with collective Christian symbols that they are usually concerned: those in which a material object, figure, dogma, text or sacrament discloses something beyond itself, something of the divine.

The fourth-century bishop, Cyril of Jerusalem, understood the mystery of the bread and wine in the sacrament as lying in the tension between appearance and reality. For him, the act of imitation was the *figure* while the salvation was the *reality*.[72] Since that time the discussion has continued as to whether the link between the material object,

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[71] Sayers, *Divine Therapy*, 159.
[72] Henry Carse, "Simple water, Consuming Flame : Nature, Sacrament and Person in Paul Tillich", *Theology*, xcix, no.787, (1995), 22-27.

ritual, or liturgy involved and the reality it represents is an arbitrary one, or has a deeper connection. A spectrum of belief, between these two extremes continues to be represented in current practice.[73] In addition, Ricoeur has differentiated two functions of symbols, which he describes as 'regressive'/ 'archaeological' and 'progressive'/ 'teleological'. He writes that the richness, or 'overdetermination' of symbols relies on a 'dialectic' between the two functions, which are 'thought to be opposed to one another but which symbols coordinate in a concrete unity'.[74]

These complexities, relating to the different understandings of the nature and functions of symbols have to be borne in mind in discussing transformation in response to religious symbols. They are incorporated in the following exploration of Tillich's understanding of symbols, and in the examination of the symbolism of kenosis, of sacrament and of ritual.

### 4:5:1 Paul Tillich

Tillich is included because of his concentration on the nature of interactions with Christian symbols. He regards symbols as 'natural', and differentiates them from signs. Both symbols and signs point to something beyond themselves, but symbols are 'natural', while signs depend on convention, are arbitrary, and do not participate in reality. Symbols are seen as unlocking other dimensions of reality both beyond and within the believer.[75] This 'third way' of interpreting (that between the two extremes noted above) gives 'full value and continuity to each natural thing, while affirming the "necessary relationship" it bears to the sacred aspect.'[76] Tillich stresses the 'experiential' nature of symbols. It is the personal response of the believer which leads to an opening up of the depths of the personality, which are usually unconscious; in McKenna's words:

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[73]David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 690.
[74]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,1970),496.

[75]Stephen Need, "Holiness and Idolatry: Coleridge and Tillich on the Nature of Symbols", *Theology,* xcix, no. 787, (1995), 49.
[76] " Simple Water, Consuming Flame", 25.

> it not only opens up dimensions and elements of reality which otherwise would remain unapproachable, but also unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions of reality ...dimensions of which we cannot become aware except through symbols, as melodies and rhythm in music.[77]

Tillich sees symbols as dynamic and changing, and suggests that they can become lifeless, irrelevant or meaningless, unless there is a continuous lively interaction with them.[78] There is emphasis on the expansion of subjectivity in response to interaction with the multivalent, ambiguous, reconciling nature of symbols, with an opening up of the deeper parts of the self and of the transcendent.

Although Tillich insists on the close relationship between the symbol and that which is symbolised, and on the power of symbols, he insists that one is not to be identified with the other. If the symbol is perceived as the same as the reality, its role changes to that of an idol; it is no longer a symbol. Tillich sees this as occurring when there is a failure to 'deliteralise' or 'break' the symbol.[79] The world of the 'unbroken myth', for example, offers certainty and safety and so is attractive but idolatrous; it offers no opportunity for growth and change.[80] This picture recalls Segal's description of a 'symbolic equation', which is so full of the observer's projections that it *becomes* the thing it represents.[81]

Tillich sees 'Jesus as the Christ', the Cross, and the Resurrection as the central symbols of Christianity. The unity of the 'essential' and the 'existential' are manifested through Jesus of Nazareth, the human being who is also the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. Christ as the 'New Being' actualises the paradox that '[h]e who is supposed to overcome existential estrangement must participate in it and its self-destructive consequences.'[82] Tillich stresses Jesus's participation in the 'negativities' of existence, 'serious temptation, real struggle, [and] tragic involvement in the ambiguities of life'. The

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[77]John McKenna, "Symbol and Reality: Some Anthropological Considerations", *Worship*, 65/1, (1991), 25.
[78]Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1951-63), 190.
[79] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, 175.
[80]John McKenna, "Symbol and Reality", 23-25.
[81]See 3.3.1
[82] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, 112.

'negativities' are not removed but accepted into Christ's unity with God.[83] Every 'trait'of Christ becomes 'translucent for the New Being, which is his being. In every expression of his individuality appears his universal significance.'[84] As the New Being, Jesus as the Christ symbolises the holding together of the opposites, of which life, in Tillich's view is made up.[85] The Cross symbolises Christ's subjection to existence, while the resurrection symbolises his conquest of it and for Tillich each symbol is meaningless without the other.[86] The Cross symbolises God's self-surrendering love, which awakens a loving response in the believer, but it is a message about divine justice as well as divine love. For Tillich this is not in terms of a 'substitutary atonement' but through God's taking the self-destructive consequences of 'estranged existence' upon himself. There is a removal of guilt and punishment, but not as 'an act of overlooking the reality and depth' of the ambiguities of existence. The Cross is a manifestation of divine participation in human life, and atonement involves man's participation in Christ's suffering. God's 'taking on' of the self-destructive consequences of existence, Tillich suggests, can only be represented symbolically.[87]

As described by Dourley, Tillich compares the suffering involved in the participation in Christ, which is necessary if a person is to come into his/her 'essential humanity', to the 'torment of existential insight' which has to be suffered in effective therapy, and which is necessary for healing.[88]

Similarly, for Sheldrake, participation in suffering and exclusion can result in transformation both for the sufferer and the participator. He illustrates this with the story of St. Francis and the leper. The leper symbolises the dark side and induces fear of contamination and guilt. Participating in the leper's suffering, rather than avoiding it, results in transformation for both. As Sheldrake points out, transformation is in 'the participation in suffering and exclusion which is at the heart of the incarnation revealed in the face of the crucified Christ.'[89] As with Tillich there is a process of staying (dwelling)

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[83] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II ,154-5.
[84] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, 175.
[85] J.P. Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament*, (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981), 76.
[86] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, 176,
[87] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, II, 201-3.
[88] J.P.Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament* ,(1981), 77.
[89] Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the sacred*, (2001), 28-9.

with human vulnerability and weakness, and fully accepting and identifying it, through Christ's suffering, which undermines Kristeva's suggestion that Christianity 'forgets' that it 'rumbles over emptiness.'[90] This *can* be the response to the symbol of the cross as God's kenotic intervention into the material and the particular, just as the response to the empty tomb as a symbol of perpetual departure can be an opening up to future possibilities, to the triumph of love over death and to the intersection of existential and essential.

### 4.5.2 Kenosis

Ward draws parallels between Kristeva's psychoanalytical understanding of the development of language and the symbolism of kenosis.[91] While Ward's work has implications for theology as a discourse, the parallels he draws also demonstrate how a Christian narrative might be experienced as symbolising early experience.
He describes the 'kenotic economy' as inseparable from 'trinitarian philanthropy', operating for the salvation of the world, through the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. God's kenosis, initiated by the pouring out of his love in the incarnation, the Word made flesh, God manifest as a human slave, whose earthly life ended in death on the cross, is a narrative of dispossession. Christ as a man, who was humiliated and murdered, was the exemplar of the human condition as a 'crucified state of dispossession'. Quoting Lacoste,[92] Ward writes that 'human beings will only come into a true sense of who they are, when they accept existing in the image of God, that is, that they accept existing kenotically.'[93]

Through a tracing of the changing Greek terms used in Philippians 2:5-11 to express degrees of identification between Christ and God, Ward demonstrates a shift in the closeness of identification before, during and after Christ's earthly life. He describes a shift towards 'externality, secondariness and appearance' through morphe, homoioma and schema. There is a 'note of separation' in Christ as slave, from the 'essence, the

[90]Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva,* (2004), 73, and see 3.4.2.1.
[91]Ward, "Kenosis and Naming", 233-257.
[92]Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Expérience et Absolut,* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 233.

original, the evident'. But the return to the Father is a return to the closest identification, 'the glory of self identification within Trinitarian difference'. Ward writes that 'homoiomata' describes a state where 'presence becomes representation for what is absent'. God then is a maker of representations, and man 'in the image of God' is similarly a maker of representations (*homo symbolicus*). The human condition then is a one of dispossession and resemblances. The kenotic narrative continues, through the human world of 'resemblances', signs and symbols, through the crucifixion to silence and death, and finally, through the resurrection to the receiving of the 'name which is above every name'. It is only through suffering and death, and after Christ participates in, and is identified with, the love of the Trinity, that he achieves his true identity. Through his passion, his suffering and love, comes a name, that is, identity and meaning, and not the confusion of resemblances.[94]

Ward quotes Von Balthasar, who describes the spirit as the 'divine medium of the gift of faith made to the Father in the Son',[95] and for Ward, human faith is the response to God's faith, which through obedience 'enables our participation in God's triune and kenotic love'. It is through this faith, that God's grace 'strengthens and deepens the power of sight'. Resemblances are then interpreted differently, through the work of the Spirit, the 'hermeneutic of God's poured out love'. In this way, phenomena are interpreted to reveal God's depths. The kenotic process is the means through which meaningful understanding of confusing 'resemblances' is gained.[96]

Ward draws parallels between this kenotic, Trinitarian narrative and the process Kristeva describes through which a child gains a sense of subjectivity and meaningful speech. Kristeva's too is a kenotic narrative: the loving mother's allowing a painful separation, in which her love suffers; the pain and suffering of the child, abandoned in a place of emptiness; the depression and mourning prior to the acquisition of language; the supportive 'metaphoric' identification with 'imaginary father'; and the participation in the parental love which leads to an ability to signify what was previously unrepresentable and

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[93]Ward, "Kenosis and Naming", 233-339.
[94]Ward, " Kenosis and Naming", 238-240.
[95]Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology,III: Creator Spirit,* Trans. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 118.
[96] Ward, "Kenosis and Naming", 243.

to speak meaningfully. The parallels are clear.

Apart from the implications for theological discourse, which include an understanding that language and logic must also undergo their 'passion' before deep meaning can emerge, the interpretation of the kenotic narrative, and the parallels drawn, show how the Christian narrative can engage with the semiotic. While Tillich's 'participation in Christ's suffering' *implies* an evocation of archaic images of loss, separation and destruction, the parallels that Ward draws makes the link more explicit. He presents the narrative of the nativity, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as an 'allegory of love' (*Allegoria amoris*). He suggests that through this narrative, the believer is 'caught up not in a knowledge of God but a knowing of God, a revelation of God about God, that issues from the movement of His intra-Trinitarian love'.[97] That this is a kind of knowledge which is beyond words and logic and which engages the believer at a deep level, is supported by the resonances with the archaic experiences described by Kristeva.

### 4.5.3 Sacrament and Ritual

In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva explores the symbolism of the sacraments, bringing together Freud's insights in *Totem and Taboo,*[98] and subsequent anthropological and psychological insights. McNelly Kearns highlights two maxims which Kristeva sees as promoting integration, through bringing together the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic' in a religious context: *I am mortal and speaking* and *Taboo forestalls Sacrifice*. The first describes the subject as a material body, for whom death is inevitable, bearing the guilt of violent separation from the mother; and at the same time a speaking self, able to accept that it is a '*sujet en procès*', what McNelly Kearns describes as 'a provisional and flexible self in both the semiotic and symbolic realms.'[99] The second indicates how the representation and acting out of a forbidden act, such as incest or murder, in a ritualised form, is an attempt to replace the need for sacrifice. In Freud's account of the myth of the 'primal father' murdered by his sons in the context of sexual rivalry, the sons

[97]Ward, "Kenosis and Naming" (1998), 253.
[98]Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo,* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1938).
[99] McNelly Kearns, *Transfigurations,* 67.

subsequently, full of guilt, develop a system of laws, taboos and rituals within which their society becomes organised. These laws, rituals and taboos, which arose in the context of violence, then become the basis for the solidifying of society and aim to forestall the need for further violence or sacrifice. Ritual, by acting out and putting into words the transgression of taboo, 'defers or deploys murderous impulses toward the other through a mediating system that removes the sting.'[100]

As McNelly Kearns suggests, Kristeva describes a breakaway from chaos and 'perviousness', associated with the adoption of the realm of the symbolic (as occurs in *Totem and Taboo*); there is a solidifying of boundaries and the development of the exchanging of signs. However, the abject does not disappear and its entry into the world of the symbolic reveals a split within the self:

> the violence of the first sacrifice, which is both matricidal and patricidal, perseveres in the violence of abjection which the law creates. The power of this law is such that it splits not only the world, but the subject as well, creating simultaneously in those who embrace it a sense of abjection or exclusion, and a striving for purity and wholeness. 'I hate a divided heart' writes the greatest psalmist of the law in Psalm119.[101]

Kristeva emphasises the violence of the splitting between the semiotic and the symbolic. She describes the division between them as the 'thetic cut', but sees the task of the '*sujet en procès*' as that of walking the line between the two and maintaining the permeability between them. Her suggestion is that this can be facilitated by the acting out of the transgression of taboos in a religious space. The subject remains mortal *and* speaking. The taboo *forestalls* sacrifice. Kristeva describes the bringing together of the mortal and the speaking, of taboo and sacrifice, of the symbolic and the semiotic in the Eucharist, and McNelly Kearns draws attention to her emphasis on the healing potential of this juxtaposition.[102]

That this urge to bring together the symbolic and the semiotic as a means of promoting integration is widespread is shown in the description of ritual by the

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[100] *Transfigurations*, 58-60.
[101] *Transfigurations*, 59.
[102] *Transfigurations*, 76-77.

anthropologist Mary Douglas. She describes two forms of ritual which have developed to deal with ambiguities of human existence. Firstly, in many rituals an attempt is made to keep the clean and sacred in daily life separate from dirt and pollution, by clear laws, rules and rituals. This is a means of establishing and maintaining order in a context where disorder, pollution, and marginalised objects are seen as threatening and as symbolizing danger and power. However, in certain other sorts of ritual, living creatures are selected precisely because they possess characteristics which represent ambiguity or waste bodily fluids (from the margins of the body), which would usually be perceived as a source of dangerous power. They are used in particular circumstances and only by a specially 'ordained' person, in such a way that their harmful power is harnessed and used as a source of goodness. In these rituals evil or the source of suffering is brought into the midst of the group, in contrast with the practice in pollution rituals, where it is kept firmly outside and often attributed to external sources such as evil spirits or sorcerers.[103] Douglas compares the difference between purification rites and those rituals which symbolically incorporate evil with William James's comparison of the religious needs of people he describes (quoting Francis Newman) as 'once-born' or 'healthy -minded' and 'twice-born' or 'sick-souls'. The 'once-born' group, who can easily accept the notion of 'free grace', are not preoccupied with their own unworthiness, tend to be optimistic, and to minimise, deny or ignore evil or attribute it to an external agency - the 'dirt rejectors'. The 'twice-born' or 'sick-souls', meanwhile, have a deep awareness of their own sin and their own dividedness. They are in need of deliverance from this depressed and guilty state. The sinfulness is fully felt and acknowledged and a sense of integration is achieved, not by denying or ignoring evil but by knowing it. They are 'dirt-affirmers'. By reaching a sense of being met, accepted and forgiven, the state of being overwhelmed by depression, guilt and sinfulness gives way to a sense of integration but with a continuing deep consciousness of the reality of both good and evil. Although James gives examples of this being a dramatic and sudden process, compared to a new birth, he is clear that it can be a gradual and evolving process.[104]

Douglas contrasts the common distrust of ambiguity and the urge to keep the self

[103]Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 94-97.

and the community pure and uncontaminated with 'men's common urge to make a unity of all their experience and to overcome distinctions and separations in acts of at-one-ment'. Rituals which involve 'polluting' material then, are confronting loss, death and reality as opposed to denying it.[105] The consciousness of the 'dark side' is maintained and 'suffered'. This incorporation of what James would call 'pessimistic elements' is in accord with Kristeva's advocacy of the '*coincidentia oppositorum*' of good and evil. Taylor has suggested that, on the question of evil, Kristeva draws significantly on Ricoeur, but without acknowledgement.[106] But while both Douglas and Kristeva would see the need for the bringing together of these 'polluting', 'pessimistic', 'carnal' or 'primitive' elements with the ''good' elements, where they are not altered or 'transmuted', but held in tension, and where there is a continuing 'deep consciousness' of both, Ricoeur's response to such elements in the interpretation of symbols is different

### 4.5.4 Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur examines in detail the differences between kinds of interpretations of symbols. He sees them as capable of being interpreted in two ways. The first he attributes to Freud, in which they are seen as manifesting archaic meanings belonging to the 'infancy of mankind'; the second looks 'toward the emergence of figures that anticipate our spiritual adventure'. One he associates with a repetition of childhood and the other with adult life and experience. Symbols can 'realize the identity between the progression of figures of spirit and mind and the regression to the key signifiers of the unconscious', so that paradoxically they can conceal but show, lead from remembrance to anticipation, and proceed from archaism to prophecy.[107] Hermeneutics in the psychoanalytic mode he describes as 'regressive'; that which increases spiritual awareness as 'progressive'. Progressive hermeneutics requires an effort of mind in order to understand and extend meaning. He compares dream symbols (mere 'vestiges', which are fragmented, stereotyped, and worn out), with traditional ones, which have multiple meanings and

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[104] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 68,131,150.
[105] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 115.
[106] Taylor, *Altarity*, 168.

serve as vehicles for new meaning. He insists that symbols have to be grasped at a crucial point, before they 'end up' in dreams.[108] Symbols require creative interpretation which demands critical thought, what he calls 'transcendental deduction'. He counsels against the use of 'anthropomorphic' interpretations only, and against the use of symbols only to augment self-awareness. Such 'symbolism of subjectivity' he sees as destructive of symbolism as a whole. Any dominant interpretation has a tendency to destroy other interpretations, that is, to be 'iconoclastic'. A symbol must 'play'on several registers: cosmic and existential, showing a bond between the human and the sacred, and speaking of the place of the human being in the being of the world.[109]

For Ricoeur, the *force* of religious symbols can be attributed to the inseparability of the two forms in interpretation and to the 'recapturing ' of primal fantasies. These fantasies speak of loss and of the 'lack inherent in desire', and it is the resulting sense of emptiness which inspires the 'endless movement' of interpretation.[110] However, while stressing the importance of the two kinds of interpretation, there is an impression from his writings that he deals with the two forms differently.

This is illustrated by his analysis of the Oedipal myth. Both Ricoeur and Freud were aware of the classical view of the legend as portraying human powerlessness and struggle in the face of destiny. However, Freud sees it as a representation of the universal impulses towards incest and parricide and the infantile struggle to repress impulses which are horrifying. Hence there is a need for Sophocles's play, *Oedipus Rex,* to include horror and self-punishment, with the violence of the play reflecting the violence of the repression of unacceptable wishes. Ricoeur, while not rejecting this view, adds his own interpretation. He sees it as a tragedy of truth, of self-consciousness and of self-recognition. Oedipus is guilty here not of acting out infantile wishes, but of pretending he had no responsibility for the plague he had caused in the city and of cursing others, as if they were the cause. He is guilty of hubris, and the play shows the breaking of his pride through suffering. Initially, Oedipus is blind toward himself but becomes enlightened when he is physically blinded by his own hand. Ricoeur describes two forms of guilt:

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[107]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy,* 496-7.
[108]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy,* 505.
[109]Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 354-6.

Freudian guilt against the Sphinx (the unconscious) and the guilt of the mind and the spirit against Tiresias, the blind seer:

> That is why guilt remains ambiguous and suspect. In order to break its false prestige, we must focus on it the double illumination of a demystifying interpretation that denounces its archaism and a restorative interpretation that places the birth of evil in the mind or spirit itself.[111]

This appears to be an example of the iconoclasm of hermeneutics referred to earlier: where one dominates it destroys the other. Yet throughout his discussion of the two hermeneutics, he struggles to combine them and demonstrate their use in both revealing and disguising. The drama of truth is not seen as superimposed on the drama of origin but as 'belonging to the primary tragedy at the outset'. His language, however, betrays his sense that the two hermeneutics are of a different order. Freud is one of the 'masters of suspicion': his hermeneutics are regressive, and his symbols are stereotyped, vestigial, and fragmented with monotonous (usually sexual) and destructive interpretations. Archaism must be denounced rather than understood and included.

The relative value given to the two types of hermeneutics is addressed directly by Smith.[112] He finds it difficult to conceive of the description of their integration and possible equality, and suggests that instead of a dichotomous balance, there must be an asymmetry, and that the tragedy of light must encompass the tragedy of origin rather than vice versa:

> they would not be on the same level in the precise sense that it is not possible to speak meaningfully about masking, distortion, deception unless there were a legitimate quest for truthful consciousness of the sort that Ricoeur sets forth in his interpretation. Truth and falsity always go together, but it is the former that exposes the latter not the other way around.[113]

The implication here is that truth lies in one interpretation and not in the other.

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[110]Ricoeur, *Freud and philosophy,* 540.
[111]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy,* 547.
[112]John E. Smith, "Freud, Philosophy and Interpretation" in ed. L.E.Hahn L.E. *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur,* (Chicago and La Salle Illinois: Open Court, 1995),147-165.

Ricoeur's answer to Smith confirms that the asymmetry, suggested by Smith, is, in fact, implicit in Ricoeur's writing.[114] He agrees that interpretations of suspicion and restoration are not comparable and that this is clear from the primacy of the tragedy of truth in relation to the tragedy of sex. However, he adds that 'so strong is the obstinacy with which the phantasies of origin draw thought back toward the origin of phantasy' that one cannot assume comfortably the 'triumphant position of hermeneutics'. While recognised as powerful and fundamental, the hermeneutics of suspicion are to be acknowledged, but in order, it seems, that the impulses or feelings they represent can be denounced and excluded from the restorative process of 'transcendental deduction'. If this is the case, then the two hermeneutics are here seen as on a different level, rather than complementary or integrated.

Freud's interpretation of the Oedipus complex is seen by Ricoeur as related entirely to sex, birth and infantile guilt, and is contrasted with an interpretation of truth, light and adult guilt. A much more recent interpretation of the Oedipal myth by John Steiner describes Oedipus as 'turning a blind eye', so that Oedipus both knows and does not know the truth.[115] In this interpretation, he very briefly confronts the truth when he is faced with it, but because it is so unbearable, he has to blind himself so that he can no longer see it. The guilt about causing the plague, which Ricoeur describes as adult, is intimately bound up with guilt about incestuous and parricidal impulses which is indeed infantile but persisting, and here so overwhelming that Oedipus can never face it. As a result, there can be no increased self- knowledge, no opportunity for reparation, and no progression towards wholeness. This shows the potential 'truth' in both types of interpretation. It also shows the difficulty in separating conscious and unconscious guilt, and the fruitlessness of attempting to denounce or dispose of unbearable truths rather than confront and integrate them. Smith dismissively wonders why a modern audience might, as Freud suggests, be interested in the idea of curses and oracles laid upon us by birth.[116] He betrays his failure to understand that Freud is referring to what he believes to be a

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[113]John E. Smith, "Freud, Philosophy and Interrpretation", (1995), 162.
[114]Paul Ricoeur, "Freud, Philosophy and Interpretation" in ed. L.E.Hahn, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 168.
[115]John Steiner, *Psychic Retreats*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 116-130.
[116] Smith, "Freud, Philosophy and Interpretation", 160.

universal, unconscious, continuing, active process and not an irrelevant historical, superstitious event.

Advancement of meaning, Ricoeur states, 'occurs only in the sphere of projection of desire, of the derivatives of the unconscious, of the revivals of archaism. We nourish our least carnal symbols with desires that have been checked, deviated, transformed. We represent our ideals with images issuing from cleansed desire.'[117]

Ricoeur *suggests* an integrating process, but one in which 'regressive' elements have to be 'rescued' and 'cleansed'; that is, in which they are transmuted. He would see a 'glimpse of the transcendent' as a 'progressive' interpretation, to be integrated with 'regressive' but *cleansed* interpretations relating to infancy.

While the last quotation suggests that the 'revivals of archaism' contribute an enriching or 'nourishing' quality, Ricoeur's descriptions suggest a degree of opposition between the two hermeneutics; he describes the relationship as 'dialectical'.[118] This is to be compared with the 'dialogue' Kristeva advocates between the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic'. For her a 'dialogue', unlike a dialectic, is not bound by logic; it is 'relational' and strives for harmony, but 'all the while implying rupture ... as a modality of transformation'.[119] The heterogeneity of both is preserved.

Nevertheless, Ricoeur's awareness of the 'archaic' and 'teleological' aspects of symbols and also of the self are reminiscent of Kristeva's 'split-self', and it is this awareness of the 'dark side', of the 'sin of the just man', that he suggests encourages the believer to go beyond the 'ethics of righteousness'. It leads to a 'non-narcissistic' reconciliation with God, which is like that of Job, a giving up of one's point of view, a giving up of desire which is 'no longer death but love'.[120] Ricoeur is concerned with the new meaning to be gained from symbols, through the nourishment of 'progressive' interpretations by 'regressive' understandings. The 'progressive' interpretations however appear to be privileged and this risks a displacement or avoidance, rather than an elaboration of the 'abject'.[121] As has been shown, in the work of Klein and her followers,

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[117]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 497.
[118]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 522.
[119]Edelstein, "Meaphor, Meta-narrative, and Mater-narrative", 32.
[120]Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 549.
[121]Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva*, 139, and see 3.4.2.5.

and in Kristeva, both kinds of hermeneutic, and a dialogue between them, are necessary for transformation. Without this the 'abject' is not symbolised and is experienced as 'nameless dread'. On the other hand, when the 'abject' is symbolised and made sense of, the individual not only experiences his/her hate and envy, but is freed up to experience love and joy. In addition, the increased awareness of negative feelings reduces the need to act on them.

Kenosis as interpreted by Ward would indeed incorporate 'archaic' as well as 'teleological' aspects, and Tillich's emphasis on the need to 'accept acceptance, though being unacceptable' as the 'basis for the courage of confidence' implies God's holding of the '*coincidentia oppositorum*' in his agapaic love.[122]

As has been discussed previously, Bollas *attributes* experiences of the numinous and the sacred to an evocation of archaic, non-verbal experience in the depth of the self. This resonance with the archaic in both Steiner and Bollas need not be seen as somehow threatening the reality of the transcendent; rather, it is possible, as Tillich suggests, that the unconscious, with its archaic residues, is the only means human beings have through which they can grasp something of what is beyond them.

The contemplation of Christ's kenotic action in the Eucharist requires an awareness and toleration of our own dark side, our ambiguity, and an understanding and acceptance and tolerance of the ambiguity in others. This has to be distinguished from Christian 'self-loathing', whose secret side is inflated grandiosity. Brooke beautifully describes a parallel process in analysis:

> Ironically, fundamentalists who think of psychotherapists as emissaries of the devil have a point. We stand in the shadows of the charismatic world, and are apologists for much of what is regarded as 'Satan's work'. Rather than exorcise the demon, we would ask what the demon would like to say. More prosaically, rather than fight the patient's distress with moral injunctions however benignly offered, we prefer to illuminate that distress in the faith that it will yield its life-affirming fruit. Our faith in what we do, in the psyche and its transformative properties, is not naive; it is more like a humble prayer .....Our prayer is carried in the compassionate hospitality for the Beast that Beauty fears; it is in the knowledge that only when Beauty loves the Beast *as a Beast* are his princely qualities revealed. The Beast does not

[122]Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 160.

empirically disappear or mutate. The transformation is in the eye of the beholder, and in her relationship to him. It is Beauty that is changed, not the princely Beast.[123].

It is this 'entering into' the dark side, which is here described as part of analysis but which is also found in Tillich, and in Ward's interpretation of kenosis, which Kristeva suggests is missing from some contemporary religions. But this examination suggests the opposite. It suggests that such symbolisation can assist in this work of discovering what the 'demon' has to say, and that it can illuminate and give more manageable meaning to distressing psychic contents, so that they can be accepted and even loved, rather than feared.

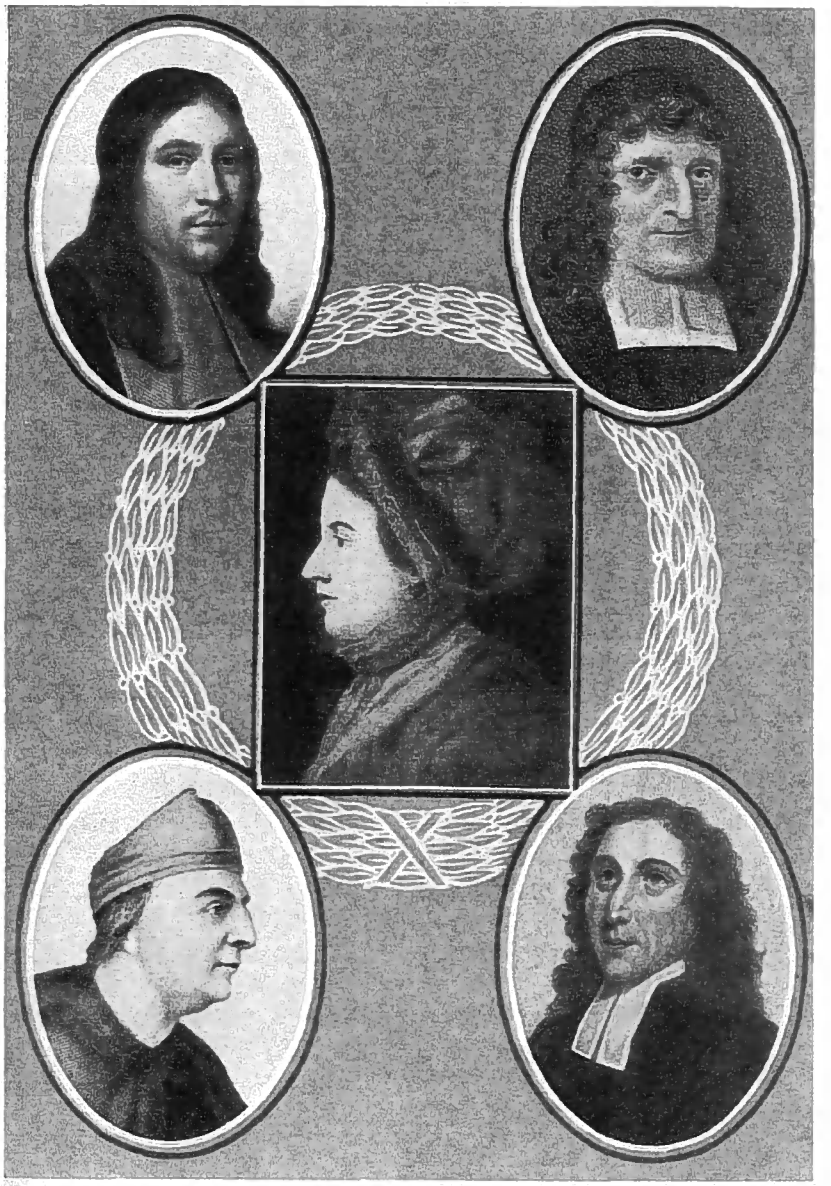
**4:6 Summary**

This chapter has outlined four ways in which religious beliefs and practice might increase awareness of the deep aspects of the self and so promote integration and growth. By providing spaces in which there are opportunities for triadic relating, for an opening up of self to the unknown, and for relating to symbols and other transformational objects in order to achieve growth, a change can come about, whereby the terrifying 'beasts' of the psyche are viewed with the 'compassionate hospitality' of Agape. They remain beasts but when they are loved as such their 'princely qualities are revealed'.

Both Kristeva and Tillich stress the need for an awareness of the 'dark side'. Kristeva would advocate not just a toleration of it but *jouissance,* a 'joying in self-division' (which encompasses loss, suffering, and transgression, as well as erotic and agapeic love), as a response to it. Tillich would advocate the need for courage to *bear* the darkness within, but would see this as being possible only through God's grace. But they would agree that the sacred is to be glimpsed in the ambiguity and suffering of human

[123]Roger Brooke, "Emissaries from the Underworld", in eds. P. Young-Eisendrath and M. Miller, *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality: Integrity, Wisdom, Transcendence.* (London/Philadelphia: Routledge, 2002).

existence. It is in the acceptance and toleration of the 'shadow', 'the dark side', that liveliness and energy exist. When it is denied, there is a sense of deadness and unreality. This has relevance to John Wesley's experience.



JOHN WESTLEY, ejected from Winterbourne, Whitchurch, and imprisoned for Nonconformity, 1662. John Wesley's grandfather.

DR. S. ANNESLEY, father of Susanna Wesley, ejected from Cripplegate Vicarage, 1662.

SUSANNA WESLEY, 1669–1742.
'The Mother of Methodism.'

SAMUEL WESLEY, 1662–1735, Rector of Epworth. Father of John and Charles Wesley.

SAMUEL WESLEY, Junr., 1689–1739. Elder Brother of John and Charles Wesley.

# PART III

## Chapter 5: Evangelical Nurture: The Wesleys' historical and religious context

Having looked at the psychoanalytic theory relating to transforming elements in Christianity in Part II of the thesis, Part III shifts to the living experiences of the Wesleys. It investigates whether the processes outlined theoretically can be recognised in practice, and if so, how they might elucidate individual variation. The main sources for examining the brothers' individual responses are the subjects' own writings (chapters 6 and 7); chapter 5 deals with the historical context in which they lived.

### 5.1 Puritan background and Family Culture[1]

As adults, both John and Charles Wesley had to face up to the political and religious influences of their time. They were not only challenged by free-thinkers, but, following the Socinian debates of the late seventeenth century, they had to negotiate a position in relation to contemporary antidogmatic liberalism, to orthodox Calvinism, to Arminianism, and (in the 1760's), to the subscription debate. They would inevitably have been affected by the responses of those who became Methodists, by the extent and power of the revival of which they were part, by the prevailing social conditions, and by the first

[1] In this examination of the Wesley family, I have drawn on Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family,* (London: J. and T. Clarke, 1823), but have taken into account Young's reservations about his accuracy, particularly regarding dates (Betty Young, "Sources for the Annesley Family", *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society,* 45, (1985), 47-57, and also his tendency to eulogise the Wesleys. I have also made great use of Wallace's collection of Susanna Wesley's writings, incorporating his editing, which aims at 'the most accurate transcription ... consistent with easy comprehension by the modern reader ... [while restraining] the urge to reproduce a text so exactly that every archaism and quirk of handwriting becomes a stumbling block ...' (Charles Wallace Jr., *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings,* (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1997),19. See appendix II for more details of family and historical background.

stirrings of the Romantic movement.

Their subsequent differences, have to be viewed against the all-pervading religious influences of an extraordinary family, which would have powerfully moulded both of them. Both parents, Susanna and Samuel Wesley, were from a dissenting tradition. Both grandfathers were dissenting preachers and both put religious principle before their own needs or those of their family. The influence of Puritanism was very strong. They were subjected to the effects of living in a large family, where many of their older siblings had died in infancy.

The paternal grandfather, John Wesley Snr. (1636-70), was a dissenting preacher. Although, he was never ordained as a priest in the Church of England, he held a living in Whitchurch, Dorset from 1658. Even before the Act of Uniformity in 1662, concerns were evident in the church about his authority to hold office, his beliefs and his practices. He was strongly pro-Parliament and was upbraided by the Bishop of Bristol for supporting Parliament against the King until the 'last gasp'. He was accused of irregular preaching, neglecting the Prayer book and disagreeing with the liturgy. Although the Bishop allowed him to continue in his living, he was soon afterwards seized and imprisoned in Blandford prison.[2] He continued to preach after the Act of Uniformity, usually in private to avoid being imprisoned again, but he refused to take the oath at the time of the Five Mile Act. As a result he had to leave his family and go into hiding. On his return, in spite of preaching only at 'prudent' meetings, he was often apprehended and had three further spells in prison.[3]

The Wesleys' maternal grandfather, Dr. Samuel Annesley (1620-96), was a Presbyterian minister who became a leading dissenter and eminent preacher. The evidence suggests that their maternal grandmother was Mary White, the daughter of the Puritan lawyer John 'Century' White. Annesley himself was one of the Puritan preachers approved by the Long Parliament, so their household would have been steeped in the Puritan tradition. There remains uncertainty about the precise number of children born to the Annesleys, (probably twenty four) of whom two boys and seven girls survived into

[2]Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family,* (1823), 23-40.
[3] *Memoirs of the Wesley Family,* (1823), 46-7.

adulthood.[4]

Annesley was ejected under the Act of Uniformity. His last living was St. Giles, Cripplegate, to which he had been nominated by Richard Cromwell. Annesley preached over a period of forty years from 1642-1682, a time of great political and religious turmoil in England. He is described by Schmidt as having been a 'patriarch of Dissent' until his death.[5]

Newton sees a continuity from the Puritanism of Annesley through to Methodism.[6] He describes Susanna as Annesley's favourite daughter, and sees her as transmitting to John and Charles Wesley values and beliefs from this special relationship with her father, and from her experience of a Puritan household. Newton cites a great deal of convincing evidence, from sermons and other writing of Annesley and his associates, of ideas and values which were transmitted through the three generations. Dewey D.Wallace, Jnr. has asserted that Annesley belonged to the group of Presbyterians who were traditionalist, 'high Calvinists'.[7] If this was the case, his grandsons would have deplored his views on predestination. Annesley's sermons, explored below, are a useful source of information about his precise beliefs on reprobation, moralism and the limiting of atonement to the elect.

Newton looked for direct evidence of the influence on John Wesley of Annesley's sermons, some of which John Wesley published in his Christian Library.[8] He quotes a sermon preached at the funeral of the Reverend Thomas Brand:

> There's not any one now perisheth under the Gospel, but if he had, or would comply with the strivings of the Spirit he might be saved. You will say, 'tis only the Elect shall be saved. I say so to[o]. But add then; There is not anyone in the world (the sinner against the Holy Ghost excepted) can prove he is not elected. I grant 'tis easie to prove they are not yet effectually called, but who can prove they never shall be. Though Salvation be of Grace,

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[4] Betty I. Young "Sources for the Annesley Family", (1985), 54.
[5] Schmidt, I,43.
[6] John Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, (London: Epworth Press, 2002).
[7] Dewey D. Wallace, Jnr, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology* 1525-1695, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 159.But see below for a sermon which seems to contradict this.
[8] John Newton, "Samuel Annesley (1620 - 1696)", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, XLV, (1985), 2,

> yet Salvation is onely for sin. There's not one in the World, ever was, or shall be damned, onely because he was not elected.[9]

As Newton comments, the aphorism that 'Puritans were Calvinists in the study, but Arminians in the pulpit', is well demonstrated here. It is an example of Annesley using complicated logic to offer hope of salvation to all, and particularly to those in despair without quite contradicting the doctrine to which he is required to subscribe. Here he is closer to his grandsons' views on universal redemption than might have been anticipated. Newton sees the sermons as typical and fine examples of Puritan preaching, 'biblical, pastoral, and grounded in the daily life of the people. They are evangelical, searchingly personal, urgent in their plea for whole-hearted commitment.'[10]

The sermons tend to confirm Rupp's thesis that there is a continuity of emphasis on 'devotion of the heart' in the context of an austere life (devout meditation and prayer, and a concentration on the sacred humanity of Christ) which runs from mediaeval Benedictine and Cistercian origins, to the 14th-century 'Nuns of Helfta' in Saxony, to Luther and the German mystics. While not claiming any direct link with the seventeenth-century Puritans after the English Reformation, he points out a strong affinity between the two traditions.[11]

The Annesley sermons fit this pattern closely: one of his sermons, not examined by Newton, and not published by his grandson, was published separately with other sermons by 'sundry ministers' given at St. Giles, Cripplegate.[12] It provides a great deal of evidence that the themes of 'devotion of the heart' in the context of strict order and obedience, and the importance of both reason and experience, pervade his thought. In addition, it calls into question Wallace's description of him as a 'high Calvinist'. Its text is : 'Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all Thy mind. This is the first and great commandment' (Matt 22: 37-8). This sermon demonstrates Annesley's style, as well as the themes in his preaching which

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[9] Samuel Annesley, *The Life and Funeral Sermon of the Reverend Thomas Brand*, (London: Printed for Dunton, 1692), 104-5, quoted in Newton,"Samuel Annesley", 35.
[10] Newton, "Samuel Annesley", (1985), 42.
[11] Gordon Rupp, "A Devotion of Rapture", in ed. R Buick Knox, *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall*, (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 119.
[12] Samuel Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripplegate or Several more cases of*

Susanna would have heard repeatedly.

The sermon addresses, in a logical, detailed and analytic way, what it means to love God. It is a 'branching' sermon, full of lists, categories and practical advice. He addresses 'complaints'. These are difficulties in distinguishing genuine love of God from more obvious or superficial substitutes. He advises those who are 'not destitute of love, yet afraid to own [they] have it'. The remedy is firstly, to be watchful for sins, secondly, to keep one's temper, thirdly, to love God out of duty, when one cannot out of grace ('let God find in you a way of Duty and you'll find God in a way of Grace'), and finally, to study Christ ('Pray and strive to know what it is to feel that Christ be all in all'). These four are the 'wheels of Christ's Chariot that's paved with love, to bring his beloved to Glory'.[13]

These exhortations stress the role of the will, of striving, of watchfulness and of perseverance, particularly at times of doubt. Annesley takes the Calvinist view that grace is the source of the capacity to love God; but in the absence of a feeling of assurance of loving God, he is not judgmental but urges increasing duty and effort, not quite as a way of earning salvation but with a strong suggestion that grace and assurance will follow. He relies heavily on reason: he strongly encourages his listeners to use their reason and intellect, even in the absence of the 'appropriate' feelings or sense of rightness.

He is often challenging, and demands absolute commitment; in order to achieve this total commitment, he recommends an almost obsessional introspection and self-examination. It is not sufficient only to search out sin but to be especially vigilant to search out and give up the most loved sin - the 'darling sin'- and to be particularly watchful for spiritual sloth, brilliantly described as the soft moth in our spiritual wardrobe:

> [Sloth is] the soft moth of our spiritual wardrobe; a corroding rust in our Spiritual Armory; an enfeebling consumption in the very vitals of Religion.[14]

But having conquered sloth, the dangers have not all been overcome; it is then necessary

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*conscience practically resolved by sundry ministers,* (London: Cockerill, 1674)

[13] *A Supplement to the Morning Exercise*, 45-46.

to guard against spiritual pride. It is as if the introspection must never stop; there can be no relaxation. Every success brings another hazard. There is a similar lack of relaxation and also a lack of acceptance of any sad, angry or rebellious feelings in his attitude to suffering; he urges a stoical toleration of it. Afflictions are like nasty medicine given to a sick child.[15]

He is scrupulous about the use of religious writings and rituals. They must retain their symbolic function and not be allowed to become idols:

> though something excellent may be written there, as with the point of a Diamond, yet it is neither the writing, nor window is prized, but the light; when that's gone, shut up the window as if it were a dead wall, that's no more regarded till light returns.[16]

Despite the emphasis on struggling towards inner holiness and perfection and the need for 'good works', he remains within the Calvinist tradition here, in warning against 'inherent grace'. He stresses that 'good works are the *genuine fruits,* though not the meritorious causes of justification'.[17]

For all his insistent demands for watchfulness and for ceaseless striving for inner holiness, he also offers hope to people who are struggling.[18] He refers to his text as this 'most difficult commandment', but he reassures his listeners. Although its demand 'includes the highest perfection possibly attainable in this life; yet let not this difficulty fright you, for through Christ our *sincere* love (though weak) is accepted; and our *imperfect* love (because growing) shall not be defiled'.[19] He is aware of human frailty and talks about only 'tolerable perfection' as attainable in this life.

Annesley does not neglect the affects and the passions. He is rhetorical in his use of language and describes intense and even ecstatic feelings involved in the experience of devotion:

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[14] *A Supplement to the Morning Exercise,* 14-15.
[15] *A Supplement,* 25-7.
[16] *A Supplement,* 28.
[17] *A Supplement,* 28.
[18] *A Supplement,* 30.

> This divine love, 'tis the *unspeakable enlargement* of the heart *towards* God; 'tis the *exstasie* and *ravishment* of the heart *in* God; ' 'tis the Soul's *losing* its self in God.[20]

His powerful and passionate preaching appeals to the emotions and particularly to deep psychological yearnings to merge with an object in a blissful and fulfilled state. The above passage is at the beginning of the sermon; it continues as an intense, attractive experience of devotion, which would be powerful in engaging the listener. However, he quickly resorts to his 'homely' metaphors, such as the 'moth', which keep the ideas accessible, and then to lists and categories, which provide a framework. Both the emotions and the intellect are engaged and there is a containment provided by the form the sermon takes. There are unrelenting demands, which reflect Annesley's demands on himself, but there is also a strong sense of a man of feeling with an awareness of human frailty and the need for and possibility of forgiveness. In Kristevan terms, Annesley's sermon on the love of God shows a capacity to balance the 'semiotic' ('devotion of rapture', rhetorical language, passionate feelings, bodily metaphors) and the 'symbolic' (logical, analytical prose, rules for living, obsessional attention to detail), and by the use of this balance, to create a psychic space for reflection and thought.

Clarke writes effusively about Annesley's character,[21] and Daniel Defoe, who was clearly a great admirer, wrote an elegy, extolling his fine qualities and going so far as to claim that he had no equal.[22] He was also described by Richard Baxter, among a list of references to dissenting preachers, as a 'most sincere, godly, humble man, totally devoted to God ...[who] did much good till he was silenced'.[23] Allowing for some eulogising, both in Clarke and in a sermon preached on the occasion of a funeral, the overall picture is of a man who was confident enough in himself and his beliefs not to need to resort to arrogance. He appears from his sermons and from the witnesses of his life and preaching as a powerful, charismatic man who was also warm and accepting of other people's

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[19] *A Supplement*, 11.
[20] *A Supplement*, 3-4.
[21] Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, 233-9.
[22] Paul Dottin, *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Daniel Defoe*, trans, Louise Ragan (London: Paul, 1928), 12, quoted in Newton, "Samuel Annesley", 36.
[23] Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, III, (London: Matthew Sylvester, 1696), 95.

imperfections. He used reason, and encouraged others to use reason, to examine their beliefs and to make decisions. Having made up his mind, he lived his life accordingly. His insistence on relentless effort and self-examination must have resulted in harsh demands on himself, his family, and on those who would follow his teaching.

Both the Annesley and Wesley families were immersed in the religious and political controversies of the time. Each of the grandfathers gave his faith absolute priority, and each, by his preaching and example, stressed the need to examine contentious issues carefully in order to reach an opinion as to where the truth lay. Having reached an opinion it was imperative to act in its defence. This lack of compromise was necessary whatever the resulting suffering to self or family. As will be shown, these traits persisted through the generations.

## 5.2'Evangelical nurture'

### 5.2.1 Classification

Greven, who has examined letters, diaries and family records of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestants in America, would have described child-rearing practices in such a family as providing 'evangelical nurture'. He concludes that there were three main types of Protestant temperament, which he calls Evangelical, Moderate and Genteel. He postulates that their religious attitudes and experiences, personal experiences and behaviour (including child-rearing), were all intricately connected, forming coherent patterns. Each of his groups manifests a particular pattern, though he warns of inevitable overlap.[24] Of relevance here is his theory that the 'evangelical' group believed in original sin, in 'inner depravity' and the 'corrupt body', and that their children were governed by 'love and fear'. He describes their belief in the need for a conversion experience, to be born again in order to be transformed from a 'state of nature and of sin to a state of grace and ultimate salvation', and an emphasis on discipline and self denial, aimed at

[24] Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-rearing, Religious Experience and the*

maintaining the subjection of the body.[25]

The moderate group, while acknowledging evil in mankind and in the world, did not embrace the idea of the total and ineradicable depravity of humanity. Human sin was attributed to the 'frailties and contrariness' of human nature. Human beings were seen by the moderates as having a dual nature, consisting of the body, representing an animal nature, and the 'reasonable soul', which had potential for great good. There was more optimism and hope of improvement, than among the evangelical group. Greven suggests that there was also a call for a more compassionate response to human frailty in this group and for self-control rather than self- annihilation. This group was governed by 'love and duty' and not 'love and fear'.

According to Greven, the God of the evangelicals was a God of 'wrath and caprice', while the God of the moderates, was a God of 'love and order'. Rather than relying on a sudden new birth for salvation, the moderates believed that a gradual 'growth in grace' and the 'development of habits of virtue' would lead towards salvation. They expected obedience of their children, but are described by Greven as 'authoritative', not as 'authoritarian'. Like the evangelicals, theirs was a struggle to subdue unruly feelings and passions, and their weapons were intellect and reason. According to Greven they feared being overwhelmed by feelings and 'proclivities to vice'; but whereas the evangelicals attempted to deny any inner ambivalence and to avoid or exclude the 'unregenerate', the moderates were more accepting of both. They were more affirming of human goodness and so more optimistic about human potential. The idea of training a child in the way it should go, through obedience to parents and then to God persisted, but duty, goodness and 'flexibility' of the will were emphasised rather than human helplessness and depravity and the need to 'break' the will.[26]

Greven's genteel group, he describes as marking a change in child-rearing practices among the gentry, in which they based their methods on 'fond affection' rather than 'conscientious discipline'; that is on 'love and reverence'.[27]

The child-rearing practices of the Wesleys' mother, Susanna Wesley, were located

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*Self in Early America,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 18.
[25] Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament,* 64-5.
[26] *The Protestant Temperament,* 192-8.

by Greven in the evangelical group, while John Locke, with whose ideas Susanna would have been familiar, was described as a moderate, though 'almost as repressive' as the evangelicals.[28] According to Greven, the aim of such 'nurture' was to instil life-long habits of self-denial, humility, self-control and saint-like behaviour, but it had unavoidable consequences for development. He anticipated that the children would have difficulty in establishing basic trust and autonomy, and that they would be likely to show evidence of a pervasive and persistent guilt and shame, which had developed at an early age.[29]

Susanna Wesley's methods will be considered in more detail later; if her child-rearing is found to be appropriately located in the 'evangelical' group, then according to this theory, the children would be at risk of these effects.

### 5.2.2 'Evangelical nurture'- healing?

Haartman[30] and Moore[31] have written in psychoanalytic terms about Christian 'conversion' as a possible solution for these sequelae of 'evangelical nurture'. These theoretical views will be considered before turning to the Wesleys' actual experiences.

#### 5.2.2.1 Haartman.

Haartman's account is similar to that of Rambo referred to in the last chapter,[32] but he refers specifically to eighteenth-century Methodism. He suggests that many of those listening to the preaching of John and Charles Wesley, and the Wesleys themselves, would have been subjected to authoritarian parenting, with strict discipline, enforced when necessary with corporal punishment, and aimed at 'breaking the child's will'.[33]

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[27] *The ProtestantTemperament,* 265.
[28] *The Protestant Temperament,* 160.
[29] *The Protestant Temperament,* 55, 61.
[30] Keith Haartman, *Watching and Praying: Personality Transformation in Eighteenth Century British Methodism,* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2004).
[31] R.L. Moore, "Justification Without Joy". History of Childhood Quarterly, II, (1974), 31-52.
[32] See 4.4.1.1
[33] Haartman, *Watching and Praying,* 14.

Haartman sees this kind of parenting as resulting in a marked form of defensive splitting in the inner world of the child, which tends to result in a polarisation of love and hate and a similar split image of the parents. The rage and guilt produced by the powerlessness, fear and humiliation of harsh parenting and corporal punishment have to be isolated from the positive feelings towards the idealised parents, who, though feared, have to be preserved as all good in the child's mind. The images of God reflect this split, with God seen either as all loving and gratifying, or as harsh and punitive.[34] There is a constant battle to eliminate unacceptable sexual and aggressive instincts, to subdue bodily passions and to placate the punitive father/God; it is so exhausting that the sufferer seeks relief. Haartman sees Wesleyan conversion as potentially resolving this split state, through a four-stage process which was described by John Wesley, to which Charles Wesley would also have subscribed.[35]

Very briefly, the process involved a first stage in which a 'desolation crisis' was induced in the believer by the preaching of 'the Law'. This recreated the infantile experience caused by strict authoritarian parenting, to which many had been subjected, in which fear, shame, self-blame and a desperation for help predominated. Secondly, often through the preaching of the Gospel of salvation, a solution to the previous distress was found. This manifested itself as a 'jubilant awakening', with a sense of 'unitive ecstasy' of the believer with a loving, forgiving God. The sinner was 'justified', and felt accepted and assured of forgiveness. The image of God changed from a demanding, punitive God to that of the God of agape. In the third stage, doubts, failures and fears returned, but the believer was sustained by the memory of the 'unity ecstasy', and finally 'sanctification' was achieved in the longer fourth phase. This final phase required the believer to 'watch and pray'; that is to practise self-examination, to resist temptation and to engage in the 'practice of the presence of God' (to consciously bring to mind the experience of 'unitive ecstasy'). It was this memory which was crucial to sustaining and supporting the believer in the struggle to face rage, rather than act on it, and to believe that it was possible for a bond with a loving parent to be maintained. The image of the loving parent survived the

[34] *Watching and Praying*, 27-28.
[35] *Watching and Praying*, 38.

hate and aggression which is directed at it.[36]

For this shift and integration to occur, object constancy and trust have to be achieved. The more powerful the influence of the individual's unconscious 'bad' objects has been, the more difficulty she will have in letting them go and trusting in God as a loving, forgiving object. The spectre of the punitive parent persists, and there remains a fear that the 'good' object will suddenly revert to 'bad'.[37] In the absence of this trust, unconscious contents remain too dangerous to access. The 'abject' is too threatening and the subject retreats to a dyadic relationship with the Oedipal father.

Haartman outlines how the repressed conflicts due to infantile trauma are expressed in religious symbolism during this process: ambivalence to parents, as enmity to God; rage, as innate corruption and rebellion; parental punishment, as God's wrath; loss and actual bereavement, as 'alienation, deadness and mourning after God'. He describes how this use of symbolism 'magnetises unconscious memories, feelings and fantasies'. Both the unconscious contents and the symbols are brought together in consciousness and can be thought about and reflected upon.[38]

Haartman asserts that this conversion facilitates internal *change*, rather than a merely *managing* of conflict or neurosis. Split-off parts of the ego, previously 'frozen' in an unconscious engagement with 'bad' internal parental representations, become accessible to consciousness and so for integration in the central ego. More of the self is then available for interaction with the other and therefore for growth.[39] In Kleinian terms, there has been a move towards the depressive position, with the establishment of a combined internal object and a capacity for concern, empathic relating and increased creativity.

As described, Haartman's relates the Christian symbolism to early childhood experiences. The same symbolism can however also be seen, in Kristevan terms, as a focus for unconscious remnants relating to even more 'primitive' experience, that of the 'archaic triangle': the erosion of ego-function and consciousness of weakness and sin in the 'desolation crisis' evoking the sense of loneliness, abandonment and anxiety in the

[36] *Watching and Praying*, 40-47.
[37] *Watching and Praying*, 67.
[38] *Watching and Praying*, 81.

early stages of mother/child separation; the 'unitive ecstatic' experience as evoking the metaphoric identification with an idealised 'imaginary' father; the process of 'watching and praying' as evoking the memory of this identification with the loving, forgiving father as a support as the infant achieves a triadic balance, avoiding dyadic merging with either the mother (and sinking into the 'abject'), or with the Oedipal father.

As Haartman concludes, the persistence of bad objects in the inner world limits the possibilities for transformation.[40] The good object may be glimpsed, but because love and hate are not fused, it is distorted by aggression and object constancy is not achieved.

While the restored image of the unconditionally loving father was offered, the critical, punitive father was never far off. In object-relations terms, for individuals in whom substantial parts of the central ego were split off, thus depleting the central ego, the hostility and fear of unconscious contents would tend to inhibit trust in the ego-ideal. For such individuals, integration would be difficult to achieve and the influence of the 'bad objects' would tend to persist, limiting the potential for change.[41] While some would achieve a degree of change, others would be impelled to continue by their own efforts to placate their wrathful father/God. Haartman quotes Wesley's descriptions of his own improved ability to handle situations which provoked lust and aggression, resulting from some change in himself. As will be seen later, these claims cannot always be taken at face-value.[42] The next two chapters will shed further light on the influence of internal 'bad' objects on the potential for change.

While Haartman's description provides helpful insights into the processes involved, an important emphasis in his thesis, which must be questioned, is that eighteenth-century Methodism offered a *uniquely* effective opportunity for transformation and growth. He claims that this was due to John Wesley's 'ensur[ing] that self-examination was grounded in a convincing and enduring sense of divine assurance'; self-examination was to be carried out only after a 'unitive' experience had occurred. This, Haartman suggests, demonstrates Wesley's 'psychological genius',[43] that he had an

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[39] *Watching and Praying*, 211.
[40] *Watching and Praying*, 216.
[41] *Watching and Praying*, 216-18
[42] *Watching and Praying*, 194-5.
[43] *Watching and Praying*, 190.

'implicit understanding of the unconscious',[44]and that he 'anticipated psychoanalytic theory'.[45] This idea that Wesley was a psychoanalyst *avant la lettre* is hard to credit on several grounds.

### 5.2.2.2 Moore

Haartman has shown how Wesley's theoretical understanding of justification and sanctification can be seen as a process leading to growth and integration. The Wesleys, who struggled with the legacy of 'evangelical nurture', came to see it as their only hope of being saved from damnation. Moore also sees John Wesley as having found a solution; he has attempted to understand John Wesley's 'conversion' experience and subsequent religious journey in terms of his early relationships. In brief he sees the shift in Wesley's image of God, at conversion, as corresponding to a shift from his image of his father (seen as a capricious, unforgiving, punitive authority, who demanded strict obedience and was obeyed through fear) to that of his mother (seen as consistent, reliable and loving, affirming good intentions, and whom one *wanted* to please, through love rather than fear). Moore suggests that the Wesley's subsequent doubts and absence of joy was an indication that he had not completely made the transition from one type of authority to another.[46]

Moore draws on Eriksonian theory[47] in concluding that it is not enough to find a new 'integrating identity' as he thought Wesley had done (though incompletely), in adopting a new image of God. An active role must also be discovered, through which the ideology can be sanctioned and reinforced. Moore sees this as achieved by Wesley through his field preaching. Field preaching was thought of as very 'irregular' and undertaken with misgivings by Wesley himself; it was disapproved of by Wesley's Anglican colleagues and initially by Charles Wesley. Moore sees it partly as a rebellion against his father, and partly as an identification with the 'person and ministry of Jesus' and he notes the reviving effect on Wesley's health. He felt better than he had for years;

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[44] *Watching and Praying,* 47.
[45] *Watching and Praying,*4.
[46] Moore, "Justification Without Joy", 31-50.
[47] E. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle,* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

he was energised and encouraged, as the effects of his preaching on others confirmed for him the truth of his message. According to Moore, Wesley had found a 'providential role', consistent with his mother's ideals, which confirmed his personal and professional identity.[48]

Moore describes the internalising of the maternal image as allowing him to be exalted (her idea of him as special) and allowing his desire for love and intimacy to be sublimated into his religious work.[49] This state of affairs is seen by Moore as Wesley's solution. Unfortunately, as will be shown, not only did Wesley's role as a preacher fail to solve all his psychological conflicts, but the descriptions of Wesley's perceptions of his parents will be shown to be less clear-cut than Moore suggests. Moore does not indicate whether he thinks Charles Wesley, who had the same parents and who also took to field preaching, negotiated the process in the same way.

### 5.3 Early Experience

The sections above have examined (1) the Puritan background and culture of the family, which theoretically would be expected to have had certain consequences for the children's development and (2) the importance of 'conversion' in the lives of such children of 'evangelical nurture' and the theoretical basis for 'cure'. The remainder of this chapter explores how the *actual* early experience of the Wesleys fits with these theories. The major factors here would have been the characters and health of their parents, the relationship between the parents, the relationships between parents and children, and the childrearing practices. For reasons of space, only the most relevant aspects can be included. Of particular interest will be an exploration as to whether Susanna Wesley's account of her child-rearing methods accords with Greven's description. The evidence as to whether or not the predicted consequences of their early experience were realised, and regarding the effects of their conversion experiences, is considered in the next two chapters.

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[48] "Justification Without Joy", 47.

### 5.3.1 Susanna and Samuel Wesley

Described as the 'mother of Methodism', Susanna Wesley has been seen as a saintly figure and model for future generations. Numerous biographies have been produced; some are based on fact, but there are others which are derivative fiction and most are hagiographic. John Newton's book, based on her relationship with the Puritan tradition, is an exception, and has been an important source for this chapter.[50]

There is an assumption by many authors, including Charles Wallace Jnr.[51] and Newton,[52] that she was the favourite child of her father. This is based largely on the fact that he entrusted his private papers and manuscripts to her. While the absence of any special mention of Susanna in the will, and the lack of any direct evidence regarding Annesley's feelings towards her, mean that it is not possible to conclude with any certainty that she was his favourite child, his leaving her his manuscripts is of significance, and suggests that he respected her intellect.[53] She was chosen as the child most likely to value his papers and use them to their best advantage. To be chosen as the guardian of his precious papers, the containers of his thoughts, his intellectual and spiritual struggles and his deepest beliefs, and the product of his life's work, because she understood the significance of them to him, would have made her feel especially valued and singled out. At that time, the fact that she, as a woman, was selected in preference to her brothers would have been of particular significance.

Some of her father's respect for her intellect may well have been related to a decision Susanna made just before she reached the age of thirteen. She carefully considered whether she would remain within the dissenting tradition like her father, or become an Anglican. In a letter to her son Samuel dated 11 October 1709, she describes having written a paper outlining in detail the reasons for her decision:

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[49] "Justification Without Joy", 47.
[50] Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism.*
[51] Charles Wallace, Jr, "Some Stated Employment of Your Mind: Reading, Writing, and Religion in the Life of Susanna Wesley", *Church History* 58 ,(1989), 358.
[52] Newton, *Susanna Wesley,* 61.
[53] Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family,* 240.

> And because I was educated among the Dissenters, and there was something remarkable in my leaving 'em at so early an age, not being full 13, I had drawn up an account of the whole transaction, under which head I had included the main of the controversy between them and the Established Church as far as it had come to my knowledge; and then following the reasons that determined my judgment to the preference of the Church of England.[54]

This decision was an enormously challenging decision to make for a twelve year old, who had such an eminent and knowledgeable father. The attention and respect that Dr. Annesley gave to this document and his failure to annul her decision, in spite of his own unhappy experience of having to leave the Church of England, must have been powerfully validating of her intellectual capacities and her worth as an individual. She would have felt profoundly valued and even special.

When Susanna was aged 20, in 1698, she married Samuel Wesley. Like Susanna, Samuel had 'dissented from dissent'. He had been educated in a dissenting college, but after the death of his father, his family struggled financially. He left home to continue his education as a member of the Church of England at Exeter College, Oxford, where he had to earn his keep as a servitor.[55] From the beginning of their marriage, they were poverty-stricken; and throughout it, they remained poor and were often in debt. Samuel suffered imprisonment for debt.

When they married, he was in the process of taking Holy Orders and was seen as a promising academic and literary figure. He had serious literary ambitions and wrote poetry and prose. Judged charitably, it seems that the quality of his poetry was uneven but there was evidence of enthusiasm, industry, liveliness of mind and a sense of humour, which would have appealed to Susanna's own eager mind.[56]

Rupp points to Samuel Wesley's *Advice to a Young Clergyman'* as a 'massive prospectus of theological learning and pastoral care',[57]and his final work, *Dissertations on the Book of Job,* was another very long, detailed meticulous work, which he was never

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[54] SW, 71.
[55] *Memoirs of the Wesley Family,* 65.
[56] *Memoirs,* 79.
[57] *Advice to a Young Clergyman,* reprinted as an appendix in T. Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley,* (London: 1841) cited in Gordon Rupp, *Just Men: Historical Pieces,* (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 115-7.

able to finish.[58]

Susanna always deferred, or appeared to defer, to his academic ability. She answered John Wesley's letters with his theological queries, in ways which demonstrated her own theological sophistication and formidable powers of reasoning. However, she would not omit the suggestion, that if he were not satisfied with her efforts, he should consult his father:

> But since I find you've some scruples concerning our Articles of Predestination, I'll tell you my thoughts of the matter, and if they satisfy not, you may desire your father's direction, who is surely better qualified for a casuist than me.[59]

The evidence of Samuel's later life shows him to have been a man unwavering in his principles even when this involved great cost to himself and his family. It also demonstrates that he was far from reticent in expressing these convictions. They would quickly have become apparent to Susanna, when she met him. His enthusiasm and passionate religious conviction would have mirrored her own.

All of these qualities were attractive in themselves, and many of them also pointed to a similarity to her reliable father which would have drawn her to him. Reliability however was not one of Samuel's characteristics, and the vicissitudes of family life brought into focus the obverse side of many of his qualities.

In her youth, Susanna allowed herself to be guided by Samuel's firm opinions, as when she was brought back from a dalliance with Unitarianism. Later, as she became more secure in her own views, they were often at odds. As she wrote to John Wesley: ''tis an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike'.[60] Here the disagreement was over the relative importance of 'practical divinity' and 'critical learning', but there were more serious and long-lasting disputes. One notorious rift, concerning Susanna's refusal to say 'Amen' to a prayer for the king, William III, lasted six months. Samuel refused to touch her or to 'come into a bed' with her, until she 'asked God's pardon and his'. He left home, and neither party relented, in

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[58] *Memoirs*, 215-6.
[59] SW, 112.
[60] SW, 106.

spite of concerns as to how Susanna and her six 'very small children' should be supported. Samuel threatened to go to sea as a chaplain and she feared that if anything happened to him she would be penniless.[61] But it was impossible for Susanna to give up her freedom of conscience and Samuel stuck rigidly to what he believed was right.

Samuel's idealism and his passionate convictions were not tempered with caution or common sense and he was intolerant of those with other views. He had irritated many in the dissenting community, firstly by separating from them after benefiting from an education in a dissenting Academy, and then by responding to an invitation to write a paper on their educational methods, which he had published without their consent.

The resentment already stirred up among the dissenters by Samuel's actions, was compounded by his political involvement in 1705. Instead of remaining impartial, as was expected of him as Rector, he made his political affiliations clear.[62] As a result, his family was subjected to great harassment: there were two fires at the Epworth rectory, which could have been caused by his enemies; cows were stabbed; and crops on their small-holding were burned. Samuel wrote to the Archbishop of York about one incident in 1705; there had been drumming, shouting and the firing of guns outside the house and the small children playing in the garden had been threatened by the mob. Susanna had just given birth to her fifteenth child, (eight of whom she had lost):

> [Susanna] had been brought to bed not three weeks. I had put the child to nurse over against my own house: the noise kept his nurse waking till one or two in the morning. Then they left off; and the nurse being heavy to sleep, *overlaid the child.* She waked; and finding it dead, ran over with it to my house, almost distracted; and calling my servants, threw it into their arms. They, as wise as she, ran up with it to my wife; and before she was awake threw it cold and dead into hers. She composed herself as well as she could, and that day got it buried.[63]

Samuel meanwhile had 'withdrawn' to Gainsborough, having been warned that if he appeared on the scene, 'they would squeeze my guts out'. The letter ends, 'All this thank God does not in the least sink my wife's spirits. For my *own*, I feel them disturbed and disordered: but for all that I am going on with my reply to Palmer ...', and he returns

[61] SW, 35-7.
[62] *Memoirs,* 103-4.

to his preoccupation with a current controversy. In a subsequent letter, written the following month, this time from prison, he does express concern about having to leave his 'poor lambs in the midst of so many wolves', but 'My wife bears it with that courage which becomes her, and which I expect from her'. And he quickly returns to a description about how much good he will be able to do with his 'fellow jayl-birds'.[64]

However unbearable the circumstances, he appeared to take at face value Susanna's outward appearance of being in control, of being able to manage to make ends meet and to take care of the children. He could not allow himself to consider the degree to which his actions affected her, though, as will be seen from her writings, she was at times driven almost to despair. Of course such behaviour was not exclusive to Samuel, and has to be viewed in the context of what Rupp sees as in line with the 'male chauvinism of that age'.[65]

Samuel was appreciated for his wit and his sense of humour, but even this could get out of hand at times. Clarke tells of a practical joke he played on a 'well-meaning, honest but weak and vain man', which if true, gives evidence of Samuel's capacity to be cruel in enjoying the man's humiliation, and of his failure to appreciate the extent of the hurt he caused.[66]

It is surprising in view of their trials and the serious differences and battles between them that a strong and loving bond endured between them until Samuel's death. Susanna retained a sense of his essential goodness throughout, even attributing his failures to higher motives. Writing to her son Samuel in1710, she compares herself unfavourably with her husband, 'You have had the example of a father who served God from his youth; and, though I cannot commend my own [example] to you, for it is too bad to be imitated, yet surely earnest prayers for many years, and some little good advice, have not been wanting'.[67]

As a woman born in 1669, Susanna naturally did not write about their sexual relationship. According to Baker, it is 'fairly certain' that she gave birth to nineteen

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[63] *Memoirs,* 104.
[64] *Memoirs,* 106.
[65] Rupp, *Just Men,* 114.
[66] *Memoirs,* 232.
[67] SW, 75.

children in twenty years, including three sets of twins.[68] Ten children survived, three boys and seven girls. Baker refers to the period of estrangement between them described above as the longest period of freedom from child-bearing for Susanna.[69] He comments that after fourteen children, she might well have welcomed such freedom, but her letter at the time suggests the opposite: 'But I am inexpressibly miserable, for I can see no possibility of reconciling these differences, though I would submit to anything or do anything in the world to oblige him to live in the house with me.'[70] This sentence demonstrates Susanna's struggle to reconcile the two different aspects of herself. The language used to describe her feelings: 'inexpressibly miserable', 'submit to anything', 'do anything in the world', is the language of a passionate lover, while her intellect clearly tells her there is 'no possibility of reconciling these differences'. This last phrase, which has an Annesley ring to it, recalls unrelenting necessity to have a 'conscience devoid of offence'. The letter suggests Susanna's intense wish to have Samuel with her, and her repeated pregnancies confirm that they were sexually active. It is not possible to be definite from this information, about whether this was out of wifely duty, or in response to a need for sexual contact, which she found gratifying and comforting. The letter suggests the latter, in which case, her passionate sexual nature was an aspect of herself she would have had to find a means of accommodating psychologically and spiritually; and their sexual relationship would have been an important aspect of their close bond.

Susanna had a need to keep her image of Samuel good. Any faults were explained by his being too good - too honest, too generous, too compassionate. In the cause of maintaining this good image, she colluded with his need to avoid seeing how much the family was suffering.[71]

### 5.3.2 Susanna Wesley's role

Having been the daughter of a moderately prosperous, eminent London clergyman, it

[68] Frank Baker, "Investigating the Wesley Family Traditions", *Methodist History*, 26: 3, (1988), 162.
[69] Frank Baker, "Salute to Susanna", *Methodist History*, (April 1969), 5-7.
[70] SW, 36.

must have been a vast cultural change for Susanna to find herself as the wife of a poor rector in an obscure corner of Lincolnshire. A young, intelligent woman, with an assured sense of her own 'special' intellectual capacities, she had to find a role that felt worthwhile, compatible with her religious aspirations and if possible 'special'. Her writings were central to the development of such a role.[72]

Charles Wallace Jnr., with reference to Irwin[73] describes how, in the seventeenth century, the traditions which emphasised the authority of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to those relying mainly on scripture, offered to women the greatest chance of extending their sphere of influence beyond their traditional roles. When the spirit or the 'Inner Light' could be invoked as a guide, this could be used as a way of challenging the 'Bible's traditional patriarchal assumptions'. Citing Nuttall,[74] Wallace describes how the Puritan emphasis on the Holy Spirit 'associated, if not identified with conscience, reason and religious experience', performed this function. Susanna was a member of the Church of England and not a puritan, but she valued conscience, reason and religious experience, all of which she saw as dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. This provided her with the kind of faith which offered the opportunity to follow the dictates of her own conscience, her own reasoning and the promptings of her own experience. By these means, she was able to extend her role beyond the traditional one of a woman of her time.[75] This extended role included her contemplative life, and it also involved the presiding over acts of worship outside the church and the education of her children, which she felt as a special trust and responsibility.

This extension of her role is made explicit in a letter to her husband Samuel:

> At last it came into my mind, though I am not a man nor a minister of the gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were; yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and if I were inspired a with true zeal for

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[71] SW, 98.
[72] See appendix III for Susanna Wesley's journal in context.
[73] Joyce L. Irwin, ed., *Womanhood in Radical Protestantism: 1525-1675*, (New York/Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press,1979), xvi, xxvii-xxx.
[74] Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1946), 47.
[75] Charles Wallace Jnr, "Susanna Wesley's Spirituality: The Freedom of a Christian Woman", *Methodist History*, 22:3, (1984), 171-2.

> his glory and did really desire the salvation of souls, I might do somewhat more than I do ... However, I resolved to begin with my own children ....[76]

Her reliance on conscience and reason has already been demonstrated. A great deal of the content of her letters and journals is concerned with intellectual analysis and argument; however, when she begins to consider the benefits of meditation, her style becomes more fervent and emotional. In some of her letters, she is carried away by her own rhetoric. One to John Wesley ends, 'I am got to the end of my paper before I am aware'.[77] A similar passage appears in her journal and is quoted in full because it gives a great deal of insight into the nature of her religious experience and of the vital importance it held for her:

> But who can by searching find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection? To know you, Oh God, is impossible; not to know you, intolerable. Our understanding is too weak, is dazzled, confounded and overpowered, and faints at the perception of your glory. We cannot bear the smallest ray thereof, but nature sinks under the weight of an incumbent deity. Yet is the thoughts of you sweeter than rest, more refreshing than food, dearer than all the treasures upon earth! When you condescend, Lord, to manifest yourself, all pain and want and care, all sense of misery vanishes in a moment, no unkindness or loss of friends, no contempt, reproach of enemies, no evil of any kind does afflict any longer. The noblest wine, the most generous of cordial doth not so much exhilarate and cheer the spirit as the least perception of your favour through Jesus Christ doth refresh and glad the soul, when ready to faint under the weight of its corrupt nature and tired with an unsuccessful pursuit of happiness in the enjoyment of what the world calls good. 'Tis these blessed lucid intervals when the soul by contemplation holds you in view that we say with the apostle,"Master, it is good for us to be here."
> Supreme eternal being! Fountain of life and happiness! Vouchsafe to be ever present to the inward sense of my mind. I offer you my heart - take possession by thy Holy Spirit for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.[78]

To her the goodness of God, is like a cordial, which heals her pain and blots out her many afflictions. The language is emotional, even passionate, and is reminiscent of that used by her father in his sermons.

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[76] SW, 80.
[77] SW, 166.
[78] SW, 333.

In addition to experiencing feelings of bliss and union in God's presence, she often refers to an increased sense of her own sinfulness: it is brought into focus and her feelings of contrition are intensified. This can be compared with Otto's description of religious experience.[79] The *mysterium* is both *tremendum* and *fascinans* for her and she would often emerge from her periods of withdrawal from the world, having experienced the presence of God, with a new sense of purpose and direction.[80]

### 5.3.3 Oppressive child-rearing?[81]

At times Susanna could relinquish some of her control and lose herself in a blissful sense of merging when contemplating God's presence, but her letters and journals show that most of her waking life was tightly ordered and controlled. This self-discipline, and the discipline involved in bringing up and teaching her children, was reminiscent of that urged by her father.

She believed deeply that the work of educating children was the same work as that of saving their souls, and central to this struggle to save their souls was her belief in original sin. She believed that through pride and sensuality, Adam and Eve had suffered a corruption of their will, and that the pre-existing subjection of the appetites of the body to the superior qualities of the mind had been lost. Self-will had triumphed and in the unregenerate state, bodily desires and selfishness predominated. The education of children was a battle to retrieve this situation, to work towards a subjection of the child's will, first to the will of the parents, and later, when understanding allowed, to the will of God. This of course mirrored her own struggle to control her own desires and appetites, to discover God's will for her and to be obedient to it.

Her beliefs, and the methods she used to 'break the child's will' have been the subject of much interest and criticism and have been detailed repeatedly; they can only be summarised here. She wrote:

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[79] Rudolf Otto , *The Idea of the Holy*, trans, John W. Harvey, (London: Oxford University Press, 1980)
[80] Charles Wallace Jnr., "Susanna Wesley's spirituality". (1984), 169.
[81] See appendix IV for contemporary child-rearing practices.

> The parent who indulges it [the child] does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body for ever... This therefore I cannot but earnestly repeat: break their wills betimes. Begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain, or perhaps speak at all. Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness: break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this![82]

This passage reflects a terror of bodily passions and self-will getting the upper hand, and while it fits with her belief in original sin, the obvious intensity and urgency suggest a fear that these aspects of herself will overwhelm her good efforts and she will be at their mercy. It is clear that she did not intend to be cruel. In fact, she believed that parents who did not set out to impose their will on their children from the beginning, were mistaken and that their misplaced 'kindness' was in the end more cruel. Unless an early start was made it was almost impossible to control self-will at a later stage, 'For by neglecting timely correction, they will contract stubbornness [and obstinacy] which is hardly ever [after] conquered; and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child'.[83] She did indeed begin early and the control was firm and consistent, but if a child was rebellious and not controlled by instruction and reprimand, she did not flinch from corporal punishment.[84]

Her expectations of the children's educational progress were extraordinarily high but were always fulfilled. She expected them to concentrate for hours on end, which they appear to have managed, and she made sure they met what modern educationalists would call their required goals. The girls' education was taken as seriously as the boys', though they did not go away to school and no girl was taught to sew before she could read perfectly. Susanna saw the early teaching of sewing as the reason that many women read badly.[85]

Her usual method was to start teaching a child to read when s/he reached the age of five. The day before, the house was prepared and everyone warned not to enter the appointed teaching room between 9 and 12 am and 2 and 5pm:

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[82] SW, 370.
[83] SW,370
[84] SW, 370-1.
[85] SW,372-3.

> One day was allowed the child wherein to learn its letters, and each of them did in that time know all its letters, great and small, except Molly and Nancy, who were a day and a half before they knew them perfectly; for which I thought them very dull; but since I have observed how long many children are learning the hornbook, I have changed my opinion. Samuel ... learned the alphabet in a few hours ... as soon as he knew the letters began at the first chapter of Genesis. He was taught to spell the first verse, then to read it over and over, till he could read it off-hand without hesitation; and so on to the second, etc, till he took ten verses for a lesson, which he quickly did. Easter fell low that year; and by Whitsuntide, he could read a chapter very well ...The same method was observed with them all. As soon as they knew the letters they were put first to spell; and read one line, then a verse, never leaving till perfect in their lesson, were it shorter or longer.[86]

For Susanna, their education was crucial for saving their souls, because teaching them to read and write gave them access to knowledge of God through his revelation in scripture and access to other works which offered spiritual guidance. Through discipline and worship in the home, they learned how to control their bodily appetites and selfish instincts, and how to respect others; they developed a pattern for life, which provided regular opportunity to experience the presence of God, so that they would be constantly aware of their own sinfulness and of God's love, justice and mercy, and would be strengthened in temptation. She believed that through such an education they were best prepared to engage in the battle to achieve a superiority of the mind and spirit over self-will and earthly passions.

Such a regime sounds oppressive in the extreme, and as such would be expected to have resulted in some of the children showing some kind of disturbance, or at least, that some might have become rebellious or found it impossible to learn. There is no evidence of this in her writings. They seemed able to concentrate and to learn quickly and the evidence from Clarke suggests that they maintained their intellectual curiosity and read widely throughout their lives.

Having examined Susanna's methods, it is difficult to locate her firmly in either of Greven's first two groups; she demonstrates features of both. When offering her children advice about 'spiritual indisposition', she certainly encouraged activity rather than

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[86] SW, 371.

passivity in the struggle. She did not advocate a 'quietist' waiting for God to act, but urged prayer and meditation, or if that were not possible, at least a 'retirement at the appointed time'.[87] Although their bodies were to be regarded as sinful and corrupt, intellect, reason and self-discipline were valued weapons against the passions. Duty, good works, the regular use of prayer, the reading of scriptures and attending worship were seen as sources of grace necessary to facilitate a gradual transformation. As she wrote in a letter to Charles late in her life, ' I do not judge it necessary for us to know the precise time of our conversion ... So Christians are first born of water and the spirit and then go though many degrees of grace, be first infants, or babes in Christ, as St. Paul calls them, before they become strong Christians. ... God's promises are sealed to us but not dated'.[88]

Like Greven's moderates, she was empathic to her children's struggles and not merely censorious. As she writes to her twenty year old son, 'Sammy', 'You complain that you are unstable and inconstant in the way of virtue. Alas! what Christian is not so too? I am sure that I, above all others, am most unfit to advise in such a case; yet since I love you as my own soul. I will endeavour to do as well as I can; and perhaps while I write I may learn, and by instructing you I may teach myself'.[89] She did not see herself as beyond the struggle, but, at least from the time of their adolescence, she let them see her vulnerability.

Greven's evangelicals, once born again, are described as denying their sinfulness and being intolerant of the unregenerate. Susanna was only too well aware of her dark side and learned to live painfully with both aspects of herself. However, while she was compassionate to those in trouble, she did advise her sons to avoid company which might lead them astray, 'Be very nice in the choice of your company, and never rely on your own virtue so far as to associate with the vicious and profane'.[90]

### 5.3.4 Factors mitigating against oppression

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[87] SW, 243.
[88] SW, 176-7.
[89] SW,73.

While Susanna talks of the need to break the children's will, she seems not to have broken their spirit. There were several factors which were likely to have mitigated her apparently oppressive methods.

### 5.3.4.1 Use of praise

In recent years, it has become a firmly established belief in the psychological understanding of behaviour control, that positive reinforcement in the form of praise, is more effective than punishment in moulding behaviour. Stone suggests that such a concept did not appear in the literature until the late eighteenth century.[91] While Susanna did use verbal and physical punishment if necessary, she did not neglect praise, and this was not given only when the children achieved success. In quite an advanced way, she gave reward for effort. Two of her 'by-laws' included

> That every signal act of obedience, especially when it crossed upon their own inclinations, should be always commended and frequently rewarded, according to the merits of the case... if any child performed an act of obedience, or did anything with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience and intention should be kindly accepted; and the child with sweetness directed how to do better for the future.[92]

### 5.3.4.2 Consistency

The method was consistent and there was no feeling of unpredictability or unfairness; the children knew where they were, and what to expect. The rules she imposed recognised the children's wishes, feelings, likely hurts and their need for respect; and they were a means of ensuring that these were taken into account on a daily basis. A child who confessed a fault was not beaten (this was aimed at abolishing the temptation to lie) and no child was ever punished twice for the same fault. A child's right to his/her property was respected,

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[90] SW, 70 -'nice' here meaning 'scrupulous'.

[91] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 - 1800,* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 274.

[92] SW, 372-3.

even if it had only the value of 'a farthing or a pin'. It must never be taken from him/her, particularly without consent. Promises were to be strictly observed and a gift once given could not be 'resumed', unless it had been given conditionally.[93]

### 5.2.4.3 Individual attention

She was able to think about each child's individual needs, treating each one separately as he or she learned to read, and taking age into account. She writes that, in Kezzy's case, she was 'overruled' in her plan to wait till a child was aged five before teaching her to read, and as a result she took longer.[94] She also set aside time every night, to talk with each child on its own, 'on something that relates to its principal concerns'. Each child was given this time weekly and it is notable that the conversation was child-centred, based on *its* principal concern.[95]

### 5.3.4.4 Humour

While Susanna's account sounds very serious, and while she became perturbed by the children's 'clownish accent' and 'rude ways' after a period of separation from them after a rectory fire in 1709, there does not seem to have been an absence of humour. Clarke gives an account of the chidren's teasing of their younger sister, Martha, who was 'distinguished for deep thoughtfulness, for grave and serious deportment, and for an equanimity, of evenness of temper, which nothing could discompose'. His account does not portray a dour or sober household.[96]

### 5.3.4.5 Warmth

The children's reactions to Susanna suggest that she gave them much more than a 'method'. Her own sense of being a valued and important individual, provided by her

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[93] SW,372.
[94] SW, 371.
[95] SW, 80.

father, and perhaps her mother, allowed her to bring a similar gift to her children. There is certainly a great warmth in the way she addressed them in her letters, and she conveyed a sense that they were constantly held in her mind. She worried that she had loved her son Samuel 'too much', and had felt that she could not have survived if he had died. She wrote to Charles Wesley, at the time of Samuel's death (1739), 'perhaps I've erred in loving him too well. I once thought it impossible for me to bear his loss, but none knows what they can bear till they are tried'.[97]The children would have been aware of such strong loving feelings, even in the context of severe discipline. Her writings also convey an enthusiasm, conviction and sense of urgency about her beliefs, and this too would have been obvious to the children, even when they were very young. She herself had great fears that unless the battle against evil, and for salvation, is engaged energetically, her children's souls would be lost, and this was frequently referred to; there was also great emphasis on duty, and the need for perseverance in the religious life. 'Love and duty' were as prominent as 'love and fear'.

It is not possible to be sure whether the oppressive features of her method were softened because she followed Locke's ideas to some extent, or whether this occurred as a result of the nature of her relationship with each child. It is likely that there were several things all dovetailing comfortably with the disciplined but reasonable methods that Locke was advocating: the early influence of her Puritan background; her temperament, which allowed a loving relationship with each child; and her beliefs in the need for discipline, as well as the need dutifully to create the optimal circumstances within which God's grace could act.

### 5.4 Conclusion

Nevertheless the children *were* subjected to strict discipline and corporal punishment. It was believed that their will should be broken and that their bodies were the seat of corruption. The struggles resulting from such child-rearing that Greven describes would undoubtedly have been important in the lives of all the Wesley children. The guilt and shame induced by the humiliation of not reaching the required standards, the anger, rage

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[96] *Memoirs*, (1823), 511-2.

and aggression stimulated by being controlled, restricted and beaten, and the lack of acceptable outlets for such feelings, must have led to a level of repressed passion that was difficult to manage, even allowing for the effect of mitigating factors.

Overall, this examination of Susanna's account of her method would suggest that she is most appropriately located, in terms of Greven's classification, as overlapping the moderate and evangelical groups. But Susanna herself was a product of 'evangelical nurture' and at times, her obsessional rumination, constant self-examination and self-blame, and harsh routines brought her to the point of exhaustion:

> Lord, might thy creature expostulate with thy infinite majesty, I would humbly beseech thee to discover unto me the cause, why I so long labour under such and so many difficulties in my way to heaven as makes me often upon the point of despairing ever to arrive there. ... How know I whether or no I shall persevere? How shall I be assured that 'the world, the flesh nor the devil', shall never be too hard for me?[98]

Although she believed in forgiveness for others, she had difficulty accepting that it could extend to her. It was only towards the end of her life, as she was taking communion, that she actually *felt* herself receiving forgiveness. Her experience is recorded in John Wesley's journal of 3 September 1739. She had said, 'I never dared ask [forgiveness] for myself but while my son Hall[99] was pronouncing those words, in delivering the cup to me, "The blood of Christ which was given for thee", the words struck through my heart and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven *me* all *my* sins.'[100] But her doubts and self-chastisement returned even after this: 'Oh, how inexcusable is that person who has knowledge of these things, and yet remains poor and low in faith and love. I speak as one guilty in this matter'.[101]

This life-long struggle to maintain the supremacy of love over hate in Susanna's internal world, which involved the subduing of what she saw as dangerous selfish desires

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[97] SW, 179.
[98] SW, 306.
[99] Her son-in-law Westley Hall.
[100] BEJ vol.19, p. 93 (3 September 1739).
[101] SW, 181.

and bodily appetites, was necessary to fend off depression and despair. For most of the time she achieved it by obsessional discipline in thought and action, which gave her a sense of being in control and therefore not liable to be swept away by overwhelming passions, and by the use of retreats from the world, in which she could feel her goodness reinforced by identification with a God of goodness and love. The struggle was exhausting and intense and relied on her understanding of the nature of God, of fallen humanity, and of the means of redemption through Jesus Christ. Her need for this framework, which helped her to live with the dark side of herself, explains the passion with which she held on to her beliefs, the importance of her faith in her life and her desperate wish that her children's souls should be saved by sharing it. Her sense of desperation, of a life and death struggle, of belief being vital for survival, was no doubt a crucial element in her children's subsequent attitudes to religion.

The different degrees to which the anticipated effects of 'evangelical nurture' existed in John and Charles Wesley would have been linked with their unique early interactions with their parents and siblings. They would also be manifested in their subsequent individual relationships, and in their experiences of religion. These differences will be considered separately in the next two chapters.