

Response to Michał Paluch's "Analogical Synthesis: An Impossible Project?"

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MICHAŁ PALUCH'S ERUDITE and irenic treatment of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy helps us to understand why Aquinas himself employed both the analogy of attribution and the analogy of proportionality. Paluch argues that "each of these doctrines is in some way incomplete and . . . they need each other."¹ He states that the analogy of attribution, used by Aquinas in his *Summa theologiae*, serves to highlight the likeness between creatures and God, namely, the likeness (however distinct) of an effect to its cause. The analogy of proportionality, used by Aquinas in his *De veritate*, serves to highlight God's transcendence by arguing that God's being is to God as created being is to creatures. In addition to their strengths, both forms of analogy also have their weaknesses. According to Paluch, the analogy of attribution does not tell us much about God except that God is a cause, since God's causality is utterly dissimilar from the finite effects that he causes. Likewise, the analogy of proportionality has difficulty both with respect to its terms (since divine "being" is beyond finite comprehension) and with respect to the relation between God and the creature, since the analogy of proportionality does not, in itself, explain how God's being is related to created being. Paluch therefore urges us to employ both of these two forms of analogy.

At the same time, Paluch is well aware that some Thomists would disagree with his proposal for holding in critical balance the two

¹ Michał Paluch, O.P., "What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?" *Nova et Vetera* (English) 14.2 (2016): 603–604.

approaches to analogy. Over the past fifty years, not least due to the influence of Bernard Montagnes's 1963 study *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, as well as to the general atmosphere of turning away from the Thomism of Cardinal Cajetan and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange,² the analogy of proportionality has not been popular. Paluch summarizes the perspective of Montagnes when he observes that, for many of those who reject the analogy of proportionality, "only the analogy of attribution that is described in terms of causality, or participation understood as communication of act, may be the proper means to articulate the foundational bond between God and creatures."³ More recently, the analogy of proportionality has gained in defenders, among whom the most prominent is Steven A. Long. As Paluch says, advocates of the analogy of proportionality point out that it "allows us to establish in the center of our metaphysical analysis the Aristotelian distinction between act and potency."⁴ In encountering actual beings, we perceive that being is not non-being and that act is not self-limiting. In reflecting upon this, we recognize (in Paluch's words) that "unlimited *esse* is the absolute perfection," and we come to appreciate the "priority of the analysis of being before the reflection on being created," thereby grounding a natural knowledge of God "that excludes any form of fideism."⁵

How, then, do advocates of the analogy of proportionality understand and account for the analogy of attribution? For his part, Steven Long argues that the analogy of attribution necessarily presupposes the analogy of proportionality, since the analogy from effect to cause

² Bernard Montagnes, O.P., *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004); see also Montagnes, *La Doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquinas* (Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1963).

³ Paluch, "What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?" 605. For further criticism of the analogy of proportionality, indebted to Montagnes, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), chapter 13, especially 552–555. Discussing Aquinas's defense of the analogy of proportionality in his *De veritate*, Wippel states, "His overriding concern throughout much of this discussion seems to be to protect divine transcendence. His theory of analogy of proportionality is not equally successful, however, in protecting him against the kind of agnosticism on our part which he associates with a theory of purely equivocal predication of the divine names" (ibid., 554).

⁴ Paluch, "What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?" 604.

⁵ Ibid.

presupposes the real being of the effect, which we discern through our contact with actual beings. Long explains, “As nonexistent beings are not attributable as real effects, the analogy of being is prior to the analogy of attribution and is in fact its necessary condition.”⁶ Here the “analogy of being” arises from the recognition that being (*ens commune*)

⁶ Steven A. Long, *Analogia Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 3–4. In his review of Long’s book in *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 629–633, Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. states that “the critique addressed to B. Montagnes misses its goal to the extent that it omits any discussion of his essential thesis: the change of model for thinking about transcendental analogy comes in Thomas’s thought from a deepening in the manner of conceiving divine causality: Thomas no longer thinks of the creature’s relation to God ‘as a resemblance of the copy to the model (formal causality) but as the dependence of one being in relation to another that produces it (efficient causality)’ (Montagnes, *La Doctrine*, 91)” (631). Bonino differentiates philosophical and theological perspectives on analogy: “Just as it is legitimate that the philosophical approach beings by unifying the multiplicity of beings at the level of *ens commune* by means of the analogy of proportionality, extended then possibly to God, so the theological approach first grasps the unity of beings in light of their divine source and thinks of creatures first in terms of their relation to God by means of the analogy of intrinsic attribution” (ibid., 632). In Bonino’s view, Long’s approach exemplifies the value of the philosophical approach, so long as the value of the theological approach is not thereby negated. For an erudite argument that Aquinas did not change his view of analogy (pace Montagnes and others, most recently John Wippel and Gregory Rocca), see Joshua P. Hochschild, “Proportionality and Divine Naming: Did St. Thomas Change His Mind about Analogy?” *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 531–558. Hochschild shows the analogy of proportionality to be fully at work in texts such as *Summa theologiae* I, q. 14, a. 3, ad 2, and I–II, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1. Hochschild grants that Aquinas “abandoned, or at least de-emphasized, the explicit invocation of ‘proportionality’ . . . when making recourse to analogy to account for divine naming” (ibid., 554), and he proposes that the philosophical reason may be that “proportionality does not imply a relation of participation, but a relation of participation does entail proportionality” (ibid., 556). Thus, if Aquinas “only remained on the ‘formal’ or semantic level of analysis, he might have chosen ‘proportionality’ to characterize the kind of unity exhibited by analogical concepts. But when he discusses analogy in theological and metaphysical contexts, he cannot leave aside the ‘material’ or real level of analysis, and so he is more likely to choose ‘participation’ to describe analogical relationships between things. Proportionality is inadequate to explain the effect’s imitation of its cause, which is usually Aquinas’s concern. However, proportionality—likeness understood as isomorphy, or formal similarity between different kinds of pairs or sets—is *implicit* in the effect’s imitation of its cause, and does help us to understand how two things can be similar without having a ‘determinate relation’ between them” (ibid.).

is intrinsically analogous. We discover this by encountering actual beings, “diverse *rationes* of act” that are like each other insofar as they are actual, but that differ from each other insofar as they are limited by potency in diverse ways.⁷ In Long’s view, if one does not recognize the analogy of being that is found in the principle of non-contradiction and the distinction between act and potency, one can never proceed to the analogy of attribution from effect to cause, since actual beings that exhibit diverse *rationes* of act are needed for an analogy from effect to cause.

In response to the concern that the analogy of proportionality fails to account for its terms, since God’s being is incomprehensible, Long argues that this is not the case, since we do know that divine being must be being without any limitation of potency, even if pure act “exceeds our knowledge and indeed exceeds the whole order of proportionate being.”⁸ Similarly, Long argues that the analogy of proportionality is itself necessary for accounting for the relation of the creature to God. For Aquinas, Long observes, “while the *esse* of the creature is an effect of God, it is not itself a receptive principle but rather the act of being of the substance that grounds the relation of creature to God.”⁹ Long concludes, “It follows that the analogical formality of being is necessarily by nature prior to and indeed the condition of the relation of createdness, of the relation of efficient and final dependency, and so prior also to the analogy of effect to cause which is predicated upon it. God is prior to the creature, but the relation of createdness is posterior to the being of the creature.”¹⁰ Long therefore anchors the analogy of

⁷ Long, *Analogia Entis*, 4; see also *ibid.*, 68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91. See also *ibid.*, 66: “*esse* is limited in relation to essence as potency. That is to say, act is not self-limiting, but is limited only in relation to potency—finally, limited in function of the hypothetical but immutable divine intention to create that which He creates, namely, some limited type of being whose existence is caused by God as proportionate to its nature (which last is to that existence as potency is to act).”

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70–71. Long observes, in response to Montaigne’s position, “The relation of participation is of course consequent upon the creation and not prior to it, for the relation of participation is real in the creature but not in God—the constant teaching of Thomas. It is impossible, then, either epistemically or ontologically, to say that the relation of participation is prior to the composite nature of the creature, for the composite nature of the creature which is the effect of creation is presupposed by the relation of participation: if there is no created being, there is no relation of participation. Insofar as there is a created being, it is a composite of act and potency whose relation of participation

being in actual finite beings, in what he calls “the formal intelligibility of proportionate being.”¹¹ In actual finite beings, we discover the analogicity of being, “the analogical unity of the likeness of diverse *rationes* of act and potency.”¹² In short, the analogy of proportionality is the ground of the analogy of attribution from effect to cause.

I am attracted to Long’s grounding of the analogy of being in the intrinsic analogicity of proportionate being. This approach attracts me not least because of its way of underscoring the meaningfulness of the vast array of creatures—including otherwise seemingly inexplicable beings, such as dinosaurs and the billions of stars. That the analogy of being should be rooted in the encounter with diverse *rationes* of act/potency helps to make sense of the value of the extraordinary profusion and difference of beings in the universe. In other words, proportionate beings are themselves, in their concrete existence, pointers to God.

For Erich Przywara, it is in Christ that we truly see both the similarity and the ever greater dissimilarity between creatures and God that the Fourth Lateran Council spoke about as characteristic of analogous discourse.¹³ At the outset of his essay, Paluch alludes to Przywara’s

is diversified hierarchically by the degree and kind of potency. Without the analogy of being as the division of being by potency and act, there is no relation of participation (nor is the creature for Thomas Aquinas a ‘subsistent relation’—language that he reserves entirely for the *sui generis* reality of the Trinity)” (ibid., 65–66).

¹¹ Ibid., 69. Long comments, “It is true enough that the unity of proportionate being is an effect of its principle, but the principle is only reached on the basis of the reality of proportionate being, and the analogical unity characterizing proportionate being . . . is the evidence on the basis of which the principle is affirmed” (ibid., 69–70).

¹² Ibid., 70. See ibid., 59–60, for Long’s explanation of the *Summa theologiae*’s failure to take up explicitly the analogy of proportionality.

¹³ For exposition of Przywara’s position, see especially John R. Betz, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 1–115. See also three essays in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011): John R. Betz, “After Barth: A New Introduction to Erich Przywara’s *Analogia Entis*,” 35–87; Kenneth Oakes, “The Cross and the *Analogia Entis* in Erich Przywara,” 147–171; and Richard Schenk, O.P., “Analogy as the *discrimen naturae et gratiae*: Thomism and Ecumenical Learning,” 172–191. Betz notes that, for Przywara, the analogy of being is “a metaphysics descriptive of actual tensions characteristic of creaturely being and thought as such, whose fundamental point is that creaturely being and thought are not self-identical but fundamentally ‘open,’ ‘suspended,’ existing in a state of ‘tension’”

position by noting that “the doctrine explaining how human words may help us to discover the created and human similarities to God without compromising His always greater dissimilarity must lead us to His last and definitive Word—Christ. It is in Christ, whose humanity became the tool of divinity, that the logic of analogy reaches its ultimate confirmation and completion.”¹⁴ Without disagreeing with this appreciation for the instrumentality of Christ’s humanity and its implications for the doctrine of analogy, I would emphasize that the analogy of being is less a historical claim than a metaphysical claim, even if the two domains do not conflict. According to the analogy of being, all finite beings disclose Pure Act as their incomprehensible source. In making this metaphysical case, which certainly has consequences for our interpretation of historical revelation, we can perhaps benefit from beginning with the Old Testament.

For example, consider the praise that, according to Psalm 148, all the beings of this world offer to God. Angels and humans, of course, should praise God, and Psalm 148 does not leave this out. But it also exhorts the sun, moon, stars, highest heavens, sea monsters, fire, hail, snow, wind, mountains, trees, beasts, insects, and birds to praise the Lord. How could these irrational things praise God? The answer is by simply existing, as actual things, in their amazing diversity—or at least the psalmist provides us with no other answer. The psalmist does say, with regard to the stars and highest heavens, that God “commanded and they were created” (Ps 148:5). Certainly God is their creator, but the praise that they offer appears to consist simply in their existing as the specific kinds of things that they are, though never in autonomy from God. This praise is joined to the praise offered by “all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth” (Ps 148:11). All creation at the same

(“After Barth,” 84). Christ fulfills the metaphysics of analogy because “it is in Christ that the creature finally finds its essence” and because “it is in Christ that the ‘in-and-beyond’ of the theological analogy (of ‘God in-and-beyond creation’) is deepened and heightened in hitherto unimaginable ways” (ibid., 84). As Oakes puts it: “Przywara’s *analogia entis* is no simple, stable philosophical metaphysic from which one may climb an ascending scale of ever more impressive essences. Instead, the *analogia entis* is shorthand for a variety of moves, arguments, and concerns that cut through a whole swathe of doctrines” (“The Cross and the *Analogia Entis*,” 169).

¹⁴ Paluch, “What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?” 592. For a Thomistic elaboration of this point, see Thomas Joseph White, O.P., “‘Through him all things were made’ (John 1:3): The Analogy of the Word Incarnate according to St. Thomas Aquinas and Its Ontological Presuppositions,” in White, *The Analogy of Being*, 246–279.

time offers praise to God for his glory as manifested above all in Israel (see Ps 148:14).

Consider also God's response to Job, a response that highlights particular beings, including the earth, the sea, the thunderbolt, the torrents of rain, the stars, and the dew and frost, as well as the calving of deer, the horse's strength, and the soaring of the hawk and the eagle. In his response to Job (see Job 38–41), God seems especially proud of the strength of the hippopotamus and the crocodile. By their strength, these creatures bear witness analogically to God's strength. The analogy of being here begins with actual beings: God reminds Job of all these creatures so as to lead Job to God from the wildness and power of actual things. God repeatedly makes clear that these creatures are God's, and that God alone made them. But the movement of God's response to Job is not so much from effect to cause—though such a movement is included—but rather from the actuality of these wild and powerful things to the God who transcends all such things as pure actuality, the God who can name himself "I am" when he tells Moses to say to the people of Israel, "I am has sent me to you" (Exod 3:14).

Prior to God's response to Job, Elihu instructs Job in a manner that has more of the rhythm of effect-to-cause. Each effect is said directly to point to the creative cause, God. Elihu begins with God as the reason for why non-rational things behave in an intelligible and predictable manner. As Elihu says, "Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. Do you know how God lays his commands upon them, and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? . . . Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a molten mirror?" (Job 37:14–15, 18).

The stability of the effect shows forth the power of God as cause and assures Israel that God will not fail in the history of salvation. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, in the very midst of the promise of the new covenant, God is identified as the one "who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea that its waves roar" (Jer 31:35). God then swears by this natural order of things that he can be counted upon equally to accomplish his historical purposes regarding Israel, despite Israel's impending exile to Babylon due to its sins. As Jeremiah proclaims, "If this fixed order departs from before me, says the Lord, then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever" (Jer 31:36).

It is not my purpose here to demonstrate the correctness of Long's emphasis on the analogy of proportionality, according to which the

analogy of being is grounded upon the encounter with the world as an analogical unity of diverse *rationes* of act/potency. I am not attempting to produce a biblical proof of the soundness of this philosophical approach. But it should be noted how the analogy of proportionality enables us to appreciate Scripture's care for the profusion of particular things, not simply in their status as God's effects, but in their own limited actuality—a limited actuality that involves dependence upon an unlimited source of actuality, pure act.

As a last example from the Old Testament, this attention to particular beings in their integrity marks both accounts of creation found in Genesis 1–2. Certainly, these accounts begin with God as Creator; all beings are God's effects. But “God saw that the light was good” (Gen 1:4), and this goodness reflects the actuality of the light, its own integrity as an actual thing. The hierarchical movement toward greater actuality—from water and dry land (Gen 1:9) to vegetation, to fish and birds, to animals, and finally to humans (Gen 1:26–28)—suggests attention to the distinct ways in which actual things are limited by potency, and to the fact that humans, among earthly beings, are the most actual, since humans can know, love, and rule.

The second creation account (Gen 2) depicts God in a more finite mode: instead of speaking things into creation by a word that causes things to come to be, God forms man out of clay, breathes life into man, and plants a garden. God is depicted here as something like a very powerful man. Yet, it is this same God who “made the earth and the heavens” (Gen 2:4), and it seems clear that God is being described in a metaphorical manner. The key point for our purposes has to do not with the profusion of metaphorical images that characterize this chapter of Genesis, but rather with the attention given here again to the diversity of things: the ground, mist, trees, rivers, gold, bdellium, onyx, birds, and animals. None of these things has an actuality equal to that of man. Man names all the living creatures, but finds no equal among them. Only woman, made specially by God for man, is actual in the way that man is: rational. And this confirms that the analogy of being finds its highest point, among material creatures, in the human person, as we would expect from Genesis 1:27's description of humans as created in the “image” of God.

Among all humans, the one who fully and truly images the wisdom, love, holiness, and sovereignty of God is Jesus of Nazareth. In his human nature, he is the greatest creature and the one Mediator. His supreme offering of praise through his salvific Cross embodies the fully

graced actualization of human intelligence and love. Other creatures join in that praise insofar as they have actuality. The analogy of being, then, is a philosophical doctrine, but one consonant in the deepest possible way with the revelation of God's "purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9–10). N&V