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(Article begins on next page)

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Analogy and Negativism

In the *Timaeus*, Plato calls analogy »the most beautiful bond […] which makes itself and the terms it connects a unity in the fullest sense.«[1] The concept of analogy has repeatedly been a topic of debate in the history of philosophy and theology. Analogy is one of the main means by which human thought has sought to express the unknown and the divine. In this article I will briefly reconstruct this concept from Aristotle to Kant and Trendelenburg (I–III). The aim of this reconstruction is to examine Kierkegaard's contribution to the concept of analogy, and to what could be called analogical thinking (IV). Finally (V), I will discuss whether Arne Grøn's negativism can be brought into dialogue with analogical thinking.

I. *Tá hómoia synorán*

Analogy is not a likeness of two terms, but of two relations. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* defines analogy as follows: »analogy [*analogía*] is equality of relations [*lógōn*], and involves four terms at least, […] the relation between one pair is the same as that between the other pair […]. As the term A, then, is to B, so will C be to D.«[2] If likeness holds between numerical terms, analogy concerns mathematical proportion; a quantitative likeness of ratios between homogeneous terms. If one term is unknown, the rules of analogy allow me to calculate it.

Analogy can also be qualitative. It is then a likeness of relations between heterogeneous terms. The relations will in some respects also be heterogeneous. I may discover a likeness between heterogeneous relations, as in the example in the *Poetics* where, »a cup (B) is in relation to Dionysus (A) what a shield (D) is to Ares (C). The cup accordingly will be metaphorically described as the ›the shield *of Dionysus*‹ (D+A), and the shield as the ›cup *of Ares*‹ (B+C).«[3]

According to Aristotle, this is an example of metaphor by analogy. »Metaphor – argues Aristotle – consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of

[1] PLATO, *Timaeus*, 31c, in *Plato's Cosmology: The »Timaeus« of Plato translated with a running commentary*, trans. F.M. CORNFORD (London: Kegan, 1937), 44, trans. modified.
[2] ARISTOTLE, *Ethica nicomachea*, V.3, 1131a –1131b, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Works of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), vol. IX, trans. modified.
[3] ARISTOTLE, *De poetica*, 21, 1457b , trans. I. BYWATER, in *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. XI.

analogy.«[4] However, as Umberto Eco argues, the first two types of metaphor – from species to genus and from genus to species – are »in fact synecdoches.«[5] The first substitutes the whole for the part; the second the part for the whole. The third type – species to species – is closer to a metaphor by analogy than to a synecdoche.[6] Thus, metaphor by analogy is indeed not only one of the four forms of metaphor, but the condition for the possibility of *every* metaphor. An analogy hides behind every metaphorical transfer.

The primacy of metaphor by analogy is mainly found in the pages of the *Rhetoric* where Aristotle discusses metaphor, as in the following quotation: »Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related – just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart.«[7] On the one hand, analogical thought is the condition for metaphorical language; on the other, metaphorical language is the expression of analogical thought.

Analogy is also a particular type of unit. Aristotle mentions four kinds of unit: numerical, specific, generic, and analogous: »Again, some things are one in number, others in species, others in genus, others by analogy; in number those whose matter is one, in species those whose definition is one, in genus those to which the same figure of predication applies, by analogy those which are related as a third thing is to a fourth.«[8] For example, we have a numerical unit between two identical squares; a specific unit between two cats, and a generic unit between a cat and a human being. In the case of analogy, we do not have a given and determinate unit between two things, but try to find an analogical likeness between different relations that constitute two things.
Aristotle does not mention »it directly, it is in fact by analogy that likeness of different genera are discovered.«[9] Analogy is a tool for discovering this likeness of different genera. As Trendelenburg puts it in his *Logische Untersuchungen*: »The analogy is indeterminate, because it experiments with the universal.«[10] A unit of analogy is the widest and most indeterminate kind of unit.

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[4] Ibid.
[5] U. ECO, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 91. Cf. also IDEM, »Metafora e conoscenza nel Medioevo«, in IDEM, *Scritti sul pensiero medievale* (Milano: Bompiani, 2012), 661.
[6] Cf. ECO, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 92–94.
[7] ARISTOTLE, *Rhetorica*, III.11, 1412a, trans. W. RHYS ROBERTS, in *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. XI.
[8] ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica*, V.6, 1016b, transl. W.D. ROSS, in *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. VIII.
[9] H. LYTTKENS, *The Analogy between God and the World. An Investigation of its Background and Interpretation of its Use by Thomas of Aquino* (Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952), 39.
[10] »Die Analogie ist unbestimmt, da sie eigentlich mit dem Allgemeinen experimentirt.« A. TRENDELENBURG, *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. 1-2 (Berlin: Bethge, 1840), vol. 2, 267, my translation.

We use analogy in order to find relations »in regard to terms that are far apart [*málista d'en tóis polý diestősi*].«[11] Is there a rule for finding analogies between terms that are far apart? Aristotle provides no rules; he says that »practice is more especially needed [*gymnázesthai déi*].« Through practice »we shall be more easily able to see in one glance the points of likeness [*tá hómoia synorán*].«[12] Analogy is something that you *synorá*, literally, something that you ›are able to see together,‹ or ›to have within your range of vision;‹ something that you suddenly discover being able to see at once.

»It is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh,« writes Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*.[13] And in his *Erläuterungen zu den Elementen der aristotelischen Logik*, Trendelenburg comments that »analogy is tacitly the guiding principle for extending our knowledge. […] Amid the prose of science, analogy still has the magical power of the poetic metaphor, until it relinquishes the magical, just as the blossom must relinquish its color for the fruit of the concept to ripen.«[14] Even the logician Trendelenburg cannot avoid describing the power of analogy analogically. He uses similar terms in his *Logische Untersuchungen*, when he writes that analogy »wants to extend positively our knowledge to an unknown region.«[15]

It is notable that when Aristotle discusses the three fundamental metaphysical principles (i.e., matter, form, and privation) and the two other fundamental principles (i.e., actuality and potentiality), he does not define them. According to Aristotle, »the definition consists of genus and differentiae [*ho horismós ek genous kai diaphorôn estin*].«[16] However, concepts like form, matter, potentiality, and actuality cannot be defined, because they cannot be included in a higher given genus. »Aristotle therefore resorts to analogy as a means of explaining the import of actuality« and of the other metaphysical principles.[17]

As for form, privation, matter, actuality, and potentiality »we must not seek a definition of everything but must be content to grasp the analogy [*to análogon synorán*] […] But all things are not said in the same sense to exist actually, but only by analogy – as A is in B or to B, C is in D or

[11] ARISTOTLE, *Topica*, I.17, 108a, trans. W.A. PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE, in *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. I.
[12] Ibid.
[13] ARISTOTLE, *Rhetorica*, III.10, 1410b, trans. by W. RHYS ROBERTS.
[14] »Die Analogie ist stillschweigend der Leitfaden unserer sich erweiternden Erkenntniß. […] Die Analogie hat noch mitten in der Prosa der Wissenschaft den Zauber der poetischen Metapher, bis sie ihn, wie die Blüte ihre Farben, an die reife Frucht des Begriffs abgiebt.« A. TRENDELENBURG, *Erläuterungen zu den Elementen der aristotelischen Logik. Zunächst für den Unterricht in Gymnasien*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Bethge, 1861), 86, my translation.
[15] »[D]ie Analogie [will] die Erkenntniß in eine unbekannte Gegend hinein positiv erweitern.« TRENDELENBURG, *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. 2, 263, my translation.
[16] ARISTOTLE, *Topica*, I.8, 103b, trans. W.A. PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE.
[17] LYTTKENS, *The Analogy between God and the World*, 48.

to D«.[18] Note the same verb as in the above-mentioned quotation: when we are unable to give a definition we must *to análogon synorán* – we must grasp the analogy – to be able to see relations together at once.

To summarize: Analogy as likeness of heterogeneous relations is a principle for extending our knowledge into the unknown. Analogy is an indeterminate kind of unit that experiments with the universal. All understanding of metaphysical principles is analogical. Through analogy we are able to see relations together at once.

II. *Prós hén* Statements

The concept of analogy so far presented is strikingly different from the medieval concept of analogy of being, which Aristotle could never have understood as analogy. In a well-known section of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle states that ›being‹ must not be understood in one sense only, but that it must be understood in many senses. Being is not univocal, but multivocal. However, this multivocality is not sheer ambiguity: »There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ›be,‹ but all that ›is‹ is related to one central point [*prós hén*], one definite kind of thing, and is not said to ›be‹ by a mere ambiguity.«[19] This one central point which all that »is« is related to is »substance.« »While ›being‹ has all these senses, obviously that which ›is‹ primarily is the ›what,‹ which indicates the substance of the thing.«[20]

Aristotle gives the famous example of the term ›healthy.‹ ›Healthy‹ is always used with regard to the substance ›health.‹ However, it can be used in many ways. It can be used in the sense of preserving health (healthy exercise), of producing health (healthy food), of being a sign of health (healthy complexion), or of being capable of having health (healthy body). Different things can be healthy because they have different relations to the substance ›health,‹ though these relations can be quite different.

In Aristotle's understanding of analogy, we have a likeness of two relations (A is to B as C is to D). In *prós hén* statements, however, we have likeness of two things (A is like B, complexion is like food) because they relate to a third term (C, health), even though the two things have a different sort of relationship to the third term (A is *not* to C as B is to C, complexion is not to health what food is to health).

[18] ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica*, IX.6, 1048 a, transl. W.D. ROSS.
[19] Ibid., IV.2, 1003a.
[20] Ibid.,VII.1, 1028a.

For Aristotle, *prós hén* statements are never ›analogous.‹ However, *prós hén* statements later become the source of the Thomistic ›analogy of being‹: God and human beings are analogous because they have different relations to the same term. For instance, *being* or *goodness* can be said of God in a proper sense (*per prius*), because he is the source of being and goodness, but they can be said of human beings only in a secondary and derived sense (*per posterius*). As Lyttkens consistently argues, the key element of Thomas' conception of analogy is the causal relation between God and creation. »All St. Thomas' analogies between God and the world are ultimately based on the relation of cause to effect.«[21]

The main epistemological difference between the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of being is that through the former we have the possibility of enlarging our comprehension by finding the likeness of given relations; in the latter we apprehend nothing new. Consider the example of ›God.‹ Through analogy of proportionality I try to understand God taking my point of departure from relations within my experience. By contrast, the analogy of being (the *prós hén* statements) only tells us something about God that we already know through faith or revelation. As Umberto Eco puts it: the analogy of being »has less cognitive value than a good metaphor.«[22]

III. Thinking of the Dissimilarity of Things

I now turn to Kant. Kant's concept of analogy is based exclusively on the Aristotelian concept rather than on the medieval analogy of being. It is not even a combination of the two concepts – as Eberhard Jüngel argues.[23]

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant defines analogy in the following way:

> In philosophy analogies signify something very different from what they represent in mathematics. In the latter they are formulas that assert the identity of two relations of magnitude, and are always *constitutive*, so that if three members of the proportion are given the forth is also thereby given, i.e., can be constructed. In philosophy, however, analogy is not the identity of two *quantitative* but of two *qualitative* relations, where from three given members I can cognize and give a priori only the *relation* to a fourth member but not *this* fourth *member* itself, although I have a rule for seeking it in experience and a mark for discovering it there.[24]

[21] LYTTKENS, *The Analogy between God and the World*, 244.
[22] »L'*analogia entis* ha minor valore cognitivo di una buona metafora.« ECO, »Metafora e conoscenza nel Medioevo«, 662, my translation.
[23] Cf. E. JÜNGEL, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 363.
[24] I. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B222, trans. P. GUYER and A.W. WOOD (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 297–298.

Qualitative analogy does not give a *constitutive* rule, but only a *regulative* rule, claims Kant. Analogy does not give me the rule for constructing the fourth member, but only the relation through which I can seek it in experience. To find the likeness of relations is my regulative rule in order to build a meaningful experience.

Despite the role that analogy plays in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is not until the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that the conditions for the possibility of analogy are analyzed. As Emilio Garroni and Hansmichael Hohenegger have argued: »In the third *Critique*, the very problem of the possibility of analogy itself is discussed.«[25] According to them the question of analogy is »the very form of the issue (at the same time unitary and complex)« that is at stake in the third *Critique*.[26] In §59, Kant explains how analogical thinking arises. We begin with a concept (or better yet, the relations that constitute a concept) that we cannot explain. We then use another known concept (or better yet, the relations that constitute this known concept) in order to understand the unknown concept. We apply »the mere rule of reflection« on a known object to an entirely different and unknown object, of which the first is only the symbol.[27] We use analogy when we want to understand something about which we are ignorant.

What kind of rule do we apply when we use analogy? The rule is the *a priori* principle of the aesthetic faculty of judgment. This principle is »a universal rule that one cannot produce.«[28] The rule exists; it is universally human, but I cannot give an account of it, I cannot show it. Because I cannot account for the rule, I cannot be sure that the rule has been applied correctly. It is impossible to distinguish with certitude the correct use of the rule from the incorrect use of it. What Kant writes about the judgment of taste can be repeated about building analogies: »One solicits assent from everyone else because one has a ground for it that is common to all; one could even count on this assent if only one were always sure that the case were correctly subsumed under that ground as the rule of approval.«[29] But we can *never* be sure the case has been correctly subsumed under the rule, because the rule cannot be produced.

[25] »Nella terza Critica si pone precisamente il problema della possibilità stessa […] dell'analogia.« E. GARRONI, H. HOHENEGGER, »Genesi, struttura e senso della terza Critica kantiana«, in E. GARRONI, *L'arte e l'altro dell'arte. Saggi di estetica e di critica* (Roma/Bari: Laterza, 2003), 41, my translation.
[26] »[…] la forma stessa del tema insieme unitario e complesso della terza Critica«. Ibid., 39, my translation.
[27] I. KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §59, B256, trans. P. GUYER and E. MATTHEWS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 226.
[28] Ibid., §18, B63, 121.
[29] Ibid., §18, B63–64, 121–122.

To think analogically is to apply a rule that one cannot give an account of. To think analogically means *synorán* – seeing relations together, at once – and that, as Aristotle claims, requires practice; it requires aesthetic practice, Kant adds.

Another point is crucial in Kant's analysis of analogy. Through analogy we think the similarity of the relations that two *dissimilar* terms have to other terms. In this way we think the analogy of two things »even on the very point of their dissimilarity.« »One can […] *think* of one of two dissimilar things, even on the very point of their dissimilarity, by means of an *analogy* with the other.«[30] By thinking about similarity, a good analogy sheds light even on the very point of the dissimilarity of the two terms, and on the dissimilarity of the relations that constitute these terms. Thinking analogically is a way of thinking both likeness and difference. I think similarity through dissimilarity, and dissimilarity through similarity. A complete dissimilarity would mean no relation, and therefore the dissimilarity could not be grasped. I need to find some similarity in order to think the dissimilarity.

According to Kant, all human cognition about God is analogical – in the Aristotelian, rather than the Thomistic sense. This cognition, however, is only ›thought‹ and not ›knowledge‹ about God. It does not allow us to ›infer‹ anything about God.[31] According to Aristotle and Trendelenburg, analogy is a tool for knowing new things. According to Kant, analogy gives no knowledge, but triggers our imagination and our thought; it »occasions much thinking.« Kant's definition of aesthetic ideas can be applied to analogy: »by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it.«[32] Every good analogy is the expression of an aesthetic idea; it "»sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end.«[33]

Kant follows Hume in his critique of analogy as a tool for extending our knowledge. In fact, Hume's critique of analogy did not want to ban analogy, but only to deny that analogy can be a source of cognitive inference: »Wisdom, Thought, Design, Knowledge; these we justly ascribe to him,« in analogy with our powers, because »we have no other language or other conceptions by which we can express our adoration of him. But let us beware, lest we think that our ideas anywise correspond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any resemblance to these qualities among

[30] Ibid., §90, B 448, 328–329.
[31] »[…] from that respect in which they [i.e., two dissimilar things] are dissimilar we cannot *draw an inference* by means of the analogy.« Ibid.
[32] Ibid., §49, B192–193, 192.
[33] Ibid.

men. He is infinitely superior to our limited view and comprehension; and is more the object of worship in the temple, than of disputation in the schools.«[34] Analogy serves to show God's infinite difference from the human. Analogy can essentially only be »very weak […] confessedly liable to error and uncertainty.« It is but »a guess, a conjecture, a presumption,« since between the divine and the human »the dissimilitude is so striking.«[35] Paradoxically, analogy allows showing precisely the dissimilitude.

To summarize: According to Kant, through analogy we apply a rule that we cannot account for. This rule is the universal human principle of the aesthetic power of judgment. Through analogy we think similarity of relations even on the very point of their dissimilarity. All understanding about God is analogical.

IV. Revoked Analogy

At first glance it does not seem that analogy plays a central role in Kierkegaard's authorship. However, I would like to highlight two books that bring Kierkegaard in connection with analogy: Anders Kingo's *Analogiens teologi. En dogmatisk studie over dialektikken i Søren Kierkegaards opbyggelige og pseudonyme forfatterskab* (1995)[36] and Steven Shakespeare's *Kierkegaard and the Refusal of Transcendence* (2015).[37] They hold opposite theses: The former that the whole authorship of Kierkegaard is to be interpreted through a peculiar concept of analogy; the latter that Kierkegaard totally rejects the concept of analogy. In this context, I must be content with saying that the two books, despite their opposite theses, share the same point of departure, namely, the Thomistic concept of analogy, that is, analogy of being. Kingo does this in order to show how Kierkegaard modifies the concept; Shakespeare in order to prove how Kierkegaard rejects it.

My thesis is that Aquinas' analogy of being plays no role in Kierkegaard's thinking on analogy. Rather, Kierkegaard's use of analogy is related to the tradition I have briefly sketched here, from Aristotle to Kant to Trendelenburg.

In an analysis of Kierkegaard's use of the concept of analogy,[38] we may be content to quote the first of the 15 theses of *The Concept of Irony*: »*Similitudo Christum inter et Socratem in*

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[34] D. HUME, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Hafner Press, 1948), Part II, 16.
[35] Ibid., 18.
[36] A. KINGO, *Analogiens teologi. En dogmatisk studie over dialektikken i Søren Kierkegaards opbyggelige og pseudonyme forfatterskab* (København: Gad, 1995).
[37] S. SHAKESPEARE, *Kierkegaard and the Refusal of Transcendence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[38] S. KIERKEGAARD's writings are quoted with the following abbreviations:
SKS *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. N.J. CAPPELØRN et al., vol. 1–55 (København: Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret/Gad, 1997-2012).

dissimilitudine praecipue est posita [The similarity between Christ and Socrates consists essentially in their dissimilarity].«[39] Kierkegaard is aware that this thesis has to do with analogy. It is confirmed in a footnote, where he writes: »the similarity consists in dissimilarity and that there is an analogy only because there is an opposition [*Modsætning*].«[40]

We know that this thesis is the only one that was not developed in the book itself. We might say, however, that Kierkegaard's entire authorship is nothing but an attempt to develop this thesis. Let us analyze this thesis. To say that the similarity between Socrates and Christ consists essentially in dissimilarity means at first sight that there is no similarity between them, and therefore no analogy. But Kierkegaard does not say that there is no analogy, he says that similarity consists of dissimilarity. Is it then a logical contradiction; nonsense? No, not if we remember Kant's definition: an analogy can even shed light on a point of dissimilarity between two terms. This is indeed Kierkegaard's point in a footnote in *The Concept of Irony*: »there is an analogy [between Socrates and Christ] only because there is an opposition.« Analogy has the purpose of showing the dissimilarity.

This has been the fundamental point of analogy since Aristotle. We revert to analogy when there is no numerical unity, no unity of species, or no unity of genus. Analogy exists only between heterogeneous things. Analogy is used when one attempts to find a relation between things that do not seem to have a relation. Analogy is an attempt to create relations between things that cannot be related to each other through a definition.

Kierkegaard uses the concept of analogy in a central place of the *Postscript*. Climacus is discussing the question of truth for an existing human being; a finite, temporal human being that tries to relate in a passionate way to something infinite and outside time. Here, it is impossible for a human being to reach certainty about whether the infinite being she relates to is objectively true. This infinite is objectively uncertain. The question of truth therefore concerns not the *object* of the relation, but the *relation* itself: »[T]ruth is precisely the daring venture of choosing the objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite.«[41] This relation is »the highest truth for an *existing* person.«[42] Climacus claims that this subjective truth, which consists in the passionate relation to an objective uncertainty, is a paradox, and this is the Socratic truth. In Christian faith, however,

KW *Kierkegaard's Writings*, ed. H.V HONG and E.H. HONG, vol. I–XXVI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978–98).

[39] KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, KW 2, 23 / SKS 1, 65.

[40] KW 2, 30 / SKS 1, 72, trans. modified.

[41] KIERKEGAARD, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to »Philosophical Fragments«*, KW XII 1, 203 / SKS 7, 186.

[42] Ibid.

subjectivity does not relate to something objectively uncertain (God as eternity), but to something that is an objective impossibility – a God that comes into existence: »Existence can never be accentuated more sharply than it has been here.«[43]

However, Socratic subjective truth is an *analogon* of Christian faith, the faith of the absurd. This is Climacus's thesis. The analogy is between two relations. On the one hand, we have the relation of an existing finite person to an infinite, eternal, but objectively uncertain being. On the other hand, we have the relation of an existing finite person to something that is impossible. From objective uncertainty »held fast in the passion of inwardness«[44] to objective impossibility held fast in the passion of inwardness. From a relation that seems to be the highest accentuation of existence, to a relation that is an even higher accentuation of existence. Between these two relations, there is an analogy, claims Climacus, even if »the difference is nevertheless infinite.«[45] After several pages, Climacus seems to change his mind: »Faith belongs essentially in the sphere of the paradoxical-religious […] All other faith is only an analogy that is no [analogy], an analogy that can serve to make aware, but no more, the understanding of which is therefore a revocation.«[46] So there is no analogy of the paradoxical-religious. Does Climacus contradict himself in the same work? And what does it mean that »all other faith is only an analogy that is no analogy«? This sentence also seems to be contradictory.

On the one hand, Climacus legitimizes analogy; on the other hand, every analogy we use must be revoked. Analogy is legitimized *in order to* be revoked. This is not only the case when we use Socratic faith as an analogy to Christian faith. This is also the case when we use examples from daily life, something that Kierkegaard does time and again in order to understand Christian faith. Recall, for instance, Anti-Climacus's analogy in *Sickness unto Death* when he compares the Christian message to an emperor telling a poor manual laborer that he is to become his son-in-law.[47]

Nevertheless, Climacus writes in the *Postscript*: »Let us take a few examples from minor situations in life, though we must constantly keep in mind that when we use these examples, there is an absolute difference, there is no analogy to the sphere of the paradoxically religious, and thus we must constantly keep in mind that when the analogy is understood, its use is a revocation.«[48] He then offers some examples. After giving examples from daily life, however, Climacus concludes:

[43] Ibid., KW XII 1, 209 / SKS 7, 192.
[44] Ibid., KW XII 1, 210 / SKS 7, 192.
[45] Ibid., KW XII 1, 206, footnote / SKS 7, 190.
[46] Ibid., KW XII 1, 569, footnote / SKS 7, 517.
[47] Cf. KIERKEGAARD, *Sickness unto Death*, KW XIX, 84–85 / SKS 11, 197–198.
[48] KIERKEGAARD, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, KW XII 1, 567 / SKS 7, 515, trans. modified.

»It is the same also with the person who is truly a Christian—if we bear in mind that there is no analogy.«[49] Analogies must be used in order to be revoked. The right application of the analogy is its revocation.

Analogy is necessary in order to understand the paradox. However, analogy is a »deception,« and if the analogy is not immediately revoked it will annihilate the paradox: »Instead of using the analogy in order to define the paradox […] he mistakenly revokes the paradox by means of the analogy, which is really a deceptive analogy, the use of which is a revocation of the analogy, not the paradox.«[50]

Analogies are like sand castles: they must be built in order to be destroyed. As Friedrich Schiller wrote in his elegy *Nänie*: »*Auch das Schöne muß sterben!*«, »Even the beautiful must die!«[51]

In an entry in *Journal JJ* from 1844 Kierkegaard discusses Trendelenburg's idea that »the highest principles can be demonstrated only indirectly (negatively).« He speaks here of analogy as a leap from a logical point of view: »From analogy and induction one can only reach a conclusion by a leap.«[52] I have mentioned the significant role that the concept of analogy plays in Trendelenburg's logical writings. Even more interesting is the fact that Kierkegaard links analogy to his category of the leap.

I noted earlier that for Kant, the condition for the possibility of building analogies is the aesthetic faculty of judgment. Kierkegaard is fully aware that analogy is related to the aesthetic and the poetic. I quote from an entry from 1849, where Kierkegaard reflects on the first of the *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*.

> The didactic treatment of the life of Christ […] is nonsense. A new path may be, and must be, blazed. […] To that end, I've thought it best to use the poetic. I think that human analogies – when, please note, the qualitative difference between God-Man and human being is respected – can help illustrate it, can help give a more vital impression of the gospel again. Christianity, or the gospel, has become trivial to people because it's been familiar to them for such a long time and they've learned it by rote. […]It's really a matter of doing *something* to make the life of Christ *present and intimate*. This, I think, is the

[49] Ibid., KW XII 1, 567 / SKS 7, 516.
[50] Ibid., KW XII 1, 580 / SKS 7, 527, trans. modified.
[51] F. SCHILLER, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. O. DANN et al., vol. 1–12 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988–2004), vol. 1, 182–183.
[52] KIERKEGAARD, *Journal JJ*, no. 266, in *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, ed. N.J. CAPPELØRN et al. (Princeton /Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007–), vol. 2, 206 / SKS 18, 225.

> merit of the little essay [i.e. the first of *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*]. Artistically, and with the help of human analogies, possibility has replaced facticity. And possibility is precisely what awakens.[53]

The poetic can serve the religious. The poetic means human analogies. On the one hand, »possibility is precisely what awakens.« On the other hand, through analogy, possibility replaces facticity, and replacing facticity with possibility is the very flaw of the aesthetic. As we read at the beginning of the second part of *The Sickness unto Death*, poetry of Christianity is sin: »Christianly understood, every poet-existence (aesthetics notwithstanding) is sin, the sin of poetizing instead of being, of relating to the good and the true through the imagination instead of being that – that is, existentially striving to be that.«[54]

Analogy is the category of making aware; of awakening; of understanding that we cannot understand. If making aware of Christianity is the key category in Kierkegaard's authorship, then so is analogy.

Continuing and radicalizing the sketched tradition from Aristotle to Kant, Kierkegaard's contribution to the concept of analogy can be thus summarized: The very nature of analogy consists in finding likenesses of relations and revoking them at the same time. Analogy defines our understanding of the incomprehensible by letting us understand in which sense we cannot understand.

V. Analogy and Negativism

»[H]ow [do] we relate to that which we do not understand or even cannot understand?« This is the crucial question the Danish philosopher Arne Grøn faces in his reading of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*.[55] Is it possible to bring into dialogue Grøn's enquiry of understanding that we cannot understand with my analysis of analogy in Kierkegaard? It should be if, in accordance with the result I arrived at, analogical thinking is a tool for understanding the incomprehensible by letting us understand in which sense we cannot understand.

In his essay »Transcendence of Thought« Grøn analyses the »thought-project« contained in *Philosophical Fragments*, a work signed by the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. First, Climacus

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[53] KIERKEGAARD, *Journal NB11*, no. 33, in *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 6, 22 / SKS 22, 26.
[54] KIERKEGAARD, *Sickness unto Death*, KW XIX, 77 / SKS 11, 191.
[55] A. GRØN, »Transcendence of Thought. The Project of ›Philosophical Fragments‹«, *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook* (2004), 80–99. Cf. also IDEM, *Subjektivitet og negativitet: Kierkegaard* (København: Gyldendal, 1997), 357–362 , and IDEM, »At forstå – og at forstå«, in *At være sig selv nærværende: Festskrift til Niels Jørgen Cappelørn*, ed. J. GARFF, E. ROCCA and P. SØLTOFT (København: Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, 2010), 100–115.

describes the Socratic position (called position A), where the human being has access to the truth. Even if the human being does not know the truth, she knows that she *can* seek the truth and that she can come to it through introspection. The truth is already in her. She must just remember it, as the slave does in Plato's *Meno*. Another human being can only help her, in a maieutic way, to go back to herself. This position is understandable.

Is it possible for human thought to construct another position? In this second position, called B, human being is »outside the truth,« is »untruth and [is] that through one's own fault.«[56] Human being is untruth and – furthermore – lacks »the condition for understanding the truth.«[57] In this position, no human being, but only God, can be the one »who gives the condition and gives the truth.«[58]

The two positions seem to sketch an alternative between immanence and transcendence; »between a natural theology and a theology of transcendence;«[59] between understanding and impossibility of understanding. On the one hand, immanent understanding; on the other, a paradox that is not to be understood. In Grøn's view, however, the alternative cannot be a simple one:

> The *project* of the book, […] is not straightforward, but awkward. It turns things upside down. The project deals with that which a human being cannot think of or imagine: that which »did not arise in any human heart,« to quote Climacus paraphrasing I Corinthians 2:9 […]. Consequently, Climacus presents *as* a thought-project that which is not thought of or conceived. The project is about a radical transcendence of thought – conceived of as a thought-project.[60]

In fact, the very problem is that »we will have to understand that we cannot understand.«[61] But if we will have to understand the paradox as the non-understandable, this means – continues Grøn – that it is possible to *misunderstand* that which we cannot understand. »The very possibility of misunderstanding (e.g., in trying to explain the paradox) shows that we cannot escape the condition of understanding.«[62] We are called to understand even that which we cannot understand. However, how can we understand that we cannot understand? Can this understanding be comprehended as analogical understanding?

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[56] KIERKEGAARD, *Philosophical Fragments*, KW VII, 15 / SKS 4, 224.
[57] Ibid., KW VII, 14 / SKS 4, 223.
[58] Ibid., KW VII, 15 / SKS 4, 224.
[59] GRØN, »Transcendence of Thought«, 83.
[60] Ibid., 82.
[61] Ibid., 84.
[62] Ibid.

Before answering this question, we must accentuate a second element crucial to Grøn's thought: Understanding that we cannot understand also involves a peculiar understanding of ourselves: »To understand the paradox *as* paradox is a *reflective* understanding in the following sense: we come to understand that we cannot understand the paradox (in the sense of explaining it), *and* we come to understand ourselves in this relation, precisely because we are ourselves in understanding.«[63] I draw attention to the words »*reflective* understanding«: Can this reflective understanding be comprehended in line with the Kantian reflective faculty of judgment? According to Kant, the judgment of taste is not only a judgment on something we experience, but in it »the subject *feels itself* as it is affected by the representation.«[64] Feeling something means feeling ourselves in feeling something; understanding something means understanding ourselves in understanding something. How do we understand ourselves, when we come to understand that we cannot understand?

Chapter III of *Philosophical Fragments* is devoted to »the absolute paradox,«[65] as that unknown we cannot understand. Climacus calls this unknown »the god.«[66]

> It is the frontier that is continually arrived at, and therefore […] it is the different, the absolutely different. But it is the absolutely different in which there is no distinguishing mark. Defined as the absolutely different, it seems to be at the point of being disclosed, but not so, because the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself but uses itself for that purpose and consequently thinks the difference in itself, which it thinks by itself.[67]

We can observe the same double movement of using and revoking analogy described in the *Postscript*: Thought tries to think by itself the absolutely different, but must at the same time revoke the understanding it arrived at. In fact, in thinking by itself the absolutely different, thought makes absolute difference like itself, and thus destroys absolute difference as difference. On the other hand, even if thought revokes its understanding of the absolutely different, it »cannot absolutely negate itself,« and it is therefore obliged to think somehow the absolutely different by itself.

According to Grøn, what Climacus presents in this section is an intensified dialectic of the limit. It has often been argued that »to draw a limit presupposes that we have an idea of what is

[63] Ibid., 88.
[64] KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §1, B4, 89, my italics.
[65] KIERKEGAARD, *Philosophical Fragments*, KW VII, 37–54 / SKS 4, 242–252.
[66] Ibid., KW VII, 39 / SKS 4, 245.
[67] Ibid., KW VII, 45 / SKS 4, 249–50.

beyond the limit.«[68] Climacus, however, intensifies this dialectic: »the thought, that seeks to think the absolute as that which is absolutely other than thought itself, encounters itself. This thought uses itself in order to think that which is absolutely different from itself. […] In the transcendence of thought, thought encounters itself.«[69] What does it mean that thought encounters itself?

On the one hand, in seeking to transcend itself thought makes a »negative experience«: »Thought's movement of transcendence does not yield transcendence of thought. In this sense, the project of transcendence of thought fails. […] Immanence is where we are, and we are not able to go beyond ourselves in a sphere of transcendence. […] Transcendence is not a position we can take.«[70] We cannot leave immanence; we cannot leave our human condition. Still, »*transcendence announces itself* in a rupture or in the limit where our thinking and imagination break down and are turned upside down, and where we ourselves become the addressee.«[71]

On the one hand, we can relate to transcendence only by thinking and imagining it; on the other hand »our imagination [is] broken and reversed«[72] in the attempt to think transcendence. This corresponds to thinking transcendence analogically. We have nothing other than human analogies for thinking transcendence; at the same time every analogy must be revoked and reversed.

Here Grøn takes a further step: »[…] that our imagination itself is broken and inverted […] opens the possibility of the inversion of perspective.«[73] We see ourselves with the eyes of the other. »Through the medium of imagination one seeks to place oneself in the situation of the other.«[74] Here, in my opinion, Grøn again encounters Kant's third *Critique*. Discussing judgment as a *sensus communis*, Kant claims that judgment yields one of the three maxims of the »common human understanding«: »To think in the position of everyone else.«[75] This maxim »reveals a man of a *broad-minded way of thinking* if he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the

[68] GRØN, »Transcendence of Thought«, 93.
[69] Ibid., 93–94. Cf. also IDEM, »Menneskelig selvforståelse og frigørelsens dialektik: Kierkegaard og Sokrates – og Platon«, in *Platon – værk og virkning*, ed. J.K. LARSEN and J.L. FINK (København: Gyldendal, 2016), 574–602, here, 598: »Med begrebet om det absolutte paradoks spørger [Kierkegaard] efter grænsen for menneskelig forståelse, men en sådan grænse kræver selv forståelse – menneskelig selvforståelse.« (»Through the concept of the absolute paradox raises Kierkegaard the question of the limit of human understanding, but such a limit demands itself understanding – human self-understanding,« my translation.)
[70] GRØN, »Transcendence of Thought«, 96.
[71] Ibid., my italics.
[72] Ibid.
[73] GRØN, »Imagination and Subjectivity«, *Ars Disputandi*, 2 (2002), 27–36, here, 34.
[74] Ibid. Cf. also IDEM, »Kærlighedens sakramente – Kierkegaard og nadveren«, in *Nadver og folkekirke*, ed. K. BUSCH NIELSEN (København: Anis, 2002), 67–78, here, 74: »Perspektivet vendes om, idet den, der ser, selv bliver set, eller rettere ser sig selv som set af den ›Anden.‹« (»The perspective is inverted, in so far as the one who sees is herself seen, or better sees herself as seen by the ›Other,‹« my translation.)
[75] KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §40, B158, 174.

judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and reflects on his own judgment from a *universal standpoint* (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others).«[76] The principle of the power of judgment is the condition both for the possibility of analogical thinking and for the possibility of an understanding through which we put ourselves in the standpoint of the other.

To summarize, Arne Grøn's peculiar contribution to the analogical thinking of transcendence is that in this negative experience of thought we encounter ourselves; we understand ourselves: »Transcendence of thought is only possible in thinking, however, not in the sense that thought transcends itself, performing a movement of transcendence, but, on the contrary, in the sense that fails to think that which is absolutely different *and thus encounters itself in its own limit* [my italics]. […] we will have to understand ourselves *in* not understanding the paradox.«[77] Facing transcendence is an experience of thought and imagination – in Kantian terms, an experience of »free play of the imagination and the understanding«[78] – and an experience of lack of thought and imagination. In it, we face the never-ending task of understanding ourselves.

[76] Ibid., §40, B159, 175.
[77] GRØN, »Transcendence of Thought«, 99.
[78] KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §9, B29, 103.