Segni e Comprensione XXXVII, n. 104

THE AIRY GRAVE IN WHICH PRESENCE IS SEALED: DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND THE DEATH DRIVE

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Abstract: In this essay the divide – and the possibility for reconciliation – between psychoanalysis and theology is examined. Drawing on the work of Sigmund Freud, the theologian Karl Barth, and the philosophers Luce Irigaray and Jacques Derrida, this essay explores to which extend the seemingly contradictory concepts of divine providence and the Freudian death drive can be seen as complementary. In order to interrogate this question, this essay considers a wide range of ideas: Irigaray's analysis of belief as an immanent aspect of the psychoanalytic project; the possibility of understanding Barth's concept of nothingness (das Nichtige) as a theological equivalent to the death drive; Barth's and Derrida's shared disruption of the binary opposition between life and death; the possibility of understanding Derrida's notion of the psychic archive as an equivalent to Barth's conception of God's fatherly preservation of His creation; and, finally, the way in which Irigaray's elemental philosophy of air, and particularly the image of the airy grave, might work as a mediator between divine and material concepts of eternal dwelling. This essay argues that these varied ideas, when thought together, provides a way of considering divine providence, and particularly divine preservation, within a psychoanalytic framework built around the death drive.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Theology, Providence, Death drive, The divine

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There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build.
Ecclesiastes 3, 1-3

1. *The Meaning of the Beyond*

Historically, the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion has been an uneasy one. Freud, although he did retain an interest in religion as a phenomenon, was notoriously dismissive of the practice of it: in his most sustained and systematic consideration of religion, the book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), he famously compared religious beliefs to a childhood neurosis[1]. However, several thinkers have attempted to bridge the divide between religion and psychoanalysis. One such attempt has been brought forth by the French psychoanalysist, linguist, and philosopher Luce Irigaray. It would, however, be wrong to assert that Irigaray has ever been uncritical of religion and, particularly, of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, she has repeatedly criticized this tradition for its repression of sexual difference[2], whereas she has often argued that sexual difference has been much more fruitfully cultivated in Eastern spiritual practices[3]. However, if a repression has taken place, it is reasonable to suggest, logically, that there has been something to repress, and, perhaps for that reason, rather than completely dismissing Christianity as exclusively a patriarchal obstruction that hinders the construction of an ethical philosophy of sexual difference, the Christian tradition has often been of great interest to Irigaray. In fact, Irigaray's engagement with Christianity has been noteworthy to the extent that it once led the literary theorist Emily S. Apter, in an uncharacteristically patronizing and alarmist essay, to speculate that Irigaray had somehow unwillingly been coerced into surrendering to

[1] S. Freud, *Die Zukunft Einer Illusion*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Vienna 1927 (*The Future of an Illusion*, translated by J. Strachey, Norton, New York 1967), p. 42.
[2] See for instance L. Irigaray, *The Redemption of Women*, in L. Irigaray (ed.), *Key Writings*, Continuum, London and New York 2004, pp. 150-164.
[3] L. Irigaray, *Entre Orient et Occident*, Grasset et Fasquelle, Paris 1999 (*Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, translated by S. Pluháček, Columbia University Press, New York 2002), p. 66.

the patriarchal enemy[4]. Irigaray's interest in the Christian tradition was apparent as early as 1974, in "La Mysterique", where she argued that the female mystics of the Middle Ages are the earliest examples of female subjectivity being given a place in public discourse[5]. But her strongest statement on the nature of Christian faith is surely "Belief Itself" (1987), wherein she goes as far as to state: «I shall term the preliminary to the question of sexual difference: belief itself»[6]. There is, however, some debate to be had in regard to what Irigaray actually means when she asserts that belief is the prerequisite to the question of sexual difference.

One interpretation, as seen in the work of, among others, the philosopher Annemie Halsema[7], is that the role of the Christian tradition, for Irigaray, is dyadic: it is at once one of the primary culprits behind the sexual indifference – the eradication of the feminine within a masculine economy of sameness – that permeates Western culture, but it is also, at the same time, the site of religious belief – or at least the rethinking of it – that might contain the constituents of a possible future economy of sexual difference. For instance, according to the feminist theologian Ellen T. Armour, Irigaray finds in the figure of Mary – and her mother Anne – a potential source for a particularly female genealogy[8], whereas the philosopher and theologian Grace M. Jantzen has identified the image of two angels facing each other with nothing but divine air between them as an, for Irigaray, important and even idyllic picturization of an intersubjective and mutually respective encounter between two sexually differentiated people[9]. I am not in disagreement with any of these perspectives, but I would argue that Irigaray's assertion that belief precedes the question of sexual difference could also be understood in a third sense. As the philosopher Penelope Deutscher has argued, Irigaray's perhaps most central idea, the idea that grounds her whole project, is the idea that there is no

[4] E.S. Apter, *The Story of I: Luce Irigaray's Theoretical Masochism*, in "NWSA Journal", 1990, n. 2, pp. 168-198, 198.
[5] L. Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*, Les Editions Minuit, Paris 1974 (*Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated by G.C. Gill, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1985), p. 191.
[6] L. Irigaray, *Sexes et Parentés*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1987 (*Sexes and Genealogies*, translated by G.C. Gill, Columbia University Press, New York 1993), p. 27.
[7] A. Halsema, *Luce Irigaray's Transcendence as Alterity*, in W. Stoker, W.L. Van der Merwe (eds.), *Culture and Transcendence: A Typology of Transcendence*, Peeters, Leuven 2012, pp. 121-135.
[8] E.T. Armour, *Beyond Belief?: Sexual Difference and Religion after Ontotheology*, in J.D. Caputo (ed.), *The Religious*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 2002, pp. 212-226, pp. 214-215.
[9] G.M. Jantzen, *Barely by a Breath…": Irigaray on Rethinking Religion*, in J.D. Caputo (ed.), *The Religious*, cit., pp. 227-240, pp. 234-337.

sexual difference; that sexual difference is impossible; that sexual difference, literally, does not exist[10]. If we, then, are to cultivate a culture of sexual difference – which is the primary goal behind Irigaray's psychoanalytic and philosophical project – that literally becomes an act of cultivating the impossible. That is, I think, what Irigaray means, when she states that belief is the preliminary to the question of sexual difference: Cultivating that which does not already exist can only be done through belief.

What is important to stress here, then, is that religion, for Irigaray, is not simply, as in the work of Freud, an object to be studied psychoanalytically, but rather something deeply entwined with her own psychoanalytic project; with psychoanalysis itself. Perhaps the clearest example of this is Irigaray's discussion of Freud's book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) – and particularly his concept of the *fort/da* – in the previously mentioned essay, "Belief Itself"[11]. The *fort/da* is a commonly used term describing a child's game observed by Freud, involving a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. The child – holding the reel by the string – would throw the reel into his cot, which was surrounded by a curtain, while loudly exclaiming the word "fort" (gone). He would then pull the reel back from behind the curtain and greet its reappearance with the word "da" (here). Freud interprets this game as the child's way of coming to terms with the continuous absence and presence of his mother[12].

Essentially, according to Freud, the child is turning a situation in which he is passive – the coming and going of his mother – into a situation in which he is the one actively controlling the process of appearance and disappearance. What Irigaray notices, however, is that the *fort/da* is not only a child's exploration – and attempted mastery – of the binary opposition between presence and absence, but that this binary is mediated by belief: the child's belief in his own ability to master the crossing of presence into absence, of course, but also the belief that what appears to be absent is in fact present just behind the curtain[13]. In this way, the *fort/da* could be interpreted

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[10] P. Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Late Work of Luce Irigaray*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2002, p. 108.

[11] It might be even more accurate still – although it sounds rather convoluted – to describe Irigaray's essay as a discussion of Jacques Derrida's discussion of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as it is presented in Derrida's book *La carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, Flammarion, Paris 1980.

[12] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer, Vienna 1920 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, translated by J. Strachey, Norton, New York 1961), p. 9.

[13] L. Irigaray, *Sexes et Parentés*, cit., p. 31.

not only as a child coming to grips with his own fear of being abandoned by his mother, but also as a primordial scene mirroring the practice of belief itself. As Irigaray points out, the most important game of *fort/da* is that of religious faith, inherently characterized by the believe that God is present beyond His apparent absence[14], and mediated by the image of the angel emerging from somewhere beyond presence in order to deliver the message of God's presence[15]. Nonetheless, what is important for the purpose of this essay is not Irigaray's reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in itself, but rather the possibility for further analysis that her reading entails.

A substantial part of her essay is devoted to a meditation on the beyond: the word – beyond – but also the concept, the idea, which for Irigaray signifies something akin to the Lacanian real. What Irigaray seems to be drawing attention to – perhaps implicitly, perhaps unconsciously – is an immanent religiosity inherent to everything that can truthfully be characterized as "beyond". Thus, we are introduced to the home of God *beyond* the visual horizon[16], the *beyond* from where the messages of the angels are transmitted[17], and the dark, hidden, sulfurous *beyond* of the devil[18], just to mention a few examples of Irigaray's constant references to the beyond. This invocation of the religious connotations adhering to the concept of the beyond is in many ways evocative of Irigaray's later work such as *To Be Two* (1994), wherein it is implied that the nature/culture dichotomy is destabilized by God as that which is beyond both[19], and *The Way of Love* (2002), wherein she argues that God is the guarantor of all otherness, alterity, of all which is beyond[20]. The beyond, she seems to be telling us, is always already situated within the realm of belief. This, of course, can be difficult to accept: after all, when we look beyond the pleasure principle, what we find, as Freud has shown us, is not only belief, but also the sinister and destructive death drive. And yet, the concept of belief is always already just within reach in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: the existence of the death drive, for Freud, is improbable, impossible to understand, only thinkable as an act of belief[21], and the function of it, Freud

[14] Ivi, p. 32.
[15] Ivi, p. 35.
[16] Ivi, p. 32.
[17] Ivi, p. 35.
[18] Ivi, p. 41.
[19] L. Irigaray, *Essere Due*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1994 (*To Be Two*, translated by M.M. Rhodes and M.F. Cocito-Monoc, The Athlone Press, London 2000), p. 88.
[20] L. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, Continuum, London and New York 2002, p. 159.
[21] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, cit., p. 18.

admits, is best conceptualized in religious terms: as the appearance of a demonic force[22]. Essentially, what I am trying to do in this essay, is to extend as far as possible the traces of the religious within the Freudian concept of the death drive that Irigaray has already drawn attention to. The question that I am trying to pose is this: is it possible – even to imagine – that the beyond of the death drive is also the beyond of belief, the belief in God and all that it entails, the belief in His presence, His predetermination, and His providence? Is it possible to think the providential God and the Freudian death drive as existing in a system of intertwinement and not of opposition? Is it possible that the death drive – the subject's urge towards his own destruction – is a part of, and not detrimental to, God's preservation of his creation? Is it possible to think divine providence in Freudian terms? And, conversely: is it possible to think the death drive in theological terms?

2. *Karl Barth and Psychoanalysis*

In order to explore the possibility of a union between the psychoanalytic concept of the death drive and the theological notion of divine providence, I have decided to base my analysis on the writings of the Swiss Calvinist theologian Karl Barth, who has provided us with one of the single most elaborate and rigorous inquiries into the nature of divine providence. The choice of Barth as the focal point of this article, however, is also motivated by the way his particular brand of theology, often referred to as dialectical theology, challenges the whole endeavor of combining psychoanalysis and theology by seemingly being uniquely resistant towards the psychoanalytic project. According to the German psychoanalyst Paul Fredi de Quervain, God is, for Barth, the Wholly Other, something completely unknowable, something entirely hidden from human consciousness, something totally beyond the reach of the human psyche, and a theology influenced by psychoanalysis, a psychology of religion, thus defeats the sole purpose of Barthian theology, which is to extrapolate the Word of God as it has been addressed by God in the form of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh[23]. Thus, Barth's theology can be seen as a direct attack on the liberal theology associated with figures such

[22] Ivi, 29.
[23] P.F. de Quervain, *Psychoanalyse und dialektische Theologie: Zum Freud-Verständnis bei K. Barth, E. Thurneysen und P. Ricœur*, Hans Huber, Bern 1977, pp. 20-21.

as Friedrich Schleiermacher, who emphasized the subjective, experiential nature of religion over the word of God[24]. Barth felt that liberal theology had caused the whole discipline to dissolve into the realm of social and psychological questions; a realm wherein the theologian, as de Quervain puts it, becomes a dilettante rather than an expert[25]. Barth's merit, then, according to de Quervain, rests in him fighting for the identity and independence of theology, and the marrying of his theology to other disciplines such as psychoanalysis can thus be seen as problematic[26]. However, in a strange, and perhaps even inappropriate, combination of biographism and psychoanalysis, de Quervain proceeds, in his article on Barth, to utilize Barth the person as a psychoanalytic subject, pointing out that his father was a liberal theologian, and speculating that Barth's drastic turn away from this branch of theology might be the result of a father complex. Furthermore, de Quervain argues that Barth's resistance to psychological questions might be caused by the fact that the psychoanalyst Ewald Jung, a cousin of Carl Gustav, once diagnosed him with exactly such a complex[27]. Whatever one makes of these insights, they at least indicate that even if Barth paid little attention to psychoanalysis in his writings, he was not unfamiliar with the discipline.

In contrast to de Quervain, the German theologian Christof Gestrich has argued very convincingly for the view that Barthian theology and psychoanalysis *can* be combined. Although he admits that the philosophical projects of Barth and Freud are vastly different on a material level – Barth was just as dismissive of psychoanalysis as Freud was of theology[28] – he nonetheless argues that Freud and Barth were highly similar in terms of what they were trying to achieve through their respective academic endeavors. According to Gestrich, both Freud and Barth were reacting to a deep crisis of the cultural

[24] See for instance F. Schleiermacker, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, 1799 (*On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated by R. Crouter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988), p. 54, where he states: «God is not everything in religion, but one, and the universe is more; furthermore, you cannot believe in him by force of will or because you want to use him for solace and help, but because you must. Immortality may not be a wish unless it has first been a task you have carried out. To be one with the infinite in the midst of the finite and to be eternal in a moment, that is the immortality of religion».

[25] P.F. de Quervain, op. cit., p. 27.

[26] Ivi, p. 30.

[27] Ivi, p. 84.

[28] Ch. Gestrich, *Karl Barth und Sigmund Freud – ein nachzuholender Dialog: Für Walter Bernet zum 50. Geburtstag*, in "Wissenschaft und Praxis in Kirche und Gesellschaft", 1975, n. 64\10, pp. 443-456, p. 443.

and spiritual landscape after the First World War: they each attempted to remedy this crisis – to free humanity from an overload of corrupted idealism that they both, I think, in ways that are similar to Adorno after the Second World War, saw as unforeseen, negative consequences of the enlightenment project[29] – by providing a new language that would make it possible to verbalize parts of the human trajectory that were previously unspeakable: chaos, sin, nothingness, the inhumane hiding under the cloak of humanity[30]. Freud did this by peeking into the depths of the human unconscious, while Barth took to Christian theology in order to disrupt the unfortunate developments in the modern conception of the categories of truth and self[31].

However, the great failing of both Freud and Barth, according to Gestrich, was their stubbornness which led them both to out of hand reject the research of the other's discipline without seeing that their projects could be deeply enhanced by a greater degree of cooperation between the disciplines[32]. It is thus my intention, in this essay, to provide a union of Barthian theology and Freudian psychoanalysis which not only considers their similarities in respect to the end goals of the projects adhering to these disciplines, but which, on the other hand, attempts – through a reading that neither Freud nor Barth would most likely have condoned – to truly explore the compatibility of their material, conceptual frameworks, sometimes, hopefully, beyond their limits. Nonetheless, it is valuable to bear in mind de Quervain's reservations regarding such a project. Likewise, it is important to attempt avoiding what Barth, according to Gestrich, saw as the danger of psychology: that the human subject attempts to gain access to the divine through narcissistic in-depth analysis of his own psyche[33].

3. *The Meaning of Existence*

Karl Barth's most sustained exploration of the concept of divine providence is to be found in his major five-volume work *Church Dogmatics*, specifically in part two and three of *Volume III: The Doctrine of Creation* which will be the focus of this article. At first, Barth's definition of providence ap-

[29] Ivi, pp. 447-448.
[30] Ivi, pp. 455-456.
[31] Ivi, p. 452.
[32] Ivi, p. 455.
[33] Ivi, p. 444.

pears fairly simple: Divine providence, for Barth, is God fulfilling His fatherly lordship over His creature by continuously preserving, upholding, and sustaining its existence[34]. However, Barth's definition of divine providence is far from simple: rather, it is rooted in a very specific and uniquely Barthian methodology. As Barth himself has made extremely clear, every single concept in his theological anthropology – including the concept of providence – is purposefully developed on a basis of Christology[35]. As Gestrich has argued, Christology occupies the place within Barth's theology that the dream does within Freudian psychoanalysis: Christology, for Barth, becomes a "primary text" which allows him to refer to a humanity beyond the phenomenological iteration of the human[36]. One might even call Christology, the life of Jesus Christ, in Freudian terms, the primal scene from where all analysis must begin.

For Barth, the belief in providence directly necessitates belief in Jesus Christ: when Barth defines providence as God fulfilling His fatherly lordship, the word "fatherly" directly refers to the fact that the God who governs His creature is «the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Crist»[37]. This means that God's providential plan is directly revealed in the history of the life of Jesus Christ; the son in covenant with God the father[38]. The fact that Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross yet rose again, shows God's fatherly lordship over His son, His refusal to let him perish, His eternal preservation of that which He has created. According to Barth, the way the figure of the providential God is exemplified in the history of the life, the death, and the resurrection of His son Jesus Christ is that which distinguishes the Christian belief in God's providence from that of all other religions and he directly criticizes older generations of Protestant theologians for failing to acknowledge the connection between belief in Providence and belief in Jesus Christ[39]. However, the idea that God's providential plan for His creature is revealed in the story of Jesus Christ requires some qualification: according to Barth, «Our anthropology can and must be based on Christology, but it cannot be deduced

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[34] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3*, Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich 1951 (*Church Dogmatics III: The Doctrine of Creation 3*, translated by G. W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1976), p. 58.

[35] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2*, Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich 1948 (*Church Dogmatics III: The Doctrine of Creation 3*, translated by H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, and R.H. Fuller, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1960), p. 512.

[36] Ch. Gestrich, op. cit., p. 455.

[37] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3*, cit., p. 28.

[38] Ivi, pp. 82-84.

[39] Ivi, pp. 31-33.

from it directly»[40]. As the German theologian Diederik Noordveld has pointed out, Barth's idea is not that there is no difference between the temporal trajectory of Jesus Christ and that of all other human beings. Obviously, all human beings are not Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Rather, the reality of God's providence revealed in the story of Jesus Christ denotes a promise to all other human beings that they, too, being as they are Creatures of God's, will be given time (to be born, to live, to die); that they, too, will be included in His providential plan; that they, too, will be preserved within God's divine covenant of grace[41].

The concept of fatherly preservation is an aspect of the doctrine of providence that is easily reconciled with Freudian terminology, where the subject is always driven by the libidinal instinct for self-preservation[42]. But while the Freudian self-preservation instinct is constantly threatened by the death drive, there is – according to Barth – nothing outside God's providence:

> The hand of God never rests. And it will never withdraw. Everything is always involved in its power and therefore in that receiving and becoming. For the faithfulness of God never ceases in the kingdom of His Grace. There is no moment, place or situation in which His creature escapes or becomes indifferent, in which He has no further use for His creation or some part of it, or in which He forgets it[43].

It is here – in regard to the constancy of divine preservation that is so strongly portrayed in this paragraph – that we venture into what is for Barth the most paradoxical, fascinating, and important aspect of the doctrine of providence. Because, while God's preservation of his creature's existence is infinite, it is simultaneously limited. How do we understand this? In order to interrogate this question, we need to consider at least two other fundamental questions: what is meant by existence? And what does it mean to preserve it? In the writings of Barth, it becomes evident that existing is not necessarily the same as being alive. Or rather: existence is being alive, and it is not.

The idea that God's preservation is limited means two separate things: first of all, providence is intimately linked to the act of creation, namely the creation of being which, according to Barth, is always linked to the creation time. Echoing the Heideggerian notion of being-towards-death, Barth asserts

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[40] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2,* cit., p. 512.
[41] D. Noordveld, *Der Mensch in seiner Zeit: Karl Barth und die Menschlichkeit als Zeitlichkeit*, Neukirchener Theologie, Neuekirchen-Vluyn 2014, p. 184.
[42] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, cit., p. 46.
[43] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3,* cit., p. 53.

that God preserves His creation within the time frame corresponding to it, within the time given to it by God. God's preservation can thus be understood as a continuous confirmation of His creature's being in time. It is limited to a specific period of time, yet at the same time, it would still be right to call this preservation eternal. Why? Because God perpetually preserves His creature to the full extent of the time predetermined by Him as proper to it. Thus, this preservation is eternal in so far as it extends throughout the whole of the time which – within the temporal logic of the individual's creation – nothing, except God, transcends[44]. The importance of Barth's idea that time is given by God should not be underestimated: Barth makes it very clear that time is given in the most literal sense – namely, *as a gift*. Time is a gift created by God and given to each and every one of His creatures, and one cannot but accept and receive this gift which cannot be given away, destroyed, or returned; time is something that we, inevitably, *have*[45].

This idea, once again, has a clear Christological basis: the existence of the man Jesus Christ in time, Barth argues, guarantees the anthropological truth «that time as the form of human existence is in any case willed and created by God, is given to man, and is therefore real»[46]. In other words, the fact Jesus Christ existed within a temporal framework guarantees that all God's creatures will be given – by God – the time deemed proper for them to exist within, and it is within this sphere of temporality that God's providential plan will be carried out. Barth's picturization of time as a gift reveals – and we shall see this several times throughout this essay – a strong sense of compatibility between Barthian theology and the thinking of French philosopher Jacques Derrida: not only has Derrida, in his book *Given Time*, explicitly emphasized the gift-like aspect of time[47], he has also, in *The Gift of Death*, tied this assertion to the history of Christianity. According to Derrida, a remarkable aspect of Christian thought is the way in which it has made a gift out of death. Each and every one is given, by God, as a part of their own temporal trajectory, their very own death to die, and this gift of death – which is included as an aspect of the all-encompassing gift of time – makes everyone unique, irreplaceable even, because *only I can die my own death*[48]. There is,

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[44] Ivi, p. 61.
[45] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2*, cit., pp. 524-525.
[46] Ivi, p. 520.
[47] J. Derrida, *Donner le temps*, Editions Galilée, Paris 1901 (*Given Time*, translated by P. Kamuf, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992).
[48] J. Derrida, *Donner la mort*, Métailié-Transition, Paris 1992 (*The gift of Death*, translated by D. Wills, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1995), pp. 40-41.

although it is not explicitly emphasized, a Christology at the heart of this idea: after all, it was Jesus Christ, as Barth has pointed out, that made his own death a gift to humanity[49]. This – the idea of temporal existence as a gift – can also be thought of in Freudian terms: «The aim of all life is death», he writes[50]. For Freud, then, the self-preservation of the subject is inherently just an act of giving time, extending time, lengthening the road to inevitable death which nothing transcends[51]. We are, as he explains, (pre)determined to be inanimate[52], and in this sense, the time put in between birth and death is – nothing but – a gift.

This – the relationship between being and time – constitutes the first aspect of what is meant by the idea that God's providence is limited. The second aspect is perhaps a bit more difficult to grasp: God's preservation of His creature is limited to that which is created. Or rather: all being exists within limits defined by being's alterity to nothingness; all that is created by God stands in opposition to that which God refused to create; that which stands on the outside of creation; that which God the Creator excluded[53]. According to Barth, this nothingness is at work in everything that resists God, and thus it is also the primary force behind sin; it is this nothingness which tempts God's creature towards sin and destruction. In this sense, nothingness is that which brought Jesus Christ to the cross, and that which he defeated there[54]. But this nothingness – *das Nichtige*, as Barth has named his neologism – is, although etymologically related to "Nichts" (nothing), far from simply nothing[55]. Rather, it is a destructive, sinister void of being, which, not unlike a black hole, devours everything that is not shielded by God's protection. When God creates and preserves His creature, something else is always rejected, and it is within the limits of this precarious dialectic of creation and rejection that existence dwells. That which is rejected by God and left as nothingness can be – to borrow a, in my opinion, particularly important, evocative, and often overlooked image within the philosophy of Luce Irigaray – metaphorized as "an airy grave".

This image appears in her book *Marine Lover* (1980) – and reappears in *The Forgetting of Air* (1983) – and unlike the philosophy of air in Irigaray's

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[49] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2,* cit., p. 597.
[50] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, cit., p. 32.
[51] Ivi, p. 33.
[52] Ivi, p. 32.
[53]K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3*, cit., p. 76.
[54] Ivi, p. 305.
[55] Ivi, p. 349.

later work which heavily explores the activity of breathing[56], air in these two books, and in this essay, is important primarily as an ontological category: as an invisible, uncontainable, constant mediator between being and nothingness. Although the air is of course generally constitutive of being – we need it in order to breathe; to live – it is simultaneously characterized by its alterity to being: it exists as nothingness encapsulating being, but a nothingness which, like Barth's, is not nothing. Without this alterity, being is, for Irigaray, unthinkable[57]. Not only that, but there is a certain fragility intrinsic to the relationship between being and air in the sense that the air can very easily become polluted and thus undermine the being that exists within it[58]. This is the sinister meaning which the image of the airy grave takes on in *Marine Lover*: the airy grave is negation of being[59]; it is a "dwelling in death", yet curiously a «dwelling in death without ever dying»[60]. The negation, the death, the nothingness of the airy-grave thus, rather than necessarily being directly harmful to being, emphasizes the way alterity is constitutive and the way negation leads the way to perseverance. And just like the threat posed by the polluted air, the nothingness rejected by God can, according to Barth, become a menace to God's creature:

> What God has eternally denied, what is not willed by Him, constitutes that which is not, that which is empty, which is necessarily nothing. But in all its singularity the non-existent characterized as such by God, the shadow which flees before God, possesses everywhere in the Bible its own ponderable reality. God knows this nothing as the opponent of the creature, as that which may and can seduce and destroy the creature[61].

Barth's depiction of this nothingness, this shadow that threatens God's creature is significant for several reasons. First and foremost because it is – for Barth – the primary reason why divine preservation and protection is necessary. Secondly, because this nothingness which at the same time possesses

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[56] See for instance L. Irigaray, *The Age of Breath*, in L. Irigaray (ed.), *Key Writings*, cit., pp. 165-170.
[57] L. Irigaray, *L'oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1983 (*The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, translated by M.B. Mader, The Athlone Press, London 1999), p. 162.
[58] Ivi, p. 7.
[59] L. Irigaray, *Amante Marine*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris 1980 (*Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, translated by G.C. Gill, Columbia University Press, New York 1991) p. 29.
[60] Ivi, p. 28.
[61] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3*, cit., p. 76.

a reality very clearly showcases Barth's very idiosyncratic idea of existence, which – as previously stated – breaches the binary opposition between to be and not to be. And thirdly, because this destructive nothingness is – again – feasibly rephrased in Freudian terms, being perhaps the clearest theological equivalent to the destructive, sadistic, and seemingly demonic death drive. This comparison, however, is complicated slightly by the fundamental difference that the nothingness rejected by God is always something perpetually external to God's creature. It must be completely external because, as I have previously explained, there is nothing internal to the logic of creation that escapes God's providence. But while this nothingness is always outside, the Freudian death drive is a force operating internally in the subject[62]. At least, that is until we consider the fact that the unconscious – to which the death drive as well as the drive towards self-preservation belongs – is often imagined as an internalization of that which is outside the subject and not as something emerging within it as an essence[63]. So far, then, there is no reason why it should be impossible for the death drive to exist within the doctrine of divine providence: namely, as the very threat that necessitates God's preservation of His creature.

4. *The Meaning of the Eternal*

However, as previously stated, one of the great paradoxes of divine providence is the idea that it is simultaneously limited and infinite. So far, I have mostly discussed the ways in which it is limited: limited to the period of time pre-determined as appropriate for the creature to live and limited in so far as it is confined within the realm delineated by the destructive shadow of nothingness. How, then, are we supposed to understand divine providence as being infinite? In order to do so, it is necessary to return to a point that I made earlier: existence, for Barth, is not necessarily the same as being alive; existence is being alive, and it is not. Existence understood solely as being alive can of course only be understood within the binary of life and death, but that is only half of what Barth means, when he speaks of existence and of God's preservation of the existence of His creature. The preservation of the creature continues past the point where the temporal existence of the creature has ended; it continues eternally before God even after the death of the creature

[62] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, cit., p. 4.
[63] For an elaboration on this point see: T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2008, p. 150.

through the divine covenant of grace, salvation, and redemption; it continues not only before, but within God, who is the eternal which all temporality emanates from[64]; it continues in what has popularly been called Heaven, the kingdom of Christ, or the afterlife:

> He [God] will not allow anything to perish, but will hold it in in the hollow of His hand as He has always done, and does, and will do. He will not be alone in eternity, but with the creature. He will allow it to partake of His own eternal life. And in this way the creature will continue to be, in its limitation, even in its limited temporal duration. And how could it not be when it is open and present to Him even at its end, even as that which has only been? This is how it will persist. In all the unrest of its being in time it will be enfolded by the rest of God, and in Him it will itself be at rest, just as even now in all its unrest it is hidden and can be at rest in the rest of God. This is the eternal preservation of God[65].

The divine preservation of existence, then, is not only the preservation of life and existence, is not necessarily threatened by death – or by the death drive. The boundaries that uphold the binary distinction between being and non-being, between life and death, show themselves to be unstable: if the distinction between life and death is not necessarily equal to that of existence and non-existence then what, exactly, is the distinction between life and death? For Barth, the Shakespearean question of to be *or* not to be is thus rewritten as to be not to be – the lack of conjunction signifying that life and death are neither opposite nor equal but rather connected in a much more complex system of interrelatedness. We see this, on a concretely semantic level, in Barth's repeated use of the phrase «existence in death», which denotes something that is not life, but also not a total absence of being[66]. In this regard, Barth once again reveals a kinship with Jacques Derrida, for whom the dichotomy of life and death is problematic because it assumes life and death as totalities and not as material signifiers entirely dependent on each other[67]. This claim – that Barth and Derrida are similar in their attentiveness to the unstableness of otherwise well-established signifiers (in this case life and death) – has been pointed out by others before me: the theologian Graham

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[64] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2.*, cit., p. 437.
[65] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3.*, cit., p. 90.
[66] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2.*, cit., p. 589.
[67] J. Derrida, *La vie la mort. Séminaire (1975-1976)*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 2019 (*Life Death*, translated by P-A. Brault and M. Naas, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2020), p. 229.

Ward, for instance, has argued that for both thinkers «the central problematic is the ineradicable otherness which haunts discourse»[68].

However, it is important to emphasize that it is not my intention to argue that death, for Barth – or for Derrida for that matter – is not a threat to human life: of course, it is. However, this does not mean that life and death are opposites. Rather death – in the simplest sense – is the end of life's temporality, which is to say that it is a natural part of the trajectory laid out before each and every one of us by God[69]. But this end to the temporal existence of being alive is not necessarily an end to being. We see this clearly in the history of Jesus Christ[70], in the story of his resurrection to an eternity within God, which, says Barth, is the lens through which the end of human life should be viewed[71]. But Barth also speaks of death in a second – and more dangerous and sinister – sense: death, not as the end of human life, but rather as an extraneous and devastating power punishing the deceased for the sins committed during their lifetime. This death is our total negation, the eradication of our being, «the final evil which our actions deserve»[72]. But death in this sense is also not the opposite of life, but rather something utterly distant from it; death as judgment, or punishment, is an extraneous power or force operating on a plane far removed from life. Life and death exist, then, in a relationship of radical alterity, as wholly other to each other, and belonging to completely different spheres. However, because Jesus died for our sins, nothing could, according to Barth, be more unnatural than that God would let us suffer this death[73]. Instead, after the end of our being in time, we are promised, like Christ, eternal rest within God[74]. The vicarious death of Jesus Christ is – also – in this sense, as Diederik Noordveld has pointed out, a victory over death[75].

However, the continuation of the existence of God's creature beyond death – the eternal life adhering to the divine covenant of grace – is an aspect of the doctrine of providence that does not seem – at least at first – at all compatible with Freudian psychoanalysis. It is not only that Freud rejects the idea of eternal rest within the rest of God – the idea of heaven, the idea of the

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[68] G. Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 244.
[69] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2.*, cit., p. 558.
[70] Ivi, p. 442.
[71] Ivi, p. 624.
[72] Ivi, p. 626.
[73] Ibidem.
[74] Ivi, p. 614.
[75] D. Noordveld, op. cit., p. 170.

afterlife – but also that he defines the concepts of life and death incredibly clearly in a fixed structure of binary opposition, leaving practically no room for the idea of something eternal persisting beyond death. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, for instance, the concept of life and death are constantly spoken of in incredibly stable, almost biological terms: namely, as a matter of being animate or inanimate[76].

5. *The Meaning of Remembrance*

How, then, is the idea of God's eternal preservation possible if we do not allow for even the smallest remnant of existence to persist beyond death? Is it possible? Or has the whole endeavor of reconciliating the Freudian concept of the death drive with the idea of divine providence shown itself to be entirely futile? Not necessarily. In order to pursue this line of thought any further, however, it is necessary to consider the potential room for interpretation left within Barth's description of the eternal preservation of God. What exactly does it mean to preserve life? What exactly does it mean to be preserved eternally? What exactly does it mean to be "enfolded by the rest of God"? Does it necessarily mean that something must remain alive, or could it be something else that remains?

«The eternal preservation of the creature means positively […] that it can continue eternally before Him. God is the One who was, and is, and is to come. With Him the past is future, and both past and future are present», Barth writes[77]. I would argue that this portrayal of eternal preservation as a preservation of the past, of time itself, warrants the interpretation that to be preserved, to be enfolded by the rest of God, could potentially be understood as an act of remembrance; that to be preserved by God might be to be remembered by God. This might not be a completely satisfying interpretation. Some might feasibly argue that interpreting the idea of eternal preservation as the preservation of a memory inevitably strips divine providence of its relation to that which is irreducibly, transcendently divine – the covenant of grace – and reduces it to something too close to the human. And yet, on the other hand, what is remembrance if not an act of belief, belief in the existence of that which is beyond the present, that which is beyond presence?

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[76] S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lust-Prinzips*, cit., p. 32.
[77] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 3,* cit., p. 89.

Nonetheless, I intend to explore the implications of this interpretation of eternal preservation a bit further as it, I will argue, reveals a particular fecundity when thought of in contiguity with Freudian psychoanalysis – particularly his concept of the death drive. First of all, though, I will insist on the importance of eternal preservation as an act of memorization and not as memory itself. This performative aspect – the *act* – is important as it is continuously stressed by Barth that God's preservation of his creature takes place not because God must do it, but because He continuously chooses to, out of love[78]. I will go even further, then, and name this act of memorization as an act of archiving: the archive seems to me the most performative, the most material, the most absolute manifestation of memorization as an act.

According to Jacques Derrida, the archive is not simply memory but rather the safeguarding, the preservation, of memory necessitated by that which threatens memory with destruction. What is it that threatens memory? For Derrida, it is not simply forgetfulness, but rather the death drive: the complete, utter eradication of memory[79]. Does this remind us of anything? Is it not reminiscent of Barth's depiction of divine providence, where God protects His creature against nothingness – against that which has been rejected from being – which threatens to destroy it? Although it should be noted that Derrida's archive should not necessarily be interpreted as an actual, physical archive, but rather in a psychoanalytic sense as a psychic archive[80], it is not my intention to assert that God *is* an archive or that divine providence *is* an act of archiving, but rather that Derrida's archive might in a way be understood as analogous to the concept of eternal preservation.

I am not the first person to discuss the possibility of imagining Barth's conceptualization of God's eternal preservation in terms of archiving. The German theologian Eberhard Jüngel specifically denies that the concept of eternity within the Barthian framework could be imagined as a musealization or archiving of lived life. Jüngel's line of reasoning is derived from the Christological basis of Barth's thought: Jesus Christ's rise from the dead, Jüngel argues, guarantees that all human beings, like Jesus, will be allowed to par-

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[78] Ivi, p. 13.
[79] J. Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*, Éditions Galilée, Paris 1995 (*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by E. Prenowitz, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998), p. 11.
[80] Ivi, p. 19.

ticipate in God's eternity as unrestricted and uninhibited living subjects, rather than existing as a collection of mere signifiers referring back to the life that was – but no longer is – lived[81].

Diederik Noordveld, on the other hand, is less quick to dismiss the notion of eternal preservation as a form of archiving: interrogating the logic of Jüngel's interpretation, Noordveld asks whether or not one can truly deny the archive as a possible depiction of the kind of preservation proposed by Barth. Given – as I have also argued – that Barth's work seems to be permeated by a sometimes almost paradoxical unravelling of the semantic congruence between "being" and "being alive" as well as between "not being" and "being dead", it seems reasonable to suggest that if man lives only once within the time that God has given him, and if death is the termination of this time, and if this termination is not the end of his existence, then his existence within the eternity of God amounts to something else than life as a living subject.

Noordveld sets forth this paradox in the form of a question which loosely paraphrased goes: can God really be my future if, according to Barth, I – or what Jüngel called the "living subject" – only exists as something that has been, meaning that the "my" – as in "my future" – has passed too[82]? I would argue that this paradox is only resolvable if one allows for the possibility that the Barthian eternity does not necessarily signify being alive, but can be envisioned as, for instance, an act of archiving. «Our life is really negative in character and therefore can only hasten towards negation»[83], writes Barth in terms that are strongly Freudian. Perhaps one could imagine God's eternal preservation as double negative rather than as affirmative: as a negation of the negation that is death and not as life. For Derrida, archiving is exactly that: a counteract against our drive towards negation. Memory, for Barth, is something similar: the last resort against oblivion[84].

So far, at least, I have drawn attention to the way in which the death drive necessitates archiving in a way that is not dissimilar to the way in which the threat posed by the nothingness rejected by God – according to Barth – necessitates divine providence. The analogy does not end here: another clear parallel between divine providence and archiving is the way in which the

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[81] E. Jüngel, *Ewigkeit, III*, in H.D. Betz, D.S. Browning, B. Janowski, and E. Jüngel (eds), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2000, pp. 1774-1776, p. 1776.
[82] D. Noordveld, op. cit., pp. 174-175.
[83] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung, 2*, cit., p. 626.
[84] Ivi, p. 513.

threats that necessitate them are also prerequisites for the things that they protect. Allow me to elaborate: as I have previously explained, the rejected nothingness is not only the threat against God's creature – against being itself – which necessitates God's preservation, but also the alterity that allows us to perceive being. In other words: just like the light is only perceivable in its alterity to darkness, God's creature is only perceivable within the limits of that which God has excluded. Similarly, the archive, as Derrida explains, is not only a safeguarding against the death drive's eradication of memory; the archive is also entirely dependent on the death drive[85]. All acts of archiving, like all other acts of preservation, are thus dependent on the eradication of something else; something is always excluded from the archive just like something is always excluded from God's creation.

The third – and perhaps most important – aspect of the analogous relationship between divine providence and archiving adheres to something that I have only previously mentioned in passing: the significance which both concepts assign to *the place* of preservation: «There is no archive without a place of consignation», Derrida writes[86]. All archived memories must be preserved in an external place – only then is the combined practice of safeguarding and rejection made possibly. Equivalently, it is only within the place, within the dwelling, within the repose, within the rest of God that the creature is eternally preserved. This is another way in which God's preservation is at once eternal and limited: God's creatures are preserved eternally, but they do not continue to live beyond their death[87]. They exist, as previously stated, only in a specific space: enfolded by the rest of God – perhaps as memory.

What, or perhaps where, then, is this external space of preservation? Could it be the place which I, initially, designated as *the beyond*? That place which is only perceivable as an act of belief, only thinkable in so far as we believe that something exists beyond what is present, beyond death, beyond life, beyond the material. A particularly evocative – and at once incredibly abstract and shockingly concrete – image depicting this beyond is brought to us, once again, in the form of Luce Irigaray's notion of an «airy grave in which presence is sealed»[88]. Whereas, in *Marine Lover*, this image was permeated by sinister undertones, the connotations – in *The Forgetting of Air* –

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[85] J. Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*, cit., p. 29.
[86] Ivi, p. 11.
[87] K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik, III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung 3*. cit., p. 88.
[88] L. Irigaray, *L'oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger*, cit., p. 167.

are of a much more idyllic kind: within the vast, uncontainable, invisible beyond of air, Irigaray tells us, everything – even what which is eventually disposed from memory – is forever preserved[89].

There is something special about being-in-air: the Slovenian philosopher Lenart Škof introduces into the academic discourse on Irigaray's elemental thinking the valuable terminology of an elemental atmosphere, which denotes our being-in-the-elements. For Škof, air is the most all-encompassing, and most elusive, element, and being in air is the most elemental way of being-in-the world; or being-there as Heidegger might say[90]. Everything is contained within air, everything merges within air: the breath of the one who is singing, Irigaray writes, merges with the divine breath[91].

In this way, Irigaray not only emphasizes the way in which presence dwells within air, she also displays the way in which this dwelling is inextricably related to the divine; the way in which the preservation of being within air is also necessarily – in so far as air is the mediator between human and divine breath – a preservation with(in) God. The role of air as a mediator between man and God has repeatedly been stressed by Irigaray: «Air is that in which we dwell […]. Air is the medium of natural and spiritual life»[92], she writes in *The Way of Love*. This assertion has wide implications for my reading of divine preservation as an act of remembrance, because, according to Irigaray, memory cannot be preserved within the material world, but must be preserved within the realm of the divine[93]. In this sense, the image of the airy grave wherein presence is sealed, or the elemental atmosphere of air, connotes exactly the bridge between material existence and eternal preservation in divine remembrance.

One reason why air plays such an important role within the Irigarayan conception of the divine, is that it allows her to envision a God of horizontal, rather than vertical, transcendence[94]. In this sense, Irigaray and Barth are not completely aligned: whereas the relationship between God and man, for Barth, is purely vertical – that is to say: from God above to man below[95] – Irigaray's horizontal transcendence implies a conception of the divine as

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[89] Ivi, p. 168.
[90] L. Škof, *Democracy of Breath and Fire: Irigarayan Meditations*, in "Sophia", 2022, n. 61, pp. 117-133, p. 126.
[91] L. Irigaray, *L'oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger*, cit., p. 179.
[92] L. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, cit., p. 67.
[93] Ivi, p. 139.
[94] Ivi, p. 149.
[95] P.F. de Quervain, op. cit., p. 21.

something that exists not above but between human beings. However, Irigaray and Barth are also not necessarily in complete opposition to each other. Irigaray has actually linked her conception of divine air, of the divinity of breath, which, of course, is largely informed by her experience with Eastern spiritual practices such as yoga, to an argument which very nearly resembles Barthian Christology. This is somewhat surprising seeing as Irigaray has often argued that the Christian tradition has failed to consider the significance of breath[96]. Yet, in her text, "The Mystery of Mary" (2010), Irigaray finds in the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus, a Christian genealogy of air which, she argues, has since been repressed.

As Škof has pointed out, we find in «almost all mythologies and religions of the world, […] a cosmological myth or narrative related to breath energy or breathing […]. Either in the form of "wind", "air", "cosmic breath" or "spirit"»[97]. Seen in this light, Irigaray's insistence on a repressed genealogy of breath found literally in the cradle of Christianity is perhaps not that difficult to be persuaded by. In "The Mystery of Mary", Irigaray provides an extremely creative rereading of the history of Mary with a focus on air and breath and argues that Jesus Christ was conceived in an act of joint breathing, in a symbiosis of breath, between God and Mary, with Gabriel, the angel and thus the embodiment of divine breath, as the mediator between the two[98]. The divinity of air, then, is partly rooted in the concrete figures of Mary and Jesus – the word made flesh, yes, but also the word given breath, or even: the breath made flesh. In this sense, Irigaray's horizontal transcendence should not be understood in terms of pantheistic immanence. For Irigaray, as for Barth, God is entirely unknowable, totally beyond human consciousness: God «who escapes our gaze and our hold», she writes, is the guarantor for difference; alterity, otherness[99].

God, for both Irigaray and Barth, is Wholly Other. This is exactly why air is so important for Irigaray as a metaphorization of the divine: it exists between us, yet, like God, perpetually escapes our gaze and our hold. Irigaray's conception of air, then, is a perfect metaphor for the kind of belief that this essay has in many ways been an exploration of: the air which encapsulates everything without ever showing itself – without ever being perceived

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[96] L. Irigaray, *Entre Orient et Occident*, cit., p. 77.
[97] L. Škof, op. cit., p. 128.
[98] L. Irigaray, *Il mistero di Maria*, Paoline, Roma 2010 (*Das Mysterium Marias*, translated by A. Dickmann, Les Éditions du Crieur Public, Hamburg 2011), pp. 18-24.
[99] L. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, cit., p. 159.

– perfectly mirrors the believe in that which is always beyond the perceivable. It is this kind of believe which is at work when Barth considers the apparent impossibility of eternal preservation; when Freud begins searching for a drive behind the psychoanalytic law of the pleasure principle, and when the child imagines the reel of the fort/da game still being present behind the curtain.

6. *Conclusion*

In the beginning of this essay, I posed this question: is it possible that two concepts as seemingly contradictory as those of divine providence and of the Freudian death drive could coexist? I posed this question after considering Irigaray's many invocations of the concept of "the beyond", each of which seemed to always evoke an inevitable aura of religiosity, which prompted me to attempt a tracing of the religious connotations within the beyond that Freud sought beyond the pleasure principle, the beyond of the death drive. In the theology of Barth, I found a perfect counterpart to the Freudian, psychoanalytic framework: a theology as deeply resistant to psychoanalysis as Freud was to theology, but which nonetheless seemed, on an almost unconscious level, to be evocative of Freudian thought in the same way that Freud's ideas seemed permeated by seemingly repressed strands of belief.

Particularly, I found in Barth's concept of nothingness – an ominous, destructive force constantly threatening the very existence of God's creature by luring him towards it – a convincing theological equivalent to the death drive. This provided a provisional union between the death drive and the idea of divine providence because this destructive nothingness is exactly that which necessitates God's providence, which for Barth signifies God's relentless and eternal upholding, protection, and preservation of His creature. But while this made it possible to translate the death drive into theological terms, it nonetheless did not bring me closer to a psychoanalytic conception of God's preservation. This, however, I found in Derrida's concept of archiving or memorization – a never ending process of counteracting the death drive's urge towards destruction.

For both Barth and Derrida, the act of preservation requires a space wherein the preservation can take place: a dwelling space – although not necessarily a physical one. As an illustration of such a space, I have suggested Irigaray's strikingly poetic "airy grave wherein presence is sealed": a space which, for Irigaray, is indistinguishable from the divine, and which is ideal for exactly the preservation of memory. In this sense, the figure of the airy grave, in this essay, serves as a mediator between the psychoanalytic and the

religious concepts of preservation in the same way that air, in Irigaray's work, mediates, or disrupts, the dichotomy of presence and absence, being and nothingness: the airy grave is a «nothingness which is not nothing»[100].

Does this comparative analysis, however, amount to a marrying of divine providence and the death drive? It does, I think, in so far as the comparisons – nothingness to the death drive. eternal preservation to the psychic archive – show that Barth's theological project and the project of psychoanalysis are similar not only in the sense that they, as Gestrich has argued, share common goals, but also in the sense that they are operating with concepts that are, while formally wildly dissimilar, materially alike.

However, there is an argument to be made: that my emphasis on the mediating figure of Irigaray's airy grave – or, in fact, the very necessity of utilizing such a mediation – implies the existence of what, in valuable structuralist terms, could be described as a semiotic dualism between the two concepts which in turn implies an alterity that is, to some extent, irreducible. Perhaps that is the reason why I, throughout this essay, keep circling back to the theme of belief: it seems to me that it takes a certain amount of belief to find common ground between the death drive and divine providence just as it did, for Freud, to assert the existence of a death drive beyond the principle which he had already declared to be law. Therefore, I shall, to paraphrase Irigaray, term the very endeavor of uniting divine providence with the death drive, theology with psychoanalysis, this: belief itself.

[100] Ivi, p. 174.