

The *Epochenschwelle* of ‘*analogia entis*’: Blumenberg’s periodization-tool and a Scholastic doctrine on the verge of Modernity



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Front Cover. "Statue of Thomas of Aquinas" created by August Falise in 1926 for the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Until 1988, this statue stood in front of the central auditorium. Then, this iconic statue was removed to a new location the Comeniuslaan." Filip Franssen ©, in Rajesh Heznickx & Stéphane Symons (eds.), *So What's New about Scholasticism? How Neo-Thomism Helped Shape the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2018): p. 298.

Summary

This thesis is the coronation of the Research Master ‘Historical, Literary and Art/Visual Cultures’ from 2020/2021 until 2022/2023. For nearly the entirety of this period, the Radboud University had lost the one and only designation of ‘Catholic’ for a Dutch university: after a diocesan conflict in its supervisory body, this designation was revoked in November 2020 by Dutch bishops, only to be overruled and restored by Rome in November 2022. Against this background, this thesis concerns the crucial Catholic doctrine of ‘*analogia entis*’ or ‘analogy of Being’, which has been levelled to the status of *the* central doctrine since the mid-20th century. Yet, this doctrine will be discussed in its broadest sense, ranging from its roots in Thomas Aquinas to the worst heretic and apostatic interpretations.

At the same time, such ‘floaty’ theological or metaphysical themes are counterbalanced by more ‘weighty’, substantial aspects of this project (as captured allegorically in the statue of Aquinas being carried off). Starting with accentuating sculptural representation of the relevant thinkers, an analogy is drawn between statues so as to introduce the topic. By the end of the thesis, however, the emphasis will have shifted to the second component of the Research Master and the literary dimension of the implications of the analogy concept for metaphor will be addressed.

Ultimately, however, this thesis is about the everyday reality of historians and their practice of periodization. More specifically, it deals with one particular reflection or debate about the limits and affordances of committing to certain periodization-heuristics: namely, the thought of *Epochenschwelle* or ‘epochal threshold’ as instigated by Hans Blumenberg. Amidst a range of approaches in post-war West-Germany to the question of the arrival of Modernity, Blumenberg advanced this heuristic to avoid some of the pitfalls he saw rampant in attempts at grappling with such a question. Rather than clear-cut breaks between epochs, Blumenberg instead proposed his periodization-tool with the intention of situating the gradual transition *in between* historical actors or witnesses: in the case of the arrival of modernity, this amounted to locating the cardinal Nicholas Cusanus on one end of the threshold (still facing the Middle Ages), while on the other end stands the heretic Giordano Bruno (facing Modernity).

The aim of this MA thesis is to “test” Blumenberg’s *Epochenschwelle*-thesis in terms of the ‘*analogia entis*’ or to see whether there can be said to be an epochal threshold in the history of the concept of analogy. To answer this question, three sub-questions have been articulated, to which the subsequent chapters correspond: (a) what is the role of ‘*analogia entis*’ in the work of Cusanus? (b) what is the role of ‘*analogia entis*’ in the work of Bruno? (c) what is the role of ‘*analogia entis*’ in the work of Blumenberg? Afterwards, a thorough application of the *Epochenschwelle* to the ‘*analogia entis*’ will be attempted, so as to draw the thesis to a close.

Word of Thanks

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Introduction

When the inquisition executed a former churchman and Dominican friar through burning at the stake in the heart of Rome in the winter of the year 1600, such a heinous and barbarous act could be taken as a late expression of the dark Middle Ages. It may be suspected that at least part of the light metaphoric used in the naming of this historiographic period as Dark Ages stems from the prevalent practice of pious clerics torching any flickering flares of brilliance that didn't conform with the dogma of the day until they extinguished. For one more recent thinker (and one seriously occupied with light metaphoric) in particular, however, the modern age had already begun by the time of the burning of Giordano Bruno of Nola (1548-1600): namely, the German philosopher and 'metaphorologist' Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996).

This is not to say that he was to be the first to make such a suggestion – far from it. In fact, a clue of this widespread claim can be found on the very square where Bruno met his fate, at the foot of a statue of his that was installed there towards the end of the 19th century. This bronze monument of the pantheist by a committee of famous, openly secular European intellectuals of the otherwise secretive freemasons (including Victor Hugo, Mikhail Bakunin, Ernst Haeckel, Henrik Ibsen, etc.) that found in him a martyr useful to rally behind for their cause. The sculpted immortalization of the philosopher was notoriously placed so as to provocatively face the Vatican during a time of the already heightened tensions of *Risorgimento* or Italian Unification. Amongst other evidence, the success of this provocation is confirmed by an anonymous document from the Catholic camp published in the same year as the statue was revealed, which speaks of rumours that certain fanatics want to dispose of the Christian Age starting with the birth of Christ by supplanting it with the *Era Bruniana* beginning in 1600.¹ Such comparisons with Jesus are not entirely arbitrary, as the relief scenes of judgment and martyring decorating



Fig. 1: Market and Bronze Statue, "Giordano Bruno" by Ettore Ferrari (1889), Campo de' Fiori in Rome. Shot by author on September 26th, 2022.

¹ Anonymous, *Dialoghetti familiari tra un imbianchino e riquadratore di stanze fiorentino ed un signore romano sopra la vera storia di Giordano Bruno* (Rome: Tipografia S. Lucentini, 1889).

the foot of the statue certainly seem to deliberately invoke similar biblical motifs. More to the point, however, is the inscription on the front view of the statue, which reads: “A BRUNO – IL SECOLO DA LUI DIVINATO – QUI DOVE IL ROGO ARSE” (“To Bruno – From The Age That He Prophesized – Here Where The Fire Burned”). Whereas the relevance of periodization is obviously set in the very stone itself here, as will become apparent, there is a subtle but real difference between Blumenberg’s claim and the idea that Bruno somehow predicted the modern secularist age of which he would be the patron saint.



Fig. 2: Inscription, “Giordano Bruno” by Ettore Ferrari (1889), Campo de’ Fiori in Rome. Shot by author on September 27th, 2022.

Nevertheless, this idea still seems to be very much appealing in the 21st century as well. A mere few years after the reopening of the Berlin Potsdamer Platz station in the wake of the German Reunification, another statue of Bruno was placed here in 2008. On one of the most commercial hubs on the continent with traffic racing constantly, one descends into the station next to some of the more famous remains of the Berlin Wall on the way to the underground, to be suddenly interrupted by another sculptural representation of the heretic. It is not only the location but also the abstract style (especially compared to the straightforward realism of the Roman statue) which immediately invokes its modernist character. The Deutsche Bahn accepting to have this statue installed was the result of a collaboration of the Max Planck Institute for History of Science and the Central European University in Budapest, in honour of Georg Soros’ seventieth birthday and crafted by Alexander Poltzin. The wood of the draft sculpture is still visible in the bronze versions (Berlin and Budapest) but most acutely present in a third wooden version installed in the townhall of Nola, hinting at the execution method as well. The accompanying collection of academic essays intended to elucidate this perplexing monumental expression of Bruno-reception are unified under the revealing metaphor of *Turning Traditions Upside Down*

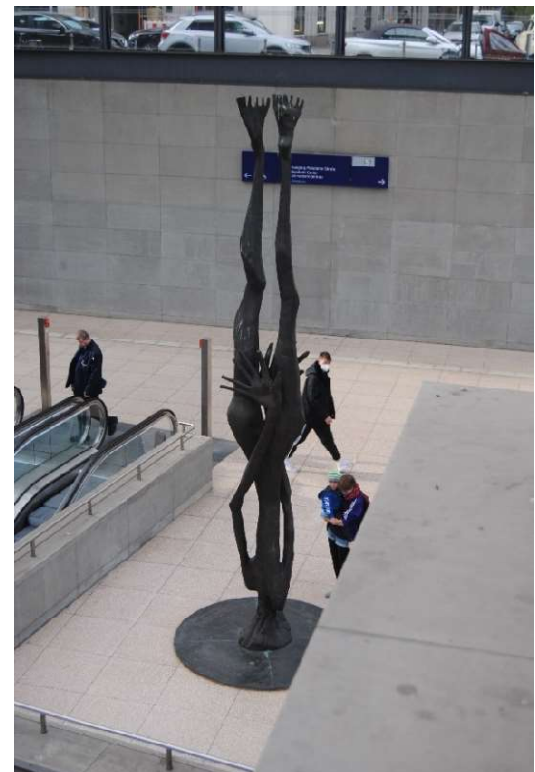


Fig. 3: Bronze Statue, “Giordano Bruno” by Alexander Poltzin (2008), Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. Shot by author on April 29th, 2022.

(2012) but feels no need to provide a coherent line of argument about whether Bruno is modern or merely “anticipating” this or that modern school.² As much is evident from the first line of the preface which is reproduced on the blurb: “Giordano Bruno: A non-conformist at the dawn of an epoch, a martyr or Modernity, or just a polemic controvert? Descriptions of this kind fall short of grasping the manifold character of the Nolan.”³ Strikingly, in spite of half the contributing historians-of-science being of German nationality but in accordance with this evasion of the question of periodization, the project fails to make mention of Hans Blumenberg completely.

Perhaps this is unsurprising since, from the middle of his career onwards, this pillar of the post-war German university system tended to withdraw from the academia he helped shape, growing increasingly into a mysterious renegade towards the end of his life. Moreover, a large part of Blumenberg’s written output consisted of colossal studies (e.g. *Die Genesis der kopernikanischen Welt* [*Genesis of the Copernican World*, 1975]), whose inaccessibility may have troubled his own reception further. The current thesis focuses on one aspect of the mammoth monograph that captured Blumenberg’s position in the debate on secularization, which nonetheless comprises a strain of thought that runs throughout his career: namely, the final part of *Legitimität der Neuzeit* [*Legitimacy of the Modern Age*] (1966), which would be published separately a decade later, as *Aspekte der Epochenschwelle: Cusaner und Nolaner* [*Aspects of Epoch-thresholds: Cusanus and Bruno*] (1976). In short, Blumenberg advanced the scholastic philosopher and Christian mystic Nicholas of Kues or Cusanus (1401-1464) and the heretic Bruno as “witnesses” or pinpoints *in between* which a threshold of epochs was passed and Modernity had arrived.

Rather than to examining directly to which alternative choices for the start of Modernity he was responding or going immediately into detail about what contexts could bring him to posit such a seemingly outrageous claim, the current project aims to extract the implications for philosophy-of-history of such a thesis of periodization in a more experimental manner. Instead, the approach of this thesis will be to “test” Blumenberg’s ‘*Epochenschwelle*-thesis’, by probing it with a core-concept central to the philosophies of both thinkers. Set up by the analogy drawn between the statues in the previous pages, this concept comprises the notion of ‘analogy’ or, more specifically, of ‘*analogia entis*’ or ‘analogy of Being’ (*Seinsanalogie*). In addition to

² In fact, most contributors seem content with deeming him a Renaissance thinker in line with Andy Warburg, Frances Yates and Wolfgang Neuser (who appears in this collection).

³ Jürgen Renn and Yehuda Elkana, “Preface” in *Rethinking Traditions Upside Down: Rethinking Giordano Bruno’s Enlightenment*, ed. Henning Hufnagel and Anne Eusterschulte (Budapest: CEU Press, 2013): p. vii.

having the advantage of having both philosophers relate to this metaphysical concept in various ways, thus making it an excellent opportunity for comparison, the following outcome of this test of Blumenberg's theory may be hypothesized: given Blumenberg's attention to these metaphysical thinkers and his efforts to set up a metaphorology, it may be suggested prematurely that this scholastic concept of analogy could further ground his interest in metaphor. In other words, the aim of the current study is to show if and how conclusions about Blumenberg's philosophy at large can be extrapolated from the analysis of the so-called 'Epochenschwelle-thesis'. Therefore, this inquiry contributes to the scholarship by adding to the understanding of how Blumenberg's philosophy-of-history, and specifically the practical problem of periodization, relates to and fits into his philosophy in general.

In contrast to the seemingly superficial character of the contemporary understanding of analogy as a '(vague) resemblance' in everyday use, the genealogical roots of the analogy-concept run deep. As much is suggested by the continuous use of the concept in both mathematics and, since recently, artificial intelligence studies; here, 'analogy' retains feats of its ancient Greek sense of 'proportion(ate)'.⁴ It is as such that the concept appears in Plato, though already with Aristotle the scholastic problematic is anticipated when he famously and fundamentally denies in the first book of the *Metaphysics* the possibility of an actuality wherein all beings or entities are equal with reference to the analogy-concept. More specifically, however, as to its meaning as theological jargon with the latinized 'analogia entis', the origins appear somewhat clouded. On the one hand, it is beyond reasonable doubt that the German-Polish Jesuit Erich Przywara's magnum opus *Analogia Entis* (1932) put the concept on the theological and philosophical map. On the other hand, it has been less clear to what degree his grounding of the concept in the scholastic tradition is based on retrospective reading and mere implicit presence in the works of his predecessors: most crucially, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) though he even goes as far back as the church father Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

Indeed, the resemblances of Przywara's notion with the approach of Aquinas, who stands at the threshold of a century of Recovery of Aristotle (upon the sudden influx of Aristotelean writings, substantially from the contact zone of Al-Andalus) and the beginning of scholasticism which he kickstarted, are remarkable. The Thomist doctrine of the distinction (or 'dissimilarity') between Creation and Creator ties in neatly with the 'analogia entis', defined here provisionally as the need to search for ways in which (God's) Creations relate or compare to each other (i.e. are 'similar') so as to express something of the Creator Himself. As such,

⁴ E.g. Melanie Mitchell, "Abstraction and Analogy-Making in Artificial Intelligence", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1505/1 (2021): pp. 79-101.

'*analogia entis*' identifies a strain of scholastic thought that competed with varieties of 'univocitas entis' or 'univocity of Being' which held Creation and Creator to be of the same (associated with Aquinas-critic John Duns Scotus and subsequently William of Ockham's nominalism, for whom descriptions or 'names' can equally be applied to both); and with varieties of 'aequivocitas entis' or 'equivocity of Being', for which such names are mutually exclusive. Regardless, the problem of the roots of '*analogia entis*' becomes all the more pressing from Przywara's later comments tentatively suggesting that he coined the concept himself.⁵ In the wake of his study, however, scrutiny of his sources confirmed Przywara's initial thesis of its embeddedness in the scholastic tradition and drove explicit traces at least back to the early Aquinas-commentator Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534) and Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) from the later movement of second scholasticism.⁶

Instead, it turns out, the concept wasn't established firmly as a technical, scholarly term until the time of the First Vatican Council, some decades before Przywara's publication.⁷ With Przywara, however, the concept was put instantly at the philosophical and theological forefront. He was aware of the most advanced clashes within neo-Kantianism and presented at the Second Davos Conference in 1929 alongside Cassirer (1874-1945) and Heidegger (1889-1976), after having already presented on its First Conference the year before as well.⁸ It has even been suggested that Przywara's debate with the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich in 1928 provided the inspiration for inviting Heidegger and Cassirer to debate their differences. Thus, this second conference will cast a shadow over the current thesis, since in many ways this project attempts to situate Przywara's concept in Blumenberg's mediation of both antagonists of the 1929 debate.

Furthermore, during (friendly and fruitful) discussions with the Lutheran theologian Karl Barth in the years prior the publication of Przywara's monograph, the former denounced the '*analogia entis*' as "'the invention of the anti-Christ' and the primary reason why he could never become a Roman Catholic."⁹ Whereas Barth would go on to propose the counter-concept of '*analogia fidei*' or 'analogy of Faith' – and not on false grounds either, as both Przywara and

⁵ Terán-Dutari 1970: Julio Terán-Dutari, „Die Geschichte des Terminus „*Analogia Entis*“ und das Werk Erich Przywaras“, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 77 (1970): pp. 163-179, here pp. 163-164.

⁶ Terán-Dutari 1970.

⁷ Terán-Dutari 1970: p. 164: „Bis zur Zeit des 1. Vatikanums und der Enzyklika „*Aeterni Patris*“ (1879) ist er – wenigstens in den Textbüchern der Jesuiten - allmählich zu einem terminus technicus geworden und wird dann in den katholischen Schulen immer mehr gebraucht. Auf diesem Weg gelangt er zu Erich Przywara.“

⁸ Thomas F. O'Meara, "Paul Tillich and Erich Przywara at Davos", *Gregorianum* 87/2 (2006): pp. 227-238, here p. 231.

⁹ Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010): p. 2.

his 21st century defenders seem to agree that Barth did not misunderstand ‘*analogia entis*’,¹⁰ thus making the concept a unique disjunction of Protestant and Catholic Christologies – ‘*analogia entis*’ would grow into one if not the core concept of Catholic doctrine. Przywara’s following gave decisive shape to the Second Vatican Council and its attempt to formulate an answer for the church facing the challenges of secular (post-)Modernity: his most prominent pupils included like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Rahner and the later pope Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI (who departed mere weeks ago). After the First Vatican Council was cut short under direct military threat in Rome at the end of Italian unification in 1870 (and more indirect threats a few years later, when the provocative installation of the Bruno statue made the pope consider to leave Rome again), this Second Council was called at the start of the second half of the 20th century. Among the most central parameters set at this Council and still upheld today has been the declaration of unequivocal support for neo-scholasticism in the modernist crisis of the church (or what amounted to neo-Thomist defenses against modern Kantian challenges and against competing strands within the church, e.g. ‘*Nouvelle Theologie*’) which Przywara expressed.

Despite its problematic and troubled traces, there is thus no shortage of literature on the ‘*analogia entis*’, especially since the start of the 21st century. To be able to compare the ways in which Cusanus and Bruno related to the concept and to analyse their differences, extensive engagement with both their own writings as well as the secondary literature on the topic will be conducted in the first two chapters (respectively). This will involve looking at the two thinkers’ sources and mapping the subsequent uses of these philosophers for purposes of philosophy-of-history. Besides drawing on Blumenberg’s aforementioned reading of them in the *Legitimität* (for which I will primarily use the renewed 1988 German edition), a new reading will be attempted. Such an endeavour is aided by the fact that Blumenberg wrote extensive introductions to new editions of their writings; acting in the capacity of editor for an anthology of Cusanus and supporting his assistant in making Bruno’s *Ash Wednesday Supper* available again in German.¹¹ In both of these introductions, Blumenberg approaches their main character through “the mirror of the inferior opponent” and by playing on the German etymology of ‘suspicion [*Vermutung*]’ and ‘courage [*Mut*]’; finding in these two speculative thinkers the

¹⁰ E.g.: Betz 2019: John R. Betz, “The *Analogia Entis* as a Standard of Catholic Engagement: Erich Przywara’s Critique of Phenomenology and Dialectical Theology”, *Modern Theology* 35:1 (2019): pp. 81-103, here p. 86.

¹¹ Blumenberg 1957: Hans Blumenberg “Einleitung”, in Nicholaus von Cues, *Die Kunst der Vermutung: Auswahl aus den Schriften*, ed. Hans Blumenberg (Bremen: Carl Schünemann Verlag, 1957): pp. 7-69; Blumenberg 1969: Hans Blumenberg, „Einleitung: Das Universum Eines Ketzers“, in Giordano Bruno, *Das Aschermittwochsmahl*, transl. Ferdinand Fellmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel-Verlag, 1969): pp. 11-61.

courage to advance into new metaphysical territories, which amounted to the epochal threshold.¹² As of yet, however, these introductions have not been scrutinized to elucidate and deepen Blumenberg's theory of 'Epochenschwelle'. (Admittedly, a shortcoming of this methodology is that it omits the third introduction, introducing a selection of Galilei's texts, which had appeared in between the Cusanus and the Bruno books in 1965.¹³) Still, these texts provide a unique entry-point, since, in the words of his biographer, Blumenberg "himself made accessible again the textual basis for the reception of the outstanding authors that would be situated on either side of the 'epochal threshold [Epochenschwelle]' in the last part of the *Legimitität*".¹⁴

In spite of this lacuna, this theory has increasingly come to be appreciated as a core component of Blumenberg's oeuvre. This coincides with the publication of a first biography, gaining traction of the translation of his work into English as well as the delayed appearance of some of his unpublished original work in recent years, including his dissertation. All of this will come in use for the third and final chapter, dedicated to contextualizing the 'Epochenschwelle' thesis both within Blumenberg's own development as well as within the writings of those he responds to. Finally, extrapolating the implications of the previous analyses for his philosophy-of-history, it will become possible to relate this component of Blumenberg's work to his broader (metaphorological) writings.

¹² Blumenberg 1957: p. 12: „im Spiegel des inferioren Gegners“. For Cusanus, this is Johann Wenck von Herrenberg, while for Bruno it is Jacobi that provides the crucial impetus (see discussion in chapter two).

¹³ Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius. Nachricht von neuen Sternen*, ed. Hans Blumenberg (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel-Verlag, 1965).

¹⁴ Zill 2020: Rüdiger Zill, *Der absolute Leser: Hans Blumenberg Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020): p. 373: „hat er selbst die Textbasis für die Rezeption jener Autoren wieder zugänglich gemacht, die im letzten Band von *Die Legimität der Neuzeit* als die markanten Figuren diesseits und jenseits der Epochenschwelle eingesetzt werden.“

I. Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Analogy

This chapter takes up the Christian theologian and mystic Nicholas of Kues or Cusa (1401-1464). Upon giving a brief account of his life, it will be demonstrated how his readership was closely involved with the question of Modernity immediately upon the rediscovery of his writings. Whether celebrated as precursor to Copernicus, as a humanist or for his infinite cosmology, Cusanus' pioneering intellectual activity continues to be seen as a great anticipation of the modern epoch. Conveniently, the recovery of Cusanus' legacy and work from the 19th century onwards was driven by two consecutive waves that serve the research question of this chapter: first, the early 'Cusanus Renaissance' was motivated by attempts to determine the compatibility of Cusanus' philosophy with scholasticism and second, its early reception was pushed by a neo-Kantian rediscovery of his work. Combining these two elements enables a further nearing to the matter at hand, since it is against these neo-Kantians that Blumenberg responds, whereas the persistent Thomist confrontation with Cusanus provides a solid foundation to analyse Cusanus' relation to the 'analogia entis'. As detailed in the methodology, Blumenberg's reading of Cusanus will be taken beyond the familiar version of his argument in the *Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Such an approach to Blumenberg's long-standing engagement with Cusanus is aided by other primary texts such as the introduction to the edition of Cusanus' work he helped issue. After having taken stock of the role of 'analogia entis' in the reception of Cusanus and Blumenberg's place in it, the chapter will be drawn to a close.

a) Vita Cusani

Already by the turn of the fifteenth century, Cusanus would be hailed as "connoisseur of the Middle Ages [*media tempestas*]" by his Renaissance contemporaries – which Blumenberg eagerly records as the very first instance of that periodization concept in Latin.¹⁵ Soon after, however, he would disappear from the spotlight. It would take until the nineteenth century, "apart from Giordano Bruno" as well as from Ficino and Kepler,¹⁶ before he and his impact on intellectual history would again become visible.¹⁷ Notably, his natural philosophical notion of

¹⁵ Blumenberg 1957: p. 11. As uttered by Cusanus' friend Giovanni Andrea Bussi, quoted as „kenner des Mittelalter“ in Cassirer 1963: Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963[1927]): p. 36.

¹⁶ Moore 2013: Michael Edward Moore, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Kairos of Modernity: Cassirer, Gadamer, Blumenberg* (New York: Punctum Books, 2013): p. 11n20; p. 27.

¹⁷ Clyde Lee Miller, "Cusanus, Nicolaus [Nicholas of Cusa], *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2009): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cusanus/> (accessed on December 6th, 2022).

‘system’ as well as his mathematically grounded concept of the ‘coincidence of opposites’ (*coincidentia oppositorum*) would find renewed relevance by that time. Besides the relief of his wall tomb in the San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome (see fig. 4) containing his heart, he left his mark in the shape of the *Cusanusstift* or St. Nicholas Hospital in (Bernkastel-Kues) where many of his manuscripts were stored as well as the rest of his remains (as detailed in his testimony to which I will return).



Fig. 4: polychrome relief of wall tomb Cusanus (left), next to Peter and Angel of Resurrection (incl. coat of arms of Cusanus’ family), by Andrea Bregno (ca. 1460s) in San Pietro Vincoli, Rome. Shot by author on September 27th, 2022.

During his lifetime, Nicholaus Cryfftz (Krebs) would rise to prominence shortly after being ordained as a priest through his public appearance as a conciliarist in the 1430s. In his young years, he had already travelled widely and had obtained a reputation causing him to be associated with the Rhineland mystics. By implication, he has also been brought up in connection with the related *Gotesvriunde* or ‘Friends of God’.¹⁸ The Council he attended was the Council of Basel (1431). On the surface level, this Council was set up to articulate a response

¹⁸ See e.g. Friedrich-Wilhelm Wentzlaff-Eggebert, „Die Mystik der „Gottesfreunde“ und der „Devotio moderna“, in *Deutsche Mystik zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Einheit und Wandlung ihrer Erscheinungsformen* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2019[1944]): p. 138.

to the Hussite Wars in the wake of the condemnation of Jan Hus as heretic and the subsequent execution by burning at the stake in the Council of Konstanz (1414-1418). In the meantime, however, a power struggle between the pope and the conciliarists came to a conclusion: since the Western Schism (1378-1417) and the simultaneous existence of multiple popes, the papacy's prestige was weakened to the extent that the conciliarists had declared supremacy over the pope at Konstanz. Cusanus defended such supremacy over the pope appealing to the broader ecclesiological understanding of the Church as 'mystical body of the one Christ'. (Blumenberg is keen here to point out that in addition to such prevalent Christian mystic ideas, Cusanus' mysticism also contained "hermetic and kabbalist ingredients."¹⁹) When he realized that the council's autonomy would act against the unity of the body of Christ, however, he would switch sides around 1437 to support the pope since such ecclesiological basis did not relieve the council from the responsibility to act in unison with the Church and its acting guardian, the pope.²⁰ Soon after, the conciliarist movement fell apart, but Cusanus' star kept rising. After having contributed to a short-lived reunion of the Catholic church with the Eastern-Orthodox churches through his diplomacy on a Papal mission to Constantinople, he would be named cardinal. Ultimately, however, he would meet his end in a clash with worldly powers on behalf of the Church.²¹

In addition to his mystic and ecclesial achievements, Cusanus' eminence can perhaps best be grasped through his favourite self-styling metaphor of the 'hunting dog'.²² Naturally, the metaphorologist Blumenberg picks up on this and elaborates on the speculative theologian's self-portrayal in the introduction of his Cusanus anthology entitled *Die Kunst der Vermutung* [*The Art of Suspicion*] (1957). Loosening the static scholastic discipline-schemata into so-called hunting-fields, de Cusa in his element follows his instincts across such fields of knowledge, ridden with many obstructions and pseudo-successes.²³ The comparison with the hound works especially well in Cusanus' capacity as a philologist with a particularly impressive track-record as a manuscript-hunter. During his early time in Cologne, he retrieved a collection of diplomatic Frankish manuscripts (the "Codex epistolaris Carolinus") buried in the Dom library. Afterwards, he would beat by seven years Lorenzo Valla's (1406-1457) proof of the "Donation of Constantine" as a forgery. Amongst his most prized finds, however, are those from Antiquity

¹⁹ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 15: „bis zu hermetischen und kabbalistischen Ingredienzien hinunter.“

²⁰ Hoff 2013: Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013): p. 6.

²¹ Hoff 2013: p. 20.

²² Hoff 2013: p. 1.

²³ Blumenberg 1957: pp. 16-17.

which included Pliny's *Natural History* and Tacitus' *Germania*; the latter of which would soon after inform Conrad Celtes (1459-1508), constituting merely one of many ways in which Cusanus contributed significantly to the German Renaissance. It is in both his mathematic-scientific and his philological-critical endeavours that the philosopher of 'learned ignorance' would come to be hailed for paving the way to Modernity, while others would even go as far as deeming him the very first modern.

b) First stages in Cusanus Reception and Modernity

In fact, it was the demand for philological attention to Cusanus' own writings that set the terms for this debate over his role in the arrival of Modernity. As one scholar of Cusanus-studies put it, "the initiative of the critical edition was also a means for resolving the contest over Cusanus's epochal identity through sounder philological analysis".²⁴ Beginning in the nineteenth century, this initiative had its roots within the Catholic context itself. Most notably, it was the Catholic opponent to the well-known protestant biblical criticism of F.C. Baur (1792-1860) from within the Tübingen School of historical-criticism by the name of Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838) that was responsible for what amounted to a so-called "Cusanus Renaissance".²⁵ Another prominent example, figuring as a "Romanticist" precursor in Blumenberg's own argument,²⁶ is F.J. Clemens (1815-1862). Clemens dedicated a pioneering study on *Giordano Bruno und Nicolaus von Cusa* (1847), which included a spectacular discovery of a new fragment from the back of a page from the Dom library.²⁷

Clemens' study wasn't (just) ground-breaking for having brought the names of Cusanus and Bruno together for the first time (as Blumenberg's critics seem to maintain),²⁸ but more so for advancing the interpretation that followed his exposure of Cusanus' influence on Bruno: namely, the allegation of Cusanus as a pantheist. Together with Richard Falckenberg (1851-1920), Clemens is thus indicative of the initial phase of the rediscovery of Cusanus' philosophy

²⁴ Albertson 2014: David Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): p. 4.

²⁵ Watanabe 1991: Morimichi Watanabe, "The Origins of Modern Cusanus Research in Germany and the Establishment of the Heidelberg *opera Omnia*" in *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Morimichi Watanabe by the American Cusanus Society*, Gerald Christianson & Thomas M. Izbicki (eds.) (Köln: Brill, 1991): p. 19.

²⁶ Blumenberg 1999: Hans Blumenberg, *Legimität der Neuzeit: Erneute Aufgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999 [1988]): p. 555.

²⁷ 'Cusaner Kodex 211', termed 'the cosmological meditation' by Blumenberg 1999: p. 582.

²⁸ E.g. Moore 2013: pp. 70-71.

as marked by the *Pantheismusstreit* and attempts to contain it.²⁹ While the *Pantheismusstreit* will be discussed in greater depth in chapter two, for now it suffices to acknowledge how the perceived nihilist and atheist threat of pantheism determined the subsequent reception of Cusanus. At this point, the question of whether Cusanus was a pantheist provoked a wave of primarily (neo-)Thomist polemics on how to square the cardinal's philosophy with scholasticism: throughout this long debate, generating the harshest attacks on and the staunchest defences of especially Cusanus' doctrine of coincidence of opposites as measured against Aquinas' principles, much of early Cusanus-scholarship was captured in antinomies such as theism/pantheism, transcendence/immanence, etc.³⁰ What was ultimately at stake, however, was the compatibility of the mystic's negative or 'apophatic' theology (i.e. cognising or approaching the absolute God through statements of what he is *not*) with the cognizing of God through his creations in the metaphysics of Aquinas.

Such neo-scholastic contestations, however, were soon to be overtaken with the first steps towards the critical edition of Cusanus' work, which were driven predominantly by the neo-Kantians. In fact, both main traditions of the German *Zurück-zu-Kant* movement took an interest in Cusanus, which coincided with an attempt to rethink philosophical Modernity. While ultimately published in the Heidelberg of the South-west tradition of Windelband and his successor Rickert, the initiative was initially set up by the Marburg circle around Hermann Cohen (1842-1918). In fact, Cohen's own supervision of the project was cut short by his death and the First World War prevented further work for another decade. By that time, the first volume of this Latin series (*De Docta Ignorantia*, 1440/1932) was issued by two students of Cohen's most prominent disciple Ernst Cassirer. Namely, Cassirer's friend Ernst Hoffmann (1880-1952) who would continue to bridge the two schools and consult Rickert about this planned Academy Edition; and Raymond Klibansky (1905-2005), who studied under both friends and whose editorial contributions were complemented by a substantial degree of heroism. Not only did Klibansky safeguard Cusanus' legacy by helping it aboard the steamships of the Warburg Library (to which will be returned throughout) as it left Hamburg for London under Nazi threat, but also managed to protect the town of Kues from subsequent allied bombings.³¹

Beyond a strong German predisposition towards Cusanus, the French reception during

²⁹ Jacobi 1969: Klaus Jacobi, *Die Methode der cusanischen Philosophie* (München: Karl Alber verl., 1969): p. 49-50.

³⁰ Jacobi 1969: p. 51-59.

³¹ Moore 2013: p. 83.

this time is noteworthy for equally responding to the same questions. Cusanus' ability to confront the turbulence of the time head-on and articulate an apt philosophical model grounded fundamentally in decenteredness was echoed in the 20th century throughout the work of Maurice de Gandillac (1906-2006). De Gandillac would go on to supervise dissertations by a range of postmodernist thinkers such as Lyotard, Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida. Moreover, de Gandillac would be present at the Davos debate of 1929 addressed in the introduction and his preoccupation with Cusanus was also framed in terms of the problem of the *Genèses de Modernité* (1992). Another, earlier French benchmark in this regard was the physicist Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), whose groundbreaking argument that Cusanus was influenced by (to the point of "plagiarizing") the twelfth-century Parisian humanist Thierry of Chartres. Although Duhem is still celebrated for exposing Thierry's influence on Cusanus and for contextualizing the latter's protomodern tendencies into the previous century, arguably, his aggressive tone is indicative of wounded national pride by the dethroning of Descartes as the first modern philosopher and as showing the birthmarks of the coming (natural-)scientific revolution.³²

It is in his pioneering philosophy of math, then, that the first of two reasons for associating de Cusa with the arrival of Modernity is to be found. While some would stick to the model of a Cartesian genealogy (including Husserl and Heidegger), indeed, the prevalent majority of the neo-Kantians interested in Cusanus subscribed to such a dethronement of Descartes. For example, on the basis of his mathematical epistemology, Cohen would deem Cusanus the true "father of modern philosophy" towards the end of his life.³³ (Nevertheless, as soon as 1883, Cohen had already brought up Cusanus in relation to Giordano Bruno in an attempt to establish the infinitesimal as the core mathematical concept upon which scientific cognition was based.³⁴) Notwithstanding the fact that Cassirer wrote his dissertation under Cohen about Cartesian math, it was in his appreciation of Cusanus that Cassirer would thus come to a drastically different attitude than Heidegger's. Clashing with the latter's lamentations of the imprisonment of philosophy or metaphysics by Cartesian *mathesis (universalis)* and the mathematization of nature,³⁵ when the two came in open confrontation at the famous dispute of Davos (1929), Cassirer would try to defend Cohen's reading of Kant as informed by Cusanus.

The second reason for linking Cusanus with the origins of Modernity was expressed as a tendency amidst this movement to retrospectively ascribe to de Cusa a prophetic confrontation

³² Albertson 2014: p. 4.

³³ Quoted on Albertson 2014: p. 3.

³⁴ Watanabe 1991: p. 27.

³⁵ Albertson 2014: pp. 4-9.

with Kantian issues: for Cassirer, Cusanus is concerned with (proto-Kantian) conditions of knowledge and his ‘coincidence of opposites’ was associated with the Kantian antinomies,³⁶ and, as for the hermeneutician Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Cusanus’ strict distinction between appearances or phenomena and things “seems to prepare the ground for the Kantian notion of the ungraspable *Ding-an-sich*.”³⁷ For Blumenberg, by contrast, such anachronistic projections are absolutely unacceptable. Latching on to a relapse into this tendency by Hoffmann, for whom Cusanus otherwise was the “last Christian thinker of the Middle Ages” whose “culture and spirit can be historically understood only in the autumn of this epoch”,³⁸ Blumenberg will remark the following: “The retransfer of modern, especially Kantian, concepts onto Cusanus’ thought always carries an instance of violence.”³⁹ To see what alternative Blumenberg poses and how Blumenberg is to be positioned in relation to this neo-Kantian heritage, it now becomes necessary to take up Cassirer’s Cusanus and Blumenberg’s response to it.

c) Cassirer’s provocation for Blumenberg’s Cusanus

Cassirer deeply appreciated Cusanus already in the aforementioned dissertation and dedicated the first chapter of his *Habilitationsschrift* on modern epistemology (1906) to him too. He was a vital link in the constitution of the critical edition of Cusanus’ work, as described above, and seemingly pushed a whole generation towards de Cusa: he even supplemented his *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927) with a text by Cusanus, issued by his students as was academic custom in Germany at the time. This text, *Idiota de Mente* (1450) translated by his son Heinrich (1903-1979) and edited by Joachim Ritter (1903-1974), led to some dispute as Klibansky (who had edited a second text appended to Cassirer’s monograph) objected to a rushed, premature issuing lacking thorough scholarly rigour as he had objected to the monograph’s conclusion of Cusanus being the first



Fig. 5: Cassirer and Heidegger by Joachim Ritter at Second Davos Hochschulkurs (1929). Used on cover of Peter Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010).

³⁶ Cassirer 2000: Ernst Cassirer, *Individual and Cosmos in the Philosophy of the Renaissance*, transl. by Mario Domandi (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2000): pp. 10-11; cf. Cassirer 1963: pp. 10-11.

³⁷ Moore 2013: p. 63.

³⁸ Quoted in Catalina M. Cubillos, “Nicholas of Cusa between the Middle Ages and Modernity: The Historiographical Positions behind the Discussion”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 86/2 (2012): pp. 237-249, here p. 243.

³⁹ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 37: „In der Rückübertragung moderner, zumal kantischer Begriffe auf das Denken des Cusaners liegt allemal eine Gewaltsamkeit.“

modern.⁴⁰ Ritter himself, at this time still a Marxist but turning to National-Socialism soon after (as would be revealed after his death), would go on to become a pillar of post-war German academia; not only did he remain in close proximity to Blumenberg through his connection to *Begriffsgeschichte*, but the monumental *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* series he set up had lasting influence. Anticipating this disciplinary orientation of his later dictionary work, Ritter had written a seminal article (1939) problematizing Cusanus' role within the history of philosophy. While the difficulty to periodize Cusanus was already articulated in the neo-Kantian camp by the likes of Windelband who described Cusanus as “a head of Janus, which looks just as much at the past as at the future”,⁴¹ Ritter's problematization would become an indicative marker for the periodization debates regarding Cusanus that still continue to rage. Furthermore, Ritter's article followed a dissertation (1925) he wrote on Cusanus under Cassirer's supervision. (It is in this capacity that Ritter would act as one of the mediators between the two discussants at Davos, as captured in the defining photograph he would take.) In contrast to Ritter's cautionary attitude, Cassirer himself had no doubt about Cusanus' status as a modern.

In *Individuum und Kosmos*, Cassirer recognized in Cusanus more than just a *mathematical* progenitor of Modernity. In this respect, it is significant that the book is dedicated to the 60th birthday of Aby Warburg (1866-1929) as Cassirer spent much time in the latter's library. Not only was Cassirer a champion of the former's *Geistes-* and *Kulturwissenschaft* for the history of philosophy, but it is clear that this book responds to the central problematic occupying the Warburg circle at this time: having Jakob Burckhardt as the Warburg Library's “secular patron saint”, those around Warburg were inspired by and reacted against Burckhardt's identification of the start of Modernity in the Italian Renaissance (and as such, Cusanus “had no place” there).⁴² Warburg himself rejected Burckhardt's idealisation of Renaissance individualism and, to take only one future regular at Warburg as an example, Johan Huizinga's *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919) not only undermined his hero's geographical narrowmindedness, but also subverted Burckhardt's rigid periodization practice by advocating for gradual epochal shifts instead.⁴³ As is apparent from the title, Cassirer's monograph took up Warburg's problem of individuality and subsequently found his solution in the German mystic's humanism and his treatises on the human face.

⁴⁰ Watanabe 1991: pp. 26-34; Albertson 2014: pp. 4-5.

⁴¹ Quoted in Cubillos 2012: p. 239.

⁴² Moore 2013: p. 52; p. 28.

⁴³ Huizinga would give lectures at the Warburg Institute in the following decade, in anticipation of his *Homo Ludens*.

In stark contrast to the ‘medieval’ refuge into the spiritual realm from all earthly sin, Cusanus’ turn to the world and reconciliation of divine transcendence with worldly immanence seemed utterly modern to Cassirer. Paying homage to Burckhardt’s thesis of individuality, Cassirer found in Cusanus the clearest articulation of a new subjectivity. Notwithstanding the negative theologian’s assertions of the unattainability and vastness of the absolute God, Cassirer holds that the germ of the modern mind lies in Cusanus’ spirited reaffirmation of the direct bond to the divine; more precisely, he finds it in Cusanus’ navigation of infinite nothingness on behalf of the null, created human beings. No longer was the universal and purely divine opposed to all ‘dirty’ and finite created beings, but instead God and man were taken together. This reconciliation was ultimately based on Cusanus’ notion of ‘coincidence of opposites’: as Cassirer explains, “the individual is not the opposite of the universal, but rather its true fulfilment.”⁴⁴ It is in this sense that Cusanus is a universal thinker embodying “the entire range and the entire *Problematik* of knowledge in the Quattrocento”, upon which Cassirer will then unleash his neo-Kantian *Problemggeschichte* (a precursor to the later *Begriffsgeschichte*).⁴⁵ Furthermore, in *De visione dei* (1453), such an expression by the individual would get more distinct contours: namely, those of the face. More specifically, the human face was taken as an image of God, as Man was created by God in his image. In other words, what Cusanus advances is one of God’s names as ‘the face of faces’. Cassirer picks up on this text, set up as an devotional instruction manual for monks, and on Cusanus’ analogical theology contained in it. Or in Cassirer’s account of Cusanus: “Each particular and individual being has an immediate relationship to God; it stands, as it were, face to face with Him.”⁴⁶

By contrast, for Blumenberg, it is precisely Cusanus’ particular reconciliation of the infinite and the finite, of the culmination of divine creation in the human as the perfected receiver of the gospel, that makes him fundamentally facing the Middle Ages. Such diametrically opposed positions tend to generate a certain astonishment among negligent readers, such as: “But here is something odd: for his knowledge of Cusanus, Blumenberg relied on the nineteenth century Catholic historian F.J. Clemens. It is quite unaccountable that he should not have turned to the more recent and philosophically profound work by Ernst Cassirer instead!”⁴⁷ Of course, such sentiments are completely unfounded as Blumenberg was deeply

⁴⁴ Cassirer 2000: p. 31; cf. Cassirer 1963: p. 34.

⁴⁵ Cassirer 2000: p. 7; cf. Cassirer 1963: p. 8.

⁴⁶ Cassirer 2000: p. 32; cf. Cassirer 1963: p. 33.

⁴⁷ This passage is cited positively, for instance, by Donald Duclow (who will be addressed at the end of this chapter) in his review of Moore’s book: Donald Duclow, “Review: Michael Edward Moore, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Kairos of Modernity: Cassirer, Gadamer, Blumenberg*”, in *American Cusanus Society Newsletter* 31 (2014): pp. 57-58, here p. 58. Quotation from Moore 2013: p. 70.

familiar with Cassirer's work to the point of giving a memorial address entitled "Ernst Cassirer's Gedenkend" (1974).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, despite a positive reference to Cassirer's *Individual and Cosmos* in the introduction for his Cusanus anthology (notably, "for this entire *problem area*"),⁴⁹ indeed, Blumenberg's citations of Cassirer in general seem to decrease in number and increase in critical tone throughout his career. Such a complex affinity to Cassirer is explained by Blumenberg's editor and fellow-member (though not concurrently) of *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, Anselm Haverkamp in an article positioning Blumenberg in the Davos controversy. Haverkamp shows how Blumenberg leans towards Heidegger's objections to the loss of Cassirer's Kantian rigour though without siding uncritically with Heidegger nor without losing sight of the guiding questions of Cassirer's project.⁵⁰ Such an understanding of the more general kinship between Blumenberg and Cassirer explains Blumenberg's ambivalence to Cassirer's Cusanus as an attempt to move beyond it.

d) Blumenberg's Cusanus

As to Blumenberg's own Cusanus, an interesting (re-)discovery has been made very recently (2022): it concerns the resurfacing of a text of a radio-essay that Blumenberg presented in 1966 on the same text by Cusanus causing the dispute around Cassirer's publication (which is relied on here by Blumenberg in shortened version), namely *Idiota de mente*.⁵¹ Amidst a series of other radio-essays on technics from around the second half of the 1960s, this essay of Blumenberg's offers yet another insight into his continuous engagement with 'Cusanus the layman'.⁵² This engagement would go back as far as the late 1940s, when he would discuss Cusanus with his academic advisors (as evidenced from surviving notes) and would give a proseminar on Cusanus in these years.⁵³ With regards to Blumenberg's Cusanus, the discoverers of Blumenberg's radio-essay take note in their commentary that in contrast to Cassirer's neo-Kantian *Problemgeschichte* and to the aforementioned Gadamer, "it would appear Blumenberg

⁴⁸ Hans Blumenberg, "Ernst Cassirer's Gedenkend: Bei Entgegennahme des Kuno Fischer-Preises der Universität Heidelberg im Juli 1974", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 28: 110/4 (1974): pp. 456-463.

⁴⁹ The subtle designation of *Problemgeschichte* is significant here. My translation and my emphasis.

Blumenberg 1957: p. 64n60: „Zum ganzen Problemkreis“.

⁵⁰ Anselm Haverkamp, "Blumenberg in Davos: The Cassirer–Heidegger Controversy Reconsidered", *MLN* 131/3 (2016): pp. 738-753.

⁵¹ Blumenberg 2022: Hans Blumenberg, "Der philosophische Dialog als literarische Form: Einführung zu >Der Laie über den Geist<" in Ralf Becker, Christian Bermes & Dirk Westerkamp (eds.), *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie: Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2022): pp. 161-164.

⁵² As noted in Blumenberg's new biography: Zill 2020: p. 494.

⁵³ Besides notes of discussions on Cusanus with his academic advisors, he would give a proseminar on Cusanus in these years. Zill 2020: p. 371; p. 157.

took a ‘third way’ in between neo-Kantianism and hermeneutics.”⁵⁴ In spite of a harsh review by Gadamer of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis in Blumenberg’s *Legitimität* for its determination of Cusanus as medieval a few years later,⁵⁵ commonalities between the two continued to exist. At a prominent conference on Cusanus’ role in the arrival of Modernity (to which famous psychologist Karl Jaspers contributed too), for instance, Gadamer deemed Cusanus’ philosophy of language a precursor to the hermeneutic centrality of language. Similarly, in this radio-essay, Blumenberg appreciates the technic element of the creating creativity of language (*sprachschöpferische Dimension*) in Cusanus.⁵⁶

More specifically, it is Cusanus’ close proximity to the 15th century layman-movement of *Devotio moderna* that is stressed in Blumenberg’s profile of the Rhineland mystic: in fact, Cusanus visited the movement’s centre in Deventer on his trip through the Netherlands in 1451 and the scholarship made available as detailed in his testimony would be set up to support this centre.⁵⁷ Cassirer, too, underscores this (“German”) religio-mystic reform-movement, internal to the church but sometimes characterized as proto-reformist, as inspiration for the German mystic’s humanism and treatises on the face.⁵⁸ Instead, Blumenberg recognizes in this movement and in its turn to personal, “lay” piety and vernacular accessibility of its message, a deeper formative effect on Cusanus: for Blumenberg, it is the use of “everyday-artisanal metaphor-speech” that imprints *devotio moderna* onto Cusanus under the mark of the layman (which used to be artisans, historically): e.g. Blumenberg stresses the Cusanic motif of the spoon-carver as emblematic for the lay-man.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the association of Cusanus with this 15th century movement drawing on ‘modern’ already puts the periodization complications

⁵⁴ My translation from Lande & Greite 2022: Joel B. Lande and Till Greite, “Über den >Mut zur Vermutung<: Bemerkungen zu Hans Blumenbergs Radio-Essay >Der Laie über den Geist< [1966] von Nikolaus von Cues”, in Ralf Becker, Christian Bermes & Dirk Westerkamp (eds.), *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie: Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2022): pp. 149-160, here p. 154: „so scheint Blumenberg einen >dritten Weg< zwischen Neukantianismus und Hermeneutik eingeschlagen zu haben.“

⁵⁵ Karl Löwith & Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hans Blumenberg: *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*“, *Philosophische Rundschau* 15 (1968): pp. 195-208.

⁵⁶ Lande & Greite 2022: p. 154.

⁵⁷ Michael Moore is, once again, far from helpful here: weirdly denouncing Cassirer’s underscoring of the movement as outdated – it “is no longer considered a serious source” – only to nuance it with Cusanus’ own admission of the movement’s influence in his testimony. It is true, however, that some doubt has come up about Cusanus intent to appoint the scholarship to Deventer specifically, which would be the exact opposite of Moore’s point. Moore 2013: p. 58.

⁵⁸ Cassirer 2000: pp. 33-34; Cassirer 1963: pp. 32-33.

⁵⁹ The discoverers of the radio-essay even assert that Blumenberg sympathizes with this himself too. My translation. Blumenberg quoted in Lande & Greite 2022: p. 154: „alltäglich-handwerkliche[] Metaphernsprache“.

back on the table (an issue discussed in the *Begriffsgeschichte* sphere by Hans Gumbrecht).⁶⁰

In advancing his solution to such periodization complications, Blumenberg strictly and consistently argues for Cusanus' qualification as medieval. While deemed on the verge of Modernity and designated a 'crown-witness' of its arrival, in Blumenberg's account, Cusanus continues to face the Middle Ages. In other words, such a solution founded on the notion of *Epochenschwelle* implies fundamentally going beyond the person 'Cusanus'. Thus, Blumenberg argues paradoxically but elegantly that "the Middle Ages are 'extended' by Cusanus", while, simultaneously, "Cusanus ends the Middle Ages, insofar as he is consequently medieval."⁶¹ A prime example in which Cusanus exhausts the Middle Ages is provided by Blumenberg in his introduction to the anthology of Cusanus-texts translated by his first assistant Gunther Gawlick. Describing Cusanus' decentered ability to think beyond the synthesizing *Summae* (of which Aquinas is the exemplifying author), Blumenberg remarks: "... one only has to think of the impossibility of the medieval *Summa* with Cusanus' thought; but the megastructures of the *Summa* are the most significant literary form-development of the medieval mind [*Geist*]."⁶² Nevertheless, such acts of exhaustion are undertaken with exclusively medieval means and thus Cusanus remains facing the Middle Ages entirely. In Blumenberg's words: "All ideas, which have instigated the claim of Cusanus as 'precursor' of Modernity, appear to him as explications of elementary medieval views."⁶³

Blumenberg is adamant and uncompromising in this respect, much to the chagrin of many a Cusanus-scholar. To give only a small selection of a predominantly English tendency: Cusanus-translator Jasper Hopkins painstakingly seeks to undermine Blumenberg's analysis on a philological level that cannot be reproduced here, without engaging with the periodization-argument on the methodological level in the slightest: for instance, such a methodological negligence is evidenced in a quote like: "given the many misconceptions, half-truths, and imprecisions in Blumenberg's interpretation of Nicholas's cosmology, philosophical anthropology, and Christology, it would be almost a miracle if his overall interpretation of

⁶⁰ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Modern, Modernität, Moderne", in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze & Reinhart Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland vol. 4: Mi-Pre* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1978): pp. 93-131. Cf. Moore 2013: p. 77-78.

⁶¹ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: pp. 13-14: „*Nicolaus Cusanus* beendet das Mittelalter, indem er konsequenter mittelalterlich ist.“

⁶² My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 13: „Man muss nur an die Unmöglichkeit der mittelalterlichen *Summa* beim Cusaner denken, um das zu sehen; der Riesenbau der *Summa* aber ist die bedeutendste literarische Formwerdung des mittelalterlichen Geistes.“

⁶³ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 48: „Alle Ideen, die Veranlassung gegeben haben, den Cusaner als "Vorläufer" der Neuzeit in Anspruch zu nehmen, erscheinen bei ihm als Explikationen von elementaren Vorstellungen des Mittelalters.“

Nicholas's role in Western intellectual history were correct."⁶⁴ More recently, Elizabeth Brient's monograph on Blumenberg's *Epochenschwelle* failed to genuinely engage Blumenberg's argument because "Cusanus' system is actually far more sophisticated than that of Bruno" and instead sought to substitute it with an argument about epochal transition with the pair Eckhart-Cusanus.⁶⁵ Finally, and yet more recent, is the criticism made by former president of the American Cusanus Society David Albertson: the charge is that Blumenberg fails to take seriously the degree to which Cusanus' infinite astronomy and mathematics are consistent with his Christian mysticism and, specifically, grounded in the central theological doctrines of Incarnation and the Trinity.⁶⁶ (Similarly, it might be pointed out in passing, it is no coincidence that the earliest, staunchest advocate of such a grounding of modern science in the Christian Trinity, the Hegelian Alexandre Kojève, starts his 1964 plea with an epigraph by Cusanus.⁶⁷ Perhaps Kojève's early awareness of Cusanus can be explained as a result of his teacher, the aforementioned Jaspers, writing a monograph on Cusanus in the same year as this article.⁶⁸) As a result of this failure, according to Albertson, it is no wonder that Blumenberg would end up on the position of a strictly medieval Cusanus and that he should reserve the true "geometrized, infinite cosmology" for Bruno as "the first modern".⁶⁹

Leaving aside the insensitivities to the intricacies of Blumenberg's periodization-heuristic, however, from reading Blumenberg's introduction, it is hard to get the impression that he misses the centrality of Incarnation for Cusanus or that he misunderstands the extent of Cusanus' infinite universe. In fact, he concludes this introduction with a meditation on how "the intimate entanglement of theology, anthropology and cosmology running through Cusanus' entire work, reaches its climax in the Christology".⁷⁰ We have already seen how for Cusanus creation culminates in the human being, making it the perfect receiver for God's gospel. To this, Blumenberg now adds a further characterization: "[Cusanus] projects not just the infinity of God onto the cosmos, but also onto the human. Infinite God, infinite world,

⁶⁴ Such a Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1988): pp. 51-93, here p. 90.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold to Modernity* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002): p. 141; p. 143.

⁶⁶ Albertson 2014: p. 11.

⁶⁷ Alexandre Kojève, "The Christian Origin of Modern Science", transl. by David R. Lachterman, *The St. John's Review* 35/1 (1984[1964]): pp. 22-26, here p.22.

⁶⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Nikolaus Cusanus* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verl., 1964).

⁶⁹ Albertson 2014: p. 11.

⁷⁰ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 68: „Die innige Verschränkung von Theologie, Anthropologie und Kosmologie, die das ganze Werk des Cusaners charakterisiert, erreicht in der Christologie ihren Höhepunkt“.

infinite human mind”.⁷¹ It is in this sense that Blumenberg reads Cusanus as having a radically decentered ontology that anticipated the Copernican revolution, while simultaneously resting on an “anthropocentric teleology”.⁷² (Additionally, for Cusanus’ decentered cosmology, Blumenberg points to the “hermeticist undercurrent of the Middle Ages” channelled through Eckhart.⁷³) Furthermore, Cusanus’ projection of God’s infinity onto the world and onto the human mind leads Cusanus the artisan-layman to pose a conception of the human mind as ‘co-creating’ with God the Creator. Blumenberg elaborates on this artisanal imitation of or ‘participation [*Teilhabe*],’⁷⁴ in Creation as follows: “On the face of it, it appears this achievement of the human mind let itself be described in [ancient,] traditional formula with Cusanus. ‘Cognition takes place through similitude [*Ähnlichkeit*]’.”⁷⁵ However, “Cognition through similitude cannot mean a secondary and coincidental application to the given here”, but constitutes an immediate, self-aware act of craftsmanship partaking in Creation.⁷⁶ For Cusanus, this position follows directly from the (theological) fact that God did not just take the shape of a human but that a human also managed to incarnate God.

It is this conception of man as ‘co-creating’ with God which would become a crucial pre-requisite for the theology of Modernity (and which, according to Blumenberg, anticipates especially Vico’s description of man’s “poietic being”, foreshadowing further discussion later on).⁷⁷ In this respect, Blumenberg goes on to emphasize that “Cusanus avoids the nominalist path.”⁷⁸ The (univocal) nominalism of the High Middle Ages also pushed towards this pre-requisite as it “recklessly” kept increasing God’s transcendence by coming up with (or *creating*) new names.⁷⁹ Blumenberg elaborates on this by saying: “Petrus Lombardus and Thomas von Aquino had still wanted to preserve this predicate [i.e. ‘creator’] for God exclusively. Already

⁷¹ Blumenberg 1957: p. 39: “er projiziert nicht nur die Unendlichkeit Gottes auf den Kosmos, sondern auch auf den Menschen. Unendlicher Gott, unendliche Welt, unendlicher Menscheng Geist”.

⁷² My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 68: „anthropozentrische Teleologie”

⁷³ Throughout his own texts, Blumenberg refers to the hermetic formula of ‘the infinite ball, whose middle is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere’. Blumenberg 1957: here p. 31: „der aus der hermetischen Unterströmung des Mittelalters”.

⁷⁴ In the context of his dissertation, it might be suspected that what Blumenberg has in mind here is the Platonist *Teilhabe* or ‘methexis’ (μέθεξις).

⁷⁵ My translation. Blumenberg, 1957: p. 53: „Auf den ersten Blick scheint es, als seien die Leistungen des menschlichen Geistes beim Cusaner durchaus in den traditionellen Formeln beschrieben. “Erkennen vollzieht sich durch Ähnlichkeit” – diese seit den Anfängen der antiken Philosophie in Geltung stehende These findet sich immer wieder.”

⁷⁶ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 54: „Erkenntnis durch Ähnlichkeit kann hier also nicht eine sekundäre und zufällige Anpassung an das Gegebene bedeuten”.

⁷⁷ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 61: „Allem voran die Geschichte, in der der Mensch sich primär als “poietisches” Wesen enthüllt und darstellt. Für Vico begreift der Geist nur das, was er selbst geschaffen hat”.

⁷⁸ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 55: „Aber *Nikolaus* vermeidet den nominalistischen Weg”.

⁷⁹ My translation, Blumenberg 1957: p. 29: „rücksichtslos”.

William of Ockham, however, contests – against Duns Scotus’ arguments - whether the claim that God alone has creating power is provable.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, this contrast is expressed also in Cusanus’ interpretation of the ‘cosmological ladder [*Stufenkosmos*]’ or Chain of Being (which will be discussed more extensively in chapter two): “The Godly being flows more unhindered into the world; despite His heightened transcendence, it is more intensively omnipresent than the high-scholastic scalar cosmos could conceive.”⁸¹ While “[t]his breakdown of the closed cosmos undoubtedly scratches the surface of pantheist perspectives”,⁸² Blumenberg is nevertheless keen to point to Cusanus’ resistance to collapsing entirely the problem of the origin of the world into an immanent natural explanation. In fact, like the nominalists, “[w]ith his mysticism, Nicholas sharpens God’s transcendence; there are no transitions or intermediate stages [*Zwischenstufe*] between infinity and finiteness.”⁸³ It is precisely in this failure, along with the rest of scholasticism, to sever the concept of God from its service to the notion of World, where his medieval loyalty to the old thought of Creation lies.⁸⁴

e) Cusanus and the ‘*analogia entis*’

Despite the extensive discussion of Cusanus and similitude (*Ähnlichkeit*) in his introduction, Blumenberg does not mention ‘*analogia entis*’ in relation to Cusanus. Yet, there is no scarcity in literature on this topic. To take one example, the Catholic apologetic Johannes Hoff claims that “Cusa revived and transformed the analogical middle way of the Middle Ages”.⁸⁵ His book-length study (2013) is dedicated to this revival of ‘analogical rationality’ by Cusanus and attempts to extract lessons from his response to his turbulent times for our own post-modern times. Recall from the introduction that the qualification of the ‘*analogia entis*’ as a middle way refers to the way in which it circumnavigated the opposition between the ‘equivocity of Being’

⁸⁰ My translation. Blumenberg, “Einleitung”, p. 52: „Petrus Lombardus und Thomas von Aquino hatten dieses Prädikat noch ausschliesslich Gott vorbehalten wollen. Aber schon Wilhelm von Ockham bezweifelt, gegen die Argumente des Duns Scotus, dass der Satz beweisbar sei, Gott allein komme schöpferische Macht zu.“

⁸¹ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 25: „Das göttliche Sein strömt ungehinderter in die Welt ein, es ist trotz seiner gesteigerten Transzendenz intensiver allgegenwärtig, als das im Schalenkosmos der Hochscholastik begriffen werden.“

⁸² My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 25: „Diese Aufbrechung des geschlossenen Kosmos streift zweifellos pantheistische Vorstellungen“.

⁸³ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 26: „Mit der Mystik verschärft *Nikolaus* die Transzendenz Gottes: zwischen Unendlichkeit und Endlichkeit gibt es keine Übergänge und Zwischenstufen.“

⁸⁴ My paraphrasing. Blumenberg 1957: p. 31: „Es ist der Scholastik nicht gelungen – und es gelingt auch Nikolaus nicht vollends –, den Gottesbegriff aus der Dienststellung des Weltprinzips herauszulösen und ihn so zu formulieren, das er von der künftigen Einklammerung des Weltursprungsproblems durch die immanente Naturerklärung nicht betroffen werden konnte.“

⁸⁵ Hoff 2013: p. x.

camp and the ‘univocity of Being’ side. For the latter (represented by Scotism and the subsequent nominalism), descriptive names are applicable to both the Divine and that which is Created indiscriminately, while the former prohibits crossing the divide either way and recognizes only (random) homonymy.⁸⁶ This language transmits Aristotelian legacy but with Aquinas a way out is posed with the ‘analogy of Being’.⁸⁷ The names are recognized as homonymy but no longer as random and, thus, knowing God is not a matter of adding new earthly labels (such as ‘wise’ or ‘good’) but in bending the earthly labels to draw God forth; or, in Aquinas’ own words in the passage on Names of God in the *Summa*: “For we can name God only from creatures.”⁸⁸

Hoff advances his argument by centring in on the devotional, mystagogical exercise of *De visione dei* where the sought-for analogical re-orientation is most instructive: more specifically, Hoff is concerned with the name of God contained in it, that is the face of faces. In passing, it might be worth pointing out that in a note (mentioning Blumenberg too), the aforementioned math-oriented Blumenberg-critic Albertson recognizes a great sympathy with Hoff’s analogy-book on *De visione dei* and his own monograph,⁸⁹ which claims to do the same for another of Cusanus’ names of God: $1 \times 1 = 1$.⁹⁰ Furthermore, it might also be noteworthy that, in spite of merely one citation to Blumenberg (and critical remarks in previous work),⁹¹ Hoff seems to advocate for a version of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis: “At the threshold to the modern age, de Cusa recovered the Pre-modern experience that every creature *is* an image of its creator.”⁹² Another parallel with Blumenberg’s Cusanus can be recognized in the way in which Hoff specifies the early 14th century devotional book from the “late medieval *devotio moderna* movement called the *imitation of Christ*” as a source for such an analogical ethics.⁹³ Deriving from this shared interest in the modern devotion, a final resemblance with Blumenberg might

⁸⁶ Pater 1995: Wim A. de Pater, “Analogie en Disclosures”, *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 56 (1995): pp. 242-256.

⁸⁷ E. Jennifer Ashworth & Domenic D’Ettore, “Medieval Theories of Analogy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 1999): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/analogy-medieval/> (accessed on December 10th, 2022).

⁸⁸ Quoted in the Pater 1995: p. 248. Thomas Aquinas, “Treatise On the One God. Question 13: The Names of God” in *Prima Pars of Summa Theologiae* (New York: Benziger Brothers Printers, 1917[1274]). Available on Wikisource: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Summa_Theologiae/First_Part/Question_13 (accessed on January 27th, 2023) .

⁸⁹ Albertson 2014: p.285-286n55.

⁹⁰ Albertson 2014: p. 1.

⁹¹ Johannes Hoff, *Kontingenzen, Berührung, Überschreitung: Zur philosophischen Propädeutik christlicher Mystik nach Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2007): p. 38.

⁹² Hoff 2013: p. 214. Cf. other instances referring to de Cusa as being “on the threshold of modernity”: e.g. Hoff 2013: p. 32.

⁹³ Written by Thomas à Kempis. Hoff 2013: p. 214.

be suggested in Hoff's attention for Cusanus' symbolically-laden everyday language.⁹⁴ This is, however, as far as the similarities go.

Whereas Cusanus' doctrine of analogy in the Thomist sense has been a controversial matter for centuries, his application of linguistic analogy has been broadly discussed since at least Cassirer. In a series of short articles dedicated to such linguistic use in Cusanus, Donald F. Duclow for instance, remarks at one point: "Indeed, Nicholas speaks analogically at every turn."⁹⁵ Beyond anticipating the (early-)modern use of 'analogy' in linguistics – the relation of which to the philosophical concept has been addressed in the entry on analogy in Ritter's aforementioned philosophical dictionary,⁹⁶ authored by a Bochum-colleague and friend of Blumenberg's – this carries theological and metaphysical significance too.⁹⁷ Thus, Duclow sets out to analyse how Cusanus tends to increasingly draw on analogies so as to bend language to bring forth the divine as his career progresses: more specifically, Duclow analyses this in terms of analogies about generative (natural) forces or powers "inherent in creation and the absolute power of God."⁹⁸

From this perspective, rather than Being, towards the end of his life, Cusanus prefers to develop a scheme of forces and their potency and "[i]n this scheme, the potency-for-becoming marks the Platonic "*chorismos*" or dividing line between God and the world."⁹⁹ In other words, Duclow concludes of the late-Cusanus: "Since Cusanus sees nothing prior to divine power, *not even being*, he develops not an analogy of being, but an analogy of power."¹⁰⁰ By mentioning '*chorismos*' [χωρισμός], Duclow scrapes the surface of an intimate entanglement of this concept with Cusanus-studies: for example, the contributor on this notion to Ritter's dictionary is himself a Cusanus-scholar.¹⁰¹ Moreover, in this entry, the previously discussed Hoffmann is credited for establishing the study of this concept; whereas within Cusanus-studies, Hoffmann is primarily known for his 'Platonized' "thematization of the

⁹⁴ For Blumenberg, see page 23 here. For Hoff, on Cusanus' attempt to unify the allegoric language of Christian orthodoxy and scientific language for going beyond the "analytic attempts to dissect the symbolically saturated language of our everyday life into 'merely metaphorical' and allegedly more elementary 'physical' truths." Hoff 2013: p.26.

⁹⁵ Duclow 1981: Donald F. Duclow, "Dynamics of Analogy", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 21/3 (1981): pp. 293-299, here p. 295. See also Donald F. Duclow, "Analogy of the Word" *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 38 (1977): pp. 282-299.

⁹⁶ Wolfgang Kluxen & Adolf Remane, "Analogie" in Ritter 1971: Joachim Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie vol. 1: A-C* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971): pp. 213-229.

⁹⁷ Zill 2020: p. 286.

⁹⁸ Duclow 1981: p. 295.

⁹⁹ Duclow 1981: p. 297

¹⁰⁰ My emphasis. Duclow 1981: p. 299.

¹⁰¹ Heinrich Meinhardt, "Chorismos" in Ritter 1971: pp. 1007-1008.

relation of infinite to finite Being” in Cusanus.¹⁰² While detailing the exact relation of this concept to its complementary counter-concept of ‘participation’ (see note 74) crossing the dividing line goes beyond the scope of the current thesis, ‘*chorismos*’ will be taken up again in chapter three.

Meanwhile, the controversy regarding Cusanus and the ‘*analogia entis*’ was already addressed by Ritter himself, in the aforementioned article (1939) problematizing Cusanus’ epochal identity (cited by Blumenberg in his introduction).¹⁰³ Agitating against Thomist interpretations of Cusanus and against attempts to reduce him to Thomism, Ritter explicitly rejected applications of ‘*analogia entis*’ to Cusanus’ philosophy.¹⁰⁴ Such applications went back to at least Johannes Uebinger and Joseph Neuner amidst the (neo-)Thomist interpretations of Cusanus addressed before.¹⁰⁵ Ritter was convinced he undermined “all traditional interpretations” for bringing awareness to the problem of epochal identity (though it has been objected that “it is yet to be seen how much of his arguments hold for the Platonist interpretations of Cusanus he criticizes”).¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, after WWII, the debate lighted up once again: Jozef Koch, who had written authoritatively about the doctrine of analogy in Meister Eckhart before,¹⁰⁷ denied any relevance of the ‘*analogia entis*’ for Cusanus on the grounds that he does not explicitly utter the term (1956). Koch was even supported in this claim on some occasions by Blumenberg’s assistant and translator of his anthology Günter Gawlick.¹⁰⁸ A few years after, however, the founding director of Institut für Cusanus-Forschung Rudolf Haubst rejected this claim: as part of a broader debate between Haubst and Koch on the question of whether Cusanus practiced a metaphysics of Being (*Seinsmetaphysik*, and by implication the ‘analogy of Being’) or a Neoplatonic henology (*Einheitsmetaphysik*).¹⁰⁹ Instead, the lack of explicit mention of

¹⁰² Jacobi 1969: p. 64.

¹⁰³ Blumenberg 1957: p. 11n8.

¹⁰⁴ Jacobi 1969: p. 63.

¹⁰⁵ Jacobi 1969: pp. 51-52, pp. 214-215; pp. 58-59.

¹⁰⁶ My translation. Ritter quoted in Jacobi 1969: p. 61: „jede traditionelle Interpretation“; Jacobi 1969: p. 61-62: „Mit welchen Argumenten Ritter auch die platonisierenden Cusanus-Interpretationen kritisiert und ob er sie mit Recht verwirft, wird noch zu prüfen sein.“

¹⁰⁷ Schulze 1978: Werner Schulze, *Zahl, Proportion, Analogie: Eine Untersuchung zur Metaphysik und Wissenschaftshaltung des Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Aschendorff Verl. 1978): p. 7n2.

¹⁰⁸ Rudolf Haubst, “Nikolaus von Kues und die Analogia Entis”, in Paul Wilpert & Willehad P. Eckert (eds.), *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963): pp. 686-695, here p. 686.

¹⁰⁹ As discussed widely and in great detail by Albertson, who attempts to insert Thierry of Chartres as one of Cusanus’ twelfth century sources (addressed briefly at the beginning of the current chapter) because the discovery of the Proclus fragment does not sufficiently cover the question of origin of specific aspects of Cusanus’ mathematical epistemology. Albertson 2013: especially pp. 209-211. Originally publication: Rudolf Haubst “Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des ‘Nicolaus Treverensis’ in Codicillus Straßburg 84.” In

‘analogia entis’ was explained by Haubst, who is sometimes grouped together with Blumenberg for deeming Cusanus the “gatekeeper of modernity”,¹¹⁰ as the result of Cusanus wanting to avoid scholarly conflicts on this topic. On this account of strategic intent, the thought of ‘analogy of Being’ is actually “unquestioned” in Cusanus and “never abandoned, but rather ever renewed and fortified.”¹¹¹ Nevertheless, while it is yet to be seen if Haubst’s argument can be refuted entirely, scholarly consensus seems to tend towards a more conservative attitude and prefers to keep Cusanus separated from the ‘analogia entis’.¹¹²

f) Conclusion:

Cusanus does not use or even mention the ‘analogia entis’. Consequently, Blumenberg does not discuss ‘analogia entis’ in relation to Cusanus. Nevertheless, Blumenberg spends considerable effort on establishing how Cusanus’ project consists of an epistemology of similitude and on distinguishing this project from the univocity of Scholastic nominalism. More broadly, however, the compatibility of Cusanus to scholasticism and Thomism has occupied those concerned with Cusanus from early on. While Blumenberg himself may have kept adequate distance to the question of Cusanus and the ‘analogia entis’, explicit debate on this question unfolded among the immediately preceding discussants to which he responded and continued with his direct affiliates. Whether Cusanus’ epochal relation to ‘analogia entis’ tends more towards a negative explanation of the strategic silent-treatment while taking it for granted completely or more towards plain denial of the Thomist doctrine must remain somewhat open. Regardless, it seems well-established after this chapter that the negative theologian – especially towards the end of his life – had already substantially moved away from the scholastic status quo of Thomism and is not so easily contained in it.

Rather than an argument regarding Cusanus’ philosophy itself, however, what was at stake in this chapter was primarily the evaluation of his epochal identity by others. In addition to Catholic evaluations of one of their fellow-churchmen, such competing evaluations were, at times, fraught with nationalist sentiments (cf. genealogies of Modernity with a Cartesian progenitor), with attempts to legitimize philosophical enterprises (such as the Kantian), or with

Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 1, ed. by Rudolf Haubst (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1961): pp. 17–51.

¹¹⁰ Quoted on Albertson 2013: p. 2.

¹¹¹ My translation. Paraphrase of Haubst’s account by Schulze 1978: p. 7: „Von einer analogia entis ist bei ihm nie ausdrücklich die Rede, wenngleich diese unbefragt (als reale Bezogenheit des Kontingenten auf das gründend Absolute) vorausgesetzt wird.“; p. 7n2.

¹¹² Jacobi 1969: pp. 214-221, here p. 216.

other motives. Among such fiercely fought battles, it is no wonder that Blumenberg's denial of Cusanus' straightforward modern status has led to a fair degree of resistance. It has been set out in this chapter, however, how Blumenberg's more nuanced position regarding the periodisation of Cusanus, contrary to his critics' contentions, has firm precedents and a solid foundation in and beyond neo-Kantianism. As only one of multiple 'crown-witnesses' of the arrival of Modernity, in Blumenberg's solution to the periodization issue, Cusanus is analysed beyond his person and as closing the Middle Ages by extending it once more. Thereby we are enabled to turn to the second 'crown witness'.

II. Bruno on the Verge of Modernity

In this chapter, the second crown-witness of the *Epochenschwelle* between the Middle Ages and Modernity will be called: Giordano Bruno. Facing, allegedly, the Modern Age while completing the threshold from out of the Middle Ages, this virulent heretic with his unmatched fanaticism for the infinity of the universe and the plurality of worlds certainly makes a compelling case. Although he left a drastically different impact in his wake compared to Cusanus, the same approach will be applied to Bruno as in the previous chapter: after a brief elaboration on the biographical context of his textual output, Bruno's recovery from obscurity will be mapped in a short overview of his reception history. The severity of this rebound is hard to overestimate: already within the 18th century his works were much-prized collector-items,¹¹³ while in the 21st their antiquarian appeal has turned into a spectacle of its own.¹¹⁴ Whereas Bruno's return to the stage of European political and intellectual history from the late-18th century onwards is a lot more bombastic than the careful reappraisal of Cusanus (perhaps, still, in character), the emphasis will be on some of the benchmarks of readings of the Nolan in the 20th century. To avoid the pitfalls of Bruno's spectacular track-record, strict attentiveness to the textual critical dimension of the discussed sources is required. This will then provide solid foundation for situating Blumenberg's Bruno, the analysis of which – it bears repeating – is conducted from the basis of his contribution to the textual scholarship. Admittedly, this methodological choice will put disproportionate focus on Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper* and his other English texts; yet, the Ash Wednesday runs through his life like a red thread up until his death. Furthermore, such a contextualization and further discussion of relevant readings of Bruno sufficiently enables the subsequent scrutiny of considerations of Bruno and the 'analogia entis'.

¹¹³ In mid-1788, François Hemsterhuis attests people paying f 180 for works of Bruno such as *La Cena de la Ceneri* and *Spaccio de la bestia trinfante*. François Hemsterhuis, "Lettre, 9.43 – 6 juin 1788" *Hemsterhusiana 9. Ma toute chère Diotime: Lettres à la princesse de Gallitzin, 1788*, ed. Jacob van Sluis (Münster: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 2012): p. 92.

¹¹⁴ In a recent episode on the American Reality TV-show 'Pawn Stars' on History Channel, a Roman bookstore is seen selling a first edition of *De Progressu et Lampade venatoria Logicorum* (1587) for \$100.000. Pawn Stars, "Pawn Stars: Rick & Chum's BIG SPLURGE on RARE ITALIAN RELICS (Season 17)", YouTube Clip, May 19th, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7zi0BsF5k> (accessed on January 29th, 2023). I owe thanks to Matthijs Smit for this recommendation.

a) Vita Bruni

The amount of accusations Filippo Bruno of Nola would accumulate during his lifetime are staggering: Arianist or docetic rejections of the doctrine of the trinity, reading forbidden books, and even an (implausible) charge of murder of a fellow Dominican shows up. Before the latter would eventually force him into his wandering years across Europe, the young Nolaner would start his turbulent career in the confines of the San Domenico Maggiore in the



Fig. 6: Statue of Thomas Aquinas by Francesco Martani (2015) in front of Ospitalità San Tommaso D'aquino in Bologna. Shot by author on September 29th, 2022.

Kingdom of Naples – thereupon taking on the name ‘Giordano’. In this Dominican Order where the University of Naples was then seated, Thomas Aquinas had been a friar too and had returned to teach in the year 1272. Bruno respected Aquinas tremendously throughout his life and mirrored the titanic mental structures of the Thomist founder of scholasticism first and foremost in the art of memory.¹¹⁵ Bruno would excel especially in this mnemotechnics, informed by the same Majorcan mystic and Franciscan Ramon Llull (c. 1232-1316) of whom Cusanus owned many books; even to the point of gaining an audience with the pontiff in 1569 to demonstrate this excellence.¹¹⁶ From early on, Bruno’s grand memory palaces housed those regions of thought that fell outside the standard dogma, such as Hebraic mysticism and astronomical enigmas of the time. While Naples provided Bruno with plenty of places marking a rich variety of pantheons and revealing layers of heritages (including the Egyptian),¹¹⁷ he was forced to leave (for good) after learning of being investigated by his superiors a mere five years after returning from Rome.

Already in these formative years in Naples, Bruno was able to balance out the heavy weight of the Thomist-Aristotelean legacy of his own Order by being supplied with a firm Augustinian-Platonist tradition in the region with the convent of San Giovanni a Carbonara.¹¹⁸ Not only did the Augustinian hermits provide Bruno with valuable mentors (especially friar

¹¹⁵ Ingrid D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic* (New York: Macmillan, 2008): p.59.

¹¹⁶ Rowland 2008: p. 53.

¹¹⁷ Rowland 2008: p. 121; p. 144.

¹¹⁸ Rowland 2008: pp. 35-37; p. 65.

Teofilo da Vairano, a name who Bruno would adopt often in his dialogues), but also a climate of exceptional tolerance towards Hebraic philosophy in “an age of rampant anti-Semitism”.¹¹⁹ In this regard, further mention is made explicitly of Fra Egidio or Giles da Viterbo is mentioned as a crucial influential force countering anti-Semitism in Naples at the time. Teofilo visited Egidio’s library, which was assembled by his closest Neopolitan associate, the aristocrat Fra Girolamo Seripando.¹²⁰ Although the exact nature of Bruno’s relation to this convent remains clouded, it is certain that in its library Bruno would get into contact with the works of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Comparable to Aquinas’ reconciliation of Christian orthodoxy with the massive influx of the Recovery of Aristotle during the turn of the 13th century, Bruno thus stood at the forefront of Renaissance reconciliation with the influx of (Neo-)Platonic facilitated by Ficino. The Florence Academy, set up by Ficino under the patronage of de’ Medici, did not just retrieve and translate long lost (Neo-)Platonic writings into Latin but also rescued the *Hermetica* from extinction. This corpus of texts was associated with Hermes Trismegistus, at the time believed to be a high priest in Ancient Egypt resembling but predating Moses. Unbeknownst to Bruno, this corpus was in fact an expression of the *Koine* melting-pot of the Mediterranean (including Hellenistic Judaist tendencies) in the first centuries after Christ, still it would prove to be a great inspiration for him. It is especially in the output of the Florence Academy that Bruno found a philosophical counter-model to the Ptolemaic-Aristotelean geocentric model (see fig. 7), which would eventually converge with his encounters with Copernican astronomy so as to be able to ground his own infinite cosmology.¹²¹

After struggling to find employment for a while in northern Italy, the twenty-nine year old Bruno would make his way to the Protestant countries “like many Italian fugitives from the Holy Office”.¹²² Yet, few went as far as this vagabond. Already in Calvin’s Geneve he obliged

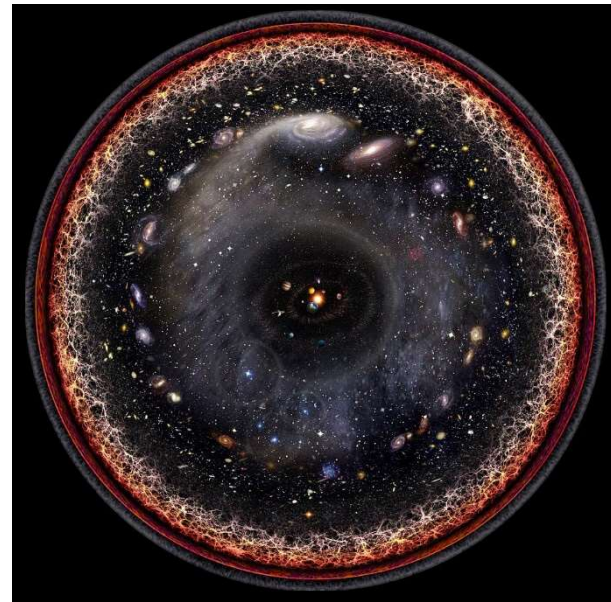


Fig. 7: Closed off ptolemaic-Aristotelean cosmos depiction. Pablo Carlos Budassi, *Observable Universe Logarithmic Illustration Classic* (2018), Infographic through logarithmic radial scale conception: Pablo Budassi website, JPG accessed on January 24th, 2023:

<https://www.pablocarlosbudassi.com/2021/02/the-infographic-and-artistic-work-named.html>.

¹¹⁹ Rowland 2008: p. 39.

¹²⁰ For this, Rowland 2008: p. 39-40, here p. 39.

¹²¹ Rowland 2008: pp. 62-65.

¹²² Rowland 2008: p. 88.

to accept Protestantism.¹²³ But the sensory-deprived convert would quickly kick the sore legs of those around him and was excommunicated so as to make his way to Anglican England through the increasingly intolerant France. More than the equally spectacular (though increasingly abstract) exercises in magic where he would expose nature's baffling shortcuts,¹²⁴ again, it was his skill of mnemotechnics that managed to bring him to a position at the royal court in Paris. With the balance of religious trifle in France tipping towards Catholicism, he was forced to make his way to England by 1583: Although marked by disappointment and humiliation, his period around London and Oxford would turn out to be his most productive. Despite his successes, Bruno's situation did not stabilize and when the position of his host (the French ambassador) collapsed, Bruno went to the central European and German states (after a short return to a worsened Paris). Among the Lutherans in Helmstedt he would overstay his welcome as well and by 1589 he could pride himself of "being the only known sixteenth-century philosopher to have been excommunicated from all three major confessions".¹²⁵

In the end, it was Bruno's reliance on benefactors and patricians paying him for tutoring and mnemotechnic training which would get the best of him. After having returned to Italy (and applying for a chair in mathematics that Galilei would take instead, after a couple of months),¹²⁶ a Venetian patron would betray him to the Inquisition after a falling-out. After half a year of Venetian prison in 1592, he was extradited to Rome and after years of trial all his texts were finally placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1600 – 16 years before Copernicus' books would be put on there. On Ash Wednesday of that same year, Bruno would be executed on Campo di Fiori; but not before, as reported by the only surviving eye-witness account, he would turn away from the cross. This anecdote would come to cast a shadow over Bruno's reception: For Blumenberg, it was "the final step" of an iconoclast process already evident in the San Domenico Maggiore (when he removed all icons *but* the cross from his room), signifying Bruno's "fundamental frustration" with the anthropocentric "Christian self-conception, of the conviction of God's admission in the singularity of mankind in the universe".¹²⁷ For Frances Yates (1899-1981), who will be returned to in greater detail during this chapter, this account aided her reading of the cross' significance as an ancient Egyptian (Hermetic) symbol in

¹²³ Rowland 2008: p. 90.

¹²⁴ Rowland 2008: p. 107.

¹²⁵ Knox 2018: Dilwyn Knox, "Giordano Bruno", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published May 30th 2018: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bruno/> (accessed December 22nd, 2022).

¹²⁶ Rowland 2008: p. 196.

¹²⁷ My translation: Blumenberg 1969: p. 59: „Es war der letzte schritt“; cf. Blumenberg 1999: p. 639.

Bruno's philosophy.¹²⁸ At the very start of Bruno's reappraisal after centuries of obscurity, however, Friedrich Jacobi (1743-1819) could only see in it evidence of Bruno's pantheism, which he equated with atheism.

b) Bruno's revival

As already addressed in the introduction, Bruno's turbulent life and especially its untimely, spectacular end would turn out to be a great source of inspiration and justification for a broad array of ideologues due to its sacrificial potential. Nowhere did the fanaticism over Bruno's ideas swing back as hard as in the German states from the late-18th century onwards. In Blumenberg's introduction to a new translation of Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper* text (1584/1969), considerable efforts are spent on "the search for parameters of the German reception of Bruno" to be able to explain Jacobi's decision to translate Bruno.¹²⁹ "Having achieved the opposite", according to Blumenberg, Jacobi had sought to discredit Spinoza at the wake of the *Spinozastreit* by associating him with the apostate Bruno and meant to adequately substantiate his claims by providing a translation of (part of) the next text Bruno wrote *On Cause, Principle and Unity* (1584/1789).¹³⁰ Instead, this decision catalysed the popularity of Bruno within the Weimar counter-movement to German Idealism, especially through the fantastic pairing of Bruno with the so-called 'double outcast' Spinoza.¹³¹ Since the fascination for Bruno's thought was solely in the interest for speculative philosophy, as epitomized by Schelling's dialogue *Bruno* (1802), Blumenberg stresses that at this point the actual engagement with Bruno's writings was restricted. Nevertheless, Bruno's name disseminated widely and especially the idea that Spinoza must have read him travelled far: although discredited by now,¹³² this idea was especially harboured by Hegel and, it might be pointed out, could still be propounded by Dilthey in 1894.¹³³ By this time, however, the veneration of Bruno's martyrdom reached a climax with the short-lived Heinrich von Stein (1857-1887), a colleague of Dilthey

¹²⁸ Yates 1964: Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1964): pp. 351-353.

¹²⁹ My translation. Blumenberg 1969: p. 28: „Inzwischen ist uns, während wir ... Parameter für die deutsche Rezeption Brunos zu gewinnen suchten“.

¹³⁰ My translation. Blumenberg 1969: p. 29. „Erreicht hat er das Gegenteil“.

¹³¹ As Slavoj Žižek explains his delineation: Spinoza was "excommunicated from the community of the outcasts of Western civilization". Slavoj Žižek, *Parallax Views* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006): p. 8.

¹³² Leen Spruit, "Bruno en Spinoza: substantie en gelukzaligheid", in *Libertas philosophandi. Spinoza als gids voor een vrije wereld*, ed. Cis van Heertum (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2008): pp. 162-182.

¹³³ Wilhelm Dilthey, "Giordano Bruno und Spinoza", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 7/2 (1894): pp. 269-284.

and a now forgotten member of the circle around Richard Wagner, devoting two studies on Bruno in terms of moral heroism; which would lead Nietzsche to articulate his critique of Romantic heroism and tyrannic self-sacrifice (without losing his appreciation for Bruno in the slightest).¹³⁴

In spite of this climax, however, Bruno would continue to be drawn upon from all sides of the political spectrum. It has already been addressed how Bruno was seized upon during the Italian Risorgimento. Throughout the 20th century, Italian communists recognized in him a precursor of Marxist materialism.¹³⁵ Correspondingly, this line of argument stroke with the official Soviet narrative.¹³⁶ At the same time, among the worst anti-Semitic Orientalists, too, Bruno (with his fixation on ancient Egypt) was held in the highest esteem. That Bruno's tirades against supposed Jewish theft of Egyptian wisdom were actually stylistic devices and ascribed to characters rather than his own personal beliefs was lost not just on such figures as Paul de Lagarde but also on contemporary commentators: for instance, the orientalist historian Suzanne Marchand reports that Lagarde would not just go as far as issue Bruno's Italian dialogues but would also have anti-Semitic passages from Bruno's *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (1584) recited at his funeral. In an earlier passage about Bruno's anti-Semitism, Marchand cites Yates (1964: p. 223) who also fails to distinguish between Bruno and his characters.¹³⁷ As a result of this widespread attraction, it should come as no surprise that 'the philosopher of fascism' Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) also took a keen interest in Giordano Bruno.¹³⁸

c) Blumenberg's Bruno

In fact, it was Gentile's philological efforts during the 20th century that brought about the first critical edition of Bruno's Italian dialogues which Blumenberg would introduce so extensively. By the time Blumenberg's assistant Ferdinand Fellmann would conduct his translation of the *Ash Wednesday Supper*, however, Gentile's edition had been supplied with the textual-critical

¹³⁴ Roderick Stackelberg, "The Role of Heinrich von Stein in Nietzsche's Emergence as a Critic of Wagnerian Idealism and Cultural Nationalism", *Nietzsche -Studien* 5/1 (1976): pp. 178-193; Alberto Fabris, "Giordano Bruno", *Nietzsche's Philosophers: A Handbook* (De Gruyter: forthcoming).

¹³⁵ Especially so in the work of party politician Nicola Badaloni (1924-2005) and echoed more recently in the Bruno-scholar Michele Ciliberto's digressions towards Gramsci.

¹³⁶ As reported by Dilwyn Knox, with acknowledging Russian Harvard-scholar of the Renaissance Ovanes Okopyan for this insight. Knox 2018.

¹³⁷ Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): p.173 ; p. 27. For a defence of Bruno from the charge of anti-Semitism, see: Rowland 2008: p. 56.

¹³⁸ For discussion of Gentile's anti-Semitism, see Rowland 2008: p. 253.

breakthroughs facilitated by Gianni Aquilecchia's redactional work in the face of the discovery of new versions of the text in 1950 and resulted in an entire, new critical edition five years later. While no archetypal manuscript is known, some insights in Bruno's revisions could be extrapolated from these versions (such as those pertaining to erasing too explicitly anti-Protestant passages), by now totalling around forty; though the matter of chronological sequence and its implications is far from settled.¹³⁹ Yet, as recent as 2019, Fellmann's translation was reissued in a bilingual edition next to Aquilecchia's edition of the Italian original (though with a substituting introduction, replacing Blumenberg's, by the new editor).¹⁴⁰

The first instalment of the highly productive English phase addressed before, the *Ash Wednesday Supper* is one of six of the texts that appeared in 1584/5 known as the London Dialogues.¹⁴¹ Conventionally, this productive outburst is explained as the result of Bruno managing to overcome his wounded pride; in other words, that the result of the humiliation from the events unfolding in this text "shocked him into sharpening his ideas."¹⁴² The debate at Oxford that inspired this fictionalized dialogue ended in such a disaster, that Bruno's next dialogue needed to (appear to) retract some of the insults launched at the English people due to the ensuing scandal. By contrast, Blumenberg, points to another explanation, not addressed in his recent biography (nor adequately appreciated by the aforementioned Yates, despite the strong hermetic link¹⁴³): "But why did this productivity arise only after his arrival in England? There is just one explanation for Bruno starting the core thought of his speculation about the universe only in England. The work of Thomas Digges appeared in 1576".¹⁴⁴ With Digges,

¹³⁹ For instance, lively discussions about the name of a female character in the dialogue embedded in the courtly context of Elizabethan England in which Bruno was situated are still conducted. See the editor's "A note on the text" in: Giordano Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, ed. Hilary Gatti (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018): pp. lvii-lx, here p. lvii.

¹⁴⁰ Giordano Bruno, *Das Aschermittwochsmahl*, ed. Angelike Bönker-Vallon (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2019).

¹⁴¹ Together comprising the Italian or cosmological dialogues (*Ash Wednesday Supper*; *On Cause, Principle and Unity* (see page 3); and *The Infinite Universe and Worlds*), and the more socio-politically, ethically, epistemologically applied dialogues (*The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (see note 21); *The Cabala of Pegasus*; and *On the Heroic Frenzies*).

¹⁴² Rowland 2008: p.142.

¹⁴³ Although Yates does address briefly the possibility of Bruno having come across the idea of infinite cosmology in Digges, she does not discuss it in relation to Bruno's productivity nor did she dwell on Digges' paternal adoption by the Elizabethan occultist John Dee; who occupies a central role in her book for his hermeticism, despite not being able to ground the suspicion that Dee met or saw Bruno. Yates 1964: p. 244; p. 188. For relationship between Thomas Digges and John Dee, see: Stephen Johnston, "Like father, like son? John Dee, Thomas Digges and the identity of the mathematician", in Stephen Clucas (ed.), *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006): pp. 65-84.

¹⁴⁴ My translation. Blumenberg 1969: p. 36: „Es gibt nur die eine Erklärung, daß Bruno der Zentralgedanke seiner Spekulation über das Universum erst in England aufgegangen ist. Das Werk von Thomas Digges, das 1576 erschienen“.

Copernican heliocentrism was no longer taken as hypothetical (as hinted by Copernicus' cautious publisher¹⁴⁵), but as actual and seen as implying an infinite cosmos. Although Digges kept the heavenly bodies in place in their fixed orbits, he blew the roof or the top geocentric dome off the Ptolemaic model and explicated an unending universe. Beyond such astronomic foundation, Digges did not shy away from the metaphysical consequences of an infinite cosmology, like Cusanus. Naturally, this resonated with Bruno, who would generalize this infinity more thoroughly and more consistently. In other words, *despite* failing to communicate his ideas properly amidst the noble men and Oxford professors in his audience, the fact that Digges' publication had already put on the map of some of Bruno's concerns provided a much-needed, vital point of departure and fertile soil to cultivate his ideas further.

Although this relation between Digges and Bruno is asserted less firmly in the *Legitimität der Neuzeit*,¹⁴⁶ three other main characteristics of Blumenberg's Bruno appeared there already. Firstly, the remarkable, acclaimed feature of the *Supper* with Bruno already historicizing his own kinship to Copernicus: rather than defending Copernicus from his Oxfordian adversaries as his authority, Bruno deals with the Polish-Prussian astronomer strictly as prehistory to his own thought.¹⁴⁷ Radicalizing the heliocentric model of the solar system, Bruno retrieves from Copernicus a principle of 'a-centricity' and pushes it towards what his biographer describes as "a much larger vision of the universe, where solar systems are as plentiful as the stars in the sky."¹⁴⁸ Secondly and relatedly, is the way in which Bruno conceives of his own relation to periodization and historical time. In both texts, Blumenberg emphasizes the impossibility of progressive history for Bruno when having to explain Copernicus' (re)discovery of heliocentricity while drawing himself on heliocentrists from Antiquity (like the Pythagoreans and Aristarch).¹⁴⁹ Bruno's solution of describing Copernicus as the daybreak of reason's rising sun and its corresponding cyclical conception of history is taken as a "fundamentally pagan eternal return",¹⁵⁰ comparable to

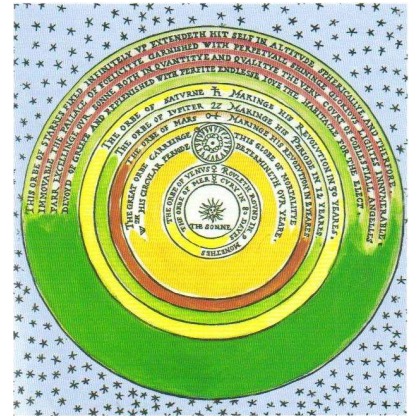


Fig. 8. Copernicanism without upper dome but open outside (as indicated by the stars). Thomas Digges, map from *A Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes* (1576), JPG accessed through Wikimedia on January 24th, 2023: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ThomasDiggesmap.JPG>

¹⁴⁵ Both Digges and (far more aggressively and publicly) Bruno dismissed this anonymous letter and it was Kepler who later revealed the publisher's authorship. See Bruno 2018: p. 258n9.

¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they are discussed on the same pages in the third part: Blumenberg 1999: pp. 431-435.

¹⁴⁷ Blumenberg 1969: pp. 38-40; Blumenberg 1999: p. 574; pp.641-643.

¹⁴⁸ Rowland marvels at Bruno's self-historization too, for instance. Rowland 2008: p. 139.

¹⁴⁹ Blumenberg 1969: pp. 41-42; Blumenberg 1999: p. 646.

¹⁵⁰ My translation: Blumenberg 1999: p. 643: „Die pagane Grundvorstellung von der Wiederkehr der Gleichen in der Geschichte ...“.

Oswald Spengler's and Vico's respective conceptions.¹⁵¹ (Nevertheless, exaggerated assertions of Vico's familiarity with Bruno, like Samuel Beckett's in his review of the influence of the Italian philosophers' cyclicalities on James Joyce claiming Vico "takes very good care not to say so", are unsubstantiated.¹⁵²) In his introduction, Blumenberg articulates its significance most forcefully when he derives from Bruno's idea of historical time "the fundamental problem of the Epochal Threshold, of the possibility of breaking onto new truths: the uneasiness of retrieving the old."¹⁵³

Finally, both texts share an analysis of Bruno's martyrdom which sets Blumenberg's interpretation apart from those accounts relapsing into the heroification addressed previously. After careful historical reconstruction of the survived Vatican reports among other sources, Blumenberg is able to disentangle the tale that Bruno died for heliocentric, "modern" science from the historical circumstances: the Inquisition did not charge Bruno for his multi-world theory, his infinite cosmology or for reading Copernicus (whose writings were forbidden only in the 17th century, as was noted before).¹⁵⁴ Instead, Bruno was condemned a – or *the* – heretic for denying the Trinity and the Incarnation: besides seemingly arbitrary Christological offenses, for Blumenberg, this points to a crucial tension between Bruno's natural philosophy and its Christian heritage.¹⁵⁵ Blumenberg seems to struggle with this tension that he deems Bruno's 'Incarnation-trauma', ultimately even breaking off the argument,¹⁵⁶ and his analysis (of its contrast with Cusanus' doctrine of Incarnation at the other side of the threshold, in particular) has not gone without criticism.¹⁵⁷

While such rejections of Blumenberg's point are certainly encouraged by his stretched-out writing style, in its compressed version three years later the emphasis has shifted in an elucidating way: the point is less that Bruno was simply guilty of the Arianist denial of the Trinity or the docetic denial of Jesus as God incarnated, or even simpler, of being a pantheist, atheist "scientist". Rather, Blumenberg's Bruno is a cosmotheist pantheist that had lost the grasp (in his apostasy) of the degree to which he had put the earth or 'world' as the substitute

¹⁵¹ For Spengler: Blumenberg 1999: p. 649; for Vico: Blumenberg 1969: p. 43.

¹⁵² Samuel L. Beckett, "Dante... Bruno, Vico.. Joyce" (1929), accessed through: <https://bibliot3ca.com/dante-bruno-vico-joyce-by-samuel-beckett/> (December 15th, 2022); Julie Bénard, "'Dante... Bruno, Vico.. Joyce.'" Samuel Beckett's "identified contraries", *e-Rea* 15/2 (2018): <https://journals.openedition.org/erea/6255>.

¹⁵³ My translation: Blumenberg 1969: p. 41: „Es ist der Grundproblem der Epochenschwelle, der Möglichkeit des Aufbruchs zu neuen Wahrheiten: das Ungenügen der alten bemerkbar zu machen.“

¹⁵⁴ Blumenberg 1969: pp. 59- 61; Blumenberg 1999: pp. 639-642.

¹⁵⁵ For, "*the* heretic", see: Blumenberg 1999: p. 657.

¹⁵⁶ Blumenberg 1999: p. 659: „Weiter als bis zu diesem Punkt scheint mir die Analyse nicht vordringen zu können.“

¹⁵⁷ As noted in chapter one with reference to David Albertson.

for the “only begotten [*>Einziggeborenen<*]” Son in the Trinity: “With Bruno, the last step hadn’t been taken yet; but it is visible where it would be taken to. The world has *substituted* the Son of God, but it *is* not the Son, like it would be in Schelling’s *Bruno*.”¹⁵⁸ In other words, for Blumenberg there is no necessary contradiction between Bruno’s (Copernican-aided) infinite cosmology and Christology, since Cusanus was already able to reconcile the two (as Blumenberg’s critics like to argue in favour of Cusanus’ status as a modern), but it was his inability to frame this cosmology in Christian terms and his unwillingness to bow down that led him to be condemned; hence, Blumenberg’s focus on the trial.¹⁵⁹ But it is the *implicit* identification of the divine with ‘world’ that makes Bruno modern. It is no wonder that such a subtlety is lost on those reading, for instance, the passage opening the *Epochenschwelle*-part where Blumenberg contrasts his theory of modernity ignited by Bruno with Burckhardt’s thesis that the Middle Ages depended on the victory over Arianism.¹⁶⁰ But it will be a subtlety of crucial importance when it comes to applying the *Epochenschwelle* to the ‘*analogia entis*’.

d) Contrast with Bruno in *Kulturwissenschaften* and history-of-ideas

Before this, however, it is worth pausing here to contrast this account of Blumenberg’s Bruno with the (Burckhardtian) Warburg historians; and not just because of another positive citation to Cassirer in this introduction for his second crown-witness.¹⁶¹ More importantly, this is because the Warburg Library can be said to contain a Brunian core. This leaning towards Bruno was the direct result of a personal interest of Aby Warburg himself which grew increasingly into an “obsession” over the span of the last two decades of his life.¹⁶² After Warburg had started his massive ‘*kulturwissenschaftlicher TypenAtlas*’ in December 1927, he made a last

¹⁵⁸ Blumenberg 1969: p. 33: „weil er das Universum an die Stelle dieses *>Einziggeborenen<* gesetzt hatte“; Blumenberg’s emphasis, my translation: Blumenberg 1969: pp. 31-32: „Bei Bruno war der letzte Schritt noch nicht getan; aber es ist sichtbar, wohin er führen würde. Die Welt ist *anstelle* des Gottessohnes getreten, aber sie ist nicht der Sohn, wie sie es in Schellings *Bruno* sein wird.“

¹⁵⁹ Blumenberg 1999: p. 658-659: „Könnte es sein, daß Bruno selbst sich den schlüssigen Zusammenhang seiner infiniten Kosmologie, seines Schöpfungsbegriffs und seiner trinitarisch-christologischen Stutzigkeit nicht ausdrücklich zu machen gewußt hat? Daß sein unendliches Weltall eben die Stelle einnahm, die in der Theologie die innertrinitarische Generation der zweiten Person innehatte?“

¹⁶⁰ Blumenberg 1999: pp. 544-545.

¹⁶¹ Blumenberg 1969: p. 40.

¹⁶² Quiviger 2007: François Quiviger (probably), “Aby Warburg and Giordano Bruno”, Bibliotheca Electronica Bruniana Research Project at Warburg, Warburg Institute Website (June 2007): <https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/research-projects/archived-research-projects/giordano-bruno/warburg-and-bruno> (accessed on December 11th, 2022).

trip to Italy the following year which has been described as “a Brunian pilgrimage”.¹⁶³ When he died in 1929 and the library was transferred to London a mere few years later, they could claim to have obtained Bruno’s complete works.

The true protégé of Warburg’s antiquarian hunt is without a doubt the aforementioned Frances Yates. Being able to draw extensively on Warburg’s collection, her book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) – as well as the part-sequel *The Art of Memory* (1966) – is still perceived as go-to introductory work for Bruno-studies to this day. In this book, which she admits “is not a monograph about Bruno” but aims to establish hermeticism as a tradition, there are some resemblances with the contemporaneous Blumenberg (who did not shy away from (pseudo-)hermetic sources either).¹⁶⁴ Most importantly, this concerns the way in which both authors, independently, agitate against the idea that Bruno was sacrificed for modern science, though in Yates’ account the condemnation of her (anti-)hero as a heretic is to be ascribed to his hermeticism instead.¹⁶⁵ In one of her more speculative hunches, Yates will even go as far as to suggest in this respect that it was the resemblance to Bruno’s (Copernican) hermeticism that led to Galilei’s condemnation as well.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, while this work by Yates was the result of decades long engagement with the Warburg collection, Yates’ interest in Bruno predates her encounter with the Library. Instead, Yates’ biographer details how it was the frustration following an attempted translation of *Ash Wednesday Supper* from as early as 1936 onwards,¹⁶⁷ ultimately rejected by Cambridge University Press, that led her to the exploration of Bruno’s hermeticism.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, it was this translation that got Yates into contact with Warburg Institute in the first place, after having placed an advertisement in the *Times* about her translation.¹⁶⁹ In her own introduction for the *Supper*, which she would come to regard as “crude” and “wrongheaded fanaticism” while simultaneously “highly seminal for my work as a whole”, Yates credited as her greatest

¹⁶³ Quiviger 2007. See also the virtualized exhibition of this Atlas as displayed at the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (2020).

¹⁶⁴ To my knowledge, no awareness on either side existed and the closest thing to an actual connection is a remark by Blumenberg’s English translator in one of his books: Hans Blumenberg, *Genesis of Copernican World*, transl. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987[1975]): p. 688ni. Yates 1964: p. x.

¹⁶⁵ This delineation of hero is used often by her biographer. For explicit description of Yates’ thesis regarding the execution, see: Jones 2008: Marjorie G. Jones, *Frances Yates and the Hermetic Tradition* (Lake Worth: Ibis Press, 2008): p. 83.

¹⁶⁶ Yates 1964: p. 359: “One wonders whether the use which Bruno had made of Copernicanism might have raised in the inquisitorial mind the idea that there might be something else behind Galileo’s support of the movement of the earth.”

¹⁶⁷ While Yates’ is certainly an early English translation, this biography misses the 1975 Jaki translation when it marvels at the how “the first English translation ... was not published until 1977”. Jones 2008: p. 65.

¹⁶⁸ Jones 2008: pp. 66-67.

¹⁶⁹ Jones 2008: p. 82.

influence the Catholic historian of science Pierre Duhem (discussed in the previous chapter).¹⁷⁰ Here, she provided a somewhat bizarre reading of a conciliatory Bruno where the *Supper* “was not a defense of Copernicus ... but a call for a return to the medieval Church” or in Yates’ own words, a “defense of the Catholic interpretation mass”.¹⁷¹ Dismissed by her biographer as one of her far-fetched, unfounded and speculative beliefs,¹⁷² this reading by Yates would later be subscribed to by Cassirer’s student and future director of the Warburg Institute Gertrud Bing.¹⁷³

In the same year as Yates had started her translation, another monumental and ambitious study with a central focus on Bruno appeared in England: *The Great Chain of Being* by Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873-1962). With this programmatic monograph about the hierarchical principle that allows descending the ladder of Being from God to the lower-scale creatures, Lovejoy set the tone for the newly found discipline of history-of-ideas; since its heyday, this discipline’s esteem diminished due to recognition of its hypostatisation of ‘ideas’ but its search for elementary building-blocks of intellectual history has been related to the Warburgian ‘topos’ before.¹⁷⁴ Already with his first publication, Lovejoy had written about Bruno and Spinoza (1904); and explicitly rejected a cautious attitude towards their relationship advanced by J. Lewis McIntyre, whose English translations from the year before he continued to rely on (and whose work was reviewed enthusiastically by a young James Joyce).¹⁷⁵ A comparative analysis of this article and the methodological engagement with Bruno in his monograph showed how Lovejoy obscured his discipline’s historiographic descentance from the discipline of history of philosophy, while continuing to use its heuristics like ‘principle’, ‘system’, etc.¹⁷⁶ The result was an undifferentiated history of the idea of the Great Chain of Being, or, as we have seen, *scala naturae* in which Bruno’s articulation is taken as merely one instantiation of a rigid, universally applicable idea that stretched from Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it is in Bruno’s yielding of this scholastic “Idea” of natural philosophical hierarchy that we find the ‘*analogia entis*’ applied.

¹⁷⁰ Yates quoted on Jones 2008: p. 66.

¹⁷¹ Jones 2008: pp. 79-80; Yates quoted on Jones 2008: p. 78.

¹⁷² Jones 2008: p. 76.

¹⁷³ Jones 2008: p. 135.

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, Ernst Müller and Falko Schmieder, “>Laboratorium kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildgeschichte< (Aby Warburg” in *Begriffsgeschichte und historische Semantik: Ein kritisches Kompendium* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016): pp. 637-653, here p. 653.

¹⁷⁵ James Joyce, ““The Bruno Philosophy”, review of *Giordano Bruno* by Lewis McIntyre” in *Critical Writings of James Joyce*, eds. Ellsworth Mason & Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966): pp. 132-134.

¹⁷⁶ Leo Catana, “Lovejoy’s Reading of Bruno: Or How Nineteenth-Century History of Philosophy was “Transformed” into the History of Ideas”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71/1 (2010): pp. 91-112.

e) Bruno and the ‘*analogia entis*’

In fact, the two principles so intimately resemble each other that ‘*analogia entis*’ is occasionally treated as synonymous with the ‘Great Chain of Being’.¹⁷⁷ This is because the latter, tying together the finite, created plants and animals all the way to the highest scales or steps of the ladder where angels and ultimately God resided, offered a model to grasp the variety of Beings in the unison of Being. In other words, the Chain captures the relationship between Created and Creator since it comprises the analogous relations between the created, existent entities in their hierarchical culmination in God. Eventually, the process of what Lovejoy terms “the temporalization of the Great Chain of Being” paved the way for the first proto-biological theories of evolution. Following an account of the Chain in Cusanus, according to Lovejoy, it is in drawing on the cluster of metaphysical principles (supplied by Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus) in the Christian articulation of this Idea, that: “Bruno is, in short, in those features ... in which he seems most ... modern ..., most completely the continuer of a certain strain in Platonistic metaphysics and in medieval theology.”¹⁷⁸ After having set out Bruno’s naturalisation and exhaustion of this Idea through sheer multiplication to the point of infinity, Lovejoy is forced to admit that “it is not solely the strain in medieval thought ... that is manifest in his doctrine.”¹⁷⁹ So where are we to locate Bruno’s application of the Great Chain of Being and, by extension, of the *analogia entis*?

Blumenberg does not discuss Bruno’s analogies, nor does he address the Great Chain of Being in relation to Bruno like he did with Cusanus. Nevertheless, a select body of scholarship permits approaching this question. For instance, one answer has been reconstructed from the notes of the highly esteemed literary scholar Northrop Frye (1912-1991) on his assessment of James Joyce’s references to Bruno. In his reading, which was mostly informed by Yates, Bruno’s attitude to the concept of ‘*analogia entis*’ should be seen as entirely negative.¹⁸⁰ In an attempt to fortify his own grounding of metaphor on the principle of identity, Frye considers Bruno’s reading of Cusanus’ *coincidentia oppositorum* as not only stacked “against the cyclical principle of Spengler and Vico”, but “[Frye] takes Bruno’s drive toward identity and unity as

¹⁷⁷ Most forcefully, Lydia Jaeger refers to *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) as concerning “the so-called *analogia entis*. Arthur Lovejoy’s study of this concept has been of significant influence.” Others include e.g.: Louise Cowan, “Analogy and Poetic Faith: Metaphors that are Meant”, *Ramify* 6/1 (2016): pp. 23-34, here p. 24; or Jeffrey S. Hocking, “Liberating Language: Rubem Alves, Theopoetics, and the Democratization of God-Talk”, *Theopoetics* 1/1 (2014): pp. 11-59, here p. 18; p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ Lovejoy 1936: Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Harvard: 1936): p. 117.

¹⁷⁹ Lovejoy 1936: p. 119.

¹⁸⁰ Denham 2015: Robert D. Denham, “Frye and Giordano Bruno”, in *Northrop Frye and Others: Twelve Writers Who Helped Shape his Thinking* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2015): pp. 103-112, here p. 104.

set over against the Thomistic *analogia entis*” as well.¹⁸¹ In Frye’s conception, “mythical analogy” belongs to the Aristotelean heritage that Bruno disposes of completely and leaves in the Dark Ages. Another approach is advanced in a far more voluminous study with a scrutiny that can hardly be reproduced here: namely, Anna Eusterschulte’s dissertation *Analogia entis seu mentis* (1994) on the analogy in Bruno – in spite of the fact, as one reviewer notes, that Bruno does not actually use this phrase.¹⁸² Rather, this phrase in the title reveals how Eusterschulte is oriented to Bruno’s analogies in both the ontological and the epistemological dimension. Building on a research project at the University of Kassel in the 1980s regarding Bruno’s late, Latin “Frankfurter trilogy”, this dissertation proceeds the analysis with a strong emphasis on mathematics (and the ancient Greek sense of analogy as ‘proportion’) over the span of nearly 600 pages.

It is in these late Latin poems published around 1591 that an epistemological dimension of analogy comes to full fruition, since they include Bruno’s mature atomist and cosmological doctrine.¹⁸³ This leads to the holistic, hermeneutic practice of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy (not entirely unrelated to the hermetic emerald law of ‘as above, so below’). In other words, the application of analogies here achieves the feature of transforming the individual, applying them in what Eusterschulte terms a “gnoseological recursion”: external contemplation of nature implies the deepening of internal knowledge and vice versa.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, it is no wonder, then, that it is in these writings – more specifically, the second poem *On the Monad* – that Bruno comes closest to uttering our phrase when he declares “entis est analogia”.¹⁸⁵ To state that this degree of explicitness is an exclusively late tendency in Bruno, however, would be an understatement: in her suspicion regarding the starting date of the last instance of the trilogy, *On the Immense and the Numberless* (1591), his



Fig. 9: Bruno bust (sculptor unknown, inquiry still running) in the Biblioteca di Filosofia of Sapienza Università, in Villa Mirafiori, Rome. Shot by author on September 27th, 2022.

¹⁸¹ Denham 2015: p. 109; p. 108.

¹⁸² Paul Richard Blum, “Reviewed Work(s): *Analogia entis seu mentis: Analogie als erkenntnistheoretisches Prinzip in der Philosophie Giordano Brunos* by A. Eusterschulte”, *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 5/2 (1999): pp. 539-541, here p. 539.

¹⁸³ Rowland 2008: pp. 189-190.

¹⁸⁴ My translation. Anne Eusterschulte, *Analogie als erkenntnistheoretisches Prinzip in der Philosophie Giordano Brunos* (Gesamthochschule Kassel: diss. 1994): p. 358: „gnoseologischen Rekursion“. Cf. Eusterschulte 1994: p. 300.

¹⁸⁵ Giordano Bruno, “Caput III. Secundus Diadis Ordo” in *De monade, numero et figura* [1591], Francesco Fiorentino (ed.) accessed through *La Biblioteca Ideale di Giordano Bruno* of Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento: p. 356: “Inde in duobus (Substantia scilicet et Accidente) entis est analogia.” Eusterschulte cites this passage as „>analogia entis<“: Eusterschulte 1994: p.312n28.

biographer is willing to push back the beginning to at least his English phase of productivity.¹⁸⁶

Already around this time, too, Bruno took up the image of the Great Chain of Being in its variety of the scales and ladder as well: Bruno felt comfortable enough to discuss the Chain with a degree of analytic distance when, for instance, it is discussed by one character in the English dialogue following the *Supper* and *On Cause (On the Infinite Universe and Worlds, 1584)*.¹⁸⁷ Without necessarily going beyond Lovejoy's frame,¹⁸⁸ Eusterschulte argues that Bruno is simply entertaining this ontological model for its productive use, that it's nothing more than "a mere reverie [*bloßes Hirngespinnst*]" for the Nolaner.¹⁸⁹ Multiplying this divine order in nature towards infinity, so that the classification system encompasses an "infinitely populous" cosmos as Lovejoy put it,¹⁹⁰ pushes the model to the limit of what multiplicity or difference this order is able to contain. For Eusterschulte, this move is indicative of how the ladder of Being and the gradation of cognition are "structured along *one and the same ladder*."¹⁹¹ When the mind is able to reconcile inner multiplicity, an ordering-system is internalized which is analogous to the structure organizing Beings – hence 'analogia entis seu mentis'. Therefore, Eusterschulte concludes: "What remains for medieval thought irreconcilably inconsistent, is brought together with Bruno."¹⁹²

f) Conclusion

With this particular reader of Cusanus, Blumenberg finds a number of themes discussed in the last chapter reoccupied. These include the substitution of a geocentric model with an infinite cosmology, hermeticist and kabbalist strains of thought, to only name a few. Beyond such continuities, however, Blumenberg also finds differences between the two crown-witnesses. Rather than the anthropocentric, teleological theology distilled in the first chapter, Blumenberg recognizes in Bruno a fundamental frustration with the anthropocentrism of the Incarnation of God in the 'only begotten [*Einziggeborene*]' Son. In contrast with the teleology of Cusanus' anthropology, Blumenberg's Bruno rejects progressive history altogether. The shockwave embodied by Bruno, downstream of Cusanus, thus obtains different shapes but it is in their shared backwash that Modernity's origins lie.

¹⁸⁶ Rowland 2008: p. 188.

¹⁸⁷ See Eusterschulte 1994: p. 298.

¹⁸⁸ As she continues to subscribe to this frame throughout, especially: Eusterschulte 1994: pp. 391-394.

¹⁸⁹ My translation. Eusterschulte 1994: p. 294.

¹⁹⁰ Lovejoy 1936: p. 116.

¹⁹¹ My translation. Eusterschulte 1994: p. 356: „Zunächst ist festzuhalten, daß Seins- und Erkenntnisstufung – unabhängig von der je verschiedenen Unterteilung in Grade von Sein und Erkennen – *ein- und dieselbe* Stufenleiter durchlaufen.“

¹⁹² My translation. Eusterschulte 1994: p. 398: „Was sich für das mittelalterliche Denken als unauflöslicher Widerspruch darstellt, wird bei Bruno zusammengeführt.“

The irreversible tear in the 16th century metaphysical frame manifested by Bruno's case in particular constituted the completion of the epochal threshold that was kick-started by Cusanus. In other words, the genie was out of the bottle. Yates' assertion that Galileo was condemned by the church because his ideas appeared to betray similar hermetic features that led to Bruno's execution might be exaggerated. But she and Blumenberg are concordant in their emphasis on the reason for Bruno's execution. Bruno was not condemned for his Copernicanism, but Copernicus' writings were blacklisted after *the* heretic had been condemned for heresy. It is in this sense, that Bruno's actions could have effect during those centuries where he was extradited into obscurity, which were so essential for the coming into being of Modernity. Beyond this, however, Blumenberg's Bruno seems to primarily diverge from the culmination of the Warburg research into Bruno. In this light, an analysis has been advanced of how Bruno's death has become the object of heroification throughout his reception history. Pushed into the service of a whole range of secular and political projects, Bruno's trajectory has been put on par with the martyrdom at the heart of Christendom. It is against this background that the discussion of the statues in the introduction gains renewed significance.

Independent from Blumenberg's Bruno, the analysis of Bruno's 'analogia entis' has generated a range of answers to the question of his relation to this concept. Stretching from a complete disposal of this concept to an intensification of the 'analogia entis' to the point of exhaustion, it seems no conclusive results can be drawn here either. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt as to the degree with which Bruno's naturalisation of the Chain of Being through its multiplication to infinity does away with any remnant transcendence, which Blumenberg found at the end of the Chain in Cusanus. It is to this extent that the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis can be said to hold up in the history of the concept of the 'analogia entis'. Rather than primarily conducting the analysis on the level of Bruno's philosophy itself, however, the main aim of this chapter was instead to measure Blumenberg's Bruno against relevant alternative readings: in addition to the previously encountered Warburg's alternative or that of Lovejoy, this included the Bruno of the more literary-oriented scholarly interest in 'analogia entis' which will resurface in the next chapter.

III. *Epochenschwelle* and the ‘*analogia entis*’

In the previous two chapters, Blumenberg has been situated in the Cusanus scholarship and the Bruno scholarship and the ‘*analogia entis*’ has been traced in both crown-witnesses of the *Epochenschwelle* respectively. Before these two theoretical components of this thesis are brought together, a final step is necessary, that of inquiring the role the ‘*analogia entis*’ played in Blumenberg himself. To not lose sight of the *Epochenschwelle* completely, however, putting the focus on Blumenberg’s philosophy himself will also provide the opportunity to further scrutinize this periodization-tool. In other words, in the search for ‘*analogia entis*’ throughout Blumenberg’s career and his broader philosophy, the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis will figure as a foothold and a navigation device to avoid straying off too far. Thus, after having set out in greater detail the practicalities of the *Epochenschwelle* as a periodization-tool and after having traced back the origins of this theory in Blumenberg’s oeuvre, the leap can be made to the early Blumenberg and the ‘*analogia entis*’. In this regard, as shall be seen, the second contestant of the Davos debate, by the name of Martin Heidegger, was a crucial provocation for Blumenberg at a formative stage. This will require a short detour through their respective and divergent accounts of medieval ontology, for which the previous chapters (especially chapter one) has paved the way.

Moving forwards, too, will reap its benefits: following the immediate reception of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis and approaching instead the contemporary mature Blumenberg’s endeavours with metaphor, another dimension of ‘*analogia entis*’ may be identified. In addition to distilling the relation of ‘*analogia entis*’ to Blumenberg’s broader oeuvre, such a move will enable a comparison of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis to other philosophies-of-history. Most relevantly, this involves the juxtaposing of the *Epochenschwelle* against the model still disproportionately present in the historiography of ‘*analogia*’: namely, Foucault’s theory of ‘*épistèmes*’. Afterwards, the true scope of the application of *Epochenschwelle* to the ‘*analogia entis*’ will become apparent, which will subsequently be attempted in the conclusion to the thesis.

a) *Epochenschwelle* in practice

During the opening of the *Epochenschwelle*-part of *Legitimität der Neuzeit*, Blumenberg clearly announces which sort of periodization-practice he targets and from which he seeks to distinguish his own *Epochenschwelle*-heuristic when he promptly remarks: “There are no

witnesses of epochal *breaks*.”¹⁹³ It’s not just that there are no perpetrators of epochal breaks (as the Great Man Histories would have it), but there are no witnesses either. Instead, driving actors or innocent bystanders of historical discontinuity witness epochal *thresholds* at best. While this notion may be said to evoke fluid or non-linear dynamic equivalents such as ‘phase shift’, there has been more attention for the judicial metaphoric in Blumenberg’s proposition: for instance, in a recent article on the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis, his biographer Rüdiger Zill stressed that the decision to treat Bruno and Cusanus as ‘crown-witnesses’ deliberately and directly ties back to the book’s general theme of having put Modernity on trial.¹⁹⁴ As is clear from the title of *Legitimität der Neuzeit*, the aim of the book was to take a stance in the German debate on secularism. In this Blumenberg argued against scholars like Karl Löwith and Carl Schmitt and against what he dismissed as the sentiment of the illegitimacy of Modernity implied by ‘secularization’ from the 1960s; it is in this context that Blumenberg’s periodization-tool is advanced.

Nonetheless, Zill drives back Blumenberg’s first use of the *Epochenschwelle* to a 1958 article titled ‘Epochenschwelle und Rezeption”,¹⁹⁵ reviewing four texts on the transition of Antiquity to the Middle Ages.¹⁹⁶ At this point it is worth re-emphasizing that Blumenberg also intends the heuristic of *Epochenschwelle* for the threshold of these epochs and not just for the arrival of Modernity. (It might be pointed out in passing here, as does Zill, that already in this article Blumenberg dismisses “naive historians of science like Pierre Durhem”, addressed in the previous chapters.¹⁹⁷) To this it may be added now that, as was seen, the mature articulation of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis is already present in broad strokes (including the couple Cusanus-Bruno) in the introduction to the Cusanus-anthology issued one year before.

The classic, traditional epochal threefold of Antiquity–Middle Ages–Modernity occurs again and again in Blumenberg in various concrete schematic applications. To give only a few of Blumenberg’s uses of this triad: in the Cusanus introduction, the modern urge to empirical research (due to an absolute lack of straightforward perception) is predated by the intermediate medieval stage of the “Visibility of the Invisible” corresponding to the metaphysical axiom of ‘impreciseness’ (“based on the difference between finiteness and infinity”,¹⁹⁸ expressed by

¹⁹³ My emphasis and my translation. Blumenberg 1999: p. 545: „Es gibt keine Zeugen von Epochenumbrüchen.“

¹⁹⁴ Zill 2017: Rüdiger Zill, “Epochenschwelle”, *Forum für Interdisziplinäre Begriffsgeschichte* 6/1 (2017): pp. 20-30, here pp. 23-24.

¹⁹⁵ Hans Blumenberg, “Epochenschwelle und Rezeption“, in *Philosophische Rundschau* 6 (1958): pp. 94-120.

¹⁹⁶ Zill 2017: pp. 21-22.

¹⁹⁷ My translation. Zill 2017: p. 22: „gegenüber naiven Wissenschaftshistorikern wie Pierre Duhem“.

¹⁹⁸ My translation. Blumenberg 1957: p. 19: „Die „Ungenauigkeit“ ist ein metaphysisches Axiom, das auf der Differenz von Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit beruht.“

Cusanus) and contrasted with the Ancient “superfluous eyesight” and the absolute commensurability of the physical and spiritual worlds.¹⁹⁹ Elsewhere, in the introduction to Bruno’s *Supper*, Blumenberg takes up the same problematic and elaborates that the Middle Ages held on to this commensurability between reality and visibility, but expanded the reality as merely one contingent choice of all possible Creations; while in the infinite universe of Modernity, it’s not just reality and visibility that diverge but also reality and possibility.²⁰⁰ Other characterizations include the often-cited stylisation of Modernity, earlier in the *Legitimität*, as the “second overcoming of Gnosticism”, after the first confrontation by the Church Fathers on the verge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages had failed.²⁰¹

While there are abundant examples where Blumenberg applies the classical periodization scheme, it is in the phases of transition that the heuristic of *Epochenschwelle* comes to the fore. By way of illustration, it might be useful to briefly digress here to connect this periodization-tool’s focus on transitory passages and zones of change to what Walter Benjamin termed *Schwellenkunde* [i.e. the art or study of thresholds].²⁰² While threshold experiences have nowadays – “in modern life” – moved to the background of our awareness, Benjamin emphasises the etymological senses of transformation [*Wandel*], passage [*Übergang*], and flooding [*Fluten*] inherent to the word *schwollen* [to swell].²⁰³ Advancing this notion in *Begriffsgeschichte* and history-of-science, Winfried Menninghaus discussed the epistemological, anthropological and mythographic dimensions of Benjamin’s notion in his monograph (1986). Although Menninghaus briefly addresses resemblances between Blumenberg’s work on myth and Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk*, he does not pick up on the structural parallels with Blumenberg’s *Epochenschwelle*-thesis.²⁰⁴ Yet, Menninghaus suggests an affinity of Benjamin’s use of threshold in his topology of myth with Cassirer, deriving inspiration from the latter’s writing on the significance of the spatialized *Schwelle* in myth.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ My translation. Blumenberg, 1957: p. 17: „Sichtbahrkeit des Unsichtbahren“; p. 20: „die Epoche des „überflüssigen“ Sehvermögens des Menschen.“

²⁰⁰ Blumenberg, 1969: p. 54; p. 53.

²⁰¹ Conventional translation of *Legitimität*: Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, transl. by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983): p. 138. Appears here as Blumenberg 1999: „Die Neuzeit ist Überwindung der Gnosis. Das setzt voraus, dass die Überwindung der Gnosis am Anfang des Mittelalters nicht nachhaltig gelungen war.“

²⁰² Benjamin 1982: Walter Benjamin, “Das Passagen-Werk: Aufzeichnungen und Materialien”, *Gesammelte Schriften V.1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982): p. 147: [C5a, 1].

²⁰³ Benjamin 1982: p. 618: [02a, 1].

²⁰⁴ Winfried Menninghaus, *Schwellenkunde: Walter Benjamin’s Passage des Mythos* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986): p. 69.

²⁰⁵ Menninghaus 1986: pp. 26-28. Cassirer meditates on this in Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken* (Darmstad 1973): p. 127.

When Blumenberg mentions Cassirer and “die Schwelle” in two successive sentences in the introduction to Bruno’s *Supper*, by now, it is difficult to escape the thought that for this facet of Blumenberg’s theory, too, a similar inspiration might be suspected.²⁰⁶

b) Blumenberg versus Heidegger on the analogia entis

In order to reach Blumenberg’s reading of the ‘analogia entis’, it now becomes necessary to confront that other antagonist of the Davos debate, Martin Heidegger. This is because, at a formative stage, Blumenberg broke away from the consolidating Heideggerian grip on post-war philosophy. It is in the context of his very early, profound departure in ontology from the fellow Husserl-follower that Blumenberg’s reading of the ‘analogia entis’ occurs. Although, as was seen in chapter one, Blumenberg would (cautiously) side with Heidegger’s charge against Cassirer on strictly Kantian or transcendental terms, he would stage a critique of Heidegger’s account of medieval ontology in his dissertation (*Beiträge zum Problem der Ursprünglichkeit der mittelalterlich-scholastischen Ontologie* 1947). Likewise, in his *Habilitationsschrift* (*Die ontologische Distanz. Eine Untersuchung über die Krisis der Phänomenologie Husserls* 1950), he would embark on a similar mission on the terrain of Husserlian phenomenology.²⁰⁷ (Not in the least, it seems significant in this respect to note for our purposes the importance in phenomenology of the Greek *epoché* [ἐποχή, ‘cessation’] – i.e. suspended or withheld judgement, which still meant ‘point in time’ rather than ‘timeframe’ or ‘period’ – for Husserl.²⁰⁸) While Blumenberg would continue to engage Husserl and phenomenology until late into his career, (fundamental) ontology and Heidegger are suddenly dropped after these works of his. Unhappy with his inability to shed the contours of his adversary in the habilitation thesis, Blumenberg never tried to publish this work and instead supplied the manuscript’s cover with a discouraging note for future readers. This followed the ultimate failure to publish his dissertation in the immediate post-war years, which remained unchanged until its publication in 2020.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile, to be able to launch his own spectacular project of the existential analytic of *Dasein*, Heidegger had problematized and contrasted his own relationship to metaphysics in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) rather starkly to major, so-called ‘onto-theological’ strains of medieval-

²⁰⁶ Blumenberg 1969: p. 40.

²⁰⁷ Zill 2020: p. 375-377.

²⁰⁸ Zill 2017: p. 23: „Denn >Epoche< habe zunächst keinen Zeitraum, sondern Zeitpunkt gemeint.“

²⁰⁹ Blumenberg 2020: Hans Blumenberg, *Beiträge zum Problem der Ursprünglichkeit der mittelalterlich-scholastischen Ontologie*, ed. Benjamin Dahlke and Matthias Laarmann (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020 [1947]).

scholastic philosophy. Naturally, pushing the claim that ‘the tradition’ or Western philosophy had forgotten the question of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit* or *Seinsverlassenheit*) involved rejecting and (later explicitly) violently dismissing much of that tradition. Heidegger’s objection to onto-theology might be summarized simplistically as a criticism of the equation of Being (*Sein*) with beings (*Seiendes*), or what amounts to the reduction of Being (*esse*) to Created Being (*ens creatum*). Instead, Heidegger opted for a fundamental ontology of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world or as thrown. It is no surprise that this attack on onto-theology led to resistance among Catholic scholars in particular: like Blumenberg, Heidegger came from a Catholic seminary background and got bored of neo-Scholasticism early on.²¹⁰ While his dissertation (*Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus. Ein kritisch-positiver Beitrag zur Logik*, 1913) still explicitly committed to Scholasticism, however, by the time of his habilitation (*Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* 1916) he already sought to break out of the scholastic confines by way of supporting Kant’s project with a thesis on the categories of the aforementioned Franciscan Aquinas-critic Duns Scotus.²¹¹ It is the severity of Heidegger’s apostatic trajectory, that would result in the atheistic or agnostic hermeneutic of human existence in the technological world in *Sein und Zeit* and that so threatened the apologists that subscribed to the Catholic trajectory with its own response to the modern challenge.

In addition to predictable mutterings against Heidegger’s way of putting theistic themes and texts in service of an a-theistic aim, in this regard, recent Catholic defenders display a tendency to bring Heidegger in open conflict with Przywara.²¹² Already with Przywara himself, there is an acute awareness of the perceived danger of Heidegger’s philosophy (and, after the 1930s, its political consequences). Besides their potential encounter at Davos, there is no indication that their engagement went beyond Przywara’s occasional writings on Heidegger. Nevertheless, within recent decades, a new interpretation is suggesting that there is more at play. Independently, and with merely one year difference, both the Canadian theologian S.J. McGrath and the French Heidegger- and Blumenberg-commentator at the Parisian Husserl-archive Christian Sommer arrive at similar conclusions on Heidegger and the ‘*analogia entis*’ upon taking his relation to Luther into consideration.²¹³ For instance, McGrath argues in his

²¹⁰ Zill 2020: p. 29.

²¹¹ See McGrath 2006: S.J. McGrawth, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

²¹² E.g. *Reimagining the Analogia Entis* (2019), especially “The Postmodern Scene of Thought: Breaking Heidegger’s Spell”; Betz 2019: pp. 99-102.

²¹³ On how “For Heidegger, the *analogia entis* does not provide a solution to the *Seinsfrage*” (my translation), see: Christian Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristotle, Luther : Les sources aristotéliennes et néo-testamentaires d’Être et temps* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2005): p. 66.

monograph on *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy* (2006), that there is a more subtle shift instead of a complete and Godless break with theology: “The interpretation of ‘being’ as ‘time’ is intended to make the *analogia entis* impossible. The assumption of time as the horizon of being is complexly related to Heidegger’s appropriation of Luther.”²¹⁴ Leaving aside here the argument for the kinship of Heidegger’s thrownness and fallenness with Lutheran Godforsakenness,²¹⁵ in McGrath’s account, Heidegger’s *Habilitationsschrift* is to be seen as “an intensification of the Scotist project”, which carries significant weight considering Heidegger’s emphasis on this text as “pivotal to his development.”²¹⁶ Notwithstanding Heidegger’s own criticism of Scotus’ alternative to ‘*analogia entis*’ of ‘*univocatio entis*’ at the beginning of *Sein und Zeit*,²¹⁷ McGrath maintains that “Heidegger has no sympathy for the Thomist *analogia entis*. His decisive departure from Scotus, the rejection of an infinite mode of being, does not break with the Scotist project of maintaining a univocal notion of being.”²¹⁸

In contrast to such an unsympathetic reading of ‘*analogia entis*’ on Heidegger’s part, Blumenberg’s parallel departure from neo-Scholasticism does not prevent him from genuinely engaging with its concepts. On the contrary, in his dissertation on Blumenberg’s theory of language, Hannes Bajohr has suggested that Blumenberg finds the two sources for his solution to the fundamental problem of ontology in “his earlier neo-Scholastic education.”²¹⁹ This problem Blumenberg identifies consists of the following: underlying the shortcomings of nominalism (whose definitions of Being “point away from themselves and invite their own surpassing” according to McGrath), there is the fundamental impossibility of language to *define* Being.²²⁰ This impossibility results from the recursiveness of any predicative ‘Being is x’ statement following the conjugation of ‘to be’.²²¹ It is this fundamental problem of ontology that would increasingly drive Heidegger from a virtuous hermeneutic circle of a withdrawal of Being to a mystical resort to poetic silence towards the end of his career.²²² Not by coincidence, this same problem of the copula ‘to be’, which Bajohr describes as a “grammatical-logical” fact

²¹⁴ McGrath 2006: pp. 20-21.

²¹⁵ For this, see Robert Stern, “Luther’s Influence on Philosophy”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2020): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/luther-influence/> (accessed January 8th, 2023): especially, “Luther, Heidegger, and Løgstrup”.

²¹⁶ McGrath 2006: p. 92.

²¹⁷ McGrath 2006: p. 35.

²¹⁸ McGrath 2006: p. 91.

²¹⁹ Hannes Bajohr, *History and Metaphor: Hans Blumenberg’s Theory of Language* (unpublished diss.: Columbia University, 2017): p. 145

²²⁰ McGrath 2006: p. 224.

²²¹ Bajohr 2017: p. 140.

²²² Bajohr 2017: p. 140-142.

or pre-condition of ontology for Blumenberg,²²³ would come to haunt Heideggerians like Derrida and had before been taken up by Emile Benveniste.²²⁴ Blumenberg's solution is a conception of language that circumvents predicative, apophantic speech and instead closes in on "apophasis (negative speech, "unsaying")", prefiguring his later interest in metaphor and 'Nonunderstanding' (*Unbegrifflichkeit*). The two sources Bajohr identifies are (a) negative or apophantic theology, such as Meister Eckhart and Cusanus (see chapter one); and (b) the *analogia entis*.²²⁵

For this second source of what would eventually amount to Blumenberg's metaphorology, Bajohr is able to point to Paul Ricoeur for the establishment of a link between 'analogia entis' and metaphor.²²⁶ Moreover, he is able to substantiate this identification of 'analogia entis' as a source on the basis that it "figures prominently" in Blumenberg's dissertation as well as on the fact that Blumenberg gave a seminar on this topic in 1951.²²⁷ Indeed, the 'analogia entis' appears across the thesis and even includes a separate section devoted to it (§4c),²²⁸ though without mentioning Przywara and instead relying on Franciscan sources.²²⁹ Throughout, Blumenberg advances an interpretation of "one of the most durable concepts" of scholasticism called 'analogia entis' as a "manoeuvre" or "sleight of hand [*Kunstgriff*]", while tying together or enabling the philosophy of Being in reconciliation with Aristotelean premises.²³⁰ Furthermore, Blumenberg adds the qualification of 'analogia entis' "secretly" smuggling in a "chorismos", a term that was come across in chapter one already.²³¹ Subsequently, according to Blumenberg, the success of this "trick" is dependent on its

²²³ Bajohr 2017: p. 140.

²²⁴ To this extent, see: Roger Hart, "Translating the Untranslatable: From Copula to Incommensurable Worlds", in: Lydia H. Liu (ed.), *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): pp. 45-73.

²²⁵ Bajohr 2017: 145-146.

²²⁶ Bajohr 2017: 146n34. Unfortunately, I have not been able obtain the course description of this seminar which is held at the DLA Marbach Archive in time. This document could provide significant input for further research.

²²⁷ Bajohr 2017: p. 146n31.

²²⁸ Blumenberg 2020: p. 33; pp. 88-92; p. 99; p. 118.

²²⁹ His main authority is Friar Pacificus Borgmann, who published up until the end of the second world war; specifically, an entry on "Analogia Entis" in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit IV* (1937): pp. 270-273.

²³⁰ My translation. Blumenberg 2020: p. 89: „Wenn nun auch die Scholastik in einer ihrer nachhaltigsten Konzeptionen, der *analogia entis* [>Seinsanalogie<] einen heimlichen Chorismos einführt“; p. 91: “Der Analogiebegriff ist nun der logische Kunstgriff, der unter den aristotelischen Voraussetzungen dennoch eine Seinsphilosophie möglich machen soll.“

²³¹ My translation. Blumenberg 2020: p. 89: „Wenn nun auch die Scholastik in einer ihrer nachhaltigsten Konzeptionen, der *analogia entis* [>Seinsanalogie<] einen heimlichen Chorismos einführt“.

(denominal) capacity to steer in between equivocity and univocity.²³² Following this, Blumenberg continues with an analysis of Duns Scotus's categories following his specific conception of Being on the basis of univocity.

While it could be worthwhile to further pursue and reconstruct this erudite analysis for the sake of contrasting Blumenberg's Scotus from Heidegger's, instead, let us stick with the 'analogia entis'. Although this is as far as the extent of the discussion of 'analogia entis' in the dissertation goes, another document might be advanced instead: from the preparation leading up to Blumenberg's dissertation, a two-and-a-half page long typed-out transcript of a talk on scholastic ontology from 1946 has survived and is stored in the DLA Marbach Archive.²³³ This file, termed an exercise on *Sein und Zeit* for his doctoral advisor Ludwig Landgrebe (1902-1991), is described by his biographer as a sketch of the dissertation, summing up some of the key deficits in Heidegger's account of medieval ontology.²³⁴ Remarkably, in this earlier, condensed text, the 'analogia entis' still figures equally prominently.

In fact, in a crucial passage also cited by Zill, Blumenberg programmatically sets out: "In the concept of 'analogia entis', whose development and unfolding may well be characterized as the central accomplishment of scholastic philosophy, the Platonic chorismos is "overcome" ["*aufgehoben*", Blumenberg's quotation marks] in the dialectical sense of Hegel."²³⁵ In other words, at the *Epochenschwelle* of Antiquity to the Middle Ages, the ancient Greek metaphysics centred around 'chorismos' (that is, the chasm 'separating' and spanning over the world of appearance, Ideas and cognition to the domain of Being),²³⁶ or what Heidegger discussed as 'Chora/Khōra' (the cosmic chasm, matrix or womb),²³⁷ gets abolished. But not before being transformed into the analogical bridge between finiteness and infinity, between Created and Creator. While Heidegger might be right that the Being (*ens*) in medieval philosophy is understood as Created Being (*ens creatum*), he foregoes on the way in which this cosmos places Being in a prerequisite 'analogia entis'. In addition to shooting holes in Heidegger's account of the Creator's role in *ens creatum*, here too, Blumenberg moves to a

²³² My translation. Blumenberg 2020: p. 91: „Ob das überhaupt gelingen kann [d.h. eine Seinsphilosophie möglich machen], hängt davon ab, wie ein Zwischen von Univokation und Äquivokation in seiner Geltung genau verstanden werden soll.“

²³³ Blumenberg 1946: Hans Blumenberg, "Referat „Die Ontologie der Scholastik“, Übung Dr. Landgrebe über Heideggers „Sein und Zeit“, 10. Juli 1946, 3 Bl.“, in *Konvolut: Beiträge zum Problem der Ursprünglichkeit der mittelalterlich-scholastischen Ontologie/Vorarbeiten und Materialien* (DLA Marbach: unpublished).

²³⁴ Zill 2020: pp. 141-143.

²³⁵ Blumenberg 1946: p. 3.

²³⁶ Heinrich Meinhardt, "Chorismos" in Ritter 1971: pp. 1007-1008

²³⁷ Jacques Derrida, "Khōra", in Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, transl. by David Wood (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): pp. 87-150.

discussion of the Copula, before drawing the talk to a close with a final and complete dislocation of Heidegger's project and his straightforward equation of Being with Time by undermining his problematic conception of medieval eternity.

To sum up: whereas the 'analogia entis' appears throughout in Blumenberg's dissertation, it is only with the aid of the early sketch of his dissertation that the centrality of this concept for his account of medieval philosophy starts to assert itself. Although less outspoken in the dissertation, the function of 'analogia entis' as "the central accomplishment of scholastic philosophy" remains equivalent in the shape of a "*Kunstgriff*": in both texts the 'analogia entis' functions to tie together the metaphysical systems and identifies a role for it previously fulfilled by the concept of 'chorismos' in Antiquity.

c) *Epochenschwellen* and Metaphorology in and beyond Blumenberg

Blumenberg's own explicit position on the 'analogia entis' has now been established. Taking a step back and circling back to the *Epochenschwelle* and its initial (institutional) reception, it will become possible to bring the two concepts together before returning to this early document once more and expanding on its discussion further. Situating the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis in the institutional milieu where it was first advanced is the final step towards enabling the analysis to move into the positing of the *Epochenschwelle* of 'analogia entis'.

By the time the mature *Epochenschwelle*-thesis was published for the first time with *Legimität* (1966), Blumenberg had founded the *Poetik und Hermeneutik* working-group together with Germanist Clemens Heselhaus and literary theorist Hans Robert Jauß. This group researching topics of aesthetics and philosophy of history, modelled somewhat on the Warburg Institute,²³⁸ gathered in 1963 for the first of seventeen colloquia and ran for more than three decades in total. During this time, the group's impact on the post-war German university system would be profound and gradually its members expanded so as to include among others the aforementioned Gumbrecht, eccentric Religion-sociologist Jacob Taubes, and renowned *Begriffsgeschichte* pioneer Reinhart Koselleck. Already from the fourth colloquium onwards, however, Blumenberg increasingly withdrew from the group and while he would return with a contribution to the seventh colloquium he would definitively depart by the end of the 1970s.²³⁹ Nevertheless, Blumenberg casted such a shadow over this circle that by the mid-1980s not one

²³⁸ Zill 2020: p. 264.

²³⁹ See Zill 2020: pp. 261-281.

but two collections about the *Epochenschwelle* would appear from its midst.²⁴⁰

In addition to the twelfth *Poetik und Hermeneutik* colloquium held in autumn 1983 dedicated to “*Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein* [Epochal thresholds and Epochal consciousness]”, Gumbrecht had dedicated one of the colloquia of his spin-off working-group to “*Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen* [Epochal thresholds and Epochal structures]” in Dubrovnik a few months prior. In his account in his *Epochenschwelle*-article, Zill recounts Gumbrecht’s explanation to publish this collection before the *Poetik und Hermeneutik* collection as “a certain Oedipal motivation” to surpass his elders.²⁴¹ Whereas Gumbrecht seems more charitable in his own entry to the collection with a positive reference to Blumenberg (though not to his *Epochenschwelle*-thesis),²⁴² Zill reproaches the two authors of the preface to the other collection for having “protocolled their critical distance to [Blumenberg]” in spite of referring to him in their own contributions.²⁴³ In other words, Blumenberg’s establishing of this problematic was quickly cast aside. Instead, Zill explains the crucial urgency of the theme occupying both collections as a direct result of the impact of the philosophies-of-history of Thomas Kuhn’s *Scientific Revolutions* and Michel Foucault’s *Order of Things* favouring breaks over progress in the years preceding.²⁴⁴ (Moreover, it was even reported elsewhere, in interviews Zill conducted with the members of *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, that following this colloquium Foucault had finally accepted to join but was prevented from doing so by his untimely death.²⁴⁵)

Other examples of philosophies-of-history that were entertained and cultivated within this milieu in the context of the institutional reception of the *Epochenschwelle* included Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998). This founder of system theory had attended the sixth and seventh colloquium of *Poetik und Hermeneutik* before.²⁴⁶ Now, however, Luhmann did not just show up to both the twelfth colloquium and Gumbrecht’s Dubrovnik group but was also the only one

²⁴⁰ Herzog & Koselleck 1987: Reinhart Herzog & Reinhart Koselleck (eds.), *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein (Poetik und Hermeneutik. Arbeitsergebnisse einer Forschungsgruppe XII)* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1987); Gumbrecht & Link-Heer 1985: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht & Ursula Link-Heer (eds.), *Epochenschwelle und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985).

²⁴¹ My translation. Zill 2017: p. 20n3: „dass Gumbrecht eine gewisse ödipale Motivation für diese Themenwahl freimütig zugibt“

²⁴² Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Posthistoire Now”, in Gumbrecht & Link-Heer 1985: pp. 34-50, here p. 49.

²⁴³ My translation. Zill 2017: p. 21: „die kritische Distanz zu ihm zu protokollieren“

²⁴⁴ As to Blumenberg, the more he endorsed the former, the less he was inclined to the latter. Zill 2017: p. 20; see also, Boden & Zill 2017: Petra Boden and Rüdiger Zill, *Poetik und Hermeneutik im Rückblick* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2017): p. 196

²⁴⁵ Manfred Frank, “Geist-Haben zu mehreren” in: Petra Boden and Rüdiger Zill 2017: pp. 251- 284; here pp. 261-262.

²⁴⁶ As reported by Frank in Boden & Zill 2017: p. 261.

to contribute to both following collections.²⁴⁷ Although not all regular members of *Poetik und Hermeneutik* would retrospectively appreciate this sociologist's input,²⁴⁸ he would occupy a very prominent place in Gumbrecht's collection as the first author, preceding even the editor's own entry.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, Gumbrecht himself was part of an attempted rejuvenation shift in *Poetik und Hermeneutik* that started with this twelfth colloquium, providing younger members and the first female regular with Renate Lachmann (who attended both colloquia but only contributed to Gumbrecht's).²⁵⁰ It is among this shift, with seemingly only limited results,²⁵¹ that the previously discussed Anselm Haverkamp is to be found as well.

With Haverkamp, the neglect of the absent Blumenberg's foundational role for this topic of the research group is somewhat corrected. Not only is his contribution on metaphor to the collection of the twelfth colloquium an exception for its explicit discussion of Thomas Kuhn, as the authors of the foreword put it,²⁵² but he can also be considered to be the only one extensively engaging with Blumenberg sympathetically throughout.²⁵³ Also beyond *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, Haverkamp would restlessly attempt to set the record straight regarding Blumenberg's impact, despite never meeting the author whose work he would later publish.²⁵⁴ In another article, for instance, going back to a lecture given at the Warburg Institute in Hamburg (2009), the increasingly reclaimed incident of Blumenberg's proposal for a metaphorology getting harshly dismissed by some of the key figures in *Begriffsgeschichte*, only to be robbed of its ideas,²⁵⁵ is discussed as "The Scandal of Metaphorology".²⁵⁶

Meanwhile, without Haverkamp being aware of it, another article bearing (more or less) this exact title had already been published by the aforementioned Umberto Eco in the early-

²⁴⁷ Niklas Luhmann, "Paradigmawechsel in der Systemtheorie – ein Paradigma für den Fortschritt?", in Herzog & Koselleck 1987: pp. 305-322; Niklas Luhmann, "Das Problem der Epochenbildung und die Evolutions-theorie", in Gumbrecht & Link-Heer 1985: pp. 11-33.

²⁴⁸ Thomas Luckmann, "Ich habe Poetik und Hermeneutik von vornherein als eine Gruppe von deutschen Gelehrten empfunden", in: Boden & Zill 2017: pp. 229-250, here p. 246.

²⁴⁹ Luhmann in Gumbrecht & Link-Heer 1985: pp. 11-33.

²⁵⁰ Petra Boden and Rüdiger Zill, "Einleitung" in: Boden & Zill 2017: pp. 7-17, here p. 9; Renate Lachmann, "Tekst und Gedächtnis. Bemerkung zur Kulturosofophie des Akmeismus", in Gumbrecht & Link-Heer 1985: pp. 283-301.

²⁵¹ See especially the outspoken reflections of close collaborator with Anselm Haverkamp, Manfred Frank's on this: Frank in Boden & Zill 2017: pp. 251- 284.

²⁵² Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck, "Vorwort", in Herzog & Koselleck 1987: pp. VII-X, here p. VIII.

²⁵³ Anselm Haverkamp, "Paradigma *Metapher*, *Metapher Paradigma* – Zur Meta-kinetik hermeneutischer Horizonte (Blumenberg/Derrida, Kuhn/Foucault, Black/White)", in Herzog & Koselleck 1987: pp. 547-560.

²⁵⁴ Anselm Haverkamp, "Theorie als Praxisform verstehen", in Boden & Zill 2017: pp. 367-400, here p. 383.

²⁵⁵ For Blumenberg recounting this event, see: Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981): pp. 12-14.

²⁵⁶ Haverkamp, "The Scandal of Metaphorology: Blumenberg's Challenge", in: *Productive Digression: Theorizing Practice* ('s Hertogenbosch: De Gruyter 2017): pp. 34-52.

1980s, though overlooking Blumenberg's coinage of 'metaphorology' from the late-1950s completely.²⁵⁷ The point of Eco's article, however, was to advance a semiotic theory of metaphorology, where metaphor occupies a "scandalous" position within language.²⁵⁸ In this impressive and dazzling intellectual journey through metaphorology's pre-history from Aristotle's theory of metaphor to more contemporary semiotic approaches, Eco dedicates one section to 'analogia entis' as one episode of Aristotle's reception (§9.1).²⁵⁹ In a passage with particular clarity, Eco explains how – in contrast to univocity and equivocity – with 'analogia entis', reality or God is approached "by means of a proportion [i.e. the old sense of 'analogy'] between cause and effect. Through a kind of metonymy, therefore, which is held up, however, by a proportion of a metaphorical type."²⁶⁰ Whereas the ancient 'chorismos' or 'chora' is conventionally understood as a chasm or a receptacle (i.e. a matrix or a womb), we have previously seen the 'analogia entis' express this proportion between cause and effect metaphorically as the Chain of Being, 'scala naturae' or the Ladder of Being. Upon having established this link between 'analogia entis' and metaphor or metaphorology, Eco does not linger on it any further. Instead, (after stressing Vico's necessity to it) he reasserts his aim of providing "[a]n overview of the history of metaphorology and of its epistemic breaks".²⁶¹ It is this commitment to the periodization-heuristic 'epistemic breaks' by the novelist and semiotician Eco that marks the starkest difference with Blumenberg's alternative.

d) *Epochenschwelle*-thesis against other philosophies-of-history

Returning now to Haverkamp's contribution to the twelfth colloquium, a foothold is available into the immediate reception of *Epochenschwelle* to continue the discussion of Blumenberg's thesis compared to other philosophies-of-history.²⁶² Here, through a number of binary oppositions present in the title, Haverkamp seeks to elucidate the 'metaphorics of paradigm' and the 'paradigmatics of metaphor' as a response to Blumenberg's *Paradigmen of Metaphorologie*. Thus, in line with Zill's characterization of the direct inspiration provoking the theme of the twelfth colloquium, Kuhn's paradigms are analysed in conjunction with Foucault. Furthermore, with regards to the foregoing discussion of Blumenberg's

²⁵⁷ Eco 1983: Umberto Eco, "The Scandal of Metaphor: Metaphorology and Semiotics" transl. by Christopher Paci, *Poetics Today* 4/2 (1983): pp. 217-257.

²⁵⁸ Eco 1983: p. 218.

²⁵⁹ Eco 1983: pp. 235-237.

²⁶⁰ Eco 1983: p. 236.

²⁶¹ Eco 1983: p. 238.

²⁶² Anselm Haverkamp, "Paradigma *Metapher*, *Metapher Paradigma* – Zur Meta-kinetik hermeneutischer Horizonte (Blumenberg/Derrida, Kuhn/Foucault, Black/White)", in Herzog & Koselleck 1987: pp. 547-560.

‘grammatical-logical’ ontology, it is interesting to note that the couple Blumenberg/Derrida is resolved by a simple complementarity (or subordination of the former by the latter): “the ‘strategy’ postulated in Derrida’s project *Of Grammatology* is the object [*Gegenstand*] of Blumenberg’s *Metaphorology*”.²⁶³ This refers to Derrida’s strategy of following the trace that is constitutes in writing and Haverkamp’s is merely one attempt of many to reconcile Blumenberg with the French post-structuralist’s metaphorology.²⁶⁴

The third and final binary contrasts historiographer Hayden White (1928-2018) to analytic philosopher Max Black, but there seems little more to this contrast than a pun on their last names. Instead, Haverkamp primarily explicates how White intended his *Metahistory* (1973) in opposition to Foucault. White’s project of developing a tropology categorizing the rhetorical devices available to historians for the writing of history has remained seminal still today,²⁶⁵ and relies on combining two sources of literary historiography: on the one hand, he credits Northrop Frye (discussed in chapter two),²⁶⁶ and on the other, its ‘Four Master Tropes’ are traced back to Vico (thereby answering Eco’s call of the previous paragraph, whom White cites as well).²⁶⁷ According to Haverkamp, it is through this reach for rhetoric – and the fourfold of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony – that White operationalizes his “coarse but potent critique of Foucault’s *Order of Things*”.²⁶⁸ Ultimately, however, White’s narrativist or narratological attempt to identify this fourfold with Foucault’s sequence of *Epistemes*, “achieves nothing more than an illustration of the reductive trend which Foucault interprets himself as the decay of representation’.”²⁶⁹

Within the historiography of ‘analogy’, Foucault’s *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966) continues to be provoking because of this thesis of the decay of representation. Foucault proposes the periodization-heuristic of ‘epistemic break’

²⁶³ My translation. Haverkamp in Herzog & Koselleck (eds.) 1987: p. 551: „Die in Derridas Projekt der *Grammatologie* postulierte “Strategie” ist Gegenstand von Blumenbergs *Metaphorologie*“.

²⁶⁴ See e.g. Nicola Zambon, “Beobachtungen an Derridas Metaphorologie“, *Bildbruch: Beobachtungen an Metaphern* 1 (2020): pp. 9-38.

²⁶⁵ Not in the least because of Frank Ankersmit’s forceful championing of its importance: F. R. Ankersmit, *History and tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

²⁶⁶ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973): p. 3; also throughout the later essay collection of Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

²⁶⁷ For this tradition, he credits literary scholar Kenneth Burke. White 1973: p. 3; For Eco, White 1978: pp. 2-4.

²⁶⁸ My translation. Haverkamp in Herzog & Koselleck (eds.) 1987: p. 556: „In einer eigentümlich grob geschnitten, aber wirkungsvollen Kritik an Foucault’s *Ordnung der Dinge* operationalisiert White einen solchen Vorgriff, der sich auf Kenneth Burkes “Four Master Tropes” beruft und bis auf Vico zurückverfolgt wird.“

²⁶⁹ My translation. Haverkamp in Herzog & Koselleck (eds.) 1987: p. 557: „So will er die spätestens seit Vossius kanonischen ‘Four Master Tropes’ Metapher, Metonymie, Synekdoche und Ironie in der Abfolge der von Foucault behandelten Epistemen identifizieren, ohne dadurch mehr zu erreichen als eine Illustration des reduktiven Trends, den Foucault selbst interpretiert als Niedergang der Repräsentation.“

through his theory of Modernity where Kantian ‘representation’ following Kant’s Copernican Revolution does away with an age-old structure or ‘épistémè’ of representation undergirding knowledge-production. No longer was the apprehension or cognition of an object straightforward, but knowledge of objects was instead mediated by representations. As knowledge was thus no longer rooted in representation itself (but instead located in the transcendental conditions of possibility of the cognizing subject), a hard break with the previous period was constituted. The preceding periods discussed by Foucault in his archaeology of the human sciences are the episteme of the Renaissance (with a straightforward representational structure based on resemblance and similitude) and the episteme of so-called Classical representation stretching from Descartes to Kant (which prepared the modern episteme through an inclination towards taxonomies, cartographies, etc. on the basis of the possibility to refine representations through deepening its relation to the object). In other words, Foucault’s decaying trajectory of subsequent “historical a priori” regimes of conditions of possibility corresponds to the claim that knowledge on the basis of resemblance and similitude or analogy became dislocated and marginalized in favour of modern, sterilized representation.

Although it has been noted that this work (which would be translated to English as *Order of Things* in 1970 and to German as *Ordnung der Dinge* in 1971) would have crucial impact on the reception of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis, it is freely admitted in the retrospective reflections by the *Poetik und Hermeneutik* members that “the genuinely interested German Foucault-reception began only much later.”²⁷⁰ A true landmark in the reception of Foucault’s *Order of Things* is Stephan Otto’s monograph (1992) on Foucault’s paradigms of similitude.²⁷¹ In addition to identifying Romantic strains of analogical thinking in the Baroque and Enlightenment phases, among other things, Otto pushes back on Foucault’s account of the Renaissance by pointing to Cusanus’ thought on resemblance and similitude (as discussed in chapter one).²⁷² Turning the tables, in Otto’s reading, Foucault succeeded in identifying a climax of thought on resemblance and similitude but rather than its dislocation has exposed its continuous relevance in spite of the marginalizing effect Foucault’s own writings had on the topic.²⁷³ Admittedly, at times Otto’s critique seems to be an expression of analogy-scholars conducting readings of the

²⁷⁰ Rainer Warning, “... ein harmonisches Gespräch” in Boden & Zill 2017: pp. 183-201, here p. 196.

²⁷¹ Otto 1992: Stephan Otto, *Das Wissen des Ähnlichen. Michel Foucault und die Renaissance* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1992).

²⁷² Otto 1992: p. 105 as quoted in Andre Rudolph, *Figuren der Ähnlichkeit: Johann Georg Hamanns Analogiedenken im Kontext des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verl., 2006): p. 9; Otto 1992: p. 259 as quoted in Norbert Winkler, “Review: Stephan Otto: Das Wissen des Ähnlichen. Michel Foucault und die Renaissance”, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 40/7 (1992): p. 850-853, here p. 850.

²⁷³ For this argument, see Rudolph 2006: pp. 8-14.

Order of Things in a bad-faith rejection of postmodern theories of subjectivity.²⁷⁴ This notwithstanding, Otto is instructive for Anna Eusterschulte's massive study on Bruno and 'analogia entis', too, when she reveals on the last pages that she only assumed Foucault's forms of resemblance and similitude to be able to exhaust them; a geometric approach to the Chain of Being therefore shows that the cognition of similitude – unified under the 'analogia entis' - like with Bruno is incompatible with Foucault's suggested model.²⁷⁵

An alternative philosophy-of-history, taking into account 'analogia entis' from a metaphorological point of view as expounded here, has no need to resort to arbitrary regimes of resemblance and similitude. Rather than a sequence of successive periods according to which the historical record is forcefully partitioned and ordered, Blumenberg's elegant solution is contained in the assertion recounted in the opening of the current chapter that "There are no witnesses of epochal *breaks*." By having done away with single witnesses and by having the witnesses of epochal *thresholds* face both the old and the new, Blumenberg comes up with a more sound periodization-heuristic. As explained by Zill in his *Epochenschwelle* article:

"It is this dialectic thought [of the double-faced witness], that separates the Hegel-despiser Blumenberg from the Hegel-enemy Foucault. After all, Foucault will always assume epistemic breaks without taking into account the underlying dynamic. The great strength of Blumenberg's conception of the threshold, is that it involves those movements and tensions."²⁷⁶

Naturally, it is Blumenberg's ability to take the metaphors of his periodization-heuristic as seriously as the material to which it is applied, that distinguishes Blumenberg's approach. It is in this respect, that the archival document of Blumenberg's earliest sketch of his dissertation can now be returned to. In the passage that was highlighted before, the "overcoming [*aufhebung*]" of the Platonic chorismos by the 'analogia entis' "in the dialectical sense of Hegel" is in no way a teleological or progressive succession. Without wanting to level 'analogia entis' to a transhistorical category, this concept can be said to name a metaphysical strain or cornerstone that transcends epochs but not before being mutilated and transformed by the

²⁷⁴ See e.g. also: Peter Bürger, "Die Wiederkehr der Analogie. Ästhetik als Fluchtpunkt in Foucaults >Die Ordnung der Dinge<, in: Christa and Peter Bürger (eds.), *Postmoderne: Alltag, Allegorie und Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1987): pp. 114-121.

²⁷⁵ Eusterschulte 1994: p. 570.

²⁷⁶ My translation. Zill 2017: p. 29. „Es ist dieser dialektische Gedanke, der den Hegel-Verächter Blumenberg von dem Hegel-Feind Foucault trennt. Denn Foucault geht immer nur von Episteme-Brüchen aus, ohne die dahinter liegende Dynamik in den Blick zu nehmen. Die große Stärke von Blumenbergs Konzeption der Schwelle ist es, dass sie die Bewegungen und Spannungen miteinbezieht.“

thresholds it passes. Thus, understood as passing through *Epochenschwellen*, the history of the concept ‘*analogia entis*’ can be analysed both in its successive phases, both in terms of discontinuity and of continuity, while remaining sensitive to the incommensurability between its consecutive paradigms.

e) Conclusion

Thus, we thereby arrive at the point where everything is in order for the full application of the *Epochenschwelle* to the ‘*analogia entis*’. From the document sketching Blumenberg’s dissertation, it has become apparent to what extent the ‘*analogia entis*’ occupies a central role in his account of medieval ontology. This centrality has become all the more urgent following the contrast with Heidegger, whose parallel departure from his neo-scholastic education meant a complete disembarking from the notion of ‘*analogia entis*’. By contrast, for Blumenberg, the ‘*analogia entis*’ functions as a cornerstone of medieval philosophy and as an alternative to the metaphysical cornerstone of ‘*chorismos*’ in Antiquity. Nevertheless, while this may indicate Blumenberg’s initial position, soon after completing his *Habilitationsschrift* he would drop the topic of (fundamental) ontology and Heidegger more or less completely.

Rather, Blumenberg would be inclined to discuss the transition from Antiquity to Middle Ages in terms of *Epochenschwelle* from now on. From having traced the initial reception of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis it has become apparent how Blumenberg’s impact should be characterized: although it hard to overestimate the degree with which Blumenberg set the parameter for the discussion of *Epochenschwellen* in the influential *Poetik-und-Hermeneutik*-group he helped establish, Blumenberg’s retreat and the group’s unease with his legacy side-tracked the straightforward impact of his theory. Nevertheless, the two discussed collections from the 1980s attest to how this theory continued to leave its mark explicitly.

By that time, Blumenberg had already encountered similar institutional disappointment with his metaphorology project. Nonetheless, through the contribution of Anselm Haverkamp, some light has been shed on the ways in which this project intersected with the discussion around *Epochenschwellen*. Moreover, his entry to the *Poetik-und-Hermeneutik* collection provided a framework from which an inquiry into the relation of ‘*analogia entis*’ to metaphorology could be conducted. While reluctant to insinuate further links at this point, as fleshing out such connections falls beyond the scope of this thesis, it has to be sufficient here to have established that such links exist.

More pressingly, was the need to relate the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis to alternatives

within the historiography of ‘analogy’. Building upon the preceding comparative analysis of other philosophies-of-history, this led to a dismissal of Foucault’s ‘épistèmes’. Simply siding with already existent critiques of Foucault’s *Order of Things* from within the field of ‘analogy’-studies, as well as with Haverkamp’s rejection of it in his early defence of Blumenberg, this concurred with Zill’s contradistinction with Blumenberg on the level of periodization: in contrast to the widespread notion of ‘epistemic breaks’, Blumenberg’s *Epochenschwelle* appears more sophisticated and adequate in handling the underlying dynamic implied by the assertion of historical discontinuity. The (metaphorical) meaning implied with ‘break’ is conveying a cessation but with limited self-reflexivity regarding the imagery invoked with it. This problem becomes all the more urgent when applied to the historiography of ‘analogy’ itself, as ‘epistemic break’ tends to be. The point of indulging in such an off-hand criticism of Foucault has been primarily to illustrate the broader scope of the application of *Epochenschwelle* to ‘analogia entis’ for history-of-science in general.

As evidenced from the reading of Blumenberg’s dissertation and the archival document provided in this chapter, it seems that an additional dimension to the often-recurring traditional triad Antiquity–Middle Ages–Modernity should be able to be discerned: namely, the threshold from ‘chorismos’ to ‘analogia entis’ and the threshold out of ‘analogia entis’ into a hypothesized modern metaphysical alternative. In an attempt to grapple with this, the final conclusion of this thesis will bring the first two chapters back into the account as well.

Conclusion

The preceding has paved the way to now take the analysis of the *Epochenschwelle* and the ‘*analogia entis*’ one final step further, culminating in the application of the former to the latter. The previous chapter has already done considerable work towards that end. The question of Blumenberg’s ‘*analogia entis*’ was answered twofold: first, in the early Blumenberg the concept was found playing a significant role and marks a stark divergence from Heidegger’s relationship to this neo-scholastic conceptual pillar. More specifically, the ‘*analogia entis*’ functions as a way to define the metaphysical system of medieval thought, resembling or even channelling the way in which ‘*chorismos*’ played this function for philosophical thought in Antiquity. Second, the mature Blumenberg’s interest in metaphor and metaphorology have been (tentatively) brought into relation with ‘*analogia entis*’. Further structural inquiries into the metaphysical background of this literary-conceptual interest might therefore be fruitful.

A guiding thread throughout this thesis, has been the attempt to put Przywara’s notion of ‘*analogia entis*’ back into the famous Davos controversy between Cassirer and Heidegger by way of Blumenberg’s mediation between these two opponents. Notwithstanding Blumenberg’s early and profound departure from Heidegger’s account of medieval ontology, it has been addressed how he (cautiously) accepts Heidegger’s objection of loss of Cassirer’s Kantian rigour. This was expressed most clearly in Blumenberg’s objections to anachronistically reading Kantian dilemmas into the work of Cusanus. Nevertheless, in many ways, Blumenberg’s aims remain aligned to Cassirer’s. On the basis of this, and on similar suggestions previously made about Benjamin, the suspicion has been advanced that Blumenberg derives his inspiration from the *Schwelle*-notion from Cassirer.

With regards to the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis, then, considerable attention has been spent on laying out where this notion came from, how this theory was posed and how it is supposed to work practically. Soon departing from this impetus, however, as has been repeated throughout, the periodization-tool of *Epochenschwelle* is advanced to circumvent the idea that historical discontinuity or epochal breaks can have individual drivers or witnesses. Instead, shifts in epochs or periods are always witnessed by multiple individuals. Furthermore, by now, it has become clear that this heuristic is therefore more sophisticated than alternatives such as ‘epistemic breaks’ because it is more self-aware of the underlying dynamic or invoked imagery insinuated with the periodization-tool as a device of the historian. By illustration, in the case of Blumenberg’s argument for the *Epochenschwelle* from the Middle Ages to Modernity, the invoked imagery of the ‘threshold’ (incl. transition, wave, etc. as was seen with Benjamin) can

be expressed as Bruno being downstream of Cusanus, while both combined enact the shockwave of Modernity (see conclusion chapter two).

It is this fluid, subtle sophistication of the *Epochenschwelle*-tool that many critics of Blumenberg's Cusanus seem to miss. Instead hearing only how Cusanus "continues to face the Middle Ages" and taking offense, Blumenberg never intended to dethrone Cusanus with Bruno as certain strains within Cusanus scholarship had sought to dethrone Descartes with Cusanus. Failing to see how Blumenberg is moving beyond Cusanus the person and failing to recognize the primacy of the threshold over the witnesses in his argument, is to miss the intrinsic claim about periodization completely. (Relatedly, it has been revealed how the dismissal of F. Clemens as a source for Blumenberg not only deliberately neglects a firm, longer lineage of putting Cusanus next to Bruno at the advent of Modernity, but also steps over an entire Thomist episode in the reception history of Cusanus which has been addressed here.) Nevertheless, it is possible to take Blumenberg's theory of periodization seriously and to construct a functional history(-of-science) upon it.

Aided with Blumenberg's introductions to the editions he helped issue, it became possible to give new depth to Blumenberg's argumentation for the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis. Approaching his interpretation from the perspective of the textual basis he helped provide for the authors that he would subsequently draw on shed light on some emphases and interpretations that didn't end up in the *Legitimität* version of the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis. Occasionally, such a slow-reading helped situate and understand the, at times, long-drawn out argumentative structure of the *Legitimität*. Rather than some of his critics' contentions, this has led to an understanding of remarkable similarities between Blumenberg's treatment of both philosophers in their mutual position within the *Epochenschwelle*: this includes stylistic Blumenberg unification of the two thinkers under the idea of the etymological connection of the 'courage [*Mut*]' of 'suspicion [*Vermutung*]' necessary to instigate the new epoch, or his methodological choice to approach them through the 'mirror of their inferior opponents' in order to bring out their message all the more clearer. Furthermore, he stresses their shared contribution to the articulation of an infinite cosmology as essential in the arrival of Modernity. Where they start to diverge, however, is in terms of Christology and the respective use they ascribe to it: whereas Cusanus' anthropology, cosmology and theology can only be understood through the culmination in the figure of Christ, Blumenberg's reading of Bruno goes beyond the person again and holds that he failed to understand himself the degree with which he had come to identify 'World' with the Son. In other words, their starkest difference lies in terms of anthropocentrism and in Bruno's refusal of the Incarnation in terms of the 'only-begotten

[*Einziggeborene*]. Nevertheless, the commitment to the introductions also came with predispositions. For example, in case of Bruno, there was disproportionate focus on the *Ash Wednesday Supper* and his English writings more generally. While this follows from the methodological choice to stick with Blumenberg's facilitation of the textual basis for the relevant philosophers, this is not to say that Blumenberg's reading of them is limited to this basis per se.

In the final chapter, the analysis went to some lengths to grasp what distinguishes an *Epochenschwelle* approach to the 'analogia entis' from other approaches. Here too, differences were asserted most forcefully between Blumenberg's theory and Foucault's model of the 'épistèmes' due to the latter's persistent sway over historiography of 'analogy'. To recapitulate, in Foucault's account, a number of 'epistemic regimes' regarding the conception of 'similitude' are separated by hard epistemic breaks and ultimately give rise to the modern regime of representation following Kant's Copernican Revolution. By contrast, it should be conceivable by now what the contours of an alternative model derived from Blumenberg would resemble: after the threshold of the 'chorismos' of Antiquity towards the medieval 'analogia entis' has been passed, the 'chorismos' is not disposed of completely but still asserts itself in its reoccupied position. There is no absolute incommensurability with the preceding metaphysical cornerstone after the threshold, nor is there a complete straightforward accessibility since now there is an added layer of 'analogia entis' as well. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that this concept didn't get firmly established as a technical term until the 20th century and that applying the term to the Middle Ages remains predominantly an act of retroprojection.

Furthermore, as hinted at in the last chapter's conclusion, it might be validly expected at this point that with the arrival of the epoch of Modernity, yet another metaphysical cornerstone starts fulfilling this role. Unfortunately, no such concept has been encountered during the span of this thesis. Alternatively, what can only be advanced instead, is the analysis which has been undertaken from the outset: namely, the test of the *Epochenschwelle* applied to 'analogia entis' by focussing on one (or two) episode(s) in the history of the analogy concept in particular; namely, its expression in Nicholas Cusanus and in Giordano Bruno. Although it is difficult to draw conclusive results, in both cases, enough scholarship has been produced to justify such an investigation.

For Cusanus, on the one hand, the epochal relation to 'analogia entis' has to remain somewhat open (since one can either lean towards the explanation of plain denial of the doctrine or towards a strategic silent-treatment). In this sense, it was remarkable how close the German scholars debating these questions in the twentieth century came to Blumenberg personally: most

prominently, Ritter's seminal article was read by Blumenberg and his first assistant that translated Cusanus ended on the conservative side of the debate. Nevertheless, it was concluded in chapter one, "the negative theologian had already substantially moved away from the scholastic status quo of Thomism – especially towards the end of his life – and is not so easily contained in it." To this it can now be emphasized again with renewed significance, that it seems crucial that towards the end of his life, Cusanus tended more towards the notion of 'chorismos' and Platonism more generally. So much so, that Cusanus studies are intimately intertwined with the scholarship on 'chorismos'. For Bruno, on the other hand, interpretations have been discussed ranging from a complete denial of the medieval scholastic doctrine to a complete exhaustion of the doctrine from inside out. It is tempting to conclude therefore that, in line with Blumenberg's *Epochenschwelle*-thesis, the degree with which Bruno naturalizes and multiplies the 'analogia entis' into infinity instantiates the final step towards Modernity: in such a view, Bruno does away with the old conception of Creation and instead collapses divinity and transcendence into an immanent origin of the cosmos, setting the parameter for the modern infinite cosmology. Nevertheless, the same cautious conclusion that was drawn about Cusanus might be warranted for Bruno: the reading of the Thomist 'analogia entis' into Bruno's philosophy might ultimately be unjustified and too much of a stretch.

The remaining aporia, therefore, is whether in Blumenberg's model we are expected to see among the witnesses of the epochal threshold of the arrival of modernity a gradually articulated, new metaphysical cornerstone already into place; or, alternatively, whether the metaphysical doctrine of 'analogia entis' gradually phases out. In lieu of the former, I am inclined to conclude that what has been encountered in the first two chapters of this thesis is a gradual phase out of the 'analogia entis'. In this regard, the *Epochenschwelle*-thesis can be said to pass the test for the concept of the 'analogia entis'. Nevertheless, future research would be advised to set out in greater detail what it is that the modern metaphysics starts gravitating around in addition to addressing other limitations of the current project. As described in the thesis, these include: a) consulting the introduction to the Galilei issue in addition to the two introductions used here, and b) further substantiating the account of Blumenberg's 'analogia entis' by scrutinizing the surviving document regarding the seminar Blumenberg gave on this topic.

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