

# THE RIGHT WAY TO SPEAK ABOUT GOD? PANNENBERG ON ANALOGY

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**A** CRUCIAL, if not *the* most basic question of all theology is the question about the right way to speak of God.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the major part of the Christian tradition, one significant answer to that question involved the use of analogy. This answer is still given in the main by Catholic theologians, although there is today no uniform agreement about the precise meaning and function of analogy among its adherents.<sup>2</sup> In a way unique among contemporary Protestant theologians, the German Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg has concerned himself with the tradition of analogy in Christian thought. He has judged analogy to be a fundamental question in theology not only because of its predominance in the tradition, but more especially because when used in speech about God it calls into play a whole understanding of the relationship between God and the world, an understanding which he indeed has found problematic. Convincing of its importance and seeking to understand its structure, Pannenberg early in his theological career undertook an extensive research project into the history of the concept of analogy. The results of this research formed the body of his *Habilitationsschrift* (inaugural dissertation), an as yet unpublished work entitled *Analogie und Offenbarung* in which the development of analogy from early Greek to medieval thinkers and into contemporary times up to Karl Barth is critically investigated.<sup>3</sup> This work in turn provided the material for a spin-off series of articles, encyclopedia entries, and book reviews on analogy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Analogy and Doxology," *Basic Questions in Theology* 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970) 211.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., the vastly different retrievals of Thomistic analogy by David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975), and William Hill, *Knowing the Unknown God* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> *Analogie und Offenbarung: Eine kritische Untersuchung der Geschichte des Analogiebegriffs in der Gotteserkenntnis* (Heidelberg, 1955); hereafter cited as *A&O* and quoted in the English translation of the present author.

<sup>4</sup> In chronological order, given with the original place of publication, the most important of these writings are: "Zur Bedeutung des Analogiedankens bei Karl Barth: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Urs von Balthasar," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 78 (1953) 17–24; "Analogie" and "Ontologie," *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. H. Brunotte and O. Weber, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956) 113–14, 1689–91; book review of Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of Its Background and Interpretation of Its Use by Thomas of Aquino*, in *Verkündigung und Forschung*, 1956, 136–42; "Analogie," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1 (1957) 350–53; "Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs als dogmatisches Problem der frühchristlichen Theologie," *Die Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert* 2 (1958) 10–20.

What does Pannenberg understand by analogy? What reasons does he advance for rejecting its use in speech about God? Using the unpublished *Habilitationsschrift* as a major source and supplementing from more recent writings when appropriate, the present article tracks this thinker in his “review of the theories of other thinkers” about analogy in order to answer those questions.<sup>5</sup> In the process the particular character of the challenge which Pannenberg poses to advocates of analogy can be brought into relief.

#### ANALOGY IN EARLY THOUGHT

Pannenberg begins his charting of analogy by noting that its origin cannot be pinpointed in historical time but is lost in the darkness of primitive human consciousness of similarities.<sup>6</sup> Long before analogy was reflected upon as such, peoples (it is characteristic of no single group but of all) perceived regularities and pervading likenesses in all worldly things and expressed this in various forms of analogy. Whether the form was magic, where similarity in appearance pointed to a certain secret identity of two different things which could then be made to serve human purposes (so that destroying the image of a person could damage the living person), or whether it was the more sober metaphor (the “foot” of the mountain is the lowest part of the mountain, as the foot is the lowest part of the human body), what was always presupposed was some likeness in the associated realities. Therefore, “in the broadest sense, every similarity can be called an analogy.”<sup>7</sup>

Such consciousness of similarities in the world led the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers to begin to use analogical thought as a heuristic tool for the investigation of the physical universe. They tried to uncover an identical relation within compared cases; once found, the commonality

tlichen Theologie,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 70 (1959) 1–45 (ET, n. 15 below); “Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Anwendung des Analogieprinzips in der evangelischen Theologie,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 85 (1960) 225–28; “Akt und Sein im Mittelalter,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 7 (1961) 197–220; “Analogie und Doxologie,” *Dogma und Denkstrukturen*, ed. W. Joest & W. Pannenberg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963) 96–115 (ET, n. 1 above); “Die Gottesidee des hohen Mittelalters,” *Der Gottesgedanke im Abendland*, ed. A. Schaefer (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1964) 21–34; book review of T. Bonhoeffer, *Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin als Sprachproblem*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 91 (1966) 120–23.

<sup>5</sup> In his *Habilitationsschrift* as well in much subsequent writing, Pannenberg appears to have adopted the methodology recommended by Aristotle, who wrote: “Let us start with a review of the theories of other thinkers; for the proofs of a theory are difficulties for the contrary theory. Besides, those who have first heard the pleas of our adversaries will be more likely to credit the assertions we are going to make” (*On the Heavens* 1, 10, 279b5–9; tr. J. L. Stocks).

<sup>6</sup> For what follows see *A&O* 17–22.

<sup>7</sup> “Analogie,” *RGG* 350.

present in these analogical cases was formulated as a generalization and then used as a law by which the unknown in additional cases could be understood. Empedocles, for example, explained the operation of the eye by analogy with the operation of the lantern: the lantern admits light but not water due to the nature of the “fine pores” on its surface; similarly, the eye admits light but not water due to the same physical property. The unclear process in the eye is explained through an identification with the better-known process in the lantern.

The actual term “analogy,” grammatically analyzable as “according to the logos,” seems to have come into common usage with Pythagorean mathematics. Whether arithmetic (e.g.,  $8 - 6 = 6 - 4$ , with the common logos expressed in the number 2) or geometric (e.g.,  $4:6 = 6:9$ , with the common logos being the relation 2:3) in kind, it is constitutive for mathematical analogy that compared relations have in common an identical logos. It was soon found that geometric analogy could be of particular use in philosophy’s efforts to deal with the inexhaustible diversity of reality, for such analogy does not require that compared items belong to the same species but only that they have an identical relation in common (e.g., hair and fins are the “same” inasmuch as they both cover a body). Relationships in the most different qualitative spheres could be analogous through their conforming to an identical logos, an equality of relation. Taking issue with those who differentiate sharply between mathematical equality of relationship and philosophical similarity of relationship, Pannenberg argues that the common logos indigenous to mathematical analogy perdures when analogy is used in philosophy: “Commonality reaching over the barriers of genus indicates not only similarity but also identity. Similarity always announces that somewhere a moment of partial identity is present. Otherwise, similarity would be an empty word.”<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of his study of analogy in earliest thought, Pannenberg focuses his preliminary insight into its structure, which is one of “identification”: “That word is not accidentally connected with analogy. . . . Again and again we are driven to the conclusion that the identity expressed in the form of proportion forms the mystery, as well as the problem, of the analogy concept.”<sup>9</sup>

#### GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Analogy received further precision in the golden age of Greek philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Socrates was the first to connect the “common” in analogies with

<sup>8</sup> A&O 31.

<sup>9</sup> A&O 18.

<sup>10</sup> Elaborated in detail in A&O 22–42. Pannenberg consulted and quoted the major standard works of the thinkers with whom he deals; these works are not specified in the present article, since what is aimed at is not a re-presentation of his research but a synthetic presentation of his thought.

the idea of a universal concept. He noted, for example, that speed occurs similarly in running, in playing the lyre, in speaking, in learning. In each case a great number of movements are performed by the respective organs (legs, fingers, tongue, understanding) in a short time. The cases are analogous by virtue of an identical logos, the concept of speed. Further cases of a similar nature can be brought under this common logos. In effect, this Socratic method of analogizing formed the origin of logic.

Although it is not as obvious at first glance, Plato's analogizing, done against the backdrop of his unitary view of the cosmos and his idea of the concept flowing from that, likewise required an identical moment in compared relations. This can be seen, for example, in his famous comparison between the sun's sending out rays of light and the idea of the good, historically so rich for theology. What is significant is the fact that in spite of all differences there is something identical in the compared realities, one in the visible and one in the spiritual realm, which empowers knowledge of the one to lead to knowledge of the other.<sup>11</sup> Precisely in this common logos lies the simile's heuristic power for human knowledge. Structurally, therefore, Platonic analogy corresponds to Socratic analogy, and both in turn are based on the mathematical model to which Plato himself expressly appealed.

In the investigation of natural phenomena and in the discussion of ethics, Aristotle too utilized analogy in the traditional Greek sense of comparison "according to the (common) logos." With its help he accomplished the classification of living things on the basis of their functions (a new precision for analogy) and distinguished between distributive and commutative justice. Only in the *Metaphysics* did he shift from this position in stating that the ultimate metaphysical principles in their different applications have not a synonymous but "only" an analogous meaning. One can speak of the universal in being, then, only in reference to substance, *pros hen*. Pannenberg is quick to point out that far from being homonymous, this is clearly a case where a common logos (the relation to one and the same commonality, substance) is once again operative. He is just as quick to admit that Aristotle himself did not see it that way, and is puzzled over that fact. Such assertion of analogy without a common logos is unheard of in the pre-Aristotelian Greek history of analogy, and Pannenberg argues that even in Aristotle it is presented only as a limit possibility.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On p. 27 of *A&O*, while discussing Platonic analogy, Pannenberg three times uses the exclamation point: between compared realities there is something "dasselbe!" ... "dieselben!" ... "etwas identisch!"—an indication of the conviction with which he is explaining what has obviously become his thesis.

<sup>12</sup> "eine Grenzmöglichkeit" (*A&O* 38; also 121).

When Platonic and Aristotelian thought flowed together to create the Neoplatonic world view, the concept of analogy was applied for the first time to the God-world relationship.<sup>13</sup> What role did the common logos basic to Greek analogy play in this new application? A major one, according to Pannenberg. True, one of the two founding principles of Neoplatonic thought maintained that the divine Origin of the world utterly transcends every one of the effects it causes: its simplicity lifts it over all contrasts. At the same time, however, the second founding principle in a “surprising twist” held that the divine Origin of all is present and can be known in what it has brought about insofar as it gives a share in its being to its effects. Origin and effects are related analogically through the effects’ participation in the being of the Origin. This commonality of being in turn grounds the possibility of knowing something of the perfection of the Origin by means of an inference from the perfection of created effects.

In the hands of its best expositors such as Plotinus, Albinus, and Proclus, the Neoplatonic causal schema is given a highly nuanced treatment. The universe emanates from the One, with successive emanations constituting ever lower orders of being. Within each order things are bound to one another through participation in the same discrete nature; between each order there is an analogical participation by means of which the highest member of a lower order is appended to the next highest order. The whole cosmos exhibits itself as a gradated structure of penetrating continuity based on analogical contact points. As one connected whole, it points to the One as the Origin of its unity. Since this cosmos does fall short of its divine archetype, all human knowledge of the divine which proceeds from it is inadequate. Nevertheless such knowledge is not simply inadequate, for an analogy between the divine and the effects which it causes does in fact exist.

The Neoplatonic causal schema is a sophisticated world view. Yet, in spite of its emphasis on the transcendence of the Origin, what remains inescapable in its make-up is the implicit presupposition of an “identity of divine and creaturely being,”<sup>14</sup> which identity undergirds the analogical transference of a perfection from the image back to the divine archetype. Without this moment of identity the heuristic power of Neoplatonic analogy would remain unrealized, for analogy functions precisely by making the unknown to be known through its similarity with the known.

#### EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

In Pannenberg’s estimation, it is not surprising that this truly imposing Neoplatonic system had great impact on early Christian thought. How

<sup>13</sup> See *A&O* 43–51.

<sup>14</sup> Pannenberg, “Gott, V: Theologiegeschichte,” *RGG* 2, 1723.

did it appear in a Christian configuration?<sup>15</sup> Was the presupposition of the common logos between God and the world broken through? Partially, in Christian thought about both creation *ex nihilo* and the resurrection. But there was no overall transformation of the Neoplatonic analogy concept by Christian thinkers such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who tended to adopt Neoplatonic ontological principles *in toto*. This reception is particularly clear in Pseudo-Dionysius, who brought Christian prehension and development of the Neoplatonic schema to a high art. He too taught that all creatures are ordered in proportional relationships, the degree of goodness of a thing being proportionate to its distance from the divine Origin; that God apportions gifts to each according to its rank in this hierarchy of being; that one can start from the known symmetry of relations between individual things of different rank and arrive at analogous knowledge of God. What gave his work its peculiarly Christian character is his teaching on illumination: both ontologically and noetically, the analogical relations between things receive their actuality only from the Light streaming from God. This brought to Neoplatonism a Christian heart and center and adapted it, so far as was possible, to Christian purposes. But what remained untransformed (unfortunately) was the lynchpin of this system of thought: analogy. Its presupposition that compared relations have something identical in common which is constitutive for their analogicity perdured even when the analogy was one between God and the world.

From his examination of analogy from earliest human thought through the Greek tradition and up through the first several centuries of Christian thought, Pannenberg formed an understanding of its fundamental structure, an understanding which consistently influences his judgment about the legitimacy of its use in theology, especially in speech about God. In sum, all analogy presumes a common logos, a moment of univocity between the compared realities: "It is decisive for the analogical inference from creation back to the divine Origin that despite all dissimilarity between God and the realm of finitude, there nevertheless still exists a common logos which permits the attributes in question in any given instance to be ascribed to God."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Description in *A&O* 51–60. Unlike Harnack and a number of other Protestant historians of dogma in the twentieth century, Pannenberg does not disparage the attempts of early Christian thinkers to come to terms with Greek philosophical notions of God and the cosmos. On the contrary, he perceives that this effort was necessary in order that the claim to universality of the one God of all peoples be proved in fact true. Whether Christian wrestling with the Greek philosophical tradition was sufficiently penetrating and critical is, of course, another question. See "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology," *Basic Questions in Theology* 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 119–22, 177–80.

<sup>16</sup> "Analogy and Doxology," *Basic Questions* 1, 216.

## PANNENBERG'S CRITIQUE OF NEOPLATONIC ANALOGY

Part way through the *Habilitationsschrift* Pannenberg halts his historical analysis and brings three theological criticisms to bear against the “menacing character” and “decisive danger” of the untransformed Neoplatonic causal schema in Christian thought. His arguments pivot around the uniqueness of revelation, the destructive power of sin, and the possibility of the genuinely new. First of all, he argues that if effects as effects, as that which they are in themselves, can stretch out from their own beingness toward knowledge of their Origin, then the decisive character of the one historical revelation is hardly understandable.<sup>17</sup> Contradicting Neoplatonism’s presumption of a community of being between God and the world is the paradox of this act of revelation: God is not like us, but God has become like us in Jesus Christ. That is what makes true talk of the true God possible. But the analogy schema flattens out this paradox into a graspable structural similarity between God and the world, on the basis of which inferences can be drawn, and thus endangers the uniqueness of God’s act of self-revelation in Christ.

Secondly, Pannenberg contends that the Neoplatonic principle of emanation of effects from their Origin makes it impossible to understand sin in its radicality as the opposition of the whole of human existence against God. This is the most important theological objection against the concept of a natural order as well as the most difficult aspect of the analogy question.<sup>18</sup> Christian Neoplatonic thought tended to dilute sin. Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, taught that through sin the creature has deviated from its pre-given proportion, although this is hardly noticed by the dull eyes of sinners; salvation re-establishes the proportion, with analogy (i.e., the creature’s rank in the hierarchy of being) determining the measure in which each thing receives the divine Light into itself. There is no sense here of the radicality of sin, nor of its penetrating power over human existence.

A third, no less destructive, consequence of the Neoplatonic causal schema lies in its inability to allow for the genuinely new. The universe is conceived of as cosmos, an ordered whole, in which existing relations are adumbrations of archetypal perfections there from the beginning. Reality is assumed to be complete in the cosmos and unchanging; the accidental and unexpected (i.e., history) is experienced as chaotic. The effect, struggling out of the diversity of the world toward the One, is pressing toward that relation with the Origin which it has always already had, a relation furthermore which is analogous to its rank in the hierarchy

<sup>17</sup> A&O 52–53; argument repeated in “Möglichkeiten und Grenzen” 227.

<sup>18</sup> This critique is explicated in “Zur Theologie des Rechts,” reprinted in *Ethik und Ekklesiologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977); also in Pannenberg’s sermon “Freiheit von Sünde,” *Gegenwart Gottes: Predigten* (Munich: Claudio, 1973) 22–26.

of being. Even the illumination of the *nous*, which occurs in conformity to its nature, brings nothing new. What is most problematic with this schema is its incapability of adequately expressing the biblical understanding of God; for what is most proper to God's action in history is the doing of ever-new things, unheard of until now. God brings into being things that do not exist and even gives life to the dead (Rom 4:17). It is particularly the Christian message of the resurrection of the dead which must "explode" the Neoplatonic teaching on proportions by which things are constituted and in which, come what may, they remain; for God is not the world principle, but the Lord of history who precisely as personal acts not from necessity and within an ordered structure but freely and unpredictably, in ways that cannot be inferred in advance.

Pannenberg presses this last critique in a particularly stringent way against the analogically grounded teaching on distributive justice. How, he asks, would Pseudo-Dionysius explain the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-16)? Is the Lord who pays the same wages for very different amounts of work the same as the God who requites each one according to the analogy of one's place in the hierarchy of being, one's merit? Is the God of the incalculable historical act the preserver of order and system? According to the Areopagite, the Spirit gives to each according to the analogy of its rank, while Paul proclaims that the Spirit apportions to each one individually as the Spirit wills (1 Cor 12:11). Here, in its uncritical adoption of the Neoplatonic causal schema, "Christian thought finds itself in full harmony with that of the pagans."<sup>19</sup> And here the decisive difference between analogical thought and thought from the historical action of God becomes clear; for that action not only fills up the room allotted to it—it breaks through all boundaries, ranks, and forms with which it meets. To be sure, God is the origin of all that exists now, and to that extent the idea of God arrived at through inference can be granted a limited critical right.<sup>20</sup> Yet God is neither exhausted in nor bound by present creation, but in freedom is also the source of what is not yet, the new and unforeseen. Analogy, then, can never become the basic thought-form in Christian theology. In fact, its persistent use leads to unfaith, since it obstructs the understanding of what is most characteristic of the biblical God.<sup>21</sup>

#### SCHOLASTIC ANALOGY

There was no continuous development of the concept of analogy from Pseudo-Dionysius' Neoplatonic Christian synthesis until the thought of

<sup>19</sup> A&O 49.

<sup>20</sup> "Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God" 139.

<sup>21</sup> Pannenberg's entire theological stance is presumed in this third critique, which he develops further elsewhere. See in particular his early essays "Christliche Glaube und

High Scholasticism. The one major contribution during this period came from Boethius, who saw analogy as a special type of equivocation while at the same time positing his own unique element of continuity: God is the highest form of all things.<sup>22</sup> In Pannenberg's reading of the history, the power of the advance of the analogy concept when it did occur in the thirteenth century is only appreciated if one perceives the crucial dilemma to which analogy provided the solution.<sup>23</sup> In the twelfth century, first one and then the other of the Neoplatonic founding principles vied for supremacy, with unsatisfactory results in each case. The one principle, the participation by effects in the being of the Cause (the divine *essentia* now understood in the Boethian sense as the form of all things), led to statements by Gilbert de la Porrée and the school of Chartres which bordered on pantheism. But the other principle, God's utter transcendence over the world, expressed by such thinkers as Robert of Melun and Alan of Lille, tended to result in statements close to agnosticism. The stakes were high in the debate between the two approaches, for each position held certain implications for the relationship between the sacred and secular spheres in a newly awakening world. A decision for similarity between God and the world would open the door to a worldly type of piety such as the Church was opposing in the form of secular Averroism on the Parisian faculty of arts. But an option for dissimilarity would set up a situation of Christian faith's irrelevancy for the world at a time when the Church was aspiring to temporal as well as spiritual dominion. The dictum of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), that between Creator and creature "no similarity can be found so great but that the dissimilarity is even greater,"<sup>24</sup> was actually a restatement of the problem rather than a solution. Similarity leading to univocity and pantheism; dissimilarity leading to equivocity and agnosticism—was there no way out of the dilemma?

A completely new "saving possibility" for a solution appeared with the works of the Aristotelian commentator Averroes. This was the concept of analogy as a mediator, "ein Mittler," between univocation and equivocation. Such a concept resulted from Averroes' identification of analogy with the Aristotelian naming of things *pros hen* and led to a new understanding of the structure of analogy: the content of a concept belongs properly and fully only to one reality, and to another only analogously insofar as it stands in a real relation of dependence on the

menschliche Freiheit," *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958) 251–80, and "Redemptive Event and History," *Basic Questions* 1, 15–80.

<sup>22</sup> *A&O* 61–64.

<sup>23</sup> Detailed in *A&O* 65–77.

<sup>24</sup> *The Church Teaches*, ed. J. F. Clarkson *et al.* (London: Herder, 1956) no. 307.

first. Thus for Averroes “being” belongs properly to substance and can be attributed to accidents only insofar as they inhere in substance. The attribution of being to accidents is neither univocal nor equivocal but according to analogy. It was in this Averroistic gestalt that the concept of analogy began to influence Scholastic thinking.

Alexander of Hales was the first to transfer the “analogy of being” between substance and accident to the relationship between Creator and creatures.<sup>25</sup> In his view, being belongs in a proper sense to God alone and to creatures only in a derived, unautonomous way insofar as they depend on God. Therefore being is said of them both analogously, *per prius et posterius*. Building on this fundamental insight of his teacher, Bonaventure determined that in the God-world analogy the point of likeness between the effect and its Cause consisted in *imitatio*, which concept he then filled with the whole richness of the relation of images to archetype.<sup>26</sup> Every creature images God in some way; through illumination (and only so) the soul can recognize the divine perfections in the mirror of nature. Although Albert the Great also accepted analogy as a mediator between univocity and equivocity, he took a different tack from Alexander and Bonaventure in emphatically refusing any essential likeness between God and creature, whether a likeness in being or in image.<sup>27</sup> For him, analogy was a purely formal relation, based only on extrinsic references between things.

Thomas Aquinas embodies the high point of the Scholastic development of analogy. Pannenberg devotes more attention to “the great Dominican” in his *Habilitationsschrift* than to any other thinker (26 pages), studying his major works in historical sequence rather than thematically in order to ascertain his position on analogy.<sup>28</sup> In a running dispute with Cajetan (still, in the early 1950’s, the most influential interpreter of Thomas), Pannenberg concludes that Aquinas fundamentally understood the God-world analogy in the Averroistic sense of *unius ad alterum* in the framework of the causal schema, and this so-called analogy of attribution undergirds even the analogy of proportionality undoubtedly present in his *De veritate*. The basic presupposition of this analogy of attribution is that the Creator in creating gives a share in being to the creature, who in turn receives it. This participation in being is thought of not in Albert’s sense of an extrinsic relation but as a real gift, constitutive of the creature. Here Aquinas’ characteristic shift away from the position of his teacher comes to the fore: the analogy of being involves a real intrinsic likeness of the creature with the Creator in the

<sup>25</sup> *A&O* 83–89.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 90–99.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 100–105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 105–31. See also Pannenberg’s entry “Thomas von Aquino,” *RGG* 6, 856–63.

ontological order. This in turn grounds the noetic and linguistic use of analogy, the transference of created terms to God, who is the ultimate origin of all.<sup>29</sup> Such references to God, of course, are fundamentally inadequate; but they are not simply inadequate, for there is an intrinsic resemblance between every effect and its cause. Words taken from earth and predicated of God do not have their usual meaning, but neither are they meaningless; they are analogical.

#### PANNENBERG'S CRITIQUE OF SCHOLASTIC ANALOGY

Motivated by the dictum of the Fourth Lateran Council, theology in the thirteenth century welcomed the Averroistic concept of analogy as a mean between univocity and equivocity, a mean structured *ad unum* or as the analogy of attribution. Its application to the God-world relationship yielded an understanding of the world of creaturely reality as analogous to God not just in speech but *per se*, through participation in being, which participation grounded the analogical transference of designations of created perfections to God. Against this concept of analogy Pannenberg mounts both logical and theological objections.

First, he does not find it true and strongly disputes that analogy is a mediator between univocity and equivocity. Although this concept of analogy derived via Averroes from the Aristotelian tradition, thirteenth-century thinkers set it squarely within the framework of the Neoplatonic causal schema, which presupposes the existence of a common logos, a univocal core between Creator and creature.<sup>30</sup> Nor was this moment of identity exorcised when Neoplatonism was adapted by the Scholastics. Although denied—and with good reason—by Thomas and the other great Scholastic thinkers, it remained an unidentified element in the very structure of the thought which they used; for they continued to presuppose a similarity of effects with their Cause—an imperfect similarity, to be sure, but a similarity nonetheless, since something real passes from Cause to effect.<sup>31</sup> Logically, every similarity must involve a moment of

<sup>29</sup> There is a curious similarity between Pannenberg and Aquinas on this point. Aquinas holds that we can know God only through God's effects. We are so strongly bound to our senses that, lacking perception, we could obtain no knowledge of God. This applies to natural as well as to revealed knowledge of God: even revelation does not make us lose our perceptive status (*Boeth. Trin.* 1b, q. 6.2 ad 5; q. 6.3; etc.). Pannenberg is working from a different metaphysics, holding that we can know God only from God's deeds in history, and even on that basis rejecting all inference to the nature of God. Yet both concur in insisting on human knowledge of God "from below" as the only possibility, and in resisting any "illumination epistemology," whether it be of Bonaventure or of Barth.

<sup>30</sup> In his review of Lytkens' work on analogy, Pannenberg praises the author's successful demonstration of the morphological connection of Thomas' thought on analogy with that of Neoplatonism. See n. 3 above, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup> Pannenberg invokes several recognized Thomistic scholars to back up his understanding of Thomas on causality, e.g., Etienne Gilson, who wrote that for Thomas, "Pour qu'il ait

identity, or else to speak of similarity is “mere mystification.” Scholastic analogy, then, is on the side of univocity and presupposes such univocity as the basis of its heuristic power. This holds true not only for the analogy of proper proportionality but also for the

‘analogy of attribution’ (of many to one—*ad unum*, or of one to another—*ab uno*), which either in a more Neoplatonic manner depends on the cause giving to its effects a share in its being, or presupposes in a more Aristotelian manner an ontological medium common to the different categories, viz., the being of substance. In every case, the members designated as analogous are bound together by an identical element common to each of them.<sup>32</sup>

Since it rejects any identity between God and creature while insisting on a similarity between them, Scholastic analogy lapses into logical unclar-ity; like a balloon cut loose from its mooring, it floats in the air.<sup>33</sup>

If there be a logical tension between what the Scholastics maintained about analogy and the actual structure of their thought, there is an even greater theological tension between their avowed intention and its partial realization when analogy is applied to the God-world relationship. Simply put, the Scholastic analogy concept compromises the transcendence of God. It is true that appreciation of transcendence was not alien to the Scholastic doctrine of analogy, which was developed precisely to protect the otherness of God. Aquinas’ doctrine in particular undoubtedly intended to protect the incomprehensibility of the divine essence: he was insistent in maintaining that every word we ascribe to God “leaves the thing signified as uncomprehended and as exceeding the signification of the name” (*ST* 1, q. 13, a. 5). Nevertheless, the structure of Neoplatonic causality and the logic of the case itself demand that, all assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, analogy presupposes a common logos existing between the analogates. And in actual fact, as their writings indicate, the Scholastics did think that not only language about God but also God’s very being is analogous to the world of human experience. A perfection signified in a concept *is* realized in God in a superlative way. Only because we conceive of these perfections in isolation and in their plurality rather than in the mode of divine simplicity in which they are realized do they not remain univocal when applied to God. Thus, for all of his insistence

causalité, au sens strict du terme, il faut qu'il y ait deux êtres, et que quelque chose de l'être de la cause passe dans l'être de ce qui en subit l'effet" (*L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale* [Paris: Vrin, 1932] 89).

<sup>32</sup> “Analogy and Doxology” 224–25, n. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Only Albert convincingly freed analogy from univocity, but his analogy of extrinsic attribution resulted in speech about God being either merely metaphorical or in fact based on intrinsic attribution in order to be meaningful.

on dissimilarity, "Thomas apparently did not reckon with a substantive transformation of what was stated in its being applied to God,"<sup>34</sup> and neither did the other Scholastics. In spite of their best intentions and explicitly stated purpose, they remained deceived, implicitly seeking through analogy to incorporate the unknown God into the known perfection, oblivious to the structure of "spiritual assault"<sup>35</sup> in the concept of analogy, even though this remained a potent factor in their systems.

Hence Pannenberg's negative judgment about the theological usefulness of analogy: the presumption of a common logos (however differently realized) between God and creature is detrimental to the transcendence and mystery of God. It removes the infinite qualitative difference between God and creature, and in some way gives the creature the power of definition over God. But the living God in a mystery of otherness, holiness, and freedom is absolutely inconceivable to the creature and can be known only when and to the extent that God chooses to self-reveal. Analogy, therefore, cannot be a path to the knowledge and naming of God. On the contrary, its use is "theologically illegitimate."<sup>36</sup>

#### TO THE PRESENT

In his research into the historical development of the analogy concept, Pannenberg expends the bulk of his energy on the Greek and classic medieval thinkers. His *Habilitationsschrift* ends, however, with a brief look at other scholars who dealt with analogy from the end of the thirteenth up to the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> Several of these provide an especially apt foil against which his own understanding and critique of analogy become even clearer.

The position of Duns Scotus has an obvious affinity with that of Pannenberg, for Scotus too argued that analogy becomes equivocal if it is not rooted in a univocal element.<sup>38</sup> Can it be said that Pannenberg's quarrel with the doctrine of analogy can be reduced to the classic dispute between the Thomist and Scotist schools, that Pannenberg is in fact an anonymous Franciscan? His own critique of the Scotistic line of thought shows that this is in no way the case. By positing the univocal value of certain concepts for God and creature, Scotus was able to maintain (incorrectly) that it was possible to draw conclusions about God; even worse, in losing the idea of "pure being" he lags behind Thomas in distancing God from the scope of the essential. Although set against the background of the free acceptance of God, his analogy concept is in no

<sup>34</sup> "Analogy and Doxology" 223, n. 19.

<sup>36</sup> "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen" 227.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 225.

<sup>37</sup> A&O 132–40.

<sup>38</sup> Pannenberg also studied Scotus' thought in his doctoral dissertation, *Die Prädestinationslehre des Duns Skotus im Zusammenhang der scholastischen Lehrentwicklung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954).

way free from the Greek ontological thematic.

Until this point Pannenberg has been focusing on analogy primarily as a means of knowing and naming God based on certain presupposed ontological foundations. With Ernst Troeltsch he shifts to a consideration of analogy as a tool of historical research whose use is fraught with theological implications.<sup>39</sup> As Troeltsch formulated the principle of analogy, judgments about the possibility of the occurrence or nonoccurrence of past events can be made only if it be presupposed that present human experience is analogous to that of the past. Given that presumption, the more similarity that can be found between "what happens before our eyes" and an event of the past, the greater the likelihood of that past event's having happened; on the other hand, if nothing normal or usual can be discerned, the probability of the event fades. Troeltsch's principle of analogy thus presupposes a "kernel of homogeneity" in all historical events and in fact provides a particularly clear example of Pannenberg's thesis that all analogy requires a common logos. While respecting analogy's usefulness in historical investigation, Pannenberg comes down hard against its being elevated to an ontological principle. The existence of a positive analogy could indeed validate the judgment that such an event occurred, but the contrary is not necessarily so: the absence of an analogy does not prove the nonhistoricity of an event, for a given event may burst all analogies and still be a reality. The historical credibility of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for example, has consistently been called into question by the prejudgment that every event must have basically the same "core" as every other. Yet the living God, whose essence is not adequately expressed in any cosmic order, acts more characteristically by creating something new in reality. Once again the "omnipotence" of analogy and the homogeneity of all reality which it posits are found to be incompatible with the transcendence of God.

Does it stand in a similar way with the *analogia fidei* of Karl Barth?<sup>40</sup> Even though Barth roots his analogy in the revealing act of God, the structural similarity between his analogy concept and that of Neoplatonism cannot be denied. He too conceives of analogy as a mediator between the two extremes of complete similarity and dissimilarity, a mean with the structure of the analogy of attribution. He too posits an ontological similarity between God and creatures and grounds the truthfulness of human knowledge of God in the objective connections between the world as witness to God and God's very self.<sup>41</sup> The fact that he

<sup>39</sup> The main critique of Troeltsch is detailed in "Redemptive Event and History," *Basic Questions* 1, 38–50. Cf. Ted Peters, "The Use of Analogy in Historical Method," *CBQ* 35 (1973) 475–82.

<sup>40</sup> Pannenberg's first published article was on this question; cf. n. 4 above.

<sup>41</sup> If one substituted the term "illumination" for Barth's "revelation," it would be clear

identifies his analogy as one of extrinsic attribution may express his intention, which is to honor the freedom of the gracious God, but in effect it leads him to an illogical stance, subject to the same critique as that levied against Albert. Barth's implicit presumption of a common logos between God and creature in the act of revelation seriously compromises the revelation of God as a historical act creating the genuinely new. Revelation may indeed show that the world is witness to God, but, Pannenberg argues,

not as if the reality of the world in which God deals with us remains intact in its objectivity: its objectivity shatters. And precisely as its objectivity shatters, it becomes in its broken objectivity the concrete frame of the action of God encountering us, striding over that brokenness, and addressing to us the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

#### SUMMARY

What does the Pannenberg of the *Habilitationsschift* understand by analogy? From his study of the history of the analogy concept, he concludes that analogy is a relation requiring a logos common to both analogates. The structure of analogy understood in this way held good from primitive human thought to the Neoplatonic causal schema, and no subsequent concept of analogy, whether early Christian, medieval, or modern, has ever broken through the confines of that Neoplatonic schema and its presuppositions. In spite of the transcendence of the Creator, that schema requires that there be a likeness between Creator and creature in order for analogy to operate. In actual practice, as thinkers as diverse as Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Barth make evident, this likeness is an ingredient of the analogy concept. Furthermore, according to this schema, analogy inevitably functions within a world characterized mainly by order and continuity, even homogeneity, or its power of inference would not be grounded. In actual fact, the systems of such diverse thinkers as Justin, Duns Scotus, and Ernst Troeltsch do presuppose such an orderly universe and are thereby unable to account for the genuinely new and the radically strange. If one is opposed to univocity, however slight, existing in the essential characteristics of Creator and creature, one must oppose analogy. This opposition must extend to the linguistic, noetic, and ontological spheres, which spheres are in fact

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how Neoplatonic in structure his analogy concept is. He may oppose the Thomistic connection of analogy with Aristotelian, empirically-grounded cognitional theory, but he has no basic misgivings about the kind of analogy propounded by Bonaventure. In this, certain Roman Catholics (Söhngen, Balthasar) believe themselves to be in agreement with Barth ("Analogie," *RGG* 1, 352).

<sup>42</sup> "Zur Bedeutung des Analogiedankens bei Karl Barth" 24.

closely related, since an ontological stance is implicit in all analogical speech about God. In sum, "all analogy in its ontological structure is analogy of being,"<sup>43</sup> and it is against the *analogia entis* that Pannenberg's main objections arise.

Pannenberg is aware, of course, that in a broad sense God can be spoken of only analogically, i.e., only by means of transferring to God the meaning of words that were formed in other contexts. This is due to the indirect way in which the divine reality is experienced in the world.<sup>44</sup> However, while an analogy between the ordinary use of words and theological use is legitimate, the extension of analogy to the very being of God is not; for the very structure of analogy, presuming as it does a common logos, involves one in knowing the unknown through the known and implies at least theoretically that one could define the essence of God. Not only is this in itself disrespectful of God, but knowledge and speech about God based on the *analogia entis* can never do justice to the personal freedom of the living God who encounters human beings in history, which is not yet finished. To the contrary, the ability of God to do genuinely new and surprising things is compromised by the concept of analogy, which fits the history of God with the world into a pre-given schema. Analogy, therefore, injures both the transcendence and liberty of God and the contingency of history through which God is revealed. Its use in speech about God is theologically illegitimate.

#### AN OPEN QUESTION

For all the vigor with which he continues to defend his understanding of analogy, Pannenberg has not rested easy with his rejection of it. To this day he has not published his *Habilitationsschrift* on analogy and revelation in which his major critique of analogy is worked out, mainly because he has not yet achieved a satisfying solution to the question of how the relation between the problem of history (and thereby of revelation) and the problem of analogy may or may not be resolved.<sup>45</sup> A major insight which made him question his own rejection of the validity of analogy occurred in the midst of his work on the resurrection. Although originally holding that all speech about the resurrection was unavoidably metaphorical, he came to realize that it would be possible to form a concept of "life" from our existing world and, recognizing the deficiency of all known forms of life insofar as they are subject to death, to negate that deficiency and extend the narrow concept of life, thinking of new,

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> "Analogy and Doxology," *Basic Questions* 1 passim.

<sup>45</sup> This statement appears in a transcript of a taped conversation quoted in the dissertation by Ronald Pasquariello, *Reality as History: An Investigation of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Understanding of Reality* (New York: Fordham Univ., 1972) 31, n. 3.

imperishable life.<sup>46</sup> A concept arrived at in this way would not be merely metaphorical, for it would have a relation to life as we know it, while at the same time its full realization would await the eschatological event of the end. This whole process obviously involves the use of analogy, which Pannenberg admitted and justified by appeal to the example of Paul, who had made a similar attempt with the concept of *sōma* (1 Cor 15). Given a strong similarity between language about the resurrection and language about God,<sup>47</sup> could not a similar pattern of thought be allowable in speech about God?

The question remains an open one in Pannenberg's thought. As his work has taken him more broadly into the fields of anthropology and the history of religions, he has moved from a completely negative evaluation of analogy to an allowance of its partial legitimacy within the broader horizon of a historically structured world, stating, for example:

It cannot be a matter of contention whether or not reasoning may or may not have a share in the knowledge of God, but only whether in a historically open reality knowledge of God can be brought to a conclusion by reasoning. Only in the sense of such a claim to totality or adequacy can the inferential method in Greek philosophy be meaningfully contested.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of being granted this limited legitimacy, analogy as such has found no explicit place in Pannenberg's overall system of thought.

Although Pannenberg himself agrees that he needs to do better justice to analogy, and finds himself no longer inclined to reject in such a simple way what he so vigorously wrote off in the enthusiasm of youth, there nevertheless remains a tremendous hesitation to endorse the analogical operation. Analogy's functioning presumes a stably structured universe; but does not the experienced contingency of history give the lie to such eternal order?<sup>49</sup> Analogy is related to a consciousness of the ontological givenness of the past and/or present; but can it survive and contribute to a world view whose originating insight is the ontological priority of the

<sup>46</sup> "Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesu," *Kerygma und Dogma* 14 (1968) 113. See also the letter to Ignace Berten, printed in I. Berten, *Histoire, révélation et foi: Dialogue avec W. Pannenberg* (Brussels: Editions du CEP, 1969) 113.

<sup>47</sup> Noted by Pannenberg in letter to Berten, *ibid.* 112.

<sup>48</sup> "Response to the Discussion," *Theology as History*, ed. James Robinson and John B. Cobb (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) 255, n. 61. See also his *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) esp. 301–26.

<sup>49</sup> This point is made especially strongly in "Kontingenz und Naturgesetz," *Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Natur*, with A. Müller (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1970) 33–80. In dialogue with contemporary physics, Pannenberg notes that even the so-called laws of nature are predicated on a contingent happening: "If A, then B..." So penetrating is our historical consciousness regarding even nature that we do not construct museums of "nature" but museums of "natural history."

future and the critical transformation of all existing reality in the light of that future? The classical use of analogy has been predicated upon a cause-effect relationship between God and the world; but is that relationship not better envisioned as one of love which creates unity-in-difference? Analogy presupposes the basic rightness of created things; but does not the powerful presence of sin distort the very starting point of analogical inference or at the very least make it ambiguous?

Both Pannenberg's understanding of the structure of analogy and his judgment about its theological usefulness, based as they are on careful and thorough study of philosophical and theological tradition, invite serious consideration. Scrutiny of his line of reasoning in turn raises questions and counterarguments to his position. Advocates of a more classical view of analogy could find room for argument with Pannenberg's understanding of being (*esse*): since being is excluded from the predicament of genus, it is not properly conceptualizable and therefore provides no ground for univocal predication.<sup>50</sup> His understanding of the role of judgment in the analogical operation could also be questioned: as a dynamic intellectual intuition, judgment does not necessarily act by incorporating God into a concept, but by affirming God as unconceptualizable though lying in the direction of the perfection of which the concept speaks.<sup>51</sup> Thinkers of a more transcendental bent could argue that analogy is not at all a mean between univocity and equivocity, but is rather the original and radical form of the relation between God and the finite, prior to and ground of the distinction between univocity and equivocity. From this point of view, the analogical operation involves one not in an "act of assault" but in an act of self-transcendence toward the God who is always ever greater.<sup>52</sup> In addition, it can be said that the negating moment in the classical analogical operation deserves more systematic attention than Pannenberg has given it; for this negating movement of the mind arguably alters the presumed univocal structure of analogy and insures that users of analogy, far from presiding over the reality of God in their concepts, are led by the movement of analogy itself into the radical otherness of the mystery of God.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ralph McInerny's "The 'Ratio communis' of the Analogous Name," *Studies in Analogy* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968) 1–66. An explanation shaped explicitly by dialogue with contemporary linguistic analysis appears in W. Norris Clarke's "Analogical Talk of God—An Affirmative Rejoinder," *Thomist* 40 (1976) 61–95, esp. section 1: "Must Analogy Be Rooted in Univocity?" (64–72).

<sup>51</sup> For an explanation of this understanding of judgment, see Hill, n. 2 above.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Erich Przywara, *In und Gegen: Stellungnahme zur Zeit* (Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz, 1955); and J. Splett and L. Punzel, "Analogy of Being," *Sacramentum mundi* 1 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) 21–25.

<sup>53</sup> Pannenberg contrasts analogy with doxology, that movement of the mind in which the concept of God is handed over and the "I" is sacrificed in an act of adoration ("Analogy and

To these and other arguments brought to bear against his understanding of analogy, Pannenberg's response is to insist that if they were indeed to be granted, analogy when used in speech about God would lose its intelligibility and heuristic power. A univocal core is indispensable if knowledge of one reality can enable the mind to infer something about another reality. To hold otherwise effectively divorces one from the origin and history of analogy, and leads one to talk about something which in fact is not analogy at all.

At the root of this uneasiness about analogy there lies a fundamentally different vision of the whole of reality. Pannenberg's thought is consistently dialectic, centered on a model of critical transformation which informs his thinking in every dimension. Although both he and most advocates of analogy in God-talk would agree on some major points (words change when applied to God; such speech is assertive and not simply performative), they each operate out of different imaginative judgments about the relationship between God and the world and about the nature of the whole, judgments which affect all subsequent beliefs and positions. David Tracy's helpful characterization of the classical forms of religious expression (manifestation and proclamation) and of the classical theological languages (analogy and dialectic) is clearly applicable here.<sup>54</sup> For those of an analogical imagination, the central clue to the whole of reality is found pre-eminently in the symbol of the Incarnation: the gracious gift of God to the world in that event makes possible the perennial discovery of some order, some harmony, in reality. Those of a dialectic imagination find the central symbol to be focused in the resurrection of the Crucified: the reversal of norms through the power of God in that event opens up the possibility of overturning present disorder and of expecting the genuinely new. The analogical imagination, if naively followed, can lead to the too-easy order of a univocal vision and ultimately to idolatry; the dialectic imagination, on the other hand, can make the present appear Godforsaken in sheer equivocity and result finally in atheism. In order to do justice to the complexity of reality, each imagination needs to incorporate elements of the other, but they remain nevertheless recognizably distinct ways of grasping the whole.

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Doxology" 215–21). But the negating moment in analogy can be seen to induce a similar movement. David Tracy has recaptured the importance of this negative movement and given it a central place in his understanding of analogy; cf. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossword, 1981) esp. 408–15.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., esp. chaps. 5, 9, and 10. See also Tracy's address "The Catholic Analogical Imagination," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 32 (1977) 234–45.

As these two imaginations in the person of their advocates debate the right way to speak about God and the range of issues inherent in that question, it illustrates clearly the pluralism in theology today. The diversity perdures because one conviction cannot simply be reduced to the other. The interesting and hopeful thing about the present moment is the growing awareness that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is even possible that as adherents of analogy move toward a greater incorporation of the historical and the critical into their thought, and as dialectic thinkers such as Pannenberg seek to incorporate more clearly elements of order, continuity, and the presence of grace into their systems, the two may yet meet on a common ground, different from either imagination in its classical form.<sup>55</sup> In the meantime, Pannenberg's explicit hesitations in the face of analogy and his logical and theological critique stand as an engaging challenge to the analogical imagination to render ever-better account of its fundamental vision.

<sup>55</sup> Tracy's *Analogical Imagination* is a sign that this may already be happening. His own characterization of analogy includes strong emphasis on its negating moment and on the "not-yet" within which it operates (e.g., 409), and in the other direction he finds reason to describe the language of Barth, Bultmann, and the other giants of the dialectic imagination as ultimately not only dialectical but also analogical (e.g., 418). Pannenberg, positioned on the "proclamation" axis in view of his Christology (427), is nevertheless seen to be calling for an "interdisciplinary analogical imagination" (450) regarding the incorporation of a theology of the history of religions into Christian systematics. Even more to the point, his effort to construct a theology focused on a proleptic universal history, precisely the stance from which he critiques analogy, is called a "daring analogical search" (412). Pannenberg would not so characterize himself, given his understanding of analogy, but Tracy's descriptions invite further conversation.