

The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity: At Odds with Modernity

Neil Ormerod

Abstract: The dominant role played by the psychological analogy in Trinitarian theology has largely been rejected by twentieth-century theology. This paper reviews the role of the analogy in the work of Aquinas and argues that the analogy embeds certain philosophical positions deeply at odds with modernity and post-modernity. It further suggests that this embedding may in fact be part of its point, if we view the doctrine of the Trinity as culturally transformative.

FOR OVER ONE THOUSAND YEARS the psychological analogy for the Trinity was the high point of Trinitarian theological reflection. From its origins in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, to its systematic exploitation in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, and beyond in the myriad commentators on Aquinas, the analogy provided a focal organising principle for Western Trinitarian theology. Yet in the modern revival of Trinitarian thought, evident during the twentieth century, the analogy has been increasingly marginalised and even rejected by theologians in both the Protestant and Catholic traditions. It is now not uncommon to find dismissive comments about speculation on the "inner life of God" among theologians who prefer to expend their energies on how the doctrine of the Trinity relates the other mysteries of faith, such as creation, the paschal mystery or the church.

Undoubtedly this represents a massive turn around in the theological climate. Yet it is not clear why this turn around has come about. As we shall see below, the reasons theologians give are myriad, though their conclusions are the same, namely the psychological analogy has had its day and we must now find alternative principles for organising our theology of the Trinity. However there are some who are resisting this litany, for example Tony Kelly,¹ Anne Hunt² and others in the Lonergan school who remain convinced of the contribution it can make. My own position is that the analogy is a significant cultural achievement in

1. See for example, Anthony Kelly, *The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989) and his article, "The 'Horrible Wrappers' of Aquinas' God", *Pacifica* 9 (1996), 185-203.

2. Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and the Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology", *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), 197-218.

which are embedded important philosophical assumptions that largely run counter to the expectations of modernity and post-modernity. Moreover, these embedded assumptions are not incidental to the task of revelation and its theological exposition.

The structure of the paper will then be as follows. First, I shall visit the analogy in the setting of the *Summa Theologiae*, to uncover its structure and its role within that work. I shall then document some of the litany of objections and rejections that the analogy has faced from theologians in the twentieth century. Next I shall explore the principles embedded within the analogy and the ways in which they run counter to modernity and post-modernity. Lastly I shall attempt to locate the analogy within a larger cultural role for revelation and theology.

THE PLACE OF THE ANALOGY IN AQUINAS' THEOLOGY

It is interesting to compare the place of the psychological analogy in the writings of Augustine and of Aquinas. In the work of Augustine it appears at the end of a long and detailed investigation of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the high point, the apex of his study. Without clear precedents Augustine proposes a number of analogies, playing with the themes of mind, memory, knowledge and love.³ While acknowledging the inadequacy of his attempts, one senses that Augustine appreciates the significance of the breakthrough he has obtained.

With Aquinas we find the analogy not as the final point of a long investigation, but at the very beginning of his analysis of the triune God (*Summa Theologiae* I q27 a1). From that point on he will repeatedly turn to the analogy in his handling of questions, articles and objections raised on trinitarian matters. It has become the key with which to explicate the mystery of the Trinity. Explicit reference to the analogy can be found in a large number of questions and articles: q27 a.1, a.2, a.3, a.4; q28 a.1, ad 4, a.4, ad 1; q30 a.2; q33 a.3, ad1; q34 a.1, a.2, a.3; q35 a.2; q36 a.1, a.2; q37 a.1; q38 a.1; q41 a.6; q42 a.5; q43 a.5. The point of this exercise is to remind us just what a comprehensive role the analogy plays in the organisation of Aquinas' theology of the Trinity.

If one may draw an analogy with the physical sciences, the difference between these two thinkers is like the difference between chemistry before and after the discovery of the periodic table of elements by Mendeleev during the 1860s. Before that time, chemistry was a series of unrelated insights seeking cohesion within a unified view. After the discovery of the periodic table, the science of chemistry began in earnest. It became the key for the complete systematisation of chemistry. So too with the psychological analogy. Prior to those final books of Augustine's *De Trinitate* the theology of the Trinity was largely a series

3. Cf. *De Trinitate*, Books 9-12.

of unrelated insights seeking cohesion within a unified view. In the systematics of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, however, that unified view is fully in possession. Still, chemistry has not yet turned its back on the periodic table of elements, whereas the twentieth century has witnessed a massive turning away from the psychological analogy.

The basis for the analogy is spelt out in the articles of *Summa Theologiae* I q27. Aquinas seeks analogies in the created order for the divine processions. He claims these are best found in the intellect where "the action remains in the intelligent agent". This action "is to be understood by way of an intelligible emanation [*emanatio intelligibilis*]". The concept that is formed by this intelligible emanation results in an identity between the knower and the known, "since the intellect by the very act of understandings is made one with the object understood" (a1). This identity implies that the procession of the concept proceeds "by way of similitude, inasmuch as the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived" (a2). In God this similitude is perfect, so that the concept or Word is nothing less than God.

Article 3 takes up the question as to whether there is a second procession apart from that of the word. Here Aquinas identifies another procession, "the operation of the will within ourselves involves also another procession, that of love, whereby the object loved is in the lover". While intellect and will are one in God, still the analogy recognises a "certain order" between the procession of Word and Spirit, since "nothing can be loved by the will unless it is conceived in the intellect". Further "love requires by its very nature that it proceed from a conception of the intellect" (a3). This procession however is not one of similitude "but by way of impulse and movement towards an object" which conforms us to the object loved (a4).

While the analogy plays a continuing role throughout the treatise on the Trinity, the next concentrated reference occurs in qq34-36, on the Son and Spirit. In q34 a1, Aquinas expands on what he has previously said about the procession of the word. He repeats several times that the word proceeds from the intellect as a concept proceeds from understanding, not a searching for truth but as it "attains to the form of truth". This link with truth raises the possibility that the procession of the word is analogous to the procession of a judgment of truth, the "Yes" which affirms actual existence.

Question 36 returns to the procession of love as analogous to the Holy Spirit. In q36 a2 he uses the psychological analogy to ground an understanding of the *filioque* since "love must proceed from a word, for we do not love anything unless we apprehend it by way of a mental conception". This is taken up again in q43 a5, ad 2, where Aquinas qualifies the procession of the word in the following terms: "Thus the Son is sent not in accordance with every and any kind of intellectual

perfection, but according to the intellectual illumination which breaks forth into the affection of love", a "Word which breaths forth love [*verbum spirans amorem*]." Such a word might be construed as analogous to a judgment of actual value that releases the responsible ecstasy of love.⁴

The history of interpretation of the analogy has been tortuous to say the least, and can be traced through the text and footnotes of Lonergan's *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*.⁵ Principal difficulties in that history have been the inability of interpreters to distinguish processions in intellect from those in the imagination, and Scotus' inversion of the relationship between understanding and concepts. Both these stances threaten to reduce the personal procession of the Word to a pre-personal form of causation which is inadequate to the realm of the divine. The interpretation of Aquinas given above has been guided by Lonergan's writings in this regard.

The presuppositions of the analogy are in themselves hardly surprising. God knows and loves Godself. Is there a relationship between this self-knowledge and love and the processions spoken of in the traditional symbols of faith? Still there is a significant shift in horizon from the more commonsense formulations of Augustine and the more precise metaphysical analysis of Aquinas. Still neither the more commonsense approach nor the more technical one has found a home in twentieth century thought in the Trinity. It is now time to consider these modern objections.

THE MODERN LITANY AGAINST THE ANALOGY

As one might expect there has been a significant rejection of the analogy from Protestant theologians, who find it difficult to derive from the Biblical witness.

For Karl Barth the whole project of *vestigium trinitatis*, of which the psychological analogy is simply another example, is suspect because it threatens to replace or undermine the single "root" of the doctrine of the Trinity. That is, "the Biblical concept of revelation is itself the root of the doctrine of the Trinity".⁶ Given the approach of the *vestigia trinitatis*, "the idea of a second root of the doctrine of the Trinity was bound to assert itself. It might then be supposed that fundamentally the Trinity could just as well be derived from and grounded upon human self-consciousness...as from Holy Scripture."⁷ Barth does not doubt the

4. For example, the suggestion of Bernard Lonergan, "Christology Today: Methodological Reflections", in *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 93.

5. Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* Vol.2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

6. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936) 383-84.

7. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 393.

good will of those Church Fathers who sought such analogies. "The inventors of the *vestigia trinitatis* had no wish to produce a second and different root of the doctrine of the Trinity parallel to revelation.... But their action is deeply overshadowed by the question whether nevertheless this is not precisely what they have done."⁸ Such a project lies under the general suspicion with which Barth holds all attempts at a natural theology of God.

The approach of Moltmann takes a different tack. While not explicitly mentioning the psychological analogy he criticises the approach of Aquinas, and the West in general for its starting point in *De Deo uno*, leading to the "general conception of the absolute subject" and the Trinity "viewed as an eternal process of self-differentiation and self-identification of the absolute subject".⁹ Such an approach "leads unintentionally but inescapably to the reduction of the doctrine of the Trinity to monotheism", by which Moltmann means modalism or Sabelianism.

This suspicion of modalism is also implied by Wolfhart Pannenberg and Colin Gunton. For Pannenberg, "[for] all the differentiation in the self-consciousness, the God of this understanding is a single subject.... Attempts to find self-subsistent relations for the Son and Spirit rather than relations merely in the Father remained artificial in the context of the psychological analogy."¹⁰ Pannenberg also seems to accept the critique of Spinoza, that "[if] we ascribe will and intellect to God, they have to be so totally different from ours that they have no more than the name in common",¹¹ so there can be no real basis for any psychological analogy.

Gunton pushes the matter further. For Gunton, Augustine's psychological analogy has left the West with a "baneful legacy", the twin blights of individualism and intellectualism:

I want to suggest that the problem with the trinitarian analogies as Augustine presents them is that they impose upon the doctrine of the Trinity a conception of the divine threeness which owes more to neoplatonic philosophy than to the triune economy, and that the outcome is, again, a view of an unknown substance *supporting* the three persons rather than *being constituted* by their relatedness. The true ontological foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity, that is to say, are to be found in the conception of a threefold mind and not in the economy of salvation.¹²

8. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 396.

9. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1981) 17.

10. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 295.

11. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Vol.1, 375.

12. Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1991) 42-3.

Thus Augustine's analogies have precipitated a theological crisis in the West which must now be overcome, generally through an excavation of the resources of Orthodox approaches to the Trinity.

While we might expect to find a more sympathetic approach from Catholic authors, this is, with some few exceptions, not the case. Karl Rahner is undoubtedly a key figure in the revival among Catholic theologians of Trinitarian theology in the twentieth century. Yet his approach to the psychological analogy is lukewarm to say the least. He expresses serious reservations about its logic:

it postulates *from* the doctrine of the Trinity a model of human knowledge and love, which either remains questionable, or about which it is not clear that it can be more than a *model* of human knowledge as *finite*. And this model it applies again to God.... it becomes clear too that such a psychological theory of the Trinity has the character of what the other sciences call an "hypothesis".¹³

For Rahner, the analogy is a hypothesis drawn from a model of human knowledge, where the model itself is drawn from belief about the Trinity. There is a circularity to this procedure which renders it of questionable value. He also points out that "when developing its ideas it has, as it were, forgotten about the 'economic' Trinity".¹⁴ As an alternative Rahner proposes a fourfold group of aspects: "(a) Origin-Future; (b) History-Transcendence; (c) Invitation-Acceptance; (d) Knowledge-Love".¹⁵

Similarly, Walter Kasper, in his magisterial work *The God of Jesus Christ*,¹⁶ shows scant interest in the psychological analogy, referring briefly to Thomas Aquinas as "showing very great courage" in describing the procession of the Word as an "intellectual emanation".¹⁷ Why this required "great courage" is not explained, nor does the analogy play any further role in Kasper's discussion.

Hans Urs von Balthasar has been particularly scathing of the approach of the psychological analogy.¹⁸ According to Hunt, Balthasar "eschews a consideration of human consciousness as primary analogy for the Trinity of divine persons, and is deeply suspicious of any kind of turn to

13. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970) 117-18. Also, in more muted form, see Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 135-36.

14. Rahner, *The Trinity*, 44. Rahner in particular levels this charge at the work of Lonergan.

15. Rahner, *The Trinity*, 88.

16. Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 1983).

17. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 187.

18. Here I shall draw on the article by Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy" (n. 2 above). Hunt has synthesised a number of Balthasar's writings, including *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968); *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990) and *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics 1: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982).

the subject". Balthasar rejects any analogy based on "the human mind and its acts of intellect and will" since "both processions must be understood as processions of love".¹⁹ For Balthasar, "only love is credible". In its place Balthasar seeks to find analogies for the Trinity in the paschal mystery, in the death, descent into hell and resurrection of the Son.

Finally, we shall turn to the work of Catherine LaCugna. For LaCugna, the whole movement from God-for-us in the economy of salvation (*oikonomia*) towards God-in-Godself (*theologia*), as found in Augustine and Aquinas in the West and Gregory of Palamas in the East, marks the "defeat" of the doctrine of the Trinity. And of course the psychological analogy is the culmination of that process of defeat, at least in the West. LaCugna questions whether "postulating an ontologically distinct 'intradivine' realm of processions, relations, and persons [is] a necessary part of trinitarian doctrine". If it is, then there is an inevitable split between *oikonomia* and *theologia*. "If not, then the unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*, as well as the equality of the divine persons, must be maintained on other grounds, without appeal to the transeconomic realm."²⁰

Lest this rejection seem total, I should draw attention to the positive treatment of the analogy in Anthony Kelly's work, *The Trinity of Love*.²¹ Kelly not only gives a positive account of the analogy in his presentation of the thought of Aquinas,²² he also seeks to develop a modern appropriation of the analogy for the present day.²³ The works by Mary Anne Fatula, *The Triune God of Christian Faith*²⁴ and Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*²⁵ both give a basic exposition of the analogy with no negative comment.

THE ANALOGY AT ODDS WITH MODERNITY

It is not my intention to defend the psychological analogy against all the charges that have been levelled against it by theologians in the twentieth century. My critique below will address some of these criticisms indirectly, though I fear that the general suspicion of modalism and

19. Hunt, "Psychological Analogy", 200. As Hunt comments, there is a real danger of voluntarism in Balthasar's position.

20. Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) 12-13.

21. See n. 1 above.

22. Kelly, *Trinity of Love*, 115-38.

23. Kelly, *Trinity of Love*, 139-73.

24. Mary Anne Fatula, *The Triune God of Christian Faith* (Collegeville: Glazier, 1990), esp. 68.

25. Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York: Paulist, 1999).

subsequent individualism will always remain for some.²⁶ Rather than defend the analogy in that way I prefer to identify certain features of the analogy which run against the grain of modernity and post-modernity. Moreover I would like to suggest that these features are not just accidental to our theologising about the Trinity but may in fact be one element of the purpose of the revelation of the Trinity itself.

Against the linguistic turn

A key feature of the Thomistic understanding of the psychological analogy for the procession of the Word is the relationship it expresses between understanding and concept formation. Within the analogy the word proceeds as an intelligible emanation. This refers to the manner in which concepts, definitions, hypotheses and judgments emerge from an intelligible and intelligent grasp of their intended object. The procession is not simply caused, but is "because". I am able to formulate a concept because I understand. Such a form of causation is eminently personal, not drawn from the subpersonal realm of physical causation.

What is clearly embedded in such a position is the inherent priority of understanding over language. This priority is entirely reversed in the modern "turn to the linguistic". Such a linguistic turn is evident, for example, in the theologies of George Lindbeck and John Milbank. Lindbeck conceives of religious doctrines as a form of linguistic grammar with no necessary ontological reference.²⁷ Different sets of doctrines simply represent different grammars and are basically incommensurable. Lindbeck calls his approach "cultural-linguistic", which he sets in opposition to "propositional" and "experiential-expressivist" understandings of religious doctrines. In Lindbeck's view religion "functions somewhat like a Kantian a priori" – not, however, one of concepts but a "set of acquired skills that could be different".²⁸ These skills shape human subjectivity like a language or culture.

Milbank expresses his own rejection of Aquinas' position most explicitly. He identifies Aquinas' "error" in the following terms: "language does not stand for ideas, as Aquinas thought, but constitutes ideas and 'expresses' things in their disclosure of truth for us".²⁹ Mil-

26. Similarly, the so-called "social analogy" will always remain suspect of tritheism. This is a charge regularly made concerning the trinitarian writings of Moltmann; see John J. O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1988) 108. Moltman's follower, Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), in fact explicitly rejects the notion of "one numerically identical nature" (p. 203). It is difficult to see how this could be anything but tritheistic.

27. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

28. Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 33.

29. John Milbank, *The Word made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1997) 29. Milbank's own attempts to interpret Aquinas leave a lot to be desired. See my article, "It is easy to see – the footnotes of John Milbank", *Philosophy and Theology*, 11/2 (1999) 257-64.

bank identifies his position as one of “linguistic idealism”,³⁰ a position that is central to his post-modern rejection of the social sciences. Such a conceptualism marks a philosophical “flight from understanding”, a flight which in modernity has reduced reason to instrumentality and introduced a pall of suspicion over the powers of intelligence. From this perspective Milbank’s option for “linguistic idealism” and the thorough-going historicism of post-modernity represent not a solution to the problems posed by modernity but more the final stages of decline and dissolution of a longer cycle of decline initiated by the emergence and dominance of conceptualism since the time of Duns Scotus (the role of Scotus in this drama has been identified by Hans Urs von Balthasar,³¹ Alasdair MacIntyre³² and less explicitly by John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio* n.45).

These two theologians are indicative of the linguistic turn of much modern thought. They stand to Aquinas’ theology much as conceptualism and nominalism stood in the decline following his scholastic synthesis. From a modern perspective the psychological analogy implies a rejection of this linguistic turn and a reassertion of the role of understanding, prior to and foundational of all language. Still, the implications of this priority of understanding go further than the problem of the modern linguistic turn. They also have metaphysical implications.

The implicit realism of the analogy

The next feature of the psychological analogy that I would like to highlight is the implicit realism of the analogy. This is evident in two ways. The first is the way in which the analogy understands the relationship between knowledge and reality; the second is evident in the very fact of using an analogy at all.

Knowledge and reality

Central to the analogy for the procession of the Word is the presupposition of the adequacy of knowledge to reality, an *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. The analogy is grounded in the philosophical confidence that knowledge of reality is possible. Such an *adaequatio* is not found in some sensible similarity, but in the intellect, in understanding. The product of divine understanding, the Word, is perfectly adequate to the divine reality, and so is nothing less than that divine reality itself –

30. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1990) 343.

31. In his article, “Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology”, *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), 569-607, Lonergan scholar Robert Doran refers to the “scattered references” to Scotus to be found in von Balthasar’s *The Glory of the Lord 5: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern World* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991); see n.46 (p. 585).

32. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) 152.

“the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived” (ST, q27 a2).

This confidence of the powers of the intellect to know reality has a clear metaphysical implication. If the understanding of the intellect expressed in the concept is adequate to the real, then this can only be because the real is intrinsically meaningful. If reality is not intrinsically meaningful, then the understanding of the intellect cannot be adequate to the real.

These two positions – the power of intellect to know reality and the intrinsic intelligibility of reality – stand in diametric opposition to the dominant post-Kantian epistemology of our day, which has effectively separated knowledge and reality, leading to widespread epistemological, and eventually moral, relativism. It is for this reason that Pope John Paul II has made repeated calls in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* for philosophers to recover their confidence in the powers of the intellect to understand reality, as a means of overcoming our present relativistic plight.

Analogy, not model³³

When contemporary authors refer to the psychological analogy they almost uniformly will refer to it as the psychological model.³⁴ It is amazing how much this choice of terminology reflects a worldview at variance with that of those who first developed the analogy. The language of “models” comes from a post-Kantian epistemology which views the constructions of the mind as models which are projected onto a phenomenal world, but which never really access the “thing-in-itself”, which remains permanently beyond our grasp.³⁵ This notion of projected models/interpretations/meanings lies at the heart of much modern relativism, where each has his or her own “interpretation”, all equally valid because reality remains intrinsically unintelligible. As a “model” the psychological model “works” even if it never corresponds to anything “real” in human psychology.

Analogy language, however, is based on an implicit realism. It seeks to compare two realities, one known, and the other relatively unknown. One reality, the human psychology of knowing and loving is expressed in either metaphysical or direct psychological language that effectively mediates the intelligible reality of those events. This reality as known is then compared with another reality, the reality of the triune God, known

33. This point is well made by Kelly, *Trinity of Love*, 118.

34. See, for example, the trinitarian works of Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (London: Burns & Oates, 1988); David Coffey, *Grace the Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979); O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God*.

35. The language of models is widespread in the philosophy of science. For some it is simply a statement of the tentative nature of scientific hypotheses, and so not a rejection of realism. For others, such as Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), the influence of Kantian relativism is more evident.

through Christian faith. In the case of analogy, if the analysis of the psychological reality is invalid, then the whole process is pointless. No analogy ensues.

Perhaps one could summarise the thrust of the above comments in the lapidary expression, “the value of rationality”. The psychological analogy has deeply embedded within it the value of human rationality. However, it is not the conceptualist deductive rationality we commonly mean by that term. Rather it is the dynamic and immanent rationality of the human subject who is governed by the transcendental precepts: Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible.³⁶ This is the rationality of submitting oneself to the immanent norms of truth and goodness which constitutes the basic meaning of the “intelligible emanation” that is so central to Aquinas’ exposition of the processions of Word and Spirit.³⁷

The rationality of value

So far we have considered the ways in which the psychological analogy for the procession of the Word embedded certain assumptions about understanding, knowledge and reality. It is now time to turn to the procession of the Holy Spirit, which is conceived as a procession of love. Still, it is not any procession of love but a procession grounded in the intelligently grasped and reasonably affirmed reality of the Godhead. This affirmation includes an affirmation of the ultimate goodness of the Godhead and so grounds a responsible outpouring of ecstatic love. The assumption we find embedded in this account I would speak of as the “rationality of value”, whereby rationality, as I noted above, does not mean the deductive rationality of conceptualism, but the intrinsic rationality of the subject who is dynamically and consciously oriented to truth and goodness. Put simply, genuine love is grounded in truth, a constant theme of John Paul II.³⁸

One consequence of such a stance is that, contrary to modern and post-modern expectations, moral debates are intrinsically decidable. This is in stark contrast to our present interminable public debates on sensitive moral issues.³⁹ Whereas for modernity values are relegated to the realm of the irrational and private, the assumption of the psychological analogy is that values are “rational” and hence public. Some have argued that this stance needs to be re-inserted into our public life.

36. See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 20.

37. For an excellent exposition of “intelligible emanation” see Fred Crowe, “For inserting a new question (26a) in the *Prima Pars*”, *The Thomist*, 64 (2000), 565-80.

38. Notably in the encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*.

39. This interminable nature of public debates on matters such as abortion is highlighted and analysed in the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre, particularly *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

For example, David Hollenbach has argued for the virtue of “intellectual solidarity – a willingness to take other persons seriously enough to engage them in conversation and debate about what they think makes life worth living”. This goes beyond mere tolerance which is a “strategy for non-interference”.⁴⁰ Such a position reflects the stance of the psychological analogy. Embedded within the analogy is a rejection of the moral relativism so dominant in our current modern and post-modern cultures.

The reasonableness of faith

The final presupposition that I would like to explore as running counter to our present age is one of the reasonableness of Christian faith. The psychological analogy is a pure example of theology as faith seeking understanding. It is an attempt to show that at the very least, the doctrine of the Trinity is in itself not self-contradictory or completely unintelligible to the human mind. As such it does not attempt to prove the Trinity, a position Aquinas rejects as impossible outside of revelation. But it does provide a solid “plausibility structure” for the doctrine. From that perspective it could well serve an apologetic purpose, or even assist in inter-faith dialogue.⁴¹

Here I would like to contrast the theology of Aquinas, as it is grounded in the analogy, and much contemporary writing. A constant criticism made by modern authors is that the analogy does not relate the Trinity to other aspects of faith, and its concentration of the “inner life” of God was either unnecessary or simply futile. The modern approach has been rather to relate the doctrine of the Trinity to other aspects of faith, such as the paschal mystery, creation or ecclesiology and so on. Now it is clear, as Hunt rightly points out, that both tasks are appropriate and can be justified by reference to Vatican I, *Dei Filius*.⁴² However to back away from the first task, of seeking the intelligibility of the doctrine in itself, can mark a retreat from a position on the inherent intelligibility of faith and a move towards fideism. Inasmuch as one moves in that direction, the first task is thought of as simply unnecessary.

Again the presupposition of most modern and post-modern culture is that religious faith belongs in the realm of the irrational, or at best the non-rational; it is something to be confined to the private world of values, not the public world of reason. In such a setting the psychological analogy asserts the publicly reasonable nature of Christian faith.

40. David Hollenbach, “Afterword: a community of freedom”, in R. B. Douglass and D. Hollenbach (eds.), *Catholicism and Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 334.

41. This has been suggested by Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) 274-5.

42. Hunt, “Psychological Analogy”, 214.

A sole emphasis on relating the doctrine of the Trinity to other aspects of Christian faith can represent a capitulation to our present culture on this matter.⁴³

REVELATION AND CULTURE

Underlying the above discussion is an understanding of the interrelationship between theology, revelation and culture. I would now like to explore the possibility of revelation being culturally transformative, using the psychological analogy as one example.

It has become commonplace in theology to speak of social sin. While recognising the analogical use of the term "sin", the concept of social sin expresses the ways in which institutions can in their very structures pervert the human good and lead to decline. One might think, for example, of the ways in which apartheid laws institutionalised the multiple personal sins of racism in South Africa. The concept of social sin is important because it helps us recognise that these structures not only arise from human sinfulness, but in themselves orient us away from the good by creating a social milieu in which sin is normalised. Feminist and liberation theologians have added to the notion of social sin by speaking of "ideology critique", so that it is not enough to change the institutions, one must also challenge the distorted meanings and values which they support, and which are in turn supported by, those institutions.

Still, the issues we have identified above are not as easily categorised as are the ideologies of racism and patriarchy. They operate on a larger canvas, often not so clearly institutionalised. They may be thought to represent a deeper alienation, an alienation from our basic identity and destiny as knowers of the truth and doers of the good. This alienation is given formal expression, not so much in laws and institutions but in the works of philosophers whose ideas shape our cultures on the time frame of centuries. Slowly these ideas move out of the minds of their creators and into the realm of our common sense. They become the air we breathe, the very fabric of our thought. We can hardly begin to think in other categories, because they have shaped our thought from the cradle. Can we not recognise in this process the notion of "cultural sin", the cumulative distortions of philosophy which alienate us from our basic identity and destiny?

The Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, speaks of revelation as "for the sake of our salvation" (n.11).

43. A further instance of such a capitulation is the withdrawal from "natural theology" among theologians, under the unquestioned assumption that it is "not possible to prove the existence of God". This position concedes too much to those who wish to keep religion in the private sphere. In this regard it is interesting to note that Lonergan viewed the psychological analogy as "a prolongation of natural theology", *Verbum*, 215.

The notion of salvation is multi-layered and touches on all those aspects of human living that are distorted by human sin and evil. These clearly include personal relationships, and we now recognise the involvement of social structures in sin and evil, but the question arises as to whether the same can be said of our cultural orientations. If the notion of cultural sin is valid, then it should not be surprising if revelation were to have a salvific significance at the level of such cultural sin. Is it not possible to view the psychological analogy precisely as a theological and cultural achievement which arises under the cultural impact of the revelation of the triune God, an achievement required to overcome the philosophical stances identified above?⁴⁴

Such a stance is the fundamental response to Rahner's concern about the circularity of the analogy. It may well be true, as Rahner claims, that our investigation of human knowing and loving is driven by our prior knowledge of processions in God. It may well be that we then apply the outcomes of this investigation to the Trinity itself. But in the process something has been gained, if the analogy stands. For we have been driven to clarify the immanent desire for truth and goodness within human consciousness, in a way that upholds our basic identity and destiny as knowers of the truth and doers of the good. And in doing so we have upheld the dignity of each and every human being as made in the image and likeness of God, so that every person in his or her self contains a faint reflection of the glory of the triune God.

CONCLUSION

In his own day the psychological analogy of Aquinas represented a high point of theological speculation, encapsulating, as we have seen above, key philosophical positions within the framework of a theology of the Trinity. It is nothing less than a major cultural achievement. That it is no longer viewed as such may speak more about our own cultural malaise than of the value and significance of the analogy itself. The role of the psychological analogy in our contemporary theological setting must then be very different from its setting in Aquinas. Theology must conceive itself not simply as interpretative of past and present texts but as culturally transformative.⁴⁵ If the analogy is to have a contemporary theological role it must clearly appropriate its own cultural depth as a critique of, and alternative to, the dominant cultural strains of modernity and post-modernity.

44. I take up this argument more fully in Neil Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), esp. 247-77.

45. See Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 440-70.