

# **The Infinitude of Beauty as Expression of the Beauty of the Infinite?**

A critical evaluation of the use of the *analogia entis* in the theological aesthetics of  
David Bentley Hart

by  
Marnus Havenga



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of Theology (MTh), Department Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of  
Theology, Stellenbosch University*

Supervisor: Professor R.R. Vosloo

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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 27/11/2013

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate if American Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart's use of the classical Thomistic principle of the *analogia entis* (in his monograph *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*), can be deemed to be a valid, responsible and beneficial manner of affirming a continuity between the beauty of God and the beauty of creation, and opposing the seemingly problematic worldview of dualism.

After reviewing a selection of works in the field of theological aesthetics, this study is conducted both as a historical analysis and a systematic exposition on the *analogia entis*, by critically examining the use (and critique) of analogy and the *analogy of being* in Greek (Aristotle), Scholastic (Thomas Aquinas) and 20<sup>th</sup> century thought (Erich Przywara, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar), before inspecting and ultimately affirming David Bentley Hart's own use thereof (in regards to the beauty of God and the beauty of creation).

## Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie is om ondersoek in te stel of die Amerikaanse Ortodokse teoloog David Bentley Hart se gebruik van die klassieke Thomistiese beginsel van die *analogia entis* (in sy monografie *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*) as geldige, verantwoordelike en voordelige wyse geag kan word om 'n kontinuïteit tussen die skoonheid van God en die skoonheid van die skepping te bevestig, en sodoende die oënskynlike problematiese wêreldbeskouing van dualisme aan te spreek.

Na die beskouing van 'n reeks werke in die veld van teologiese estetika, fokus hierdie studie op beide die historiese analise en die sistematiese uiteensetting van die *analogia entis*, deur die gebruik (en ook kritiek) van analogie en die *synsanalogie* in Griekse (Aristoteles), Skolastiese (Thomas Aquinas) en 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuse denke (Erich Przywara, Karl Barth en Hans Urs von Balthasar) onder die loep te neem, waarna David Bentley Hart se eie gebruik daarvan (in terme van die skoonheid van God en die skoonheid van die skepping) ondersoek en uiteindelik bevestig word.

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My sincerest thanks furthermore goes to my parents, Marthinus & Ronelle Havenga, my brother and sister, Franco and Ané Havenga, and especially also then Angelique Bester, for their endless support and care - for which I am endlessly grateful.

*“... A man that looks on glass,  
On it may stay his eye,  
Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
And then the heav’n espy ...”*

*The Elixir, George Herbert*

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 Setting the Scene

When it comes to the classical conundrum of what the relationship between the natural world and the supposed supernatural entails, it could be argued that many religious traditions have emphasized the importance of vigorously differentiating between corporeal reality and the divine, in an honest attempt to safeguard the transcendence of their god(s).

This has then also been true of Christianity – a religion in which believers are continuously warned not to transgress the second commandment by equating the creaturely with the divine.

Although this conviction stands true to scripture and tradition, it could be contended, however, that an over-emphasis on the distinction between God, as *wholly other*, and creation, often leads to a problematic dualistic *Weltanschauung*, where creation's integrity is undermined in being seen as the realm of malevolence and turpitude, in opposition to, and as negation of, the goodness, truth and beauty of the realm of God. In several instances, this has given rise to a deep settled suspicion and even antagonism towards the physical, sensory world, and the beauty and splendor it holds, and indeed led to the prevalence of (what can be deemed as) otherworldliness in the thought, as well as practice of numerous Christian communities of faith.

It is then unsurprising that some of the most severe and prevailing criticism that has been raised against Christianity has centered on its supposed belief that virtuous, heaven-bound followers of Christ should refrain from sensory pleasures and beauty, by willfully negating their earthly existence and disavowing their bodily state.

In his poem, *The Minister*, poet R.S. Thomas, for example, mourns the fact that Christianity, and Protestantism in particular, *botches* one's flesh by acting as an

“adroit castrator ... of song and dance and the heart’s innocent joy” (Merchant 1990:20), while Friedrich Nietzsche, in his *Ecce Homo* (and several other works, as will be seen later on in this thesis), similarly spurns Christianity for despising the physical world and the muses of *Parnassus* (Nietzsche 1969:272). Simone Weil, in continuity herewith, also then bemoans the fact that “the beauty of the world ... (and the) pure and authentic reflections of this beauty in art and science” seemingly stands “outside visible Christianity”, and goes as far as to state that it is exactly this fact that is keeping her “outside (of) the Church” (Weil 1959:108-9).

If these voices are to be believed, and Christianity, as a *myth of the soul*, indeed involves a call to abdicate one’s bodily existence and is inherently irreconcilable with the beauty of life on earth, it is quite comprehensible that modern humanity, confident in its own ability, and more than willing to face Huxley’s *brave new world*, could make a choice to abandon the burden of religion, invent the death of God, and embrace without reservation a secular world, devoid of even a *souçon* of transcendence – all based on the belief that God, and the world of faith, is “not compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and (*above all!*) universal happiness” (Huxley 2010:183).

A dualistic worldview, where divine and creaturely existence are held over against each other, could thus partly be responsible for a *world come of age*, where humanity has *chosen* to outlive their gods – resulting in a cosmological and anthropological reduction of reality to take place<sup>1</sup>, and a radical “immanentism” to become the *status quo*<sup>2</sup>.

Recently, however, a number of theologians, fully aware of the secular stand of Western society, have spoken out against the dangers of the misbelief of a dualistic worldview and called for Christianity, across different traditions, to reaffirm the intrinsic integrity, value and beauty of the created world<sup>3</sup>. For – it is

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<sup>1</sup> As pronounced and described by Hans Urs von Balthasar in the opening chapter of his *Love alone in Credible* (Balthasar 2005).

<sup>2</sup> A claim that will be discussed comprehensively in the fifth chapter of the study.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. Benedict XVI, “*Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflection*”, University of Regensburg speech, September 12, 2006.

held – if it is true that God, as primordial instance of beauty, created the earth, declared it good, and also sent his Son to become flesh, the physical world, and especially the beauty therein, can surely not be dismissed as inherently abhorrent and ungodly.

David Bentley Hart, an American Orthodox theologian and philosopher, is one of a number of contemporary (Christian) thinkers who has heeded this call by making a stout stand against any metaphysical system that sees God and creation in opposition to each other, and advocating for what can be seen as an aesthetic continuity between the creaturely and the divine. These ideas are then especially prevalent in his masterly and erudite extended essay, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* – a work which has, as Ellen Charry writes, "broken on the theological scene as a cross between a comet and a hand grenade" (Charry 2006:101), and is (still) widely regarded as one of the most significant (and provocative) theological works in recent years<sup>4</sup> (McGuckin 2007:90).

When reading *The Beauty of the Infinite*, wherein Hart indeed then advances that corporeal reality should not be seen as the negation of the divine, but rather as a vessel of God's glory, peace and above all, splendid beauty, it is interestingly seen that his propositions (in regards to the relationship between God and creation) is evidently grounded in the classic Thomistic principle of the *analogia entis* (the *analogy of being*) – denoting an analogical continuity between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation.

The *analogy of being*, according to Hart's thought, indeed uniquely and effectually obliterates any dualistic thought, and properly allows for creation to be perceived as an analogical expression of God's *being*, participating in the jubilant life of the Trinity and, thereby, bearing testimony to the richness of the beauty that marks God's glorious *infinitude*.

The *analogia entis* has, however, through the ages, and especially in the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is quite a remarkable feat, given that the book is in essence a revision of Hart's doctoral thesis (McGaukin 2007:90; Hart 2007:95).

century when it was at the heart of theological discussion and debate, been a very controversial principle, that has time and again been dismissed as a veiled endeavor in *natural theology*, whereby irresponsible lines between the creaturely and the divine are drawn. Karl Barth, arguably the most prominent (and influential) voice of Reformed theology in the last century, indeed famously stated in the opening passages of his *Church Dogmatics* that it should, in fact, be seen as the invention of none other than the *anti-Christ* (Barth 1975:xiii).

Hart, thoroughly versed in Thomistic thought, following and building on thinkers such as Erich Przywara, the brilliant Jesuit Scholar who initially placed the principle of the *analogy of being* on the theological agenda in the last century, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, often described as the father of theological aesthetics, believes, though, that the *analogia entis*, functioning in accordance with classical rules of analogy (according to proportionality), does definitely not naively and idolatrously equate creation with God (as Barth suggests), given that its proposal of a similitude between the creaturely and the divine is always set in an even greater dissimilitude (as God and creation can be said to have different *moments of being*, as will be explained throughout the thesis). For this reason, the *analogia entis* does presumably maintain God's transcendence, whilst still not falling trap to a fatal dualism where the Creator and created are placed in opposition to each other – which, for Hart, indeed renders it the *definitive* theological principle regarding the (aesthetic) relationship between God and his creation.

To engage and evaluate Hart's proposition that a sound theological aesthetic, devoid of dualistic tendencies, needs to be built on the principle of the *analogy of being*, it is then of cardinal importance to undertake a comprehensive study of the history and development of analogical thinking, the *analogia entis* in particular, and the way that it has been used in the field of theological aesthetics – which is then exactly what this study hopes to do.

The *analogia entis* has only been the subject-matter of two dissertations written at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University four decades ago<sup>5</sup>. As the dispute regarding its use is far more than a mere academic quarrel, but, in essence, “a debate about everything” (Betz 2011:49), another study regarding the *analogia entis* is arguably long overdue, and could hopefully be of considerable value, especially in regards to ecumenical dialogue between the Reformed, Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

## 1.2 The Research Problem

The research problem of this study accordingly pertains to the classical metaphysical conundrum, which has haunted humanity throughout the ages, regarding the relationship between the divine and the creaturely, especially when speaking about the beauty of God and the beauty of creation. If Christianity, and Reformed Christianity in particular, has at times been guilty of a deep-settled suspicion, and (at worst) antagonism towards the splendor and beauty of this world (a view that will be further examined in the initial parts of this study), and is subsequently in truth haunted by a tendency towards an unhealthy and heretical dualistic worldview, the *problématique* of the matter lies in how theology could resist and recant such thought, without demolishing the confessed transcendence of God – to which, Hart believes, the *analogia entis* can be seen as the answer.

The *analogia entis*, far from being a simple solution, straightforwardly solving one of theology’s biggest challenges, remains, however, as mentioned previously, a highly contentious notion, against which many warnings, especially out of the Reformed tradition, has been sounded. It ought thus to be approached in a meticulously informed and cautious manner, especially in the work of a skilled and convincing writer and rhetorician<sup>6</sup> such as David Bentley Hart.

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<sup>5</sup> Potgieter, P.C. 1973. *Die Analogia Entis in Historiese Perspektief*. Universiteit van Stellenbosch & Durand, J.J.F. 1973. *Heilsgesiedenis en die dialektiek van syn en denke. Strukturele verbindingslyne tussen Thomas Aquinas en die teologie sedert die Aufklärung*. Universiteit van Stellenbosch.

<sup>6</sup> Who, in fact, sees himself firstly as poet and storyteller, as is written in the introduction (or "Author's Apologia", as he calls it) of his anthology of short stories, *The Devil and Pierre Gernet* (Hart 2012:ix)

### 1.3 The Research Question

By taking into account Christianity's relationship with the notion of *beauty* throughout the ages (as presented by recent studies in the field of theological aesthetics), and inducting an enquiry into the invention, use and working of analogy and the *analogia entis* in Greek and Scholastic thought, as well as the innovative appropriation (and critique) thereof in certain 20<sup>th</sup> century theological endeavors (especially also then concerning aesthetics), this study, guided and cautioned by the research problem stated, will ask if David Bentley Hart's employment of the *analogia entis* could indeed be seen as a valid, appropriate, responsible and beneficial manner of affirming an aesthetic continuity between God and Creation, and addressing the presumed problematic worldview of dualism, and the thought it gives rise to.

### 1.4 The Research Method and Design

After setting the scene by reviewing a selection of works in the broad (and fairly novel) field of theological aesthetics, this study will be conducted in part as historical analysis, and in part as systematic exposition of the *analogia entis*. This will be done by critically examining the use of analogy and the *analogy of being* in Greek (Aristotle), Scholastic (Thomas) and 20<sup>th</sup> century thought (Erich Przywara, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar), before inspecting and evaluating David Bentley Hart's use thereof in his *The Beauty of the Infinite*.

This study will thus primarily take the form of a literary study of key texts pertaining to the matter at hand. A broad selection of writings, stemming from an array of classical thinkers, church historians and systematic theologians, as well as from David Bentley Hart's own pen, will be consulted in order to fully comprehend and engage the question of the *analogia entis* (and Hart's extensive use thereof).

The rationale behind this approach is that a clear understanding of the working of and historical debates around the *analogy of being* will hopefully give much needed context and insight into Hart's propositions, and subsequently assist in

assessing its legitimacy.

## 1.5 the Structure of the Thesis

After this introductory chapter, the study will continue – in Chapter 2 – with a review of recent and significant scholarship in and on theological aesthetics, whereby key voices in the field, the terminology employed and the arguments that are made will be examined and engaged. The chapter will then specifically give attention to arguments put forward with regards to Christianity's traditional relationship with the notion of *beauty*, as well as focus on the revival of Thomistic metaphysics (and the use of analogy and the *analogia entis*) in many current thought concerning theological aesthetics – largely as a result of the influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Chapter 3 will then give a brief exposition of the classical use and working of analogy, as put forward by voices such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, and also inspect how the analogy of proportionality, in particular, serves as foundation for the notion of the *analogy of being*, as used by Przywara, Von Balthasar, and, of utter importance for this study, David Bentley Hart.

Chapter 4 will firstly succinctly examine and explicate the way in which Jesuit Scholar Erich Przywara, placed his interpretation of the *analogia entis*, firmly rooted in a Thomistic understanding of the analogy of proportionality, on the 20<sup>th</sup> century theological agenda, whereafter attention will also be given to the critique Przywara received – most notably from Reformed scholar, Karl Barth. Given the fact that David Bentley Hart's theological project has been deeply influenced by, and stand in continuity with, the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the father of contemporary theological aesthetics, this chapter will furthermore then focus on *his* defense and justification of the *analogia entis* against the concerns and critique raised by Karl Barth, and also enquire into his own appropriation thereof in his theological aesthetics.

Chapter 5 will introduce Hart, and his work, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, to the conversation. It will then firstly focus on his assessment of the thought of Nietzsche and his postmodernist followers – who, in Hart's opinion, have, as a result of the reigning dualistic disposition in religious thought, chosen to affirm creaturely existence over against the realm of the divine – whereafter attention will be given to the way in which Hart, himself engages the tradition of the *analogy of being* (and important interlocutors such as Przywara, Barth and Von Balthasar).

Bearing in mind the content of the previous sections of this study, Chapter 6 will then explore the way in which David Bentley Hart appropriates the *analogia entis* as cornerstone of his theological aesthetics presented in the form of a *dogmatica minora* (which consists of systematic expositions on the themes of *Trinity*, *Creation*, *Salvation* and *Eschaton*) in order to explain and assert the existence of an intrinsic relationship between the beauty of God and the beauty of creation.

After conducting a thorough examination of the working and (historical) complexities of the *analogia entis*, and subsequently engaging the comprehensive use thereof in David Bentley Hart's work, this study will draw to a close by critically evaluating in the concluding chapter if his insistence on an analogical continuity between the beauty of God and the beauty of Creation, set in the *analogy of being*, is indeed a responsible and helpful dogmatic proposition.



## Chapter 2 – Theological Aesthetics and the Turn to Analogy

### 2.1 The Reappraisal of Theological Aesthetics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

No longer loved or fostered by religion, beauty is lifted from its face as a mask, and its absence exposes features on that face which threaten to become incomprehensible to man. We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it.

(Von Balthasar 1983:18)

In the opening pages of the first volume of *The Glory of the Lord (Herrlichkeit)*<sup>7</sup>, a work which evidently serves as one of the key stimuli for David Bentley Hart's theological project<sup>8</sup> (Bychhov 2005:663; Shepperd 2005:184; Morrison 2007:662), Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (in accordance with the sentiments voiced by R.S. Thomas, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simon Weil, as stated in the introductory chapter of this study) argues that beauty, the sister of goodness and truth<sup>9</sup>, has often been negated, neglected and ignored in the history of religious thought. Convinced that this a grave and lamentable mistake (instigated by a heretical belief that the divine life is irreconcilable with earthly splendor), Von Balthasar subsequently sets out to construct a monumental *theological aesthetic*, wherein beauty is reinstated as a primary principle regarding Christian truth (of which more will be said in what follows, as well as in the fourth chapter of this study).

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<sup>7</sup> Which forms part of a trilogy on Systematic Theology, also consisting of his *Theo-Drama (Theodramatik)* and *Theo-logic (Theologik)*.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, in fact, writes that *The Beauty of the Infinite* can be seen as an "extended marginalium" on Von Balthasar's thought (Hart 2003:29).

<sup>9</sup> Together forming Plato's 'triad of transcendentals'.

Von Balthasar's pioneering thought, although mostly marginalized during his own lifetime<sup>10</sup>, has become immensely influential over the last few decades, inspiring a host of theologians to reconsider theology's aesthetic dimensions and reaffirm Christianity's relationship with beauty (Kearney 2010:332). Aesthetics is indeed, largely because of the contribution of Von Balthasar, no longer a forgotten or distrusted chapter in theological enquiry, but the subject matter of an incredible amount of intriguing and valuable scholarship – particularly then also pertaining to the dogmatic implications of what is deemed beautiful (as is the case with David Bentley Hart's *The Beauty of the Infinite*, the focus of this study).

In order to come to grips with this current upsurge in scholarship centering on the relationship between aesthetics and theology, the importance and relevance of beauty, and the conviction that the splendor of creation does not necessarily stand in binary opposition to Christian truth (in which Hart's work could be seen as a leading voice), this chapter will set the scene for the remainder of this study by succinctly surveying and engaging a selection of recent and significant works in the field of theological aesthetics. After initially investigating key terminology employed (such as the terms *aesthetics* and *beauty*), and also examining and explicating arguments made in regards to Christianity's relationship to beauty throughout history, the focus will then specifically be on the way in which Hart's theological thought, firmly dependent on and determined by the tradition of analogy and the *analogia entis*, forms part of the current conversation on how earthly beauty could possibly relate to the splendor of the glory of God.

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<sup>10</sup> Oakes (1994:4-6) argues that a combination of reasons, not always necessarily pertaining to the content of his work (e.g. his close association with mystic writer Adrienne von Speyr, him leaving the society of Jesus to form a 'Secular Society' and his publishing firm often publishing controversial works), led to the fact that he was continually isolated by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century theological community, mistrusted by Rome and not invited to attend Vatican II.

## 2.2 Some Terminological Clarifications

### 2.2.1 Aesthetics

Given that this study is primarily concerned with the field of theological aesthetics – the appellation under which David Bentley Hart, following in the footsteps of Von Balthasar and others, conducts his theological endeavors – it is apt and important to understand, from the onset, what is meant by the term *aesthetics*:

*Aesthetics*, deriving from the Greek word for perception (*aesthesis*), was originally coined and appropriated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in his *Reflections on Poetry* (1735) and *Aesthetica* (1750). By way of this term, Baumgarten hoped to bring about a new school of thought, distinct from the “mathematization and rationalization” that marked the natural sciences of his time, wherein sensory experience, formerly exiled by Cartesian dualism<sup>11</sup>, would be reestablished as primary source for acquiring and internalizing knowledge (Hammermeister 2002:4). The origination of the term *aesthetics* was thus initially prompted by an attempt to establish and uphold sensorialism.

Almost immediately after Baumgarten, however, the term was further developed, most prominently by his student G.F. Meier, to explicitly denote thoughts regarding the sensory perception of the beautiful, given that, as was put forward, human beings do not primarily experience the world around them as sets of numerical quantities, but rather as instances of splendor and beauty (Cilliers 2012:51)

Aesthetics’ linkage with the sensory experience of the beautiful, subsequently also then led to the term being appropriated in regards to art, traditionally believed to be a fundamental bearer and expresser of beauty. Over the course of time, though, this association resulted in art (and art theory in particular) coming to

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<sup>11</sup> Central to Descartes’ thought is a clear distinction between the thinking mind (rationality) and corporeal matter – the former being seen as the only true basis of knowledge (Newman 2010).

define aesthetics, leaving initial definitions (pertaining to sensory perception and the notion of beauty) in the distant past. Farley (2001:x) claims that in recent years almost all fashionable textbooks on aesthetics define the term exclusively as the philosophy or theory of the arts (regrettably omitting any mention of sensory experience or beauty).

It is interesting to note, though, that in most contemporary *theological* reflections on this subject (manifestly influenced by Von Balthasarian thought), aesthetics is once again understood as a term which does indeed denote sensorial perception (in accordance with Baumgarten's original purpose), and specifically and explicitly concerns the investigation and appreciation of that what is considered beautiful (see, e.g. Hart 2003:1,16). Von Balthasar's call to rediscover and rethink the value of beauty has indeed been heeded, and while aesthetics, as philosophical discipline at large, remains skeptical about its relevance and possible significance (Scruton 2011:x), *theological* aesthetics undeniably sees beauty as central to its whole undertaking. Although art (and its place in the worship and life of the community of faith) also forms part of the conversation (and is indeed written on frequently), complex questions regarding theology's fundamental understanding of the nature of perceived beauty and the dogmatic implications thereof, sits at the very core of the current flood of scholarship that is done under the label of theological aesthetics (Farley 2001:viii).

### **2.2.2 Beauty**

Given the fact that theological aesthetics thus primarily concerns itself with (experienced) beauty, it is of immense importance to state what is meant by this term. This, however, is an arduous task. Although many attempts has undeniably been made to provide a lasting definition<sup>12</sup>, beauty, as Crispin Sartwell notes, is rather notorious for being a concept that "should not, and perhaps could not be

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<sup>12</sup> Without explicitly attempting to provide a genealogy of beauty, Farley (2001) proposes that there has been, broadly and simplistically speaking, amongst others, four distinct attempts at defining beauty throughout Western history: 1) beauty as harmonious proportion (in Ancient Greek and Medieval thought); 2) beauty as a sensibility (during the Enlightenment); 3) beauty as benevolence (in some 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pietistic thought); and 4) beauty as self-transcendence (in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century physiological, anthropologic thought).

defined” (2006:3). Beauty indeed seems to name instances of experience that “escape scientific analyses” (Milbank 2003:1) and transcend any categorical classifications (Gadamer 1986:18). The elusiveness of beauty, Farley contends, could then partly be responsible for the fact that the term has fallen out of use and become a nonissue in modern aesthetics (2001:6).

This, however, does not mean that we cannot know or say (even just in part) what beauty entails, given that beauty, according to Von Balthasar, has a certain self-evidence that leaves an undeniable impression on all who have been affected by it (1983:37). David Bentley Hart, in accordance with Von Balthasar, contends that although it is evidently an unreasonable charge to provide a clear cut denotation of beauty, it is nonetheless possible, and necessary (especially for theological aesthetics) to acknowledge and state certain “themes” that come to the fore when speaking about the beautiful (2003:17).

It could thus be said that beauty is typically recognized as that which “pleases the sight” (as Thomas Aquinas famously proclaimed), and hence induces desire (Milbank 2011:1) - especially for those with the “eyes to see”, as Josef Pieper writes (a thought that will be returned to throughout this thesis) (Pieper 1990:35). Von Balthasar, drawing from Dionysius the Areopagite, states that beauty elicits *eros*, bringing about a yearning for what is seen and experienced (Von Balthasar 1983:122). This state of desire does not, interestingly enough, lead to an eventual resolve, but could be seen as something that *binds* exactly in its non-arrival; continually bringing forth an intensified longing, even as it pleases and satisfies (2011:2). True beauty is ostensibly never depleted, but subsists as a mysterious, inexhaustible well of delight, that endlessly continues to evoke desire, and constantly beckons onlookers to return for more (Oakes 2001:149). As Milbank says: “To experience beauty is not only to be satisfied, but also to be frustrated satisfyingly” (2011:2).

Beauty, as the invocator of desire, should consequently, according to some contemporary voices (including David Bentley Hart), not principally be understood as a subjective sensibility, belonging to the eye of the beholder (as is the case in Kantian thought), but rather as an objective reality, with phenomenological

priority, that gives "shape to the will that receives it" (see, e.g. Hart 2003:17; Sartwell 2006:5). Beauty, it is held, in evoking desire (the response it is recognized most clearly in), appears not to be restrained or mastered by the human mind, but rather draws its onlookers out of themselves, into direct encounter with its objective *otherness*. The beautiful, it could thus be contended, is something that, in the moment of encounter, does not allow those touched by it to "belong to themselves" (Von Balthasar 1983:122) – which makes the confrontation therewith a startling experience that "pierces our everyday defenses" (Milbank 2003:3).

It could then also be held that beauty, as objective phenomenon, which "pleases the sight" and evokes desire, is not encountered as an abstract, otherworldly reality, above and beyond the sights, colors, occurrences and sounds of everyday life. Beauty, albeit elusive and mysterious, is in fact seen and experienced as something that subsists in, and is expressed by substantial forms *in* this world. Von Balthasar ardently claims that, when speaking about the beautiful, form (*Gestalt*) stands central to everything, and that beauty cannot be rightfully understood distinct from it (Von Balthasar 1983:151). Beauty, it could be held, is indeed entrenched in the "intensity of surfaces, the particularity of form and the splendor of created things" (Hart 2003:24). This does not mean that one should fetishize on the exterior properties of objects (which could be seen an act of "profound disrespect for what is truly beautiful"), as Graham Ward warns (2003:63), but simply that one should recognize that the alluring, infinite depth of beauty does not come to expression apart from corporeal reality, but exactly in and through finite, material *form*. Roger Scruton thus says: "We call something beautiful when we gain pleasure from contemplating it as an individual object ... in its *presented form*" (Scruton 2009:26).

Although much more can be said with regard to how beauty could be recognized and understood, attention will first be given to an array of scholars' assessments of Christianity's traditional relationship to this elusive, yet ubiquitous phenomenon.

### 2.3 Christianity's Relationship to Beauty

While keeping the words of Nietzsche, R.S. Thomas, Simon Weil (in the previous chapter) and Von Balthasar (in the beginning of this chapter) in mind, it could be argued, however, that beauty has not necessarily been completely absent from the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that it has indeed sporadically played an important role in various understandings of religion and the life of faith.

Walter Brueggemann writes that from early on in the Old Testament it is evident that the tabernacle-tradition (Exodus 25-31; 35-40) was utterly “preoccupied with beauty”, and that the temple-tradition, similarly, spared nothing “to create for Yahweh a place of beauty” (1997:426). It is furthermore seen that the Psalms are full of descriptions of the beauty of God’s creation, and that the wisdom literature continually compares wisdom and moral goodness to the beauty of the treasures of the earth – so much so that Claus Westermann (1997:597) argues that the description of beauty constitutes one of the most important elements in this book of Proverbs (a sentiment that is also promulgated by someone like Samuel Terrien; see Brueggemann 1997:339). Few would then also deny the sheer beauty of the prose and poetry employed in numerous Biblical texts. The power of verbal images and the art of writing beautifully was indeed something deeply rooted in Israel’s way of life (De Gruchy 2001:19).

Beauty, it could be held, has then also indubitably been present in the Christian church throughout history. It should be remembered that from the time when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire (and the arts and statues of antiquity was theatrically thrown into the river Tiber (De Gruchy 2001:11)), up until the Enlightenment, most of the Western world’s notable works of beauty (whether visual art, music, poetry or architecture) were brought forth in and by the Christian church (Brown 1989:47-50).

As Farley writes:

Christianity employed (beautiful) visual arts in catacombs, on house church walls and in its basilicas. Strangely beautiful is the Gregorian

chants, textual illuminations by Celtic Monks and cathedral architecture. And from the poetic beauties of the Hebrew Bible and Greek and Roman rhetoric, a tradition of beautiful language formed the creeds, liturgies and prayers of the Church. The Christian movement *did not turn away* from beauty when it created its sacred spaces, copied its manuscripts and composed its official language.

(Farley 2001:6)

It could moreover be said that beauty has also been an (underlying) theme in various theological writings throughout the history of Christianity. In the second and third volumes of the *Glory of the Lord*, respectively titled *Clerical Styles* and *Lay Styles*, Hans Urs von Balthasar names and discusses a variety of thinkers and theologians, including Irenaeus, Augustine, Denys, Bonaventure, Dante and John of the Cross, who produced “beautiful theologies” in which the aesthetic dimensions of life, and the wonder of experienced beauty, was understood to be part and parcel of Christian truth and the life of faith (Nichols 1998:66).

While Christianity has thus definitely not been completely devoid of aesthetic sensibilities through the ages, it should nevertheless be noted that there is an overwhelming consensus that the abovementioned is not the whole story: The Christian faith has seemingly also had, as Farley states, a “disturbing dark side”, characterized by a “powerful and intrinsic anti-aesthetic” wherein beauty’s status has always been “shaky and problematic” (2001:7,9). It could indeed be said that in Christianity’s long and ever variable history, beauty has regularly been negated and disregarded, and even, from time to time, held to be none other than an idolatrous and seductive “beast”, leading to “idleness and immorality”, and thus existing as the exact opposite of truth and goodness (2001:7).

Although admitting the complexity of the matter, Farley suggests that, amongst others, three dominant themes could be held to lie behind Christianity’s seeming discounting, dismissal and suppression of beauty throughout the ages; *iconoclasm, asceticism and futurism* (2001:9).



## 2.4 Iconoclasm, Asceticism and Futurism (Farley)

The first of these themes, *iconoclasm*, should be understood, according to Farley, against the occurrence of the Semitic, monotheistic revolution, characterized by the call to obedience to a single, personal deity – which stood in direct opposition to traditional, tribal types of faith, where the sacred was held to be multiple enabling and beautifying forces present in the very flow of the universe.

In archaic “nature religions”, Farley writes (2001:9), communities were strangely attuned to the power and beauty in their immediate vicinity, as well as the cosmos at large, as it was believed that the particularities in the world, be it animal, storm, wave, sun or mountain, were expressions of deities. It was thus exactly in the mysterious splendors of the world that the divine, who presided over love, fertility, birth, war and death, were thought to be seen and experienced. In this view of life no distinctions between natural and supernatural realms were made, as it was assumed that everything was animated and beautified by a godly presence. It is accordingly no wonder that the making of beautiful relics and icons, thought to be enchanted by godly presence, were an important part of these traditional faith-systems (2001:9).

With the onset of radical monotheism, however, this conviction, that the divine constituted a set of immanent powers and beauties dispersed throughout the cosmos, was exposed to be revolting idolatry – the ultimate taboo in the monotheistic belief system. For as is proclaimed in Exodus 20:4-5a:

You must not make a carved image for yourself, nor the likeness of anything in the heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them in worship; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

This declaration that there is only one, true God naturally led to a severe iconoclasm, where any thoughts equating nature with the divine (as was continually done in the past), were strongly condemned. The divine, in this new understanding of life, did no longer come to expression in and through the

splendors of the corporeal, finite world, but rather spoke through the words of mediating messengers, prophets and texts, from *above and beyond*. The “universal flow of symmetry (and) color”, stripped of its mystery and feared for inciting idolatry, thus became marginal in divine mediation (Farley 2001:10).

Although it is true that, in the monotheistic revolution, the world and the beauty it holds were believed to be the creation of the one God, Farley contends that it was henceforth solely understood as the setting in which human beings should “work out the moral dimensions that define them”, until, as the Christian eschatology hold, they finally leave this world behind. The focus was thus never really again on nature and its beauties, but rather on human beings, their moral life and their eventual transnatural home (Farley 2011:10).

Farley’s second theme, pertaining to Christianity’s marginalization and suppression of beauty, is *asceticism* – something that has, in his opinion, been present (in various degrees) in almost all traditional Christian pieties and thought patterns (2001:11).

Asceticism, which could be understood as the self-denial of certain earthly desires and pleasures, is usually seen to be the result of a deeply engrained suspicion of humanity’s bodily existence (a view that has ostensibly haunted Christianity throughout the ages). Farley holds that there has indeed continually been a tendency within Christian communities of faith to assign, with far-reaching consequences, the origin of human evil and sin to the body, the senses and physical needs – the very things in which we see beauty to find its primary mediation (Farley 2001:11).

The human body, according to Farley, should not be seen as the only villain in an account of asceticism however:

A broader asceticism (also) targets the *self* as unworthy of esteem, attention and pleasurable experiences. Self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction pleasures, and innocent joys that attend engagements with nature, arts and human beings ... joys that come with the preoccupation of

'idleness' (is seen as something that) must be rooted out if the human being is to be the uncompromised servant of God. They are (indeed held as) incompatible with true spirituality and with the sanctity that lives from and only for God.

(Farley 2001:11)

This asceticism of the body and the soul, and the subsequent self-denial of worldly beauty it usually entails, has indeed, according to Farley, time and again robbed Christianity of its aesthetic dimensions, and contributed to beauty "being seen as the beast" (Farley 2001:11).

The third theme in Christianity's suppression of beauty, according to Farley's thought, could then be held to be *futurism* – which he sees as the apocalyptic dimension of the monotheistic revolution (Farley 2001:11).

Farley writes that religion can also marginalize beauty by the way that it interprets time. In an apocalyptic type of faith, ultimate goodness, justice, freedom and beauty is usually seen to be something that belongs to an impending future reality. Many apocalyptic Biblical texts, especially from the books of the prophets (for example Hosea 14:4-7), do indeed conjure up marvelous images of peaceful and beautiful realities – all, however, belonging to an age to come. It is thus seen that although religion sometimes does provide striking descriptions of beauty, it is more often than not a postponed beauty, that will only one day, when *this* world comes to an end, be experienced by God's faithful.

It should be understood, however, that by saying that the future will be beautiful, it is implicitly implied that the present is not. Embedded in the belief and hope of future beauty, is a conviction of the present's utter ugliness.

Although it is true that humanity lives in a sinful, cruel world, and many apocalyptic literature were indeed composed during very dire times (see, e.g. Pagan 1989), a simplistic and naive futurism, which has undeniably been prevalent in many Christian communities throughout history, could be held to be

utterly problematic, given that its insistence on the beauty of the future clearly denies any possibility of beauty in the present. Futurism, according to Farley, could thus be seen as something which negates the beauty humanity currently experience, by putting all hope on the coming “kingdom of God, salvation (and) heaven” (Farley 2001:11).

## 2.5 Farley’s Themes in Practice

When telling Christianity’s story, copious illustrations of where Farley’s themes of *iconoclasm*, *asceticism* and *futurism* seem to have been at work, becomes evident. Besides the examples out of certain Biblical texts (especially in the Deuteronomistic and Prophetic traditions), scholars (working on the historical trajectories of Christianity’s relationship to aesthetics) typically refer to early Patristic apologetic writings warning against idolatry (e.g. Eusebius of Caesarea), the iconoclastic controversies that occurred in the East, and the writing of a text such as the *Libri Carolini* by the Carolingian Divines in the West, as evident instances where Christianity’s aesthetic dimensions could be seen to have been suppressed (see, e.g. De Gruchy 2008:11-29; Nichols 2007:32-38).

It is, however, in the occurrence of the Reformation, where numerous scholars allege the most blatant manifestation of Christianity’s negation of earthly beauty came to the fore.

The fact that the early followers of Protestantism, enticed by the “dangerously ambiguous rhetoric” of leaders such as Luther, Karlstadt, Zwingli, Calvin and Henry VIII, violently destroyed sculptures, paintings, rood screens and crucifixes in church buildings (De Gruchy 2008:38) indeed labeled the Protestant movement, from its onset, as a “new and severe iconoclasm, suppressing aesthetic dimensions in the interpretation of faith” (Farley 2001:6), and already in 1526, Erasmus professed that in Germany, “the arts do freeze”, because of Protestant influence (Woods 2007:265).

De Gruchy, however, states that it is important to remember that the Reformation was “complex in its character and ambiguous in its achievements” (2008:37).

Although the dangers of images were indeed one of the central issues at stake, and there is “no denying, of course, that Protestant Christianity was largely aniconic, (and resulted in) a new wave of iconoclasm”, it is, in his opinion, not necessarily correct to say that the Reformers had no reverence for aesthetics whatsoever (2008:37).

Calvin, for example, notably stated that creation is a “beautiful theatre”, and that humanity should take pleasure in its goodness (Bouwsma 1987:135). The problem, for many of the Reformers, did indeed not necessarily lie in creation, the material, and the beauty it held, but rather in the fact that humanity, in their fallen state, misused the visual in an idolatrous manner, to, as Eire writes, “reverse the order of creation by attempting to bring God down to their level” (Eire 1989:232). In late medieval Catholic religion, marked by superstitions and dubious faith practices, it was indeed commonly found that people’s faiths were heretically “fixed on images and their salvation bound up with iconic signs” – something the Reformers (with right) fervently opposed (De Gruchy 2008:37).

While therefore not necessarily inherently against the aesthetic dimensions of the world, the Reformers, convinced of the utter otherness of God, the terrible danger of idolatry, as well as the primacy of the Word whilst the elect is still on this fallen earth (touching thus on Farley’s three themes), nonetheless devised a theology wherein a decisive shift “from the eye to the ear” would take place (De Gruchy 2008:39). From here on God would exclusively be heard (through the reading and the preaching of the Word), instead of seen; the “eye lost its privileged role in religious practice”, Margaret Miles writes (2006:123), and, sadly, it was beauty that would come to pay the price for this development for generation on generation to come.

Protestantism, rooted in the unassailable initial aniconic and iconoclastic tendencies of the Reformation, would thus, as a result of its (virtually) exclusive focus on the *ear*, and the subsequent development of the belief that the *wholly other* Creator, and bodily creation, is “set in opposition” (Webster 2010:387), indeed come to be known as a faith tradition with a low view of the corporeal world, the arts and the wonder of experienced beauty. Although many

illustrations could be given where this anti-aesthetic ethos came to clear expression throughout the years (e.g. 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century pietism)<sup>13</sup>, it is interesting to note that it is especially in the last century that a multitude of theological thought, explicitly excluding and suppressing beauty, came to the fore. Some examples include the theologies of Anders Nygren, Gerhard Nebel and Rudolf Bultmann.

In his magisterial work, *Agape and Eros*, theologian Anders Nygren (in accordance with a long line of thought stemming from Tertullian's initial exclamation "*what has Athens to do with Jerusalem!*") contends that the history of the world is marked by two distinct and conflicting houses – the house of Greece (with its controlling concept of *Eros*) and the house of Christianity (with its controlling concept of *Agape*). Given that beauty, as was said earlier in this chapter, has always been associated with *desire* (*Eros*), Nygren declares that, together with other aspects of pagan culture, it undeniably belongs to the vile Greek, instead of the Judeo-Christian house. Earthly beauty, in Nygren's thought, is thus something that subsists as a sinful distortion of the goodness of God and accordingly, can never be associated with the Christian faith tradition (Farley 2001:69).

In his *Das Ereignis des Schönen*, Gerhard Nebel, similarly advocates that earthly beauty has no place in the Christian understanding of the life of faith. Central to his argument (which closely relates to what was proposed by Nygren) is the belief that the aesthetic world, the tragic current setting of beauty, stand in direct opposition to the iconoclastic world of Israel. Although he does believe that true beauty belongs to God (Nichols 1998:11), and that it will eventually be experienced in *Paradise* (with God's final and complete revealing), he is nonetheless of firm opinion that earthly beauty seduces humanity into idolatry – as seen in the narrative of the golden calf (Nebel 1953:127).

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that examples could also be given where an *anti-aesthetic* did not prevail; theologian P.T. Forsyth, poet John Milton and artists such as Rembrandt and Van Gogh are but a few examples of ardent Protestants who did not see any discrepancies between their faith and their appreciation for the beauty of creation.

The thought of Rudolf Bultmann provides perhaps then the most striking illustration from the last century of the way in which the aesthetic dimensions of life was banished in certain Protestant theology. Bultmann, in setting out to reveal the deeper, subjective meaning within the “religious myth”, attempts to de-historicize the Christian faith, and, in accordance with the usual “climes of the existential”, portray the “self” as a “homeless wanderer seeking escape from history” (Hart 2003:22). In this endeavor, Bultmann treats the physical world as an enclosed continuum wherein the supernatural’s salvation of the human “self” could only happen through an “interruption” or “perforation” of history (Bultmann 1958:15), thus explicitly excluding “the aesthetic and the concept of beauty from playing any role in the Christian life here and now” (De Gruchy 2013:80), as seen in this extract from his “*Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze*”:

The idea of the beautiful is of no significance in forming the life of Christian faith, which sees in the beautiful the temptation of a false transfiguration of the world which distracts the gaze from ‘beyond’ ... The beautiful is ... as far as the Christian faith is concerned, always something that lies beyond this life.

(Translation found in Von Balthasar 1989:27)

In abovementioned theologies, visibly haunted by *iconoclasm*, *asceticism* and *futurism*, corporeal reality is time and again held to be completely irreconcilable with the goodness and splendor of God, which, as clearly seen, results in the aggressive negation and suppression of earthly beauty. For these thinkers, the “sphere of fixed stars, the *stellatum*” could indeed not be admired and adored for its magnificent splendor, but should rather be seen as “the final barrier” between the glorious world of God and the broken, sinful world of humanity (Hart 2003:24) – an outlook which can undeniably be described as dualism is the truest sense of the word. It is thus no wonder that Von Balthasar, as a contemporary of theologians such as Nygren, Nebel and Bultmann, bemoans the fact that that beauty is “no longer loved or fostered by religion” and indeed “lifted from its face as a mask”.

The "story" that has been told up until this point could indeed then, in the words of Edward Oakes, be summed up as follows:

Myth emerges as the natural expression of man's innate sense that the world is saturated with the divine ... Christian thought gradually weans itself from this (understanding) under the influence of revelation, especially in the Old Testament, with its polemic against idolatry ... When Protestantism arrives, the European soul has but two choices to make: naturalism (of either the scientific or romantic variety) or fideism ... and in either case, the openness to the divine has been lost, and we meet Bultmann waiting for us at the end of the garden path.

(Oakes 1997:182)

## 2.6 Beauty Revisited

It is exactly in this swamp of 20<sup>th</sup> century anti-aesthetic thought that Hans Urs von Balthasar emerges as a theologian convinced of the fact that beauty should be rediscovered as something inseparable from the life of faith. For Von Balthasar the category of the beautiful, far from being something that stands in opposition to the divine, (in fact) abolishes any dualistic thought, and illuminates the wondrous truth that there exists an ontological, aesthetic relationship between God and earthly life (Von Balthasar 1983:148, 151).

Von Balthasar's momentous claims (which will further be discussed in the fourth chapter of this study) principally rests on his belief that true beauty is *not* a finite occurrence, limited by the totality of this corrupted, passing world (as recurrently held to be the case in many theologies since the monotheistic revolution), but rather, the *third transcendental*, underlying all that is, and thus belonging first and foremost to the *being* of God. Beauty, according to Von Balthasar, intrinsically linked to goodness and truth (the other two *transcendentals*), indeed "characterizes the form of ultimate reality", is "part of God's nature" and should in truth be seen as the "essence of God's glory (*doxa*)" – hence the fact that his theological aesthetics is named "*The Glory of the Lord*" (De Gruchy 2008:103).



Following a Thomistic metaphysic<sup>14</sup>, and strongly relying on the tradition of the *analogia entis*, Von Balthasar also then asserts that, since the transcendental properties of being is predictable to both divine and worldly being (as separate *modes of being*, as will be seen in the next chapter), the beauty of the finite world ought to be seen an *analogous* expression of this infinite glory of the Trinity (Van Erp 2004:106) – a “shimmer” *participating* in “the absolute, fascinating preciousness (*Kostbarkeit*) of God” (as he writes in his essay *Kunst und Verkündigung*, translated and quoted by Nichols 2007:56).

According to Von Balthasar, earthly beauty, as a correlate of divine beauty does thus *not* stand in opposition to God and the life of faith (as Nygren, Nebel and Bultmann argued), but rather reveals the glory of the Lord – which brilliantly explains why it has immeasurable depth, “pleases the sight” and elicits desire, as was held earlier in this chapter. As the Angelic Doctor says: “All things are turned to the beautiful ... desiring God (the supersubstantial *pulchrum* and fount of all beauty) as their end, and, on account of the beautiful, seeking after him ...” (quoted in Nichols 2007:12-3).

Von Balthasar’s use of a Thomistic ontology and his subsequent insistence on the fact that, instead of a dualistic dichotomy, there in actuality exists an analogous, ontological correlation between the beauty of God and the beauty of the world, has, as said in the beginning of this chapter, been incredibly influential over the last couple of decades. When thus surveying an array of recent scholarships in and on theological aesthetics, it is striking to see similar propositions (clearly instigated by Von Balthasar's thought) being avowed by theologians stemming from diverse traditions and schools of thought.

In *Towards a Theology of Beauty*, for example – which has come to be seen as one of the central works in 20<sup>th</sup> theological aesthetics (Farley 2001:76) – Jesuit

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<sup>14</sup> Which Von Balthasar sees as the highpoint of Western philosophical thought (Oakes 1994:181). In his opinion, Thomas’s ontology, with its real distinction between *esse* and *essentia* (which will be discussed in the next chapter), truly enables “theologians” as well as the “ordinary believer” to “recover the true meaning of glory” (Von Balthasar 1989:395).

scholar John Navone protests that beauty should not be degraded and negated by religious (or secular) thought, seeing as beauty, in his opinion, can in truth be understood as nothing less than the joyous expression of the infinite splendor of the beautiful Trinity.

For Navone, a self-proclaimed Thomistic theologian (Navone 1996:57), beauty can be described as the “mystery that enchants and delights” (Farley 2001:xi), and should primarily be seen as one of the transcendentals, eternally grounded in the divine life of God. Given that the corporeal world was created by God, and is utterly contingent on his *being*, earthly beauty, Navone holds, also then “reflects and participates in the splendor of (this) Beauty”, and could therefore be grasped as an *analogous* expression of the divine (1996:1). The thought of a “basic and profound analogy between human existence and the very *being* of the living God”, is indeed of cardinal importance to Navone’s entire theology (1996:12). It is because of this understanding that Navone can truly contend that “things are beautiful because their Creator is Beauty Itself” (1996:8).

In *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love*, wherein former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, innovatively investigates the creative processes involved in the creation of the beautiful (by focusing on the thought and work of Jacques Maritain, David Jones and Flannery O’Connor), it is also professed that earthly beauty exists in wondrous continuity with the beautiful life of God the Creator. Williams states that it is interesting to note that there seems to be significant convergences between the understanding of the artist’s creative labor, and theological discourse regarding God’s act of creation. For as artists give birth to what is necessarily continuous, but also utterly other, free and independent from their *being*, “(creation’s) life is radically grounded in God (as its artist), and just as radically different from God”; both “wholly drawn from the generator’s substance, and wholly a free re-presentation (and) re-realization” (Williams 2006:161).

Artists’ relationship to their beautiful artwork can consequently, according to Williams, help the believer to understand God’s relationship to his beautiful creation, as something continuous, yet completely different from the beauty of the

divine life. It could indeed then, Williams asserts, be said that there exists a profound “*analogy* between the *being* of creatures and the *being* of God”, in much the same way as there exists a similarity, as well as an “irreducible difference” between “the *being* of a work of art and the creative *being* of the artist” (Williams 2006:166).

In his inventive and erudite study, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice*, South African Reformed theologian, John de Gruchy, specifically focusing on the relationship between social ethics, justice and the beautiful, also holds that beauty cannot be ignored or negated, and should, in fact, stand central to religious thought (especially in the opposition to the utter ugliness of injustice, dehumanization and oppression found in this world) (De Gruchy 2008:2).

De Gruchy’s “senior partner in dialogue” for this work is then none other than Hans Urs von Balthasar (De Gruchy 2008:7), whose pronouncement that beauty should be understood as the expression of the *glory of the Lord*, is thoroughly engaged throughout the work. In this regard, Von Balthasar’s conception and appropriation of analogical thinking, and the *analogia entis* in particular, which, according to De Gruchy, has vast implications for theological aesthetics at large, forms an important part of the discussion (2008:104). Although the *analogy of being* is not explicitly affirmed or denied in this study, it is nonetheless apparent that De Gruchy is very adamant on the fact that the splendor of creation should be deemed to be fundamentally related to, and in continuum with, the splendor of God.

This is then especially seen in his discussion (and backing) of Bonhoeffer’s notion of “aesthetic living”, vested in the “mature worldliness” of the Scholastics, wherein the sensual beauty of the world is fervently affirmed as a cardinal part of Christian

truth, and any dualistic separation between God and earthly splendor is strongly opposed (De Gruchy 2008:153)<sup>15</sup>.

The Radical Orthodoxy movement, being of firm belief that aesthetics is intrinsically linked to metaphysics (Ward 2003:58), has also regarded it as one of their main objectives to affirm an aesthetic, participatory continuity between God and the beauty on earth.

In his essay, *Beauty of the Soul*, in the compilation *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, John Milbank, for example, engaging the epistemology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, contends that the beauty of the world, strangely experienced as something “not reducible to mere appearance” (Milbank 2003:11), eternally originates in, and returns to, the “drama of the Trinity” – which then explains its “ontological depth” (2003:34). Earthly beauty, Milbank argues, could therefore veritably be said to mediate the “invisible in the invisible”, and as such, analogously express God’s infinite *glory* in “finite surfaces” (2003:2). This *analogical understanding* (of the relationship between God and creation), evident in the essay, is then indeed central to Milbank’s entire theological thought (as seen in e.g. his *Theology and Social Theory*; Milbank 1990:304-316).

In his essay, *The Beauty of God* (from the same compilation *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*), Graham Ward, another key voice in the Radical Orthodoxy movement, setting out to defend the tradition of iconography (against e.g. the thought of philosopher Jean-Luc Marion<sup>16</sup>), also argues that earthly beauty, although dissimilar to the divine, expresses, and participates in, the beauty of God. Similar to Milbank (and the other works described previously), Ward’s views concerning beauty is also then deeply influenced by, and dependent on, the (theological) notion of analogy, as he writes that earthly beauty can truly

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<sup>15</sup> In another publication, *Icons as a Means of Grace*, De Gruchy writes that: “No Protestant theologian in recent times has spoken out more strongly against the dangers of dividing reality into two spheres than Bonhoeffer”, and quotes Bonhoeffer in saying in his *Ethics*: “There are not two realities, but only one reality and that is God’s reality” (De Gruchy 2008:100).

<sup>16</sup> And his startling work, *God without Being*.

be seen as an “analogical ordering ... with respect to the (beauty of the) Word” (2003:58).

## 2.7 Introducing David Bentley Hart as part of the Discussion

When reading the abovementioned works (which serves as only a small representation of scholarship recently published on this theme), it is evident that the notion of an aesthetic (and analogical) continuity between God and his creation (over against a dualistic cosmology where earthly splendor is ignored or negated), has been at the heart of the current conversation conducted in and on theological aesthetics. It is also then as part of this conversation, and manifest strand of thought, that David Bentley Hart’s recent theological project in aesthetics could be read and understood.

Hart’s *The Beauty of the Infinite*, in agreement with the texts mentioned, is veritably a work wherein creation, and the beauty it holds, is perceived (in words also favored by Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov<sup>17</sup>) as a “tabernacle and manifestation of (God’s) beauty” (Hart 2003:181). For Hart, experienced beauty “reflects the way in which God utters himself” (2003:178), which makes any ontology with the tendency towards oppositions, ruptures or negations between the divine and earthly (as was the case in the theologies of Nygren, Nebel and Bultmann), an “absurd attempt to limit the limitlessness of creation” (2003:207). God, as “endless display of beauty”, according to Hart, imparts “beauty to beings from (His) own depth of loveliness”, which results in the corporeal world being a “God-fashioned creation”, existing as “vessel of his glory” (as Von Balthasar also continually proclaimed) (2003:207). For Hart, the “whole fabric of being is (indeed) woven in infinite Taboric light”, and therefore truly beautiful beyond words (2003:237).

In accord with the voices stated above, yet markedly more adamant and relentless on the matter, Hart also then holds that analogical thinking, and the *analogia entis par excellence*, is paramount to an aesthetic theology, wherein

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<sup>17</sup> See Evdokimov (2000)

experienced earthly beauty is deemed to stand in continuity with the infinite and wondrous glory of God. For Hart, the *analogy of being*, vested in a Thomistic ontology, as used by thinkers such as Przywara and Von Balthasar (as will be seen in Chapter 4), indeed serves as nothing other than a divine gift through which every dualism, especially the "separation between flesh and spirit" (leading to the negation of corporeal creation) is overcome, and the "grammar of doxology" is magnificently revealed *in* this world - which leads him to utilize it as the central principle in his theological project (as evident in his *dogmatica minora* which will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this study) (2003:306). The *analogy of being* is indeed, according to him, the ultimate "destiny of Christian metaphysics" (Hart 2010:395), illuminating, in evident manner, the fact that the beauty "of heaven and earth truly declares and belongs to the glory of the infinite God" (2003:20).

In order to properly engage Hart's propositions (which, as shown, stand in clear continuity with an array of other recent works in theological aesthetics), attention will now be given to the origination and appropriation of analogical thinking, and the *analogia entis* in particular in Greek and Scholastic (Chapter 3) and 20<sup>th</sup> century thought (Chapter 4).

## Chapter 3 – The Use of Analogy in Ancient Greek and Scholastic Thought

### 3.1 A Third Alternative

Analogy, and the *analogia entis* in particular, as employed by David Bentley Hart and other contemporary voices in theological aesthetics, stems, as mentioned, from the classical conceptions thereof found in the philosophies that were brought forth by thinkers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. In order to thoroughly engage Hart, and his belief that the *analogy of being* should stand central to all (aesthetic) theological endeavors, it is thus important and necessary to enquire into these original understandings and appropriations of analogical thought.

Greek philosopher and polymath, Aristotle, is commonly held to be the most prominent and influential proponent of analogical thinking in classical antiquity (Bartha 2013). When consulting his writings, it is indeed seen that he recurrently (albeit not necessarily systematically) contends that apart from the fact that different entities could be perceived to be similar to each other (and thus in an univocal relationship), or dissimilar to each other (and thus in an equivocal relationship), a third alternative, namely that of an analogical correspondence, referring to the occurrence where the compared entities are neither completely identical nor completely distinct, but somehow related (amidst their ostensible divergence from each other), is also conceivable (Betz 2011:47).

According to Aristotle, there could thus veritably be said to be a midpoint or “mean” between univocal and equivocal relationships (see, e.g. his *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.3.1131b.), brought about by a similarity occasionally apparent “among otherwise disparate things” – which is then effectually expressed by the concept of analogy (Betz 2011:46).

Analogy, thus understood as a concept signifying and naming a presumed similarity-amidst-difference between compared entities, is then usually interpreted to be utilized in two distinct manners in Aristotelian thought (Ross 2000:15):

Its first use, it could be argued, typically entails a description of how diverse correlates, which are similarly termed, are seen to be related to one primary analogate from which their different meanings derive. This use of analogy, which has come to be known as the *pros hen* (“to one”) analogy, or analogy of attribution (*analogia attributionis*), is customarily explained with the hackneyed example of the term “health”, which could be employed in regards to an animal, urine and nourishment, where the animal is the primary analogate, and urine and nourishment are only “healthy” in an analogical sense – respectively as sign and cause of health proper (Betz 2011:46).

The second utilization of analogy, in contrast to the *pros hen* analogy, is then seen to involve the comparison of two completely distinct (yet related) proportions (recalling the first traces of analogical thinking in Greek arithmetic), where, for example, it could be said that 2 is to 4, as 4 is to 8, or (deliberately moving away from the restrictedness of mathematical precision) that sight is to the eyes, as thinking is to the mind (Betz 2011:48). This use of analogy, which therefore has to do with the resemblances between the inner workings of different proportions, has appropriately come to be known as the analogy of proportionality (*analogia proportionalitatis*) (2011:48).

### **3.2 The Analogy of Proportionality in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas**

As a result of the “accidents of history”, Aristotle’s work remained unknown to the Christian Church for the first millennium of its existence. Once it was discovered and translated into Latin in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, however, it truly instigated a revolution in Christian thought (that was until then primarily marked by a Platonic and neo-Platonic rationale<sup>18</sup>), and, with time, it was properly assumed that it was

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<sup>18</sup> Pasnau writes: “Although almost none of Plato’s own works were available until the 15th century, a version of Platonism was indeed transmitted through the Neo-Platonism infusing Augustine’s thought, as well as through various Neo-Platonic tracts that made their way into the Latin philosophical canon (of these the most notable were the *Liber de causis*, derived from Proclus, and the writings of pseudo-Dionysius” (2012:665).



almost impossible to be a theologian “unless one (is) one with Aristotle”<sup>19</sup> (Höffe 2003:199; Oakes 1997:30). It is thus unsurprising that the Aristotelian notion of analogy would become paramount in Scholastic thinking – as then indeed overtly seen in the theology of the Church’s *Common Doctor*, Thomas Aquinas.

For Thomas, analogical thinking, which he adeptly appropriated and restructured in regards to Christian metaphysics, was “not only a mere doctrine, a ‘that’, but a whole way of life; a ‘how’, that demanded the fullest commitment of the soul” (Oakes 1997:37).

Gerald Phelan, a revered Thomistic scholar out of the last century, writes:

(According to Thomistic thought) there is not a problem either in the order of *being*, or in the order of knowing, or in the order of predicating, which does not depend for its ultimate solution on the principle of analogy. (For Thomas) there is not a question that can be asked either in speculative or practical philosophy which does not require for its final answer an understanding of analogy.

(Phelan 2011:1)

It could then be held that Thomas, following Aristotelian thought, also distinguished, amongst others, between *pros hen* analogies, where “one notion is referred to several things, which nevertheless has *being* only in one ... (as is the case with) the notion of health”, and analogies of proper proportionality, where the focus is on the resembling inner-workings of different proportions (see, e.g. Thomas’s *Scriptum super Sententiis* 1, d.19, q.5, art. 2, ad 1; Betz 2011 47; Long 2011:41).

It is then this second type of analogy, according to Steven Long, which stood central to Thomas’s understanding of the relationship between God and creation (especially in some of his earlier texts, as will be explicated in what follows) (Long

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<sup>19</sup> A view Martin Luther, who saw Aristotle as an “intellectual power that threatened to displace the scriptural viewpoint”, countered by proclaiming exactly the opposite in his 40<sup>th</sup> thesis of his treaty *Against Scholastic Theology* (Höffe 2003:199).

2011:21). In order to comprehend this application of the principle of analogy (according to proportionality), it is, however, firstly important to investigate his groundbreaking ontological distinction, wherein a differentiation between a being's existence (*esse*) and essence (*essentia*) is proposed.

Thomas indeed claimed, most famously in his *De ente et essentia*, a commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, that a distinction between a being's *essentia*, referring to its "set of special characteristics ... by virtue of what the creature is what it is", and its existence, which has to do with the fact that it truly *is*, can be made (Johnson 2010:71; Oakes 1994:31). When using the example of a tree, it could therefore be said that a tree's essence is its *tree-ness* (referring to its roots, stem, bark, branches and leaves etc.). The fact that it is a tree (distinguishable by its *tree-ness*), however, does not necessitate *that* it *is* or indicate *why* it *is*, which can then, following Thomas's logic, be attributed to its existence (something, visibly different from its essence). It could therefore be argued, according to Thomas's thought, that finite beings are utterly groundless in themselves, seeing as *what* they are (their essence), does not necessitate the fact *that* they *are* (given the evident distinction between *esse* and *essentia*) (Oakes 1994:32).

In this understanding, in which all beings are said to have both essence and existence (that are distinguished from one another), there is, according to Thomas, however one radical exception, namely God. For in God, it is seen that his *essentia is* to exist, resulting in the fact that his existence, unlike creation's, is a necessary fact, bound-up with his essence (*that* he *is*, belongs to *what* he *is*). As Thomas says: "There is a thing, God, whose essence is his existence itself" (Aquinas 2000:69) – which indeed then makes him "the *First Being*, who possesses *being* most perfectly" (*Summa Theologicae* 1.44.1, quoted in Johnson 2010:71).

It could then accordingly be said that creaturely beings' instances of *esse*, groundless in itself (since it is not necessitated by the beings' essences), can only ever occur as something dependent on the One who necessarily exists, namely God (whose essence is existence). Creaturely existence is thus indeed always contingent on God's existence – which, according to Thomas's thought, results in

the fact that it, in its finite (and thus limited) act of *being*, shares and participates in the divine essence which is “ever-perfect ... as pure *act*” (Horrigan 2007:143-144).

This, however, according to Gilson, does not mean to say that “God should be seen as universal *being*”, or that *being* itself should be understood as a common *genus* of sorts, but rather that “the only instance in which ‘to be’ is absolutely pure of any addition or determination is also the only instance in which *being* is (in actual fact) distinct from the rest (namely creation) ... He *is* He, precisely because He alone is ‘to be’ in its absolute purity: “*Unde per ipsam suam puritatem est esse distinctum ab omni esse*” (Gilson 1952:177 with quotation from *De esse et essentia* 4.4). God is thus “... (his own infinite) *being* and, as such, wholly distinct from all creatures ...”, whose instances of *being* are nonetheless always contingent on God’s act of existence (Johnson, 2010:71).

It could hence be said that the *being* of God and the *being* of creation, as two “varying modes of *being*”, with dissimilar proportions of *esse* and *essentia* (“For in him they are one, while in other things they are diversified” – Aquinas 2000:70), are utterly disparate from each other, and that God should indeed be deemed to exist according to *his* own perfect and infinite existence (separate and sufficient in its boundless self<sup>20</sup>), just as creation ought to be deemed to exist according to *its* own existence (dependent on, and thus participative in God’s *being*) (Long 2011:43). Even though creation derives from God, and undeniably receives its (original and continual) *being* as divine gift (since it is groundless in itself), it can thus never be equated with the distinct act of existence of God (where *esse* and *essentia* are one and the same thing), and should therefore be understood as something with a completely *different* existence (with its own integrity), infinitely exceeded by the one whose essence is identical to pure *act*.

Yet, as a result of the fact that we are dealing with two “*modes of being*” that are comparable by the very fact that both *are* as proportions of essence and

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<sup>20</sup> Which will be seen to be a significant theme in David Bentley Hart’s aesthetics (with its emphasis on the importance of the doctrine of *Divine Apatheia*).

existence (even though God's essence *is* to exist) – with creaturely *being*, originating from, and thus continually participating in God's *essentia* (which *is* esse) – it is nonetheless possible, in addition to the admittance of a colossal difference between the two realities, to also argue for a very real and intrinsic correspondence between the existence of God and the existence of creation (Long 2011:43). As God *is* (and stand to the things which are his own), creation, dependent on God's *being*, also *is* (and stand to the things which are *its* own), which indeed leads to an assertion of a sure similarity (the fact that God and creatures both *are*), amid the evident dissimilarity (the fact that they *are* differently, given that God exists necessarily, and creation, only contingently by participation) (Oakes 1994:32). It is thus possible to define the relationship between God and creation in terms of the analogy of proportionality, since their similarity to one another, transpires amidst (and because of) two (infinitely) different proportions relating to their *being* (Menn 2003:165).

General consensus exists that the clearest example of Thomas's conception of the relationship between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation in terms of the analogy of proportionality (as explicated above) is found in his *Scriptum super Sententiis* (a commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard) and his *Questiones disputatae De Veritate*, or *De Veritate* in short (a collection of responses to twenty nine disputed questions on aspects of faith and the human condition) – two texts, it should be noted, which were composed relatively early in Thomas's career (Long 2011:39).

In *Scriptum super Sententiis*, Thomas is thus seen to say:

... And similarly I say that 'truth' and 'goodness' and all such items (which, in the context of this study can also comprise 'beauty') are said analogically (*dicuntur analogice*) of God and creatures. Hence, it is necessary that according to their *being*, all these be in God and in creatures according to the intelligible character of greater and lesser perfection; from which it follows since they cannot be according to one *being* (*esse*) in both places, that there are diverse truths ...

(I, d. 19, q. 5, art 2, ad 1, quoted and translated in Long 2011:41)

It is thus seen that Thomas lucidly professes that *being* (which encompasses features such as “truth”, “goodness”, and also, without a doubt, “beauty”), cannot be said in the same manner of God and creatures, as they *are* according to different “perfections”, which, according to Long, refer to “diverse *rationes*” of *esse* and *essentia* (Long 2011:42). Thomas is thus seen to suggest that the relationship between the two separate (yet related) existences and truths of the creaturely and the divine can only rightfully be described in terms of analogy (by proper proportionality).

This notion is then further developed in Thomas’s *De Veritate*, in the question: “Is knowledge Predicated of God and Men Purely Equivocally?” – a passage which needs to be read in full, to fully comprehend and appreciate the significance of the argument made:

It is impossible to say that something is predicated univocally of a creature and God because in all univocal predication the nature signified by the name is common to those of whom the univocal predication is made. Hence, from the point of view of the nature signified by the predicate, the subjects of the univocal predication are equal, even though from the point of its real existence one may take precedence over another. For example, all numbers are equal from the point of view of the nature of the number, even though, by the nature of things, one number is naturally prior to another. No matter how much a creature imitates God, however a point cannot be reached where something would belong to it for the same reason it belongs to God ... Whatever is in God is His own act of *being*; and just as His essence is the same as His act of being, so is his knowledge the same as His act of being a knower. Hence, since the act of existence proper to one thing cannot be communicated to another, it is impossible that a creature ever attain to the profession of something in the same manner in which God has it, just as it is impossible for it to attain the same act of *being* as that which God has.

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that whatever is predicated of God and creatures is an equivocal predication; for unless there were at least some real agreement between creatures and God, His essence would not be the likeness of creatures, and so He could not know them by knowing His essence. Similarly, we would not be able to attain any knowledge of God from creatures, nor from among the names devised for creatures could we apply one to Him more than another; for in equivocal predication it makes no difference what name is used, since the word does not signify any real agreement.

Consequently, it must be said that knowledge is predicated neither entirely univocally nor yet purely equivocally of God's knowledge and ours. Instead it is predicated analogously, or in other words, according to a proportion. Since an agreement according to proportion can happen in two ways, two kinds of community can be noted in analogy. There is a certain agreement between things having a proportion to each other from the fact that they have a determined distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two has to unity in as far as it is double of unity. Again, the agreement is occasionally noted not between two things which have a proportion between them, but rather between two related proportions – for example, six has something in common with four because six is two times three, just as four is two times two. This first type of agreement is one of proportion; the second of proportionality.

We find something predicated analogously of two realities according to the first type of agreement when one of them has a relation to the other ... as when healthy is predicated of urine and animal because urine has some relation to the health of an animal. Sometimes, however, a thing is predicated analogously according to the second type of agreement, as when sight is predicated of bodily sight and of the intellect because understanding is in the mind as sight is in the eye.

In those terms predicated according to the first type of analogy, there must be some definite relation between the things having something in

common analogously. Consequently, nothing can be predicated analogously of God and creature according to this type of analogy. But in the other type of analogy, no definite relation is involved between the things which have something in common analogously, so there is no reason why some name cannot be predicated analogously of God and creature in this manner.

(q.2, art. 11 quoted in Long 2011:43-5)

In this passage, which brilliantly encapsulates that which has been put forward and explicated throughout this chapter, Thomas thus clearly affirms that due to the fact that God and creation can neither be deemed to stand in a univocal relationship (since it is impossible for creatures “to attain the same act of *being* as that which God has”), nor in an equivocal relationship (as that would imply that “from among the names devised for creatures (we would not be able to) apply one to Him ... since (no word would) signify any real agreement”), the only appropriate manner to speak of the relationship between the creaturely and the divine, is through analogy (as an effective “mean” between univocity and equivocity, as Aristotle said). Thomas then furthermore argues that although one could potentially speak of an analogy of proportion (which in this case refers to the analogy of attribution or the *pros hen* analogy), it is indeed important to realize that it is primarily by means of the analogy of proportionality, wherein the relationship between God and creation is not defined in a determinable manner (as is the case with the Aristotelian example of “health”), but truly as a mysterious similarity-amidst-difference between two distinct proportions of *being* (in the same manner as it could be said that “sight is predicated of bodily sight and of the intellect because understanding is in the mind as sight is in the eye”) that predications regarding the creaturely and the divine can indeed be made.

### **3.3 The Analogy of Proportionality Reconsidered?**

From the previously cited passages out of *Scriptum super Sententiis* and *Questiones disputatae De Veritate* it is clear to see that Thomas (at least in these writings) believed that it is only through the analogy of proportionality, wherein “... creatures stand to the things which are its own as God does to those which

belongs to him” (De Veritate q.23 art.7 ad.9, quoted and translated in Long 2011:50), that a “proportion” between God and creation may be affirmed (2011:50).

Yet, it is important to note that many scholars (especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) have argued that although it is indeed evident that Thomas strongly avowed the importance of proper proportionality in the “proportionality texts”, as *Scriptum super Sententiis* and *De Veritate* would come to be known, it could in fact be contended that he only held these views for a brief period early in his career, and overtly abandoned them in his later, mature writings (see e.g. Klubertanz 1960). This suggestion, which stands contrary to almost five centuries of Thomistic study and interpretation (Osborne 2012), is normally substantiated by the seeming facts that Thomas does not explicitly reiterate or affirm the arguments and explications in favor of proper proportionality (as mentioned previously) in any writing after *De Veritate*, and moreover appears to call upon the (before shunned) analogy of attribution when speaking about the relationship between God and creation (in a passage such as *question 13, article 16* of the first part of his magnum opus, the *Summa Theologica*).

Steven Long, though, is of strong opinion that these arguments are not as convincing as they seem, and that it is definitely still possible to see the analogy of proper proportionality as *the* primary principal according to which Thomas understands the relationship between God and his creation. Although it is indeed true, Long argues, that Thomas does not explicitly mention the analogy of proportionality by name in his later writings, it should be noted however, that he also does not explicitly refute or deny his former declarations (which he most certainly would have done if he had indeed changed his mind, as a result of the strong manner in which they were originally posed) (Long 2011:56). According to Long, chances are thus good that Thomas expected his readers to continue to understand the analogy of proportionality, as explicated in the “proportionality texts”, as a normative principle serving as enduring foundation for all that would be proposed in future texts (2011:56).



It could indeed then be argued that even though no overt references to the analogy of proportionality (by name) can be found in Thomas's mature works, a text such as *Summa Theologica* nonetheless seems to presume and imply exactly what the analogy of proportionality, with its identifiable emphasis on the facts that God and creation have different "modes of *being*" (brought about by varying *rationes* of *esse* and *essentia*), proposes. The text of *Question 13*, for example, which makes extensive reference to analogical thinking and the predication of qualities in terms of the creaturely and the divine, states that *being* is the "one primary thing" which needs to be understood as analogical (Aquinas 2013:95); that names are thus not predicated "of God and the man according to the same concept" (2013:94); that "God is not a measure that is proportioned to the things that are measured" (2013:95); and that "God and creatures (are not) contained in a single genus" (2013:95) – which are all pronouncements which clearly coincide with that which was said in *Scriptum super Sententiis* and *De Veritate* (as explicated previously)<sup>21</sup>.

It could subsequently, according to Long, also then be argued that when Thomas indeed refers to what seems to be the analogy of attribution, as is seen when he, for example, writes: "... In the case of all names that are said of many things analogously, there must be some one thing with respect to which they are all said ... (which then in) a primary sense (is) God" (Aquinas 2013:96), he is specifically referring to the causal relation between Creator and creation (given that "the effect *qua* effect is indeed virtually ordered to its source"), which nonetheless could be held to be translatable to, and contained in, a prior instance of the analogy according to proportionality (Long 2011:59). Long thus contends that the analogy of attribution is always a secondary analogy in Thomas's work, which is solely used *in terms of* the analogy of proportionality (and its proposition that God and creaturely *being* is indeed distinct from each other, as a result of their differing proportions of *esse* and *essentia*) (Long 2011:59).

According to Long, Thomas does thus not deny or contradict what was proposed

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<sup>21</sup> Further instances where clear traces of the analogy of proportionality could be seen to occur (even though "proportionality" is not mentioned by name) is, for example, *Summa contra gentiles* 4.12 and *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 3, art. 5, ad 1 (Osborne, 2012).

by means of the analogy of proportionality (as Klubertanz suggests), but in actual fact builds on its propositions, in order to further develop his understanding of the relationship between the creaturely and the divine (Long 2011:56).

### **3.4 Cajetan, the Analogy of Being and Beyond**

Throughout this chapter it has thus been seen that one manner of interpreting Thomas's appropriation of analogy (as a "mean" between univocity and equivocity) in terms of *being*, is according to proper proportionality (which could then, as was shown, consequently also serve as a foundation for a transferred analogy of attribution when speaking about the causal link between the creaturely and the divine). Even though this is a contested interpretation, it is important to note that it was exactly this understanding of analogy within the work of Thomas that was originally coined as the *analogy of being*, or *analogia entis*, by Cardinal Cajetan – one of the first and most influential interpreters of the Angelic Doctor's thought in history (Betz, 2011:47-49). It was indeed also then this interpretation of Thomas's analogical thinking, under the Cajetanist title of the *analogia entis*, which served as the foundation for Erich Przywara's and his student Hans Urs von Balthasar's theologies (see, e.g. Przywara 1962c:136; Dalzell 2000:68), which, in turn, influenced a host of theologians' writing on aesthetics, including David Bentley Hart.

Equipped with an understanding of how analogy functioned in classical antiquity and during the Scholastic area, it is thus now possible to explicate the theologies of the *thinkers by analogy* of the previous century (as well as the critique they received), which will directly assist in engaging David Bentley Hart's use of the *analogia entis* in his theological aesthetics.

## Chapter 4 – The Analogy of Being in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### 4.1 From Aristotle and Thomas to Przywara, Barth and Von Balthasar

Although analogical thinking and the *analogia entis* (as the Cajetanian title for Thomas's description of an analogical correspondence between the *being* of creation and the *being* of God) were often invoked in theological and philosophical discussion ever since the Scholastic era (see, e.g. Randall 2006; Betz 2011:49), it was, however, with the commencement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (a century that would notably be marked by two brutal world wars), that a renewed interest in the relevance and significance thereof to theology and metaphysics arose (White 2011:11). This, it could be argued, was largely as a result of the significant scholarship by Roman Catholic theologians such as Erich Przywara and Hans Urs von Balthasar, who believed that the value of Thomistic thought, with its reliance on analogy (especially when it comes to the matter of ontology, as seen in the previous chapter), should be rediscovered and reutilized in a post-Cartesian world, unable "to hold together the polarity between God's transcendence and imminence" (Oakes 1997:36).

As it is evident that David Bentley Hart's employment of the *analogy of being* (especially in regards to aesthetics and the notion of beauty) is fundamentally influenced by these 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers (and their interpretations and utilizations of Thomas's thought), it is of utmost importance to analyze their propositions as final groundwork for the following chapters' focus on Hart's work.

This chapter will thus commence with a description of Przywara's reintroduction of the *analogia entis* to the modern theological discourse (which, as will be seen, was strongly bound up with the occurrence of the First World War), after which

Karl Barth's critique of Przywara's proposals will be discussed<sup>22</sup>. This will serve as an important segment of this thesis at large, given the fact that Barth's arguments against the *analogy of being* could still be seen to be definitive objections to what Hart proposes in the *Beauty of the Infinite*. The chapter will then conclude with an explication of Przywara's student, Hans Urs von Balthasar's rebuttal against Barth's critique, as well as a description of his own employment of the *analogia entis* in his theological aesthetics (which will serve as an appropriate introduction to the following chapters on David Bentley Hart's theology).

#### 4.2 War, Przywara and Analogy

The conundrum regarding creation's relationship to the divine, which has, as was postulated in the introduction of this thesis, haunted humanity throughout the ages, was, as could be expected, also at the forefront of discussion during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given the tragic occurrences of two world wars, where humanity, who were held in particularly high esteem ever since the Enlightenment (Leigh 1999:68), were exposed to be "carnivorous beast(s)", living in what could be seen as an ever-erupting "volcano" (Johnson 2010:35; Przywara 1967:47), many were unsure if the truth of God (if indeed there was a God<sup>23</sup>), could in any way be brought into relation with the vile and atrocious reality of the war-ridden modern world, or if it was indeed the case that creaturely existence was irreconcilable with the reality of the divine, as several factions within different faith communities – clearly enthused by the themes proposed by Farley (as mentioned in the second chapter of this study) – proposed (2010:36).

A leading voice in the discourse regarding the relationship between God and

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that this segment will exclusively focus on (the development of) Barth's thought in terms of the *analogy of being* (for the purpose of this thesis's argument at large), and will thus not attend to *his* propositions regarding beauty and aesthetics (which although relevant to the themes of this thesis, falls outside the perimeters set by the Research Problem and Research Question). For an interesting read regarding Barth's understanding of beauty (and especially then, the beauty of God), in relation to someone like Hans Urs von Balthasar's, see De Gruchy (2001:111-21)

<sup>23</sup> It could be said that the Nietzschean notion of the "death of God" culminated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partly due to events such as the two world wars (Kritzman & Reilly 2007:131; White 2011:2-3).

creation during this period of disillusionment and uncertainty, was a young Jesuit theologian, Erich Przywara, who fervently held that although it is true that God is utterly distinct from the world (by the very fact that he created it *ex nihilo*), it should nonetheless be recognized and professed, especially amidst the “storms of the times”, that He, as Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of earthly reality, is also an active force *in* the world, and that creation, in its finite state, can truly be deemed to stand in wondrous continuity with his infinite *being* (Johnson 2010:36). According to Przywara, theologies that expediently “crossed out” God’s nearness to the world and saw ontic existence as a “pure negation” of the divine, were not only unsound (as it, to his mind, evidently stood in contrast to the basic Christian truths of creation and the incarnation of Jesus Christ), but also led to tragedy and despair (Johnson 2010:47; Przywara 1923:350). Przywara indeed thought that it was exactly because of the fact that the Christian Church, in all its shapes and forms, had construed reality in dualistic terms (with a clear polarization between the realm of God and the realm of humanity), and recurrently opted to retreat from culture, instead of engaging it with the truth that God is also present in it, that the modern world was in such a dire state (Johnson 2010:32).

In the face of Europe’s political and cultural turmoil, Przywara thus believed that theological reforms, wherein the existing accent on God’s distinctiveness would be balanced out with a subsequent account of his involvement in, and connection to creation, was urgently needed. In his opinion, Christianity indeed had an obligation, amidst the unsettling events that were shaking the foundations of the world, to right the wrong of continually “running in the background”, which he saw as one of the “illnesses” of the church (Johnson 2010:39-40; Przywara 1962:124), by proclaiming to the world that God is not only above all that *is*, but indeed also present and active in earthly existence (2010:36).

In order to uphold and theologically account for this conviction that God is not only beyond, but also *within* the world, Przywara, who was well schooled in the history of philosophical thought, deemed it imperative to revisit and revive Thomistic metaphysics, wherein, in his opinion, God’s relationship with creation is comprehended in terms of the “miracle of the analogy of being”, as account of the simultaneous “similarity and dissimilarity between God and the creature in its own

*being*" (Johnson 2010:41; Przywara 1962:213-4).

Przywara indeed believed that it was solely by means of a Thomistic ontology, as expressed in the tradition of the *analogia entis*, that the tragic and utter problematic dichotomy between the earthly and the divine (which has, as was argued in the second chapter, been present and prevalent throughout the ages), could truly and rightfully be rectified, given the fact that its ingenious proposal of a continuity-amidst-discontinuity between the *being* of creation and the *being* of divine, properly illuminated God's immanence within earthly reality, without surrendering or compromising his transcendence (which, notwithstanding Przywara's fervent focus on God's presence and involvement in the world, remained paramount in his thinking, as will be seen in what follows) (Johnson 2010:23). For Przywara, indeed, the *analogia entis* showed God to be "the God exterior and interior, the towering God of both incomprehensibility and the unutterable indwelling within all creation: God in us and above us", and could therefore be understood to be "*the primordial metaphysical fact*" regarding the relationship between the creaturely and the divine" (2010:42; Oakes 1994:33; Przywara 1962:403; Przywara 1962b:193)

It is thus no wonder that the *analogy of being* would become the single, decisive principle in almost all of Przywara's philosophical and theological works (Oakes 1994:37).

#### **4.3 Przywara's Conception of the Analogia entis**

Przywara's initial encounter with the idea of a profound analogy between God and creation occurred through his study of *De ente et essentia* (wherein Thomas's distinction between essence and existence is famously laid out), as well as *Scriptum super Sententiis* and *De Veritate* (the "proportionality texts", investigated in the previous chapter) (Przywara 1962c:7). From the onset, Przywara's conception and utilization of the *analogia entis* was therefore strongly bound up with the Thomistic assertion that any proposed continuity between God and creation should always be understood in terms of the fact that the creaturely and the divine have distinct instances of existence, that are neither in an equivocal

relationship (whereby God would only be transcendent, as Przywara's adversaries proposed), nor, on the other side of the spectrum, in an univocal relationship (whereby God would only be imminent, as the Hegelian tradition propagated<sup>24</sup>), but truly analogical to each other, given their differing, yet comparable proportions of *esse* and *essentia* (as explained in the previous chapter) (Oakes 1994:37). It could thus be held that Przywara's basic conception of the *analogia entis*, which remained dominant throughout his whole lifetime, was primarily according to the analogy of proportionality (Betz 2011:69; Johnson 2010:139) – the instance of analogy which captures the "restless separating line of the distinction" between God and creation (Przywara 1962c:136; Johnson 2010:139) – as evidently seen in this revealing passage:

(Creation is) similar to God through the possession of a unity of essence and existence, but even in this similarity it is essentially dissimilar to God because, in God, the unity of essence and existence is that of identity, whereas in the creature the unity of essence and existence is one of tension. Now since the relation of essence and existence is the essence of *being*, so God and the creature are in *being* similar and dissimilar – that is, they are analogous to each other: and this is what we mean by *analogia entis*, *analogy of being*.

(Przywara 1962b:403, quoted and translated in Johnson 2010:73)

Although the analogy of proportionality, inspired by Thomas's "proportionality texts", continually remained foundational in Przywara's understanding of the *analogy of being*, he furthermore also then deemed it possible, because of the analogy of proportionality's affirmation of a similarity (amidst difference) between God and creation, and the fact that creation's *being* is contingent on God's acts of creation and sustainment, to employ the analogy of attribution (or *pros hen* analogy) when speaking of certain characteristics that are found in both God, primordially, and in creation (with the focus being on the causal link between the two) (Johnson 2010:136). As was the case in Thomas's thought (according to

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<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to counter *Cartesian Dualism*, Hegel proposed that "God is the subsistence of all things, and is actually in all things" and that the world is thus "divine in its *Allness*" (Yerkes 1978:196).

Steven Long, as seen in the previous chapter), it should be noted however, that Przywara's use of attribution *always* functions in terms of proportionality, as evidently seen in these passage out of his work, *Analogia entis*:

The unlimitable 'tensioning' analogy (which is the analogy of proportionality) is the (sole) basis for an ... 'attributive' analogy.

(Przywara 1962c:139 quoted and translated in Johnson 2010:139)

Przywara's *analogia entis* (in its fullest expression) should thus be understood to be made up of both a primary, indispensable analogy of proportionality (inspired by Thomas's "proportionality texts"), emphasizing the fact that God and creation, although in continuity with each other, have an infinitely different "way" of *being* (as a result of their varying proportions of *esse* and *essentia*), as well as a secondary analogy of attribution, emphasizing the fact that since there indeed exists a continuity between the earthly and the divine, creation can truly be said to have similar characteristics and qualities to what is found in God, its creator (Johnson 2010:137). By honoring both these classical forms of analogy, the *analogia entis*, according to Przywara, accounts for both God's transcendence and imminence, and thus effectively illuminates the truth that God is not only *above and beyond* the world, but also wondrously connected to its very existence.

#### **4.4 From Above to Below: The Analogy of Being and Faith**

Even though Przywara's conception of the *analogia entis* aimed at showing, amidst the calamities of war-ridden Europe, that God is truly present in, and connected to worldly existence, he was nonetheless very adamant on the fact (especially as his thought matured) that the use of analogy does not form some kind of "natural bridge between God and creatures" that granted humanity "traversable access to the divine" (Betz 2011:54). For Przywara, any comparison that would be made between God and creation (by means of analogy, and especially then, the analogy of attribution), always occurred within an even greater instance of dissimilarity (as famously stated by the Fourth Lateran Council, already a generation before Thomas), which truly, in his opinion, suggests that the *analogia entis* can only ever function "from above to below" (a



phrase that will be seen to be of crucial importance in both Von Balthasar's and Hart's works) (Johnson 2010:145). Przywara, answering to the critique that his *analogia entis* is nothing other than a disguised instance of *natural theology*, thus writes:

The *analogia entis* is an abbreviated way of stating what the Fourth Lateran Council – and thus a Christianity that was still united – defined in 1215: that even in the most extreme regions of the supernatural ... 'one cannot note any similarity between Creator and creature – however great – that would not require one always to note an ever greater dissimilarity'<sup>25</sup>. Thus the *analogia entis* in no way signifies a '*natural theology*', on the contrary, it obtains precisely in the domain of the supernatural and the genuinely Christian.

(Przywara 1955:277, quoted and translated in Betz 2011:75-76)

According to Przywara, the *analogia entis* should thus not be seen as a crafty formula whereby God's *being* can be deduced from earthly existence by means of the "potentiality in the creature's power" (an interpretation he viewed as a "grotesque distortion of his views", given his emphasis on the fact that God is infinitely different, and thus principally incomprehensible, to creation), but rather as something which functions in "the domain of the supernatural", and is received as "gift from above" (Przywara 1955:277; Przywara 1962c:133-4; Betz, 2011:67-8, 75).

For Przywara, the "gift" of the *analogia entis* is then indeed understood to be given through God's revelation – initially in creation (Przywara, in accordance with classical Catholic theology, believed that creation, even after the fall, remained a divine manifestation of God's goodness, although humanity continually fails to see this truth, because of the blinding effect of sin (Betz 2011:72), and furthermore, all-importantly, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection fully revealed, redeemed and fulfilled God's deep-settled connection and affinity to ontic reality (an idea which is further developed by Von Balthasar,

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<sup>25</sup> The precise wording of the Fourth Lateran Council reads as follows: "*Quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest (tanta) similitudo natari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda*" (White 2011:5).

and also emphasized by Hart, as will be seen in what follows) (2011:84; White 2011:13). According to Przywara, the truth of the *analogia entis* is thus always tied up with the faith-confessions that God spoke the world into existence *ex nihilo* (and that its *being* is therefore utterly dependent upon the “gracious and free act” of God (Oakes 2011:156)) and sent his son, as God-incarnated, to abolish the powers of death, make void the lie of *totality*, and liberate creation to see and know finite existence’s wondrous continuity with the infinite *being* of the divine (as expressed in “the miracle of the *analogia entis*”)<sup>26</sup> (Betz 2011:80).

Przywara thus says:

The final mystery (of the *analogia entis*) is (made visible by) God alone, in reverent looking to him who is beyond all creation.

(Przywara 1962c:443 quoted and translated in Betz 2011:81)

Even though it is thus clear that Przywara explicitly framed his conception of the *analogia entis* with the assertion that revelation (received in faith) is the only manner of truly coming to understand the truth of the relationship between God and creation, Protestant theologian, Karl Barth nonetheless believed that his proposals were heretical and false, and should therefore be rejected and opposed – especially amidst the realities brought about by the wars. When investigating the *analogia entis*’s reemergence in 20<sup>th</sup> century theological discourse (mainly as a result of Przywara’s scholarship) it is hence also of immense importance to consider and evaluate Barth’s substantial critique of Przywara’s thought (which, as said in the beginning of this chapter, can still be deemed to be the most severe critique that has been raised against the analogy of being).

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<sup>26</sup> Which results in the *analogia entis* not only dealing with ontology, but also with epistemology, seeing as it does not merely state *how* things really *are*, but also pronounces the way in which humanity sees and understands the way everything is: by means of faith (see e.g. Przywara’s description of the close connection of ontology and epistemology in Przywara 1990:128).

#### 4.5 A Different Take on the War: Karl Barth's Break from Liberal Protestantism

Contrary to Przywara's conviction that the Christian community did not do enough before, amidst and after the First World War (because of the assumed dualistic conception that the divine and worldly realities are mutually exclusive), Karl Barth, arguably the most important and influential Reformed theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Oakes 1994:45), was of opinion that Christianity (and especially the Protestant tradition to which he belonged), had actually done *too much* in the face of the tragedies that occurred, given the fact that many clergy members and theologians openly and actively endorsed the wars on the basis of theological grounds (Johnson 2010:15). This, according to Barth, was regrettably made possible by the fashionable belief (propagated, in particular, by Liberal Protestantism), that subjective experience is one of the cornerstones of theological reflection, and that the presence of a "religious war" sentiment among many (authoritative) German Christians, could thus be seen to be sufficient reason to endorse the political powers of the day's war-hungry cause (2010:16).

For Barth, though, the fact that subjective experience could be used to validate an atrocity such as the war (which, according to his thought, stood in clear opposition to the will of God), made its validity completely void, and also showed any theology that promulgated its worth, "false to the core" (Johnson 2010:16). In a sermon he delivers only one month after the outbreak of the war, he indeed ardently pronounces that anyone calling upon the experience of God to justify its own side in the war, is indubitably engaging in an act "completely alien to the innermost *being* of God", given that, as he had come to realize, "the innermost *being* of God" can truly be deemed to be "completely alien to humankind" (Barth 1974:465 quoted and translated in Johnson 2010:16).

This insight, that the "*being* of God" should be regarded as "alien" and unknowable to human understanding (which clearly stands in opposition to what Przywara, following Thomas, proposes), would then indeed mark the theological trajectory Barth would travel on for most of his lifetime, as will be seen in what follows (Johnson 2010:16).

#### 4.6 God as Wholly Other

After his break from liberal theology, Barth, in rereading the Bible and certain “primary sources” of the Christian faith, became increasingly convinced that his objection to the use of experience in theological enquiry, was indeed correct, and that God, according to Scripture and the “old orthodoxy of Luther and the Reformed tradition”, could only ever be understood to be the *wholly other*, whose revelation breaks forth into human existence “from above” (see, e.g. his lecture “The Righteousness of God”, delivered near the end of the war; Barth 1978:9-27; Johnson 2010:17-20). This conviction, it could be held, came to full expression in the theology found in his provocative commentary on the book of Romans – a work, according to Robert Jenson, which “represents in theology the end of historical religion” (Jenson 1969:51).

In the *Epistle to the Romans*, Barth indeed proclaims that, according to Paul’s thought, God ought to be understood as “the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are to have and do” who is thus “distinguished qualitatively from men and from everything human, and (can) never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or conceive, or worship as God” (Barth 1933:330). The reality of God, for Barth, is then solely encountered when his revelation, through the person of Christ, breaks forth into human existence as “a pure, absolute, vertical miracle”<sup>27</sup> (1933:60), and even then, human history and God’s truth is seen to remain “separated absolutely” from one another (1933:77). According to Barth’s understanding of Romans, God’s manifestation through Christ does thus not lead to a “merging or fusion” between the creaturely and the divine realities, but precisely illuminates the fact that they are in stark opposition to one another at every given moment (1933:108).

As Johnson says:

(For Barth) the place where God is revealed to the world is the place where the world in and of itself – that which Barth had named ‘so-called

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<sup>27</sup> Which could be seen as the *Urgestalt* of the interaction between God and creation that will be described as the *Analogia Fidei* (as will be seen later in this chapter) (McCormack 2011:92).

history' – is negated ... there is (thus) *no* connection between God and humanity apart from God's revelation in Jesus Christ ... (and) even Jesus himself is seen not in terms of material and concrete events of human life ...

(Johnson 2010:29)

#### 4.7 Barth's Interactions with Przywara at Göttingen and Münster

After the publication of the first, as well as the second revised edition of the *Epistle to the Romans*, Barth, albeit not in possession of a Doctorate, was offered an academic appointment as honorary professor in Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen – which he gladly accepted, as he was convinced that “(his) place was among the theological students of Germany”, given the muddle Protestant Theology was in (Barth & Bultmann 1981:156).

It was during his time at Göttingen that Barth first encountered Przywara's theology, and the notion of the *analogia entis*, when his friend and mentor, Eduard Thurneysen, urged him to acquaint himself with the young Jesuit theologian's work (Johnson 2010:48). Although Barth, in reading Przywara's propositions, was highly impressed by his theological skill and knowledge, he was nonetheless of opinion that his own understanding of God, as the *wholly other*, who is *only* encountered in faith, stood superior to Przywara proposals (Johnson 2010:50).

In his first university lecture series on dogmatics (later published as the *Göttingen Dogmatics*) Barth thus (arguably) confirms the gist of what he had said in his *Epistle to the Romans*, albeit in a more refined manner (Johnson 2010:59), by asserting that there is a fundamental *diastasis* between God and creature; that God consequently only enters human reality when his “*Logos*” manifests *from above* (in “revelation, scripture and preaching”<sup>28</sup>) (Barth 1991:14); and that any human words about the divine, therefore exclusively refer to an “original speaking *by God*” from beyond<sup>29</sup> (1991:12).

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<sup>28</sup> As “Three-fold Word of God” (Barth 1991:14).

<sup>29</sup> A notion précised in the post-Reformation expression: “*Deus dixit*” – “God speaks” (Johnson 2010:59).

Shortly after this lecture-series, where he blatantly avowed his allegiance to classical Reformed theology, Barth, however, decided to move from Göttingen to the University of Münster (which was a predominately Roman Catholic institution) – presumably to learn of, and engage with Catholic theology on a deeper level than before (Johnson 2010:84). That Przywara, and the *analogia entis* in particular, was on his mind when he made this decision is quite clear, as he started working on a second cycle of dogmatics on his arrival at his new workplace, wherein he surprisingly attempted to incorporate a version of the *analogy of being* into his understanding of God's relationship with creation (2010:85). Amy Marga notes, though, that he was clearly quite anxious about this new consideration, as he added an exclamation mark in the margin next to every occurrence of the term *analogia entis*, in the handwritten manuscript of this work (which, to this day, remains unpublished) (Marga 2006:161).

Amidst his evident uncertainty regarding the use of the *analogy of being*, Barth decided to invite Przywara to visit the seminar he was teaching on Thomas Aquinas, so that he, together with his students, could direct questions and reservations regarding the *analogia entis* to him in person (Johnson 2010:87). Przywara, who was very keen to engage other theologians with his propositions, accepted the invitation, and on the appointed dates, came and gave a comprehensive lecture on the way in which he interpreted Thomas, and consequently understood the *analogia entis* to function (2010:88).

Directly after Przywara's visit, Barth wrote to Thurneysen, the very person who first introduced him to his thought, that the lecture Przywara delivered was a masterpiece and that he "shone" while answering his and his students' questions (Barth & Thurneysen 1974:652; Johnson 2010:91).

He also then described Przywara's visit to his household, as follows:

... he overwhelmed me ... just as, according to his doctrine, the dear God overwhelms people with grace (at least within the Catholic Church) so that the formula 'God in-above the human from God's side' is, at one and the same time, the shorthand of his existence as well as the dissolution of all Protestant and modernist, transcendental and

immanent stupidity and reason and tension in the peace of the *analogia entis* ...

(Barth & Thurneysen 1974:652 quoted and translated in Johnson 2010:92)

This excitement over Przywara's lecture, and the prospects of utilizing the *analogy of being* in his own theology (as he had already gradually started to do) was, however, very short-lived, as Barth, after further study of his work, and an apparent reconsideration of what was presented at his Thomas Aquinas seminar, soon changed his mind on Przywara's suggestions, as will be seen in what follows.

#### 4.8 Barth's Rejection of the Analogia entis

Only a few weeks after Przywara's visit to Münster, Barth delivered a four part lecture series at the *Hochschulinstitut* in Dortmund entitled *Fate and Idea in Theology*, wherein he, surprisingly (given his prior disposition towards Przywara's proposals), overtly objected to the use of the *analogia entis*. It is thus clear that Barth rethought and reevaluated the notion of a similarity-amidst-dissimilarity between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation after the dust of Przywara's visit settled, and eventually came to the conclusion that the belief that God is completely alien to human existence, and is only met in and through Christ, should indeed be upheld (Johnson 2010:94).

In the lectures, Barth is thus seen to fervently protest the proposal that earthly reality stands in an intrinsic relationship to the divine, simply by virtue of the fact that it *is*. In proclaiming God's association with creation (by means of *being*), the *analogia entis*, according to Barth, indeed leads to the treacherous illusion that the unknowable, *wholly other* God, can somehow "be inferred from the given" (namely human existence), without any mention of the revelatory act of the incarnation (Barth 1986:33, 38) – which makes its propositions, in the same manner as was the case with liberal Protestantism, false to the very core (Johnson 2010:96, 99, 101, 162).

Barth then goes on to argue that God and the world, in their very existences, should indeed be understood to be completely distinct from each other, with the only point of interaction between them being the person of Jesus Christ, wherein the *Logos* of God is communicated, *from beyond*. For Barth, the Christ-event, other than for Przywara, does thus not reveal, fulfill or redeem a supposed truth of a similarity-amidst-dissimilarity between the creaturely and the divine, but is indeed the first and lone instance of association between two utterly distinct realities (Johnson 2010:100):

God's Word (namely Jesus Christ) is something new to them. It comes to them as light into darkness. If they hear something that they basically already know, then they certainly hear something other than the Word of God.

(Barth 1986:39)

In the end of the *Fate and Idea in Theology* lectures, Barth asserts that theology should thus incessantly respect the infinite dissimilarity between God and creation, and “refrain from all reaching – however ingeniously, piously or covertly – for a grand synthesis of opposites” (Barth 1986:54).

The *analogia entis*, which supposedly indeed tries to bridge the polarity between infinite and finite existence, is therefore, for Barth, nothing but an “illusion”, far removed from the actual truth that creation only meets God through Christ (Barth 1986:54).

Barth thus says:

(The God of the *analogia entis* is) no *wholly other* at all, but simply the last in a long line of human works ... For precisely when we want to find God in it, believing we have spoken our ultimate word, we remain alone with ourselves, shut up in our prison of distance, alienation and hostility towards God ... To speak a human word at the very point where everything depends on God's Word being spoken is fatal self-assertion. Theology must therefore resist the impulse to devise a grand synthesis of opposites.



(Barth 1986:56)

After the *Fate and Idea in Theology* lecture series, Barth, continuing to think of the *analogia entis* (and his now public refutation thereof), spent a considerable time rereading Luther – whose dogmatic expositions further confirmed to him that Przywara’s thought is indeed wrong, and therefore needed to be opposed persistently (McCormack 1995:389). When, at the end of his designated reading period, he was asked to lecture on the theme of *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life* at Elberfeld as part of a “theological week”, it was thus, to his mind, the perfect opportunity to employ what he had learned from Luther, to further disprove and dismiss Przywara’s proposals (Johnson 2010:109-10).

In the address at Elberfeld, Barth’s main critique of the *analogia entis*, which follows on what he had said in his *Fate and Idea in Theology* lectures, is then seen to center on Przywara’s assumingly flawed understanding of the sinful state of creation (Johnson 2010:111). Barth, enthused by Luther’s theology, indeed charges Przywara (and his *analogia entis*) of relying on the suspect Augustinian notion that sin does not undo creation’s relationship with the divine, but only temporarily distorts and clouds “the (otherwise) undisturbed continuity of man with God” (Barth 1993:23). For Barth, Augustine’s understanding, that sin is “a disease to be cured” (through the redemption of Jesus Christ), rather “a sign of spiritual death ... which fundamentally separates the human from God” completely misunderstands Scripture’s account of the Fall, and leads to an utterly distorted view of creation’s relationship to God (as illustrated in the falsehood of the *analogia entis*).

Contrary to Augustine’s (and subsequently Przywara’s) assessment of creation, Barth, in accordance with classic Protestant theology, then fervently declares that the reality of sin, far from being something that brings about a mere *disturbance* between the creaturely and the divine, in actual fact ensures an “irreconcilable contradiction” between God and the very existence of creation – a contradiction which remains extant even after the redemptive act of Christ (Johnson 2010:115).

For Barth, the task of the Holy Spirit is then not to cooperate with human action, or to help illuminate, restore or redeem some primordial connection between the

*being* of God and the *being* of ontic reality (given that any inherent connection is permanently abolished due to the reality of the Fall), but rather to establish a barrier between the revelation of Christ, and the ever-enduring sinful nature of creation, so that humanity, who, even in the aftermath of Christ's redemptive act continues to act in opposition to God, can wondrously be "made fit by God for God", through the hearing of his Word (Johnson 2010:117).

In this lecture, Barth is thus once again seen to be very adamant on the fact that the *analogia entis*'s proposition that God and creation's *beings* stand in an intrinsic continuity-amidst-discontinuity with each other (even after the occurrence of the Fall), and that the revelation of Christ reveals and redeems this everlasting truth, is completely false. For him, indeed, creation, as a result of its sinful state, has always, and will always, by the very fact that it *is*, exists distinct from God, as *wholly other*, and can therefore only encounter the divine through the *act* of God's revelation in Christ (for which it is prepared, through the work of the Holy Spirit) (Johnson 2010:117).

#### **4.9 The Analogia Entis as the Invention of the Anti-Christ**

Given the fact that Barth, after brief flirtations with Roman Catholic theology and an idea such as Przywara's *analogy of being*, was manifestly starting to reach certain conclusions regarding his dogmatic positions (as seen in lectures such as, amongst others, *Fate and Idea in Theology* and *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*), the time was arguably ripe to "begin at the beginning" and compose a comprehensive, multi-volume dogmatic-collection, wherein he would have the opportunity to lay out his understandings of the Christian faith's inner working in a systematic manner (Barth 1975:xi).

Barth thus commenced with the writing of his *magnum opus*, the *Church Dogmatics* – a work wherein he, as could be expected, planned to make substantial utterances on Przywara, the *analogia entis*, and the Protestant position on the relationship between the creaturely and the divine. As he was putting the first volume together, however, he clearly came to the realization that the time had passed for polite disagreement in terms of something that was so fundamental to the Christian faith (and its understanding of God and creation),

and that a radical and bold statement regarding the use of the *analogia entis* needed to be made (Johnson 2010:153).

This verdict, Johnson argues, was partly reached as a result of Barth's concern, given the tumultuous and uncertain political situation in Germany (which would eventually develop into the Nazi takeover of the German government as well as the Second World War), that the *analogy of being*, which he now was convinced could only ever function "from below to above" (and could thus be understood to be *natural theology* in its purest form), would be used, in the same manner as was the case with the propositions of Liberal Protestantism in the First World War, to link what was happening in the world, with thoughts regarding God, in order to justify political activity with reference to the divine<sup>30</sup> (Johnson 2010:153).

When the time thus came to write the preface to the first volume of his Church Dogmatics, Barth seized the opportunity and made a momentous statement regarding Przywara's proposals, which, in no uncertain terms, elucidated his position regarding the *analogia entis* once and for all (Johnson 2010:153):

The Word or existence? ... I hope that now, at least at it concerns my own intention, the answer is clear ... I can see no third possibility between the tolerance of the *analogia entis* which is legitimate only on the grounds of Roman Catholicism – that is, between the greatness and misery of a so called natural knowledge of God ... and a Protestant theology which draws on its own sources, stands on its own feet, and is finally liberated from this secular misery; for all these reasons I can only say 'No' here. I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the anti-Christ, and I think that because of it, one cannot become Roman Catholic. Whereas, at the same time, I do not approve of any of the other reasons that one can have for not becoming a Catholic, as they

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<sup>30</sup> McCormack notes that Barth clearly expressed these fears in a lecture he delivered on July 1930, titled *Die Theology und der heutige Mensch*: "Barth was very concerned at the time of this address with a situation which he say to be developing in the Evangelical churches in Germany. Everywhere, he noted, there were people in the church who ... were 'rediscovering their Catholic hearts'. By this, Barth meant that from every corner and in every possible way, the cry for natural theology was being heard with increasing intensity. This development represented, to his mind, the 'most dangerous possibility in a most dangerous moment'" (McCormack 1995:416).

are short sighted and trivial.

(Barth 1975:xiii)

In this infamous piece of writing, Barth is thus seen to admit that the *analogia entis* is completely irreconcilable with his theology, seeing as God, according to the “sources” of Protestantism (to which he, to his mind, fully aligns himself), could never be brought into relation with what is seen and experienced in earthly reality. For Barth, therefore, the suggestion of a similarity-amidst-dissimilarity between the *being* of creation and the *being* of the divine is nothing other than the ultimate heresy, functioning as a “tool of the devil” (Johnson 2010:156).

#### 4.10 An Eventual Turn to Analogy

After the aforementioned declaration, wherein a conclusive verdict concerning the use of analogy (in terms of the relationship of God and creation) is seemingly reached, Barth continued to emphasize, in accordance herewith, the fact that God, other than what the *analogia entis* suggests, is indeed the *wholly other*, who is completely distinct from creaturely reality and only ever encountered and known in the person of Jesus Christ – something which does not occur *through* creation (as if there was a continuity between the earthly and the divine), but rather “*in spite*” of that which everlastingly “contradicts him” (Barth 1975:166,168; Johnson 2010:161,167; Betz 2011:37).

As his arguments in the *Church Dogmatics* develop, it is interestingly and surprisingly seen, though, that Barth eventually does call upon the notion of analogy when he attempt to explicate how exactly the interaction of God and creation, through the revelation of the Word, occurs<sup>31</sup>. Contrary to Przywara’s suggestion, Barth’s use of analogy, however, does not refer to the category of *being* (given that he still fervently believes that God’s *being* is unknowable to human reality<sup>32</sup>), but is rather seen to denote a temporary correspondence

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<sup>31</sup> Barth would later note that he, in writing on the interaction between God and creation, came to realize that “the concept of analogy is in fact unavoidable” (quoted in Von Balthasar 1992:109).

<sup>32</sup> And that theology should indeed never attempt to engage issues of ontology (see e.g. what is said in Barth 1975:36).

(amidst an infinite dissimilarity) between God's *act* of revelation (through his Word, Jesus Christ), and creation's acceptance of this revelation (in the faith given to them by God)<sup>33</sup>. Barth describes this instance of analogy, which would come to be termed the *analogia fidei*, as follows:

Hearing of the Word of God could not take place if there were not something common to the speaking God and the hearing person, an analogy, a similarity in and what this event for all the dissimilarity implied by the difference between God and humanity – if we may now adopt this term – a 'point of contact' between God and humanity ... This point of contact is (however) not real outside faith; it is real only in faith. In faith man is created by the Word of God for the Word of God, existing in the Word of God and not in himself, not in virtue of his humanity and personality, not even on the basis of creation ... Hence one can only speak of this point of contact theologically and not both theologically and also philosophically, as of all else that is real in faith.

(Barth 1975:238-9)

In the end, against what would be expected, Barth is thus indeed seen to employ analogical thinking in his understanding of the relationship between God and creation – but only when speaking of the moment when Christ, as the Word of God, is revealed to humanity (and this revelation is received in faith)<sup>34</sup>. His judgment on the analogy of being's proposal of a similarity-amidst-difference between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation has thus (seemingly) not changed, as he still fundamentally believes that despite a "point of contact" in

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<sup>33</sup> Making his theology a "theology of *happening*" rather than "a theology of *being*" (Dalzell 2000:83).

<sup>34</sup> Barth would also later on in his *Church Dogmatics* (CD III/1-2) briefly speak of an *analogia relationis* between God and creation, which, in the same manner as the *analogia fidei*, is intrinsically reliant on God's revelation in Christ. The logic of the *analogia relationis* works as follows: "(T)he relation between God and the human Jesus corresponds to the relation between the eternal Father and the eternal Son; the relation between the human Jesus and humanity in general corresponds to the relation between the human Jesus and God; the relation between humans to other humans correspond to the relationship between the human Jesus and humanity; and thus, the relation between humans to other humans correspond to the relations within the Trinity. This correspondence in relationship, with (the revealed) Jesus Christ as center, is (then) how a human exists *in analogy* to God" (Johnson 2010:197-8)

revelation, creaturely existence, in its sinful state, remains irreconcilable with the splendor and majesty of God's infinite *being* (Johnson 2010:169-70).

Barth would then, notwithstanding the obvious controversy it caused, never fully withdraw his proclamation that Przywara's proposal of an analogical correspondence between creaturely reality and the divine is the "invention of the anti-Christ" (Johnson 2010:189, 191-2), and until the end of his life, speak of the *analogia entis* as an "idol", denoting a false and heretical understanding of God's relationship to creation (see Barth 1995:88-9).

This harsh confutation of the *analogia entis* by Barth was very hard on Przywara, who indeed later commented that he was utterly dismayed that a theological proposition which he had hoped would become the "point of departure of fruitful discussion", was turned into a "point of ... great conflict" instead (Przywara 1955:177 quoted and translated in Shenk 2011:172).

Przywara truly believed that his account of the *analogia entis* was not, as Barth held, an attempt to draw idolatrous line between the earthly with the divine (which would indeed have made it an "invention of the anti-Christ"), but rather, as explicated, a humble assertion, in accordance with classic Thomistic thought, that amidst the *infinite* dissimilarity between the creaturely and the divine (brought about by the fact that God and creation exist *differently*, due to their varying proportions of *esse* and *essentia*), there also subsists a wondrous continuity between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation (since both, in fact, *are*, and God, as creator, can be seen to be the primordial instance of *being* from which everything stems) – a truth, according to Przywara, which, contrary to what Barth stated, only ever comes to light by means of revelation (through creation, as well as, definitively, through the incarnation of Christ).

Przywara was thus convinced that Barth grossly misunderstood (and misrepresented) what he was trying to express through his proposal of the *analogia entis*, and that the dismissive criticism that was levied against his theology was therefore indeed groundless.

One of the most prominent theologians to share Przywara's sentiments, was then none other than Hans Urs von Balthasar.

#### 4.11 From One Swiss to Another

Even though Hans Urs von Balthasar held Barth in very high regard, and especially appreciated his fellow Swiss's Christocentrism and emphasis on the importance of revelation (which would indeed be seen to be important themes in Von Balthasar's own theology, partly due to his interaction with Barth) (Oakes 1994:50; White 2011:18), he nonetheless was of opinion that Barth's assessment of Przywara's theology was erroneous and unfair, and that it indeed could be said that "nothing whatever can be found of that ogre Barth has made (the) *analogy of being* (to be)" (Von Balthasar 1992:50).

In his book, *The Theology of Karl Barth (Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie)*<sup>35</sup>, Von Balthasar is thus seen to argue that Barth's major accusation against the *analogy of being* – that it does not honor God's transcendence and idolatrously attempts to equate the things of the world with the unknowable existence of God – is in actual fact applicable to his own dialectical method (wherein it is held that creation, in its "fallenness", stands in absolute contradiction to the truth of the divine<sup>36</sup>). For Von Balthasar, it could indeed be contended that a theology that only speaks of God's distinctiveness from creation (yet also wants to avoid an *Epicurean understanding* of God, by nevertheless referring to some point of contact between the creaturely and the divine), ironically capsizes transcendence into immanence, seeing as creation, in such an understanding, could only ever be overwhelmed, submerged and made one with God, in the eventual moment of encounter (McCormack 2011:108-9; Oakes 1994:58-59).

Von Balthasar thus writes:

God is identified (in all his aseity!) with his revelation. Then the creature is defined as the pure opposite to God and thus is identified with nothingness. And finally, when the creature is retrieved by God through revelation ... (which is an absolute and divine movement), creation is

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<sup>35</sup> A book that Barth (interestingly enough) considered to be the best book ever written about his work (White 2011:xi)

<sup>36</sup> As found in his commentary on the book of Romans, and the works that follows its trajectory.

then equated with God himself ... The irony is that at every place where Barth wants to do pure theology, where human thought has no more room for maneuver unless it be ... 'superseded', here we encounter the unexpected (but also unavoidable!) irruption of a very unbiblical philosophical pantheism (or more precisely, theopanism)<sup>37</sup>.

(Von Balthasar 1992:84)

Contrary to Barth's dialectical theology, which, in a seeming attempt to safeguard God's transcendence, utters "... Not !! Rather God!", yet precisely herein directs all eyes on creation instead (Von Balthasar 1992:84), the *analogy of being*, according to Von Balthasar, can truly be seen to protect the dissimilarity between the creaturely and the divine (as Przywara continuously held) (Hanby 2011:341; Von Balthasar 1992:50). This is because its suggestion of a similarity-amidst-difference between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation indeed preserve creation's integrity (as something with a different existence than God), even in the moment of its interaction and similarity with the divine (Dalzell 2000:61; Hanby 2011:365; Oakes 1994:113; see also Von Balthasar 1989:404) – a point which will be seen to be of immense importance in David Bentley Hart's theology.

Von Balthasar then holds that when Barth eventually realizes that the interaction of God with creation, through his Word, inevitably needs to be described in terms of some sort of analogy (a realization Von Balthasar describes as a "conversion" Barth undergoes (Von Balthasar 1992:93)), his suggestions of an *analogy of faith* (and an *analogy of relationship*) between God and creation do not stand opposed to what Przywara advocates in his theology (as Barth believed it did), but in actual fact necessarily presupposes and fulfills the wonder of the *analogia entis* (Johnson 2010:197; McCormack 2011:116).

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<sup>37</sup> Von Balthasar explains: "Technically, pantheism says the universe, all that is, is God; whereas theopanism says that God is everything ... In a sense they both mean the same thing, since both versions assert that God (is equal) to nature" (Von Balthasar 1992:94). In this critique, Von Balthasar clearly echoes what Przywara has also said regarding Barth's (early) work, as e.g. seen in this passage: "(in Barth's theology) transcendence and immanence are no longer bound together in a 'tension of opposites' but have been made identical. In that the hidden, incomprehensible God, the *Deus absconditus* as Luther liked to say, is not merely 'all in all', but rather everything alone' (Przywara 1923:348, quoted and translated in McCormack 2011:95).



Von Balthasar is thus seen to argue:

However much ... creation may be dependent ... on God's revelation in Christ, it is just as true that we can glimpse *in* this revelation a *presupposition* lying at its foundations that makes revelation possible in the first place.

(Von Balthasar 1992:112)

The "miracle of the incarnation" of Christ, according to Von Balthasar, indeed reveals an original ontological "continuity" between God and creation – a continuity which, in fact, "no contradiction (brought about by the Fall) ... can break in upon" (Von Balthasar 1992:114; Johnson 2010:197 McCormack 2011:115). For, he writes, "if revelation is centered in Jesus Christ there must by definition be a periphery to this center ... ", namely creaturely existence (1992:163; 2010:197)

McCormack writes:

(A)ccording to Von Balthasar, the incarnation does not establish for the first time a 'compatibility' that did not exist prior to it. On the contrary, the incarnation requires the existence of this basic 'compatibility' if God and the human are to be united in the one divine-human person. As he puts it 'we can glimpse' in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ 'a *presupposition* lying at its foundations that makes revelation possible in the first place'<sup>38</sup>. What is presupposed is the 'compatibility' of the divine and the human as established in the creation. 'The order or the Incarnation presupposes the order of creation'<sup>39</sup>. Thus the two natures cannot *exclude* each other. They cannot be so related as they 'correspond to Yes and No, thesis and antithesis, statement and contradiction. Otherwise his humanity would not be authentic, and sinful humanity would not be redeemed through his Incarnation'.

(McCormack 2011:115-6)

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<sup>38</sup> See Von Balthasar (1992:108)

<sup>39</sup> See Von Balthasar (1992:163)

For Von Balthasar, the revelation of Christ, received in faith, can indeed thus be seen to reveal (and fulfill) a deep-settled, primordial continuity (amidst discontinuity) between the very existence of creation and the infinite *being* of the divine (as expressed by the *analogia entis*) – exactly what Przywara had in fact been proposing in his theology all along (as described previously in this chapter). Przywara’s *analogia entis*, for Von Balthasar, is therefore not only compatible with Barth’s mature theology, but is in actual fact (unknowingly) presupposed by what Barth suggests in his work.

The *analogy of being*, according to Von Balthasar’s thought, should thus not be seen as “the invention of the anti-Christ”, but rather as a fundamental truth regarding the relationship between God and creation. For in and through its suggestion of a continuity-amidst-discontinuity between God and creation, it rightfully holds that God is truly distinct from creation (seeing as creation, even in the moment of interaction and similarity with the divine, is indeed, in the words of Von Balthasar, “something and not nothing” (1992:94), with its own instance of *being*), yet also in wondrous continuity with creation’s existence – a similarity that enables revelation in and through the creaturely to take place (as definitively seen in the incarnation of Christ).

It is then especially this affirmation of a similarity (amidst dissimilarity) between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation, that can be seen to be of essential importance in Von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics.

#### **4.12 Von Balthasar’s Return to the Whole**

When reading the magisterial *Herrlichkeit* (*The Glory of the Lord*), it indeed becomes evident that the *analogy of being* acts as foundation for Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics (wherein he, as mentioned in the second chapter of this study, endeavors to reinstate beauty as one of the primary principles of the Christian faith), given the fact that its unique proposition of an ontological continuity (amidst discontinuity) between the *being* of God and the

*being* of creation (first and foremost by means of the analogy of proportionality<sup>40</sup>), brilliantly enables and illuminates the truth that beauty, as one of Plato's "supracategorical" transcendentals (which underlies all instances of being) acts as "vehicle" through which the *glory (doxa) of God* is manifested within creaturely reality<sup>41</sup> (Nichols 2011:7,42).

Imperative to Von Balthasar's understanding and utilization of the truth of the *analogy of being* (especially in terms of theological aesthetics), which can be seen as a further development of Przywara's original propositions, is then the assertion that the continuity between the glory of God and the beauty of creation (which, according to the rules of the analogy of proportionality, always functions within an ever-greater dissimilarity), does not come to expression in abstract manner, or as subjective sentimentality (*in the eye of the beholder*), but rather in and through objective, historical form (*Gestalt*) in the world (De Gruchy 2008:109; Oakes 1994:148)<sup>42</sup>.

Von Balthasar thus says:

The beautiful (as earthly expression of God's glory) is above all a *form*, and the light does not fall on this form from above or and from inside, rather it breaks forth from the form's interior. Visible form not only 'points' to the invisible, unfathomable mystery; form *is* the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while, naturally (according to the rules of analogy), at the same time protecting and veiling it. (Forms) have an exterior *manifestum* which appears and an interior depth radiating (with the glory of the Lord) through the external aspect, neither of which, however, are separable in the form itself. The content (of God's revelation) does not lie behind the form but within it.

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<sup>40</sup> Von Balthasar, in accordance with Erich Przywara, indeed believed that the analogy of proportionality, consisting of the comparison of two differing proportions of *esse* and *essentia* within creation and God's *being*, serves as the foundation of the *analogia entis* (*wherein* the analogy of attribution functions) (Dalzell 2000:64; Nichols, 2011:62).

<sup>41</sup> Which makes Von Balthasar's theological aesthetics "a theology of God's *self-revelation* in the light of the third transcendental" (Dalzell 2000:101).

<sup>42</sup> Which explains why beauty can indeed be held to be an objective reality with ontological priority as stated in the second chapter of this study.

(Von Balthasar 1983:151)

Von Balthasar is very adamant however, on the fact that even though it could be said that the glory of God comes to manifestation in and through the (beautiful) forms of this world, and creaturely reality, in its corporeal state, thus witnesses to, and participates in the splendor of the *infinite*, the truth of the relationship between the creaturely and the divine is *not* overtly apparent to humanity, (among other) as a result of the the reality of creation's sinful state (as Przywara also emphasized) (Oakes 1994:157). According to Von Balthasar, sin, which for him comprises of a wicked anthropocentric disposition in which the world is regarded as a self-sufficient, enclosed continuum (wherein humanity is its own god) (see Oakes 1994:112-113)<sup>43</sup>, truly renders humanity unable to *read* the forms and “perceive the content” of the divine beauty that fills creation (Von Balthasar 1983:151; Nichols 2011:68). Instead of seeing the truth of the “whole” (that the creaturely and divine stand in harmony with each other, and that God's glory beautifies the forms of the corporeal world (Dalzell 2010:59, 61), the reality of sin, Von Balthasar argues, causes humanity to falsely perceive the world as an autonomous realm, without any association with a supposed God – which, naturally, leads to disastrous consequences (Oakes 1994:157)<sup>44</sup>.

It is then exactly because of the world's sinful state (wherein humanity remains willfully blind to the truth of God's continuity and affinity with his beloved creation), that God, according to Von Balthasar, sends his Son to reveal, redeem and fulfill the fundamental truth encompassed in the *analogy of being*. Christ, as the ultimate union of divine and created *being*, and thus the “form of all forms” (Von Balthasar 1983:432), is indeed deemed by Von Balthasar to be the *analogia entis*

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<sup>43</sup> Von Balthasar indeed sees (original) sin as: “... a revolt against the creator, a disavowing of the nature in which man was placed and created ... Man does not want to be man but something else (as he imagines, something ‘higher’); as a ‘religious’ person, he gives, as it were, his ‘resignation letter’ to God ... Instead of accepting the primary fact of his creatureliness ... he tries, as it were, to leap over this basis and seek for a magical way to reach, *on his own*, the creator's way of being – almost as if he were trying to eat some kind of philosophical or spiritual apple, endowed with that same charm that ensnared Adam and Eve” (Von Balthasar 1939:69-70 quoted and translated in Oakes 1994:111). In the following chapters it will be seen that Hart also holds this view.

<sup>44</sup> Von Balthasar writes that humanity, in rebelling against the truth that it stands in continuity-amidst-discontinuity with a reality different from its own, “attack only (itself)” (Von Balthasar 1983:449-50).

in person, through which the glory of the Lord is fully and definitively revealed in creaturely reality<sup>45</sup> (O' Donnell 2001:126; Dalzell 2000:76). Although the world, by its sinful nature, rebels against this truth (which threatens the very foundation of earthly autonomy) and murders Jesus, his death on the cross<sup>46</sup> and resurrection<sup>47</sup> precisely reveals him to be the “most sublime of beauties” (1983:33), who “embraces the ... abysmal ugliness of sin” (1983:124), offers redemptions to a world infected by human pretension and will to power (De Gruchy 2008:124), recapitulates everything in “heaven and on earth” (Balthasar 2004:292), and, through the light that shines forth from his figure, illuminates the glory of the Lord radiating throughout history (Oakes 1994:198).

Von Balthasar then holds that it is only in the self-surrender to the light shining forth from the Christ-form, as the ultimate revelation of God's beauty and splendor, that creation, by means of the faith it receives, is enabled to see the world as the “whole” it truly is (Dalzell 2000:32). Faith, acquired in saying “yes” to what is revealed in Jesus, is thus, according to Von Balthasar, a “gift of a new light” whereby the glory of the Lord becomes apparent in creaturely existence (Dalzell 2000:80).

Von Balthasar's conception of the *analogy of being* is thus thoroughly dependent on the revelation of Christ, as the *analogia entis* in person, given that it is only through him that the wondrous truth of a continuity-amidst-difference between the creaturely and the divine can truly be seen, understood, and also expressed through the lives of believers<sup>48</sup>. Von Balthasar's use of the *analogy of being* could

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<sup>45</sup> Nichols writes that for Von Balthasar the incarnation is the “pouring of God's glory” into the form of this world, in one of its primordial embodiments, namely humankind (Nichols 1998:35).

<sup>46</sup> Which, according to Von Balthasar, would always have been the end-result of Christ's “provocation” (that the *glory of God* is now fully revealed in worldly existence) (Oakes 1994:188).

<sup>47</sup> Which, for Von Balthasar, serves as God's validation that Christ was right in making the claims he had made, and that God's glory has indeed been fully revealed in earthly reality (Oakes 1994:188).

<sup>48</sup> Nichols writes that for Von Balthasar “seeing” always goes hand in hand with the transformation of one's life: “A theory of perception cannot be had in this context without a doctrine of conversion, and so ultimately of sanctification ... (Indeed), the lives of the saints are signs of the authenticity of divine revelation in Christ” (Nichols 2000:3). The transformation of a believer's life as a result of *seeing* the glory of God, is then the theme of Von Balthasar's *Theo-dramatics*.

thus be held to stand in continuity with what was proposed by Przywara in his mature theology (seeing as Przywara, as previously shown, also believed that it is only through faith coming from the revelation of Christ, that the *analogy of being* comes to its right), as well as with Karl Barth's *analogy of faith* and *analogia relationis* (as instances of analogy which presupposes and points to the fact that God and creation are evermore "compatible" with each other).

#### **4.13 Returning to the Theology of David Bentley Hart**

With Von Balthasar's theological aesthetics examined and discussed, the ground is prepared to once again return to David Bentley Hart, and *his* theological aesthetics, as put forward in *The Beauty of the Infinite*. In engaging with Hart's work, it will become clear that Aristotle's, Thomas's, Przywara's, Barth's and Von Balthasar's thought veritably had an immense influence on his theology, and that the content of the last two chapters thus offers much needed assistance in the comprehension and critical assessment of his propositions.

## Chapter 5 – The *Analogia Entis* according to Hart

### 5.1 A Brief Review

At this point in the thesis, it is important to shortly summarize what has been said over the last couple of chapters, given the fact that the content of these chapters will, as mentioned, serve as a framework whereby Hart's work will be explicated and evaluated.

After the Research Problem and Research Question were introduced in the introductory chapter of this study, Chapter 2 set out to investigate the broad theme of theological aesthetics (which can be deemed to be the general designation under which David Bentley Hart conducts his theology in his monograph *The Beauty of the Infinite*). Herein it was held that Hart's work forms part of a discussion initiated by Hans Urs von Balthasar (as Hart himself confesses; 2003:29), which centers on the belief that beauty, as one of Plato's supracategorical transcendentals, which pleases the sight, invokes endless desire and comes to expression in the physical, objective forms in earthly reality, should not be negated, neglected and ignored in religious thought (as has arguably been the case throughout the centuries, due to the prevalence of themes such as *iconoclasm*, *asceticism* and *futurism* in the Judeo-Christian tradition), but in fact be seen to stand in continuity with the goodness, splendor and glory of the divine.

It was subsequently held that although the concept of analogy, and the tradition of the *analogy of being* (which stands central to Von Balthasar's thought), can be said to play an important role in the work of many contemporary voices in the field of theological aesthetics, none can be seen to be as adamant on the importance thereof, as David Bentley Hart. This indeed then begs the question if this unyielding insistence on the use of the *analogia entis* can in fact be seen to be a responsible and beneficial manner of affirming an aesthetic continuity between God and Creation (as the Research Question of the study asks).

In order to better understand and engage with Hart's use of the *analogy of being* in his theological aesthetics, Chapter 3 investigated the classical (and formative)

conceptions of analogy and the *analogia entis* in the thought of Aristotle (in Greek antiquity) and Thomas Aquinas (in the Scholastic era). In this chapter, it was thus seen how Thomas utilized Aristotle's concept of analogy (as a *mean* between univocity and equivocality), in order to describe a similarity-amidst-difference (first and foremost according to proper proportionality and derivatively according to attribution) between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation, given their differing, yet comparable proportions of *esse* and *essentia*, and the fact that creation's act of *being* stems from, and is contingent on, God's acts of creation and sustainment – a description that would then come to be called the *analogia entis* (the title Cardinal Cajetan bestowed upon Thomas's propositions).

Chapter 4, following what was said in Chapter 3, then showed how the principle of analogy and the *analogia entis* in particular was placed back on the agenda of the modern theological discourse by Erich Przywara, who believed that it could help war-ridden Europe to see that God is not only distinct from the world, but also actively present in it. It was further then emphasized that Przywara (especially as his thought matured) did not see the *analogy of being* as a form of *natural theology*, whereby God's inner-*being* could be deduced by enquiring into creation's nature (given that the similarities between the creaturely and the divine is always outweighed by the dissimilarities between them, and sin renders humanity blind to the truth of all that *is*), but rather as something functioning from "above to below", which becomes evident in the faith-confessions that God created the world, and sent his Son to reveal, redeem and fulfill its relationship to him.

After the description of Przywara's theology, attention was given to Karl Barth's critique of the *analogy of being* (which will again be discussed in what follows). It was thus seen that Barth, arguably the foremost Reformed theologian during the mid-twentieth century, had a different view on the reality of war-ridden Europe, which ultimately led him to the conviction that God, contrary to what Przywara suggests, should be seen exclusively as the *wholly other*, who is solely met in the revelation of his *Logos*, Jesus Christ – a belief which ultimately culminated in his infamous declaration that the *analogy of being* is nothing other than the invention of the anti-Christ. It was also then seen that Barth did eventually turn to analogy in



his mature theology – but only when speaking of the point of contact between the creaturely and divine which occurs when revelation is received by faith, and definitely not in regards to the *being* of creation and the *being* of God (as Przywara, following Thomas, had argued).

In the last segment of this chapter on the use of the *analogy of being* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the focus shifted to Hans Urs von Balthasar. It was thus shown how Von Balthasar rebutted Barth's critique on Przywara's thought (by saying that it is only by analogy that God's transcendence can actually be upheld, and that Barth's *analogia fidei* and *analogia relationis* presupposes the *analogy of being*), whereafter Von Balthasar's own use of the *analogy of being* in his theological aesthetics was explicated.

## **5.2 Dionysus Against the Crucified: Nietzsche and his Postmodernist Disciples**

With the itinerary travelled thus far in mind, the focus of the thesis now shifts to an investigation of Hart's theological aesthetics in his *The Beauty of the Infinite*. When reading his monograph, it is however seen that Hart does not immediately set out to affirm or explicate his proposition of an aesthetic continuity between the splendor of God and the beauty of creation, but firstly focuses on the objection that the Nietzschean strand in postmodern philosophical thought raises to such a suggestion (Hart 2003:33,43).

Hart is thus seen to argue that the tendency within Christianity (and Western Metaphysics in general) to construe reality in dualistic terms (which ultimately results in corporeal reality, and the beauty it encompasses, to be villainized and negated, as Von Balthasar, Farley, and most other voices in theological aesthetics argue – as was seen in Chapter 2), has indeed prompted many thinkers, unwilling to denounce their creaturely status, to turn their backs on the supposed transcendent realm (held to stand over against corporeal being), and fervently affirm ontic existence to be the *be all and end all* of reality<sup>49</sup> (see Hart

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<sup>49</sup> Instead of thus negating creaturely existence (as is asked of them), a choice is rather made to negate the transcendent realm (see e.g. Hart 2003:136).

2003:10, 92). This position, which has veritably become the status quo in postmodern thought, can, according to Hart, then indeed be seen to have its foundation in the “antimetaphysical” philosophy of none other than Friedrich Nietzsche – the “most prescient philosopher of Nihilism (as he writes in his book *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*; 2009:106).

According to Hart, Nietzsche’s denunciation of Christianity, which can indubitably be regarded as a “virtuoso performance” and “a rhetorical tour de force” (Hart 2003:94), predominately centers on his utter distaste for the Christian life as aesthetic phenomenon, as already alluded to in the introductory chapter of this study (2003:95). Hart writes that for Nietzsche, Christianity, with its dualistic cosmology (where the realm of God is placed over against the realm of humanity), can indeed be deemed “one great curse pronounced on (earthly) life”, which exalts weakness “at the expense of ... beauty”, “drains life from this world by directing life’s energies towards another, unreal world”, and is expressed most perfectly as “hatred for the flesh” (2003:95; Nietzsche 1968:155-6,186). According to Nietzsche’s thought, Hart argues, Christianity’s continual reference to an “other” world, indeed only ever led to the “squalid defamation of the world that is” (Hart 2003:96; 1968:155-6).

Nietzsche can thus be seen to say:

Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally life’s nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in ‘another’ or ‘better’ life. Hatred of the world, condemnation of the passions, fear of (real) beauty and sensuality, a beyond invented ... to slander this world ... (truly leading to an) impoverishment of life.

(Nietzsche 1967:22-4)

Hart further holds that for Nietzsche, Christianity’s aversion to earthly existence is best exemplified in its belief that Christ, as the “immaculate conception” (a title, according to Nietzsche, whereby the church had in actual fact forever “maculated

(natural) conception” (Nietzsche 1968:147), suffered and died on a cross, in pure innocence, in order to supposedly save believers from the evils of this life. For Nietzsche, this narrative of Christ can most certainly not be seen as the *good news* Christians hold it to be, but should in fact be deemed to be a “gospel of castration”, which forever condemns earthly existence in the most severe manner imaginable (Hart 2003:96; Jaspers 1965:320).

Nietzsche thus says:

(T)he crucified and the innocent one – counts as an objection to life, as a formula for its condemnation ... The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from (it) ...

(Nietzsche 1983:542-43)

Hart then holds that Nietzsche, disgusted by Christianity’s ethos of “castratism” that “denigrates the senses, strives against the instincts of the flesh, and defers ultimate value to the realm of the spiritual alone”, goes on to propose an alternative view of reality – complete with a figurative “god appropriate to (his) own ... piety”, namely “Dionysus, (the) god of indestructible life, ecstasy, joy and power” standing over against the “Crucified” (Hart 2003:96,106).

For Nietzsche, Dionysus, the mythic Greek god associated with the joyful celebration of chaos, irrationality, human instincts and tragedy (Pfeffer 1972:30), is truly the perfect emblem of the “most pious godlessness”, who, in his “extravagant (and) contradictory magnificence”, represents an “enmity against every faith that distracts life from itself” (2003:106). A life lived in accordance with the latter-day cult of Dionysus, according to Nietzsche’s thought, does indeed not attempt to look for relief or consolation from the reality of the world, but is rather utterly true to its bodily state, and continually surrenders to the underlying fact of all carnal existence, which can be summed up as “the will to power” (Hart 2003:98).

Nietzsche’s philosophy, done under the “patronage” of Dionysus, thus serves, according to Hart, as a call to “invent and narrate the death of God”, move *beyond*

Christianity's dualistic conception of reality (with the morality of "good and evil" it entails), and wholeheartedly commit to earthly existence – wherein beauty (in its tragic truthfulness) is indeed then seen to come to glorious expression in the very ferocity, disorder, difference, strife and violence brought about by the ever-enduring "will to power" (see Hart 2003:151).

Hart thus says:

(Nietzsche's) *pure* affirmation (of earthly reality), as could scarcely be otherwise within a discourse of defiant immanentism ... embrace(s) the (prior) negative as the positive, *being's essential* positivity, its creative and wanton élan, in which violence (is) not a dialectical negation ... but ... the world's essential, if atelic, creative power (which indeed brings about beauty).

(Hart 2003:40)

According to Hart, Nietzsche's philosophy, as succinctly (and selectively) described above, can then veritably be said to have instigated the prevailing postmodernist discourses, in their "godless forms", propounded by voices such as Gilles Deleuze, Michael Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and others (Hart 2003:30, 35). These thinkers, Hart argues, "disenchanted with all the beguiling promises of faith ..." (2003:43), and entranced by the *counter-gospel of Dionysus*, have indeed chosen to complete the Nietzschean destruction of metaphysics by definitively dismissing the transcendent reality of God (as an indeterminate "no-thingness" lying behind the veil of the Kantian sublime<sup>50</sup>), and committing themselves fully, as Nietzsche has requested, to ontic existence (see 2003:43-93).

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<sup>50</sup> Hart writes that the Kantian notion of the Sublime, which, in his opinion, is almost always presumed by the philosophers being discussed in this section of the study (binding them, in fact, together, as e.g. held in the essay *Du Sublime* by Courtine, 1988), can be said to repeat at the level of the aesthetic the first Critique's prohibition upon "metaphysical adventures beyond the theoretical", in a manner far more radical than the less threatening "noumenon", by signaling an impenetrable midpoint between the (beautiful) forms of this world (the world of representation), and the unknowable realm of the *infinite* (the world of the *unrepresentable*) (see Hart 2003:43-52).

For Hart, postmodernist discourses (in their Nietzschean form) can thus always be seen to center on *being's* "finitude, its absolute limitation to the condition of the world in its 'worlding' ...", given that God, as Derrida has proclaimed, has become the name of indifference itself (Derrida 1974:71), and humanity, in the words of Deleuze, has "become ... creature(s) of the surface" in the same manner as "tick(s) or louse(s)" (Deleuze 1990:133). This indeed then makes postmodernist discourses, "ontologies of violence" (as John Milbank has pointed out<sup>51</sup>), where *being* is a "tragic economy"; some sort of "structure of sacrifice in which beings suffer incompleteness and destruction", exactly so that "*being* may be"; the realm where Dionysian violence, rooted in the ultimate truth of *difference*, everlastingly reign supreme (Hart 2003:10,128-9).

For, as Derrida says:

If we must say ... 'all is but Dionysus' ... we must know – and this is to write – that, like pure force, Dionysus is worked by *difference*. He sees and lets himself be seen. And tears out (his) eyes. For all eternity, he has a relationship to his exterior, to visible form, to structure (as opposed to the "unrepresentable"), as he does to his death (an ever-enduring, ever-repetitive event<sup>52</sup>). *This* is how he appears (as himself).

(Derrida 1978:28-9)

### 5.3 God Beyond, yet also Within the World

Hart then proceeds to proclaim that the tragedy regarding Nietzsche's and his postmodernist disciples' thought (as described above), is the fact that the essential premise on which it is built – that Christianity requires, and in fact demands, a flight from ontic existence (and the joys and splendors it encompasses) – is an utterly false, unbiblical and unorthodox interpretation of the Christian story (Hart 2003:133). For, Hart holds, when the Christian narrative is seen for what it truly is (as expressed in Scripture and the orthodox decrees of

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<sup>51</sup> In his *Theology and Social Theory* – see e.g. Milbank (1990:278-9).

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche's notion of *Eternal Recurrence* can indeed be seen to play an important role in many a postmodernist's view of the Dionysian reality (see e.g. Hart 2003:60-2).

faith), it becomes clear that it has always been a “discourse of the surface” (2003:15), where God does not stand above and beyond finite existence (expecting humanity to abdicate their creaturely state, as Nietzsche believed), but is utterly present and active in the physical, time-bound history of the creation which he lovingly affirmed to be “good” following his free act of creation *ex nihilo* (a very important theme in Hart’s theology, which will be discussed comprehensively in what follows).

Hart thus writes that the Christian God:

... does not inhabit only a particular *temenos* (lying behind the veil of the sublime) ... (since he can indeed be seen to be the One) who tabernacles *among* his people, whose *skekhinah* abides in his temple; ... who ... indeed, as he chooses, dwell upon the earth. The same God who infinitely exceeds all things addresses Moses out of the burning bush to proclaim himself ‘Ehyeh asher Ehyeh’, ‘I am that I am’, or rather, ‘I will be what (where, when) I will be’ ... He is the infinite who is not merely boundlessly ‘sublime’ but who ... goes where he will ...

(Hart 2003:212)

Hart also then argues that the Christ-event, far from signaling the final rejection of earthly existence, as Nietzsche and his disciples (especially Deleuze) believes, could in actual fact be said to be the definitive assertion of earthly reality. Christ, Hart writes, indeed assumed human finitude into himself without despoiling it, or rejecting it (Hart 2003:205). Instead of being a “gnostic savior”, it is in the very flesh of Christ, Hart holds, that his divinity is revealed, and it is indeed then also by the breaking of his physical flesh, that his divinity is imparted to other (2003:32). For Hart there is thus “something almost tediously wrong” in claiming that Christ’s life on earth has ever figured in the Christian tradition as a “repudiation”, rather than “an affirmation of the fleshly life” (Hart 2003:107). The fact that God became incarnated in corporeal existence, Hart holds, does veritably not only reconcile creation with God, but also definitively reunite humanity with creation, seeing as Christ, according to him, in his very life, death and ultimate life-giving resurrection re-declares and re-reveals creation’s ultimate

goodness (a point which will also be returned to, and discussed in length, in what follows) (Hart 2003:134).

Hart thus asserts that the belief that Christianity is a religion wherein ontic existence stands in opposition to the realm of God, should be deemed to be a severe distortion of the Christian evangel which, in actual fact, centers on “... life, and that in all abundance” by preaching “creation, divine incarnation and resurrection of the flesh, and the ultimate restoration of heavens and earth” (2003:107).

Hart indeed says:

If Christian culture were simply spiritualist, if it endorsed only ethos like that of the *Corpus Hermeticum* or the libretto of *Parsifal*, Nietzsche (and his followers’) indictment of Christian ‘castratism’ would command great force; but for all the cunning and psychological inventiveness of his genealogy, it fails at every juncture to accommodate the complexity of what (they) want to describe. The orthodox doctrine of creation out of nothingness (as well as the belief in Christ’s incarnation) ... (leads to the conviction that) all things (has) to be affirmed, and with equal emphasis, as God’s good creation.

(Hart 2003:107)

This declaration of God’s presence and involvement in ontic existence, together with the affirmation of creation ultimate goodness is then, according to Hart, brilliantly accentuated when addressing the matter of ontology.

Hart argues that contrary to abovementioned Nietzschean “ontologies of violence”, where creaturely existence is purposefully divorced from any notion of transcendence; or the dualistic ontologies that has often marked Christianity, from which these Nietzschean “ontologies of violence” were “misbegotten” (wherein it is held that earthly existence should always be seen as a negation of the truth of God) (Hart 2003:30); a genuine, orthodox Christian ontology, as has occasionally

been present in the Church<sup>53</sup>, insists on the fact that earthly *being*, although distinct from God (since it was created *ex nihilo*), stands in wondrous continuity with the infinite and joyous existence of the divine – as is then expressed by the “miracle of the *analogia entis*” (2003:241).

The *analogy of being*, Hart holds, indeed uniquely illuminates the fact that earthly *being* cannot be grasped under the confines of some sort of “immanentism”, and also then, that violence and chaos is most certainly not the foundational grammar of earthly existence; but that creation, in the words of Gregory of Nyssa, is a “song praising God, the true primordial, archetypal music”, in whom creaturely existence can in fact “glimpse itself as in a mirror” (Hart 2003:194).

#### 5.4 The Analogia Entis

Hart’s initial explication of the *analogy of being*, which serves as the foundation for his use thereof in his theological aesthetic, taking the form of a *dogmatica minora*, is quite a complex and composite piece of writing – which indeed then makes the content of the last few chapters extremely relevant and helpful in deciphering his thought.

It is thus seen that Hart holds that the *analogia entis*, true to the original Aristotelian and Thomistic understanding of the principle of analogy, indicates that the relationship between God and creation should neither be understood to be univocal, nor equivocal, but properly analogical (denoting a midpoint between the utter sameness of univocity and the utter distinctness of equivocality, as was said in Chapter 3) (Hart 2003:213, 235).

This analogical relationship – Hart (following Thomas and Przywara) then holds – “cannot (first and foremost) take the form of a homonymy of ‘attributes’ applied to two substances”, but should rather be seen to “consist in the rhythm of the creature’s difference from God, its likeness to his unlikeness, under the form of a dynamic synthesis of distinct moments of *being*” (2003:214, 235). Expounding on

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<sup>53</sup> In, for example, the thought of the Cappadocians, Augustine, Maximus, Dionysius the Areopagite etc. (Hart 2003:223).



what is meant by this phrase, “distinct moments of *being*”, Hart then evidently turns to Thomas’s ontological distinction (described in Chapter 3), and claims that finite beings, defined as *that* wherein a differentiation between “what it *is* (its *essentia*), and that it *is* (its *esse*)” is made (rending them, as shown, groundless in themselves, given that their essence is distinct from, and does not necessitate their existence), should be seen to be completely different from the infinite life of God, who, contrary to creation’s, is “not so divided” (seeing as God’s essences is “his existence itself”, as Thomas held) – a difference, Hart argues, that nevertheless illuminates “within the (tenuous) unity of every being, an analogy pointing to the God in whom *being* and being determined (or of being Who He Is) are not divided” (which then indeed can be recognized, in accordance with the content of the previous chapters, as an instance of the analogy of proportionality) (Hart 2003:214).

Hart thus writes:

The *analogy of being* does not analogize God and creatures *under* the more general category of *being*, but is the analogization of *being* (itself) in the difference between God and creatures ... (I)f the primary analogy is one of *being* then an infinite analogical interval has been introduced between God and creation ... Thus the *analogia entis* renders all ‘essentialist’ analogy impossible<sup>54</sup>.

(Hart 2003:241-2)

The *analogy of being*, according to Hart’s thought, does thus not attempt to draw a naïve or simplistic comparison “between creatures and God as two kinds of existents, who subsists in the shared abstract quality of *being*”, but rather, through its reliance on the ontological distinction and the analogy of proper proportionality, “introduces an analogical interval into *being* itself” (as Thomas and Przywara also

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<sup>54</sup> A thought he also accentuates in his essay *The Destiny of Christian Metaphysics*, by saying: “The (analogy of being) does not treat *being* as some genus under which God and the creature – or the infinite and the finite – are placed ... Quite the reverse, in fact: it is precisely *being* that is seen to be understood as analogous; and it is precisely any univocal concept of *being* – any notion that God and creatures are ... comprehended by *being* as such – that the *analogia entis* as principle denies” (Hart 2011:379).

held). This indeed then leads to an affirmation that God and creation have infinitely different “moments of *being*” – amongst which there nonetheless subsist a similarity and continuity (by which attributive predication can be made), seeing as both “moments of *being*” can be said to exist as proportions of *esse* and *essentia* (although differently), with creation’s *esse* necessarily being contingent on, participative in and expressive of “the transcendent act of *being*, that is also subsistence: the life of God” (Hart 2003:232-3). For Hart, in accordance with Thomas and Przywara, the *analogy of being* is thus (firstly) marked by a “*maior dissimilitudo*”, wherein a further “*similitudo*” between God and creatures can also wondrously be affirmed<sup>55</sup> (2003:246).

Hart thus says:

Certainly the analogical never offers an epistemic grasp of the divine, such that God comes to occupy a more and stable place in the taxonomy of concepts. Insofar as analogy describes the way in which creation manifests the God who gives *being*, difference is the first term of the likeness, and speaks of the Trinitarian God who always has distance and difference. And so analogy widens the interval of difference even as it closes it, asserts an ever greater dissimilitude embracing every similitude ...

(Hart 2003:314)

Hart subsequently holds that the criticism that has been sounded against the *analogy of being* (most notably by Karl Barth, as shown in the previous chapter) – that it is nothing other than an idolatrous attempt to equate the creaturely with the divine – should frankly speaking be dismissed as total “nonsense”, which truly reveals an inability to understand what the *analogia entis* actually proposes (as Przywara and Von Balthasar also contended) (Hart 2003:241; 2011:396). Far from endeavoring to bridge (and thus destroy) God’s otherness (as Barth, in his “notorious (and) fairly barbarous” pronouncements, implies (2003:241)), the

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<sup>55</sup> Here, Hart notably uses the terminology of the Fourth Lateran Council, which reads (as mentioned in the Chapter 3), “*Quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest (tanta) similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda*”.

analogy of being, Hart argues, in actual fact, properly honors and professes to God's infinite transcendence – something which, in ironic manner, cannot be said of a theology with a dualistic disposition.

Clearly rehearsing and building on Von Balthasar's (as well as Przywara's) arguments (as discussed in the previous chapter), Hart holds that theologies that focus exclusively on God as *wholly other* (and are thus marked by "a duality that ... makes of God and creation dialectical opposition(s)"), inevitably fall prey to the paradox whereby radical transcendence in actual fact becomes a radical kind of immanence, since God, in this understanding, is evidently placed on the same plane as creation, by being turned into some sort of *supreme being* set atop a summit of *lesser being* (who then, as instance of *pure negation*, can indeed only be overwhelmed and absorbed into the One who is *everything*, in an eventual moment of interaction, as Von Balthasar held) (Hart 2003:238, 241-2; 2011:398).

Hart therefore writes:

(P)urely dialectical (systems) ... (are ultimately the same as) 'identist' systems ... imprisoning God and world within an economy of the absolute ... If God is thought ... (as) total absence ... or static 'Wholly Other', God appears merely as the world's highest principle (that overwhelms everything else) rather than its transcendent source.

(Hart 2003:243)

The *analogy of being*, in opposition herewith, Hart argues, in its "purely positive account of finite being" as the "analogical expression of a positive and determinate infinite act of being", counters any conception that equates the creaturely with the divine in holding that creation's "moment of *being*" is not destroyed, but in fact comes to its right, in its distinctness, in its continuity with God, who, as fount (and not "highest principle") of creation's existence, also has *his* own, distinct "moment of *being*" – "that depends upon no other for his existence ... that is not a 'thing' set off against ... nothingness ... (and) that is not a (higher) being among other beings" (Hart 2003:234, 243; 2011:398-9).

According to Hart, every theology that therefore does not subscribe to the *analogy of being* (and instead succumbs to a dualistic schema), is indeed then, as already mentioned in the second chapter, a “tower of babel”, that heretically attempts to “mount up to (a) supreme principle, rather than dwelling in and giving voice to the prodigality of the gift” – namely creaturely *being* (Hart 2003:249).

Subsequently, Hart also then holds that the accusation that the *analogy of being* nullifies the importance of divine revelation and faith should be seen as utterly fallacious. In the same manner as Von Balthasar, Hart argues that God’s revelation to creation, received in faith, in fact always presupposes the *analogia entis* – without which it undeniably would have been one big “contradiction”:

... Apart from the *analogia entis*, the very concept of revelation (if creation then supposedly does *not* become *one* with the divine is the moment of interaction) is a contradiction: only insofar as creaturely *being* is analogous to divine *being*, and proper to God’s nature, can God show himself as God, rather than in alienation from himself; there would be no revelation otherwise, only ... perhaps the ghostly call of the Gnostic’s stranger god ...

(Hart 2003:242)

As was the case with Przywara and Von Balthasar, Hart truly also believes that, as a result of the fact that the proposed similarities between God and creation is always outweighed by infinite dissimilarities (as the Fourth Lateran Council professed), and especially then also because of creation’s sinful state (leading to a willful blindness, as Von Balthasar held, and will be discussed in what follows), the truth of the *analogy of being* only rightly becomes evident in God’s manifestation through revelation (and then in particular the definitive revelation of Jesus Christ, the *analogia entis* in person). For Hart, the *analogia entis*, far from being faith’s antithesis, can actually be said to be a “receiving of words” – something which veritably “culminates – or rather, abide – in faith” (a point which will be discussed comprehensively in the next chapter) (Hart 2003:314-5).

Hart is consequently of the conviction that the critique that has been sounded against the *analogy of being* (especially by Karl Barth, as described in the previous chapter) does definitely not hold water, and could therefore confidently be dismissed as mere “examples of inane (and cruel) invective”<sup>56</sup> (Hart 2003:241) – for, he argues, contrary to being some sort of “naive *natural theology*”, or an attempt to grasp the very *being* of God, the *analogia entis* is indeed nothing other than a “poetic” (faith) confession which declares, in line with Scripture and the orthodox tradition, that creation is not a negation or alienation, nor a (violent) *totality* where God is but an absence existing as an instance of “no-thing” beyond the veil of the sublime, but, in fact, a (continual) act of God’s grace, wherein something other than God, which nevertheless exists in continuity (amidst discontinuity) with the infinite and plenteous *being* of the divine, is lovingly and joyously brought forth *ex nihilo* and declared “good” (as God is primordially good) (Hart 2003:242). A rejection of the *analogy of being*, according to Hart, is thus “ultimately ...” a “rejection ... of Genesis 1, and everything that follows after it ...” (2003:242).

### 5.5 Towards a Theological Aesthetics

Hart, in accordance with Hans Urs von Balthasar, also then believes that the *analogy of being* naturally gives rise to and “properly belongs within” a *theological aesthetic* (Hart 2003:211), since its proposal of a continuity-amidst-discontinuity between the *being* of God (in its infinite profusion) and the *being* of creation (in its finite occurrence) – coupled with the conviction that the category of the beautiful, as one of Plato’s supracategorical transcendentals that underlies all instance of being, transpires “oblivious of the (supposed) boundaries that divide the transcendent from the immanent (and) the supernatural from the natural” (Hart 2003:20) – brilliantly illuminates the fact that the beauty of creation, as freely given “other”, is neither an “idol” standing in opposition to the divine, nor the violent workings of Nietzsche’s Dionysus, but a magnificent “icon”, prevailing as

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<sup>56</sup> Hart, playing on Barth’s words, also then teasingly says that “if (a) rejection of the *analogia entis* were in some sense at the very core of Protestant theology, as Barth believed, one would... be obliged to observe that it is also the invention of the anti-Christ, and so would have to be accounted the most compelling reason not becoming Protestant” (Hart 2003:242)

an “intonation of grace” and expressing the infinite and joyous splendor and glory of the beauty of God (for those with the eyes of faith to see) (2003:144,181).

After investigating the Nietzschean “ontologies of violence” (standing against the notion that the world could be said to exist in aesthetic continuity with the infinite existence of God), and also giving an introductory explication of the working of the *analogy of being*, Hart is then indeed seen to develop and present his own *theological aesthetic* in the form of a *dogmatica minora* – with the *analogia entis* as foundational principle – wherein it is affirmed that creation truly transpires as a “theatre of divine glory ... good, gracious, lovely and desirable, participating in God’s splendor ...” (Hart 2003:21).

## Chapter 6 – The Beauty of the Infinite: Hart's Theological Aesthetics

### 6.1 A Dogmatica Minora

For David Bentley Hart, as explicated in the preceding chapter, the Thomistic ontology encapsulated in the principle of the *analogy of being*, with its preposition that creation, as a contingent “moment” of *being*, exists in continuity (amidst discontinuity) with the infinite and splendid life of the divine, veritably counters (what he sees as) the “sterile” theologies “of the religious dualist(s)”, which affirm God’s glory only through the negation of worldly beauty (as specifically explicated in the second chapter), as well as the subsequent tragic “ontologies of violence”, proposed by the Nietzschean postmodernists, which, on the other side of the coin, only affirm corporeal reality’s (violent) ‘goodness’ through the negation of the godly realm (Hart 2003:213, 242, 245).

For this reason, Hart, in accordance with Hans Urs von Balthasar, indeed then utilizes the *analogy of being* as “speculative context” for his *theological aesthetic* (the “heart” of his book *The Beauty of the Infinite* at large (Hart 2003:33)), wherein he, through the presentation of a *dogmatica minora*, built on Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and centering on the key themes of *Trinity*, *Creation*, *Salvation* and *Eschaton*, endeavors to illustrate that beauty (in terms of the infinite life of God, and especially then also in terms of finite life of creation) can truly be said to be an all-important (and even all-determining) leitmotif in the story told by Christianity (2003:154, 243).

This second-last chapter of the thesis will subsequently engage and explicate the ways in which Hart uses the *analogy of being* in his theological aesthetics, whilst continually keeping the content of the previous chapters – which indubitably serves as foundation and inspiration for his thought – in mind.

## 6.2 Trinity

Hart – convinced, in accordance with Przywara’s thought, that a theology proposing an analogical relationship between God and creation should always function from “above to below” (leaving any accusation of *natural theology* void) – commences his *dogmatica minora* by proclaiming that the triune God, who, according to Thomas, “possesses *being* most perfectly” and “is absolutely pure of any addition or determination” (as quoted in the third chapter), is boundlessly beautiful (Hart 2003:157, 177).

For Hart, the most elementary truth of any theological aesthetics is indeed that God’s very essence (as pure and perfect act), eternally radiates with unfathomable beauty, since He, in his “uncircumscribable” infinity, can truly be deemed to be the “supereminent”, primordial actuality of goodness, whose glorious existence, in the idiom of Gregory of Nyssa, “cannot be passed beyond” (Hart 2003:192-3). Hart writes that God does not have to “find or determine himself” as the beautiful God He is (in or through his involvement in creaturely existence), but is everlastingly “sufficient, at peace ... good, sovereign and wholly beautiful ... with or without creation” (2003:157)<sup>57</sup>.

This, Hart holds, does not suggest that God’s beauty is “simply ideal” – a “remote, cold, characterless ... (and) formless” archetype (existing as “no-thingness” beyond the sublime, as the Nietzschean postmodernist would contend), but that He, in actual fact, exists as the “fullness of all form”<sup>58</sup> (2003:177). Besides being infinite, Hart pronounces, God is indeed thus also “infinitely *formosus* ...” (2003:177).

According to Hart, this truth of God’s everlasting and infinite beauty is then

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<sup>57</sup> Something which, according to Hart, is properly expressed by the traditionally controversial, yet (in his opinion) largely misunderstood notion of *Divine Apatheia* – which he, himself unequivocally subscribes to (Hart 2003:158).

<sup>58</sup> As seen when the Psalmist praises “the savor, the sweetness of the Lord” (27:4), and exclaims “I shall be sated, upon awakening, in beholding thy (beautiful) form” (17:15); and when Zechariah declares “how great is His goodness ... and how great is His beauty” (27:4) (Hart 2003:177).



principally perceived (and understood) within a Trinitarian theology, where it is confessed that the triune God exists as “*perichoresis* of love ... a dynamic coinherence of three divine persons<sup>59</sup>, whose life is eternally one of shared regard, delight ... feasting and joy” – as exquisitely illustrated in the narrative of Christ’s baptism (Hart 2003:155,168,175-7).

True to the Orthodox tradition (to which he belongs), Hart holds that the “tableau” of Jesus’s baptism, where God the Father proclaims his “pleasure” in the beauty of the Son, and the Spirit jubilantly concurs to the Father’s words by ascending as a dove, constitutes an “icon ... a crystallization” of the joy that everlastingly mark the “intradivine relations” (Hart 2003:168). Employing the words of Gregory of Nyssa, Hart writes that the Trinity, as on the day at the river Jordan, (everlastingly) “looks upon itself”, and in the recognition of its beauty, “desires what it possesses” while also thus “possess(ing) what it desires” (2003:173). God’s beauty, Hart continues, should therefore essentially be understood as “delight and the object of delight; ... what God beholds, what the Father sees and rejoices in in the Son, in the sweetness of the Spirit, what Son and Spirit find delightful in each other” (2003:177).

Hart then suggests that given that beauty, in its most perfect and magnificent occurrence, transpires within the *dance* between the three (distinct) persons of the Trinity, and is seen to be marked by a continual recognition and rejoicing in the other’s glorious “*otherness*” (within the unity of “divine simplicity”), *difference* and *distance* can veritably be said to be part and parcel of its actuality. This truth, Hart holds, clearly thus presents an alternative account of *difference* that does not

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<sup>59</sup> Hart writes that although many theologians, especially in modern Western dogmatics, is cautious of using the term “persons” (as a result of the supposed “imprecision” of the word, the different connotations thereof and the fact that the modern understanding of personality is far removed of that which could sensibly be said about God), the terms routinely offered as alternative (such as Barth’s “mode of subsistence”) invariably “fail to reflect the immediacy, livingness, and concreteness of the scriptural portrayal of God, either in the Old Testament or in the New”. For Hart, “John’s account of the prayers of Christ – heard as addresses to the Father, but also clearly as response to the Father’s mission to the Son – are resonant with both an intimacy and a distinction of voices, of places of address, that makes ‘persons’, for all its inadequacy, an indispensable word” (Hart 2003:170-1).

involve chaos, violence, opposition and strife (as is the case in the Dionysian understanding thereof), but, in actual fact, speaks of infinite joy, delight, peace and beauty (the everlasting motifs in God's glorious life as Trinity) – which indeed then serves as foundation for the fact that creation can be deemed to be something “other” than God, existing, in its distinctness, as “tabernacle and ... manifestation of his beauty” (Hart 2003:177, 181).

### 6.3 Creation

According to Hart's thought, God's free and loving act of creation, *ex nihilo*, of something “other” than himself, naturally and necessarily stands at the heart of the *analogy of being's* assertion of a continuity-amidst-discontinuity between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation (as discussed throughout this thesis). The account of God's creation of the world and the analogical relationship that is established thereby, thus constitutes a vital part of his *dogmatica minora* at large, as will indeed become clear in what follows.

For Hart, the astounding feature of Christianity's conception of creation, which veritably sets it apart from all other traditional creation myths, and also then indeed serves as the foundation for the truth of the *analogy of being*, is the fact that it does not regard the coming into being of creaturely existence as some sort of (necessary) emanation from God's *being* – as “a cosmic sacrifice ... (a) cosmic ventry ... or (an) effluence of divine substance” (in which an “eidetic or substantial continuity” between the creaturely and divine essences would necessarily have been established); but truly as an unoccasioned and deliberate making (“Let us make ...”), out of sheer nothingness, of that which is “other” than God; and consequently, as “a kind of play, a kind of artistry for the sake of artistry”<sup>60</sup>, an invention out of “delight”, an “expression” of love, a “gift” of grace, something “receiving all, while meriting nothing” (Hart 2003:251, 257).

This fact, Hart contends, that creaturely existence, in the Christian telling of creation, does not transpire as a *lesser* instance of the divine *eidōs*, but truly

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<sup>60</sup> A notion, according to Hart, brilliantly expressed by the figure of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs, at play like a child before the eyes of God (Hart 2003:251).

come to *be* as a freely and needlessly devised work of art, an *eikon*, that is gratuitously and joyously wrought, *ex nihilo*, and “handed over” by its artist (whereby it is clearly distinguished from the “creative *being*” from which it stems, while obviously remaining intrinsically connected thereto), is exactly then the reason why it, in its distinct *being* (with its “gracious marriage of ‘essence’ and ‘existence’”) can be said to exist as an ontological analogy of the infinite and utterly beautiful life of the divine (Hart 2003:131, 251, 307). For, Hart holds, in not being a negation of God’s infinite and sufficient existence, creation, in its positively and joyously determined “moment of being”, can veritably only ever jubilantly “tell of”, point to and participate in (what can be deemed as) “infinite proportion ... ever yet greater magnitude, ‘quantity’ and beauty”, from which it stems, and on which it depends for its initial and continual existence, being utterly groundless in itself (Hart 2003:251, 300).

Hart writes:

Precisely because creation ... is other than the dynamic life ... of God ... precisely because creation is not part of God ... precisely because it is not ‘substantially’ from God, or metaphysically cognate to God’s essence, or a pathos of God, is it an analogy of the divine ...

(Hart 2003:158)

It is thus indeed within Christianity’s unique telling of God’s act of making, according to Hart’s thought, where it is held that creaturely existence is needlessly and joyously brought forth *ex nihilo* as something other than God’s infinite and sufficient essence, that the truth of a similarity-amidst-discontinuity (or *similitudo* within *maior dissimilitudo*, to use Hart’s wording) between the creaturely and divine “moments” of being, as beautifully encapsulated and expressed by the principle of the *analogia entis* (and explained throughout the thesis), is illuminated and everlastingly affirmed.

Following Von Balthasar’s thought (as held in the fourth chapter), Hart then stresses that abovementioned necessarily leads to a vociferous assertion that the beauty that transpires in God’s elated act of creation truly expresses, reflects and

participates in the glorious splendor and joy that marks the infinite and abundant life of the Creator God, who, as Trinity, “*is beauty and infinitely beautiful*” (as Gregory the Theologian originally remarked) (Hart 2003:251-3).

Creaturely splendor, Hart holds, far from standing in opposition to the beautiful life of the divine (as believed by the “religious dualist”), can indeed thus be said to be a proclamation of divine beauty – “a shining fabric of glory ... whose inmost truth is its aesthetic (analogical) correspondence to the beauty of divine love, as it is eternally expressed by the Trinity” (Hart 2003:252). Hart notes that, when reading the account of creation as described in the first chapter of Genesis, it is seen that God recurrently identifies that which He had willfully brought forth *ex nihilo* as “good” (as He himself, indeed, is primordially and infinitely good) – an affirmation, in his opinion, which first and foremost sounds as an aesthetic judgment, and continues to ring true throughout the ages (Hart 2003:253-4). Creation’s beauty – Hart (turning to the words of Hillary) holds – can thus undeniably, in its distinct moment of being, be seen and understood to be the reflection of the “God who is all beauty”<sup>61</sup> (2003:252, 254).

In order to explicate and expound on this idea that creation transpires as something other than God – in analogical correspondence to the life of the divine (as the *analogy of being*, according to proper proportionality, holds) – and as such, wondrously reflects the Trinity’s infinite and joyous beauty, Hart turns to two metaphors (complimenting the image of God as artist and creation as artwork), which, as will be seen, indeed effectually and rather poetically expresses what has been said above, as well as in the previous chapters.

The first metaphor Hart uses to describe and explicate creation’s correspondence to God’s beautiful *being*, is then that of “cosmic music” – an “image”, Hart writes, that can be seen as an “especially happy way of describing the analogy of

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<sup>61</sup> This indeed then exquisitely explains why the beauty of the world is experienced as a “mysterious inexhaustible well of delight”, which “pleases the sight”, “induces desire” and does not “allow those touched by it to belong to themselves”, as said in Chapter 2.

creation to the Trinitarian life”<sup>62</sup> (Hart, 2003:276). According to Hart’s thought, it could thus be said that creation, in its created “otherness”, joyously resounds as a newly composed “expression (and) inflection” *on* the eternally rich and beautiful melody belonging “to the dance and difference, address and response, of the Trinity” (2003:276).

Hart holds that the best manner to explicate this proposition is by turning to the magnificent opuses of Johan Sebastian Bach – who, in his opinion, can undeniably be deemed to be the “greatest of Christian theologians ... the most inspired witness to the *ordo amoris* in the fabric of (creaturely) *being*” (Hart 2003:282).

Hart writes that it is indeed in Bach’s music, as nowhere else, that the potential “boundlessness of thematic development becomes manifest”; where it is perceived “how a theme can unfold inexorably through difference, while remaining continuous in each moment ... upon a potentially infinite surface of (variation)” (Hart 2003:283). Unlike, say, Wagner’s compositions, that consist of endless motivic reoccurrences – synthetic, rationalized and sublated leitmotifs<sup>63</sup> – Bach’s composition abounds with “motion”, as all thematic content is submitted to “the irreducible dissemination that fills it out” (2003:283). In Bach’s music, he writes, each note is indeed not a necessary occurrence (imbibed out of that which precedes it), or mere mechanical repetition, but an unforced and unnecessary, yet wholly fitting, harmonious, and indeed beautiful supplement – veritably making Bach’s compositions the “ultimate Christian music (which) reflects as no other artifact ever has or could the Christian vision of creation” (2003:283).

Just as is the case in, for example, Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* (wherein a simple aria from the *Anna Magdalena Notenbüchlein* is stated, only to be displaced by a

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<sup>62</sup> Hart writes that although there is a long tradition, stretching from Pythagoreanism to Neoplatonism, of seeing creation as a “*musica mundana*” or “*harmonica mundi*”, this image can indeed be held to be especially fitting within Christian theology – and its understanding of creation – as will be seen in what follows (Hart 2003:275).

<sup>63</sup> Which, according to Hart, can be seen as an audible expression of a quintessentially Hegelian logic, where *all* (including creaturely existence as well as the divine or *Geist*) is subsumed in one univocal, monotonous existence (Hart 2003:283).

majestic sequence of thirty variations composed on its bass line), or his “shatteringly profound” *Ciaccona* at the end of the second *Unaccompanied Violin Partita* (where an initial theme of only four bars is reborn in sixty-four variations, passing through the minor, through the major and back to the minor again), the beautiful and infinite life of God, Hart writes, can indeed be seen as the “theme” on which the “polyphony” of creaturely being, in its utter uniqueness, is raised up as a glorious analogical expression (2003:283-285).

Another metaphor Hart subsequently uses to explicate the way in which creation, and the beauty it encompasses, come to *be* as ontological analogy of the glorious life of the Trinity, is that of *speech* or *discourse*. Hart writes that, in the most elementary terms, all that has been said above (and is encapsulated in the *analogy of being*), can be summarized by stating that “God speaks God, and creation occurs within that speaking, as a rhetorical embellishment, a needless ornament” (Hart 2003:291). According to Hart (following the thought of Hamann in his *Aesthetica in nuce*) God can indeed be thought of as the “mighty orator” and the “poet at the beginning of days”, who speaks the “discourse of (creaturely) *being*” into life – neither as a mere reiteration of the beautiful “words” belonging to God’s infinite existence (in which case it would have been mere “tautology”), nor as a great silence, destitute of any speech at all, but indeed as newly devised poetry, needlessly articulated, *ex nihilo*, as an “endless sequence of beautiful turns of phrase” (2003:292).

This, Hart writes, does indeed not mean that “God and world constitute between them a single order of content and explication”, but rather that the relationship between “the infinite plentitude of God’s Word and the flowing measures of creation’s loquacity” is truly that of an “ontological analogy”, as stated in the *analogy of being* (Hart 2003:294,97).

In a passage, wondrously entrenched in the logic of Thomas, Przywara and Von Balthasar (as stated throughout the thesis), Hart explains:

Creation’s words are analogous to God’s eternal utterances of himself because in their restless dynamism of essence and exposition (or

*essentia* and *esse*) ... they reflect under the form of a finite and complex synthesis the perfect and simple convertibility in God of essence and expression (*essentia* and *esse*) ... It is this notion of a transcendent origination of *being's* expressivity that allows for real difference, a real "digressionism" ... An 'expression' bound entirely to its own immanent force express nothing but its own expression – express, that is, precisely nothing ... True expressionism ... is possible only if there is that moment that allows it to differ, to be at once a new word and an act of disclosure ... To see creation thus as an expressive surface reflecting God ... is (indeed) not to discern a continuity without analogical interval between God's knowledge of himself and his 'reprise' of that knowledge in what He creates. God is the supreme rhetorician. As opposed to the mechanistic monism of Spinozan expression, Christian thought makes room for the thought of expression as deferral, as writing, transcription, mediation, and dissemination; it is the divine distance (this transcendent presence to) creation that makes the world an inflection of the eternal Torah, the writing that the Logos comprises as difference.

(Hart 2003:295)

In this passage, Hart thus beautifully accentuates the fact that the relationship between God and creation (effectually exemplified by the image of an orator or poet and the words that are uttered, or written, by him or her), can, logically speaking, never entail ontological identity (given that creation would then simply have been an instance of sheer nothingness). This relationship should indeed thus, in complete opposition to any identist (univocal) system, or dualist system (which as shown, pretty much amount to the same as an identist system, as creation, as pure negation is submerged into the *being* of God) be seen as a true and proper analogical correlation (according, indeed, to proportionality), where creaturely existence, with its own positively determined *being*, marked by a distinctive "finite and complex synthesis" of *esse* and *essentia* (whereby it is forever differentiated from the *being* of the divine), "expresses" the truth, glory and wondrous beauty of the one from whom it stems (whose *esse* and *essentia* are

one and the same thing, as Thomas and Przywara emphasized) and naturally depends on for its initial and continual *being* (being groundless in itself<sup>64</sup>). According to Hart's thought it could thus be said that the "words" uttered by God, in *not* being God, speaks of God, and indeed therefore resound, in their distinct occurrence, with the beauty of the One who initially and definitively speaks "himself", and also declares his "words" to be wholly good.

In utilizing the imagery of beautiful music and poetic discourse, and conceiving of creation as an "inflection" (on God's infinite symphonic theme) and as spoken "expression" (of the God who is the "mighty orator" and "poet at the beginning of days"), Hart thus indeed brilliantly (and quite beautifully) exemplifies the way in which Christianity (guided by its understanding of God's act of creation, as a willful and joyous making, *ex nihilo*, of something "other" than Himself) can fashion (what he then, in accordance with Thomas, names) "proportional analogies" between the distinct "proportions" of creaturely existence, and the "infinite 'proportion'" from which it stems (as described throughout the whole thesis) (Hart 2003:300, 303). This indeed then leads to a confident declaration that the beauty of creation does not stand in opposition to the glorious existence of God (as those enthused by *iconoclasm*, *asceticism* and *futurism*, as well as the Nietzschean postmodernists profess), but in actual fact, in its "differend" *moment* of existence, transpires as "reflection" and "echo" of the splendor, joy and above all beauty that marks the everlasting *perichoresis* of the Trinity (2003:296).

Hart writes (by making use of the words of Maximus and Bonaventure):

(Given the analogical correspondence between the creaturely and the divine, God's goodness and beauty) radiates from all created things, and are seen in all of creation's weights, measures and proportions. Thus every creature is a vestigium of divine beauty, in ways too marvelous to calculate or 'reduce' ... (C)reation's rational coherence speaks of the eternal ratio of God; the essences of things (are) ... free

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<sup>64</sup> Creation's groundlessness is exquisitely exemplified by using the metaphor of language, as it could be held that *what* the "word" of creation says (its content), does not necessitate *that* it is said.



expressions of love and delight ... together hymning the glory of their creator. It is the overwhelming immensity and variety of created beauty, the sheer eloquence with which creation proclaims divine glory, that 'corresponds' to God. Created *vestigia* are divine locutions in an endless and bewildering array of different inflections; and from their image one (indeed) receives an image of, share in, and impulse towards that delight that belongs to God ... Creation imitates and expresses God, as every rhetorical excess express the rhetorician.

(Hart 2003:309)

Hart, clearly following the thought of Przywara and Von Balthasar, nonetheless then warns that all this talk of the magnificent wonder of an analogical correspondence between (the beauty of) God and the (beauty of) creation would have been quite futile without the *form* of Jesus Christ. For Hart, it is indeed solely due to the fact that the everlasting, ever-beautiful "truth of God", Jesus Christ, assumed human form and became a ladder "restoring the broken ladder of Adam" that the soul can "enter into and delight in the glory that creation makes manifest" (Hart 2003:317). Christ, Hart holds, "the Logos and measure of all things", is therefore (as Von Balthasar also says) the One who calls all analogy forth; the One who truly shows the propositions, forms and bounty of creation (as discussed above) in their truest light (2003:17).

In a time of sin, Hart writes:

God himself, who imparts the theme of creation, must give the theme again, must himself restate his supreme rhetoric, which comes now in the form of a servant.

(Hart 2003:317)

## 6.4 Salvation

Hart's understanding of sin<sup>65</sup>, which evidently resembles Von Balthasar's (as explained in the fourth chapter), is that of a vile disposition within human consciousness, wherein creation is not conceived of as a "gift" of grace out of the hand of God, which, as such, exists as analogy of (and before) the infinite life of its creator, but, conversely, as an enclosed, self-sufficient and autonomous *totality*, that belongs to, and is ferociously ruled by the (supposed) sovereign and all-powerful godhead that is humanity (Hart 2003:298, 346). The sequence of sin, according to Hart's thought, thus involves humanity, wrapped up in self-pride and narcissism, willfully turning their gaze (and desire) away from God, towards themselves, and fabricating the most "radical kind of interiority, a boundary of inwardness" – which indeed then leads to a world of thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities and powers; a world of "violence and privation"; a world of death<sup>66</sup> (Hart, 2003:286, 326).

It is then amidst this (self-inflicted) tragic and violent state of affairs, where the soul, as Anselm said, is rendered "unable (and unwilling) to see the beauty of God, to hear his harmony, to perceive his fragrance, to taste his sweetness", that God (everlastingly<sup>67</sup>) chooses to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to re-reveal, re-affirm, restore and definitely accentuate the truth of creation's existence, by, in fact, becoming man (Hart 2003:320-1, 338).

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<sup>65</sup> Something that he does not explicate or develop in a systematic manner, yet alludes to throughout his book.

<sup>66</sup> The sinful state of creaturely existence, as comprehended by Hart, thus clearly resembles the violent and strife-filled, hyper-immanent Dionysian reality described (and subscribed to) by Nietzsche and his disciples – something which Hart readily acknowledges. He, in fact, notes that it could be argued that, for example, Foucault's portrayal of the "complexity and inventiveness of (the will to) power" (in a work such as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*), is as close as one could possibly come to a comprehensive description of sin "in theological terms" – the difference being however, that Foucault does not pass judgment on power and violence, but rather sees it as the ultimate truth of reality, the "wellspring of life" (Hart 2003:69).

<sup>67</sup> Hart believes that the story of Christ's incarnation "belongs eternally to the life of God" and that no contradictions thus exist between "the course of the Son into the world" and the "eternal being of the Son as God". For, he writes, God's *being* is indeed always a moment of "self-outpouring, manifestation, an act of abasement and exaltation in the single gesture of the 'gift'" (Hart 2003:324).

For Hart, the wonder of the Gospel is truly that Jesus, the “very form of God”, is incarnated *in the flesh* (Hart 2003:320). Hart writes that, contrary to what Nietzsche and his followers believe, Jesus is indeed no “gnostic savior”, no “impalpable and unworldly redeemer ...”, but the Lord who embodies a “real and imitable practice”, and saves “precisely because he can be grasped ... precisely because of his concrete particularity, his real and appearing beauty” (2003:320). The fact that Jesus is fully God, and also fully man, without contradiction, accordingly then leads Hart (together with Von Balthasar) to declare that He can be deemed to be the *analogia entis* in person – the definitive “ontological analogy between God and creation ... who allows all the measures and proportions of creation to speak of God, as instances of his glory” (Hart, 2003:325).

Hart writes:

(T)hat he is the true measure of creation, the form that reveals the pleasure of the Father in all his works, and the shape of what is pleasing to the Father – is made clear by the boundlessness of the analogical response he enfolds in the perfect intensity of his form. If creation is an (analogical) address, a divine discourse of glory ... then ... Christ, in (his) boundless ramifying fecundity, constitutes the analogy that perfectly corresponds to the truth of the world – and so (then) restores to the world its truth.

(Hart 2003:329)

As the *analogia entis* in person, Christ indeed then retells – in the very motion and content of his life, lived both towards the Father and towards creation and his fellow humanity – the true story of creation (and its analogical correspondence to God’s infinity), that has been lost in the seemingly endless epic of sin (Hart 2003:325). In the incarnation of Jesus, Hart holds, God thus brings about a return of the gift that He has given in creation, by Himself giving it again, anew, “according to the Trinitarian dynamism in which donation and restoration are one” (2003:325). Turning to the words of Athanasius, Hart writes that the *Logos* becomes flesh, in order to “reestablish the original pattern” after which the world was crafted, and also to “impress” again on creation the wondrous and infinite

beauty of the divine image. Christ, as God's supreme beauty, the *perpulchrum* as Bonaventure would say, therefore restores and reveals the truth of creaturely beauty by making the beautiful "yet more beautiful", and the exceedingly beautiful "more beautiful still" (2003:320).

According to Hart's thought, Christ, as the definitive rhetorical expression of God (and thus the *analogia entis par excellence*), can therefore be said to effect a "recapitulation" that refashions creation after its ancient goodness and splendor (Hart 2003:325).

By making use of the words (and logic) of Irenaeus, a theologian who, next to Paul, can be deemed to be the most illustrious writer on the theme of salvation by recapitulation (Hart 2003:325), Hart writes:

Christ's life effects a narrative reversal, which unwinds the story of sin and death and reinaugurates the story that God tells from before the foundation of the world – the story of creation he wills, freely, in his eternal counsels ... Christ's life effects an ontological restoration of creation's goodness; it is because the rhetoric of his form restores the order of divine rhetoric that creation properly is, that created *being* is redeemed in him.

(Hart 2003:325)

This fact, that the incarnation of Christ can be seen as the Father's "supreme rhetorical gesture", in which all that has been said and continue to be said regarding creation is wondrously brought to light and given its perfect emphasis, is then, according to Hart, exquisitely accentuated in the Gospels' (and especially John's) accounts of Christ's miracles: "The healing of infirmities, the raising of the dead, the feeding of the hungry, even the transformation of water into wine" (Hart 2003:327). Hart writes that Christ's miracles are not to be seen as attempts to manipulate or negate the order of creation, nor as mere "tricks" intended to provoke amazement, but rather as acts that signals a definitive affirmation and restoration of creation's original and true beauty and goodness. For Hart, Christ's miracles "repeat God's gift of creation by imparting joy in the good things of the

world – food and wine, fellowship and rejoicing, life and vision and health – to those in whom such joy is lacking”, and thus indeed testify to his nature as the “creative Word who can command and restore all the words of creation” (2003:327-8). Christ’s miracles (like all aspects of his life and ministry), can thus be deemed to constitute a *semeiosis* that restores the “original *semeiosis* of the world ... the language of glory” (2003:328).

According to Hart (again clearly following Von Balthasar’s thought, as held in Chapter 4) it is then exactly as a result of the fact that Jesus’s life reinstates the true pattern of creation – which evidently stands contrary to the lie of *totality* and its “romances of power, its hierarchies of truth, its prudential violences and narrative of rights, rules and possessions” – that He is ultimately brought to the cross (Hart 2003:326). The beautiful form of Christ’s life, as the *analogy of being par excellence*, can indeed only ever appear as the definitive “offense” to a world order enslaved and blinded by sin, who, then, in a desperate and frantic attempt to dispel the *unbearable* truths of his beauty and peace, pronounces, as retort, the only word it truly knows, namely *death* – as brilliantly illustrated by Pilate saying unto Jesus: “Knowest thou not that I have the power to crucify thee”<sup>68</sup> (2003:333).

Christ’s beautiful form – given to creation as a gift – is however a truth, according to Hart, that cannot ever be made undone, and, in fact, becomes “more manifest in being suppressed” (Hart 2003:333). Even though Jesus is thus indeed crucified (something He willingly and obediently endures with “inexhaustible love”), the cross, as “final word ... pronounced by the powers of the age in defense of their rule ... the final argument whereby ... totality claims for itself foundation as old as the world”, does not have the ultimate say – for after the violence of the crucifixion, the “final drama enacted by *totality*”, which, as the Gospel of John

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<sup>68</sup> Hart, understanding Christ’s incarnation according to the principle of recapitulation, and committing himself to a *non-tragic* reading of the gospel, is very adamant on the fact that the cross should always be seen as a “response of political power” to the revealed truth of God (2003:354), rather than a divinely imposed punishment required for the satisfaction of the “debt incurred by sin” (which would make God, in his opinion, “complicit in the violence of the world” (2003:360). “The violence that befalls Christ” Hart writes, belongs to our sacrificial order of justice, an order overcome by his life” (2003:371). This argument, standing against (the traditional reading of) Anselm’s “substitution theory” in *Cur Deus Homo* (see 2003:364-72), is one of the most controversial aspects of Hart’s book, and is indeed strongly challenged by someone like Francesca Murphy (see 2007).

makes clear, can be seen as the moment of Christ's glorification (where He draws all the world to himself), Christ is indeed wondrously brought back to life, in the flesh, by his Father; "he who was dead is – literally – not dead now"; and this, for Hart, everlastingly makes all the difference<sup>69</sup> (2003:322, 333-4, 391).

Hart writes:

... the infinite cannot be brought to an end by crucifixion, because it continues to be the gift it is even in surrendering itself ... even the cross, Rome's most 'persuasive' image of terror, is conquered ... (V)iolence shows itself to be inherently finite and exhausts itself upon the infinite as gift.

(Hart 2003:354)

For Hart, it is then of immense importance to realize that, in the resurrection, it is precisely the concrete form of Jesus, "in its proper beauty", that God "*desires* and calls back to life" (Hart 2003:333). Far from transforming Christ into some "symbol of religious truth", the resurrection, Hart writes, truly vindicates and imparts again the whole substance of Christ's earthly life in all its infinite beauty (as the *analogy of being* in person) – and it is then exactly this beauty, according to him, shining forth from (the resurrected) Christ, that brings about a different "ambit of vision", where *totality* is exposed for the lie it is, and the primordial truth of creaturely existence, as joyous gift, transpiring as glorious ontological analogy of the divine, becomes wondrously clear to see, for those (it should however be noted) who accept, and surrender themselves to this truth of Christ in faith (2003:337).

According to Hart, the "form" Christian optics must take, in order to see, through Christ, the primordial truth of all that *is*, is indeed then that of *faith* – which he understands as an acceptance of the truth of God's Word, and the surrendering of one's life (and hence one's vision) to the light shining forth from the risen Christ

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<sup>69</sup> At this point Hart's thought deviates from Von Balthasar's theology, in that he places his ultimate focus on Christ's resurrection (which, according to him, renders Christ's death void of any significance), where Von Balthasar (although also seeing the resurrection as all-important) continues to emphasize the importance of the cross (and the events of Holy Saturday), throughout his theology (see Oakes 1994:233-249) .

(Hart 2003:337). For Hart, in accordance with Przywara and Von Balthasar, the wonder of the *analogy of being* is thus intrinsically linked to a life of faith, given that it is only through an encounter with Christ, as the *analogia entis* in person, that the joyous truth of the world's analogical correspondence to the divine, becomes known<sup>70</sup> (2003:338).

Hart writes that it can thus be said that there is a “terrible fragility” to the truth that creation exists as analogical expression of the divine, given the fact that it, for the time being, is still only a “word among words” – imparted as a gift of faith – which, naturally, may be rejected (or even distorted or corrupted) (Hart 2003:338-9). There will however, according to him, come a day when the infinity of God will finally be made manifest for all (willing or unwilling) to see; when sin and the lie of *totality* (although already defeated in Christ’s death and resurrection) will no longer have any sway; and when creaturely existence will everlastingly be restored and affirmed, through the truth of Christ, as the analogy of the divine.

## 6.5 Eschaton

For Hart, it is of immense importance to understand that, even though the light of the eschaton evidently dawns with the event of the resurrection, where sinful humanity’s lies of *totality* is exposed, and the goodness, peace and beauty of creaturely existence is restored and re-revealed by Christ, as *analogia entis* in person, Scripture and tradition still speak of a definitive moment in history, when the Kingdom of God will ultimately irrupt into human history, and, so, *bring all to their true end* (Hart 2003:396). Hart emphasizes that this final eschatological happening should nonetheless not be seen as a (Hegelian) completion of the history of the world, but something that is “adventitious” – which “comes suddenly, like a thief in the night, and so fulfill no immanent process, consummates none of our grand projects, reap no harvest from history’s dialectic” (Hart 2003:396). The eschatological vindication of creation, says Hart, is indeed not a consummation of

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<sup>70</sup> Which, according to Hart – as Balthasar also believed – then informs and influences the way a believer lives. Morality, for Hart, is a “labor of vision”, and seeing the world as the analogical expression of the divine indeed thus leads, in his opinion, to an *ethic* where *all* is treated as the making of God, and every event, where death, violence and deprivation is at the order of the day, is opposed (Hart 2003:342).

history or the fruit of totality, but, in a moment of unexpectedness, “once again creation” – since the “gift remains simply the gift it always was”, although it is now given conclusively (2003:398).

The definitive coming of God’s Kingdom, according to Hart, can then be seen as the “beautiful surfacing” of the truth of creaturely existence (in its created particularity); humanity’s final liberation from the darkness of sin (and the lies of *totality*), to the light of God’s infinite joy and splendor; a revealing of the fact that God’s glory truly transpires in and through the “whole of created *being*” (Hart 2003:400-1). Such is indeed the hopeful promise of the eschaton and the “general resurrection”, Hart writes, that creation, in which the glory of God has primordially been given beautiful analogical expression, “is to be redeemed as such, as an aesthetic truth” (2003:401).

Christian eschatology, Hart holds, does thus not presage the negation of worldly existence, nor its incorporation into the *being* of God, but signals its ultimate restoration “as God’s creation”, existing as a wondrous analogy – as “likeness in difference” – of the divine (as was plainly the creator’s intention from the beginning, as Von Balthasar says) (Hart 2003:401). The magnificent message of the Kingdom, Hart holds, is thus indeed that “the good of creation is creation itself” without any need for any higher justification, seeing as it remains evermore, as Augustine writes, a great and beautiful “hymnody, with God as mighty composer” – an ontological analogy, which, in its distinctiveness, sings of the glory of its creator (2003:401).

Hart then holds that, as the eschatological interruption of the Kingdom constitutes an everlasting affirmation of creation, it also, nonetheless, involves a judgment that falls across all things, given that the vindication of the true history of creaturely existence (as expressed in the *analogy of being*), necessarily comprises the condemnation of all falsehoods standing against it (Hart 2003:399). The “language of hell”, Hart writes, therefore unavoidably enters Christian discourse alongside the wondrous evangel of the coming Kingdom’s peace and beauty (2003:399).



Hart, however, subscribes to, and promulgates the tradition of Christian thought that does not make a distinction between the fires of hell and the light of God's glory, and in fact interprets damnation as the soul's "resistance to the beauty of God's glory, its refusal to open up itself before divine love", which then causes divine love and beauty to seem as "an exterior chastisement" (Hart 2003:399). For Hart, hell is thus not a place that the loving God willfully bans sinners to, but a condition brought about by the sinful *self*, unwilling to accept the wondrous truth that God reveals, through Christ.

Hart writes:

Hell is the experience ... of divine glory not as beauty, but as formless sublimity; it is the rejection of all analogical vulnerability, the sealing off of the 'self' (or the cosmos) in univocal singularity, the 'misreading' of creation as an aboriginal violence. The 'fire' of hell is that same infinite display of *semeia* by which God is always declaring his love, misconstrued as the chaotic sublime rather than the beautiful, not susceptible of analogical appropriation ... it is the soul's refusal to become (as Gregory says) the expanding vessel into which the beauty of God endlessly flows. (E)xile is possible within the beauty of the infinite only by way of exilic interiority, a fictive inwardness, where the creature can grasp itself as isolate essence ... where the analogy of the heavens is not the transforming voice of God but only (thus) a mute silence ... and so a torment. Hell cannot serve as an objective element of the beautiful – a source of delight – because it is an absolute privation of form and quantity; it has no surface, nor even a shadow's substance; its aesthetic 'place' is the sealed outside of an inside. But destroyed by the infinite motion of Christ, it is now always to be consigned to the lake of fire.

(Hart 2003:400)

Turning in the last few pages of his *dogmatica minora* to Gregory of Nyssa's eschatology, Hart writes that it should nonetheless, even when speaking of the inevitability of hell, be remembered that the Christian God is a "God (that) is on

the side of the particular ... (a God that is on the side) of the ... lost", who eternally wills that "nothing be excluded from the good". According to him, one *can*, and in fact, *should* thus – in this "time of waiting"<sup>71</sup> – hope that each and all will eventually be redeemed from the history of sin, so that hell can truly be the *non-reality* it innately is (see Hart 2003:402-11).

As Hart's propositions in his *The Beauty of the Infinite* have now be examined, the time has come to return to the study's Research Problem and Research Question, as stated in Chapter 1.

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<sup>71</sup> As he describes this period between the *resurrection* and the *eschaton* in his book *In the Aftermath: Provocations and Laments* (2008:19)

## Chapter 7 – Conclusion

### 7.1 The Research Problem and Research Question Revisited

Prompted by voices such as R.S. Thomas, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simone Weil, this thesis commenced by contending that Christianity, throughout its long and complex history, has often been guilty of placing the realm of the divine too starkly against creaturely existence, which necessarily then results in the splendor evidently found in this corporeal world being seen as the vile antithesis to the goodness and beauty of God (a view that was then further considered, and developed, in the second chapter of this study, which introduced the field of theological aesthetics, and also investigated Christianity's traditional relationship to the aesthetic dimensions of life).

It was subsequently held that besides the fact that this dualistic cosmology arguably contributed to (post)modern Western society – unwilling to repudiate their earthly existence and disavow their bodily state – choosing to do away with the supposed transcendent realm by “inventing the death of God” (a notion further addressed in Chapter 5 with its focus on Nietzsche's and his postmodernist disciples' thought), numerous voices, from different faith traditions, had pointed out that the idea that God and the world exist in binary opposition to one another, surely contradicts orthodox Christianity's understanding of (God's free act of) creation, and the event of the incarnation, where God sent his Son to recapitulate the world, by becoming flesh.

It was then said that David Bentley Hart can be seen to be a theologian whose (aesthetic) theology, as presented in his book *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*, actively and overtly opposes any system of thought that puts God and creation over against each other (or subsequently do away with the transcendent realm all together), in holding that the beauty and splendor of creation should, in actual fact, be deemed to stand in ontological continuity with the beautiful life of the divine – a proposition he veritably grounds in the Thomistic principle of the *analogia entis*, denoting an analogical relationship between the *being* of God and the *being* of creation.

It thus accordingly seemed, at first glance, as if Hart's thought, reliant on the *analogy of being*, could possibly serve as the perfect resolution for the (problematic) dualistic cosmology that has arguably been present and prevalent throughout Christianity's history, as well as the consequent occurrence of a radical "immanentism" that sees the beauty of the world as the handiwork of *Dionysus* (without any mention of a transcendent realm whatsoever).

The *analogia entis* – far from being a simple solution, straightforwardly solving one of theology's (and metaphysics in general's) biggest challenges – has however undoubtedly been one of the most contentious and controversial theological notions throughout the ages (and especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it most recently rose to prominence), which evidently serves as clear warning signal that it ought to be approached, particularly in the work of a skilled and convincing rhetorician such as David Bentley Hart, in a meticulously informed manner (which naturally involves a comprehensive understanding of the formative conceptions thereof, as found, among other, in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Erich Przywara and Hans Urs von Balthasar).

Given the abovementioned – which serves as the *problématique* of this thesis, and can be encapsulated by saying 1) that there thus seems to be a serious need for a theology that does not negate earthly existence and somehow affirms creaturely beauty and splendor in terms of the goodness and beauty of God; 2) that David Bentley Hart believes that the answer lies in a theological aesthetics grounded in the *analogia entis* (as presented in his *dogmatica minora*); 3) yet that one should be cautious of an uninformed and uncritical acceptance of the *analogy of being*, given that many reservations regarding its validity and appropriateness has been raised – the research question was asked, reading as follows:

By taking into account Christianity's relationship with the notion of *beauty* throughout the ages (as presented by recent studies in the field of theological aesthetics), and inducting an enquiry into the invention, use and working of analogy and the *analogia entis* in Greek and Scholastic thought, as well as the innovative appropriation (and

critique) thereof in certain 20<sup>th</sup> century theological endeavors (especially also then concerning aesthetics), this study, guided and cautioned by the research problem stated, will ask if David Bentley Hart's employment of the *analogia entis* could indeed be seen as a valid, appropriate, responsible and beneficial manner of affirming an aesthetic continuity between God and Creation, and addressing the presumed problematic worldview of dualism, and the thought it gives rise to.

In order to answer this question, an investigation regarding the history and working of the *analogy of being* was undertaken, wherein the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Erich Przywara, Hans Urs von Balthasar, as well as Karl Barth, was comprehensively examined.

## 7.2 Invention of the Anti-Christ or Gift of God?

Ever since the publication of the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth's pronouncement – that the *analogy of being* is nothing other than the “invention of the anti-Christ” (as mentioned in Chapter 4) – has stridently knelled throughout the decades, and (sadly) remains, to this day, the very wording the *analogia entis* is most closely associated to<sup>72</sup> (White 2011:xi).

In the third chapter of this thesis, which investigated the reemergence of the *analogy of being* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was seen that the reason behind Barth's uttering of this contemptuous remark, ostensibly lies in his (eventual) realization (following years of quandary regarding the matter, as was explicated) that the proposal of an ontological analogy between the creaturely and the divine can only ever function – in the words of Thomas White – as a vile and heretical attempt to “domesticate the transcendence of God” and “distort the (importance of) revelation” and should accordingly be dismissed as an instance of *natural theology*, (potentially) serving as a treacherous tool in the hand of the devil (White

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<sup>72</sup> White notes that most studies that have been conducted on the *analogy of being* (and especially then Przywara's and Von Balthasar's use thereof) over the last couple of decades, was primarily instigated by interest generated by Barth's words (White, 2011: xi).

2011:10).

It can arguably be said that this judgment by Barth, intrinsically affixed to his (in)famous *anti-Christ-remark*, still serves as the most noteworthy critique that has been pronounced against the *analogy of being* – as manifestly seen by the fact that most writings on the matter, including Hart’s book, almost exclusively engage Barth’s words of contention. The question if Hart’s employment of the *analogia entis* (and any employment of the *analogy of being* for that matter) can be held to be a “valid, appropriate (and) responsible” manner of affirming creation’s goodness in relation to God (as the Research Question asks) is thus, in many ways, tied up with Barth’s verdict that it has only ever been a profane endeavor to equate the creaturely with the divine and bypass the need for revelation.

In this thesis’s investigation regarding the formative conception of the *analogy of being*, as found, among other, in the theologies of Thomas Aquinas (building on the thought of Aristotle), Erich Przywara and Hans Urs von Balthasar, it was interestingly seen, though, that none of these (original) thinkers ever (naïvely or shrewdly) endeavored to bridge the transcendence of God, or to nullify the need for God’s revelation, but, in fact, continually and overtly grounded their propositions in a rigorous differentiation between creaturely and divine *being* (given that *esse* and *essentia* are one and the same thing, and presupposes and necessitates one another, in the life of “the *First Being*, who possesses *being* most perfectly”, while they are divergent and contingent in creaturely beings) – which evidently makes “dissimilarity” the *first* and *definitive word* in their respective descriptions of the *analogy of being*’s unique working (as explicated throughout this thesis).

Przywara and (especially then) Von Balthasar – as shown – even then went as far as to say that it is *only* by means of the *analogy of being* that the transcendence of God is truly ever safeguarded in a proper manner, since dualistic dispositions, as sporadically found in Barth’s writings, paradoxically capsize God’s transcendence into a radical immanence, while the *analogia entis*, with its assertion of a similarity-amidst-dissimilarity between the very existences of creation and God, effectually upholds and accentuates creation’s positively

determined distinctness – even *in* the moment of continuity and similarity with the divine (an argument Hart would also then underscore and promulgate in *The Beauty of the Infinite*, as seen in Chapter 5) (White 2011:5).

Michael Hanby thus writes:

(The) entire point of the doctrine of the *analogia entis* (for these thinkers) ... (was indeed) to insist upon and protect the infinite difference between God and the world ... (for it is) by virtue of this infinite difference from the world that God is ... (held to be) intimate and immanently present to the world ... (as) something other to and different from (him) ... and thus somehow 'like (him)' (exactly) in and through this difference.

(Hanby 2011:341-2)

In the investigation of Przywara's and Von Balthasar's thought, it was furthermore also seen that the *analogy of being*, and its affirmation of an ontological continuity-amidst-discontinuity between God and creation, does certainly not (if understood correctly) stand in opposition to Christ's incarnation, but can, in fact, be said to be fully revealed, recapitulated and brought to fulfillment in this wondrous, all-determining event (which, in turn, necessarily presupposes the analogy of being). According to Von Balthasar's thought, Christ, as the "God-man" who is "the ultimate union of divine and created *being*", can even be held to be the *analogy of being* in person, the "concrete *analogy of being*", whose illuminating light – alone – allows a world, rendered blind by sin, to know and see the truth of creation's analogical relationship to the beauty and goodness of God (Palakeel, 1995:106-9; Howsare, 2009:64).

As a result of these findings – which can be encapsulated by saying that the formative conceptions of the *analogy of being*, as found in Thomas, Przywara and Von Balthasar, neither naïvely equate the creaturely with the divine, nor do away with the importance of the Christ-event – it could be contested (as Przywara and Von Balthasar, themselves, tirelessly had) that the proposition of an ontological analogy (primarily according to proportionality) between God and creation (as

captured in the Cajetanian term, *analogia entis*), does *not* stand guilty to the charges raised by Barth, and can arguably indeed thus be held to be a “valid, appropriate (and) responsible” theological principle, which functions, as Przywara originally proclaimed, as “gift” out of the hand of God.

Given the fact that Hart’s conception of the *analogy of being* is evidently inspired by the theologies of Thomas, Przywara and Von Balthasar, and it is then seen (in investigating his propositions in *The Beauty of the Infinite*), that he truly follows their thought at a hair’s breadth (by similarly holding that God and creation’s ontological similarity transpires *within*, and *because of*, their infinitely distinct “moments” of *being*, and only becomes perceptible in a sin-ridden world, trapped in *totality*, with the events of the incarnation, and especially then resurrection, of Christ, where creation is evermore recapitulated<sup>73</sup> (Bychkov 2005:663)), it can positively be asserted that his description (and subsequent use) of the *analogia entis* also stands impervious to Barth’s accusations (as he, himself indeed contends, as was shown).

For Hart (as for Thomas, Przywara and Von Balthasar), the *analogy of being* – far from ever equating the creaturely with the divine, or nullifying the importance of Christ’s incarnation and a life of faith – indeed illuminates the fact that the world is created, and also recapitulated, as a positively determined, distinct “moment” of *being*, which, solely because of this truth, truly stand in wondrous continuity *with*, and exist as beautiful expression *of*, God’s infinite glory and beauty – as he then eloquently elucidates in his magisterial *dogmatica minora*.

### 7.3 The Infinitude of Beauty as Expression of the Beauty of the Infinite

In Hart’s *dogmatica minora* (consisting of expositions on the themes of *Trinity*, *Creation*, *Salvation* and *Eschaton*) – which, as John Morrison notes, is certainly not “minor” in any conceivable manner (Morrison 2007:662) – it is indeed then seen how the *analogia entis*, as discussed throughout this thesis, brilliantly serves

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<sup>73</sup> Ellen Charry writes that in Hart’s *dogmatica minora* it is indeed exquisitely shown that creation (and the truth of the *analogy of being* that is established therein) does not stand in contradiction to Christ’s salvation, but that the two occurrences, in fact, “kiss” (Charry 2006:103).



as “speculative context” of, and definitive motif in, Hart’s fervent assertion that the beauty of the world, contrary to what the “religious dualist” and the Nietzschean postmodernist contest, *comes to be* as analogical expression of the infinite splendor belonging to the God “who *is* beauty and infinitely beautiful”, with or without creation.

According to Hart, the innermost, all-determining truth of creaturely existence, as seen in the telling of the Christian *evangel*, is indeed that it does not transpire as a negated instance of God’s *eidos*, but truly, *ex nihilo*, as something novel and “other” – complete, as Thomas, Przywara and Von Balthasar (in their expositions on the *analogy of being*) said, with its own “moment” of existence (where *esse* and *essentia* are differentiated from each other) – which results in the fact that it wondrously point to, express and participate in the infinite beauty of the divine, as an evident analogy (according to proportionality) of the Creator’s *being* (on which it depends for its initial and continual existence). For Hart, as shown, it is exactly also then this truth – standing against any dualistic (or “immanentist”) cosmologies – which is everlastingly re-stated and recapitulated (in a world where it has become clouded and distorted due to humanity’s sinfulness) in Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection, and which will one day, with the (abrupt) happening of the *eschaton*, definitively be affirmed and revealed (for all to see) when creation is finally rid of any rival words (claiming the world as *totality*).

Hart’s *theological aesthetic*, thoroughly reliant on the *analogia entis*, can indeed thus be seen to counter, and remedy, any dualistic thought that construes creation as the negation of the goodness of God; or the incarnation as the coming of a gnostic savior sent to save the faithful *from* corporeal reality; or the *eschaton* as the final obliteration of this world, so that the saved few can finally enter the realm of God; by ardently asserting that the corporeal world, in the *here and now*, radiates, in its very distinctness from God, with the glory, splendor and joy of the divine – evidently making earthly beauty *infinite* (as analogical expression of God’s *infinitude* that is everlastingly beautiful).

## 7.4 Concluding Remarks

In a world where dualistic cosmologies indubitably continue to abound, and modern humanity is regularly impelled (by “prophets” of the *Crucified* and *Dionysus*) to choose between the realm of God (which seemingly involves a *flight* from this world, and a negation of earthly beauty and pleasure, as R.S. Thomas, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simone Weil bemoaned), or the realm of ontic reality (which, contrarily, involves a fervent embrace of ontic existence, and its violences, at the expense of any transcendent reality), the *analogy of being*, as employed by Hart (especially in his *dogmatica minora*), indeed thus provides a fascinating and refreshing third alternative, where the creaturely and the divine are certainly not held over against each other (requiring humanity to somehow *choose* one or the other), but rather said to exist in a wondrous and aesthetic continuity-amidst-discontinuity (which results in creation and the beauty it encompasses, analogically expressing the goodness, glory and beauty of the divine).

The *analogy of being* (as indeed used by Hart), Michael Hanby writes, mediating between two “untenable extremes”, can truly thus be held to be immensely valuable in recovering an account of creation where it is not seen as a negation of the divine, nor as something devoid of any transcendence but as “a novel and gratuitous ‘surplus’ of *being* ... (an) abundance of goodness, truth and beauty, which is *not* God (yet) which is good (and beautiful) and ... ‘like God’ in its very difference from God” (Hanby 2011:373-4).

Although the *analogy of being* remains a controversial principle (by the very fact that it, as said, deals with one of the most fundamental questions of all, namely the “relation between God and creation” (Betz 2011:36), and is indeed still ignored, evaded and even opposed by many a theologian (especially in the Reformed tradition, where “dialectic (still) tends to have priority over analogy” (2011:44), a strong case could nonetheless be made that – if used correctly (as is seemingly the case in Hart’s theological aesthetics) – it veritably seems to function as a “valid, appropriate, responsible”, and especially also “beneficial manner” of affirming “an aesthetic continuity between God and Creation, and addressing the presumed problematic worldview of dualism, and the consequent

thought it gives rise to”, given the fact that it illuminates and accentuates an aesthetic continuity between the creaturely and the divine, whilst ostensibly not falling trap to a naïve *natural theology*, where God, the “First Being, who possesses being most perfectly” and creation, whose *being* is always a gift of grace, are heretically equated with one another.

As one of the main problems with the *analogy of being* (and debates surrounding its use) – in the words of Eberhard Jüngel – is that it is more often invoked, and also criticized, than it is “even remotely understood” (Betz 2011:35), the hope is that *this* thesis, in its own small and humble manner, will help in shedding some light on its unique (and indeed often misunderstood) working, and the way that it can potentially be appropriated in terms of a theological aesthetic (as seen in the work of David Bentley Hart), which, in turn, could possibly contribute in realizing Erich Przywara’s original dream, that the *analogia entis* would truly serve as the “point of departure of fruitful discussion” (Przywara 1955:177).

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