Relearning to Think Analogically:
the decline of language and the alleged silence of God[1]

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A1. Twentieth Century philosophy was largely dominated by the question of language. Suffice it to recall that, for its part, analytical philosophy is effectively philosophical analysis *of* language – be it about questions of science, ontology, art, ethics, social reality, religion, mind, psychology, decision-making, even about speech-acts for their own sake. The semiotic nature of early pragmatism and the rise of neo-pragmatism later in the century continued or, perhaps, ended the obsession. To this latter question I shall return shortly below in reference to Richard Rorty's assessment of the "Linguistic Turn." But because the problem being addressed in this essay has to do with the apparent decline of language and the alleged silence of God, we should keep in mind that inquiries into what we mean by "God" and by the usual attributes given to Him, or the linguistic coherence and the truth

[1] The use of **A, B,** and **C,** with subsequent variants, is meant to suggest different routes that have a family resemblance, yet, on occasion, do cross each other on whatever way they were meant to go. I should like to ask the reader to follow the signs, for, in the end, we might possibly get somewhere. But, in any event, it might be good to note that **A** refers to analytical concerns with language and God's communicability, **B** with hermeneutical philosophy, and **C** with analogical thinking.

conditions involved in activities describable as religious, has received ample attention in analytical and "post-analytical" (Rorty's term) philosophy.

B1. However, one of the distinguishing features of hermeneutical philosophy, as practiced principally by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, is not only that it concerns itself with language but also the *condition* of language in general, involving the divine very much in the process.[2] So, to deal properly with our topic, it is to these authors we shall eventually have to give much of our attention. As we shall see, the issue will logically centre on poetics and donation, or simply giving, or gift. Though in regard to the outcome of their thoughts on this subject, very distinct one from another, these authors share a common position about the ontological import of poetic language. They also share, but also in varying ways and with impressive dexterity, a commitment to phenomenology that we can and should take literally as the "discourse, or logos, of appearances." In so doing, a philosophical decision is taken in regard to metaphysics, either as something to combat or, at best, something to which we may cautiously point towards but really not say much about. In other words, consequent analogical thinking is not encouraged; univocal thinking, which concedes different modes of intensities in accordance with the kinds of appearances that constitute events, is cultivated in its stead. Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur will ask the question about the meaning of being but not presume that it has anything like transcendental qualities that can really be grasped by analogical judgments.

A2. At his most interesting, Rorty can be appreciated as a metaphilosopher and, as such, he understood that the entire Linguistic Turn is the result of the failure of any kind of transcendental philosophy that would make epistemology a privileged domain within that genre of literature that we have come to call, "philosophy."[3] It is additionally instructive

[2] I opt deliberately for the expression "hermeneutical philosophy" instead of the more usual "philosophical hermeneutics." I take the latter to stress the kind of theoretical treatment of hermeneutics as an art of interpretation, stressing some of the general features that encompass the reading and interpreting of any kind of text. Indeed, some of what Paul Ricoeur does corresponds to this, for, coming after Heidegger and Gadamer, he thought it well to bring back into view the original object of hermeneutics, i.e., texts. In the wake of Heidegger, it will be Gadamer's conviction that philosophy itself is hermeneutical. And that is the sense that I assume here.

[3] It was, more precisely, to explain the emergence of analytical philosophy and its eventual dominance in the Anglo-American academy that Richard Rorty understood the movement as a "Linguistic Turn." As mentioned, he would then associate it as last-ditch effort to continue a long and pernicious metaphysical desire for the non-con-

that Rorty assumed the consequences of his own conviction of how philosophy, as a literary genre, must hitherto conceive itself. Inspired in Wittgenstein's idea of language-games and Donald Davidson's non-reductive physicalism, he would argue that concepts nothing are but tools to make our way in a world. The world we have before us is a world without intrinsic qualities, i.e., no inherent nature capable of making one sentence necessarily more true than another. Our immersion in the world is no more than an immersion in our own language and particularly its metaphoricity, i.e., its condensing into one semantic field surprising combinations that give shape to our imagination and sense of life that must – to be lived well – be taken as ultimately individual and unique: the temptation to dilute one's sense of self into a common nature is to be avoided. Needless to say, for him the question of divine presence is part of a world well lost. And the silence of God is not an issue for the simple reason that He exists not. Yet poetics looms large and is, of course, operative in the deconstruction, or the re- contextualising, of singular narratives in the project of individual freedom: a successful recreation of a personal story will take the form of either the development of the preferred metaphor by which one leads his life, or eventually the creation of a new one. We are just given the idea that poetics does not necessarily guarantee any immersion into ontological groundings. And this would be especially the case, if one does not believe that there is one to be concerned about to begin with. The world is entirely phenomenal and contains no hope for a revelation of anything deeper, no promising disclosure of something more meaningful. If ontology can be at all imagined, then it would be no more than the void underlying the promise of a human project that has nothing to sustain it, except its own desiring.[4]

tingent. For his part, Rorty would himself explore, in view of his own ends, Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and emphasis on the primacy of the poetic and Gadamer's insistence on dialogue would make him one of the heroes in Rorty's best work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. In Rorty's mind, both Heidegger and Gadamer would contribute to the dismounting of the "Plato/ Kant Canon" and put the contingencies of history, linguistic practices, and political enterprises as manifestly more germane to the human condition.

[4] Conor Cunningham's *The Genealogy of Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2001) traces the impact on modern and contemporary philosophy made by the univocal reading of being, initially manifest in Scotus's departure from analogical thinking. It eventually encouraged – certainly beyond Scotus's own intention – the nihilist logic of provision: the wilful making of nothing "something," implying then the discursive effort to argue for its something-ness, when it can never be other than it is, i.e., nothing. Rorty's philosophical undertaking, in many ways (but not in all!), is reflective of this mode of thought that actually characterises much of what has come to us in the

A3. Nicholas Wolterstorff, who is by training an analytical philosopher, presents a powerful argument that contradicts that of Rorty's: that God speaks can be argued for and, that being so, the idea of God's being silent might be merely the result of a contrary belief-system that just negates the possibility to begin with.[5] The matter will indeed come down to belief and it is precisely there that Wolterstorff wishes to tackle the problem.

Wolterstorff's over all thesis about divine discourse involves, therefore, a prior argument that belief about God can be what he calls – along with Alvin Plantinga and William Alston – a basic belief.[6] That simply means that it strikes the mind so immediately and necessarily that it cannot be artificially suspended and then resumed as a derivative factor in human life. Now, such a belief does not mean that it is a true belief and that we may indeed be deluded in relation to the reality of God. It merely asserts that we have that kind of belief. So the gist of the thought is going in an opposite direction than the one that Kant took, but very much in the same direction taken by Kant's contemporary, Thomas Reid.[7] For Reid, we have innate dispositions that are triggered by beliefs and immediately refer us to the external world. To the extent that we look for the true root of epistemic justification, then it would be more profitably sought in the immediate trusting attitude toward the external world than in the reflective power of reason standing in judgment on the concepts that it produced itself. Now, the question becomes (and it is here that his work becomes especially interesting) the following: in a world characterised by such intense commu-

name of philosophy. On this, John Milbank is particularly assertive: "/…/ the substructure of all modern pragmatism, most phenomenology, and most analytic philosophy is implicitly nihilist, rendering the question of 'postmodernism' a trivial irrelevance." Milbank, "The Conflict of the Faculties" in *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2009), p. 307. I shall not trouble myself with expressions of postmodernism in this essay because I think that Milbank is largely right in his assessment. The problem is one of nihilism versus theism, univocal thinking versus analogical thinking. But theism and analogical thinking still remains viable alternatives in these – if you insist – post-modern times.

[5] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995). A very suggestive reflection on the implications of the work can be found in Wolterstorff's, "Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?" in *Modern Theology*, 14:1 (January 1998), pp. 1-18.

[6] The important work that announced and formulated the basic positions of Reformed Epistemology is *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

[7] For the Reformed Epistemologists, Reid is a pivotal figure. In his *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), Wolterstorff traces the drift that epistemology took in the acceptance of Kant's version and the rejection of Reid's. Perhaps the most significant and determining casualty was philosophical realism and the rejection of metaphysics. Interestingly, Wolterstorff concludes the work with a consideration of the "Two Thomases: Aquinas and Reid".

nicability, what kind of status do all those kinds of communication that constitute "mood actions," e.g., the worlds produced in art, and that which divine discourse engenders have? In relation specifically to the divine, the fact that human beings have a natural religiosity is neither surprising, nor reason for excitement. This would be simply consonant with the idea of basic beliefs. But, in approaching the divine by the way of discourse, he brings into the story a frankly theistic program, by which the divine personhood is presupposed. Otherwise said, Wolterstorff brings before his readers a set of theological presuppositions and asks that their viability be tested for their rational potential and not discarded out of hand.

To begin with, Scripture, the principal vehicle of God's addressing humankind, ought to be understood in terms of speech-acts and most particularly of the illocutionary kind, God promises, affirms, commands, etc.. But, given the nature of Scripture, the agency is actually double: God may speak but does so through those who speak at once for Him and for themselves. The prophets are the prime examples of this kind of situation. They are historically placed in the middle of a vast plan to interpret events as acts of divine discourse, to interpret the divine intent to realise, in time, justice within the all-encompassing horizon of *Shalom*, introducing through it a measure of justice in the world.

> There can be no shalom without justice. Justice is the ground floor of shalom. In shalom each person enjoys justice, enjoys his or her rights… Shalom goes beyond justice, however. Shalom incorporates right relationships in general, whether or not those are required by justice: right relationships to God, to one's fellow human beings, to nature, and to oneself.[8]

Divine speech-acts do not participate in the laws of nature, as the sciences of nature understand them to be. But the natural order is not entirely closed, or at least the practice of science need not suppose that it is. There is no necessity in eliminating the possibility of other influences, like God intervening in His communicating with His human creatures, without giving them a fair hearing. Like basic beliefs, the thesis ought to be consid-

[8] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004).

ered innocent until proven guilty. Granting the presuppositions, i.e., not ruling them out altogether as a starting point, the degree of intelligibility they may or may not provide for the complexity of the human experience will eventually come to light. That would be the essence of his philosophical wager. But, now, on the premise that speaking implies normative engagement, the norms that are carried along in divine discourse must inhere in God's character. From this we must assume that God being God must act in character, and, if in what He says we know Him to be a loving person, His issuing of commands to human persons is tantamount to cultivating His character in them; "What God requires of me is what God's character requires of me. The phenomenon of God's requiring something of me is parasitic on the requirements of God's character."[9]

Wolterstorff's argument advances, thus, on the basis of the conviction that God is not a silent God, and most especially for those whose cognitive faculties are open to what He indeed has to say and requires of them. A wider issue is, however, posed by the decline of language: it is the kind of emerging culture in which modes of expressions, albeit rife with fixating images, are deficient in the kind of *poesis* that effectively binds human beings to the sources of life that they themselves must learn to deal with and finally consent to.[10] In this regard, hermeneutical philosophy, as Heidegger initially conceived it, seems to be called to a mission of recovery in the midst of a civilisation programmed to forgetfulness.

B2. What Heidegger had to say about hermeneutics is mostly confined to the first sections of *Being and Time.* In essence, in the pertinent paragraphs dedicated to the idea, he maintained that hermeneutics ought to be seen in its original sense as identified with the sort of thinking which, negatively, cautions against the temptation that metaphysics presents but, positively, affirms the historicity of our questioning and interpretive understanding. But in this proposal there is also the underlying wish to evoke the primordial bond between the question of being and the emergence of

[9] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, p. 112.

[10] In Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, we are given a sense of the transitive nature of *poesis*., Along with the art of plot-making in the production of tragic narratives, it looks beyond itself and seeks to imitate nature. In this imitating of nature, we are talking principally to the nature of human action in dramatic tension with the forces, or circumstances, that it cannot dominate.

Dasein in the very act of questioning, the space within which being becomes unconcealed truth. In what *Dasein*, "being-there," says, we can get an insight into what is being shown in that very event of saying. In this showing/ saying, being-there experiences the arrival of what comes to language as language.

An important consequence in so establishing this original bond is the "Destruction" of the Cartesian *Cogito.* In its place, the idea of the thinking, interpreting, historied human being would be reinstalled within the ontological dimension that has been forgotten: indeed, as the first sentence of the work announces: "the question of being has been forgotten in our times." It is the overcoming of the forgetfulness that will comprise a kind of mission to rid Western culture of its obsession with grounding, of which metaphysics is a symptom. The issue of grounding would extend to the correlative obsession with control that has resulted with a civilisation based on technological standards of assessing results. Language itself needs to be liberated from an instrumental status to that in which we move, see, and have our being.

As a matter of fact, the word "hermeneutics" would become culturally familiar only with Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. However, the force of Heidegger's philosophical vision is decisive in what hermeneutical philosophy was to become. Along with breaking through "representational" models of thought that dominated the modern mind, it sought to reengage with the kind of thinking that reflected a spontaneous relationship with being. This he would recognise particularly in the pre-Socratics. But there seems to have more involved in his wish to undertake in different terms the pre-modern quest to harmonise thought and being. Concerning Heidegger, we also have in Gadamer a privileged witness to what it was that drove his mentor. In an interview late in his long life, Gadamer was asked if he considered himself a continuator of Heidegger in regard to hermeneutics or alternative to him. His answer:

> About this I would say: his radicalism always bore the stamp of his religious background. For his whole life, his radicalism was driven by an endless search for God. I also search in my own way, but with the difference that that I did not have any important childhood influences in this

direction. But for the young boy Heidegger in Messkirch growing up as a church sexton's son, it was of course completely different.[11]

In his *Gadamer: A Biography*, Jean Grondin, who carefully traced his subject's relationship with Heidegger, picked up the tread of their association in Marburg in the early 1920's. We are told of Gadamer's first encounter with the thought of Thomas Aquinas and "the unusually complex" positioning that Heidegger had with the West's greatest theologian. It appears that, in a previous time as a seminarian, Heidegger had enjoyed the patronage of a Roman Catholic foundation dedicated to the continuing study of Aquinas, to which Heidegger pledged himself. In 1919 he rejected the "system of Catholicism," supported by Thomist thought, and became convinced that it deformed the originality of Aristotle and, in doing so, contributed along with Kantism to the ontological experience as the Greeks understood it, i.e., to the forgetting of the question of being.

> The task was to 'destroy' Aquinas, indeed all of Thomism – that is, Neo-Kantian and implicitly phenomenological philosophy of consciousness and its self-certainty. The task was to make manifest the prejudices of this tradition, the 'ontological tradition of the West,' as Heidegger came increasingly to call it, in order to make one's way back to the more primordial concerns of philosophy and of human *Dasein*.[12]

Mirroring the preoccupations of Rudolf Bultmann, with whom both Heidegger and Gadamer were friendly during their time in Marburg, concerning the conflation of biblical and Hellenic languages in theological discourse, Heidegger's notion of Destruction had for its intent the purging of all theological notions implicitly affecting philosophical discourse that constituted the onto-theology, which Heidegger persistently attacked for having blocked the path to a renewed questioning of being. It also had the effect of liberating theology to be a properly Christian one, i.e., without the underpinning provided by Greek philosophy. This, in particular, would have pleased Luther and it would seem that the rejection of Aquinas led

[11] "A Look Back Over the Collected Works and Their Effective History" A Dialogue with Jean Grondin in *The Gadamer Reader* edited by Richard Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), p. 425.

[12] Jean Grondin, *Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 114.

Heidegger toward a deeper involvement with a Protestant frame of mind which can indeed be characterised as fideism and decidedly suspicious of metaphysics.[13]

The result was twofold: firstly, the theological motifs, particularly in relation to language, that appear in a manifest way throughout Heidegger's own work are "paganised" and immersed in a being that nevertheless has a voice. As he progressively moves into the post-*Being and Time* phase of his work, we encounter more insistently being's revealing and withdrawing before the questioning *Dasein*, Famously we are told that poets and philosophers have the special vocation to be attentive to the *logos,* i.e., the gathering in, of being. For Heidegger, being is therefore hardly silent. But language seems to have become strangely autonomous and certainly not under human control; language speaks itself. The human beings who speak in response cannot, therefore, be allowed to define reality. Yet we are said to abide in the world poetically and Holderlin's poetic voice is that which translates the divine and not that of Scripture. The word that language speaks, and to which *Dasein* is attentive, ceases to be personal. Here, at least in the ambit of philosophical inquiry, the biblical God is likely to be silent, though – once again – poetry reigns, albeit in the neutral voice of impersonal gods, reflecting being that seems to have nothing to offer except time.

But is it not also significant that the Heidegger's revolutionary thinking began with the rejection of Aquinas's realist theistic metaphysics?[14] The rejection seems to be part and parcel to the turning away from the so-called Catholic system. Moreover, the turn involved an engagement with liberal Protestantism (at least in the case of Bultmann) that was conjugated with the flight to the Greeks. What we shall encounter more briefly in

[13] Besides the association with Bultmann, Grondin cites, through the testimony of Gadamer, that Heidegger had been reading intensely Paul, Augustine, Luther, Melanchton, and Kierkegaard. *Gadamer: A Biography*, p. 101. In this context, it might be mentioned that the idea of *Deus Absconditus*, understood in association of Luther's theology of the cross, might signal another way that God might be considered silent. The contrary notion of the theology of glory with its implicit reference to the metaphysics practiced by the scholastics and by Aquinas in particular would be likewise the object of Luther's disdain.

[14] Heidegger's aversion to neo-scholasticism based on a certain reading of Aquinas was by no means a rarity in Catholic circles at that time. For example, Maurice Blondel turned his back on that kind of reading when he conceived and brought to fruition his *Action (1893)*. On his point of departure and his reasons for proceeding thus, see my, "Blondel, The Suspended Middle, and the Church" in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* Vol. 9(1), 2009. But the sidestepping, if not simple rejection, is even impressively demonstrated in Fergus Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Clearly, the most outstanding and frontal critique came from Henri de Lubac,, very much influenced by Blondel, but, in varying degrees, it is found in the others that Kerr selected: Chenu, Congar, von Balthasar, Lonergan, Kung, Schillebeekx, Wojtyla, Ratzinger.

Gadamer and Ricoeur will be seen as giving some corrective balance to Heidegger's radical questioning, the Christian *Logos* regaining some of its centrality. Yet a considerable measure of fideism will remain in vigour. The point of the observation is that, to the degree that this is the case, grace and nature will be separate realities and the revealed God's capacity to be heard will not have much to do with the order of creation.

B3. In "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," a short but especially useful example of his manner of thinking, Gadamer commences thus:

> Why has the problem of language come to occupy the same central position in current philosophical discussions that the concept of thought, or 'thought thinking itself,' held in philosophy a century and a half ago? In dealing with this question; I shall try to give an answer indirectly to the central question of the modern age – a question posed for us by the existence of modern science.[15]

Remaining for the time being close to the content of this passage, we gather that, to begin with, the entrance of language at the centre of philosophical preoccupations *as a problem* is not exactly an ancient one. In fact we are given the idea that it has come after another thematic, to wit, "thought thinking itself," and that such an emphasis on the purely noetic transcendental foundation has been replaced and, in its replacement, the possibility is presented to rethink the significance of the role occupied by science in our culture. Something more expansive and interconnecting, something at once comprehensive yet closer to how people actually live their histories, has come into view as that which is indeed more foundational. Moreover, the times seem to demand it. And to say that the times demand it is also to say that the culture of the given time has a need that wants addressing. An uneasiness lies just below the surface of how we think of ourselves that "thought thinking itself" cannot really deal with. So we find – again on Gadamer's account – that the philosophical discussion has turned massively to the matter of language, suspecting that better answers

[15] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in *The Gadamer Reader* Edited by Richard Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern, 2007), p. 77.

to philosophical questions might be discovered by attending to what language does and does particularly to us, with us.

Perhaps, its position is finally transcendental as well and may be expressed as "speech speaking itself" – just as Heidegger did. But, differently than Heidegger, and however much throughout his writings he studied and exercised hermeneutical readings of Greek philosophy, Gadamer did give serious credit to the poetics of the biblical texts. In this regard let us consider the sentence with which he concluded the same essay:

> Genuine speaking that has something to say and hence does not give prearranged signals, but rather seeks words through which one reaches the other person, is the universal human task – but it is a special task for the theologian, to whom is entrusted the saying-further (*Weitersagen*) of a message that stands written.[16]

Most intriguing is the role that is, among all other interpreting and questioning beings, allotted to theologians: to them a communication, fixed in writing but demanding to be said again and again, has been given in trust. As the passage stands, it remains rather cryptic. Notably left to be merely guessed at is if the theologian and guardian of Scripture is somehow responsible to the Church, for that would make a difference in ascertaining Scripture's role in the context of a doctrinal tradition, intent on formulating its teachings with the coming Kingdom in mind. But it remains nevertheless germane to our topic that this idea of the theologian's task stands in response to the levelling of language in our technological civilisation. In fact, it is particularly poetic language that constitutes the safe-guard of those depths of language that cannot be exhausted by conceptualised language at the service of human usage, but yet is to be invoked by those whose mission it is to recognise its presence: "The hermeneutical task is to learn how to determine the special place of poetry in the constraining context of language, where a conceptual element is always involved."[17] Implying a conceptual scheme, poetic structures constitute texts in their most eminent sense, for they stand on their own: in contrast to speech acts de-

[16] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem", p. 88.
[17] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Autobiographical Reflections" in *The Gadamer Reader*, p. 37.

termined by modes of intentional and circumstantial use, "eminent texts" cannot be just left behind.[18] They are texts in their highest possible form, corresponding to that aspect of *Logos* that gathers together, provokes questions and leaves traces that indicate a path to take.

Succinctly put, for Gadamer, human life and the world that it inhabits is constituted linguistically and the process of understanding that structures human intelligence is fundamentally dialogical. This means, in effect, it is grounded in a kind of conversation that is constantly moved along by questioning and then re-questioning the answers that have been provided. We are given an image of a mosaic, the contours of which may be relatively stable, while the pieces that comprise it are in constant movement, for they are actually events: they happen when people reach out to one another in dialogue. Even admitting, as Gadamer often does, that our times, apparently dominated by "levelled life-forms of the industrial age" that approximates language use to a "technical sign-system," the simple effort to say something to another in a unique circumstance is a moment in the constitution of a world. Language, in its most fundamental reality, is the dialogical, involving fusions of horizons and a persistent experience of the shaping power of their historical effects. At its most intense, it comprises experiences that challenge the familiarity of the already established, opening the path of further questioning in the quest of meaning. In Gadamer's words,

> What I am describing is the mode of the whole human experience of the world. I call this experience hermeneutical, for the process we are describing is repeated continually throughout our familiar experience. There is always a world already organised in its basic relations into which experience steps as something new, upsetting what has led our expectations and undergoing reorganisation itself in the upheaval.[19]

[18] The notion of the "eminent text" is taken up both in Gadamer's "Autobiographical Reflections" and an important essay in which he endeavoured to engage Jacques Derrida's critique of the hermeneutical asking after meaning. For his part, Gadamer sees that the entire deconstructive enterprise falls ultimately in the realm of hermeneutics, the realm in which we reach an understanding – however much we need to differ and supplement our current awareness. At the end of the day, the Derridean concepts such as *différance* and *dissémination* can be appreciated, Gadamer thinks, within the categories of "effective historical consciousness" or "fusion of horizons." "Hermeneutics Tracking the Trace (Derrida)" in *The Gadamer Reader,* pp.372-405.

[19] Gadamer, "The Unversality of the Hermeneutical Problem," p. 87.

In effect, as Gadamer would argue in the last part of *Truth and Method*, language constitutes the horizon for a hermeneutical ontology on the basis of the universality of both. Curiously, if there be forgetfulness in the Western tradition, it is, for Gadamer not so much the case of being. The greater risk lies in the forgetting of the *being* of language. However, the Christian notion of the Incarnation has been instrumental in preventing that from happening: it "brings the phenomenon of language out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection. For in contrast to the Greek logos, the word is pure event (verbum proprie dicitur personaliter tantum).[20] He, as a philosopher notes that, in the doctrine of the *Verbum*, in which the Creator God and the Son are united, the phenomenon of language needs to be appreciated in the light of the Word, through whom creation came into being and, *qua* word, is implicit in all. "The greater miracle in language lies not in the fact that the Word becomes flesh and emerges in external being, but that that which emerges and externalises itself is always already a word."[21] Thus, incorporated into Christian theology, the phenomenon of language will have an import unknown in Greek metaphysics, entering as it now does in the forming of the intellect as an inner word. Citing favourably Aquinas and the correspondence, on the one hand, between the thinking and speaking to oneself, and, on the other, the Trinitarian doctrine of the Incarnation, the word is not understood as constituting an expression of the mind: it is the very thing intended, an event.[22]

What remains important for Gadamer the philosopher is that Christology presents us with a "new philosophy of man," one that mediates between the finitude of the human mind and God's infinity. Hermeneutical ontology and the language that constitutes it have a theological inflection that philosophy needs to acknowledge but not necessarily follow beyond that. That said, it remains significant that, in Gadamer's proposal, biblical and theological discourse has been admitted within the poetics of language's ontological status.

[20] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* Second, Revised Edition (New York: Continum, 1999), p. 419.

[21] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.420.

[22] Perhaps thinking of Karl Barth while insisting on the tension of the divine Word's uniqueness and the multiple events of the Church's ever anewed preaching of it, Gadamer opines thusly: "The Christ of the Resurrection and the Christ of the kerygma are one and the same. Modern Protestant theology, in particular, has elaborated the eschatological character of the faith that depends in this dialectical relationship." *Truth and Method*, p. 427.

B4. It is relevant that Paul Ricoeur's *Conflict of Interpretations* represents a clear echo of Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties.* Besides underscoring Kant's persistent presence in Ricoeur's thought, it indicates more importantly how hermeneutical philosophy is called to have the transcendental role of arbitrating and bringing into a more general order the plurality of discourses concerning the *humanum.* (This echoes Kant's conviction that critical philosophy, an "inferior" faculty would be of potentially great service to the nation in rectifying the "superior" faculties of theology, law, and medicine.) Moreover, the sense of service that Ricoeur sees in hermeneutical philosophy has directly to do with the state of contemporary language: he states in his programmatic, "Existence and Hermeneutics" that "I see this general hermeneutics as a contribution to this great philosophy of language, of which we so much feel the need. /…/ The unity of human speech is, in our times, problematic."[23]

The scope of Ricoeur's philosophy is vast and perhaps his most lasting contributions, emerging from his original hermeneutics of the symbols and myths of evil, will be what he has taught us about metaphors, narratives and the figuration of both self and world. But the gist of his philosophical hermeneutics is captured in the proposal with which he began "Existence and Hermeneutics." It comes down to this: the hermeneutical problem that Ricoeur defines as that of reconciling understanding and explanation may be grafted onto the phenomenological method. The result would be the renewing of the concept of self, or the intentional conscience, in terms of existence, for existence would henceforth be seen as interpretative. But, on the other hand, phenomenology will provide the conceptual framework within which the several levels of meaning of human being, discerned by approaches dealing with the archaeology, teleology and eschatology of desire. Each approach to symbolic language has its pre-defined methodological bias that determines the direction of its findings, but all contribute to the discipline of the "I am" implied in the "I think." Remaining throughout intentional, the human subject is apt to grow as it learns to decentre its attention and loosen the hold of the narcissism of the first conscience. With this in mind and because it is ultimately a question

[23] Paul Ricoeur, "Existence et herméneutique," in *Le Conflit des Interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 19. It would seem that we are not entirely rid of the Kantian proposal in regard to the faculties. See the reference to Milbank's essay on the subject in footnote 4.

of a hermeneutic of self, the most demanding decentring is provoked by biblical language, its *poesis*, its unique power to give shape to human hope in the face of its limits – whatever the kind. This means in effect that biblical *poesis*, its metaphoricity, has ontological dimensions that hermeneutical philosophy can be explicated for its existential significance. The living poetically that Heidegger endeavoured to disclose as primary takes on a different hue with Ricoeur: the voice of Heidegger's notion of being is ultimately pagan, that of Ricoeur's of the biblical faiths.[24]

In the eighth study of his *La métaphore vive*, in which he sought to locate just where metaphor opens a space for philosophical speculation, Ricoeur confesses that he notes some revengefulness on the part of Heidegger in regard to metaphysics, a positioning that Ricoeur deplores as hubristic. The passage in which he states this is actually striking, especially keeping in mind Heidegger's animus against Aquinas and the Catholic system:

> Je ne puis voir dans cet enfermement de l'histoire antérieure de la pensée occidentale dans l'unité de "la" métaphysique que la marque de l'esprit de la vengeance auquel cette pensée invite pourtant à renoncer, en même temps qu'à la volonté de puissance dont ce dernier lui paraît inséparable. L'unité de "la" métaphysique est une construction après coup de la pensée heideggerienne, destinée à justifier son propre labour de pensée et le renoncement dont il voudrait qu'il ne soit plus un dépassement. Mais pourquoi cette philosophie devrait-elle refuser à tous ses devanciers le bénéfice de la rupture et de la novation qu'elle s'octroie à elle-même? Le moment est venu, me semble-t-il, de s'interdire la commodité, devenue paresse de pensée, de faire tenir sous en seul mot – métaphysique – le tout de la pensée occidentale.[25]

In essence, Ricoeur's complaint is that what Heidegger took for a generally sharable experience was, in fact, a very personal one. Ricoeur would rather see the philosophical as bound to the radical belonging that poetics seeks to articulate and preserve, indeed – quite reminiscent of Gadamer in

[24] Ever an astute reader of his philosophical interlocutors, Ricoeur observed that, at the end of the day, Heidegger's ontology « *procède d'une écoute plus attentive aux Grecs qu'aux Hébreux, à Nietzsche qu'à Kierkegaard.* » *La métaphore vive* (Paris : Seuil, 1975,) p. 397.

[25] Paul Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil; 1975), pp.395-396.

this regard – drawing human beings into its *Logos* and the *Logos* into Being. The space already opened by poetic descriptions constitutes the possibility of speculative discourse to organise its potential for meaningful referencing. This would be a distinctly different kind of metaphysics from the one that would fall prey to Heidegger's critique of onto-theology based on a sensible/ non-sensible divide. A better rendering of metaphysics would be to note how it takes its cue from the metaphorical process operative in poetics that vivifies both concept and language. Continuity rather than discontinuity marks the association between metaphor and speculative discourse and is at work in Aquinas's analogical attribution, the middle way between the equivocal and the univocal.

Thus conceived, Ricoeur actually displaces Heidegger's notion of onto-theology from the trap of dualism to the transferring potential of metaphor that provides an iconic imaging for the ascending, vertical orientation of analogical speculation.[26] On Aquinas's deepening of Aristotle's notion of analogy, Ricoeur appreciates how he is able to maintain the difference between the speculative and the poetic at the juncture where their proximity is greatest: contrary to Heidegger's reading, the Thomist doctrine of *analogia entis* represents a fertile exchange between metaphysical and poetical discourses. [27] But, in general, Ricoeur's idea is that poetical discourse possesses a "vehement" urgency for refiguring reality and renovating our capacity to describe it. Impinging forces stemming from desiring, the cosmos, and poetic imagination that underlie symbolization enter into the metaphorical process and give rise to thought. About how much thought? Well, the philosopher – according the arresting image with which he concludes "Existence and Hermeneutic" – can only, like Moses, reach the River Jordan and must be content on seeing from afar the Promised Land of ontology on the other side. Entering it will not be allowed to us for the time being. But this ontology never ceases to be at once a matter of plenitude of language as expressed by the *Logos* of Christ who comes as an event and constitutes the measure of the philosopher's effort to achieve the fullest use of his reason.

[26] *La métaphore vive*, p. 355.
[27] *La métaphore vive*, p. 356.

> S'il n'y a qu'un *logos*, le *logos* du Christ ne me demande pas autre chose, en tant que philosophe, qu'une plus entière et plus parfaite mise en œuvre de la raison ; pas plus que la raison ; mais la raison *entière.* Répétons ce mot : la raison entière ; car c'est ce problème de l'intégralité du penser qui s'avérera le nœud de toute la problématique.[28]

Such is the limit of the philosopher whose hermeneutical exercises, in name of reason, take as a standard the donation of a *Logos* identified with a Person. The question remains: how would the reasoning look if we also learn to look at the donation from the point of view of the donor?

C1. Aquinas's teaching about analogy ought not to be primarily understood as referring to a concept, i.e., the concept of analogy. Analogy is simply the way being is properly grasped by human subjects as they know and judge what is around them in the light of the *Logos.* There is, in such instances, participation in what is actively caused and sustained by the Creator God, the source of radical donation.[29] In this case, the *Logos* has transcendental status as that which constitutes a continual advent of grace, and analogy, as part of a process of intellectual conceptualisation, is predicated upon the metaphysics of participated being. Under these circumstances, the human responses in addressing what it knows is simultaneously a seeing. This is to suggest that before the "Linguistic Turn," effectuated by philosophy, beginning at the turn of the Twentieth Century and then lasting throughout, Christianity itself implies a linguistic turn built on God's speaking creation into existence and then in the re-creation initiated by the Incarnate Word. In other words, the philosophical linguistic turn is parasitic in relation to an originally theological one that sets the human mind in the way of God's. Human beings can speak really and truly because they can come progressively to speak and see truly.

In his endeavour to argue for the primacy of "theological metaphysics" and its capacity to engender greater intelligibility than self-limiting philosophical discourse, Milbank interprets Aquinas as offering a phenomenology in which created givens are seen as mirroring their eminent cause:

[28] Paul Ricoeur, "La liberté selon l'espérance " in *Le conflit des inteprétations*, p. 394.
[29] On this, see Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism*, pp. 179-190.

> But the things can only be signs of God if the divine perfections are remotely visible in created perfections – or rather, if to see a created thing as possessing any perfection to grasp its faint conveying of a plenitude of perfection in Aquinas is immediately and implicitly a phenomenology of seeing more than one sees, or recognising the invisible in the visible.[30]

What we are now speaking about is then no longer contained in the idea of onto-theology, but rather "theo-ontology" – an expression also advanced by Milbank to argue for its potential to give a greater account of reality's consistency, even its material consistency, now contemplated in the light of the originating Word. This greater consistency would thus also extend to language and the true breath of its poetics, in this case, Christological poetics.[31] Thus conceived, Heidegger's complaints are more than displaced (as in the case of Ricoeur's critique) but simply overcome: shifting differences in loving and peaceful relationships simply inhere in the *Logos* of the *Theos*. (*Esse* in *pace*, as Maritain once nicely said to underscore the peacefulness of divine action.[32])

Understood in this manner, our reading of reality resists a division between language and non-language, the metaphysical and the physical, moral interests and practical aims. Moreover, seen in this light, reality is not at all best described as a web of substances, defined in their genera and species. They are better thought as relational networks, liable to both repetition and open to continual redistribution. Clearly, whatever we say hangs greatly on how we perceive and then think about them. This would be the kind of pedagogy that speculative theology can provide, but we are still obliged to order rationally our thinking within the scope of the analogical mirrors that situate us causally and set us on our way.

C2. Another promising entrance into relearning to analogical thinking can be found in the terms that Maurice Blondel proposed for the no-

[30] John Milbank, "Truth in Vision" in *Truth in Aquinas* (with Catherine Pickstock) (London: Routledge, 2001), p.47.

[31] M. Sumares, "Christological Poetics and Politics: The Direction of John Milbank's Theology of Language," in *Being-Just-in-Time* (Coimbra: Angelus Novus, 2000), pp. 76-101.

[32] Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 123.

tion of truth: *adaequatio mentis et vitae*. It might be instructive to note that Blondel found that this formulation was a more congenial than the more traditional reference to *intellectus et rei.* For one thing, both mind and life are wider and more ductile concepts suggesting a lively connection between the intellective and volitional capacities, on the one hand, and, on the other, that which actively appeals and increments those spiritual powers. As I have proposed in "Blondel. the Idea of the Suspended Middle, and the Church," because it has to do with the mind's equating itself with the mediating power that brings into harmony the heterogeneous orders constitutive of reality, the figure of the supernatural in the form of the Incarnate Word will appear as ultimately determinate. No other reality could be more alive and active, for it is life itself, assuming and realizing without erasing the differences that the philosophy of action will bring into view.[33] This engagement constitutes action itself as that which proceeds from the human being and acquires successive, let us say, semiotic determinations that stand on their own, somewhat akin to Gadamer's idea of eminent text. Acting is creating but also losing oneself in the creation, whilst adding to it. The living out of the process is one of analogical participation.

Human action, finally, is this emanative *poesis* that is equally metaphysics in act, a perfecting and trans-substantiating of that which is given through repetition. In plainer language, this is equivalent to saying that religious awareness of God's communicability cannot be separated from the responsive practice implied in religious life. The confidence in the determinations – be they explicitly devotional or the allowing of forgiveness and reconciliation – is an expression of analogical participation in the life that is Christ, the bearer of divine pardon and worthy of praise. In such cases, human language may ever be struggling against the limits of what the human mind can come to understand before the self-giving Creator God, but it can indeed come to see and know of its place in the economy

[33] M. Sumares, "Blondel, the Idea of the Suspended Middle, and the Church," p. 47. In relation to Aquinas, it might be curious, but still relevant to note that Blondel's point of departure differs from that of Aquinas's in that latter leans on Exodus 3:12 (I AM WHO AM) for his theistic metaphysics of act, whilst Blondel's thesis, *Action (1893)*, centres on the Incarnation, or the *Vinculum Substantiale* — different images from the same poetics.

of grace, acknowledging its evidence and truly speak of it. And in which case, as the idea expressed in the subtitle of Catherine Pickstock's daring book, *After Writing: The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, suggests, where one kind of thinking and speaking has run its course and has not much more to say and/or think, another way of doing both remains the most promising.[34]

[34] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).