

1

Analogy and the Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth

This is a densely argued and not always transparently clear investigation of the structure of Barth's doctrine of analogy. Frei probes the doctrinal and philosophical resources on which Barth drew, and asks whether he avoided the pitfalls associated with the idealist language that he appropriated for his dogmatic purposes.

The piece was not originally included in the Yale Divinity School archive of Hans Frei's papers, but Charles Campbell came across a typescript and supplied me with a photocopy. The text is undated, but I would tentatively ascribe it to the late 50s or early 60s: in style it resembles Frei's 1956 thesis more than any other of his writings; Frei quotes the English translation of Church Dogmatics II/1 (1957), but the introduction is phrased in such a way as to suggest that it was written before Barth's death in 1968; and Frei misattributes the phrase 'God-intoxicated man' to Herder (as he did in his doctoral thesis, unlike his correct attribution to Novalis in 'Karl Barth – Theologian' in 1969).¹ I am grateful to Hester Higton for preparing an electronic text from the photocopy. CPH 1960a.

Introduction

For the understanding of Karl Barth one will do well to bear in mind the word with which Herder once characterized Spinoza: He is a *God-intoxicated man*. Why, for example, does it appear to be so difficult for Barth and Bultmann to get into significant conversation, at least to the point of significant disagreement? In large part the answer is that the two men's 'scent for what is concrete and actual' is so utterly different. For Bultmann actuality is the present–historical, and any theology, concept of God, salvation etc. must in some sense conform to this actuality. Barth's thought on the other hand, reminds one vividly of the inner spring that one sometimes seems to detect in medieval proofs for the existence of God. They are rather arguments for the existence of creation. The reality of God is such that his non-existence is inconceivable. In seeking probative assurance of it what one really intends to do is to assure oneself that that exists, the non-existence of which involves no contradiction, either in actuality or in thought. God's existence is sure. The proof of his existence is but a way of seeking to explicate the fact, not nearly so certain, that something other than God exists. Barth's thought is deeply sympathetic to this sort of view, and both his advocacy of the ontological argument in the form which Anselm gave to it and his peculiar version of what is analogue and what is analogate in real understanding point in this direction.

I

Barth speaks of the proper analogy as *analogia fidei*. We may describe this as follows: Faith includes or is an act of apprehension (*vernehmen*) of a proper and unique object, God. This act of apprehension is undivided (contrary to Kantian dualism). In it the hiatus between thought as the content of consciousness (of which one may give a phenomenological description) and thought as the noetic form in which the object is genuinely present to thought, is overcome. One may describe the apprehension in two ways, once by way of the elements of rational consciousness, i.e. as a critique of reason, and once objectively as the judgment and intent concerning objective reality other than the thinking mind that grasps it. But these two descriptions must parallel each other since, as we have said, in apprehension there is no hiatus between object and apprehension. Insofar as we are speaking of consciousness, the unity of apprehension takes place within or prior to the duality of intuition (*Anschauung*) and concept (*Begriff*):

Human knowledge (or cognition: *erkennen*) takes place only in intuitions and concepts. Intuitions are the pictures in which we perceive (*wahrnehmen*) objects as such. Concepts are the counter-pictures with which we make these perception pictures our own, by thinking i.e. ordering them. In this way they and the corresponding objects can be pronounced by us.²

Insofar as we speak of apprehension as objective judgment, its unity takes place within or prior to the duality of perception (*wahrnehmen*) and thought (*denken*):

In that God has determined him and granted him to apprehend *God*, man is apprehender *generally*. Apprehension means taking another as such into one's self-consciousness ... to be capable of doing so ... Man cannot only posit himself, but in that he posits himself, he can posit something other and posit himself in relation to it as well as it in relation to himself ... We know that and how man apprehends ... By pure thought we cannot pass beyond the barrier of self-consciousness and thus cannot take another into our self-consciousness ... (on the other hand) what I merely perceive and have not thought remains something external to me without being taken up into my self-consciousness as something other. Only the *concept* of apprehension is divided ... The apprehension itself ... is the undivided act in which perception makes thinking possible and thinking makes perception actual ... As capable of such apprehension man is claimed in his

relation to God ... That he has *spirit* means, in man's case, first of all that he is capable, in this sense, of apprehension – first of all and above all of God; and because he can apprehend God, therefore and therewith the other in general.³

Faith, then, in one of its forms is apprehension: For be it noted that apprehension is apprehension of God's actuality as *this* proper being, or the one who bears the proper name God. The apprehension of *this* being takes place only in an act of obedience to the Word of God, in which that name stands revealed. Indeed apprehension is the cognitive form of this active obedience, faith. God is known in his Word, and the Word is given only in and to faith. When Barth speaks of *analogia fidei* he means first of all an identity of faith and apprehension, and he means further that in the act of the apprehension of God our words, intuitions and concepts are in a manner conformed to God.

Now we must add that by virtue of the fact that faith has as it were other forms than that of apprehension, the *analogia fidei* is more inclusive than the cognitive form in which we have here clothed it. For epistemological purposes, apprehension is identical with faith. Nevertheless, under other conditions one would have to say that faith as such and not simply our intuitions, words and concepts is conformed to God and to his Word.⁴ It is important to say this because it is only as an *act* of faith, that of apprehension of God, our words, intuitions and concepts are conformed to God. They are not so conformed in themselves:

That which makes the creature into an *analogon* of God does not lie within it and its nature, not even in the sense that God from within himself recognizes and accepts something within the nature of the creature as an *analogon*. Rather, what makes the creature into an *analogon* of God lies solely in the veracity of the object known analogically in the knowledge of God, and thus in that of God himself. Thus it pertains to the creature extrinsically in the form of apprehension and precisely not intrinsically.⁵

Analogy therefore exists only as an act of faith in or apprehension of God as object in which faith, our words, intuitions and concepts are conformed to God in the act in which he reveals himself in his Word (once again, in the *act* or *process* of faith and apprehension only! The analogy is therefore not so much in being as becoming). The conformity of analogy is not one of equality or inequality, identity or non-identity, but rather 'a similarity (*Ähnlichkeit*), i.e. partial correspondence and agreement between two or more different magnitudes which limits identity as well as non-identity.'⁶ We note

immediately that analogy-in-apprehension means that God is an object. He is not myself. He is other than I or we. He is recipient or acted upon, albeit in unique manner, as a unique object, i.e. as the only one who is subject *in toto* even in his being acted upon either by himself or by the creature. Furthermore, we must add that his unique objectivity for us is not his primary objectivity, that in which he is objective only to himself, to his subjectivity. The latter unity of objectivity and subjectivity *in* which he is himself (i.e. behind which there is no being and therefore no *fons Deitatis*) is his Triunity. To us creatures he is uniquely objective in a secondary objectivity of which the primary objectivity is the ground and possibility. In this secondary objectivity he is himself once more and nothing less than himself but this time in hidden form, as a creature in the creaturely realm. This means that God is present to us as object only in revelation, i.e. in that activity and work (*Wirken und Werken*) *ad extra* in which he is himself the act, in the Incarnation of his Word and in the effective

or of the Absolute (which is ‘after all’ simply correlative to its conceivability). Rather it signifies the positive, special presence of God who is

invisible and unpronounceable because he is not there in the manner in which the corporeal and spiritual world which he has created is there. Rather, in this ... world he is there in his revelation, in Jesus Christ, in the proclamation of his name, in his witnesses and sacraments and thus visible only for faith ... This means that he is to be seen only as the Invisible one, pronounced as he who cannot be pronounced – and both not as the inclusive concept of limit or as origin of our vision and speech but as the one who orders and permits ... and in free, gracious decision enables this our hearing and speaking.⁸

He is absent because he is present in a special mode, the mode of unconditioned freedom, as untrammelled Agent in one special act. Both presence in God’s specific mode and his absence according to our general understanding of presence may be partial synonyms for what Barth means by God’s hiddenness and revealedness. In any case the fact that God *veils* himself in his revelation excludes the notion of equality or identity (*Gleichheit*) between God and faith. The fact that he *unveils* himself in his revelation excludes the notion of total non-correspondence (*Ungleichheit*). Now this mysterious act of veiling and unveiling is not a quantitative balance (as the terms ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’ of God are sometimes taken to imply) between two magnitudes in God and (*per analogiam*) in man. ‘Partial correspondence’ means no quantitative division in God or man. The act of veiling and unveiling himself in revelation is a unitary act of the unitary God to unitary man, though it may only be grasped dialectically. But even the dialectic is teleologically ordered, for the gracious will of God to reveal himself is basic to his veiling as well as his unveiling of himself. The word ‘partial’ must be introduced then not for reasons of quantitative division in the relation between God and man but in order to grasp that our genuine apprehension and the conformity that takes place in it meet their limit in the very same act of God which enables them to come about in the first place. So the conformity or correspondence of faith-apprehension with its indirect object, God, remains partial.

Our exposition of Barth’s understanding of the term analogy may stop at this point for the time being. We shall have to develop it briefly later on in connection with the three concepts to which Barth has chiefly sought to apply the term. First, there is the analogy of our words and concepts and their object, God. Secondly, and analogy exists between faith and the Word of God. (In the chronology of Barth’s *Dogmatik* this analogy is actually prior to the other.)

Finally there is an analogy between God and man *qua* man, an *analogia relationis* which includes also a conformity of the rest of us to the man Jesus.

II

We must try now to set Barth's understanding of analogy into the wider context of his thought. We begin by reminding ourselves once again that he has equated apprehension with one distinct form of faith. It is that form in which God as well as the Word in which we grasp him appear as object. We have also heard that neither God nor man is divided. Obviously therefore God is subject even if it is extremely difficult for us to understand what that may mean. Man also is subject or agent, the irreducible agency

This difficult affirmation is absolutely central to Barth's thought. We may observe in the first place that it also relies upon a certain analogy between faith and God's Word. Faith now means not so much apprehension as subjective human participation in or presence to God, and thus a certain conformity of the human subject to the divine. God is not object toward faith in this sense but rather the openness of the Revealer in the revelation for the participation or presence of the believer. In other words God as subject is present to the believer. First God is fully present to himself in his own (state of) revealedness. This is the basis for his presence to the believer's subjectivity and then the basis of the believer's presence to God.

Secondly we may suggest that this affirmation, strange as it sounds, is so central to Barth's thought that we encounter it in the exposition of every doctrine. Because it is everywhere it seems to have no form basic to all others so that a certain (doubtless distorting) boldness is involved in searching for its fundamental formulation. We shall have to make just that attempt.

In the first place the affirmation that man's presence to God's revealedness is man's own act and yet as such the act of God, seems to be an echo of Barth's interpretation of a motif in traditional Christology. It recalls the mysterious conjunction 'and' of Christology: Divine and human natures are not merged, synthesized or confused in the act of incarnation. Yet any endeavor to see either nature in abstraction from its union with the other is precisely that – an abstraction, an unreality. We may not abstract the total qualification of human presence to and for divine revealedness from the absolutely prior revealedness which God is first of all in himself (the openness in which as Spirit he is open to the communion of the Father and the Son) and which on that basis he is *quoad nos*. On the other hand we may not abstract the revealedness of God from a participation in it which alone makes it real, although we must add that the participation is in the first place not that of the creature but that of God himself in his identity with his Word. Only after affirming the self-sufficiency of this divine self-participation may we add that it is wrong to abstract divine revealedness and human presence in faith from each other. Now we may add that such an abstraction would echo either Ebionitism (divine revealedness is naturally or automatically present to human subjectivity – the liberal view) or Docetism (divine revealedness includes within the divine presence to itself the presence of the human subject to God – the view of the objective Idealist). However, Barth stresses that the divine revealedness is the total and sufficient ground of human presence to revelation. He seems to affirm on the one hand that there is no necessary, essential or internal relationship between those two and yet he seems to provide just such a systematic principle when he declares the one to be the sufficient ground of the other. Once again the parallel to his Christology is clear. The two natures bear no necessary, essential or internal relation to each other qua natures, and each is present in undiminished fullness.

Yet God and God alone is the subject of the event of incarnation and thus also of the real and genuine human being and agency. It is in this sense that Barth interprets the meaning of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*.⁹

In the second instance the affirmation that man's presence to God's Word is God's act and yet an act the subject of which is man and not God has obvious affinities with the doctrine of predestination. The focus and concreteness of divine being is a unity of Agent and being in a specific act, the act in which God is one in the unity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This being in and as specific act is reiterated in the incarnation.¹⁰ Contrary to what is usually taken to be the direction of Platonic thought Barth believes that the being and knowledge of being other than God is possible and real only through *this particular* divine being in act: 'It is this object and content for the sake of and in relation to which man's nature is a rational nature ... In this particularity (*das Besondere*) the universal (*das Allgemeine*) is contained.'¹¹ A specific act or decree electing the specific man Jesus from eternity is the basis of predestination. In and through his election that of others takes place. In him the electing God and elected man coincide. To place predestination in an absolute decree outside Jesus Christ is to talk about an abstract God (an absolute or universal without concrete focus) and abstract man. Indeed man is simply eliminated from the equation by an on-rushing fatalism or some other mythology. But in contrast to every sort of fatalism God has the power to determine and move man by the utilization and activation of human freedom. God moves man from within in such a way that divine freedom is the indispensable ground and the enabling context for human agency and freedom. In the act of God's government over and in man the latter exercises his selfhood:

To give honour to God means that in our existence, words and actions we are made conformable to God's existence; that we accept our life as determined by God's co-existence, and therefore reject any arbitrary self-determination. Self-determination comes about when God is honoured by the creature in harmony with God's predetermination instead of in opposition to it. It happens when we accommodate ourselves, not to the dominion of any power (history or fate, for instance), but to that of the One to whom alone there belongs right and finally might.¹²

Finally we may point to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the basis for the mutual presence of God and believer:

The Spirit guarantees that to man which he cannot guarantee to himself: his personal participation in revelation. The act of the Holy

Spirit in revelation is the ‘yes’ to God’s Word pronounced by God himself on our behalf, but pronounced now not only *to* us but *in* us. This ‘yes’, spoken by God is the ground of the confidence in which man may understand revelation as something which concerns him. This ‘yes’ is the mystery of *faith*, the mystery of the *knowledge* of the Word of God, but also the mystery of a willing obedience pleasing to God. ‘In the Holy Spirit’ all this exists in man: Faith, Knowledge, Obedience.¹³

As the Spirit God is present to us and we through faith are present to him. In this mode of divine being he is not only the source of revelation, the revealer, nor only the content of revelation. Here he exists as revealedness, i.e. as revelation open for the participation or presence of the creature. It is to this openness that faith is conformed. Thus through him in his revealedness he is not only present to us but we in our inwardness are present to him.

Inwardness at first blush seems to have more in common with the subjecthood of the agent than with the objectivity of structure; and yet it does seem to point to a structural, static element – but in the agent. Perhaps it comes as close as any concept to representing the integrating and dynamic focus of agency (subjecthood) and structural continuity (objectivity). Its bond of union with objectivity and agency is so close that one may say that it penetrates these immanently. It is not a noumenon of which they are phenomena, nor a substance lying at a distance behind two or more perceptible qualities. It is therefore not the self which Locke assumed and Hume rejected. One recognizes without difficulty here Kant’s noumenal self but even more typically Schleiermacher’s feeling existing only in the passage to and fro between thought and will. Projected on a universal scale (and there is no intrinsic necessity why inwardness *per se* should be individual, since in this view individuality is usually simply equated with the empirical expression of inwardness) it may assume the shape of Hegel’s subject, indeed of absolute spirit, or later of Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s will to power. In any case, it is a *content* filling a *form* of determinate *structure* moved by its own *agency*.

In some such sense Barth too sees human being or faith ‘present’ (the term now assumes an uncanny flexibility) to the Spirit that is its enabling present. One may say that here, much more clearly than in connection with the doctrines of Incarnation and Christology, the thought form emerges by which Barth can understand a human act or participation as one in which – in the actual event of revelation, of presence to each other of divine revealedness and human inwardness – the human being is untranscended subject and yet the act is God’s! Von Balthasar¹⁴ compares Schleiermacher’s ‘transcendentalism’ and Barth’s ‘actualism’ in the search for an original unity in knowing and being. For both the point of ‘greatest intensity’ is the co-presence of duality with its

own transcendence. For Schleiermacher the duality of intuition and feeling is overcome in the ultimate identify of God-consciousness in Christ and in religious (self-)consciousness. For Barth there is the much more stringent duality of revelation and faith, 'which however is overcome and turned into a unity *in actu* through the deed of the Holy Spirit grasping man.' The point of 'absolute intensity' in Barth's theology lies 'essentially beyond rational cognition although it is the basis of all reason; it is the Actual which justifies every condition, the non-objective from which every antithesis may be posited and explained.' This point of highest intensity and transcendence is for Kant the unintuitable transcendental apperception, for Fichte the original positing of the 'I', for Schleiermacher the original fact of religiously determined feeling; and for Barth it is 'faith as God's prime act of Grace upon man.' Because this reality from which the movement of thought derives and to which it points is beyond thought, thinking must be dialectical. Moreover this reality is the meeting point of objectivity and being. For Barth it is the focus of the unity of God and thence the eternal basis for the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ. It is the point 'from which creation originates, salvation is effected and the task of human culture must be undertaken'.¹⁵

Faith, then, is the point of contact or mutual presence between God's revealedness and human inwardness, of divine and human content, of the Spirit and human spirit. As the action of the Holy Spirit faith is the act of God and yet an act of which the human being is subject. Here duality and its transcendence meet. The thought form is obviously that of German Idealism. The issue which we must pose but cannot answer is if this thought form substantively dominates the content of Barth's theology. The steadily recurring accusation of 'Christomonism' (which infuriates Barth) points in the direction of an affirmative reply. On the other hand one may say that despite all tendencies to the contrary Barth hesitates to make of the transcendence into unity (e.g. *enhypostasis* or the doctrine of the Spirit) a *systematic* principle from which the existential or anthropological reality and its nature are to be derived.

Yet an element of doubt remains about his denial of transcendence and assertion of duality. If he were consistent in it he would be untrue to his basic theological principle, the absolute priority and independent, concrete reality of God, who is the basis for the being and truth of all else that exists. Simply to assert the duality of divine and creaturely realities would mean resignation from all significant theological statements of explanation concerning creation, redemption and faith. But on the other side there looms the threat of a monistic Idealism for which the reality of Spirit, and its openness or presence to itself, includes within itself every other reality and spirit. Is the thought form then simply inadequate? But is there any philosophy of which the theologian must

not finally say the same thing? And yet all theology must be clothed in philosophical dress.

We may point out that Barth frequently speaks as an existentialist both in his anthropology and his doctrine of reconciliation. Existence and the reality of historical events may not be derived systematically from the priority of eternal necessity. Existence and salvation take place within the context of irreducibly human decisions. Furthermore Barth steadily endeavors to balance his existentialist pronouncements – not by the monistic inclusiveness of Idealist ontology but by asserting the prior, independent, concrete and ‘eventful’ objectivity of divine being over against contingently independent created being. God is in himself objective and thus the basis of an analogical conformity of creatures to himself. We see that existentialism and traditional metaphysics supplement Idealism. But when one asks how historical event is to be related genuinely to eternal event, so that the inwardness of each becomes really present to that of the other in its eventfulness rather than simply confronting it after the fashion of purely substantial mutually isolated structures, the priority of Idealism emerges immediately.

Once again it is the doctrine of the Spirit which indicates the duality and its transcendence in divine and human action, the limits of Idealism as well as its positive function in the service of theology. Barth finds himself in basic disagreement both with Schleiermacher and with theological liberals precisely over the understanding of the Holy Spirit. The liberals through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wanted to carve out a position similar to that of Schleiermacher but without his metaphysical understanding. By and large the theology of Schleiermacher and his followers was a theology of the Spirit. Its irreducible presupposition was the reality of consciousness, a quality of human inwardness which one could call inwards, faith or religion. In his essay on Schleiermacher in *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert*¹⁶ Barth suggests that Schleiermacher put piety or religion at the center of theology precisely where the Reformers put the Word of God or Christ. Now the Reformers ‘split’ their center immediately by distinguishing faith from the Word of God even in faith was completely based on and created by the Word. God is known then once as the Word of the Father spoken *to* man and once as the Spirit of the Father and the Word allowing man to apprehend and participate in that Word. Schleiermacher also split the center of his theology, i.e. piety, by positing the historical even of redemption, Jesus Christ, over against piety. His starting point (human consciousness) might well have become a theology of the Holy Spirit since he starts with human awareness of God. But it was not such a theology for ‘the Word is not so safeguarded in its independence over against faith as it ought to be if this theology of faith were to be a genuine theology of the Holy Spirit.’ And so one must ask if religious

consciousness rather than the Spirit has not become the total subject matter of theology.¹⁷

We may interpret Barth to suggest that Spirit and faith become merged for Schleiermacher and subsequent liberal theology. Thus, even when Schleiermacher and the liberals insist as they do, on the objectivity of Father and Son (or rather God and Christ) to faith, that objectivity is bound to be purely relative; for prior to it is the immediacy, directness or internality of divine and human spirit in the order of religious knowledge. Does not this mean a confusion of the Holy Spirit with human spirit? In a sense the question need to be raised, for ontological questions are automatically excluded for the liberals! One may simply avow that 'in faith' the Spirit (or God) and human inwardness are directly present to one another. The order of knowledge is therefore radically separated from the order of being. If there is any relation between them it is that of two contraries. In the order of knowledge a direct if not internal relation between God and man is asserted to the hilt. In regard to the object of this knowledge liberals desire to maintain the objectivity of God. Barth has always insisted that the order of knowing and the order of being (also the knowledge of knowledge and the knowledge of being) are parallel, with priority belonging strictly to being and the knowledge of being. He asserts that Father and Son are genuinely objective only if God as Spirit, revealedness open to faith, also remains strictly and unconfusedly God. The distinction between the Holy Spirit and human inwardness (divine presence to man, human presence to, participation in God through this Word) must remain complete in the order of being as well as in knowledge. The relation cannot simply be internalized. And yet *qua* relation it must at least find an internal expression. Here Barth seems simply to invert liberalism. While human consciousness does not contain within it the Word of God, the Word as revealedness is that Word pronounced not *to* but *in* us. In that sense faith is contained within the Word of God or the Spirit.

The unity of internality is in some sense basic to the external duality. But it must posit rather than deny that duality. And it would seem that at this point, where we must assert the mutual presence of the Holy Spirit and human inwardness (within the absolute priority of the Spirit) and their abiding distinctness in the orders of being and knowing, we have arrived at the limits of the usefulness of Idealism as a thought form. It is a fit means for expressing the absolute priority of the Word of God over faith as well as their genuine relatedness. But it cannot express either the mutual independence of these two structures, contents and agencies nor the nature proper to each, the uncreated. But is Barth's dilemma unique? Has not every endeavor to formulate the doctrine of creation encountered a similar or at least parallel difficulty?

To express this distinctness or mutual independence of Spirit and faith – in the orders of being and knowing – is a task in the execution of which

apprehension and analogy are indispensable means. Let us here remind ourselves of two facts. First, insofar as Barth has a system (parallel to classical German Idealism) it is the unity *in actu* of the Holy Spirit and faith within the absolute priority of the Spirit. To the extent that this is his basic position, apprehension of God (and his Word) as object is clearly included within faith as simply one aspect of a wider or more basic mode of being present to or participating in God. It is but the cognitive form of faith as a unitary decision–act. Likewise one would have to say that God, the object of apprehension, is more basically subject (Agency and/or content) than object (structure). In that case analogy (conformity which is neither identity nor total dissimilarity between human words, intuitions, and their object) is necessary and proper because it points toward a more basic univocal relation and indicates at the same time that this relation cannot be simply that of apprehension of an object.

Secondly however, insofar as Barth asserts the distinctness of Spirit and faith he suggests that the priority of God cannot be made the center of a system in which God and creatures are coordinated (Barth stresses the impossibility of a theological system over and over: e.g. KD II/2, p.198; III/1, pp.253f, 439). In that case apprehension is in no way superseded by any other form of faith. Moreover the objectivity of God cannot be transcended in his subjectivity. Analogy now is called for to indicate that the conformity of our apprehension to God remains a conformity ‘at a distance’, just as in God himself the unity of subjectivity and objectivity remains a complex unity of ‘over-againstness’.

III

The relation between faith and apprehension parallels the order of being, i.e. the relation between God as Agent, subject or content and God as object or determinate structure. Ultimately then it is the doctrine of God which will determine the place of analogy as well as apprehension in the total context of Barth’s thought, even though we must add hastily that the doctrine of God will have to be (for Barth) a completely Christological one, since God reiterates his specific eternal act which is his being in the specific historical act which is Jesus Christ.

We have already observed that Barth applies the concept of analogy, conformity in (but not apart from) apprehension as an act, mainly to the relation between apprehension and God as its object, to the conformity of faith to the Word of God and to the conformity of man as God’s image to his Creator. The *analogia fidei* is first of all applied to faith and the Word of God. However, Barth himself observes that this strictly epistemological procedure is not necessarily the only proper one,¹⁸ especially (one might add) since he himself insists so strenuously on the priority of *ratio essendi* over *ratio*

cognoscendi and the parallelism between *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi*. Furthermore the tension that we have observed between apprehension and participation or ‘presence’ will not be ultimately and properly dealt with except in the understanding of the being of God. It is therefore appropriate to turn first to the analogy between God and our words, intuitions and concepts.

We note immediately that God’s being as Person in the most proper sense of the word occupies Barth’s attention when he tackles the problem as we have seen it posed by his thought form. We observed the priority of Spirit as the systematic element in Barth’s thought, and at the opposite pole we noted that Barth holds to the untranscended objective apprehension of an independent structure in the knowledge of God. The same dialectic occurs in the concept of God. God acts, he is act: He is not being behind the act; his being is to be the specific and concrete act which constitutes his Deity. He is to be described as *actus purus et singularis*.¹⁹ Because he is in himself a concrete act filled with his own content for his own agency, he is act quite sufficiently and independently of his positive or negative relation (i.e. contrast) to creatures. This independence of the agent-being fulfilled in himself Barth speaks of as God’s freedom, suggesting that it is a precise equivalent for the traditional understanding of God’s aseity.²⁰ Now action in contrast to mere happening takes place only in the unity of spirit and nature. We must ascribe a nature to God or else confuse him with the world of spirit – from which he is actually as sharply distinguished as he is from the world of nature. ‘In scripture the distinction of divine from non-divine happening does not correspond in the slightest to the distinction between spirit and nature ... If God has no nature, if he is ... chemically purified absolute Spirit, he does and can do nothing at all.’²¹ In that case too all our statements about the Triune God are pictures, parables and symbols to which ‘only the structureless and motionless being of a Spirit would correspond as their proper ... truth, a Spirit properly suspect of being merely a hypostatization of our own created spirit.’²²

Having assured ourselves of the coincidence or unity of nature and spirit in all action and in the divine act, Barth goes on to say that now we are able to say that the specific agency of God is that of the freedom of Spirit,

not accident or necessity, not the conformity to law or fate of a natural event – although nature is not excluded from it – but the freedom of a self, knowing and willing and disposing over nature, distinguishing itself from that which it is not and that which it is not from itself. The peculiarity (*Besonderheit*) of the divine event, act and life is the special way of the Being of a Person.²³

In this unity of spirit and nature God does not participate in the principle of personhood (*personifiziert*). He *is* properly Person, he is ‘being actualizing and

uniting the fullness of all being in the actuality of his Person.’ As such he unites spirit and nature in himself in a deliberately teleological order: Nature is subordinated to spirit in him. In this teleologically ordered unity he is not an ‘it’ nor a ‘he’ after the manner of creaturely persons, ‘but actually (and thus also for actual knowledge) always an I: The I that knows itself, wills and distinguishes itself is in just this act of its perfection of power fully sufficient to itself.’²⁴

What distinguishes God’s being-in-act from ‘abstractly intuited natural being’ and ‘abstractly conceived spiritual being’ is that it is moved by itself.²⁵ In human being as person we only know man as the source of movement of both nature and spirit. ‘*We* live and thereupon there is living nature, living spirit.’ In our activity the two are coordinated, ‘spirit prior, nature subsequent, spirit as subject, nature as object, nature as matter, spirit as form.’ But over against unmoved nature and unmoved spirit as well as our moved and moving being – over against both stands God’s being as the one and only being moved by itself. In him alone activity or movement and being are completely one. No other being unites fully its ‘I’ with the spirit and nature that make up the determinate content of the self’s agency. No other being is absolutely its own proper, conscious, willed and effected decision. Thus God alone, being completely as act, is properly speaking Personal Being. This his being-in-act behind which we may not look for some fuller, general or absolute being, is his being Person in the eternal modes of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is *this* Person and no other.

Man is not properly person: he becomes person or participates in personhood by being conformed to the Person of God on the basis of God’s love of him and of the fact that he may return this love.²⁶ *Originally* only God is ‘I’; human beings are not personal except in communion with him who is fully personal. ‘What do we know’, Barth asks, ‘of our being-I before God has named his Name for us and has called us by our name?’²⁷ To be truly personal, to be a knowing, willing acting I is to be capable of and to actualize communion in oneself without need of another (and on this basis to extend communion to another). Only the being and love of God have this character. Thus also the concrete reiteration in time of this concrete, eternal personal being is the one genuinely human person that we know: ‘The one, the person that we really know as human person is the person of Jesus Christ, and just this person is the Person of God the Son, into which humanity without itself being or having personhood was assumed into community with the personal being of God. Just this one man is thus the being of God making himself know to us as He who loves.’²⁸

Our difficulty with Barth’s thought is in part terminological. For example the original ‘I’ that penetrates its own nature and spirit is in the human person the focus of actual agency as well as the specific content which is structured in

determinate fashion in nature and spirit. But because God is self-moved being, there is in him apparently no *tertium quid* (as there is in the human person) to be distinguished in addition to nature and spirit. Agency and the specific content or inwardness by which God is *this* person and no other is as it were distributed over both his spirit and his nature. However the teleological subordination of nature to spirit in which God is ‘he’ or ‘I’ rather than ‘it’ would seem to demand a closer identification of agency and content with ‘spirit’ than with nature. Spirit is the ‘being of comprehensive concepts (*Inbegriffen*), laws and ideas’.²⁹ If agency is closely associated with this ideal structuredness all that is left in divine ‘nature’ is matter or content. Secondly since agency is always specific act for Barth, the specific ‘content’ also that makes God *this* rather than that would have to be identified with agency. Thus ‘nature’ seems to be an empty action, despite Barth’s evident desire to believe otherwise.

In any case what has been said of the term Person must be extended to the full content of the concept of God, to his being, love, freedom and all the perfections of his being as he who loves in freedom. All these, even the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are properly applied not to creatures and their relations but to God. Here they are used with reference to a concrete reality that corresponds precisely to each respective concept.

Here is the crucial joint in Barth’s understanding of analogy. Undergirding the concept of analogy there is an insistence that with reference to God, and to him alone, conceptualization coincides with and is adequate to the reality to which it points. Concepts mean or intend that reality literally and they are adequate to their intention. The claim – implicit all along in our analysis of the term Person – is extremely bold. It may in part explain what Barth meant when appealed to the theologian to take genuine risks. Barth would suggest that something like this is involved in the courage to be – theologically. At least in its narrowest or most immediate context this view contrasts completely with Tillich’s suggestion that every concrete reference applies to God symbolically.

But now Barth has to face the question: *Whose* concept is literally adequate to the reality grasped in the concept? The answer is obvious: God’s concept, or if you will, God’s Word. No one denies this, of course, but is it not silly to talk about this adequacy while we live on earth, on the other side of a vision of this adequacy? Barth’s answer would be *no*, for if revelation does not involve an understanding of this adequacy it has little meaning. Obviously we do not simply reiterate or capture it, but in the act of revelation, in the state of revealedness and faith, our knowing parallels this unity of being and knowing, indeed it stands within it. Nevertheless – the adequacy is God’s alone and thus the need for analogy arises. Our words and concepts as such are *totally* inadequate to the actuality of God. Insofar as we try to apply them to him as

our words and concepts we only repeat the egocentric circularity of Descartes' *Meditations*. But is this really a concrete possibility, this endeavor to understand ourselves and our world apart from God and to comprehend God as an implicate of this understanding? For Barth the endeavor is at least abstract, in the pejorative sense of that term. For our words and concepts are not in the first place our own any more than are the objects to which they point.

The creatures which constitute the appropriate object of our human intuitions, concepts and words are his creation. Our thinking and our speech in their appropriateness to this their object are also his creation. Therefore the truth also in which we recognize this our appropriate object in the manner appropriate to us is his creation, his truth.³⁰

And therefore while it has to be said that 'his truth is not our truth', one must add that 'our truth is his truth. This is the unity of truth in him as *the Truth*'.³¹ The situation is obviously parallel to that which we have observed all along. Analogy arises as an act in which our apprehension, totally different from its object, is conformed to the identity of divine conceptualization with divine being. Our apprehension of divine objectivity and the systematic unity in which God is identical with himself and the ground of our presence to him are conformed to each other in a divine-human act. God as Spirit, Agent or Subject is the ground on the basis of which God as object may correspond indirectly to our apprehension of him. God as Person is the unity-in-complexity that includes or is at once Subject and Object. He is himself even in otherness from himself. He is Triune. Thus God lays claim to our words through his self-revelation, something he can rightfully do as their Creator and ours. In this act

the miracle takes place by which we become participants in the veracity of his revelation, by which our words become true designations from him. Our words are his property, not ours. And in his disposing of them as his property he places them at our disposal ... and commands us to make use of them in relation to him. The use which is thus made of them is therefore not a secondary (*uneigentlich*), merely pictorial one, but their literal use. Symbolically (*uneigentlich*), and pictorially we use our words (so we may now say looking back from God's revelation) when we apply them within the limits of what is appropriate to us, to creatures. When we apply them to God they are not estranged from their original object and their truth but on the contrary led back to them.³²

The identity in which truth and objectivity are one, in which God as subject is his own object takes place only in God's self-knowledge. This is the *terminus a quo* of our knowledge of God, but as such remains hidden from us. Our knowledge of him takes place in a conformity which is *a posteriori* and identical with his self-knowledge. It is an apprehension of his genuine objectivity as reiterated in that hidden form in which once again he as object and subject is one with himself, in Jesus Christ. Here nature, objectivity is indeed present, but nature is assumed into the divine subject-act. Is the objective apprehension then grounded in a *prior* (even though indirect) presence of the human subject to the divine Subject, or is this presence simply identical with apprehension? No decisive answer appears to be forthcoming. However, one may say that apprehension depends at all times upon a literal applicability of concepts to God. Thus apprehension, when it is internally distinguished into intuition and concepts, and analogy arises as the mode of conceiving God, still points in a literal direction. Analogy is therefore an act of *noesis* closer to literal than to symbolic understanding of the object to which faith is present. Analogical understanding is at least literal in intention though not in execution.

The hiatus between intention and execution is overcome only in act. Analogy is a conformity that takes place. It exists only in act or in process. Faith is an act, and the divine act in which the act of faith is conformed to God through his Word is the act of Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit. *Analogia fidei* therefore is never *analogia entis*. For *ens* or *esse* appear to Barth to refer on the one hand to 'absolute' being supposedly more basic than the act in which God is who he is and which he reiterates *ad extra* in the Incarnation, and on the other to an abstract being of the creature apart from the act in which it is conformed to God. Indeed, it seems to Barth that being here is a comprehensive term univocally applied to include within itself both God and creature, Catholic protests to the contrary notwithstanding. This is the product of the Anti-Christ! In contrast to Protestant Scholasticism (in the figure of Quenstedt)³³ and Catholicism one may not speak only of an *analogia attributionis extrinsecae* between God and creature and not an analogy of intrinsic attribution. 'What makes the creature into an *analogon* of God does not lie in its nature ... but exclusively in the veracity of the object analogically known in the knowledge of God and thus in the veracity of God himself. Analogy is for the creature therefore *extrinsecae* in the form of apprehension and not *intrinsecae* its own.'³⁴ It appears then that the creature is being conformed to the divine act in Christ. Barth insists that he does not mean to identify creation with redemption any more than he means to cancel out creation through redemption. He asserts that there is no intrinsic conformity in the contents of the two, outside of God's redemptive act in which he conforms created being to himself. One must not identify Christology and the doctrine

of creation but one must base the latter strictly on the former. It is in the act of its being conformed to the redemptive act that creation emerges concretely and clearly into view.

Roman Catholicism distinguishes sharply between our knowledge of God as Creator and as Triune Redeemer and Reconciler. Since for Barth knowing parallels being, he believes that this view necessarily involves a partition of the unitary God. Moreover God's being can be known only in his reiteration *ad extra* of the unitary act which he is in himself, in his work of revelation. Barth accuses Roman Catholic theology of circumventing this concrete setting and grasping for the knowledge of God *in abstracti* within a supposed community of absolute and relative being. When he encounters Catholic thinkers who are willing to subordinate *analogia entis* to *analogia fidei* but insist that in the act in which *analogia fidei* takes place there must also be a *participatio entis Dei* on our part, Barth agrees with evident surprise. With this interpretation of *analogia entis* he has no quarrel though he doubts that it is in any sense normative or even representative Roman thought. For the most, it seems to him, Catholic thought reverse the proper theological assertion, *esse sequitur operari* into a 'metaphysical' *operari sequitur esse* which must be rejected.

It is not necessary to describe at length the second (chronologically first) relation in which analogy arises. It is the knowability of the Word of God through faith. If in the first relation Barth emphasized the apprehension of the objective reality, in the second he tends to stress the other, perhaps more systematic side of the relation of God and man, the participation of man in God's Word. Indeed he suggests that mystical language and conception may be the most appropriate to employ on the description of this relation.³⁵ And yet it is true that the difference between the first and second analogical relations is for the most part merely one of emphasis. The Word of God is the event in which the hidden God reveals himself in the proclamation of the Church. It is as it were the form of which God himself is the content. The grasping of the Word involves a Deiformity,³⁶ the *analogia fidei*. Between the publication of the first volume of *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, and *The Doctrine of God*, Barth revamped his Christology. In KD I/2 he for the first time included very fully and explicitly a Chalcedonian understanding of two natures. He understood now that 'the message of the Bible is realistic', and that the ancient theologians were right in raising not only the ethical but also the physical question concerning revelation. Undoubtedly this insight prepared him more fully for an acknowledgment of *analogia entis* within *analogia fidei* than had been the case when he originally wrote of *analogia fidei* as a pure *analogia actus* in KD I/1. In this earliest volume he is simply concerned to speak of an 'indwelling' of Christ that takes place in faith. The point of contact between God and man, man's Deiformity, takes place in faith alone and thus on the sole basis of the Word of God effectively spoken *in* as well as *to* the new man in

Christ. The old man is an abstraction with whom there can be no point of contact, for faith and unfaith do not meet on the same level. He is as it were excluded from reality.

Far more striking are Barth's statements about the third relation which deals with the analogy – not of faith to God or to the Word of God but – of man, the creature, to God and to Jesus Christ. Throughout his treatment of creation and the creature Barth is plagued by the relation of Christology to creation. If Christology is the constant clue to the nature of creation – and we must remember that knowledge is the recapitulation of reality for Barth – what is there to prevent our saying that Jesus Christ is the only real creature? Is it not at least possible that the creature's reality consists in its presence to the one true human subject, Jesus Christ who is fully present to himself in and through his presence to all other creatures? Once again the problem of the thought form arises before us with its 'point of absolute intensity' where the duality of objectivity is posited (and not transcended!) by an overarching unity. We now learn that this complex conceptuality which Barth applied to the relation between God and creature and to God himself, applies also to the creature. The basic form of human being is analogous to God, but one has to add that unlike God, the human being does not have this basic form in himself but in another: human existence as *imago Dei* is co-existence. But it is only a conformity in act, in the act of co-existence. Moreover, it is an extrinsic analogy, an analogy to God that takes place only in relation between human being and human being. It is intrinsic only to God, not to man. Thus we have to speak of an *analogia relationis* (again in contrast to *analogia entis*!)

The conformity meets its evident limit (by virtue of which it is *analogia relationis* and not *analogia entis*) in the fact that only God is genuine I. He can and does exist and genuine 'I' because he includes 'thou', 'over-againstness' within himself, so that he is subject-object unity in specific determinateness. Other–self as internal relation! Is one of them more basic than the other, or is the bond between them the basic element? Where, one must ask, is the 'I' in this unity-in-complexity? Is it distributed over self (subject) and other (object) so that it has no focus but is simply an internal relation? Is it simply the bond between subject and object? Or is the genuine 'I' the subject more nearly than the object? Where is the divine unity? At any rate, it is just this divine unity in self–other duality that Barth wishes to proclaim. For it is the basis of God's relating himself to an other external to himself while yet remaining the same free 'I'. Because he is an 'other' to himself he can become the creature's 'other'. On the basis of this immanent dialectic in God, God can be both the object of the creature's apprehension in faith and the subject-Spirit in the presence of whom human spirit becomes actual spirit. And once again we confront the question: Is Barth the systematic theologian for whom the subject–Spirit is absolutely prior as the unity on the basis of which in

untranscendable self–other duality the apprehension of God in the Incarnation takes place? Or is there a dialectical balance between subjectivity and objectivity both in God and the divine–human relation?

Finally, the self–other relation in God which is the ground of the relation of the divine self to creaturely ‘other’ is now reiterated in secondary form between creature and creature. The analogy of relation between God and man is existence in the vis-a-vis of I and Thou. The analogy breaks down because in God this existence is internal, whereas in man it is existence external to itself. According to Barth’s interpretation of Genesis the analogy to God which humanity has *qua* humanity consists in sexuality. Outside of any determinate state of human being in race, people or some mythical order of creation, humanity exists in the co-existence, the relatedness of man and woman. This analogy is the image of God, and sin can never obliterate it. But just in this connection we must remember that creation is not a state or *positum* in and by itself. Its meaning is beyond itself in history. The image of God, though certainly not obliterated must be seen in that concrete event in which it is more than promise, in which it is actualized in fulfillment. Obviously this event, this man is Jesus Christ and in the act of conformity to him – and in this act alone – every man is God’s image. Furthermore the literal archetype of the interrelation in which the image exists, the vis-à-vis of man and woman, is the relation in which Christ and the woman given to him, the Church, exist together.

When Barth discusses the nature of man the outcome is obviously similar to his exegesis of the image of God. The only real revelation of what it is to be human, of humanity in its intended being as the covenant partner of God, is found in Jesus. He is genuine man for God, and man is naturally man only as man for God. Anthropology continues to be developed Christologically. To go on now to say that Jesus here reiterates the being of God as he is in himself and towards the human creature, i.e. that Jesus truly incorporates the self–other relation, is to make not a psychological but an ontological statement. It is the center of Jesus’ actuality to be man for God and (in reiteration) man for his fellow man. When we say that this is an ontological statement we mean that there is no ‘inner depth’ in him where he is simply for himself or with God alone. His being human in co-humanity is the image of God. Thus, with all the dissimilarity between Jesus and other human beings he yet affirms a certain correspondence, an analogy between them and himself, a covenant capacity (based of course on the actuality of the covenant, i.e. upon God’s grace and not on an *inherent* capacity). Here, in and through the correspondence between Jesus and other men the conformity between God and man is made concrete.

We have seen that on the human side this correspondence consists in existence in co-humanity. But only Jesus can be man purely for his fellow beings. In

every other human being the term ‘for’ signifies a reciprocity not existent in Jesus.³⁷ In every other man this reciprocity means that man is man neither as isolated individual nor primarily as one among many, where no genuine reciprocity takes place, but as one over against one, singularity with singularity. If this is the case, the ‘I am’ which otherwise indicates abstract man – the affirmation of humanity without fellow man and thus without Christ, as Nietzsche for example conceived it – the ‘I am’ is concrete, and ‘I’ in encounter or history. Being in encounter is analogous to God, and at the same time one may say that the ‘I’ is not reduced to its relations.

Once again: Is analogy, the act of being conformed, an expression of a Christomonistic system in which Christ is the subject-spirit in whose objectivity to himself all men have a presence in his sight? Or is the act of analogy the expression of an abiding duality between divine and human spirit in which God and man are present to each other in untranscended objectivity.

¹ See ‘The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth, 1909–1922: The Nature of Barth’s Break with Liberalism’ (Yale, 1956), p.555; cf. ‘Karl Barth: Theologian’ in Hans W. Frei, TN, p.171. The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* has ‘ein Gottbetrunkenener Mensch’ attributed to Novalis speaking about Spinoza (Friedrich Leopold, Baron von Hardenberg, 1772–1801), but provides no reference.

² KD II/1, p.203, Frei’s translation; cf. CD II/1, p.181. Cf. H. Bouillard, *Karl Barth: Parole de Dieu et Existence Humaine*, vol. 2, pp.178ff.

³ KD III/2, pp.378f, Frei’s translation; cf. CD III/2, pp.399–400; cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976), pp.148–68; English translation: *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, tr. E.T. Oakes (San Francisco: Communio, 1992).

⁴ Cf. KD II/1, p.11; CD II/1, p.13.

⁵ KD II/1, p.270, Frei’s translation; cf. CD II/1, p.239.

⁶ KD II/1, p.254; CD II/1, p. 225.

⁷ Cf. KD II/1, p.58; CD II/1, pp.54–5.

⁸ KD II/1, p.213, Frei’s translation; cf. CD II/1, p.190.

⁹ Cf. H. Volk, ‘Die Christologie bei Karl Barth und Emil Brunner’ in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954) vol. III, p.634.

¹⁰ Cf. KD II/1, pp.291ff; CD II/1, pp.257ff.

¹¹ KD III/2, pp.382f, Frei’s translation; cf. CD III/2, pp.402–3.

¹² CD II/1, p.674; cf. KD III/3, pp.166ff, CD III/3, pp.154ff.

¹³ CD I/1, p.475.

¹⁴ Von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, pp.213ff.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.213f.

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- ¹⁶ Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag/Zollikon, 1952; English translation: Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, tr. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1972).
- ¹⁷ Barth, *Die Protestantische Theologie*, pp.422f.
- ¹⁸ Cf. KD I/1, pp.24ff; CD 1/1, pp.25ff.
- ¹⁹ KD II/1, p.296; CD II/1, p.264.
- ²⁰ KD II/1, p.340; CD II/1, p.302.
- ²¹ KD II/1, pp.297, 299; CD II/1, pp.265, 267.
- ²² KD II/1, p.299; CD II/1, p.267.
- ²³ KD II/1, pp.299–300; CD II/1, p.267.
- ²⁴ KD II/1, p.300; CD II/1, p.267.
- ²⁵ KD II/1, p.301; CD II/1, p.268.
- ²⁶ KD II/1, p.319; CD II/1, p.284–5.
- ²⁷ KD II/1, p.320; CD II/1, p.285.
- ²⁸ KD II/1, p.321; CD II/1, p.286.
- ²⁹ KD II/1, p.301; CD II/1, p.268.
- ³⁰ KD II/1, p.257; CD II/1, p.228.
- ³¹ KD II/1, p.258; CD II/1, p.228.
- ³² KD II/1, p.258; CD II/1, p.229.
- ³³ [Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-88), Lutheran dogmatician.]
- ³⁴ KD II/1, p.270; CD II/1, p.239.
- ³⁵ KD I/1, pp.232f, 253.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p.251.
- ³⁷ Cf. KD III/2, p.291.