

# ANALOGY

## FROM THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL TO THE METAPHYSICAL

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(Received 17 September 2018, revised 29 September 2018)

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### **Abstract**

Analogical discourse allows our mind to understand the Universe by drawing resemblance between entities that seem to be strange one to the other. Going from analogy as a cognitive faculty, facilitating our thinking process, this paper attempts to reach the metaphysical discourse on being. From metaphors, symbols and mythical texts, it suggests reaching some criteria for the relationship with the Being, a relationship where 'analogia entis' would be the key. From being a link facilitating our understanding of the Universe we live in, analogy becomes a condition for our human-human relationships, since it's the key for empathy. This key also opens up the gates for a relationship with the divine, where resemblance and differentiation are at play to help us 'see' and live abundantly.

*Keywords:* analogy, metaphor, epistemology, metaphysics, mythology

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### **1. Introduction**

Language is used by humans to communicate their ideas, feelings, emotions etc. It's a tool that holds a vision of the world, a way of seeing it and interacting with it. Language is also a thinking tool. Thoughts are moulded within words, which are used to designate the entities of this world. Different languages reflect different visions of the world. Yet one way where all languages are similar is the use of comparisons, metaphors and allegories. A common thing between the mentioned figures of speech is the use of analogy, where one word usually used to refer to an entity would be applied to refer to another, either visible or invisible, concrete or abstract.

So why do we use the same word to designate multiple things? Why is our mind not confused, but rather uses this method to facilitate expression, communication and relation? Starting with analogy as a faculty of our human mind, this article seeks to understand this phenomenon, trying to go from the epistemological level to the ontological level. Can we use this phenomenon in

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human language and thought to know more about the mystery of existence in general, even more, the mystery of being?

## 2. Analogy - the use of the term

The term *analogy* was first employed in ancient Greek mathematics to designate a proportion of four terms  $a/b = c/d$ . In other words,  $a$  is to  $b$  what  $c$  is to  $d$ . This analogy, known as analogy of proportionality, is used in linguistic metaphors where, for example, we say that ‘intelligence sees’ just as the ‘eye sees’. In this case, vision becomes an analogue concept, where vision is to the eye what intellection is to intelligence. This form of analogy can be found in the definition of Aristotle, who writes that proportion (analogia) is the equality of ratios [Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, V, 6, 1131a31]. Note that Aristotle distinguishes between metaphorical analogy (The lion as king of animals) and properly proportional analogy (intellection and eye, which both *see*, with their *vision* being defined as degree of knowledge). Metaphorical analogy, thus, includes a level of dissimilarity, along with the similarities (or proportion) that make the metaphor possible to start with.

Another sort of analogy is that of attribution, where the same term is ‘attributed’ to different entities, through a *pros hen* relationship. (The term analogy of attribution will not be used even with Saint Thomas Aquinas, but the *pros hen* analogy of Aristotle was described as analogy of attribution in Medieval philosophy.) The classical example is that of the word health, which is used to refer to a healthy living organism, a remedy, or a sign of health: “Everything which is healthy is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, another because it is capable of it.” [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 1003a32] The healthy human being, or animal, becomes the source, the primary analogate, through which we can speak of healthy medicine (cause of healthy human being), or healthy urine (sign of healthy human being). Having explained this form of analogy, Aristotle proceeds to explain that, *similarly*, “there are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting-point...” [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 1003b6]. Being could thus be said of substance, affections of substance, or things proceeding towards substance. This is where many thinkers conclude that Aristotle is paving the way to what will be known as the ‘analogy of being’, a term to which I will come back later in this essay. What is important, for now, is the *vertical* aspect of analogy, where it becomes a fundamental stone in metaphysical language.

As an introduction to his book on *Analogy*, Jean Borella dissects the etymological meaning of the word. *Analogia* is a Greek word, composed from *logia*, which is a derivative of *logos*, and the prefix *ana*. *Logos* means word, discourse, thought, ratio..., while *ana* means elevation, from down upward, repetition, going backward, or in reverse order. These different meanings are grouped in the Greek philosophy to give, through the term analogy, the idea of a *relationship* between what is down here and what is above. This relationship is

only possible due to a resemblance (repetition), between what is down here and what is above. Thus, the image that tries to repeat a specific entity makes a discourse on this entity possible [1].

This is how a discourse on God becomes possible, which is precisely what Saint Thomas Aquinas will explain in his *Summa Theologiae* [Summa Theologiae, q.13, a.5]. Here, Aquinas discusses the names applied to God and creatures. These names can neither be used in univocity nor equivocity, which is why analogy becomes the balance, the *between*, where names used analogically allow us to have a glimpse of what God is - thus avoiding agnosticism - while admitting the ignorance of how things are in Him, on the perfect level, thus avoiding the presumption of equality between the creatures and the creator. In the words of Saint Thomas, “no name is predicated univocally of God and of creature”, while “names are not applied to God and creatures in a purely equivocal sense” [Summa Theologiae, q.13, a.5].

Besides this use of analogy, related to the order of knowing, Aquinas explains another use of analogy, this time on the level of being. This use of analogy describes a relationship that links the creator to the creature. This is what will be known as *analogia entis*, the analogy of being. This term, though not directly used by Aquinas, is one of the fundamental doctrines in scholastic philosophy, and as Przywara argues, one of the fundamental elements in the catholic faith [2]. It is based on the belief that creatures, as the act of the creator, hold in them traits of their author, and thus resemble Him. Aquinas points to this doctrine in the question on whether any creature could be like God. To this question, the angelic doctor gives a clear answer: “all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being” [Summa Theologiae., q.4, a.3]. Note that Aquinas makes sure to keep this resemblance in the category of cause-effect, where the effect reproduces (distantly) the form of the agent. The world is similar to God, then, not with a small difference of degree, but with an incommensurable difference of type. This use of analogy will be subject to a greater controversy, especially with the advent of the enlightenment philosophers, where any discourse on *being* will be questioned (see rejected), leading to the questioning of utility of Metaphysics itself.

For the moment, let us go back to the use of analogy in the order of knowing, examining how this *faculty* of our minds functions in order to situate us in the world. For this, it will be very useful to examine the use of analogy in metaphors and in the symbolic stories of mythology.

### 3. Metaphors and symbolic analogy

*Metaphora* is the Greek word for transfer, from *metapherō*, which is to carry over. A metaphor is a figure of speech where a word is applied to an object or action to which it is not usually applicable. This figurative meaning necessitates that the mind apprehends a similarity between the use of the word and the meaning in which it is ordinarily used. This is where metaphors are

directly related to analogies. Take, for example, the metaphor of a *heart of stone*. In this metaphor, a double analogy lies. The first analogy is between the *heart*, biological organ in the body, and a psychological faculty, the one related to love, givenness, etc.... The second analogy is between this psychological faculty, metaphorically designated by the *heart*, and the stone. Saying that a heart is of stone means drawing some similarity between this heart and the stone. It means this heart is tough, rigid, and cannot easily change its form or be influenced by the environment. This heart does not easily let someone see its inside; it is not transparent. It's a heart that doesn't want or doesn't know how to love.

This abstraction shows similarities that the mind does not directly stop to consider, but that take the meaning upward (*the ana*, in analogia) to a level that was unseen before the use of analogy. To keep up with the example of the heart of stone, what does the heart mean in here? The image of the heart is used to designate the faculty of love and desire: we love, desire, long for, *from the bottom of our heart*, or *whole-heartedly*. The heart also designates intellectual faculties: we meditate in our heart, we know something *by heart*, and we *think* in our heart. These metaphors are based on the analogy between the heart, *centre of human body*, and the psychic pole that associates the aforementioned functions. This set of analogies is a symbolic analogy, where the heart symbolizes the centre of personality. This centre, in the west, is 'the place of feelings', whereas "traditional (oriental) civilizations see it as the place of intelligence and intuition" [3]. This similarity gives us more information, even if non-consciously, between the personality and the heart. Just as the heart has two parts (and the brain too, for that matter) that function together for a healthy body, the centre of a human being has to have the intellectual and emotional functions work together in harmony for psychological health. A heart of stone does not allow to be moved by emotions. It seeks to be purely rational, indifferent to the emotional faculties that give us a heart of flesh, a human heart!

In his work on *the Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricœur presents a progression of the metaphor from the semantic to the hermeneutic, where the used figure of speech refers to a higher level of reality by the proposed re-description of an entity [4]. To him, getting the message of the metaphor necessitates the perception of a conflict between the literal and figurative meanings. This encounter between two different things, like the heart and the stone, will create some sort of *tension* because of the apparent contradiction. Of course, the state of tension necessitates that the metaphor be new, where the brain is not processing it as it processes the other words designating usual objects. Saying that God is my rock might not trigger the tension of a Christian who usually prays the psalms, or at least is exposed to this image several times. However, this same image triggers tension in a fundamental Muslim mind that is not used to it. In one of the discussions I had the opportunity to entertain with some Muslims from rigid cultural background, they expressed to me how disturbing that metaphor was. Are we talking about animism in here? Is God an entity of this world to start with? Naturally, the answer is no, but this incompatibility in meaning is necessary to create the metaphor, where one reference is blocked (the

rock) with the benefit of liberating a reference from a higher, or deeper level. This level is from the dimension of *fiction*, a term by which Ricoeur does not mean the unreal, but the imaginative openness towards new dimensions of reality. Fiction allows a person to re-describe reality; it's a poetic imagination, found in poetry and myths, that opens up for new "regions of human experience that cannot be accessible unless with an analogical language, coupled with an apophatic language (which says what being is not)" [P. Ricoeur, *Synthese Panoramique*, International Balzan Prize Foundation, 1999, <http://www.balzan.org/en/prizewinners/paul-ricoeur/synthese-panoramique-frenchl-ricoeur>].

The Ricœurian approach to analogy and metaphors meets the writings of Gaston Bachelard, to whom the poetic language is a moment of tension, where two contradictory feelings (one that wants to stick to the concrete tangible reality, and one that wants to play, explore and grow) "immobilize time (...) getting the person out of common duration (and) pointing to an *immediate metaphysics*" [5].

This human capability of poetic language, Bachelard calls it poetic *reverie*. It is a poetic imagination that does not simply create images, but rather "un-forms the images given by perception" [6] to build new images. It is only after a rejection of the limited reality, the finiteness of sensible experience, that our spirit can create new images. But careful, creative imagination is not simple daydreaming where the subject escapes the responsibilities of reality into a world of fantasy. Creative imagination, found in poetic language, is a constructive faculty that reveals another dimension of our reality. It's the "function of the unreal (which) triggers a conflict between the act of conceptualization and the act of imagination" [7]. Art, which results from this faculty, is not a mimetic reproduction of nature, but rather a work of participation in the creation of nature, a nature called through the human spirit to continuous *becoming*, continuous trans-formation, and continuous glory. With the work of art, the human being enters a state of complicity with nature, where he embraces nature and refuses it at the same time. The artist embraces the connection with nature and recognizes the hidden traits of his humanity in it. At the same time, the artist refuses to limit nature to what is sensible, limited, even negative and resisting sometimes. Like the struggle of Jacob, the struggle with nature is one for the sun to come up with a new identity, a new name, a name that contains the divine, capturing it in a mysterious presence, the name of Israel. This human journey towards a higher meaning through symbolic analogy marvellously manifests itself in mythical texts, which is our next stop on the way.

#### **4. The mythical way - explanation of the mystery of life**

In *the Master and His emissary*, Iain McGlchrist explains how our brain is divided into left and right hemisphere [8]. This division was subject to misleading studies and opinions, where empathy and art would be the work of the right hemisphere, whereas mathematics and language would be tasks handled

by the left hemisphere. However, McGlchrist explains, some truth is behind this way of dividing tasks within the brain. It's that our left brain is concerned with static abstract concepts; its main function is to isolate ideas and categorize them, decontextualizing thoughts and using denotative language. The right hemisphere, by contrast, yields a world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected living beings in the context of the lived world. The two hemispheres are used into our tasks and are definitely needed to accomplish successful things in life. However, the western world, especially after the enlightenment, has been almost controlled by the left brain, which is growing at the expense of the left brain. Philosophers, and even theologians, were quite busy for around three hundred years with *demythologization*, seeking only what can be explained on a rational scientific level. (The term started with Rudolf Bultmann [9] but also Kant' *Religion within the bounds of bare reason* was of a high influence in de-valourising myths, where rationalism did not see in *muthos* any added value to the logos [10].) The mistake of the demythologization project was excess of rationalization. Like the grain in the sun without water, the human mind was agonizing from excessive reason. The Cartesian dubito, meeting the Kantian formula of the impossibility to grasp the numinal world, ended up by creating a culture of *excroissance* when it comes to our human rational dimension. (The term was used by Jean Baudrillard to designate death by overgrowth [11].)

This tragic development of things resulted in an abandonment of the mythical discourse. Suddenly, the only legitimate speech became the one with clear and distinct ideas. The only acceptable discipline was the one dealing with concrete, straightforward ideas. The only two ways to self-fulfilment became the True and the Good, but these two lost touch with the Beautiful, which ended up disturbing our human quest for happiness.

But while *muthos* seemed to give no added value to the logos, where most of the philosophical thinking takes place, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a come-back of the importance of mythical reasoning. It suffices to mention the Oedipus complex, a major element in Freud's psychoanalysis, in order to see the importance of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex in the revelation of our human nature. With the advent of psychoanalysis, psychology started to rely heavily on mythology in order to understand the human mind. Though sometimes revisited in a reductionist way, anthropologists and psychologists stopped seeing mythical language as a primitive, see illogical language, but rather as a pre-logical, richer and perhaps even more relevant language which brings us back to the hidden part of our humanity, our unconscious part that influences our lives and daily decisions.

For Bachelard, "every myth is a condensed human drama" [12] in that it reveals a hidden order of reality, not less real than the one that rational thought is used to deal with. Mythical texts are full of symbolic metaphors, where what is seemingly unreal (a talking dragon, for example) reflects a very important reality in disguise.

Paul Diel was famous for his psychological study of mythical symbolism, which he bases on the existence of a *super conscious*, the human faculty that both reveals and creates higher meaning through a “vague feeling that is more precise and certain than theoretical knowledge” [13]. The super-conscious is revealed by the symbolic images of divinity. It’s the power that harmonizes our human faculties and desires into a creative all. Freud’s mistake, according to Diel, was the confusion between the superconscious and the subconscious, which resulted in the reduction of symbols into pathological symptoms [13, p. 30-36]. For Diel, mythology, as the production of symbolic imagination, forms both the primitive and collective superconscious.

The myth expresses our human quest for a higher meaning, deeper than the sensible world. It includes the philosophical questions that directly follow astonishment in nature: where did we come from? Why are we here? And why is there something rather than nothing? The image of Oedipus, questioning his origins and seeking his real parents, reveals the human quest for our real identity, our origins and our destiny. His escape from his hometown reflects the fear that comes out of anger when our emotional needs go unmet. Oedipus discovered that his social-emotional dimension was at risk. On one hand, he might not be the son of his parents, and on the other hand, he might hurt them if the prophecy were to be true. In his fear and anger, he decides to leave. We are afraid of the lack of meaningful relationships, we are afraid of the lack of love, and most of all, we are afraid of the lack of truth!

To challenge this fear, Oedipus’ fight with the Sphynx reflects the battle to make ‘sense’ out of life, where sense means both meaning and direction. But our quest is not always smooth and easy. It is never clear and simple, since it was distorted by the sensual desires of a paedophile Laius, a father who is afraid of his disoriented desire. The fearful Laius will be afraid of being replaced by the new-born Oedipus, and thinking selfishly, he will bring up his own death, though delayed. Oedipus will come back, full of anger, and the prophecy will become self-fulfilling. The first fruit of a disoriented desire will kill Laius. But Oedipus does not accept to be a victim. He embraces his fate and takes the punishment for marrying his mother and killing his father, though the crime was done unknowingly. This is where he will be guided by his daughter into the holy ground of Colonus, where he would die a mysterious death, simply disappearing, but remaining as a blessing to the city in which he died.

Oedipus quest for self-knowledge reaches a culmination through an act of love: when the imperfections of life put us into situations where mistakes are inevitable, we must never accept to act as victims, but rather as heroes. Oedipus accepted to pay the price of his actions to cast the plague away from Thebes. He will thus become honoured by the gods, and his memory will remain a blessing to the place that received him. His death, however, will remain a mystery. There is no answer to the mystery of death, at least not in Greek mythology, but there is an invitation to savour the mystery of love, which gives abundant life.

Freud's Eureka, when he discovered the myth of Oedipus, was not just because he discovered the desire of a boy to his mother and his rivalry with his father. This *eureka* came to exist because the myth was alive. It was revealing a reality that was (unfortunately) only partially grasped by Freud's interpretation. The myth expresses the reality that makes us who we are as humans, mortal beings with anguish and hope, organized in a society, inevitably obeying some rules, and heroically challenging the obstacles to a better life.

But where could this better life be found? How do we translate the mythical message into a lived reality? And if myth and symbols reveal our human way of thinking, how can we go from the epistemological level to the ontological level?

## 5. From epistemology to ontology

Though the return of the myth helped thinkers reconsider the importance of imagination in science and creativity, and though it brought back our attention to what Balthazar calls the *way of beauty*, it still needs to be taken further in order to regain boldness to address topics such as essence, being, and God. In the *Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, Gilbert Durand, and though he praises the symbolic function and the imaginary axis of our human thought, concludes that this axis is a necessary illusion, a way to construct a purely human better world, discovering the transcendence within [14]. Is this all what analogical discourse could bring us?

Going back to the enlightenment ages, and since Kant judged it impossible to have any knowledge of the *numina*, speaking of essences became obsolete, and discussing issues related to God became something highly subjective, related only to taste and opinion. The western world started living into an one-dimensional culture. Analytic philosophy was becoming *The Philosophy*, and scholasticism became something that even faithful theologians started exchanging with a theology of praxis, with no room for metaphysics. A work like Przywara's treasure for the mind, *analogia entis*, would have to wait from 1962, the year when it was published in German, till 2014 to be translated into English, the most accessible language in our age. Of course, the work was judged very hard to translate, which is clearly reflected in the translator's notes, but the delay of a translation cannot be simply attributed to the difficulty of the topic. It's that analogy, or at least its use to reveal something from the order of being, was not a fashionable subject anymore. The only analogy that managed to be reinstated was the one related to poetic imagination, which was brilliantly studied by Jung, Bachelard, Durand, and many others since the mid twentieth century.

Undeniably, analogy starts in the order of logic and knowledge. The human mind thinks analogically. All our knowledge starts by experience, and we inductively build it into concepts and ideas. But induction is the act of the mind which joins different instances together based on some resemblance between them. The work of conceptualization is about placing entities into categories,



finding common general characteristics, which will belong to the concept. In a way, then, conceptualization is the result of a work of analogy, where differences and similarities are found. This is how the notion was proposed as a solution to the problem of the one and the many. Analogy is also a process, within inductive reasoning, where we can have a discourse on what escapes the order of the sensible. This is why analogy leads us to what I call *meta-sensible*, something beyond, yet starting *from* the sensible world. The question, now, is whether this meta-sensible can help us encounter the metaphysical, and if analogy can be used to know more about being, or more, if the knowledge of being is possible through resemblance between the finite being and the Eternal Being.

In the quest for the truth, the problem of human knowledge will naturally impose itself, since the study of the possibility of grasping the truth necessitates that we delve into the process of knowledge itself. We have no access to the existence of things unless by an act of knowledge. This is why philosophers are stuck in the metaphysical problem of relationship between existence and knowledge. As Przywara puts it, philosophers have been coming and going between a theory of being (ontology) and a theory of knowing (*noesis*) up to the point of creating a meta-ontic and a meta-noetics. This effort, however, is doomed to fail, since it oscillates between two terms that are independent one from the other. It's that the noetic and the ontic are related, yet differentiated, within a phenomenological structure which facilitates knowledge while allowing for differentiation. In this structure, everything is relational. The subject is necessarily in relation with the known object, while the latter is in a relationship with its environment as with the capacity of knowledge in the perceiving consciousness. Having this established, and to understand the relation between existence and knowledge, one must apprehend the two from a more complex picture, where all elements are in an intimate relationship, and where knowledge becomes an act of differentiation.

Our knowledge implicitly goes through a complexity that we don't even realize, but that exists nevertheless. Our consciousness is directedness towards the objects of the world, and the process of knowledge is an act of interaction between the human consciousness and the world. But to think the world is to give it a sort of unity, to see it globally, which is the task of our right hemisphere. This is where analogy draws things together in our mind, giving the world an identity, making it alive, which is also what we find in mythology. This identity is one related to a system, where our consciousness belongs too, as one of the elements forming the structure of the observed object. In order to know, then, the subject needs to pull himself out with an act of differentiation, which requires some transcendence, otherwise the subject would melt in the known objects.

To explain this point further, let us take the example of a person looking at a tree. Two differentiations must take place in this situation: 1) the differentiation between the subject and the tree, and 2) the differentiation between the tree and the rest of the environment that holds the tree. In the

second differentiation, there is a set, tree-environment, which we perceive, while being aware of the differentiation between the two elements. But the tree is not perceived without its background, an environment within which it is observable. Thus, this tree depends on the rest of the environment in order to be known, which in turn depends on the totality of the world.

Knowledge remains incomplete if it doesn't have the vision of a full set, a totality within which our consciousness observes specific elements. But this totality is not completely grasped by our consciousness (one doesn't see the universe while observing a star), so a part of the external information will not be grasped by our consciousness while observing the tree.

To come back to our structure, we find ourselves, in every act of knowledge, in front of four necessary elements:

- an external information, not completely reachable, which is the set object-environment;
- an exterior information, the reachable part of the set object-environment, and which is at the roots of the image we receive in our brain;
- an interior information formed by the image of the external object;
- our self, our *intimate interior*, which is different from the images received from the outside world, and which allows us to know that we are not what we perceive.

Whether one is idealist or realist, these four entities must be acknowledged as a must for any act of knowledge. Not all elements of this set, though, are totally known. The unreachable exterior and the undefined intimate interior are not completely revealed to the subject. The intimate interior, which is the self, is hard to define. I always start my philosophy courses by asking my students who they are. After they try to give me answers related to their family, their major, their job, etc..., which are all about situating themselves in the world, they give up on the answer, considering the question to be very disturbing. No matter why Socrates was executed, after setting the ultimate aim to be the knowledge of the self!

This knowledge of self needs to be revealed to us, within our transcendent dimension, which is why the scripture gives us the first description of humans as made at *the image and resemblance of God* (Genesis 1.26). It is through resemblance that we find our identity. The question thus becomes: what are we observing and what are we discovering? Is it just our resemblance to the world, which obviously exists through all common constituents of our physical dimension and the world (after all, we are made of dust and water), or is it a resemblance to something transcendent? And if so, where do we observe this transcendence? A higher act of knowledge is thus to be considered, which takes place within the relationship of a You and an I.

## 6. The I and Thou relationship

Just as the observed element is situated within the set object-environment, the observer, in the act of knowledge is within the set of I-and-Thou. This

relationship contributes to the act of knowledge through differentiation and similarity. On one hand, we all have something in common when we perceive an object. On the other hand, our perception of objects is not always the same. Other people perceive the world in different ways, and this difference helps the observer have access to different perspectives, and thus to a part of what was still hidden from the unreachable environment of an object. The thou “fills the horizon; (...) all things live in its light” [15]. This light does not simply enlighten the exterior universe, but also the interior one. I experience my intimate interior through intimate relationships with a thou, and I get closer to the mystery of human consciousness.

A word, in here, on the importance of analogy. It is the faculty through which I can have empathy towards others, by comparing their experience to mine, and thus concluding their emotional reactions, being able to put myself in their shoes. It is empathy that holds the key to intimate relationships. One doesn't know other people until he knows their pains and struggles; otherwise relationships don't get close enough to enjoy real intimacy.

Our image of ourselves, then, passes through the other. I cannot be anything (as spiritual, jealous, angry, or mean) as Sartre says, “unless others recognize me as such” [16]. This relationship with others makes me what I am. I am born as a result of a relationship, I start smiling in a relational setting, babbling, talking, walking... all my developmental activities find their fulfilment in a relational setting. And since the inner self cannot be grasped unless caught in action (whether cognitive or physical), I conclude that I can only know myself in a relational setting. “We live in a sleeping world. But when a thou whispers in our ears, a saccade launches people: the I is awake through the grace of a thou.” [17]

Within this intimate inter-dependence, the I discovers a fundamental characteristic of his, which is the lack of being. As much as we know we exist, we know that we ignore who we are, and this lack of knowledge is related to an ontological insufficiency. We are directed to the outside world, seeking a mirror to reflect our image. Narcis in us is seeking its lake, but an inert lake will only drown us in the foolishness of self-worship. We need a living lake that reflects our image, a dynamic being to which we can relate. This can only be accomplished through a relationship of empathy, where one is *present* to the other, a *presence* that shines in the aspect of *communion*, which is defined by Gabriel Marcel as a state of mutual givenness, where I give the other of who I am, and he gives me of who he is [18].

But unfortunately, relationships do not always build me. Some sort of relationships destroys me and give me degraded images of myself. This is possible because humans have the option of not choosing the good, not fulfilling their potential, and going against their nature. This is the mystery of free-will. Going into wrong relationships, where communion is not chosen, would then make me delve into the darkness of ignorance, creating a distorted image of self. Here is where the journey of self-discovery through relationships becomes a risk. This is where anguish takes place again into our psyche. Not just that the

other might deceive us, but also this other might disappear. Gilgamesh might lose his friend, Enkidu, and cannot do anything about it, no matter how much he cries, and no matter how determined he would be on the journey to get the miraculous plant of everlasting youth. But the risk is worth taking, since it helps me find the act of love, the power that draws the universe together.

## 7. Love and Being

Love is a power that reveals our being, since it draws us to the other and helps us take the risk towards communion, which fulfils us. This communion allows us to join the human movement in the quest of a reality that fulfils its being. It is the disposition to answer each other's appetite for being, this thirst for perfection expressed in our human quest. But human relations are incapable of reaching perfection. Though necessary for me, a thou remains incapable of satisfying my thirst for eternal happiness. The relationship I-thou that defines our being fails to help us attain perfection. Social life aims at perfection, but remains incapable of it, while understanding the other remains an unaccomplished task. Even empathy will remain imperfect, since I will never live the exact emotional situation of the other. Only the Absolute attracts my human actions, my thoughts, my love and my relational being. My being cannot be discovered unless I give it to another person. Consciousness is not reflected until it opens to the other person. But then this person will realize that he is not fulfilled; he discovers in himself a dual perspective, that of being and that of not-being. The realization that our being needs the other makes us realize that our being is unaccomplished. In the words of Edith Stein, our being is "a *now* between a *no longer* and a *not yet*. But by its breaking apart in its flux into being and not-being, the *idea of pure being* is revealed to us." [19]

Our being, along with our privation of being, places us in front of the idea of a pure eternal Being. This pure Being is Absolute, without any dependence, without any privation of being. Relationship with others is not secure, even impossible, without the idea of this Being. Even knowledge, which is impossible without the attraction of love towards the world, is impossible without the love of this Absolute. But is that Absolute, pure Being, an independent reality or the fruit of the human dream, the desire to reach perfection?

## 8. The Absolute - human idea or reality?

God, the pure Being, could be just the fruit of our dreams, our effort to euphemize a finite world. Modernity developed a new anthropology that admits the existence of a God in our human dreams but denies any knowledge regarding the Being of this God. Atheist or agnostic humanists suggest that this god is a human idea, a necessity for human thought and development, a dream of perfection that differentiates between humans and animals. Feuerbach suggests that the divine is the interior mystery of human nature. God would then be the mysterious interior of our being, the necessary illusion of a relation that

transcends our being, an illusion expressed in poetry and mythology. But this current of thought forgets that an illusion stops being one once we expose its illusionary character. We are then facing a clear alternative: either the illusion is something, or it is nothing. If it is nothing, we cannot have a discourse about it, and if it is something, its explanation cannot but be equivalent to its disappearing. Are our minds then doomed to stay in this ignorance, and what can we do to overcome it? This is where our duty as philosophers, seekers of Wisdom, would be to formulate some criteria for the possibility of Being. This Being has to be transcendent to our world, otherwise it would hold no answer to our need to overcome our finite being. At the same time, this Being must be immanent to our world, otherwise it would be completely ignored, since our minds cannot go beyond our finiteness to grasp it.

How could this Being, then, be at the same time transcendent and immanent? This is where the analogy of being becomes a solution. It's that a resemblance exists in the creature, and this resemblance is a mysterious presence of God in our being. This resemblance, though, cannot overcome in any way the incommensurable difference between the Being and us. Analogy of being implies that the resemblance between God and creature only exists in a way that does not even come close to the profound unlikeness between creatures and the creator. In a word, the only possibility to know God, to establish a relationship with God, goes through the analogy of being, which is why Przywara considers it as a fundamental element of Metaphysics.

Without this analogy of Being, symbols would become pure ideas, formation of the human mind. With it, a symbol becomes real; it becomes a mystical operator that can immediately link a person to the source of being. Analogy, through symbols, brings the presence of God. Everything becomes discourse and all echoes the truth about being and Being. Does symbolic analogy prove the divine, then? Not necessarily, but it invites to an openness, a humble receptivity, accepting that being secure does not mean controlling the truth with the mind, but rather humbly being open to receive it. One thing that idealism got right, though, is that this symbol must go through the human being to get a meaning. Nature is only linked to the divine through us, which is why the scriptures teach us that the disturbance in our relationship with God disturbed the order of creation altogether. But where is the man who can re-establish the link, making it possible for humans to meet the divine? Since humans cannot overcome finiteness and reach perfection, the only alternative would be in perfection meeting us humans. This is where the Symbol *par-excellence* becomes a must, the absolute link between humans and God, the man who is also a God, the empathic person who is fully human and fully divine. Philosophers might not be able to find this truth on their own, within their human finiteness, but being humble, acknowledging the fact that this reality can only be received, would place them in the state of waiting for a revelation, which is not far from coming!

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