

# The Mystical End of Finitude

*Analogia Entis as Catholic Denkform*

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to show that the doctrine of *analogia entis*, the analogy of being, is a proper form of thought for Catholic theology, because it is based on a theological metaphysics. The thesis includes a very brief historical account of the concept of analogy in philosophical and theological metaphysics, but has for its real starting point the exclamation of Karl Barth that the *analogia entis* is "the invention of the Antichrist." After exploring Barth's reasons for reacting so strongly to the doctrine, I discuss some of Barth's Catholic interlocutors' attempts to resolve the dispute. Then I attend to the question of form of thought, or *Denkform*, a term coined by Hans Urs von Balthasar in his study *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* to express "styles of truth" in Catholic theology. Finally, I consider the original proposal for the *analogia entis* by Erich Przywara. My conclusion is that the *analogia entis* exceeds the requirements for openness set by Balthasar for a Catholic form of thought, and that it, as an essentially open metaphysics, testifies to the mystical end of finitude.

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## Introduction and Background

Truth is an elusive thing. We all know the reoccurring experience of a bright moment of simple, seemingly complete illumination that nevertheless quite soon turns out to be only a provisory insight, a stopping point, on a long journey towards truth.<sup>1</sup> (“We shall never cease from exploration...” as T. S. Eliot would have it.) Dwelling too long in any moment is not for mortals, as we recognise in the gospel story of when the disciples decided to settle down with Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the mount of Christ’s Transfiguration. God is not to be figured out once and for all. There are numerous ways of saying it – some are better than others – but there is a constant tension in the life of a Christian between, on the one hand, a relative ”oikophilia," a love of home that springs from acknowledging creation as a divine gift, in spite of the devastating consequences of sin, and, on the other hand, the pilgrim character of our existence as creatures, always becoming, finding our being as ”a moving image of the eternal” – slouching towards Jerusalem(!).

The *analogia entis*, or analogy of being, has come to signify an important metaphysical doctrine in the contemporary debate. To my mind, the analogy of being is a technical term for describing the above, fundamental experience, which is why it is such an important concept to bring into metaphysical inquiry. It touches on many important questions, most especially of the proper *end* of our existence and the ways of thought and practices that we inhabit to make sense of it all.

Over the course of writing this thesis, I have lost count of the times I despaired at the prospect of saying *anything* of considerable worth about something so ultimately mind-boggling as the relationship between God and creation. This is nevertheless my trembling attempt at exactly such an enterprise. However, in the end there is a great consolation to know that any rightful expression of a Christian metaphysics will always find its final consummation in the words “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10)<sup>2</sup>

When I first read Karl Barth a few years ago, he appeared as much more sympathetic to me than he does today. Maybe it was because I found his response to Liberal Protestantism much more pressing back then. While I have come to think, as this thesis also will imply, that his own path was ultimately misdirected in that it did take some straightforwardly unorthodox directions, I still deeply admire his Christocentric pathos and the kind of language that such a commitment produces.

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of the philosophical insights of John Paul II in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture references come from the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*.

In the midst of what I will characterise as a major ecumenical controversy, debate or disagreement in the following pages, I want to remind myself, and any reader, of the only reason it should have a rightful place in theology. In the words of D. Stephen Long:

Christian unity is only a unity in Christ. If we first seek Christ, unity will inevitably follow. If we do not yet have unity, it must be that he is not yet our first desire and end. If the *analogia entis*, metaphysics, dialectic, nature/grace distinction, *potentia oboedientialis*, *finitum non capax infiniti*, ecclesial structures, ethics, or doctrine does not serve that end, it has no necessary place in the theodrama.<sup>3</sup>

Barth himself noted that “fear of scholasticism is the mark of a false prophet.” We cannot shy away from the decisions of old in order to pragmatically hasten ecumenical progress. The concepts discussed in a thesis like this bring into light some of the underlying structures of speaking and living. Thus, theological reflection through the use of speculative and technical concepts may not be an end in itself, but it can help overcome important difficulties that arise in the Christian community and even in modern society, in which theological language has never really been abandoned.

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<sup>3</sup> Long 2014, 287.

## Thesis Statement

This thesis seeks to answer whether the *analogia entis* is to be held as a theological *Denkform*, in the manner that these two terms have been formulated and discussed by Catholic theologians, particularly in their dialogue with Karl Barth. By *Denkform*, I mean a guiding principle of thought for theology that is grounded in a metaphysics. This originally German term will have to be explained before I conclude the thesis, but let me say already that by 'principle' I do not mean a ready-made system or matrix onto which theological *loci* should be made to fit, but rather a metaphysical truth that can vary in its formulations, and nonetheless has as its content to express the basic relationship between God and creation. The problem that this thesis seeks to explore, namely whether **the *analogia entis* is a proper form of thought for theology**, finds its answer in a decision about whether the concept "analogy of being" expresses a theological understanding of metaphysics. I will show that there were Catholic theologians who very much thought so, and try to describe why and in what way. Karl Barth thought it was rather the opposite and he will be our devil's advocate in the staged, posthumous colloquy that is to follow.

## Notes on Method and Material

This thesis takes Karl Barth's famous rejection of Erich Przywara's rendition of the *analogia entis* as its point of departure, and then turns to the broader, Catholic question of analogy's place in theological metaphysics. But for what seems like a rather narrowly confined debate in the mid-1900's, there is a surprisingly vast and growing amount of scholarship that attempts to continue the conversation in a number of directions. In fact, the existing materials would probably suffice for many hundred volumes of worthwhile scholarship. Nevertheless, any work, especially one as slight (and neophytic) as this, must be based on decisions about material scope as well as a thematic focal point.

Although I have surveyed an overly ambitious quantity of literature – at least for the task being – in the process of writing this thesis, only some of it will have found its way into the text explicitly. This is due to the obvious limitations of scope and length that apply to this type of examination, but also because the concept "analogy of being" discussed here is employed multifariously by a vast number of theologians and philosophers in the 20th and 21st century.

This thesis is not the result of a close reading of a particular book or author, but all of the books that I have studied engage the question of an analogy between God and creation. My engagement with the texts is analytical in that I attempt to understand their respective arguments in and of themselves. However, this is done from the perspective of the questions that I am trying to answer, and thus what I write is not a complete analysis of any single text. I try to save any judgments of my own to the concluding remarks by the end of each section, but I will already have made decisions in the choice of arguments and their presentation. In a sense, this amounts to a synthetic approach. I also introduce thinkers who disagree with the authors that I discuss, in order to show that any conclusion I make is dependent on a number of interpretive decisions. As regards my sources, I rely on primary literature, that is to say on texts written by each interlocutor in the debate, to the degree that it has been possible. But I also make frequent use of secondary literature that clarifies points of context and offer their own evaluation, and in doing so I always make reference to them.

In order to uncover some historical ground I first turn to Hampus Lyttkens's thorough historical account of the analogy concept in the first part of his *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of its Background and Interpretation of its Use by Thomas of Aquino*.<sup>4</sup> Hans Urs von

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<sup>4</sup> Lyttkens 1952

Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*<sup>5</sup> has been the most influential book in figuring out the importance of the debate about analogy. It is simultaneously an interpretation and contextualisation of the debate between Karl Barth and Erich Przywara SJ and a bipartite contribution: to the ecumenical dialogue that followed it, as well as to an intra-Catholic debate about nature and grace that was taking place at the time. Also, I have had the opportunity to learn from Przywara more directly by way of the recently published translation *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*.<sup>6</sup> In my pursuit to understand these thinkers and their arguments in their larger historical setting and subsequent effects on contemporary theology, I am most indebted to the following texts: John Betz's "Translator's Introduction" to Przywara's *Analogia Entis*; the anthology titled *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*<sup>7</sup> edited by Thomas Joseph White OP; and Joseph Palakeel's ambitious survey of the debate in his dissertation *The Use of Analogy in Theological Discourse: An Investigation in Ecumenical Perspective*.<sup>8</sup> This thesis is also deeply, albeit less explicitly, indebted to the indispensable works of David Bentley Hart, John Milbank, Francesca Murphy, Gösta Hallonsten and Matthew Milliner. It is they, together with the translator of Balthasar's study, the late Kenneth J. Oakes SJ, who have made it possible for me to enter under the grand arches of Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Denys the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa, Julian of Norwich, Ephrem the Syrian and all of the doctors of the Church who have preserved and expounded upon the deposit of faith through the ages.

## *Definitions*

*Denkform* is a term borrowed from Hans Urs von Balthasar, which could be substituted for "formal principle" or even "theology" as such. I take Peter Casarella's words to be the only necessary clarification of the concept *Denkform* for this thesis: "Balthasar's use of the terms 'thinking' (Denken) and 'form of thought' (Denkform) rather than 'theology' could be construed as nothing more than the pretense of a literary scholar who had crossed the border into dogmatic theology without wanting to leave behind all traces of his original home in literary studies."<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the term 'supernatural' will confound readers who are not used to Catholic terminology. It should be understood not in the popular sense of "the spiritual", but rather as the name of that which transcends our natural capacities, which in theology would be, *par excellence*, the

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<sup>5</sup> Balthasar 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Przywara 2014.

<sup>7</sup> White 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Palakeel 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Casarella 2011, 193.



participation in, and consequently experiencing intimate knowledge of, the inner life of the Triune God.

I use the terms *analogia entis* and analogy of being interchangeably, and when I do not explicitly announce anything else, I am using the concept in the broad sense of an analogical relation between God and the world.

### *Limitations*

I have limited myself to less than a percentile of the literature that exists about the analogy of being, as this thesis is not intended to be a full survey of the discussion surrounding it. But I also want to stress that my reading of the literature at hand in no way claims to be final or comprehensive. I am rather picking up some of the crucial points of contention between the discussed authors that have interested me particularly. For these reasons, I cannot pretend to give more than an imperfect, compressed account of any of the theological masterminds that appear in this thesis. A further limitation that I must state is that this thesis does not primarily attempt to discern what any thinkers' "final position" was on a particular subject, but rather to evaluate the texts studied as much as is possible *on their own terms*, regardless of who wrote it or what other texts by the author may have said. This limitation seriously affects the validity of my own opinions, to the point where they should only be taken as a provisional evaluation. This debate needs to be studied with much more attention to detail to personal and contextual contingencies elsewhere, and I hope to have the time some day in a longer thesis.

## Research Survey

The theological dispute concerning analogy as a concept in theology has faithfully and mutually been kept alive by Catholic and Protestant theologians since the 1920's, when Reformed pastor Karl Barth and Jesuit Erich Przywara had their first encounter. The very basis of the dispute was the classical tension between natural theology and revealed theology, testified to as early as in Tertullian's "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" This debate had a certain novelty over it, however, as both Przywara and Barth were proposing a *theological* metaphysics in and over against a modern culture that had abandoned both Athens and Jerusalem altogether. Soon shelves after shelves would be filled with books, defending the one view or the other, qualifying the terms of the debate and developing connected issues of thought. Some of the hundreds of authors of these subsequent books will be accounted for in my thesis, but here I want to explain the import of the debate with which it deals.

"Is the idea of analogy between God and creation, rhetorically speaking, 'the invention of the Antichrist' or the Wisdom of God?" asked a group of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant theologians assembled in Washington D.C. with the intention of seeking ecumenical ground for theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This choice of topic as a hinge for ecumenical dialogue could surely not have been conceived of a hundred years ago, but it has actually shown to be fruitful, both in light of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's "Christological turn" but more generally as a possible expression of a non-secular, post-Enlightenment metaphysic, for one which Christians are in desperate need. The conference resulted in an anthology, edited by Thomas Joseph White OP,<sup>10</sup> and it covers a wide range of questions associated with the original debate between Barth and Przywara. White identifies three fundamental issues that the debate helped bring to light: "(1) the relationship between Christianity and the metaphysics of being; (2) the relationship between Christological grace and our understanding of the meaning and purpose of human nature, and (3) the relationship between Christian faith and modern human reason."<sup>11</sup> These are crucial issues, and they are indeed the reason for the great amount of literature concerned directly or indirectly with this particular debate.

If we stay true to the ecumenical trajectory of this debate, issue (1) should be the least controversial. Certainly Barth's Protestant contemporaries Emil Brunner<sup>12</sup> and Dietrich

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<sup>10</sup> See White 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> See Brunner 1935.

Bonhoeffer<sup>13</sup> were both content with accounting for the question of metaphysics and “being” [*Sein*], which at least proves that Barth’s rejection of accounts of creaturely being was not a general Protestant impulse. Today, only the select group called Barthians follow their master in renouncing all accounts of being, focusing instead on the event character of God’s activity in the world, while most other Protestants have since long re-valued natural theology.<sup>14</sup>

With respect to issue (3), while there was disagreement as to how one should approach modern human reason as a dialogue partner, Barth and his Catholic interlocutors essentially shared the conviction that modern philosophy was and is deeply inimical to the Christian faith. Przywara’s *Analogia Entis*<sup>15</sup> was his great attempt to show the hopelessly dialectical imagination of modernity, in its pendling between utter transcendence, and utter immanence – “theopanism” and pantheism. Barth instead had chosen to go the way of objectivism, announcing in his *Church Dogmatics*<sup>16</sup> the death of the Cartesian subject as well as Schleiermacher’s pious subject. Today, we can see Barth as the grandfather of the postliberal theological movement, or the Yale school as it is called, consisting of theologians like Hans Frei and George Lindbeck who work from the assumption that there is no “one” modern reason to which theology needs to correlate. In the same way, Przywara’s emphasis on the analogy of being and a theological metaphysics has been taken up by the loosely defined group Radical Orthodoxy, with which Catherine Pickstock, John Milbank and David Bentley Hart have been associated. We must not ignore that popes St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI were both influenced by Przywara in papal writings on faith and reason.<sup>17</sup>

It is when we get to issue (2) that a clearer pattern of disagreement crystallises. What Catholics call the *potentia obedientialis*, the capacity of human nature to receive grace, is at the centre of the dispute. The reformation principle of *sola gratia* seems, not only with respect to Barth’s account but even in Luther’s theology, to rule out the possibility of human nature to know something positively of God on the basis of their simply being creatures. At least this is what Gottlieb Söhngen<sup>18</sup> argued, and suggested that the formula *simul justus et peccator* was the Gordian knot that had to be cut before any real rapprochement could be made between Catholic and Protestant theology. But it is equally so, thought Hans Urs von Balthasar,<sup>19</sup> that although there is in Catholic theology a *duplex ordo* of creation and salvation, as according to the decrees of Vatican I, in reality

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<sup>13</sup> See Bonhoeffer 1964.

<sup>14</sup> For one example of this, see Blomberg 2012.

<sup>15</sup> See Przywara 2014.

<sup>16</sup> CD 5, 415 (Balthasar’s numbering)

<sup>17</sup> See the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* and the Regensburg address, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> See Söhngen 2012.

<sup>19</sup> See Balthasar 1992.

there is only one existing order of grace that includes both. Barth could, on the other hand, teach Catholic theology not to confuse speculation with reality, and not to separate natural capacities from actual grace. Even so, Barth scholars today like Keith L. Johnson and George Hunsinger still argue against the possibility of a resolution between the Catholic view of nature as a presupposition of grace, and the supposedly reformational rejection of any potential in the human being for even responding independently to grace.<sup>20</sup>

This discussion has not produced any theological consensus apart from clarifying that Catholics and Protestants have different starting points for thinking about grace and nature. More specifically, while Catholics and Protestants may agree on the Christological primacy of grace and revelation as the starting point for theology, they are at disagreement about what role creation and human co-operation play in the drama of salvation.

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<sup>20</sup> See Johnson 2010; Hunsinger 1991

*He moved from one likeness to another, to teach us  
That He has no likeness.*<sup>21</sup>

## Gene(an)alogy

The concept of analogy originates in the Ancient Greek philosophical tradition. Hampus Lyttkens achieved in his 1952 dissertation on Aquinas's use of analogy a very thorough *exposé* over the term's origins from pre-Socratic mathematical inquiry and its development into a vital element of classical metaphysics.<sup>22</sup> To begin with a short genealogy makes for a perfect introduction to our thesis, because Lyttkens shows that the elusive nature of analogy was exactly the reason it would show itself so useful in the metaphysical schema of being as a participatory and hierarchical concept. The concept of analogy would then prove itself a keystone in the development of Christian doctrine, and become an indispensable figure of thought for pre-modern theology.

### *Analogy in Early Mathematics*

In his historical account of analogy, Lyttkens first turns us to Archytas, one of Plato's contemporaries, whose use of analogy is threefold and centres on the notion of a 'mean' (*mesothesis*). Indeed, Archytas's analogies seem equivalent to the so-called "Pythagorean means," which were expressions of harmony and other aspects of mathematics. Ignoring for our purposes the first and second instances of analogy, which are respectively *harmonic* and *arithmetical*, there is for Archytas a third, *geometrical* analogy.

Analogy on Archytas' geometrical account is a matter of *proportionality*. Proportionality within geometry holds when two pairs of numbers are interrelated, as, for example, when geometrical objects differ in absolute size whilst having the same dimensions according to a *ratio*. For Lyttkens, this "is what corresponds to the true concept of analogy, as it consists in agreement between one or more numeral relations (λόγοι)."<sup>23</sup>

Geometry is the true origin of the concept of analogy, Lyttkens also argues, because it was discovered through the uncovering of irrational numbers, which only geometrical figures are able to represent properly. The most commonly known irrational number is  $\pi$ , that is to say the ratio

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<sup>21</sup> Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Faith*, 31.11.

<sup>22</sup> Lyttkens 1952.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Proportionality, then, was useful in geometry because it rendered it "possible to relate irrational to rational numbers."<sup>24</sup>

Analogy, however, is "ambiguous and unclear,"<sup>25</sup> which ultimately is why it was deemed suitable for interrelating aspects of reality outside of mathematics. Lyttkens explains: Archytas in his treatment of arithmetic quite inconsistently designates analogy variably as the equidistance of numbers in an arithmetical series,<sup>26</sup> on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the position of a given number within the series that is intermediate to the others. However, Archytas also varies in calling the *geometrical* analogy a likeness of proportions or a *mesothesis*. On Lyttkens account, Archytas effectively leaves us with this basic sense of vagueness about the analogy concept.

### *Plato: Analogy of Proportionality*

Moving on from mathematics into philosophy, Plato is among the first to systematically utilise analogy in a metaphysical schema of knowledge and being. According to Lyttkens, Plato's most interesting application of analogy is "to describe the interrelations of ideas to the material world and the various forms of human knowledge."<sup>27</sup> Plato's metaphysic hinges on the conviction that "[m]aterial things exist by participating in ideas."<sup>28</sup> Participation names the basic understanding of the diffusion of contingent being in relation to necessary, infinite being. With this way of thinking, analogy becomes a convenient device for describing the relation between how we come to know ideas through perception, and the likeness of things to ideas. Knowing an idea, according to Plato, is, for example, analogous to perceiving a thing. Going into Plato's theory of analogy at depth cannot be the objective of this section, but while it may be a shallow attempt I will, however, try to say something more about it.

Plato's division between the material world and the world of ideas is expressed as *becoming* vis-a-vis *being*. In *The Republic* he develops a fourfold hierarchy from a basic distinction of the "not-yet-real" to the real, which includes relations between images and ideas; imagining and thinking; believing and knowing.

These groups of couples are all interrelated in a "ἀναλογίαν", but what that actually means is far from clear: only that they relate through being analogously related to each other. Analogy designates a purely formal correspondence between knowledge and truth, in that the degree of reality in an object somehow has a likeness to its degree of clarity in the knowing subject. "Purely

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid..

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>26</sup> I.e. a series of numbers ordered in a non-random sequence.

<sup>27</sup> Lyttkens 1952, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

formal," for Plato himself ultimately would not admit a real likeness between the two spheres; this is because only the world of ideas is really real, so to speak.<sup>29</sup>

There are, however, indications that Plato takes analogy to mean something more than just likeness of relations. In *Timaeus*, Plato explicitly employs ἀνά λόγον in accounting for how

we differentiate between the world and its prototype, and it is likewise necessary to differentiate between concepts referring to prototypes and to images. While the former are fixed and unchangeable, the latter – emanating from an image – are only imaginary, and analogous to the former. Being bears the same relation to becoming as truth does to belief.<sup>30</sup>

Although Plato employs the term ἀνά λόγον almost as vaguely as his predecessors, there are two moments in his philosophy that need mentioning, due to their influence on successive thinkers, no less Aquinas himself (however indirectly through the raster of Christian interpretations of Plato).

The first is the well-known description of the sun as analogous to the good. When Socrates in *The Republic* attempts to define exactly what the good is, he can do no other than give an indirect example, as any exact definition is out of reach. However, it is possible to speak of the offspring of the good by virtue of being most like it. Socrates points to the sun for a comparison. The sun gives the eye a light that it "sheds" on its intended objects, but it also illuminates the objects by shining its light out from them. Both sight and visible things have their source in the sun. What the sun is for the material world, then, the good is for the world of ideas; the good illuminates the intellect as well as intelligible objects. Where the sun is the source of vision and light, and even the existence of material things, the good is the source of knowledge and truth, as well as the existence of ideas. At this point, the analogy comes in to play: the effects, or products, of both the sun and the good are "similar to, but not identical with"<sup>31</sup> their cause or source.

In Plato's schema, analogy is not some arbitrary similarity. Rather, this similarity-without-identity entails a hierarchy in which the sun as well as the good is higher than their respective products. Not only so, for in the Platonic schema, the sun causes the world of becoming and material images, whilst the world of being and knowledge is a product of the good. Although Plato does not expand on it, here we find the first hints at a similarity-without-identity, a likeness, to be

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 26.

discovered between the indefinable good and the much less "real" material world. However, there is no "real" analogy in the sense of one thing actually *being* in relation to the "real".

We find the other important moment of Plato's analogical excursions in the *Laws*. In this case, Plato does not speak of analogy explicitly but interpreters of this work have done so, to the point that Lyttkens derives Aquinas's idea of analogy as proportionality from it. In the oft-discussed passage, Plato is saying that there are two kinds of equality between men in a state. First of all, equality denotes a numerical likeness in that one man is equal to another in the most literal sense of them being two of the same kind. However, there is another sense in which Zeus gives to each man according to his nature different degrees of the good, "more to the greater, less to the inferior, in proportion to the virtue and education of each."<sup>32</sup> Such is Plato's description of justice, that "what is naturally equal to unequals"<sup>33</sup> is given according with respect to the adequacy of the receiver. Although the term analogy does not appear, this understanding of justice is later transposed into an ideal of cosmic order, beyond the *polis* and mere ethics. The just distribution of the Good as a cosmic idea adumbrates the later Christian vision of the world as a divinely given hierarchy, where everything receives its being in proportion to its place in the order. But even here, there is an understanding of "proportion" that can be called analogy in relation to the Good. Lyttkens does not think, however, that Plato's account of the good amounts to the Christian understanding of the Good as the transcendent Creator.<sup>34</sup>

### *Aristotle: Analogy of Attribution*

With Aristotle, we come closer to a real analogy between the world and God. Lyttkens admits that he cannot account for all the places in Aristotle's works where analogy is used, but he contrasts Aristotle with Plato, saying that analogy "means something else than merely a relation to truth." This does not mean that Plato is wrong on Aristotle's account, but that Aristotle takes analogy further. Analogy in Aristotle signifies many kinds of relations, but the basic point of an analogy is that it is a concept that gathers and unifies several different things, and is superior to the things that it "sums up." For our purposes, it will suffice to say that Aristotle allows for the same kinds of analogies as Plato, whilst also introducing his own ways of employing the concept. Of these, one is of special interest to us.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>33</sup> Plato, *Leges* 757d, quoted in *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 51f.



Aristotle's most famous and most employed example of analogy is the  $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ , meaning "referring to one thing." The *pros hen* analogy is commonly called an analogy of attribution (after Cajetan), meaning that there is one concept or thing of which all related concepts are derivative. Aristotle himself explains "health" by way of the *pros hen*. We predicate "health" to many different things, as medicine and urine, which are respectively a cause and sign of health. However the meaning of health comes from the healthy person who is an instance of it. As an instance of health, the person is the *analogate* to which the other things called "healthy," as *analogans* (that is to say a verb principle), point. What Aristotle achieves is a kind of linguistic theory of similarity between dissimilar things, based in a metaphysical understanding of substances as analogates.

Can God be called an analogate on Aristotle's view then? First of all, Lyttkens points out that the *pros hen* is a one-sided relation. This is problematic because a substance *qua* analogate cannot at the same time be an *analogans* pointing to something other. Especially when we think of the concept of being as a concept, this becomes impossible to hold in an absolute sense, for then everything except prime matter would be *analogans*, and there could be no substances as analogates. Aristotle thus introduces the idea of primary and secondary being, in order to affirm that while being is in a sense univocal and one, even related being has a nature of its own – that is to say, is a substance. If God can be called the primary being to which everything ultimately points, then it is possible with Aristotle to find an *analogy* of being between God and the world.<sup>36</sup>

### *Augustine: Participation*

The historical development of an analogous account of being should be attended to in much more detail than the above. But if we move on, as we must, to Christian uses of analogy, we will find that the Ancient Greeks – as the different schools of antiquity traduced them – supplied theology with indispensable instruments for expressing biblical and doctrinal ideas of creation's relation to God.

While it was an utterly foreign thought to the Greeks, Lyttkens writes; Augustine as a Christian naturally began his account of the relation between God and world with attending to the Old Testament's implicit affirmation of creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Undoubtedly, Augustine borrowed some concepts from the Neoplatonists, but he did not accept their fundamental idea that the Demiurge only fashioned creation out of pre-existing eternal "matter." Instead, creation in Augustine's theology is made to be from an eternal prototype that is to be found nowhere else than in the intellect of God. God is like an artist who moulds creation after a model in his mind,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 55f.

and thus the things of the world are images of the prototypical idea in God. Plato's description of the world, that is to say "becoming" as a moving image of the eternal is also applicable here in so far as the eternal is God. God communicates himself as a gift to us through the ideas to which the world point, and by learning the ideas we come to know God himself. This is, however, an act on God's part, an illumination that he gives to us freely. Lyttkens calls the above theory "exemplarism."<sup>37</sup>

Augustine develops his "exemplarism" by adding the dimension of participation. Created being exists by virtue of participation in God's being; all things participate in the ideas of the divine intellect. The well-known Augustinian equation of existence with goodness (and consequently evil with "lack of goodness") is the underlying model here, which is drawn out of the "God saw that it was good" in the creation story of *Genesis* 1. Creation's goodness is specifically thought of as participating in the being of God, the *bonum per se ipsum* – the Good in itself: *Omne autem quod est, in quantum est, bonum est. Summe enim est illud bonum, cujus participatione sunt bona caetera.*<sup>38</sup> There is a degree of likeness to God in the degree to which something is good, because that which is "more good" is participating more intensely in the Good. This applies to other aspects of creation too, such as unity and truth. Unity and beauty are intimately related so that what is beautiful participates more eminently in God's being. Truth, which ultimately finds its measure in Christ who is the truth, also pertains in the degree to which it bears a likeness to God. This last Christological aspect of the matter is not of any small significance to Augustine, because of the Scriptural and creedal testament that everything is being created through Christ.<sup>39</sup>

Now all this sounds very cataphatic; that is to say positively affirming of our knowledge of God through human concepts. It is true that Augustine is bound to trust the words of Rom. 1:20: "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made." He can even speak of "vestiges" of the Trinity in created things and the human soul as an image of the Trinity; be it that only the person of faith can recognise the Triune God in the many threefold structures of things in the world. Augustine qualifies, however, his optimistic view of creation and humanity as a pointer to God, with the radical affirmation of God's transcendence and otherness.

It is a much more common theme in Augustine's theology to praise the mystery of God. God is ultimately infinite, eternal and inconceivable for the human soul. *Si comprehendis, non est Deus* – "If

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>38</sup> "Now everything that is, to the degree it is, is good. For that is the highest good, in which everything else that is good participates.", my translation. *De Trinitate*, VIII. 3. 5, quoted in *ibid.*, 111, n. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 111f.

you understand it, it is not God," Augustine says. All knowledge is marked by an ultimate inadequacy in predicating God, even that which is revealed to us, as God is always to be sought anew. *Invenitur quaerendus!* – "That which is found is yet to be sought!" Augustine's reputation as a moralist is here corrected by the fact that he also is a deeply mystical theologian.

Augustine's apophaticism is not simply founded on the un-spiritual nature of the sensible world that we as human beings are bound to, but also because the essence of God can never be understood by the human soul. Augustine has a doctrine of the *simplicity of God*, which means that all the names and attributes we have of God ultimately express one single unity. There is no distinction of properties in God's essence, and this is ultimately as much as we can say about the matter. Our attribution of properties to God, such as goodness, omnipotence and omniscience really pertain to the concepts in the human soul, which is an essentially imperfect image of the divine and, therefore, *not* a unity, because it is created. "Silence is the only possible way of speaking worthily of God," as Lyttkens summarises it.<sup>40</sup>

But then again, although God is sublime, we must speak of God in positive affirmations. This is most importantly because Scripture as the means of our salvation and union with God is directed to our human comprehension and necessarily expresses itself in creaturely imagery. Scripture even ascribes human, imperfect attributes to God such as jealousy, repentance and anger. Also, to say that God is ineffable is logically to make some kind of positive statement with respect to God's essence. Augustine accounts for these positive statements in saying they express something of God but that they must be purged from the way they are realised in human beings. This is done by way of an affirmation of every attribute, followed by a negation of the same, but not to the degree that the attribute loses its meaning altogether. What we subsequently are left with is not any concept that is identical with God but nevertheless signifies a real likeness. Only in acknowledging that such conceptual likeness is superlatively exhausted by the essence of God does it carry any weight. Even illumination, God's gift of knowledge in the human soul, seems to be conditioned upon this distinction between created imperfection and divine simplicity. In the end, this "agnosticism" is still founded in a theological affirmation of God as the source and end of all existence, which distinguishes it definitively from modern scepticism.<sup>41</sup>

Although Augustine does not use the term analogy to describe his theory of attribution, based on an ontology of an imperfect proportionality, it clearly carries the traits of such a concept. Later in the history of theology, this strategy will be called the *via eminentiae*, a term associated with

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 117f.

Thomas Aquinas, to whom we will have to turn as the last and decidedly most eminent expositor of analogy.

### *Thomas Aquinas: Two Analogies*

Thomas Aquinas has always been regarded as the father of the idea of analogy in theology, as his writings are permeated by an analogical way of understanding the relation of creation to God. Like Augustine his thoughts about this relation proceed from the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which as we saw in Augustine forms the ontological basis of a certain form of "agnosticism" with respect to our knowledge of God. Throughout his works Aquinas is first and foremost creating a theological synthesis of the wisdom found in Scripture, the Fathers and the philosophers of old. This is also true of Thomas when we look to his uses of analogy. We cannot here discuss at length the relatively novel adaptation of Aristotle's metaphysical schema, which forms and informs the essential structure of Aquinas's own reasoning, or lay the impressive groundwork that Lyttkens does in his explication of Aquinas's thoughts on the relation between God and creation. On the other hand, it will hopefully suffice to compress Lyttkens' analysis here, and to trust that it is indicative of a greater structure in Aquinas's grand world of thought.

The fundamental basis of Thomas's analogies is the idea of the likeness of an effect to its cause. Because creation is caused by God, it bears a real likeness to him. However, this can be understood in the way of the *pros hen* analogy as well as a matter of proportionality. Because I have already laid out the basic form of these analogies, I shall only mention how these fit into Thomas's proper Christian understanding of creation.

In the case of the *pros hen*, or analogy of attribution, Aquinas only allows for some specific predications to apply to God. These are, according to Lyttkens: *ens*, *verum* and *bonum* – that is to say, being, truth and goodness. For these terms, God is said to be the analogate to which creaturely being, truth and goodness are pointers, *analogans*.<sup>42</sup> Lyttkens calls this a *direct* proportion, which comes closest to the cataphatic way of predicating attributes of God from creation. It is not the last word on analogy for Thomas, however. Since the finite creature is faced with an infinite God, there can never be a *truly* direct proportion between them. Infinity is not "proportionable" to anything, and thus we cannot have knowledge of a "proportion" of infinity. Thus, the analogy of proportionality as the relation of two things to two other is the final, apophatic word on the relation between creature and God: "as the essence of God exceeds all created things, so does His knowledge exceed all other knowledge. The proportion between our

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 246f.

knowledge and the created things is accordingly the same as between God's knowledge and His essence."<sup>43</sup> Proportionality as the relation of two things compared to two other is the same thing as metaphor, and as we saw in the beginning, also the way in which a geometrical proportion can express irrational numbers.

St. Thomas does not reject *pros hen* predications of God from creation, but in a manner that mirrors St. Augustine's "agnosticism" he is aware that this kind of likeness is ultimately inadequate to the task of relating to the one, infinite source of everything. On the other hand, proportionality in itself does not express the kind of real likeness that, notwithstanding any reservations against direct proportion, must exist between cause and effect. The metaphorical nature of proportionality, like poetry in general, is much more vulnerable to audacious speculation and must be countered with the more substantial boundaries that *pros hen* attribution offers. After all, the *pros hen* analogy finds its ultimate expression in Christ, who is the analogate of "man" and "God" at the same time.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 319-320.

*Without analogy, no theology! Without it talk corresponding to God is as unthinkable as being corresponding to God.*<sup>44</sup>

## The Invention of the Antichrist

Hans Urs von Balthasar's monograph *The Theology of Karl Barth*<sup>45</sup> is immensely helpful for understanding the project of Karl Barth's work, especially his (at the time) 5000-page long seven-volume opus *Der Kirchliche Dogmatik* (in English, *Church Dogmatics* = abbr. CD).<sup>46</sup> Though never intended by Balthasar to be a "Catholic Answer" to Barth, or an introduction to his theology, Barth himself happily admitted that the book represented the best understanding of his theological endeavour. Its content is an exposé of the development of Barth's thought, exploring the "motivating principles and formal structure" animating it, as well as an explicitly "private attempt by an individual theologian to *respond* to Barth" from a Catholic viewpoint.<sup>47</sup> The response that he sought to formulate was specifically directed at a trope sounding from the first volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*: "I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the Antichrist, and I believe that because of it it is impossible ever to become a Roman Catholic, all other reasons for not doing so being to my mind short-sighted and trivial."<sup>48</sup>

Barth, according to Balthasar, suspected the edifice of Catholic theology "of possessing an overarching systematic principle that is merely an abstract statement about the analogy of being and not a frank assertion that Christ is the Lord."<sup>49</sup> He feared – and indeed held that the Catholic Church was guilty of the charge – that a pre-revealed truth about God, attainable by purely philosophical means would render God's self-revelation in Christ something relative and merely additional to a more general metaphysics. The (non-)crux of such a view of faith and reason is

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<sup>44</sup> Jüngel 1980, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Balthasar 1992.

<sup>46</sup> Barth 1956-77. I will from here on refer to these volumes by *CD* following the specific volume and page number. The *Church Dogmatics* was to grow further, into thirteen volumes, and was not completed by the time of Barth's passing in 1968.

<sup>47</sup> Balthasar 1992, xviii. In his foreword, Balthasar takes great pains to underline the importance of careful, patient and well-informed dialogue in these matters, and it has been suggested that the tension involving Henri De Lubac's revision of Thomism and the controversy that led up to the encyclical *Humani Generis* lies behind this caution. At the time before Vatican II, Catholic theologians belonging to the loosely defined *nouvelle théologie* movement were accused of being fideists or crypto-protestants because of their criticism of the dominant strand of theologians called the Manual Thomists, who insisted on a very sharp distinction between the domains of nature and grace. According to these "novel" theologians, the latter view (which de Lubac coined 'extrinsicism', referring to the idea of grace as an extrinsically added feature to a 'pure nature') was indebted more to the Enlightenment rather than Thomas Aquinas, and its logical conclusion was secularism. See White 2011, and Chenu 1986. Stephen D. Long even claims that "Balthasar never intended his engagement with Barth to be an introduction or exposition of Barth's theology alone. He engaged Barth for reasons internal to his own Catholicism, reasons that grew out of Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950)." in Long 2011, 174.

<sup>48</sup> *CD* I/1, xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar 1992, 37.

purportedly that Christ "cannot be the ultimate foundation of the whole world order."<sup>50</sup> Whether something like the analogy of being really amounts to a Catholic principle is partly what this thesis aims to discern – both with regard to the real meaning of the analogy of being, but also whether it is to be held as true.

We must not fail, however, to notice that from the outset, the idea of an analogy of being has close affinities with Barth's contention with liberal Protestantism but also, perhaps even more critically, an intra-Catholic debate about the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, and in general about the relationship between grace and nature. As we will see, a counterpart of sorts to Barth's rejection of "natural theology" is found in Hans Urs von Balthasar's own discontentment with so-called Manual or Neo-Thomism. Both theologians, we can say, sought to rid from their own respective ranks a deeply secularist, Enlightenment predisposition for rationalism.<sup>51</sup>

To see this connection between Barth and *nouvelle théologie*, we must begin with sketching – however compactly – the development of Barth's argument about grace and nature in and through his younger dialectical period up to the more mature, but no less radical, project of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. Only by doing this can we understand what Barth's rejection of the *analogia entis* entails, before turning to the setting in which the doctrine was originally formulated.

### *Dialectical Theology in Context*

The form of Barth's early work has frequently been described as *dialectical*, which is to say that it leaned heavily towards a dichotomy of either-or, most notably demonstrated in the first editions of his *Der Römerbrief*. Now, "dialectic" carries with it a plurality of meanings, but in Barth's case it is primarily a borrowing from Kierkegaard's way of expressing paradoxes, rather than the Hegelian process towards synthesis.<sup>52</sup> *Dialectical theology* likewise emphasises the "infinite qualitative difference" between God and creation.<sup>53</sup> On Barth's account, then, either man is the measure or God is; either we are saved through our own works or by God's sovereign gift of grace; either we invent a God who is like us through Religion or so the wholly other God reveals

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, the "secularist" tendency may be said to derive from certain interpretations of the *pura natura*: a functional, hypothetical concept about the inherent capacities of the creature "apart from grace" which at some point became mistaken for a real state of events. Balthasar dedicates a whole chapter to this issue in part III of *The Theology of Karl Barth*. Maybe the least controversial thing to conclude about the matter is to state with De Lubac (and ultimately the Church Fathers and the Scriptures) that most basically there is a continuity-in-distinction between the *imago Dei* and *similitudo Dei*, which safeguards against deriving grace from nature, *but equally* against separating humanity from its transcendent end.

<sup>52</sup> Although Hans Urs von Balthasar identifies both forms of dialectic in the *Romans*. See Balthasar 1992, 82-83.

<sup>53</sup> Hegstad 2013.

himself in and through his Word. These are not unfamiliar motifs, as they are modern interpretations of the Protestant Reformers' *solae* principles (of these, *solus Christus* is of the highest priority), directed against what was perceived to be Roman Catholic corruptions of biblical and apostolic teaching.<sup>54</sup>

Barth was, however, first and foremost reacting to his own teachers and colleagues within Protestantism, to those belonging to the school of Liberal Theology – which by then was more than a century old. In Barth's view, the development of (German) Protestantism from Pietism to Schleiermacher's pure subjectivism was a grievous error. Though Barth in no way wanted, as Balthasar put it, to "cut of all the ligatures that bind him to the tradition of Schleiermacher and liberal Protestantism"<sup>55</sup> – indeed all the while appreciating Schleiermacher as a "rich, complex and sophisticated man"<sup>56</sup> – he strongly admonished liberal Protestantism for having abandoned authentic Christian faith altogether. While he regarded Catholicism as a mere distortion of a substance which it nonetheless had preserved, Pietism on the Protestant side had, by substituting the believing subject's consciousness for God's self-revelation "*Senkrecht von Oben*", begun the descent towards the "Niagara" that was Schleiermacher, "over whose rim the main rivers of theological thought ... comes roaring down with frightful relentlessness."<sup>57</sup> It was a catastrophic move according to Barth, through which Feuerbach had been proved right about God as being merely the projection of humanity's deep-seated wishes. For him, "speaking of God by speaking of man in a loud voice"<sup>58</sup> would not suffice.

One fateful event triggered Barth's definitive turning away from his former teachers (of these, Adolf von Harnack was the most prominent). In the wake of WWI they defended the German Empire's brutal attack on Belgium, which for Barth was conclusive evidence that the Liberal "tradition"<sup>59</sup> he had been introduced to as a student was ultimately incapable of proclaiming the Gospel – if not before, then now – in a time when Christendom was rapidly fading into twilight. Appointed professor of Reformed theology at Göttingen in 1921 after the surprising success of his manifesto *Römerbrief*, he found an arena to develop a newfound theological trajectory, and in

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<sup>54</sup> Balthasar 1992, 32

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>56</sup> ZdZ 8(1924):56 quoted in *ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> ZdZ 8(1924):56 quoted in *ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>58</sup> Barth 1952, 196.

<sup>59</sup> Of course, the essence of any liberalism is to be a tradition that will not admit to being a tradition; or, in the words of Stanley Hauerwas, to be the story that "you should have no story except the story you chose when you had no story", making it an ahistorical and hermeneutically naive project from its very outset. Cf. MacIntyre 1988.



*Zwischen den Zeiten*, a periodical, known for gathering a loosely "dialectical" crowd, to which Barth regularly contributed.<sup>60</sup>

It is in the 1920's, before the collapse of *Zwischen den Zeiten* (due to increasing theological disagreements) and before the coming to power of the Nazis that we thus encounter the early, explicitly dialectical Barth. While the theology of his first edition of the *Romans* had leaned toward a Platonist narrative of idea, fall and return, the second edition had tried to steer away from total identity and offered in its place a dualism between (post-lapsarian) sinful creatureliness and the Wholly Other, God. By the end of the 1920's Barth would find himself in conversation with the Jesuit Erich Przywara, who was much concerned with responding to Barth's theological moves, in the formulating of his early versions of the *analogia entis*.

### *A Coming to Terms with Analogy?*

By the time of the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, however, Barth was making theological decisions in the direction of affirming some kind of analogy between God and the world.<sup>61</sup> No longer was the dialectic of the Wholly Other and His Word juxtaposed against sinful creation the overarching theme of his theology. The immature schema of God as the only real subject in the drama of creation and redemption was gradually done away with as Barth progressed in his dogmatics and realised that "the concept of analogy is in fact unavoidable", because neither identity or total dissimilarity can express a *true* relation between man and God: "if we *re*-cognize God, this must mean that we see God using our prior views, concepts and words; thus we see God not as something totally Other. But in and with these human means of images, concepts and words (the only ones we have), we truly do see God."<sup>62</sup> With this realisation follows an affirmation of creation's intrinsic value, because once the human subject is recognised *as* subject, however relatively with regard to God, there can no longer be any talk of created being as a "contradiction", even less an equation of the human condition with sin (that is, before it is united, meaning identified, with God, as in both editions of *The Epistle to the Romans*). This re-cognition of a true relation between God and creation, however, differs quite radically from the classical

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<sup>60</sup> In English, *Zwischen den Zeiten* (ZdZ from now on) translates to "between the times". It was the words of theologian Friedrich Gogarten (who later abandoned the "dialectical" theologians for the Nazi-friendly German Christian movement) that were taken as inspiration for the journal's name: "Das ist das Schicksal unserer Generation, daß wir zwischen den Zeiten stehen." ["It is the fate of our generation, that we stand between the times."] Clearly, the final defeat of Christendom was deeply felt after the devastation of WWI.

<sup>61</sup> It is explicitly acknowledged in the *CD* that Barth had heeded some of his Catholic interlocutors' criticism, not least from Joseph Ratzinger's former teacher, Gottlieb Söhngen, and Erich Przywara, who both will appear in the following sections.

<sup>62</sup> *CD* II/1, 253-54.

accounts of it, in the sense that it still denies any real, albeit secondary, activity on the part of creation. Nevertheless, Barth had begun speaking in terms that indicate a turn to analogy:

By the power of faith and its profession, the Word of God becomes a human thought and a human word, certainly in the infinite dissimilarity and inadequacy, but not in total human strangeness with its model. The human copy [*Abbild*] is a *real* copy of its divine counterpart [*Vorbild*].<sup>63</sup>

Having reconsidered analogy, and put forth his own rendition of it, the *analogia fidei*, Barth made himself more content with speaking of a partnership between God and Creation. However, the only analogy that Barth would allow was one achieved as an act of totally unprepared, unprecedented grace. The new moment in Barth's theology was to counter the *analogia entis* with what he called *analogia fidei*. Until this point, *analogia fidei* had named the practice of measuring the gift of prophecy against the *ratio* of faith which one has been given, as stated in Rom. 12:6. Normally this passage (κατὰ ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως in Greek) is taken as the foundation for the *regula fidei*, as testified, for example, in Tertullian. But interpretation of this passage is already saturated with anthropological and ontological considerations about grace in the Fathers, as a homily by John Chrysostom exemplifies: "For though it is a grace, yet it is not poured forth at random, but framing its measure according to the recipients, it lets as much flow as it may find the vessel of faith that is brought to be capable of."<sup>64</sup> Faithful to the *sola fide*, Barth reinterpreted the *analogia fidei* from Rom. 12:16 to mean an event of faith, in which "there takes place a conformity of man to God, i.e. an adapting of man to the Word of God." This position is often described as "actualist" with respect to God. It means quite simply a prejudice for event over substance, or act over being. The actualist account collapses the difference between potency and act, the given and the novel, first and second causes. Everything happens by virtue of direct divine activity. It is a dynamic that fits perfectly with the *sola fide*, because it necessitates our own incapacity to do anything without God acting from without, as it were, upon us.<sup>65</sup>

What constitutes this "analogy of faith," then? The important term here is *event*, meaning a "divine act" in which man becomes "known by God," that takes place "on man rather than through man."<sup>66</sup> We could not become more informed about Barth's version of analogy than by the following quote:

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<sup>63</sup> CD I/1, 254.

<sup>64</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia 21 on Romans*.

<sup>65</sup> This is not just Catholic polemics, but something that Barthians are very fond of admitting to. Cf. Hunsinger 1991, 30f.

<sup>66</sup> CD I/1, 244.

If there is any real analogy between God and man [...] what other analogy can it be than the analogy of being which is posited and created by the work and action of God himself, the analogy which has its actuality from God and from God alone, and therefore in faith and in faith alone?<sup>67</sup>

Hence with "faith alone" as the absolute precondition, Barth can admit to an *analogia entis*.

Barth will thus allow for theological talk of analogy only as long as it does not become distinguished from God's act of grace. Philosophical analogy, that is to say any knowledge, however imperfect, about God on the basis of the creature's own being and acting, is still excluded. According to Joseph Palakeel the "essential novelty" of Barth's theology is that

[t]he Barth-Gogarten-Thurneysen School, taking the Kierkegaardian line of infinite qualitative distance between God and man, went beyond the universal causality of God (*Allwirksamkeit Gottes*) to exclusive universal causality (*Alleinwirksamkeit Gottes*) and the absolute transcendence of God.<sup>68</sup>

The above account of Barth's *analogia fidei* makes sense in light of the fact that he introduces the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* by saying it remains "a revision of the old book instead of the expected new one!"<sup>69</sup>

### *Agreement from Barthians*

In order that my interpretation should not come across as one-sided or even insolent, I would like to provide textual support from two Barthians who agree with its basic proposal. Keith L. Johnson argues that the human being as merely a creature is utterly incapable of pointing analogically to God:

Barth does, in fact, hold that, in an analogy between God and the human, the concepts and characteristics used in that analogy apply to both parties so that there is continuity between their application to God and their application to the human. The key distinction, however, is that this continuity is the result of God's grace in Jesus Christ *alone*. In other words, Barth denies that an analogy can be drawn between God and the human as a function of those characteristics that are understood to belong to the human by virtue of his or her creation by God, because the human in analogy with God is the human *in Christ*, and the being of this human is *objectively distinct* from the being of the human as such.<sup>70</sup>

As regards the reason for rejecting the analogy of being, George Hunsinger concurs with the idea that for Barth, it threatens the role of sovereign grace in the event of faith: "Barth opposes the

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<sup>67</sup> CD II/1, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Palakeel 1995, 126.

<sup>69</sup> CD I/1, xi.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson 2010, 187.

*analogia entis*, ... in part because it posits an independent human capacity for receiving and cooperating with grace in revelation and salvation."<sup>71</sup>

### *Concluding Remarks*

What should we say about Barth's understanding of the analogy of being? His theological decision to reject the concept is dependent on certain criteria for what the creature naturally is (*ordo essendi*, to speak here with Aquinas) and consequently knows (*ordo cognoscendi*). He is, even in his more mature, appreciative account of created being and "the humanity of God", at a fundamental disagreement with the Catholic view, which claims what I would call an "ontological receptivity" of man and creation *ante Christum*. Barth's own alternative, the analogy of faith, is not in and of itself an antithesis to Catholic theology. In fact, it only becomes so when it is juxtaposed with other fundamental teachings about God and creation, something that we will have to deal with in the next section.

One important problem with Barth's version of analogy is that it can never reconcile itself with the statement, for example, that creation, as a relatively autonomous reality, is radiant with the glory of God. The glory of God that the heavens declare, as the Psalmist writes (Ps. 19:1), would not be recognised as a glory at all if it were not for the fact that it is a glory actualised by God's supernatural grace *and* revealed in faith alone.<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, this would amount to Barth's earlier view of creation as a contradiction in the face of the Wholly Other God – a justified judgment in the face of Barth's own view of the *CD* as a revision of *Romans*.

The stakes are still high in the debate about whether Barth finally yielded to his critics at any stage and accepted some form of analogy of being. It may in the end be a quite uninteresting question when we consider the fact that followers of Barth, like George Hunsinger and Keith L. Johnson, advocate an actualist position that they believe justified in view of Barth's legacy.

I do find Barth's attempt to avoid liberal Protestantism commendable, not least because he would later see that it became complicit with Nazi ideology. His reaction to a *Kulturprotestantismus* was legitimate and necessary, but the question is whether Barth ever overcame a more fundamentally dialectical mode of doing theology. Positing a Wholly Other God and denouncing all forms of natural theology by constructing an analogy of grace and faith alone, seems to be simply a

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<sup>71</sup> Hunsinger 1991, 13.

<sup>72</sup> I do not have the space necessary to go into questions of theological aesthetics, but I want to clarify that the issue here is not that of whether a *theologia crucis* is necessarily irreconcilable with an analogy of being. Rather, I am concerned with the question of whether anything creaturely can rightly be called beautiful. Beauty is moreover only one of the transcendentals that come into complete doubt on this account.

stopping point at the other extreme end of a dialectic between immanence and transcendence. The ultimate question is whether such a dialectic is a philosophy or a theology.

However, it has been argued that the real problematic of Barth's theology is not solely due to the Protestant emphasis on *sola fide* or the analogy of faith as such. The next section will offer two Catholic assessments of Barth that engage him exactly from the starting point of the *analogia fidei*.

*Divini est muneris, cum ... recte cogitamus.*<sup>73</sup>

["It is with the gifts of the divine that we rightly know."]

## **Catholic Engagement with Barth**

Despite my critical conclusions in the last section, there is much more to say about Barth on the topic of analogy. It is, for example, not very likely that Barth had tried to understand Przywara's *analogia entis* when he called it the Antichrist. To this purpose Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote the book about Barth's theology, as he was convinced that the meaning of the *analogia entis* had not yet reached through to Barth. There were many other attempts to reconcile Barth's Christocentrism with a deepened understanding of creation's relative integrity, and Gottlieb Söhngen's was one of these. He realised that if Barth could adopt some elements of Catholic, scholastic terminology, then he might be convinced to attend to the full picture, given that it be presented in a manner faithful to the Reformation pathos of grace supreme. I begin here with Balthasar – rather anachronistically when we consider that Söhngen appears as an important figure in his book – and move on to Söhngen, in order that we might appreciate Barth to the fullest extent, yet at the same time notice the oddities that make up the ecumenical controversy about him.

### *Balthasar: Nature as a Necessary Minimum for Grace*

It would seem impossible to summarise Barth's theological thinking in a systematic manner, but some have succeeded in characterising and discerning general habits of thought in it. One of these few, Hans Urs von Balthasar, is wary in his synthetic study of Barth<sup>74</sup> not to reduce his final judgments to simple rejections, but to convey as faithfully as possible the utter complexity of his "project" – a fine reason for the lengthy character of this book, apart from the fact that Barth was such a prolific writer. In his *Church Dogmatics* there is a constant wavering about the extent of creation's positive relatedness to God. Barth nevertheless ends up affirming Protestant teaching on *sola gratia* – as we already saw in the previous section – which in its full-blown dialectic entails a rejection of any likeness to God in the creature *ante gratiam*. This is also one of the heavier criticisms that Balthasar attaches to Barth, and I will dedicate this part of the section to an exegesis of Balthasar's view of nature.

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<sup>73</sup> The Council of Orange, Hünemann and Denzinger 2012, (379).

<sup>74</sup> Balthasar 1992.

Balthasar considers a variety of themes in Barth's development of thought, as well as within Catholic theology, but his book is explicitly concerned with the *analogia entis* as the ground of theological conflict between Barth and Roman Catholicism. Perhaps the most important theme in his interpretation of the conflict is the relation of nature to grace in theology. Because even if grace in some basic sense goes all the way down, as it were, even for a proper Catholic doctrine of creation, the question remains whether there is an important distinction to be made between creaturely existence and divine – between the gratuity of creation and gratuitous grace. Balthasar explores this basic question throughout his book and propounds the classical thomistic formula of *gratia supponit, extollit, non destruit, sed perfecit naturam* – grace presupposes nature and elevates it, does not destroy it but perfects it.

This "nature" which grace presupposes is "primarily a negative one" which is not to be thought of as something "in itself," certainly not as the *pura natura* that figures in the systems of the neo-scholastics. The latter would in practice entail a kind of secularism – the positing of a real world from which God could be excluded. Barth rightly feared that this was the *analogia entis*, a Catholic metaphysical system. But for Balthasar the concept of nature in theology is rather purely formal, and only distinguishable by hypothetically subtracting from the *de facto* world in which grace is always already present. However, since grace presupposes nature, nature must exist as a "minimum" for any talk of grace to make sense at all.<sup>75</sup> I want to quote Balthasar at length here because he presents us with a substantially different theological understanding of nature from what Barth feared should become a competitor to the supernatural gift of grace:

Based on the belief that it is possible to give a clear exposition of intraworldly structures in their *eidōs*, at least up to a certain point, some people then think they have discovered *purely* natural and purely isolable relationships. Then they feel justified in continuing this construction and likewise in drawing conclusive boundary lines, even going so far as to specify the relationship of this hypothetical "being" to God and its ultimate fate! But it is obvious how questionable the results of this are. For where do we get the right to understand these intraworldly structures as if they were disengaged from transcendence? How can you drain marriage, for example, or the whole of morality of its *concrete* relation to God and to the Last Things? The only end we know in our *de facto* world is our supernatural one. So how can we so blithely maintain that the world possesses a self-sufficient, *definitive* ground of fulfilment apart from this end? Only God, God alone, can have the final word. The fact that grace is free in its relation to nature does not suffice for making pure nature so governing a concept.

The right approach for theological thinking will be different. It will move within the complex order of this world, which is the *only legitimate object* of theological thought. Living inside its vocation in grace, a grace that

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 285.

has *already* been poured out, theological thinking will step back reverently and acknowledge that this grace is totally undeserved and that the creature is wholly unworthy to receive it, that it is a servant who is, through no merit of its own, called to become a friend of the master.

While we do not need to describe it in great detail, this image of the servant who has been simultaneously clothed in the grace of friendship captures the contrast between nature and grace. **Nature is to be sought in that *minimum* that must be present in every possible situation where God wants to reveal himself to a creature. And that minimum is expressed by the term *analogia entis*.** If there is to be revelation, then it can only proceed from God to the creature – to a creature that precisely as creature does *not* include revelation in its conceptual range. **The "nature" that grace presupposes is createdness as such.**<sup>76</sup>

Balthasar has the intra-Catholic debate about pure nature explicitly in mind here, and in an important sense does he resonate more deeply with Barth's emphasis on the "necessity" of grace for expressing creation's relation to God, than his Catholic colleagues. Nature here is an "antechamber" for revelation, which grace freely gives itself to and thereby reveals nature to be totally gratuitous. At the same time, this implies, writes Balthasar, that nature as created being cannot be wholly dissimilar to its Creator. Theologically speaking, there is in the created being truly *being* that bears a likeness to God's being. Balthasar is saying that, for the sake of *grace*, one must allow for a concept of creaturely being that is at the same time positive and dynamic: "What the formal concept of nature tells us is that everything touched by grace retains its natural side: grace is always a grace in a nature and for a nature. It remains modal to nature and is never itself substantial. But while this is all true, so is the converse: grace so radically transforms, exults and irradiates nature with the divine reality that no aspect or corner of nature can escape its impact."<sup>77</sup>

How does Balthasar go from the presupposition of nature to the idea of analogy? As soon as the relative autonomy of the created being has been acknowledged as such, this "relationality" becomes the ground of an *analogia relationis*, which by implication is to speak of an analogy of being.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, he is happy to point out that Barth "describes the God-creature relation in the classical terms of the analogy of being,"<sup>79</sup> which finds its culmination in the verdict that "[i]f human being is a being in correspondence to its determination to be God's covenant comrade, then the statement is unavoidable that human being corresponds to God himself: to the being of the Creator."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 284-285.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 113; 163.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>80</sup> CD III/2, 325f.



Balthasar comes very close to formulating an *analogia entis* within an *analogia fidei*, with the former as a presupposition of the latter, but with the latter as the concrete basis. Thus, Balthasar is not really engaging Barth as a critic first and foremost, but as someone who is, theologically, trying to bring him into the Catholic fold by assenting to his original worries whilst simultaneously correcting the structures in his thought that lead into a dead end.

Some recent Barth scholarship questions whether Barth would have any use at all of an analogy of being within an analogy of faith. George Hunsinger, for example, thinks that Balthasar is mistaken to fit the question of analogy as a *Denkform* onto Barth's own concerns:

From the beginning of the series to the end, his [Barth's] rejection of the *analogia entis* did not waver. Certainly as the series goes on, a greater use is made of analogical constructs in non-polemical contexts, but this use would seem to be more a development in his thought than a development of his thought. That is, his outlook has not changed, as von Balthasar seems to imply, in any fundamental way; Barth simply finds occasion to use analogical constructs (not a single "doctrine" of analogy) whenever they help to explicate the doctrinal matter at hand. The quest for a single *Denkform* would seem to have skewed the reading at this point.<sup>81</sup>

According to Hunsinger, Barth never held the analogy of faith in the sense of a *Denkform* for theology,<sup>82</sup> and consequently he could not have proposed anything like the *analogia entis* within it.

### *Söhngen: The Question of Anknüpfungspunkt*

Gottlieb Söhngen chose a somewhat different route of dialogue with Barth, but suggested in concordance with Balthasar that the analogy of being is supposed to be understood *within* the analogy of faith, as Christologically motivated. What concerned Söhngen most was how there could be an *Anknüpfungspunkt* ["inner ontological contact"] between nature and grace in Barth's alternative, the analogy of faith, because from his Catholic viewpoint, grace presupposes nature (whilst it does not destroy it but perfects it).

The starting point for Söhngen in the essay "The Analogy of Faith: Likeness to God from Faith Alone?" is to trace Barth's rejection of the *analogia entis* back to an idea of participation in God by faith alone, as found in Luther. Barth's own *analogia fidei* is similar to Luther's, Söhngen argues, in that both express protest against the Catholic idea of creation having a likeness to God. In and of itself, nature is wholly removed from God because of sin. As far as the theses of the Heidelberg disputation go, Luther's *sola fide* is an explicit negation of any knowledge of God from creation.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Hunsinger 1991, 7.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 20. Hunsinger simply states that the actualism that informs Barth's *analogia fidei* rather is the true *Denkform* here.

<sup>83</sup> Söhngen 2012, 66, n. 7.

There can be no talk of analogy between God and man, at least not in the order of knowing: "That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened."<sup>84</sup> But the *sola fide* is not just a way of speaking about the incapacity of the human being to know God. It is a proclamation of the state that the justified person is in, as *simul justus et peccator*. Sin is the condition under which all of creation is laid, even in the posterior *de facto* reality of salvation in Christ: "to God the saints are simultaneously righteous and unrighteous: *always intrinsically* sinners and always extrinsically justified; *sinner in reality* and righteous in hope."<sup>85</sup> The dialectic is obvious; sin is an *ontological* reality and the proper denominator of creaturely being, even after faith. What Luther offers instead is a human likeness to God by grace alone, a wholly extrinsic *participatio* in Christ through faith alone.<sup>86</sup>

If Luther's idea of participation through faith alone is *the* Protestant account of the relation between God and creation, Barth too is guilty of an *analogia attributionis extrinsecae*, that is, "a relationship of correspondence from a purely external attribution ... The unity between humanity and God is strictly an external and in no way internal connection."<sup>87</sup>

Söhngen, however, tries to offer Barth a way of seeing an *Anknüpfungspunkt* between grace and nature; an analogy of being *through* the analogy of faith. Because of the supernatural participation in God's inner being which is the communicated grace of salvation, we can speak also of a communicated natural participation of being through God's creation:

The gracious inclusion of human nature within the inner divine sphere of life means a new ontological reality in the person, but the reality of salvation is not something natural, but gracious. The reality of salvation stands between two natural communications of God, between the communication of the Creator in his positing of the world and humanity and the entirely different communication of God in the inner divine processions.<sup>88</sup>

Söhngen also qualifies his "analogy of being" along the way, in order to appease any accusations against it as natural theology for its own sake. On his account, the relative *analogia entis* holds by virtue of the participation of being (as *ens commune*) in God but in no way entails any self-impartment of God, or sharing of his divine nature – which is how the supernatural gift of faith and its content, revelation, is commonly described in scholastic theology. Rather, "our

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<sup>84</sup> Luther, #22.

<sup>85</sup> from Luther's *Vorlesung über den Römerbrief 1515/1516* as quoted in Söhngen 2012, 66. My italics.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 68f.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>88</sup> Söhngen 2012, 192.

metaphysical statements about God concern his essence only according to its external side."<sup>89</sup> The analogy of being could never replace or be compared to that which is received in grace. Nevertheless, nature does not stand in competition with grace, which is the important lesson with regard to *simul justus et peccator*: "this short phrase contains everything un-Pauline, un-Augustinian, un-liturgical, and un-Catholic, such that our being seized by the religious force of Luther's words can only be the grip of deep anguish." Were it not for the *simul justus*, there would be no real dispute between a Protestant and a Catholic analogy of creation to God.<sup>90</sup>

Barth responded positively to Söhngen's evaluation, to the point of acceding that if Söhngen's account had been the official Roman Catholic rendition of the *analogia entis*, then he would have to withdraw his accusations against it; but to Barth's mind this was sadly not the case.<sup>91</sup> Bruce L. McCormack suggests that Barth "ceased speaking of [the analogy of being] because Söhngen and Balthasar had given him reason to believe that there were other versions of the analogy of being to be found among Catholics that were more amenable to Barth's talk of the *analogia fidei*."<sup>92</sup> Joseph Palakeel takes notice that Barth in the third volume of *Church Dogmatics* even admitted an *Anknüpfungspunkt* in man as the image and likeness of God. Barth's increasing attention to Christ as a partaker of human nature in the incarnation led him to formulate an *analogia relationis*, by which God and man relate to each other. The *communicatio idiomatum* of Chalcedonian Christology makes it possible for us to predicate things about God by predicating things about Christ's human nature, which is to say that human, creaturely being does bear a likeness to God. Such an analogy does not, however, for Barth finds its foundation in the act of creation, but in God's act through faith and revelation, through history and ultimately in and through Christ.<sup>93</sup> The *Anknüpfungspunkt* is therefore still only extrinsically achieved, and for this reason Keith L. Johnson can conclude that Barth's analogies to the very end are something quite different from Söhngen's proposal:

[W]hile Söhngen may be correct that Barth does have to talk about a *participatio entis* - and, by implication, an *analogia entis* - if he talks about an *analogia fidei*, he is incorrect to think that Barth's definition of either term stands in line with his own. The key difference is that the *analogia entis* implied within Barth's *analogia fidei* is one that *cannot* be understood as part of the larger 'nexus of being' in which all other things exist, while Söhngen's version can. The reason this is the case is found in Söhngen's explicit rejection of

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 188. Söhngen explicitly refers to Rabbi Moses Maimonides, whom Aquinas discusses in the question of whether the divine names signify the essence of God. Maimonides claims they do not, while Aquinas holds that they do, but with the necessary condition that "although these terms [*good, wise, just*] which our intellect attributes to God from such conceptions signify the divine essence, they do not signify it perfectly as it exists in itself, but as it is conceived by us."

<sup>90</sup> Söhngen 2012, 70.

<sup>91</sup> CD II/1, 82.

<sup>92</sup> McCormack 2011, 89.

<sup>93</sup> Palakeel 1995, 138-139.

the *analogia attributionis extrinseca*. Söhngen rejects this type of analogy because he believes that it sets 'faith against being, or the reality of faith against the being of the world and human reality'. The analogy must be an *intrinsic* one, he argues, because otherwise the human's being in Christ stands in opposition to human being as such. Söhngen, in short, wants to retain an account in which the grace available through Jesus Christ does not stand in contradiction to, but in line with, the grace found in nature by virtue of God's act of creation. As we have seen, however, Barth simply cannot accept such an account.<sup>94</sup>

### *Concluding Remarks*

This section does not give us a wholly unified picture of what to say about the *analogia entis* with regard to Barth, as Barth's own position is so difficult to pinpoint. However, it is possible to identify some commonalities and differences between the Catholic idea of analogy and Barth's.

Beginning with Balthasar's rapprochement between Barth and Catholic theology, we must say that it is an impressive display of irenicism to the point where analogy no longer becomes the dividing line between them, but rather Christological considerations. Balthasar rather warns Barth about other aspects of his theology that threaten the concept of nature, namely what has been termed "Christo-monism." Expressing the concern that Barth exaggerates his Christocentrism to the point of turning it into an idealist system, Balthasar thinks he "ends up talking about Christ so much as *the* true human being that it makes it seem as if all other human beings are mere epiphenomena."<sup>95</sup>

If we now take Söhngen's proposal into account, it seems we are again not dealing with the question of "likeness" *per se* but a certain conception of nature's inherent capacity and worth. If Barth did move from a dialectical mode of thinking about God and creation, then he should not have had any real difficulty with analogy within the analogy of faith. However, actualism lingers still in the background, as Barth ultimately cannot accept any account of "being" that is not achieved by the grace of Jesus Christ.

If nothing else, then, the disagreement over Barth's legacy reveals that his rejection of the *analogia entis* runs deeper than the issue of any *particular* formulation of it. But at the same time, it is not necessarily the *analogia entis* itself that remains the dividing issue between the churches, as it can be shown to fit within an *analogia fidei*.<sup>96</sup> Rather, it would seem that there is a difference in starting points, in formal principles, between Barth's theology and Catholic theology in general. The

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<sup>94</sup> Johnson 2010, 181.

<sup>95</sup> Balthasar 1992, 243.

question of a basic Catholic "form" in theology will become the topic of the last section of this thesis.

*Deum tamquam ignotum cognosc[imus].*<sup>96</sup>

["We know God as unknown."]

## The Question of Analogy as *Denkform*

In the first chapter of the final, third part of *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Hans Urs von Balthasar introduces the question of "styles" in philosophy, pointing out that this "noblest fruit of our human understanding" is a living, developing thing that nevertheless retains a perennial form. This perennial character is essential to the idea of truth, since truth never ceases to be truth, but it is "profuse," meaning it is connected to human reason and as such cannot be "caught in the net of any finite concept." Because of the variations of human talents, personalities, individual traits, and missions there is a "style" not only for the beautiful but also for truth, says Balthasar. Styles of truth [*Stilgeschichte des Wahren*], he continues, that are the most personal, most "touched by genius" are "precisely ... the most universally valid." In this way, there is a unity of truth in every unique style; Aristotle is nothing without Plato, and Thomas Aquinas is nothing without them and the Stoics and Plotinus. These thinkers presuppose truth in the form that their forebears have expressed it, yet in their own thought they achieve something new. Philosophical development works in analogy with how architectural forms such as the Gothic presupposes the Romanesque, Roman and Greek; they are not simple accumulations, bricks of past insights and decisions piled one upon the other, but complex beautiful structures with a surprising, mysterious unity to them. Now the same must hold ever as much for theology, "whose object towers over every individual form while needing all of them in order to express the wealth of revelation." It is exactly here where we encounter the term *Denkform*, which signifies the various particular styles for truth. The question of a *Denkform* for theology thus appears at this point in Balthasar's book as a way of asking what keeps theology together in expressing truth.<sup>97</sup>

The question of *Denkform* for Catholic theology may perhaps seem a little odd in a work dedicated to evaluate the theology of a Protestant companion, but it is precisely because of Barth's original suspicion, that the *analogia entis* reveals a ready philosophical form into which revelation is predetermined to fit, that it becomes *the* pressing issue for Balthasar to explore. What Balthasar wants to show Barth is that the Church's faith is no "closed-off and finished

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<sup>96</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 1, a. 2, ad. 1.

<sup>97</sup>Balthasar 1992, 251-252.

system" that it can lay claim to while at the same time affirm the truth that it nevertheless is the receiver and protector of.<sup>98</sup>

It is because of the content of revelation as "the highest *ratio* – the personal divine Logos himself" that it "needs all the forms of the worldly *logoi* of truth in order to present its inexhaustible fullness: the abstract and general as well as the concrete and individual." Because revelation is knowledge of the Word of the Father in the Spirit become flesh, that is to say become creature, there is no finitude or completion to revelation, however much a trans-temporal fullness radiates through its finite expressions at any point in time. Catholic thinking "remains open," which from a systematic viewpoint might come across as indefinite and ultimately dissatisfying.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, while revelation is necessarily clothed in vestments borrowed from philosophic systems, these systems neither exhaust nor finalise a form.<sup>100</sup> Balthasar takes the example of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which "does not solemnly canonize the Aristotelian philosophy of nature", but rather, is one of the formulations that make revelation accessible because of their "wide semantic range." This is crucial to understanding particular historical debates, Balthasar continues, because we "who come later and want to understand the position taken by the Church must know the semantic range [*Denksprache*] of that century's language to evaluate the specific extent of the pronouncement in question." What we *cannot* do is to confuse these philosophically imbued pronouncements with the idea that Catholic theology is built on an underlying "systematic principle" that pre-sets a limit to the content of revelation.<sup>101</sup>

At this point Balthasar recounts Barth's judgment that there is a "doctrine of the analogy of being" that is the "foundational schema of Catholic thought and doctrine."<sup>102</sup> Suddenly we see what Balthasar intends by the above considerations! Here is the reason, in the end, why Balthasar does not claim to offer a "Catholic response" to Barth – simply because there is no Catholic, unified, systematic way of responding to a particular theologian's way of thinking. Of course, this is conceivably very irritating to someone who would like to reject Catholic theology on the whole – and we may have to ask if Barth is guilty of the like. In the end, however, this is not Balthasar's

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid..

<sup>100</sup> Or rather, "form is not perfect closure", as Francesca Murphy points out in an essay on the musical aspects of Przywara's *analogia entis*. See Murphy 1993.

<sup>101</sup> Balthasar 1992, 253-254.

<sup>102</sup> *CD* II/1, 597.

judgment of Barth: his deeply Christological concerns save him from being a full-fledged systematician.<sup>103</sup>

Peter Casarella has even argued that Balthasar's goal with the *Denkformen* as an expression of Catholic theology as being "open" is an ecumenical gesture towards the true elements of Barth's thinking, to "integrate elements of Barth's theology into a new Catholic synthesis". Balthasar's "method" is to integrate all true forms to Catholic theology, since he "conceives of the entire truth about God and humanity as a symphonic whole whose unity is greater than its parts."<sup>104</sup>

We now have to bring in Przywara himself as our witness to learn what it might mean that the analogy of being is a "basic Catholic form." It may turn out be congruent with Balthasar's account of *Denkform*, and even be a kind of theological metaphysics.

### *Przywara's Principle*

So far in this thesis I have in a way bracketed the question of which version of analogy Barth was so critical. We have instead attempted to cover the more general dispute of a likeness of creation to God, as expressed historically through terms like participation and analogy of being – especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Barth was certainly not very precise when he identified not just individual theologians but the entirety of Catholic theology with the *analogia entis*. And theologian Henri Bouillard gives us reason to hold that Barth opposed *any* kind of analogy of "intrinsic attribution," no matter whose formulation of it we choose to study: as long as analogy names the possibility of predicating things of God apart from revelation.<sup>105</sup> It nevertheless becomes necessary at this point to look closer at the thinker responsible for initiating that particular debate with which this thesis is concerned.

Keith L. Johnson has raised the possibility that Barth may never even have read Przywara's equally magisterial and elaborate *Analogia Entis*. At least as much is clear that the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* developed during the time that Przywara's book came out, and that the two

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<sup>103</sup> Balthasar certainly implies that Barth is trying to reject Catholicism as a system, when he argues that heresy, which is to say 'choice', always comes with an intention at systematisation, a closed-off formal and material principle: "Heretics are constantly amazed at and lament over the fact that Catholicism never seems to find definitive expression in a system, that for every statement there is something more that could be said, that it is common for Catholic theology to distinguish even in papal and conciliar statements the time-conditioned mode of expression from the transtemporal content that strictly obliges the believer." Balthasar 1992, 253.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 205; Casarella 2011.

<sup>105</sup> The opposite of extrinsic attribution, which we covered in the section on Söhngen.



theologians had a "fruitful encounter" in the form of a personal meeting and a seminar even before then.<sup>106</sup> Whatever we conclude about Barth's knowledge of Przywara's account of analogy between God and creation, it will be of great importance that we outline the basic structure and purpose of it, in order to show that it at least is not the "ogre" [*Schreckgespenst*] that Barth made out of it. We may even find it to be much less antithetical to Barth's integral theological concerns.<sup>107</sup>

Erich Przywara understood himself to be a "student and faithful expositor of tradition",<sup>108</sup> and he was convinced that the *analogia entis* was a way of articulating a fundamental doctrine of the Catholic faith. He never claimed the doctrine to be his invention, although the term *analogia entis* first appeared in theology with the late scholastics, with Cajetan in the fifteenth century and as a specific concept with Suárez (1548-1617). The Jesuit schools solidified it as a technical term in their textbooks, and this is how it was traduced to Przywara as a seminarian in Valkenburg, Holland. Przywara was, however, responsible for spreading the terminology in the German-speaking world, just like he had introduced John Henry Newman to the same.<sup>109</sup>

In his translator's introduction to the *Analogia Entis*, John Betz characterises Przywara's basic contribution as a reformulation of the linchpin of the theological metaphysics of the Church Fathers and Aquinas. They were all expositors of Scripture, faithful to its witness that God is at the same time visible in his creation (Ps 19:1; Wisd. 13:5; Rom 1:19-20), reflected in his image (Gen. 1:26-27) and yet infinitely surpassing creaturely existence: "Who is like the Lord our God, who is enthroned on high?" (Ps. 113:5) Just like the doctrine of the trinity is implied by Scripture, so is the doctrine of the *analogia entis*. There is, however, a radicality to Przywara's rendition of the analogy of being, which is that the doctrine becomes to him more than just a technical term in scholastic theology: it is the "standard of a properly Catholic understanding of reality."<sup>110</sup>

Betz outlines the development of Przywara's doctrine of analogy through an early period in a number of books and essays, to the mature standpoint of the original *Analogia Entis*.<sup>111</sup> It is not the objective of this thesis, however, to record this important and substantial development, but

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<sup>106</sup> Johnson 2010, 150.

<sup>107</sup> Balthasar 1992, 257.

<sup>108</sup> Przywara 2014, 43.

<sup>109</sup> Palakeel 1995, 155.

<sup>110</sup> Przywara 2014, 43f.

<sup>111</sup> The translated *Analogia Entis* to which I refer is Przywara's compilation in two parts. The first part was first published in 1932 and is called *Analogia Entis: Original Structure* whereas the second part, *Universal Rhythm* consists of essays written between 1939-1962. Przywara also made some clarifying alterations to the first part before the compilation was published.

rather to point out the basic unity of Przywara's proposal by explicating one important aspect of it, namely the identification of the *analogia entis* with a formulation of the Fourth Lateran council.<sup>112</sup> When we later turn to the question of the *analogia entis* as a principle, or basic form of thought for a theological metaphysics, we will have to uncover a few other aspects of it.

In the essay "The Scope of Analogy as a Fundamental Catholic Form," Przywara argues that the *analogia entis* finds its eminent dogmatic expression in the Fourth Lateran council's response to Joachim of Fiore's controversial doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>113</sup> Joachim of Fiore agreed with the Church that the "Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one essence, one substance, and one nature," while denying that this unity was a "true and proper" one.<sup>114</sup> Rather he claimed that unity in the Trinity models on the unity that is the church, namely by "collectivity" and similitude – going on to claim that the economical trinity unfolded historically as a collective unity "in charity." Przywara explains that Joachim abolished the distinction of being in union "in God" (as the Trinity is eternally and essentially) and "with God" (as we are by a partaking of grace). With the risk of oversimplifying the problem to the point of distortion, Joachim believed that the persons of the Trinity ruled their respective kingdoms of different ages in time. A correlative to the Old and New Testament, there was an age of the Father, and of the Son – and thus Joachim prophesied the coming of the age of the Holy Spirit, in which a direct union of humanity in God would become realised as charity and grace. This meant not only that the Church's hierarchy would be replaced by another one more "like" this definition of God's unity as charity, but it also meant that humanity in this new age would become *identical* with God – or, God would become *identical* with humanity – concluded Przywara. That prospect was to his mind a bleak one, and would even become the historical basis of the theological imagination of modernity as polarity between "theopanism" (God is everything = Protestantism) and pantheism (everything is God = naturalism).<sup>115</sup>

In the eyes of the council then, this pneumatological supersessionism, as it were, explicitly denied recognition of her existence as the body of Christ, but also threatened creation's existence as such. Substituting divine unity as a spirit of charity for the God who is by nature and essence unity comes at a dear price. It is to collapse the essential distinction between creature and God,

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<sup>112</sup> So much more can and should be said about the phenomenology, the logic, the obediential power of the *analogia entis* that will not make its way into this thesis. I could not overstate how helpful John Betz's translator's introduction to the *Analogia Entis* is to this end.

<sup>113</sup> Przywara 2014, 353f.

<sup>114</sup> Hünemann and Denzinger 2012 (431).

<sup>115</sup> Przywara 2014, 354f.

making the mediating event of the incarnation superfluous, if not meaningless. Accordingly it nullifies the salvific mission of the Church as united to, and sent by, the Son who is God become man. Precisely because God's unity in nature is altogether different from the kind of unity we share as humans in the Church, is it possible for us to be creatures at all. Another way of putting this is to say that the distinction between nature and grace is once again eradicated, as the "otherness" (to use a popular term) that constitutes both giver and receiver respectively, is dissolved.

For being a heresy that began in what – as always – seems like one abstract idea of unity juxtaposed with another, its full-drawn conclusions were positively dramatic. One of the errors that the Church recognised in Joachim's millennial schema was precisely the likening of intra-human, collective unity in charity to the inner unity of the Trinity, without any ontological, categorical distinction between them. So, to this end the Fourth Lateran Council announced the formula: "*Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos non maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.*" ["One cannot note any similarity between creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to observe an ever greater dissimilarity between them"].<sup>116</sup>

For Przywara, the term *greater dissimilarity* in this formula can be said to define the *analogy* of being between God and creation because it safeguards in an absolute sense against any confusion of likeness with identity, whilst affirming a relative likeness. He can thus include both the *analogia attributionis* and the *analogia proportionalitatis* in his understanding of analogy, as long as they express *both* likeness *and* alterity on the creaturely side of thing by virtue of their having a unity in God's being – a *unity-in-tension* [*Spannungseinheit*]. The most important insight is, however, that the dissimilarity always remains greater.<sup>117</sup>

### **Analogia Entis as Open-ended Denkform**

We thus turn to the final issue of the *analogia entis* as a *Denkform* for theology. This will require us to 1) describe Przywara's intention with analogy in some further detail, in order to see how it is 2) the expression of a theological metaphysics.

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<sup>116</sup> Hünemann and Denzinger 2012 (806). Translation from Przywara 2014, 72-73.

<sup>117</sup> Przywara 2014, 72f. The German original term *unity-in-tension* is a particularly felicitous expression to learn for Swedish-speakers, as it translates "spänningsenhet" – a much more vivid term thanks to the closer relation of these two germanic languages.

Balthasar notes that the emphasis on *dissimilarity* is precisely what saves Przywara from the accusation of Barth that it constitutes a predetermining philosophical system.<sup>118</sup> That it is not such a system is not accidental on Przywara's side either, especially not since he was already aware of Barth's ecumenical challenge during his writing of the 1932 edition of *Analogia Entis*. When we turn to that book in particular, it is impossible to notice how the content of Przywara's doctrine reveals something altogether different from a closed-off system.

Taken by today's standards, Przywara in a way comes across as a truly postmodern philosophical theologian. There is nothing in his account of creaturely being that gives the typically modern primacy to stable forms or substances in the face of polarity and differentiation – he is bordering almost on the Heraclitean, were it not for the utter relativity of creation to its transcendent Creator. If the *analogia entis* is a veritable description of anything, then it is more a tracking of creaturely movement and contingency than a metaphysical theory – we should here recall the importance of *dissimilarity*. This is not to say that it is a closed-off philosophical account where flux or *agon* towers as a basic matrix of existence. What it tries to do is give a provisional account of experience and knowledge here in our *regio dissimilitudinis*. In Przywara's own words, in the final pages of the first part of the *Analogia Entis*, the analogy of being is a

*creaturely principle* and, thus, as consisting in the illimitable openness of the movement of becoming. Were it something like *the* formula of the creaturely (and so, logically, of the relation between God and creature), it would constitute the most absolute starting point for an absolute metaphysics: from which everything could be deduced, even the profoundest of theological mysteries. As it is, however, it is merely an expression for how the uttermost potentiality of the creaturely (including the *potentia obedientialis*) is at work within the starting point of thought as thought. It is not a principle that makes the creaturely comprehensible and thus manipulable, but one in which the creaturely oscillates unhindered in its utter potentiality.<sup>119</sup>

As Balthasar states it: "the analogy of being is the destruction of every system in favour of a totally objective availability of the creature for God and for the divine measure of the creature."<sup>120</sup>

There is another important point to be made about the *analogia entis* as a creaturely principle for thinking about the creaturely, which is that it is, as Balthasar describes it, "open-ended" and finds its final truth in theology. Przywara remarks: "to say that metaphysics is 'provisional' as

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<sup>118</sup> Balthasar 1992, 255.

<sup>119</sup> Przywara 2014, 310.

<sup>120</sup> Balthasar 1992, 255.

philosophy is to say that it first attains 'finality' through theology".<sup>121</sup> There is no clear demarcation to be made between philosophical and theological metaphysics when we consider the openness to God that Przywara is at pains to show in every moment of his thought, but the implication is clear: *every metaphysics has a theological consummation*. Openness to grace also characterises an "originally sinful philosophy" from a "redeemed philosophy" – it ultimately separates what is *paganus* from *catholicus*:

A fallen philosophy is one that seeks to be absolute (it is no accident that the formula of original sin in Gen. 3:5 is that of "knowing ... like God"), only then to succumb either to the dead absoluteness of a "pure critique" that rends everything apart (in a "pure dialectic") and thus only progresses from sin and death to hell. A "redeemed" philosophy not only knows itself to be living before the *one* living absolute (God) in its creaturely distinction from this absolute (and hence to be living within the unfettered creaturely moving of genuine "becoming"), but also and precisely recognizes its own native tendency to fall into the death of "pure concepts" and into the hell of "pure critique".<sup>122</sup>

This really is the last word on metaphysics, in a sense, because the proper goal of any philosophy should be a *preparatio evangelica*, making ourselves ever-prepared to receive grace. We should see now that "Erich Przywara's" *analogia entis* really is not merely an expression of a personal style, but the formulation of a metaphysics that is not a system but a witness to creaturely being's "openness."

### *Concluding Remarks*

I take Balthasar's account of *Denkform* to be an adequate description of theological method and its relation to theological truth – whilst allowing that his "style" is also a "style" among others. The *Denkform* as Balthasar tries to explain it, eludes Barth's critique of Catholic theology at the most basic level, since it shows first of all how forms of thought are *legio*, but also that they truly are handmaidens whereas the material content they carry is not bound by the philosophical concepts we employ to express it.

When it comes to Przywara, we must conclude first of all that Barth's accusation simply does not apply to him. Nowhere do we find Przywara claiming that we can deduce revelation, not even anticipate its material. They only disagree where Przywara's Catholic colleagues, Balthasar and Söhngen, already have done so – on the question of creaturely being's proper place in the drama

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<sup>121</sup> Przywara 2014, 170.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

of salvation. As a creaturely principle, the *analogia entis* is however a much less cataphatic proposal than Barth's and Söhngen's analogy of being within an *analogia fidei*. Maybe that is because Przywara begins in philosophy and is acutely aware of the hazards and disappointments of the craft.

We must also conclude that insofar as Przywara's *analogia entis* is the expression of the Fourth Lateran Council's decree on the ever-greater dissimilarity of God to creatures, no matter how great a likeness, there *is* a dogmatic basis for describing it as a theological metaphysics. As we have seen, however, it is an ultimately apophatic metaphysics, that only clears the way for grace to enter into and redeem the creaturely. Every open-ended philosophy is a Catholic philosophy, and as such coincides with Balthasar's concept of *Denkform*.

## Summary and Final Reflections

This thesis set out to explore the thesis that the analogy of being is a proper form of thought for Catholic theology, by which is meant a guiding principle of thought for theology grounded in a theological metaphysics. To show what this would mean and how it could be so, I ordered the thesis into four separate sections with the final aim of connecting the dots.

In order to speak of "analogy" in any meaningful way I needed to present a brief genealogy or history of ideas that traced the concept from Thomas Aquinas via Augustine to Aristotle and Plato down to the Ancient Greek mathematicians. The concept of analogy turned out to be ambiguous, yet forceful in its expression of relations of similarity *and* dissimilarity between God and the world. Especially the Christian use of analogy proved itself an adequate handmaiden for expressing the likeness of creation to its transcendent Creator while at the same time safeguarding the transcendence of God. The Christian *analogia entis*, on the historical account as a *via eminentiae*, is ultimately apophatic in that it stresses the difference between divine and creaturely existence and knowledge.

Then, I turned to the accusation of Karl Barth against Erich Przywara's *analogia entis*. I traced the seeds of his thinking to his early dialectical period and identified an essential objection to analogy as a denial of nature's inherent capacities to anticipate grace. Barth was also shown to have radicalised the reformation's concept of God through the formula *Alleinwirksamkeit Gottes*, which denies the creature any activity of its own, resulting in actualism. My analysis of the mature Barth is that he has not changed his mind about nature as opposed to grace; the same reformational impulse that drove him away from Nazism was little other than the inverse position of the Liberal Protestantism that he was chastising.

In the third section, I introduced two individual attempts at resolving differences between Barth and Catholic theology. First, there was the assessment of Hans Urs von Balthasar, who clarified the Catholic concept of nature: showing it to be *de facto* much less independent from grace than what Barth and the neo-scholastics would have it, even if there still has to be a purely formal concept of nature, a minimum, that ensures a receptivity for grace in humanity *qua* created. Given that nature is *de facto* graced, Balthasar tries to convince Barth to accept an analogy of being within the analogy of faith. Second, Söhngen approximates the same thing, but from a different angle. In arguing for the necessity of an inner ontological point of contact [*Anknüpfungspunkt*] for

grace in nature, he points to created being as participating in God "only externally", which means that God is not known in his essence even though there is an analogy of being. However, it is concluded that the *simul justus et peccator* stands in the way of affirming an analogy of *being* even *within* an analogy of faith. This doctrine of Luther's and Barth's is the true stumbling block for ecumenical rapprochement.

In the fourth and final section, I explicated Balthasar's idea of *Denkform*, which is nothing other than the forms of thought that theologians construct from the philosophical language of the day to give expression to the material content of theology. As "styles" with individual traits, they do not close themselves off to revelation, but gives it vestments that help to clarify what is needed for the time being – there is thus a "history of styles" for truth. "Openness" is characteristic of Catholic theology, exactly because it is not bound to any particular system of expression, except for very broadly defined dogmatic formulations.

Then, I finally considered Przywara's rendition of the *analogia entis*. It is a creaturely principle meant to underline the relativity of creation to God, in order to open thought up to revelation, because ultimately philosophy has a theological consummation. The formulation of the Fourth Lateran council of an ever greater dissimilarity between God and creation becomes the linchpin of Przywara's account of analogy, as it safeguards both creaturely and divine being as being receiver and Giver of grace respectively. Przywara's distinction between originally sinful philosophy and redeemed philosophy points out that a closed-off philosophy of pure concepts and pure critique leads to hell and death. He could not agree more with Barth on this point, which makes it apparent that Barth never really understood Przywara's basic, apophatic insistence with respect to creaturely being. Perhaps Przywara would still have been accused of having a concept of nature apart from grace, but that would not be because of something peculiar to him – rather, it is part and parcel of Catholic theology to admit that grace presupposes nature, it does not destroy it, but elevates and perfects it.

I hope to have shown that the analogy of being is a true expression of a theological metaphysics, which is not to say that it is some "ready system" but a proper theological appropriation of creaturely, philosophical concepts. The enterprise of metaphysics has, for many a good reason, come under attack in the recent century, but with anything like the above understanding of the subject, I do not think there is an escape from it if we are to study fundamental theological themes. I also hope that I have shown the ecumenical power in going beyond the particular



dividing lines between the confessions, and asking the most basic questions about God and creation. Ultimately, creaturely being and thought, on an account like the *analogia entis*, suggest a **mystical end of finitude**, by which I mean to say that finite being always already anticipates a divine communion. As a starting point for ecumenical discussion, a proper formulation of the *analogia entis* has the potential of opening up the stalemate that still seems to withhold with regard to humanity's co-operative role in the drama of salvation.

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