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JOHN R. BETZ

The Circle of Analogy: Metaphysics, Christology, Anthropology¹

Elsewhere, building on the work of Erich Przywara (1889–1972), I have tried to make a case for analogy as an enduring *Denkform* for Christian philosophy and theology, one that applies even to such dogmatic *loci* as Trinitarian theology, Christology, and theological anthropology.² Admittedly, the claim that analogy bears such extensive theological significance might seem to be a stretch. For when we speak of analogy, even in Catholic theology, our use of it tends to be restricted either to questions of theological language and the manner in which human words may be said to apply to God (following what Aquinas says about analogical predication in *ST* I, q. 13), or to the metaphysical relation between God and creation, which Dominican tradition has long described in terms of the *analogia entis*. Let us call these two uses the nominal (or linguistic) and the metaphysical. Complicating matters, it is not necessarily clear how these two uses are related. Indeed, inasmuch as Wittgenstein de facto replaced Aristotle as “the philosopher” of late twentieth-century theology, it cannot even be assumed that they go together at all—not if metaphysics finally gives way to a philosophy of language and “being”, which Aquinas understood as the intellect’s first object,³ becomes just another word by which we try to make sense of the world.

In what follows, however, I would like to suggest that any perceived aporia between traditional metaphysics and modern philosophies of language is an illusion through which we need to pass. Certainly, there is no metaphysics without language and linguistic practices, and therein lies the *particula veri* of the late Wittgenstein, but neither can theology, understood as a particular kind of discourse, dispense with metaphysics without sacrificing the intelligibility and universality of its claims—claims that pertain to what is actually the case. This is not to say that the nominal and

¹ Originally given as a lecture for the doctoral colloquium at the university of Fribourg, Switzerland, on 20. October, 2021.

² See BETZ, John R.: *Erich Przywara and Karl Barth: On the Analogia Entis as a Formal Principle of Catholic Theology*, in: WHITE, Thomas Joseph O.P. (ed.): *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Anti-Christ or the Wisdom of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2010, 35–87. Following Przywara, one could go even further and argue that analogy is the *Denkfigur* (*a posteriori!*) of all thought whatsoever, inasmuch as the structure and history of philosophy is itself inherently analogical, bearing witness throughout to a dynamic principle of unity-in-difference.

³ See *ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, corp.

metaphysical uses of analogy are not distinct. My point is simply that in their distinction they are analogically related (ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλο), inasmuch as the former implies and inevitably leads to the latter. The simplest explanation for this is that just as being is the condition for the possibility of language, language, in turn, is the condition of the possibility of any disclosure of being. In other words, the two uses of analogy go together for the very same reason that being and language do.⁴

The more specific question that will occupy us here, however, is the question of the *pros* (πρὸς) in *allo pros allo*, that is, the question of how we come from the nominal to the metaphysical analogy. How, in other words, do we come from reflection upon the expansive analogical function of language⁵ to a full-fledged analogy of being? The answer is not as elusive as we might imagine: for the linguistic ordering of diverse phenomena through language, achieved at its most expansive through the poetic use of metaphor, points to a metaphysical ordering of diverse things in a common Logos from which all things come. In other words, from the simplest reflection upon the practical working of language as a logical “gathering” (in its etymological connection to λέγειν) of diverse phenomena into one, we come in thought to the notion of a Logos in which all are ultimately one. Moreover, we come to see that whatever unity there is between this Logos and the many poetically gathered “up” into it would have to be an *ana*-logical unity (if we hear in analogy the “upwards” of the ἀνω), inasmuch as the many “gathered up” into the Logos cannot be said to be univocally identical with this Logos. Rather, they are analogically related to this Logos, which is at once *in them* as their deepest Logos, but also *beyond them* as the transcendent cause of their being. And so we come, before we know it, to the concept of a metaphysical analogy, whereby all things are analogically related to a common Logos.

But if it can be shown that the nominal analogy leads up, as it were, to the metaphysical, what does the metaphysical analogy have to do with dogmatic theology? This question is just as difficult to answer because it

⁴ Needless to say, this is a Heideggerian point. But before Heidegger, it was a point made by Hamann to Jacobi: “For me it is a matter neither of physics nor of theology, but of language, the mother of reason and its revelations, its A and Ω. It is the double-edged sword of all truths and lies; and do not laugh if I must attack the matter from this angle. It is my old lyre, but by it all things are made”. See HAMANN: *Briefwechsel*, vol. 6. Frankfurt: Insel 1975, 108.

⁵ “Analogy, considered as a semantical feature of natural language, is part of the expansion structure of language; it belongs to those structural features by which the language is adaptable to new kinds of thoughts and transformable to express new kinds of experience. [...]. Analogy in natural language is like gravity in nature, a fundamental and ubiquitous force which it takes the genius of Aristotle and Aquinas to describe”. See ROSS, James F.: *A New Theory of Analogy*, in: *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 44 (1970), 72. Ross does not here undertake the passage from the role of analogy in ordinary language to metaphysics, but he admirably demonstrates the ubiquity of analogy and its expansive semantic function.

recalls the debate between Barth and Przywara. Indeed, it signals caution, lest we be accused—as Barth essentially accused Przywara—of elevating a metaphysical principle into a controlling dogmatic principle and imposing a philosophical metaphysics upon dogmatic theology. If we are not to fall prey to the same ecumenical problems that beset early twentieth-century theology, we will therefore need to be as clear and careful as possible. Firstly, it should be understood that no metaphysics other than an *analogical* metaphysics is being proposed: 1) because no other kind of metaphysics is adequate to thought itself, as Przywara with remarkable rigor showed in the *Analogia Entis*; and 2) because the Christian faith excludes any other kind, e.g., a univocal metaphysics or, what would be even more absurd, an equivocal metaphysics. More to the point: in proposing an analogical metaphysics we are proposing nothing other than what is implied by revelation and the doctrines of every Christian confession. It is implied, for instance, in the doctrine of creation, unless one would affirm what the church has always rejected, namely, pantheism and Gnosticism. It is implied in Trinitarian theology, unless one would affirm that the immanent Trinity is realized and perfected in and through the world à la Hegel. It is implied in Christology, unless one would assert not just the hypostatic union of natures in Christ but their identity. It is implied, furthermore, in pneumatology, inasmuch as the Spirit analogizes being, conforming the many, who are in becoming, to their Logos; it is implied by the same token in anthropology, inasmuch as to be human is to be an analogy between one's native image and spiritual likeness. It is implied, furthermore, in ecclesiology, which is nothing but a manifestation of the analogical unity-in-diversity of the many members in relation to their capital analogate; and it is implied, finally, in eschatology inasmuch as the world and every rational spirit in it is ordered to the revelation of its Logos, its primary analogate, to be judged according to the extent that it has lived up to its analogical vocation, its call to union with the Logos, or culpably failed to do so. In sum, the principle of analogy is so obviously implied in Christian theology that to defend it seems like defending a tautology.

But if analogy is a given *Denkfigur*, and even something like a transcendental condition for thinking Christian doctrine, it is at the same time—and this is critical to observe—not something given *a priori*, but rather *a posteriori*. As Przywara repeatedly pointed out, though few seem to have appreciated this fact, analogy is not something from which anything could be deduced; it is not something from which any philosophy or theology could be derived. It is rather what we find to be the case after any serious philosophical or theological investigation. To be sure, analogy in the sense of ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλο is always already at work in our experience of the unity-in-diversity of things, from the basic biological unity-in-difference of male and female to the mysterious unity-in-difference of *noesis* and *noema* that is the structural condition for the possibility of any consciousness whatso-

ever. And in this respect it could very well appear to be an *a priori* principle. But it is nevertheless something that we discover *a posteriori* and that stands to be corrected in light of revelation. For the entire point of the analogy of being, as Przywara understood it, is that every creaturely opposition that has the form of *allo pros allo* (from the analogical unity-in-difference of essence and existence to male and female, and indeed the whole of creation inasmuch as it is structured by an analogy between essence and existence) is *not* a self-contained analogy but, as an analogy, can be understood *only* in reference to its Logos, which is mysteriously in-and-beyond it. In short, the entire thrust of the analogy is toward the Logos. Indeed, *what* the analogy of being is cannot be understood in any definitive sense except in light of its primary analogate, in terms of the Logos (1 John 3:1-2).⁶ It is therefore *not* the case that analogy predetermines the Logos (as if revelation were being put in a straightjacket by a philosophical metaphysics), but that analogy itself is judged according to the revelation of the Logos. Before it has been penetrated by the light of the Logos, the analogy of being is at most an image—a very faint one at that—and not yet a likeness. We might say that it is an analogy *only* in an analogical sense, and that the real analogy of being is not so much what creation now is as what in Christ it is meant to be.

But for Catholic theology this does not mean that the “analogy” is no analogy at all, for this would be tantamount to saying that God is no longer the Creator. If a more extensive notion of analogy is to be justified, we will have to show, in keeping with the venerable Thomistic principle *gratia (fides) non destruit sed supponit et perficit naturam (rationem)*, that analogy (specifically, the analogy of being) is, firstly, not at odds with dogmatic theology, but the very form of metaphysics presupposed by it. For the sake of a *complete* understanding of analogy, however, we will also have to show how the analogy of being is transformed and perfected in light of faith. In other words, having ascended in thought to the Logos of analogy, we will have to show what happens to the analogy of being in light of Christ, who alone fully reveals this Logos. For, as it turns out, in the light of Christ analogy turns into and is perfected by katalogy. Then, finally, in view of the astonishing descent of the Logos we can see how this transformation of analogy pertains to the human being, who is essentially (and therefore called to be) a poetic analogy of the Logos. Hence the title “The Circle of Analogy”, though, as we shall see, we might equally have chosen

⁶ It is precisely here, therefore, that we run up against the limits of philosophy. But the negative limit of analogy also presents a new possibility, inasmuch as thought *can* become faith and the light of faith *can* shine in the darkness of analogical incomprehension. By the same token, it is here that philosophy is once again presented with the example of Mary, whose fruitful openness to the Logos made possible the definitive revelation of this Logos, which thought itself, if it has not been blinded by passions, naturally desires to see.

as a title, “The Ladder of Analogy”, since at the top of the ladder what began as an ascent logically converts into a descent.

First, though, let me offer a brief explanation for the sequence of terms in the subtitle: “Metaphysics, Christology, and Anthropology”. The reason for beginning thus is to suggest from the start that metaphysics and Christology go together, and that it is a serious mistake to separate them. Indeed, I would suggest that undermining the analogy of being undermines the very foundations of Christology, inasmuch as Christology presupposes and is predicated upon precisely the kind of relation between God and creation that the *analogia entis* describes: a relation between divine and human natures that is at once without confusion (ἀσυγχύτως) or separation (ἀχωρίστως). In other words, here already we see that analogy is a fundamental *theological* figure and, more specifically, a figure for Chalcedonian orthodoxy—if to understand the relation between God and creation or the person of Christ we have to learn to think, in one way or another, in terms of a *unity-in-difference*. *Nota bene*, this is not to say that one cannot arrive at an analogical metaphysics from reflection on Christology, and see how, given the unity of the divine and human in Christ, creation might be similarly constituted. Nor am I saying that by analogy one automatically comes to Christology. I am simply saying that an analogical metaphysics is the most reasonable metaphysics (more reasonable than every monism and dualism, every pantheism and deism), and that sustained reflection on the nature of being points in the direction of something in which—or someone in whom—the differences of creation are united in the manner of an analogy. In other words, the *analogia entis*, as the most reasonable metaphysics, points to Christology as its ultimate material ground, and Christology points back to the *analogia entis* as the formal condition of the possibility of the hypostatic union. For unless divine and human nature are somehow compatible in their difference, however great, then there could be no incarnation.⁷

⁷ To be sure, since the debate between Barth and Przywara, philosophical metaphysics and dogmatic theology have gone down two seemingly divergent paths. In the end, however, metaphysics and Christology cannot be two separate discourses if Christ is the Alpha and Omega, i.e., the *principium et finis*. For from a theological standpoint each is implied by the other, leaving only the methodological question of which direction one is coming from: whether one is coming from metaphysics to Christology or from Christology to metaphysics. Both, I would suggest, are legitimate paths: the one (more or less represented by Przywara) is proper to philosophical or fundamental theology; the other (more or less represented by Barth) is proper to dogmatic theology. In sum, far from excluding one another, I would suggest they need one another, and that this is how we ought to think about the debate between Barth and Przywara, and, by extension, between Reformed and Catholic theology, because each clearly helped the other to be a better theologian: Przywara impressing upon Barth the need for some kind of analogy, and Barth, in turn, impressing upon Przywara the need to articulate the analogy of being in more Christological terms.

Now, as for the last term in the title, “anthropology”, how this relates to my sequence will become clear in due course. But it should be clear that if metaphysics as analogical metaphysics is finally concerned with the *Logos* of the analogy of creation, and if *this Logos* has been revealed in Christ, then the logos of *anthropos* cannot be understood apart from him. In other words, Christology is the measure of anthropology, as Barth rightly emphasized against every attempt to define humanity in other, non-Christological terms. But, again, this need not exclude a provisional analogical metaphysics. For it is from the image of the thinking *anthropos* that we come to the thought of the Logos of *anthropos*, and from the revelation of the Logos (for the first time) back to the likeness of *anthropos*. In sum, from analogical metaphysics we come to (possibility of) Christology, and via Christology we come back to anthropology, from which point we start all over again. And this, in part, is what I mean by the “circle” of analogy. For as soon as we have ascended by analogy to the Logos in thought we find that the Logos is not there, so to speak, but has always already descended to be the Logos, the Way, of our humanity in Christ.⁸

From beginning to end, therefore, we are caught up in the circle of analogy, leaving only the question of where one finds oneself within it: is one ascending to the Logos in thought or has one found him and already descended into the depths with him in faith? Or is one rising again with him? My point, in any event, is that analogy is more than a matter of thought, or poetry. It is a matter of our very being. For the movement of life is itself one of analogy, inasmuch as there is no real life that is confined to itself, much less curved in upon itself, which is the definition of sin (*incurvatio in se*). Rather, life itself is a poetic relation of one thing to another, which is the simplest way of understanding of what an analogy is. There is therefore something to be said for attempts to revise ontology in light of the principle of relation, especially when one tries to think of being in light of Trinitarian theology. For in this light the archetype of all life is not a subsistent being enclosed in itself, but a subsistent life that is always caught up and borne toward another: in the eternal *exitus* of the Father from himself toward the Son, who is himself *towards* the Father from eternity (*pros ton theon*, as John’s gospel says)—a life that is full, to the point of brimming over, when it is returned in the joy of the Spirit. Being, in other words, is life, because it is analogical. Or, better, it is not that being is analogical so much that “*analogy is being*”, as Przywara said, and that anything not caught up in this life is really dead.⁹

⁸ If we were to emphasize what this means for us, an appropriate title would have been: “Die Leiter der Analogie: Auf-gabe und Hin-unter-gabe”, since “Auf-gabe” implies not just a given task, but a “giving-up”, and since “Hin-unter-gabe”, suggests both “surrender”—*Hin-gabe*—and the direction that being surrendered, in Christian theology, assumes.

⁹ See PRZYWARA, Erich: *Analogia Entis. Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John Betz, David Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2014, 314: “The ‘being’—

1. MINIMAL AND MAXIMAL ANALOGY

Now, admittedly, if we think that analogy is nothing more than a *modus loquendi*, and used in theology merely as a way of speaking about God and ensuring the propriety of theological language, as a matter of theological etiquette, so to speak, the foregoing will sound grandiose, and perhaps as an absurd transgression of the limits of language and experience. Moreover, it could appear that we have fallen back into metaphysics in the old sense of the term, which is no longer permissible to us after Kant laid down the limits of thought, etc. And no doubt that criticism could be applied to Przywara, too, by anyone who thinks that the age of metaphysics is over and that analogy in Aquinas is little more than a qualification on our use of language. As Herbert McCabe once said, "Analogy is not a way of getting to know about God, nor is it a theory of the structure of the universe, it is a comment on our use of certain words".¹⁰ Let us call this the *minimalist* version of analogy, which is typically attended by a rejection of metaphysics either for reasons stemming from Kant, or Heidegger, or Wittgenstein.

My own view, however, is that these reasons, which *prima facie* may have a point to them,¹¹ are ultimately spurious and indicative of lack of metaphysical nerve—*nota bene*, not a lack of nerve to transgress the limits of thought along the lines of pre-critical metaphysics, but rather a lack of nerve to consider that the limits of our world are the structural limits of an *analogy*, which *eo ipso* points to a Logos that, in Przywara's idiom, is in-and-beyond them. But if this is so, then the minimalist analogy, inasmuch as it does not recognize an ontological analogy, is necessarily a truncated analogy. What is more, it is an indication of an aesthetic failure to recognize the analogy between the metaphoricity of language and the metaphoricity of being, in short, between the poetry of language and the poetry of being; to see, in other words, that something has been translated so as to *be* an analogy. My point, in any event, is that theology is not just a meta-discourse about the language games and practices peculiar to persons of a given faith community over time, but an inherently metaphysical discourse, because it is about reality, which, according to Christian scripture and tra-

Sein—which all philosophies take to be the primordial question and primordial datum with respect to everything else, does not (subsequently) 'have' analogy as an attribute or as something developing from it; rather analogy *is* being, and thus thought *is* (noetically) analogy". At the pinnacle of metaphysics everything is thus reversed: starting from being we end up finding in the light of faith (in the Trinity) that what is original is not being, but analogy (love) as being.

¹⁰ See McCabe's commentary in: *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 3: *Knowing and Naming God*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1964, 106.

¹¹ For we cannot think being without also reflecting upon the conditions of thought; we cannot think being if we think of it only in terms of beings; and we cannot think being apart from language, its uses, and practical ways of being, and so forth.

dition, is an analogical reality. All of which speaks for a *maximalist* view of analogy.

Again, this is not to say that we should go back to a pre-linguistic approach to metaphysics and a correspondingly naive realism (although something of the sort has gained more currency in recent years after Quentin Meillassoux's critique of correlationism and the object-oriented ontology of Graham Harman).¹² For, obviously, reality is mediated to us by language, so much so that one could say with Heidegger, "no language no ontology", or with Hamann, "no word, no world".¹³ As Catherine Pickstock has put it, *nota bene* in the context of an argument for a new religious metaphysics, "There is no moment when one's specifically human knowledge of the world precedes or exceeds one's symbolic or linguistic reading of the world".¹⁴ It is simply to say that language is never *just* language, but always already *more* than language—and not just because being is always given in language as transcending language, but because language itself is positively capable of indicating what exceeds it. And inasmuch as language functions *this* way, bearing witness to something beyond it that is somehow indicated within it, its very structure is analogical and a reflection of the analogy of being. One could even say, if we pull out all the stops, that language ultimately bears some remote analogy to the Logos himself, with the difference that in him the Father is *perfectly* indicated.

Of course, ordinary treatments of analogy in Catholic theology tend to be more modest, being limited to what Thomas says in part one, q. 1, a. 13 of the *Summa Theologiae*—to the effect that when we say that God is wise we mean this neither univocally nor equivocally, but analogically. But, as I have tried to show, this is not all that analogy means in theology, and if we confine our treatment of analogy to a merely nominal analogy, failing to advance to a metaphysical analogy, we would be failing to think both philosophically and theologically. Moreover, we would be failing to appreciate how analogy, and indeed the analogy of being, is implied throughout Aquinas's theology even though Thomas himself does not use the term *analogia entis* as a *terminus technicus*. Consider, for example, what Thomas says in *ST* I, q. 4, a. 3 when he says that creatures participate in the likeness of the cause (namely, God) "according to some sort of analogy, since

¹² See MEILLASSOUX, Quentin: *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London: Bloomsbury 2009; HARMAN, Graham: *Speculative Realism: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2020.

¹³ See HAMANN: *Briefwechsel*, vol. 5. Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag 1965, 95: "Were there no Word, there would be no reason—no world. Here is the source of creation and government."

¹⁴ See PICKSTOCK, Catherine: *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020, 15. But for Pickstock this does not mean the end of metaphysics; on the contrary, it is the symbolic nature of language, within which, so to speak, we live and move and have our being, that points to the symbolic nature of being, which is revealed within it. See IDEM: *Repetition and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013.

existence is common to all. In this way all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being". Similarly, in *De veritate*, Thomas says that in so far as creatures are from God "they participate in some likeness of Him and thus lead to His likeness" (*De ver.*, q. 18, a. 2, ad 5). And one could find any number of similar passages in Thomas, especially in his commentary on the *Divine Names*.

Clearly, Thomas subscribed to what Dominican tradition after Cajetan came to call the *analogia entis*, whose more precise sense, as has been explained elsewhere, is bound up with the real distinction between *essentia* and *esse* (or *existentia*)—inasmuch as the creaturely unity of essence and existence is an analogue of their identity in God. Following Aquinas, I will therefore maintain in addition to a nominal analogy a more robust, metaphysical understanding of analogy. But we cannot simply posit this. If we are to pass through the apparent aporia and mediate between the "grammatical" and, for lack of a better term, "traditional" Thomists, we also need to show how these two uses of analogy are connected; that is, we need to show by what path we can ascend from a practical analogy of names to a theoretical analogy of being. Then perchance we can see how language and being are analogically related.

2. FROM PREDICAMENTAL TO TRANSCENDENTAL ANALOGY

To this end, let us begin with what since Cornelio Fabro has been called analogy's "predicamental" usage,¹⁵ that is, its application within the immanent realm of the ten categories or "predicaments" of Aristotle: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, having, acting, being affected. For, according to Aristotle, whatever is said of anything will be predicated of them—primarily of substances, such as Socrates, and secondarily of accidents in connection with one or another of the categories. Within these categories analogy functions as a way of mentally or poetically uniting things that are otherwise very different, and this is why Aristotle classifies analogy itself as a species of metaphor.¹⁶ For the sake of argument, thinking of the etymological connection of analogy to ἀνω and λέγειν, let us also consider how all language is in some sense analogical inasmuch as every word involves a "gathering up" of various objects and experiences under a common term, e.g., in the way countless species are gathered up under the genus "tree". But is there really a way from the predicamental to

¹⁵ For Fabro's discussion of the distinction between predicamental and transcendental participation, see *La Nozione metafisica di partecipazione*, (3rd ed. Torino 1963), pp. 145-209; *Partecipazione e causalità* (Torino 1960), pp. 372-380. See also the intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: *The Notion of Participation*, in: *The Review of Metaphysics* XXVII, (1974) 3.

¹⁶ *Poetics* 1457b16f., trans. I. Bywater, in: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984.

the metaphysical use of analogy, or from the analogical function of language in general to what eventually came to be called the analogy of being?

To answer this question let us consider the beginning of Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle famously says that “being can be said in many ways” ($\tauὸ δὲ ὅν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς$). What does this mean? To give Aristotle’s own example, “some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of substance itself. It is for this reason that we say even of non-being that it is non-being.”¹⁷ Now, if this were all that Aristotle said about being, we might be talking today about the equivocity of being instead of an analogy of being. But Aristotle points out what we intuitively know to be true: that some things are more real than others. To give the example offered by Kris McDaniels, consider a donut, the kind with a hole in the middle, or, if you prefer, an ordinary tire.¹⁸ No one would say that the hole does not exist; but neither would anyone say that it exists like what surrounds it. Rather, it exists in a way analogous to what more truly is. And the same thing can be said, by extension, of accidents with regard to substances, or, for Aristotle, of the different kinds of substances, ranging from the perishable to the eternal and moving (e.g., the planets), or from the *primum mobile* to the unmoved mover.

It is not without reason, therefore, that in the same context of Book IV of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle sketches out what has come to be known as a *pros hen* ($\piρὸς ἔν$) analogy, which later came to be called an analogy of attribution, inasmuch as diverse things take their name from a primary analogate.¹⁹ The classical example, of course, is that of health as said primarily of a person, and in secondary or tertiary senses of a healthy appearance or healthy urine or of a healthy diet, medicine and exercise, as signs and causes of health. Clearly, for better or for worse, language is intrinsically hierarchical: by reason (by the logos of language) we organize things by reference to primary things, which most embody what we mean. And so it is here with respect to the question of being: within the context of Aristotle’s metaphysics, being is naturally said most truly of the prime mover, which abides in itself without being moved by anything else. Fol-

¹⁷ *Metaphysics* IV, 2, 1003b6-11, trans. W.D. Ross, in: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984.

¹⁸ See McDANIELS, Kris: *The Fragmentation of Being*. Oxford: OUP 2017.

¹⁹ *Metaphysics* IV, 1, 1003a32; cf. V, 1, 1028a10. This type of analogy is so called for the reason that diverse things sharing a common denomination (e.g., several things sharing the denomination “being”) are analogically related to “to one” primary analogate from which their different meanings derive.

lowing Aristotle, we are therefore justified in moving from a predicamental analogy to a metaphysical analogy.

But does Aristotle really give us a genuine analogy of being? Can we go from Aristotle's predicamental analogy to a genuinely *transcendental* analogy, which transcends all the categories? No, because as Heidegger rightly pointed out, for Aristotle the question of being is exhausted by the question of substance. Indeed, the question of being qua being, as we understand it in existential terms, is really never asked. Nor could Aristotle have asked it inasmuch as for the Greeks the world is eternal. For Aristotle, what we mean by being is just substance or substances, and whatever we might mean by the analogy of being is simply a hierarchy of substances, graded according to their degree of permanence. If, therefore, we are to make our way from a predicamental analogy concerning substances and accidents to a genuinely transcendental analogy, we have to free up the question of being from its automatic categorization as substance. Thus far Heidegger is correct. But one does not have to follow Heidegger any farther than this. Instead, let us follow Thomas, attentive to the existentialism inherent in the so-called real distinction, which resonates in all being and in every copula, between *essentia* and *esse* (or *existentia*). For in everything that "is" we can reflect upon both "what" it is (*quid est*) and the sheer fact "that" it is (*quod est*), its essential whatness and, for lack of a better term, its existential "thatness", its sheer givenness.

Now, from an Aristotelian standpoint, everything has suddenly changed: for if we really think through what is given in the real distinction (which cannot be taken for granted, because for many it is no more than a *formula* and a way of once again explaining everything away), we realize that we absolutely cannot get a hold, a grasp, on being, however hard, like Hegel, we try. We find that being is always in excess of what we can comprehend—not only because of the infinite diversity of beings, which, if we merely had time, we could eventually categorize, but because existence itself can never be reduced to essence. Not only is it *unvordenklich*, as the late Schelling said, it is also *undenkbar* in that no logic or concept can capture it: it is, as it were, pre-logical and pre-conceptual. And this is why, when the *Seinsfrage* really comes to us, when the question of being is really thought, it comes with a stunning force, breaking in upon us with the question of the sheer givenness or, in theological terms, the sheer giftedness of being in every thing.

3. WITH AND BEYOND BARTH AND HEIDEGGER

Whether we are aware of it or not we are now at the top of the ladder of analogy, so to speak, having ascended to that point where, from the question of being, we come to appreciate the gift of being in everything. We have come, in other words, to the point at which philosophically we can go

no further. For, from a pure philosophical perspective, it is inexplicable why there should be anything rather than nothing. Nor could we stay here even if we wanted to without falling from vertigo, perceiving in faith that the Being of God is the Being of the Logos, but that the Logos to which we have ascended is always already the descending Logos through whom all things are made (John 1:3) and all things are saved (John 12:32).

Now perhaps we can better appreciate what Przywara, following Aquinas and Thomist tradition, means by the analogy of being, which we would arguably do better to understand as a radical experience of being rather than as a tried-and-true concept of being. For the basic epistemological point of the analogy of being, certainly as emphasized by Przywara, is that being *cannot* be captured in a concept, since the moment one would try to grasp being it slips away, parsing incomprehensibly into *essentia* and *esse* (*existentia*). On the one hand, negatively, the analogy of being thus leads inevitably to an experience of thought's limit. But, on the other hand, positively, this recognition of thought's limit is also the threshold of a new understanding of being and possibility of being. For it is then that we come to recognize, perhaps for the first time, the difference between saying that we "are" and that God IS, and what Przywara with trembling reverence called the *analogia entis*. As Balthasar said of Przywara, "He lives like the mythical salamander in the fire: there, at the point where finite, creaturely being arises out of the infinite, where that indissoluble mystery holds sway that he baptized with the name *analogia entis*".²⁰ Sadly, however, as Balthasar observed in 1962, no one seems to have understood this, and "the term passed over into the common vocabulary without an understanding and concomitant appropriation of its true pathos."²¹ And it was in this etiolated form, as nothing but an abstract concept, that it was branded either the "invention of Antichrist" (Barth) or a relic of "onto-theology" (Heidegger).²²

Certainly, these are caricatures of the *analogia entis*, but that does not mean that they do not signal dangers. One might even grant that, while Barth was unfair to Przywara, he was right to see the danger in a thought-

²⁰ BALTHASAR, Hans Urs von: *Erich Przywara*, in: *Tendenzen zur Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Geschichte in Porträts*, ed. by Jürgen Schütz. Stuttgart: Olten 1966, 355. According to the myth, the salamander's cool skin is supposed to preserve it from the fire. Balthasar's point, accordingly, seems to be that for Przywara, a true apprehension of being is to stand in the consuming fire of God (Heb. 12:29), to see oneself as thoroughly from God, so thoroughly that one should be consumed, and yet be able to stand as a creature from God before God, living in the fire.

²¹ PRZYWARA, Erich: *Sein Schrifttum*, ed. Leo Zimny, with an introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag 1962, 6.

²² Elsewhere I have tried to show with Balthasar why these are grotesque caricatures of the *analogia entis* and why Przywara's thought deserves more credit than modern theology (and philosophy) has given him. See *Analogia Entis*, 74–115; BETZ, John: *Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two)*, in: *Modern Theology* 21 (2006), 1–50.

less and uncritical appropriation of the *analogia entis*. If, therefore, we are really to *think* the *analogia entis*, we must take care lest we turn it back into a concept of being, from which, Barth feared in 1929, one might contentedly “survey” one’s relation to God in a “scheme of a unity of similarity and dissimilarity”,²³ or we end up back in a rationalistic metaphysics—an “onto-theology”—all over again, in a system of thought that fails to register the very mystery of being that the analogy of being, between essence and existence, is meant to disclose. And this could easily happen if, instead of patiently abiding in the creaturely space of the real distinction between essence and existence, one props oneself up on it and proceeds directly to identify God as an *identity* of essence and existence—as if this identity were even remotely comprehensible.²⁴

But Christian metaphysics must do more than defend itself against criticisms: it must learn from them in order to go beyond them. And it must freely admit what it can learn, in this case from Barth and Heidegger, arguably its two strongest critics. From Barth, Christian metaphysics can learn to keep its Christological focus, and think being, as it must, in light of Christ. And to his great credit, perhaps instigated by his debate with Barth, Przywara strove in this direction, so much so that the *analogia entis* is finally an *analogia caritatis in Christo*. From Heidegger, on the other hand, Christian metaphysics can learn to dwell in the real distinction and to meditate upon the mysterious gift of being in everything—a gift that we fail to appreciate or respect if we automatically understand being as what is caused and God, in turn, on the basis of a metaphysical system of cause and effect, as the *causa sui*. Heidegger is surely right about this, and so, once again, we must be careful to dwell within the real distinction, mindful of what it means, so that we never lose sight of the *gift of being*. For it is only then, when we appreciate the mystery of *esse*, that we can raise our minds to the contemplation of *Being as Gift*. Otherwise we will not appreciate anything as it was meant to be appreciated, as something that

²³ BARTH, Karl: *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*, trans. R. Birch Hoyle. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1993, 5.

²⁴ To be sure, this is formally what is meant by the *analogia entis*—an analogy between a non-identity of essence and *esse* in creatures and a simple identity of essence and *esse* in God. For Przywara, however, this identity is not a clear concept. On the contrary, it is blindingly incomprehensible, veiled as it were by paradoxes, and can be imagined only through a glass darkly on the basis of what is *merely* an analogy. In no sense, therefore, does it provide any ground in thought on which the creature could stand and from which it could survey its relationship to God, as Barth feared. For the entire point of the *analogia entis* as Przywara understood it is that we do not have any identity in ourselves, but that our identity is that of an analogy. By the same token we can see how impossible it would be to “survey” one’s relationship to God by virtue of the analogy of being, as Barth feared. For the *analogia entis* underscores precisely the *maior dissimilitudo* between God and creatures, showing that the relationship between God and creatures can be understood in no other way than in (Christological) terms of ever more humble service to the ever-greater God.

might not have been but *is*—not merely as a *factum*, as modern technology would have it (for there really is no such thing as a bare fact), but as the analogical presence of transcendence. Then, having left behind the crass philosophies of modern technology and analytic philosophy, which have no place in the precinct of theology, we can begin to do philosophy again in the original thaumatological sense of the word—wondering at the Logos in-and-beyond all things.

On the one hand, Christian metaphysics would do well to think *with* Heidegger, when it arrives at the question of the gift of being, and from genuine metaphysical reflection on the gift of being rises up to contemplation of Being as Gift. For then, and only then, far from scholastic textbooks, do we really see what is meant by the analogy of being: when being itself becomes mysterious once more. But it is not enough to ask the *Seinsfrage* with Heidegger and contemplate the gift of being in every thing, as any serious reflection upon the real distinction would demand. A philosopher must also ask what it means if Being is nothing other than a kenotic, self-absconding Gift. In other words, it is not enough to stop thinking, as Heidegger does, with the *es gibt*, with a bare existentialism, and refuse to ask the *other* philosophical question, which is latent in the real distinction, namely *what gives*. Granted, Heidegger is right to steer us clear of a wooden essentialism, and every systematic reduction of existence to essence (à la Hegel), but he is surely just as wrong to suppress reason's desire to know whence the gift of being comes, from what Giver, and why?

For his part, tragically, it seems that Heidegger was afraid to return to the realm of reason and its grounds. He was afraid to go where thought itself leads, for fear that he might have to ask teleological questions once more, of the kind Aristotle and every thinking person feels compelled to ask. And so, fearful of the call of the Logos, spurning ever reason and every ground, he contented himself with calling being nothing in order to be left to himself, which is the final absurdity of his philosophy. For there is no reason to stop where he stopped, with a pseudo-mystical *Sein als Nichts*,²⁵ certainly not if philosophy is etymologically a searching for wisdom, and nothing is not wisdom. On the contrary, thought (and, *nota bene*, not just

²⁵ I say here pseudo-mystical, because Heidegger's ontology terminates not in the darkness that is the veil before the God who is revealed *in the darkness*, as for the Christian mystical tradition from Gregory of Nyssa to Eckhart to John of the Cross, but in a genuine nothing, an ontological nihilism, as Edith Stein and others pointed out. Przywara calls it a secularized Carmelite mysticism. See PRZYWARA, Erich: *In und Gegen. Stellungnahmen zur Zeit*. Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz 1955, 173. To be sure, on the most charitable of readings, we might say that, for Heidegger, too, nothing is not really nothing, but a veil before Being, which is nothing but gift. And there is room here to redeem Heidegger, if it is not too sententious to say so. But Heidegger seems bent on not thinking the possibility that Being might be more than Nothing, that it might really be goodness, generosity, and love. Why indeed *Sein als Nichts*, except in a provisional sense? Why not *Sein als Güte und Liebe*? Thus far Heidegger was not willing to think.

Christian thought) beckons us further. It beckons us to contemplate the possibility that the nothing at which Heidegger arrived is but the *veil* before the mystery of being, not its pseudo-definition. Why indeed *Sein als Nichts*? Why not *Sein als Güte und Liebe*—a love so loving that it hides itself and absconds itself and even outright denies itself for the sake of the beloved? Simply put, why Heidegger? Why not Bonaventure, who arguably knew more about being because he knew that the Gift of Being had something to do with love? And if Being is Gift and Love, why not think that Being might be and really is Trinitarian: that Being is eternally given (in the Father's eternal ex-istence in the Son) and eternally received (in the Son's receiving the Father's ex-istence), and joyfully given and received in their common Spirit? And why not think that, for us, and for anything outside of God, really to be is to be caught up into this life in which divinity is joyfully given and joyfully received, and that everything else “is” by analogy, i.e., insofar as its life participates in this Life.

4. ANALOGY AND KATALOGY

But can one really get from a predicamental analogy to a metaphysical analogy all the way up to Trinitarian theology? One's answer to this question could be both too modest and too daring. It would be too daring to say that reflection on analogy leads directly into the heart of Trinitarian theology. But it would also be too modest to say that there is no analogy between our wonder at the gift of being and the possibility of (Trinitarian) Being as Gift, because there *is* an analogy here, which may not be evident from reason alone, but is certainly evident in light of revelation, which transforms our entire understanding of analogy. For, seen in light of revelation, and in light of Trinitarian doctrine in particular, it is not that the Being of God as Gift is analogous to the gift of being in creation, but the reverse: that the gift of being in creation is *analogous to the Gift of Being*, which is the Father's eternal gift of the divine nature to the Son.²⁶ In other words, what we mean by being is no simple imparting of existence, in the way that Thomism typically understands the *actus essendi*, but something much more intimate, inasmuch as our inmost being is analogous to the self-

²⁶ If this is so, if our temporal being through the Logos is *like* the being eternally given to the Logos, then the gift of being to creatures through the Logos would have to be something more profound than the actualization of a given possibility. It would have to be more like a total self-communication on the part of the Logos, who comes kenotically to be in things, giving them life, in a way analogous to the way the Father eternally comes to be in him, giving him eternal life. Likewise, just as by an eternal kenosis the Father is eternally manifest in the Son, so too the Logos, through an analogous kenosis, is manifest in creation. When, in any event, we say that all things were made through the Logos, citing John 1:3, we do not mean a remote mechanical production, but that the Son gives himself as completely to his creation as the Father gives himself to him, disappearing in it, so to speak, in order to give it the room to be its very principle and end.

communication of the Father's own life in the Logos. And if this primary self-communication is total, even kenotic, as Balthasar and Bulgakov have argued, then we have reason to believe that the communication of being to creatures is similarly total, similarly kenotic, with the difference that no creature can wholly receive it and—except for the immaculate conception—is imperfectly received. At the end of the day, therefore, when Thomas says that *esse* is in all things most intimately (S.T. I, q. 8, a. 1 corp.), this should not be understood abstractly, but as intimately as possible: in terms of the kenotic self-communication of the Logos, through whom we are given a share in his own being from the Father. In other words, if our own creation through the Logos (John 1:3) is modeled on the total self-communication of the Father to the Son, and if the Father holds nothing back from the Son, but gives everything to him, and if the Son gives everything back in the Spirit of an eternal Eucharist, then it stands to reason that creation through the Logos is similarly total self-communication and gift, whose completion cannot be anything less than a similarly complete return of this gift, even through the darkness of sin and death, which is precisely why Christ says, in a profoundly metaphysical sense, "it is finished" (John 19:30).

In the end, therefore, what was first seen as a remote analogy of being (inasmuch as God is in creation in the way that a cause is in an effect, or an artist is in her work) turns out to be something inconceivably profounder and more intimate. For the Logos that was first identified atop the ladder of analogy as the ideal and abstract Logos of creation (its primary analogate) is now seen to be the real Logos in whom we live and move and have our being—moreover, as the Logos who is so real as to become flesh and "sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), die like a common criminal, and descend into the depths of hell on our behalf (1 Pet. 4:6). As the letter to the Ephesians sublimely says: "When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (4:9-10). In other words, the moment we see the Logos for who he is—in the words of Heraclitus, "the Way up and the Way down" (ὁδὸς ἀνω κάτω μία καὶ ώντη)—the analogy reverses direction: we see that the Logos who is above (*exterior omni re*) is also below (*interior omni re*). Indeed, we see with Augustine to our amazement that the one who transcends all things is the one who is in all things innermostly (*interior intimo meo*), and that the one who seemed so far away stands at the door of the heart knocking (Rev. 3:20).

In this Way, then, analogy is katalogy.²⁷ For the Most High, who by nature is exalted above all creatures, has, so to speak, always already left his

²⁷ See BALTHASAR, Hans Urs von: *Theo-Logic*, vol. 2, trans. Adrian J. Walker. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2004, 171–218. Balthasar here develops in light of his own theology

throne, has always already descended, even prior to the incarnation, to be the very being of our being and the life of our life. In the words of the Greek poet quoted by Paul, the Logos becomes “the one in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). But were we then wrong to understand the immanence of God in creation in terms of the immanence of a cause in its effect? No, not if we understand that the word cause is itself to be understood analogically. Such an analogy is natural to sound reason, and here, too, therefore, the Thomist analogy between grace (faith) and nature (reason) holds true. Or were we perhaps wrong to understand the analogy in terms of the real distinction between essence and existence, which suggests a mysterious identity of essence and existence in God? Not at all. For it remains the case that we exist by participation in the one who is Being itself, and that all that becomes (*in fieri*) is an analogue of Him who most truly IS. The difference is that we now see that the *esse* in the real distinction is more profoundly a share in the *esse* of the Logos who is the Father’s Ex-istence, and that the real distinction is upheld from below by the Logos, who condescends, so to speak, to be the beginning and end of the temporal movement it implies.

In sum, katalogy does not spell the end of the analogy between God and creatures, in the way that the so-called “death of God” theologies, following Hegel, wrongly supposed. Rather, katalogy deepens and clarifies the nature of the analogy and the relation between immanence and transcendence proper to it. For Christ, the Logos, remains our primary analogate and the transcendent *measure* of our being, against which our being is judged; at the same time, by virtue of his kenosis (in creation and redemption) Christ, the Logos, is the *inmost* being of our being. Not only is he incomparably exalted, the very Ex-istence of the Father; by virtue of his kenosis (in creation and redemption) he is also the very being of our being and the life of our life, apart from whom we would have no being or life at all. The “in-and-beyond” structure of analogy thus remains as firmly in place as ever. But are we not compelled to say that katalogy mitigates the *maior dissimilitudo* between God and creation? Must we not, in view of the depths of revelation, reverse the teaching of Lateran IV and say that within every dissimilarity, however great, God is ever more similar to us in Christ? No, for the proximity of Emmanuel does not override the analogical difference between Creator and creature, which remains even and precisely within the hypostatic union; therein lies truth of the *analogia entis* from the stand-

Przywara’s own katalogical understanding of analogy, as Przywara understood it in connection with the doctrine of creation, which he understands in terms of a primal condescension (see *Schriften*, vol. 2, 442, where he speaks of creation as a “Sichhinabneigen Gottes”), but also in view of the depths of the hypostatic union (see p. 452), and, over time, ever more explicitly in terms of Christology. Katalogy is an explicit theme, for instance, in Przywara’s late Christologically framed anthropology. See PRZYWARA, Erich: *Mensch: Typologische Anthropologie*. Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz 1958.

point of Christological doctrine. After all, the hypostatic union is precisely a *union*, not an identity of natures; it is also the union of such disparate natures that makes the hypostatic union so stupendous, and the display of such love unto death an enduring sign of God's greatness (John 15:13). The analogical difference between God and creation thus remains even and precisely in the case of the hypostatic union and, by analogical extension, in every *unio caritatis in gratia*.

Of course, something has nevertheless changed. For the truth of the analogy of being is now seen in its proper depths as an analogy of love.²⁸ But the analogy of love is not a zero-sum game in which the deeper love goes the less transcendent it is. On the contrary, the analogy of love is such that the deeper love goes the more sublime it appears. In the words of St. Bernard, whose sermons on the Song of Songs Aquinas was discussing when he died:

I have ascended to the highest in me, but, behold, the word is towering above that. In my curiosity I have descended to explore my lowest depths, yet I found him even deeper. If I looked outside myself, I saw him stretching beyond the furthest I could see. And if I looked within, he was yet further within. Then I knew the truth of what I had read, "In him we live and move and have our being." And blessed is the man in whom he has his being, who lives for him and is moved by him.²⁹

If we may take Bernard as an exemplary mystic, true mysticism, based on an experience of the depths of divine immanence, thus leads to exaltation and expressions of divine transcendence. True mysticism, in other words, confirms the structural integrity of the analogy of being. The difference is that the interiority of God is understood to be even deeper profounder (*interior intimo me*) and the superiority of God is understood to be even greater (*superior summo meo*).

CONCLUSION

Needless to say, all of this requires more explanation than I can give here, and this is the risk I have taken in proposing a *maximalist* understanding of analogy. But what I mean by the circle of analogy should now be clear. For what I mean is that, as the circle is drawn upward, at its top, at the moment one glimpses a revelation of the Logos or merely begins to suspect that the Logos of all things has been revealed in and through them, it begins to turn downward, such that analogy becomes what Balthasar, following Przywara, called *katalogy*. But then, as we are caught upward into the

²⁸ LOCHBRUNNER, Manfred: *Analogia Caritatis. Darstellung und Deutung der Theologie Hans Urs von Balthasars*. Freiburg: Herder 1981.

²⁹ Sermon 74 from *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Song of Songs*, 4 vols. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications 1971–1980, 90.

circular movement of analogy, drawing out the connotation of the *anō* in the *ana* of analogy, *katalogy* becomes analogy once more, for we ourselves ascend with Christ to the extent that we descend with him, as Przywara liked to say, in ever greater service to the ever-greater God. And this brings me, finally, to the meaning of analogy for anthropology. For if the incarnate *Logos* is the meaning of human being—and indeed the meaning of all being—then to be human is essentially to be an analogy of the love of God that has been revealed to us in Christ.

Abstract

*In the twentieth century it could be said that Catholic thought about analogy shifted from a more metaphysical to a more linguistic frame of reference. This article, however, seeks to show how thought about being and language inevitably leads from a merely predicamental analogy to a genuinely metaphysical analogy; and, secondly, how the metaphysical analogy, the so-called *analogia entis*, is transformed in light of revelation—so much so as to become *katalogy*. What is presented here as the “circle of analogy” thus involves both an analogical ascent to the *Logos* and a katalogical descent with the *Logos* as the circular movement of thought and being.*