

Transgressions: Erich Przywara, G. W. F. Hegel, and the Principle of Non-Contradiction

Ragnar M. Bergem

ABSTRACT This article concerns the nature of reason in the work of the Twentieth Century Catholic theologian Erich Przywara and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The discussion centers on three interlocking issues: (a) the question whether proper thinking submits to or transgresses the principle of non-contradiction; (b) the relationship between reason and history; (c) the theological concern with distinguishing the “history of reason” and the divine life. It is argued that both Hegel and Przywara give an account of reason where there are moments of contradiction, and that this is a necessary feature of historical existence. Further, while Przywara and others are concerned with Hegel’s making reason’s reconciliation of contradiction in history identical with the divine life, I argue that although this is a real concern, Hegel’s account is more equivocal than normally admitted. Finally, I argue that the distinguishing feature between Przywara and Hegel is what happens after the moment of contradiction; that is where we see the most important difference between an analogical and a dialectical account of reason.

KEYWORDS analogy; contradiction; Przywara, Erich; Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich

The article is based on a paper originally presented at the History and Ontology Conference in Delphi, Greece, 2015. The author’s conference expenses were partly covered by the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge.

✉ Ragnar M. Bergem, Trinity Hall, Trinity Lane, Cambridge CB2 1TJ, United Kingdom rm702@cam.ac.uk

© *FORUM PHILOSOPHICUM* 21 (2016) no. 1, 11–27
ISSN 1426-1898 E-ISSN 2353-7043

SUBM. 30 November 2015 Acc. June 30 2016
Doi:10.5840/forphil20162112

If we are to think about anything at all, it seems that we must at the very least be thinking *this*. But thinking *this* does not amount to very much. Like the toddler who is beginning to realize that he is somehow set apart from the world he lives in, we must also be able to say that *this* is not *that*, and indeed that this thing I am thinking is different from me. These are very minimal requirements for what would qualify as thinking. In fact, they correspond to the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction. The former says that A is A, the latter says that A is not not A.

However incontrovertible these principles may at first seem, as we start to think about the mundane objects of everyday life, about the reality in which we live and, especially, as we think about thinking itself, complexities arise. Before we know it we begin to wonder whether these principles hold even in the clearest case.

In the remarkable work *Analogia Entis*, the Catholic theologian Erich Przywara combines his discussion of the notion of the analogy of being, read as *the* principle of the Catholic tradition, with a sustained attention to the nature and role of thinking. Somehow, in thinking the relation between the creaturely reality and the divine we are led to thinking thinking itself.

Starting out from the notion of thought, λόγος, Przywara breaks down thinking into stages much as I did above. The first form of thinking corresponds to the purity of the λόγος itself. Λογίζεσθαι is the form of thinking that grasps things in their immanent self-identity.¹ Here the given is taken as self-sufficient and clearly defined. Λογίζεσθαι has the allure of the divine, as it encourages grasping both things and oneself in a view proper only to the Creator himself, and many thinkers have fallen to this temptation, concluding that this is exhaustive of what thinking is. If this account of thinking is interpreted ontologically, the principle of identity becomes the measuring rod of thinking and thus applicable to all that there is.

The complexities of experienced reality are hindrances to any attempt to make the principle of identity absolute and remain with the λογίζεσθαι.

1. Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics; Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 199–201 (Hereafter referred to as *AE*). Research into Przywara's work is still relatively small in the Anglo-American literature. The most notable recent discussion can be found in the essay collection in Thomas Joseph White, ed., *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). Much of the discussion in this volume is nonetheless focused on the Karl Barth–Przywara exchange, and none of the authors go into any detail about the issues discussed in this article.

For as we begin to talk about the world, saying *this* or saying *that* does not seem quite enough. If we try to explain what we mean by *this*, or what we are referring to, we find ourselves able to explain the thing thought only by also saying what the thing is *not*. Things are not as self-identical as we first might think.

This is διαλογίζεσθαι, or dialectical thinking (AE, 201–3). Dazzled by the insufficiency and the lack of self-identity of any particular it can lead us to a conception of the world as a sea of contradictions. More likely, however, is that we try to understand how the contradictions envelop themselves, return, as it were, into some kind of identity. But then again the allure of the divine intrudes. For if the world in which we think is one which sustains its identity in contradictions, then the journey towards truth becomes truth itself, as Przywara warns. If we try thinking God here, we must understand God as the dialectical unfolding and becoming of history. Thinking is therefore truly divine, for it partakes in this unity-in-contradiction, and the rhythm of creaturely history is identified with the rhythm of the divine life.

ANALOGY AS THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION

Against these modes of thinking Przywara sides with Aristotle, who made the principle of non-contradiction the foundation of thought.² Both λογίζεσθαι and διαλογίζεσθαι, when taken to their logical conclusion, do away with the principle of non-contradiction and absolutize the principle of identity. This will not do. The third option is ἀναλογίζεσθαι, a thinking that neither claims immediate nor dialectical-speculative identity with the object of thought. This is a thinking situated “between thought’s two deepest antitheses,” that is, it resides in the *middle* between dialectical opposition and pure identity (AE, 203).

Aristotle, who championed the principle of non-contradiction, also laid the metaphysical basis for ἀναλογίζεσθαι, that is, analogical thinking. The “lowest level” of the creaturely realm is the realm of pure possibility, where the principle of non-contradiction does not hold. Here is a *coincidentia oppositorum* of possibilities. In the realm of actuality, the enacted (ἐνέργεια), one instance is selected out of the infinite sea of possibility, thus suspending it from the realm of the contradictory. Here actuality en-

2. It must be noted that Przywara’s interpretation of Aristotle, as with most of the figures that appear in the former’s work, is highly creative. Aristotle’s ideas and terms are often transposed and put to use far beyond what can be justified in a historical exposition.

tails the exclusion of its opposite and the principle of non-contradiction applies: “what is, is not not” (Przywara’s formulation, *AE*, 207). At the same time, the enacted is directed towards completion (ἐντελέχεια), which is the place where the principle of identity is fulfilled. Between δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, and the fulfillment in its τέλος, there is a recurring rhythm, a “back-and-forth.” This is the place of *analogy* “understood as an *immanent dynamic middle directed to an end*” (*AE*, 209).

Analogy is therefore a term that comes in to denote the dynamic existence in that realm of being suspended between the infinite contradictory possibility and pure identity. The dynamic movement is key: for Przywara, the principle of non-contradiction serves as a guide in a world caught up in tension. It is a principle of thinking things in the middle—neither contradictory nor in their complete identity. Thus the principle of non-contradiction stresses openness: the gap between the given actuality and its future identity (*AE*, 210). Actuality is not nothing, but it is also not yet wholly itself.

What we might call the horizontal, intra-creaturely analogy is itself analogous to the primary analogy: the vertical divine-creaturely analogy (*AE*, 219). The creaturely realm as a whole is suspended between the divine being and nothingness. Just as actuality is directed towards an end (ἐντελέχεια), the creaturely realm has its identity beyond itself in the divine milieu, and corresponding to the realm of creaturely δύναμις, we find the nothingness of *ex nihilo*. Again the principle of non-contradiction: “what is, is not not.” The “what is” signifies the contingent existence God gifts the creature. The latter “not” refers to the *nihil* of creation *ex nihilo*. As with the intra-creaturely analogy, the principle of non-contradiction serves as a guide for thought because it affirms the existence of the given particularity without circumscribing its identity. Przywara is able to provide an analysis of these relations through the ontological distinction between essence and existence (*AE*, 151–4, 159–60). The principle of non-contradiction is valid for creaturely reality because while the finite thing *is*—has existence—its essence is bound up with the divine being. This is because “in the creature there is no identity of the ideative and the real,” that is, there is a gap between the existence of the creature and its ideal truth (essence), because its essence is never completely articulated by its concrete historical existence (*AE*, 152). The principle of non-contradiction therefore corresponds and applies to a finite reality whose essence is “in and beyond existence” and therefore a divine life that is in and beyond history (*AE*, 160).

THE TRANSGRESSIONS OF ANALOGY

As much as Przywara's exposition is insightful and suggestive, it is hard to shake off the feeling that he gets everything right by reformulating the law of non-contradiction as ordinarily understood. The participatory metaphysics that Przywara espouses in his *magnum opus* may indeed save our thinking from the pitfalls I have already mentioned. Nevertheless, it does not save the principle of non-contradiction in the usual sense, which is the (rhetorical) wager of his argument.

The reason the principle of non-contradiction fits within Przywara's framework is his reformulation of the principle itself. Turning the principle into the form "what is, is not not," he makes the *iss* and the *nots* refer to specific ontological modalities, instead of allowing for a logical formulation ("A is not not A"), which would traverse any particular reality. Problems arise, however, if one compares the finite creaturely realm with the divine being. Here one must say, wholly consistent with Przywara's own thinking, that *anything* which is, is not itself because it has, most truly, its being in God. We cannot that say the creature is God, but at the very least we have to say that while the creature is creature, it is also not itself: A is A and A is not A.

Insofar as the primary, "vertical" analogy is concerned Przywara has simply pinpointed the single case in which the principle surely *does* apply, that is, when comparing anything that exists with the *nihil*. His suggestion that the principle of non-contradiction is somehow the foundation of all thought is not very helpful. And, indeed, the early nominalist Scholastics already objected against the analogical because it entailed transgressing the laws of logic.³ Even an elementary reflection on the notion that being is somehow analogical or graded should make one aware that it does not square, at least in any obvious way, with the binary nature of the "is" of logical predication.

Przywara's distinction between essence and existence and his apt description of the tense life of creaturely as essence-in-and-beyond-existence are of little help here (AE, 190). Again, the principle of non-contradiction ("what is, is not not") applies if the "is" of "what is" refers to the finite existence and the final "not" to the *nihil*. This seems to account for the suspended life of the creature in the between: out of and above nothing, and

3. See also John Milbank, "The Thomistic Telescope," in *Transcendence and Phenomenology*, ed. Peter M. Candler and Conor Cunningham (London: SCM Press, 2007), 292–7. As is apparent from the rest of this article, I do not count this as an argument against analogy. It would only count as such if one already had decided that formal laws of thinking should be the measuring rod in this question.

therefore existing, but not self-identical due to its essence being tied up in the divine being above. Yet the “in-and-beyond” already betrays a tension not graspable by logical binaries. For we must say that the creature both is and is not its own essence *in the same manner*. Here we cannot refer to different ontological realities in the same statement. In clear terms: the essence of the creature is a is what it is, and is not what it is. This contradiction cannot be overcome, because having one’s between God as *esse ipsum* and nothingness means that one’s being is between being and non-being, which simply cannot be captured by a discourse governed by the law of non-contradiction.⁴

The so-called “intra-creaturely analogy,” that is, the dynamic-analogical middle of actuality between δύναις and fulfillment in identity, must be read against the background of the vertical analogy and thus the principle of non-contradiction seems to break down here as well. Though perhaps if we bracket, *per impossibile*, transcendence for a moment there seems to be room for the principle of non-contradiction. Przywara certainly seems to think so: The creaturely realm of actuality is governed by more-or-less stable essences which allow us to say that *this* thing is not *that*.

Although this is not the place to deal with this in its entirety, one might want to push Przywara’s suggestive concept of *rhythm* one step further.⁵ In that case, instead of conceiving the realm of actuality as governed by clearly defined essences, one could say that to be a thing is rather itself to partake in, or even be, a rhythm. As Lexi Eikelboom has argued, drawing on Philipp Lacoue-Labarthe, rhythm seems to be constitutive of the real: rhythm creates the very possibility of differentiation by creating restraints through repeating pulses, beats or moments.⁶ Such a notion might fit with what Catherine Pickstock calls “non-identical repetition,” and in

4. A reviewer raised the issue of whether Przywara’s formulation must entail a contradiction. Is it not just another way of saying that the creature is yet to be perfectly realized? This need not entail a contradiction, it seems, just as it seems possible to speak without contradiction of an acorn being and not being an oak tree. While the example given would be decided by one’s theory of form (if one spoke of a Hegelian reinterpretation of Aristotle’s theory of form, for example, one would most likely have to say that there precisely is a contradiction between actuality and possibility), it should suffice to say that a contradiction can only be avoided in such a case due our ability to distinguish in what sense the acorn is and is not an oak tree. Concerning Przywara’s formulation of the *analogia entis*, however, it seems to me the point is precisely to rule out the possibility of making a univocal distinction between the actual realization and potential perfection of the creaturely. That is not to say there is no distinction, because the very thrust of Przywara’s argument is that we must uphold the distinction despite not being able to determine it univocally.

5. This concept appears throughout the work, although the concept it is never formalized. See *AE*, 139, 264–65, 296.

a similar fashion suggest a vision of creaturely reality as consisting of repeating knots or densities in between which there is real room for rest, but which nonetheless are connected through their differentiated articulation of or participation in one and the same rhythm.⁷ Conceiving *thingness* as rhythmical also suggests that to be is something that *takes time*, and as being takes time, so also must thinking. Reading Przywara against the grain in this fashion brings out much more clearly the vision of a historical and rhythmic existence present all throughout his work, and takes seriously his claim that the “ultimate rhythm of being” is the rhythm of analogy (AE, 484). In light of this conception of historical creaturely life and thought, we must face the challenge of one who seems to be Przywara’s implicit interlocutor: G. W. F. Hegel. For *Analogia Entis* can be read as an attempt to articulate the historical life of thought without succumbing to the Hegelian system.

SPECULATIVE TRANSGRESSIONS

One of the many myths about Hegel that scholars like to dispel is that Hegel denied the principle of non-contradiction. But he did. While the principle of non-contradiction seems to hold for the “ordinary consciousness,” Hegel always insisted that the apparent self-sufficiency of any finite given is an abstraction, and can be considered as such only by tearing it from the intelligible passage in which it lives. We must indeed say “this,” and “this is not that,” but only as part of a broader movement of comprehension. In fact, unbeknownst to those who hold to them, the principles of identity and non-contradiction “contain *more* than is *meant* by them,”⁸ the principles themselves veil their inner movement: Identity is only identity by being different from difference, and so includes difference within itself.

For Hegel, truth happens *in passing*. If we are preoccupied with the fi-

6. Lexi Eikelboom, “An Archeology of Rhythm in Continental Post-Hegelian Philosophy” (lecture, Graduate Research Day, University of Oxford, February 2012).

7. Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially 41–70. Compare also her reflections on music: “Neither a pure flow nor pure present moments make any coherent sense. And yet in music we hear this impossible reconciliation” Catherine Pickstock, “The Musical Imperative,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 3, no. 2 (1998): 24, doi:10.1080/09697259808571981.

8. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 5–6 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden mit Registerband*, eds. Karl Markus Michel and Eva Moldenhauer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 6:45; in English as *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 361. Hereafter cited as *WL*; page references in braces refer to di Giovanni’s translation.

nite moments of thinking—this; not that, and so on—we easily forget that thinking happened in between. That is why, for Hegel, thinking cannot but be a historical undertaking; thinking properly means remaining with the object of thought, paying attention to the almost imperceptible change in context, and the way in which the subject is implicated in the process itself. One of the most ingenious elucidations of this process in Hegel’s philosophy is his discussion in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here he discusses the classic epistemological dilemma: If knowledge is the correspondence of the subject with the object, or the subject’s concept of the object and the object itself, how could one possibly assure this correspondence—how could one possibly step out of the process of thinking and compare object and subject?⁹ Hegel faces the dilemma head on and claims that the only way beyond it is a vigorous attention to the labor of thought; a “phenomenology” of the process itself, which will expose that the epistemological crisis happens not at the end of a reasoned elucidation of the problem, but rather as the result of a hesitation to push thinking to its own limits, to take thought where thought inevitably wants to go.

The journey of thought begins with the cognition of an object. Consciousness takes this object to be the in itself, or the essence—the location of the truth of the object (*PhG*, 3:76–7 [¶84]). This is the point at which something like the Kantian project arises, or indeed comes to a halt. Proclaiming truth to be the *in itself* Kant has already assured failure from the start, for what is in itself cannot stand in relation to consciousness. Nevertheless, Hegel’s claim is that Kant’s stopping here expresses a complacency, a refusal to properly face the paradoxes through which thinking must go. In other words, Kant’s whole project is based on an undue valorization of the principle of non-contradiction. No wonder, then, that Hegel loved to point to Kant’s antinomies: Even though Kant did not draw the consequences of them, he had brilliantly demonstrated how reason pushes towards its own limits—has a drive to think beyond non-contradiction—and extend into the realm of antinomies (*WL*, 5:52 [35]).

Hegel continues: after the initial engagement with the object another cognition arises. This is the “*the being-for-consciousness of this in-itself* [Für-es-Sein dieses Ansich]” (*PhG*, 3:79 [¶86]).¹⁰ This second cognition is the product of reflexive consciousness, which means that “what conscious-

9. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 68–70; in English as *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), ¶73. Hereafter cited as *PhG*; paragraph references in braces refer to Miller’s translation.

10. The emphasis stems from the translation.

ness has in mind is not an object, but only its knowledge of that first object.” If the first cognition was directed towards an object, the second cognition seems to be directed towards the first cognition, it has the form of “I cognize that I cognize that object.” “Ordinary” consciousness interprets this as a spurious or redundant cognition, a bare reflection on one’s own cognition of little use to the epistemological dilemma at hand. However, if one attends to this new, second cognition, one can see that the object

ceases to be the in-itself, and becomes something that is the *in-itself* only for consciousness [*der nur für es das Ansich ist*]. And this then is the True: the being-for-consciousness of this in-itself. Or, in other words, this is the *essence* [Wesen], or the *object* [Gegenstand] of consciousness. (*PhG*, 3:79 [¶86])

In the process of thinking the object itself has changed and with it truth. There is a recognition that consciousness is implicated in the process of knowing, and that “truth” cannot be attained without reference to the relation opening up between the subject and the object. A faithful description of the “object” cannot happen abstracted from the context in which that object is known, a context in which both subject and object reside.

Inasmuch as truth is the being-for-consciousness of the in itself of the object, we are already beyond the limits of ordinary thought. Thinking properly involves affirming both the self-sufficiency of the object and its constitutive relation to its “other.” Squarely facing reality, Hegel claims we must follow thought where it leads. Doing so is perilous, and there are many opportunities to refuse progress and remain in the chastised world of non-contradiction. The transition from *Verstand*, understanding which remains with ordinary logic and refuses to push thought to and beyond its limits, to *Vernunft*, proper thinking which is open to the perplexities of reality, is a difficult transition because the difference is not “visible” in any ordinary sense. Thinking is something that “proceeds for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness [hinter seinem Rücken vorgeht]” (*PhG*, 3:80 [¶88]).

RHYTHMS OF TRANSGRESSION

We notice two overlapping insights in the works of Hegel and Przywara:¹¹ In the process of thinking there is a fundamental need to divide and distinguish. Saying “this” and “not that” is simply part of what comprehension means; without it thought would have nothing to grasp. Recognizing lim-

its is therefore an indisputable part of thinking, and not only the limits of the objects but the limits of the thought itself. Simultaneously, there is the inevitable drive to transgress those very limits: there is a strangeness to any finite object that cannot be contained, that cannot be conquered through further distinctions on the same level. The insufficiency on one level of description demands a shift in perspective and a new description that not only adds complexity, but dislodges the stable identity achieved in the first place. The presence of infinity in the movement of thought is articulated just as much in the transgression of the limits of finite objects as in the transgression of thought's own limits: there seems to be no limit beyond which thought could not go. As Hegel would insist, once reason has thought its limit, it has already been transgressed.

These two elements of thinking instigate a rhythm back and forth between the creation and transgression of limits; between univocal description and contradiction; the finite and the infinite. This rhythm is history itself; the life of the Concept in Hegelian terms. It is a rhythm which cannot be sufficiently described in synchronic terms, because thinking is something that genuinely takes time. For Hegel, to speak of the "limit," "contour" or "death" of an object of thought is to say one and the same thing.

At this point we must note a hesitation on Przywara's part. He fears that for Hegel "the journey towards truth comes 'to be the site of truth;'" that the historical process of comprehension so *exhausts* the reality which we think that we here have "the titanic form of a laying hold of the inner rhythm of the divine life" (AE, 202). Indeed, he points to Hegel as an example of the problems when one puts an exclusive emphasis on thinking as *διαλογίζεσθαι*—as proceeding in and through contradictions that return to a higher identity. Przywara's concerns are not very new nor are they entirely unfounded. They concern how one interpret this historical comprehensive movement constituted by a repetitive flouting of the principle of non-contradiction.

Put bluntly, the theological consequence of a misstep here is a dangerous amalgamation of God and history. Although this objection is not

11. The following two aspects correspond roughly to what Graham Priest calls "closure" and "transcendence." Although Priest puts forth a strong argument in favor of the inevitability of contradiction, his argument is primarily "formal," in the Hegelian sense; that is, in my reading of both Hegel and Przywara, the logical and ontological are so tied together, that the rhythm between these two moments of closure/identity and transcendence/otherness is at once logical, metaphysical and historical. Cf. Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199254057.001.0001.

novel in any way it is still emphasized by notable scholars and demands attention.¹² Before one should conclude so, however, there are at least a few things to be noted.

Regardless of what one thinks about Hegel's project in the *Wissenschaftslogik* to exposit "God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit" (WL, 5:44 [29]),¹³ and to make the transition to the finite world a necessary consequence of that exposition, when Hegel reaches the Absolute Idea, the Idea *still remains to be thought*. For the Absolute Idea is the "absolute unity of the pure concept and its reality," a unity, however, that Hegel has not thought (WL, 6:573 [752]). That is why "pure truth," or the "göttlichen Begriff,"¹⁴ we should say, "becomes as final result also the *beginning of another sphere and science*" (WL, 6:572–3 [752]).

Hegel's investigation into the nature of the divine leads us therefore back to the world, to a project of thinking the Absolute that until now has been exposit in its abstract form. The Absolute Idea soars over the Hegelian system as the expression of an unwavering faith in the ultimate intelligibility of the world: nature and Concept can coincide; the Absolute can be thought. More than anything, then, the *Logic* is a call to think: all the work remains to be done, and Hegel's repeated failures to think the Absolute—whether in *The Philosophy of Right*,¹⁵ or when he tried to explain the positions of the planets rationally—these are not a failure of the system, but rather a reminder there is yet more to be thought. Following John Walker, we might say that it was because the impressive reconciliation achieved in Hegel's system had no correlate in the real world (European culture was still entangled in all its diremptions) that Hegel's philosophy was met with so strong reactions.¹⁶ Hegel had pointed to a *Sollen*, to something that ought to be thought, but is not yet so.

Although we might press the abstract nature of the Absolute Idea in Hegel, and therefore the persisting challenge to think, one may put this

12. See for example William Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Graham Ward, "Hegel and the Grandeur of Reason," in *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, ed. Peter M. Candler and Conor Cunningham (London: SCM Press, 2010), 232–63; Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

13. The emphasis stems from the translation.

14. Translation modified.

15. Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Verso, 2009), 218–25.

16. John Walker, "The Autonomy of Theology and the Impact of Idealism: From Hegel to Radical Orthodoxy," in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, ed. Nicholas Boyle and Liz Disley, vol. 4, *Religion*, ed. Nicholas Adams (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 179–80.

down to the claim that the end of history has simply not arrived yet—but that when it does arrive, God will be shown to be nothing but the reconciling movement across the finite particularities. There are reasons to take issue with this. Against the view articulated in classical works such as Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, in which Hegel is read as one who thought he had reached the end of history, there are reasons to believe Hegel thought the Absolute might never be completely realized historically, as Charles Taylor and John Burbidge have argued.¹⁷

If, however, Hegel should at times put too much stress on the closure of his system, thereby leaving out aspects of reality, the apparent “failure” paradoxically reveals the strength of his philosophy, because this infuriating ability to reclaim what exceeds the “system” is the very key to the system itself. One should nevertheless be cautious about launching a critique on the basis of what is left out, for such attempts tend to essentialize the remainder in question and claim it as the unthought and unquestioned beginning of yet another system no more “open” than that of Hegel.¹⁸ Instead, cracks in the Hegelian hegemony demonstrate that the value of his contribution is not a system closed but rather his incessant call to think despite giving us no guarantee that the Absolute could ever be exhausted by the world. When we reach the end of the journey of thought, we might not yet be finished. If this is the case, then one cannot so easily claim that the historical process ontologically exhausts the truth of things, for truth is then in-and-beyond history.¹⁹ Thinking the thing in its final self-identity would be nothing less than an encounter with the divine being itself.

These considerations should do away with easy dismissals of Hegel as a thinker who closes off thought into a static whole or who identifies God with the current totality of affairs. The difference between Przywara's and Hegel's theological visions is subtler and as mentioned earlier, it has to do with how thinking proceeds in the face of contradiction.

We have seen that both Hegel and Przywara claim that only a double description that transgresses the principle of non-contradiction stays true

17. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 426, *passim*; John W. Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 29–38.

18. Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 3–11.

19. Rowan Williams, “Dialectic and Analogy: A Theological Legacy,” in Boyle and Disley, *The Impact of Idealism*, 4:274–92.

to reality. There is a need to go beyond. But how does one go beyond? What is the next step? This might be where Hegel and Przywara part ways. For Hegel, the principle of non-contradiction is breached because there is a true contradiction there: The multiple descriptions of the “object” are necessary because they describe a reality whose “moments” are mutually nugatory. True comprehension engages these contradictions, and in and through this engagement the same contradictions are reconciled. Not resolved, however: there is no going back to simple descriptions and the a-relational dichotomies of ordinary understanding. The engagement is itself the reconciliation, for comprehension is a thinking-together and is only possible if the moments of thought are held together in a larger context which, although it is only implicit, is itself intelligible, thinkable. There is therefore a sense in which

I am the conflict, for the conflict is precisely this clash, which is not an indifference of the two as distinct but their bonding together. . . . I am the fire and water that touch each other, the contact now separated and ruptured, now reconciled and united and union of what utterly flies apart; and it is just this contact that is itself this double, clashing relation as relation.²⁰

The identification of myself with the reconciliation of contradictions does not betray a solipsism but the recognition that thinking partakes in the reality of thought. More importantly, this movement of “speculation” wherein I recognize that true comprehension already implies a concept within which contradictions are reconciled. Thinking happens in the middle voice: reconciliation happens to thought as thought reconciles. Finally, speculation is not the end of the process: for every moment of reconciliation is already strange, uneasy and incomplete. Should thinking rest with the achieved reconciliation and become a result it turns false. The Owl of Minerva must fly again, lest thinking goes stale.

Against this life of the Hegelian Concept we can see the distinct character of Przywara’s articulation of the rhythm of analogy. Przywara likewise stresses the importance of movement: in his early work *Religionsphilosophie katholischer Theologie*, he warns against the dangers of staking one’s ground in either essence or existence.²¹ Truth happens in the rhythm be-

20. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, ed. Walter von Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983), 120–1; published in English as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Crafts Hodgson, trans. Peter Crafts Hodgson, Robert F. Brown and John Michael Stewart, 3 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 1:213.

tween the acknowledgement of the given and the openness for plenitude yet to be given. Przywara is uneasy about Hegel's tendency to only allow dialectical relations (AE, 185). As we have seen, contradictions arise in Przywara's account of thinking as well, but they are not the expression of negative relations in the same way Hegel claims they are. Przywara tries to show fidelity to a reality that is "not other," to borrow a term from Nicholas of Cusa. Analogy is situated between self-identity and exclusion, which means that creaturely reality is permeated with polarities that are not relations of negation.

There is indeed therefore a moment of transgression: as the initial description betrays its insufficiency, another perspective must be brought in that is not just complementary, but in tension with the initial take on the matter. This tension is not one of dialectical contradiction but a moment of disclosure in so far as it appears as the creative articulation or expression of a depth in which the perspectives are reconciled, or even coincide. There is a kind of paradox here, but not only because we are in a place where we must say "both . . . and." Instead, the truly paradoxical aspect is that Przywara insists we must speak double *and* that these dual perspectives are not in dialectical conflict.

There also is an objection here: How does this differ from a simple negative theology which negates its negations and rests in incomprehensible silence beyond the conflicting moments of thought? How does this even differ from a sort of Kantian negative theology that postulates an invisible and sublime reconciliation beyond the limits of thought? One can answer these questions by repeating Przywara's (and Hegel's) insistence on the dynamic rhythm of thought. The multiple descriptions of reality stand in a kind of *creative* tension which do not exactly drive towards a speculative reconciliation, but a new way of expressing the "object" in question, a tension which has something to do with what Hegel calls misrecognition. Tension leads to movement, to new pathways of thought. Here the next step is at once "poetical" and "conceptual"—the attempt to stabilize a determinate difference between poetics and systematics is vain—but is precisely therefore thought. This is not incomprehension, because thought is genuinely put to work, spurred by a tension. Halting at the paradox would not only lead to incomprehension, it would, as Hegel recognized, turn into false thinking. Not going forward, not trying to express and think the reality in new ways, would be to bear false witness to the difficulty which lead

21. Erich Przywara, *Religionsphilosophie Katholischer Theologie* (München: Oldenbourg, 1926), 3–20.

to the original tension in the first place. And difficulty does not disappear: when true comprehension of and fidelity to the object is no longer speculative reconciliation, what is needed is a kind of creative, even aesthetic, activity, where neither criteria nor result can be prejudged.

All this means that thinking requires a kind of risk. What Przywara calls “the (formal) dynamic unity of concept and mystery,” can only be reached by a vigorous engagement with the object, and once it is reached, the unity can only be attested by being repeated in new and different ways (*AE*, 185). With Przywara, then, the affirmation of the existence of given is always interlaced with a recognition that the tension or “negative” aspect of the given, points to a truth which supersedes the present configuration. In Przywara’s vocabulary, we recognize that essence is in-and-beyond existence, and therefore that truth is found in-and-beyond history.

Perhaps the above readings of Hegel are more charitable than Hegel himself deserves. At the very least they should point to a greater affinity between the Thomistic tradition and Hegel than often is presumed. And, paradoxically, as we have seen Hegel is also useful for challenging a lingering Neo-Scholastic rationalism in Przywara, in so far as the latter still clings to the principle of non-contradiction as a fundamental mode of thought. In Hegel we find an insistence on the time it takes for things to be, and thus that when we think created things there is always an otherness, a call to think and speak of them in new ways. In so doing, far from simply unearthing a hitherto unthought layer of a static reality, we must recognize that something positively new has been achieved in the process of thinking. The law of non-contradiction must be suspended in order to come to terms with a reality which is not fully describable in univocal terms. At the same time, as Przywara reminds us, there is always an in-and-beyond; the historical process is always outstripped by the divine truth disclosed therein. Przywara tries to steer clear of that side of Hegel which, he thinks, ultimately falls back into identity or univocity. Both Hegel and Przywara tell of a rhythm of thought between plain descriptions and transgressions of ordinary logic. The restful activity of comprehension occurs between these moments. At the same time, we are faced with the question of how thinking proceeds beyond transgression. Here Hegel and Przywara diverge, and their dispute is of great import: it has to do with a faithful comprehension of ourselves, world and God.²²

22. I am grateful to Christian Coppa, Asle Eikrem, Catherine Pickstock, and Rowan Williams for valuable discussion concerning the issues raised in this article.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boyle, Nicholas And Liz Disley, eds. *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*. Vol. 4, *Religion*, edited by Nicholas Adams. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Burbidge, John W. *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Desmond, William. *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.
- Eikelboom, Lexi. "An Archeology of Rhythm in Continental Post-Hegelian Philosophy." Paper presented at Graduate Research Day, University of Oxford, February 2012.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter Crafts Hodgson. Translated by Peter Crafts Hodgson, Robert F. Brown and John Michael Stewart. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- PhG ———. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden mit Registerband*.
- . *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- . *The Science of Logic*. Edited and translated by George di Giovanni. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- . *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*. Vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*. Edited by Walter von Jaeschke. Hamburg: Meiner, 1983.
- . *Werke in zwanzig Bänden mit Registerband*. Edited by Karl Markus Michel and Eva Moldenhauer. 20 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–1986.
- WL ———. *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Vols. 5–6 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden mit Registerband*.
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Edited by Alan Bloom. Translated by James H. Nichols. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Milbank, John. "The Thomistic Telescope." In *Transcendence and Phenomenology*, edited by Peter M. Candler and Conor Cunningham, 288–333. London: SCM Press, 2007.
- O'Regan, Cyril. *The Heterodox Hegel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Pickstock, Catherine. *Repetition and Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- . "The Musical Imperative." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 3, no. 2 (1998): 7–29. doi:10.1080/09697259808571981.
- Priest, Graham. *Beyond the Limits of Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199254057.001.0001.
- Przywara, Erich. *Analogue Entis: Metaphysics; Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014.
- AE ———. *Religionsphilosophie Katholischer Theologie*. München: Oldenbourg, 1926.

- Rose, Gillian. *Hegel Contra Sociology*. London: Verso, 2009.
- . *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.
- Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Walker, John. “The Autonomy of Theology and the Impact of Idealism: From Hegel to Radical Orthodoxy.” In Boyle and Disley, *The Impact of Idealism*, 4:167–93.
- Ward, Graham. “Hegel and the Grandeur of Reason.” In *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, edited by Peter M. Candler and Conor Cunningham, 232–63. London: SCM Press, 2010.
- White, Thomas Joseph, ed. *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011.
- Williams, Rowan. “Dialectic and Analogy: A Theological Legacy.” In Boyle and Disley, *The Impact of Idealism*, 4:274–92.