

Unavoidability of Nature – the Struggle of Erich Przywara and Chantal Delsol to Reintroduce the Concept

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Abstract: The history of modern philosophy has been marked by a retreat from traditional metaphysical concepts, including the notion of nature, which is central to theological considerations. It allows us to recognize a direct connection between the ordered world of nature and the existence of God. Still, some theologians paradoxically welcomed the downfall of metaphysics. Acknowledging the irreversibility of changes in the intellectual landscape of contemporary culture, and following Heidegger's critique of the so-called ontotheology, they stated that one can and should "do" theology without resorting to metaphysical concepts, like the concept of nature. In this paper I am revisiting the work of two thinkers that defended the concept of nature. They represent two generations of 20th and 21st century Christian theologians (Erich Przywara) and philosophers (Chantal Delsol) who assiduously sought to reintroduce the concept of nature to the mainstream of intellectual discourse. Tracing their footsteps, we shall see that intellectual systems inspired by Christianity actually need the concept of nature, or its equivalent. What is common to both scholars is that they try to achieve this goal indirectly, by substituting the concepts of classical metaphysics. As mentioned, modern critique left metaphysical notions with a bad reputation (undeservedly, in our opinion), but Przywara and Delsol replace them with related concepts that latter-day thinkers find easier to accept.

Keywords: Przywara, Delsol, nature, analogy, personalism, postmodernism

There is no doubt that the concept of nature – which indicates the objective order of things, or to put it differently the objectively structured reality¹ – is central to theological considerations. It expresses the view according to which a human being is not a creator of a surrounding reality, and his or her role in conducting investigations and inquiries consists solely on discovering (as opposed to inventing) the truths about the external world. This is of special importance in the domain of ethics and moral theology, in which humanity experiences especially strong temptations to impose truths (as opposed to decipher them) onto reality. Nature in the classical thought consists of independent in their existence substances, which are composed of forms and matter. The former indicates an aim of the substance in question, by which one understood its optimum, a maximal degree of existence of the thing. To

¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143–158.

have a nature means to have a best possible way of existing. To be in accordance with one's own nature results in flourishing.

For medieval theologians and philosophers, it was not difficult to recognize a direct connection between the ordered world of natures and the existence of God. If non-intellectual (and sometimes even non-living) beings have goals, then there has to be Someone who establishes these goals from the outside, just as an archer establishes a direction of an arrow when he aims at the target.²

On the other hand, the history of modern philosophy is marked by withdrawal from the traditional metaphysical concepts, including the notion of nature. David Hume famously argued that there is no impression in one's empirical experience that could be named "substance,"³ and Immanuel Kant concluded from sceptical remarks of his predecessor that "substance" is nothing more than the category of human intellect, and hence says nothing about the objective reality.⁴ One cannot be surprised that both of the aforementioned philosophers thought that neither one can prove the existence of God by means of speculation of pure reason, nor that there are objective or natural moral laws (Hume reduced ethics to the realm of feelings and Kant inferred moral laws from human reason).

Some theologians paradoxically welcomed the aforementioned downfall of metaphysics.⁵ They acknowledged the irreversibility of changes in the intellectual landscape of contemporary culture, and following Heidegger's critique of the so-called ontotheology⁶ they stated that one can and should do theology without metaphysical concepts, like the concept of nature. Jean-Luc Marion for example saw in the theology founded on the classical metaphysics the danger of idolatry,⁷ and Merold Westphal went even further and accused ontotheology of atrocities committed by the Western civilization, including Holocaust.⁸

In the following paper I am going to show the thought of two thinkers that defended the concept of nature. They represent two generations of 20th and 21st century Christian theologians (Erich Przywara) and philosophers (Chantal Delsol), who continuously tried to reintroduce the concept of nature to the mainstream of intellectual discourse. In this way we shall see that intellectual systems inspired by Christianity need the concept of nature or its equivalence. What is common to both of them is that they try to achieve this goal indirectly, by substituting the concepts of classical

² This line of reasoning one can find in the so called fifth way of Thomas Aquinas (*STh* I, q. 2., a. 3).

³ "The idea of substance must be derived from an impression or reflexion, it it really exist. But the impressions of reflexion resolve themselves into our passions and emotions; none of which can possibly represent a substance. We have therefore no idea of substance" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 15).

⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 129–134.

⁵ Cfr. Godzieba, "Ontotheology to Excess," 8–20

⁶ Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, 140–141.

⁷ Marion, *God Without Being*, 25–29.

⁸ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 1–28.

metaphysics. Because of the aforementioned modern critique metaphysical notions have bad reputation (even if we think that undeservedly so) Przywara and Delsol replace them with concepts that easier to accept by the other thinkers.

The following scheme was adopted in the article: in the first part of the paper I shall analyze theology of Erich Przywara and I shall try to show that he reintroduced the concept of nature by the dynamics of being expressed by the German phrase: “in-und-über.” In this way he managed to capture the essential features of the classical notion of nature: on the one hand substantiality of things, and their goals on the other. In particular, I shall investigate the concept of *analogia entis* with particular emphasis on the aspect of openness to transcendence. In the second part of the paper I shall focus on personalism of Chantal Delsol. As a philosopher she is more concerned with implications of our thinking on culture. I shall try to show her recipe for a balanced culture and how it relates to the concept of nature. In the end, I shall attempt to compare these two thinkers. In my analyses I will rely solely on source materials. In this way I will try to bring out original thought of Przywara and Delsol, without the mediation of interpreters.

1. *Analogia Entis* of Erich Przywara

Erich Przywara, a Jesuit, philosopher and theologian of Polish-German origin, lived in the 20th century (1889–1972 to be precise) and took part in the most important philosophical and theological discussions of that time, including with Martin Heidegger. He played a decisive role in the formation of theology of the most eminent representatives of this discipline in the 20th century: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner. The main contribution of Przywara to Catholic theology was the creative reinterpretation of the principle of analogy of being (*analogia entis*), which he used as a key to reflection on all created reality and its relation to God.

1.1. Philosophical Analogy

While looking at the development of philosophical thought, Przywara notices that from the very beginning it is characterized by a tension between two aspects of being: its changeability and immutability. He identifies philosophies that emphasize the changeability of being with Heraclitus, and those emphasizing the immutability with Parmenides. It also states that consistently accepting one of them implies negating the other. Thus, philosophy was looking for an opportunity to capture these two aspects of being. Aristotle solves this issue by claiming that apart from finite beings that are in constant motion, passing from potency to act, there must be some Neces-

sary, Infinite Being.⁹ It is him that is indicated by the entire existence of a changeable, finite being. For in itself it would be nothing but potency or nothingness. The finite Being, therefore, is suspended in the dynamics between potency and the Infinite Being. Aristotle emphasizes that we define both the finite being and the Infinite Being with the same word “being.”¹⁰ This does not mean, however, that the word describes the same thing in both cases. There are many ways of speaking about being as a substance. In order for such a judgment to be valid, an analogy is necessary, i.e. something intermediate between unambiguousness and ambiguity. Here it becomes evident that a finite being is an analogous reality. By itself it is not an unchanging and permanent substance, but has some share and similarity to the invariability of the Necessary Being.¹¹

St. Thomas will clarify these considerations by observing in finite being the real distinction between essence and existence.¹² Beginning with Thomas’ “real distinction,” Przywara describes finite being as a tension (*Spannung*) between essence and existence. On the one hand, man feels unity, on the other he experiences the tension between who he is now (existence) and the complete realization of himself (essence). Przywara will describe this state as “being one in tension” (*Spannung-Einheit*). This non-identity of essence and existence is responsible for the changeability of creation as being. The hallmark of creation is therefore the continual “becoming” (*in fieri*). To describe this situation, Przywara uses a specific idiom, that the essence of creation is always “in and above” (*in-über*) existence. On my reading of Przywara, in this way he reintroduces the concept of nature into the philosophical discourse of his time. It is because, on the one hand, the essence “gives form” to the existing creature, making it what it is at the moment (it makes a thing an ordered being), but on the other hand, it transcends existence because it pushes man towards something that has not yet been achieved (it is responsible for a certain dynamics of a being by directing it at an aim). It differs from the Infinite being which is fully realized – its essence identifies itself fully with existence. Thus, it can be said that the Infinite Being is the only one IS, while the finite being participates in this existence and tends towards it.

⁹ “Nothing, then, is gained even if we suppose eternal substances, as the believers in the Forms do, unless there is to be in them some principle which can cause change; nay, even this is not enough, nor is another substance besides the Forms enough; for if it is not to act, there will be no movement. Further even if it acts, this will not be enough, if its essence is potency; for there will not be eternal. movement, since that which is potentially may possibly not be. There must, then, be such a principle, whose very essence is actuality. Further, then, these substances must be without matter; for they must be eternal, if anything is eternal. Therefore they must be actuality” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 1071b).

¹⁰ “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’, but all that ‘is’ is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and is not said to ‘be’ by a mere ambiguity” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 1003a).

¹¹ Cfr. Betz, “After Barth,” 44–47.

¹² “Omnis autem essentia vel quidditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo: possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel phoenix et tamen ignorare, an esse habeat in rerum natura. Ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia vel quidditate” (Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, cap. IV, 100).

1.2. Theological Analogy

If, basing on Exod 3:14, the only one IS is defined as God, then one can move from an immanent analogy to a theological analogy. Here, the concept of St. Thomas is basic for Przywara. One has to look at the question 4 of *Sum of Theology*, where the Angelic Doctor discusses the question of whether creation can be like God.¹³ Now, Thomas thinks that it can and to support this claim he gives two arguments from the Holy Scriptures, one concerning the origin of man: “Let us create man in our image and likeness” (Gen 1:26), and the other for his final goal: “We know that when he is revealed, we will be like him” (1 John 3:2). Both indicate the real ontological similarity between the Creator and the creature. Moreover, Aquinas argues that even without considering the Scriptures, it is possible by reason alone to show the similarity between the Creator and the creature, because every effect is similar to a cause, so it is the same with the Creator and the creature. This account, as Thomas says, is “a kind of analogy; through existence that is common to all. Thus all created things, insofar as they are beings, are similar to God the first and general principle of every being.”¹⁴

In terms of St. Thomas, Aristotle’s reasoning is deepened: “being” is “being in Being” because being means being of Being in all things. God as Being is the greatest depth of all being. Thus, the analogy as participatory being relied above and beyond (bottom-up analogy) has as its deeper premise the analogy as a self-communicating relation from above of the Divine identity of Being (top-down analogy). Both senses of the analogy complement each other in a new way. The bottom-up analogy has the top-down analogy as its basis, since it is the latter that reveals the transcendent and immanent God who is the end (“beyond”) and the basis (“in”) of everything. On the other hand, it is in the bottom-up that the top-down reveals its depth, because without a bottom-up analogy we would not be able to (on the way of philosophy) come to the top-down one. Hence the analogy does not mean that God is similar to creation, but that creation is in some way similar to God.¹⁵

So when Przywara uses the term *analogia entis*, he first of all wants to say that the world of variable and finite things is deeply embedded in a reality that is different from itself, which is changeless and infinite. Thus, every perfection in the dimension of creation is a reflection of the infinite perfection of the Creator. This is how the Creator reveals himself in his creation. Przywara emphasizes, however, with Augustine that God is in everything, but also above everything. Thus, although He becomes knowable in His works, He remains elusive in His innermost essence.¹⁶ Przywara

¹³ *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3.

¹⁴ *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3.

¹⁵ Cfr. Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 119–120.

¹⁶ Cfr. Przywara, “Gotteserfahrung und Gottesbeweis,” 7.

avoids the extremes of theological thought that lost its ground in metaphysical thinking. Very often this kind of theology results in apophaticism which has nothing to say about God out of fear of committing a fatal mistake of anthropomorphism.¹⁷ In the next chapter I shall look closer at the extreme positions of philosophy that forgot about the analogical dimension of religious language.

1.3. Pantheism and Theopanism – Two Extremes

In the contemporary world, Przywara notices the emergence of two extremes, which he calls “pantheism” and “theopanism.” Przywara describes the content of the term theopanism with the idiom “God himself.” It is a view where the role of creation is minimized, because it is either a manifestation or an emanation of the divine ideal, as it happens in various idealisms, neoplatonism, and eastern philosophies, or it lacks integrity because it is torn apart by the fall and marked by the impossibility of cooperation by God’s grace, as in Lutheran Reform theology. Pantheism, on the other hand, is the dialectical opposite of theopanism and is summed up by the idiom “the world itself.” It occurs in Western secular materialisms. God is unreal in them, and all reality is transferred to the world, making God a product of self-alienation (Feuerbach-Marx), myth-poetry (Nietzsche) or the desire for self-fulfillment (Freud).

According to Przywara, the *analogia entis* is a cure for these philosophical and theological extremes. This is because the analogy of being functions in two respects: the first is the tension in creation between essence and existence (philosophical analogy); the second is the transcendent relationship of creation to the Creator (theological analogy). Regarding the first aspect, the *analogia entis* maintains the unity in tension between the philosophies of essence and the philosophies of being. Regarding the second aspect, the analogy of being tries to maintain the tension between the omnipotence (*Allwirksamkeit*) of God and the secondary agency of the world: “Instead of the disease of the modern ‘God himself is everything’, the totality of the Thomistic ‘God is everything in all’; instead of ‘God is above us or in us’ (either the world is absorbed by God or God is dissolved in the world) great, liberating and life-giving ‘God is above us and in us.’”¹⁸

1.4. “Analogia Entis” as a Model of Dynamic Polarity

The final element of *Analogia Entis* is the rule of “dynamic polarity,” which responds to the one-sidedness of other philosophies and theologies. It is about the dynamic connection of the poles of essence and existence in creatures (horizontal) and the immanence and transcendence of God (vertical). Przywara emphasizes that there is no

¹⁷ Cfr. Marion, *God Without Being*, 25–52.

¹⁸ Przywara, “Kant-Newman-Thomas,” 961.

balance here, no dialectics with clearly described regularity of movement, but it is about a certain dynamism, a back-forward movement that tends towards transcendence.¹⁹ Przywara keeps reminding that the analogy of being is not simply some verbal code for a specific metaphysics, but a profound expression of a real religious experience.²⁰

The analogy thus becomes a dynamic back-forward relationship between bottom to beyond and above (transcending immanence) and from top to inside (immanent transcendence). In other words, we are talking about the analogy as the “immanent dynamic center” of actualization (*energeia*) between dynamic potency (*dynamis*) and inner goal-direction (*entelecheia*).²¹ And here we can see that we are dealing with two analogies: within creation and God-creation (as shown below), because by its purpose (*entelecheia*), the creation analogy refers to something outside of it, which is the Absolute Act. Therefore, creation is necessarily in relation to God. This does not mean that God is necessarily in relation to creation. God is “complete-

¹⁹ A more detailed description of the dynamics of *analogia entis* in Erich Przywara and its grounding in his contemporary philosophy can be found in: Raczyński-Rożek, „*Analogia Entis* Ericha Przywary,” 217–230.

²⁰ In his reflection on the analogy, Przywara refers to the thought of Augustine and his sentence *Deus interior et exterior omni re* (God is in everything and above everything). In other words, God is more within us than ourselves and at the same time transcends everything as Infinite and Inconceivable. God reveals himself in mystical closeness combined with the greatest distance. This is seen in the very reality of love which, as Przywara claims, is “fearful love and loving fear.” The fear that appears in love results from the possibility of losing a loved one and gives that love sobriety and respect for the loved one. Love corresponds to the first part of the phrase “God in me.” The element of fear, on the other hand, refers to “God above me.” Both are interconnected so that God’s immanence does not reduce God to human reality, while God’s transcendence does not become a disregard for human activity. In Augustine, in his work and in living his faith, we find this Christian balance between God’s immanence and transcendence. In conversations with Monika in “Confessions,” you can see the ineffable and sublime mysticism expressing the attitude of closeness “God in me,” while in anti-Pelagian writings a huge distance to God who remains unexplored “God above us” (Cfr. Przywara, “Katholizismus,” 544–545).

²¹ To emphasize the dynamic aspect of reality that is *Analogia Entis* Przywara uses the image of a pendulum. An analogy is the relation between act (*energeia*, *actus*) and potency (*dynamis*, *potentia*). There is a forward-backward swinging motion between them. Possibility is the engine of all dynamics. Each update, on the other hand, is something provisional in relation to the infinity of possibilities that always surpass it. Each update is an instrument in the hands of “infinite possibilities” which they push towards the fullest possible realization. But on the other hand, a “pure possibility” that needs updating presupposes that there is someone who updates it, someone who is topical in itself. In this sense, actualization is the defining purpose of opportunities. This in turn shows the primacy of the realm of being and transcendental over the realm of possibility. The analogy thus stabilizes the relationship between possibility and realization, that is, the dynamic suspension characteristic of creation. On the one hand, the update is directed backwards and creates frontiers in a deceptive sea of endless possibilities. Here, the implementation goes towards the possibilities. On the other hand, the possibility is pushing towards updating. So each update moment is oriented forward towards the new update, which is determined by the purpose that the creation contains (*entelecheia*). In this way, the update goes beyond itself. The principle of non-contradiction is thus situated in a certain transitory between the gulf of negation of this principle (in the infinite possibility) and the elevation to the most defined “is” (where the principle of identity is fulfilled). In other words, an analogy is an internal dynamic means directed towards an end. This goal-orientation points to “measure from above” (Cfr. Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 113–116).

ly independent and free.” Creation is a movement “necessarily dependent and receptive” as opposed to God’s “independent free endowment.”²² This is how philosophy and theology intersect.

1.5. “*Analogia Entis*” – Filling the Philosophical into Theological Analogy

How does Przywara perceive the mutual relationship between philosophy and theology? For a German Jesuit, theology is already present “in” philosophy. It is worth asking, however, to what extent the analogy of being, as a medicine for contemporary extreme concepts, can be recognized by reason itself and as such belongs to our natural knowledge of God. Przywara believes that natural theology, without faith, is always on the verge of idolatry, because it risks losing the distance between the Creator and the creature. Hence, theology cannot be reduced to philosophy, or even to natural theology. Theology is always “above” philosophy and natural theology. Again, the analogous formula appears, “theology is in and above philosophy.” But if theology is above philosophy, it is also what philosophy strives for, its own *telos*. We can therefore speak of an analogous relationship in which philosophy seeks its fulfillment in theology.

Therefore, the analogy of being can only be fully realized in a theological perspective. It consists in the crossing of two analogies – philosophical (essence is in and above existence) and theological (God is in and above creation). According to Thomas’ principle that grace does not destroy nature, but supports and develops it. If there is no theological analogy, it becomes distorted because creation tries to fulfill itself by its own. The real situation of man becomes clear, who without God cannot exist – he is nothingness and tends towards nothingness (Heidegger’s *Das-ein ist zum Tode sein*). Only by looking in the light of theological analogy does his true goal, that is, supernatural goal, which is being in God, becomes apparent. This orientation of man above himself, however, is not possible by the natural striving of creation, nor is it derived from its power. It is a free gift from above. At the same time, the creature’s activity is in no way reduced in relation to its own ultimate goal. Closeness to God who is “in” creation is at the same time the greatest granting of freedom and independence. The closeness of God makes man realize that he is made in His image and likeness and that he participates in the power of knowing and choosing his own path.²³

Finally, Przywara considers the *Analogia Entis* to be the realization of the Declaration of the Fourth Lateran Council against Joachim of Fiore: “The similarity between Creator and creation cannot be observed, although it is large, unless it is also claimed that the dissimilarity between them is even greater” (DH 806).

²² Cfr. Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 121–122.

²³ Cfr. Betz, “After Barth,” 67–68.

1.6. The Place of a Human Being in the Theology of Erich Przywara

Przywara applies his analogy to very specific cases. We will quote two of them, from the work *Deus semper maior*, which the author himself calls the practical application of *Analogia Entis*.²⁴

When Przywara talks about creation, he talks about man. For him, man is the center (*Mitte*) of the world: the center of his being as a meeting of the body and spirit (material and formal cause), the center of the world's becoming as a man and a woman (efficient cause), the center of community life in the world as a goal that organizes the world (final cause). Man is also the crossing point (*Kreuzung*) of these realities. In it they meet. Unfortunately, in its being the center and the crossroads, it is marked by the scratch (*Riß*) of "being like God" that tears it apart, because unity is only in God. When a man is targeted on himself (*zu-sich-selbst*) instead on God (*über-sich-hinaus*), the body turns against the spirit, the spirit against the body, man against woman, woman against man, individual against community, community against the individual. In order to avoid this, man must be constantly suspended (*hängen*) in God.²⁵ This being suspended in God is a practical dimension of the *Analogia Entis*.²⁶

Man "suspended" is "in and above" creation: he leaves what is purely natural and tends to "above" which is God. However, he does not cease to be a human being and this striving "above" happens "in" him. At the same time, he also experiences that God is "in and above" creation, because on the one hand, leaving what is purely natural, man is filled with God (God is "in" him), and on the other hand, experiencing God's closeness and the greatness of His majesty ("in"), Man feels the fear and the actual distance that exists between him and God, and thus experiences "above" God. This being suspended (*hängen*),²⁷ taking into account the fact that human nature is tainted with sin, takes its fullest form on the cross. According to Przywara: "A man is the more a man the more he is hung on the cross."²⁸ This is the analogical attitude of unity ("in") and distance ("above") with Christ the Redeemer. Being hung with the Savior on the cross and being able to co-penance the sins of the world, he experiences closeness, at the same time he sees his own sinfulness, which makes him aware of how much the Messiah is "above" him. Remaining in this dynamic suspension is the only way to realize man's own humanity, that is, to salvation.²⁹

It is clear that in the Przywara's theory, human nature can only have one goal – supernatural. This inclination towards God manifests itself in three directions: praise

²⁴ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I. Vorbemerkung.

²⁵ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 67.

²⁶ This is where the image of *Analogia Entis* as a pendulum, mentioned above, fits.

²⁷ This is a play on words in German, as "hängen" means both "to hang" and "to be suspended."

²⁸ Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 72.

²⁹ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 71–72.

(*loben*), show respect (*Ehrfurcht weisen*), serve (*dienen*). First of all, the one whom I praise and adore fills my interior, because he is my authority. You can see the closeness here. Secondly, the one I praise generates my respect at the same time, and this is where distance becomes apparent. The word *Ehrfurcht* contains the word *Furcht*, meaning fear. Respect has some fear that then turns into tribute. And finally, service. Serving God does not mean analyzing His commands, but living in a constant readiness to obey them – in an attitude of trust and obedience. These three realities create a unity that not only directs you to God, but allows you to open up to Him and experience Him more deeply.³⁰

This has its consequences in practical philosophy, because man naturally needs an ideal that either finds in God or will be constantly disappointed with earthly ideals, criticizing and destroying them. Przywara says that either man will submit to God's authority, or will be under the tyranny of man, or will become a tyrant himself. Just like in great totalitarian systems, where attempts were made to build the world according to a human idea and against God's law. Huge disappointment with the results of these efforts and the scandal of evil that resulted from them led to the negation of any vision of the world. This is the first example of how the *Analogia Entis* can find practical application in shaping an appropriate worldview.

The second example concerns man as a social being. Przywara describes a human being in two dimensions: as the member of society and as the principle of society. On the one hand, man is a member of the nation, religion or state, and not only an absolute individual (like God), on the other hand, he is to somehow rise above the community and shape it (in and above). Therefore, it should function in a certain rhythm of ascending and descending: a person ascends towards the individual, and then descends to be a member of the community. Man remains in nature, but thanks to God's grace he can rise above it. Likewise, in the order of the Incarnation, Christ humbled himself and therefore was lifted up.³¹

Przywara discovers in human nature an autonomy of a subject (this is an aspect of his thought that we shall observe in the philosophy of Chantal Delsol, too). According to Przywara, a human being is also to be the principle of society. For in the overall structure lies the strength that allows the individual to become independent. This individual, by standing above the community, is to immerse himself in the community. In the natural order, Przywara gives the example of a politician in Plato, who, having risen above the community, carries its good within him and sacrifices himself for it – he becomes its principle. In the supernatural order, society shares in the Father's fatherhood, in the brotherhood of the Son and in the unity of the Spirit – intratrinitarian life is the ideal of a common life. In the order of the Incarnation, according to the hymn in the Letter to the Philippians, Christ descends into the misery of

³⁰ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 95–96.

³¹ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 63–64

the world to be lifted up as Savior. The Creator disappears in creation, the Redeemer dies in sinful humanity, the Holy One encloses himself in the human Church, and in the mystery of bread and wine – thus Christ becomes the principle of the Church.³²

In real society, however, one must also take into account human sinfulness – a scratch. The rupture here consists in the lack of unity given by an analogous attitude – “in and above.” A member’s ascension (“over”) must be combined with an agreement to remain a member (“in”). Otherwise, in the natural order, instead of rising from law to self-discipline, a rebellion against law arises. In the supernatural order, the temptation to be independent as God introduces people into total dependence on the world (bondage to sin – disorderly attachments). In the Incarnation, Christ faces an ill-conceived eschatology that seeks to annihilate matter in order to rise to the kingdom of God. In this way, however, it negates itself (being essentially connected with matter). The Incarnation is to counteract the temptation to make the kingdom of God on earth – the deification of the temporal world, because this leads to the creation of a culture of constant criticism, dissatisfied with this created world, which in this world will never be like God.³³ In other words, the oblivion of a dynamic nature of beings results in the culture of critique, and hence, the constant need of emancipation – we will see the same conclusions in Delsol’s analyses.

For there to be healthy ascension it must be in a mutual rhythm with descending, the latter being the leading thing. The politician must remain in his place, that is, be a healthy principle of society. Otherwise it will be impossible healthy ascending – to develop independent individuals. Descending as an exaggerated self-giving is, according to Przywara, an expression of the desire for power and possession, and even more deeply of hatred for one’s own greatness. If a politician wants to be a beggar with a beggar and a craftsman with a craftsman, he takes their freedom and destroys their borders. If a politician does not serve society within the proper limits, he poisons society, deprives it of its defensive instincts, and begins to steer it, as individuals are deprived of all boundaries.³⁴ Although it is not the main point of my hypothesis it is interesting to notice that reintroduction of the concept of nature and analogical way of thinking results on Przywara’s view in conservative political philosophy. His position is similar to Delsol’s critique of “maternal state” that tries to eliminate any possibility of risk and failure. According to Przywara the politician is to educate members of the society to be independent citizens who know their identity and who will obey the law. It was certainly not a model in the totalitarian states of the 20th century, where every individuality and structures that built it, such as the family, were killed in order to subordinate it to the ruling party. On the other hand, in the twentieth century, appeared thoughts that glorified the individual and placed

³² Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 64.

³³ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 64–65.

³⁴ Cfr. Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, I, 65–67.

him above the law, as Nietzsche's, for example. Only an analogous balance can be the basis of good attitude. This is the second practical example where the *Analogia Entis* indicates the shortcomings of contemporary culture and the direction in which to seek the right balance.

2. Chantal Delsol's Personalism

The second thinker described in this article, is a still living political philosopher, historian of ideas and philosophical anthropologist Chantal Delsol (born 1947 in Paris). She is the author of over a dozen philosophical books, including: "Essay about a man of late modernity" [*Éloge de la singularité. Essai sur la modernité tardive*], "What is man?" [*Qu'est-ce que l'homme?*], "Hate to the world. Totalitarianisms and Postmodernity" [*La Haine du Monde. Totalitarismes et postmodernité*], and "Cornerstones. What do we care about?" [*Les pierres d'angle. A quoi tenons-nous?*]. As a journalist, Delsol cooperates, among others with *Le Figaro* and *Valeurs actuelles*. She is a member of the French Academy, professor at the University of Marne-le-Vallée and founder of the Hannah Arendt Institut. She is also considered the heir of this thinker. Among the authors of Western Europe, she is distinguished by her sensitivity to the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, knowledge of its history and an attempt to use the tragic experiences of this region (especially the Soviet regime) as a warning to the rest of the old continent.

2.1. Save the Concept of a Man as a Person

Chantal Delsol makes the category of a human being as a person the basis of her reflection. For this reason, her thought can be defined as one of the types of personalism. It will become clear when we take into account that Delsol writes in the time that is sometimes described as the era of post-humanism. I have noticed that the withdrawal from the metaphysical concepts resulted in apophaticism and the age of the hidden God.³⁵ According to post-modern philosopher Jean Baudrillard the death of God is followed by the death of reality and the death of a human being.³⁶ If on the example of Przywara we could observe a struggle of a Christian thought with its modern adversaries, on the example of Delsol we can witness "phase two" of the same struggle – this time with an unwanted child of modern philosophy, that is post-modernism.

³⁵ Cfr. Dobrzeniecki, „W poszukiwaniu transcendencji,” 9–13.

³⁶ „There are no proofs of this reality existence – and there never will be [...]. And when you begin to believe in it, it is because it is already disappearing” (Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil*, 19).

According to the French philosopher, this approach to man constitutes the identity of European culture. Today, however, it has been distorted. According to Delsol, postmodern culture falls into schizophrenia in its perception of man: on the one hand, it considers man something holy (never again the Holocaust), and on the other, in the light of the discoveries of neuroscience and biology, it treats him as an animal of a higher category. This discrepancy is revealed at every step: "Pushed by a mad wind, late modernity simultaneously ridicules spirituality and complains about triumphant materialism; proclaims moral relativism and is indignant at the development of pedophilia; proclaims that everything is vanity, and regrets that society is overwhelmed by suicidal boredom."³⁷ Such an internal disruption will finally, according to Delsol, result in the collapse of European culture or in return to totalitarianism, because, as the French philosopher argues, "all cultures are worthy of respect and people can live happily in all, but none can survive without minimal cohesion."³⁸ The way to heal is to restore the proper concept of a person. To this end, according to Delsol, two things must be done: firstly, to establish the inviolable dignity of the person and, secondly, to review and correct her status.³⁹ It means that for Delsol a process of restoration of the concept of person does not lead through metaphysics but through ethics. The concept of a natural law returns to her system indirectly by means of metaphors such as the metaphor of a gardener. It is hinted by her comparisons of culture to ecological ecosystems.

To be inviolable, human dignity must be based on dogmatic faith derived from Christianity. It cannot be bestowed from outside. When this society or some part of it gives a person dignity, it can change the conditions determining the object of this dignity at any time. This was the case in the times of Nazism, where ideology granted rights to Germany, while Jews or Poles were treated as sub-people. Similarly, in ancient Greece or ancient Rome, it was not unethical to kill underdeveloped babies. It is hard not to see the similarity, writes Delsol, with today's liberal individualism, which is beginning to apply eugenics to unborn children (abortion) or to the sick and the elderly (euthanasia). Due to the decline of religious motivation, human dignity in European culture has become an externally assigned category, and this is not enough to keep it inviolable. For any dignity that is not based on transcendence is not unconditional.⁴⁰

Besides, for human dignity to be inviolable, according to Delsol, it should be left without definition. It must be recognized that the existence of man flows from mystery and that no science can describe him exhaustively. Otherwise, a man risks being reduced to one of his dimensions (biological, cultural, social) and will become

³⁷ Delsol, *Éloge de la singularité*, 74.

³⁸ Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 11.

³⁹ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 28.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 30–32.

only an element of a system. In this way, it will cease to be a being worthy of respect. For unconditional existence to exist, one must recognize spirituality in man. This is because it introduces the fear of breaking something divine and mysterious in him and allows him to maintain his inviolability.⁴¹ Because Delsol lacks a direct reference to metaphysics she claims that the idea of an inherent value of a person is a religious one. She draws this conclusion by a negation of other alternatives: on her view the notion of a person is not scientific, biological, psychological or political. But one could notice that the aforementioned conclusion is too quick, because she does not entertain the idea that the concept of a person is metaphysical. It is here that one can clearly see her effort to express convictions one could easily express in classical philosophy with different notions. It is because her point of reference in philosophy is not the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas but philosophy of Enlightenment. In the section I shall show in detail what I mean by that.

According to Delsol, first, the concept of a person must be distinguished from the category of an independent subject. The latter is a product of the Enlightenment, which led to its degeneration: a man who, according to the Judeo-Christian conception, was king over the world, began to exercise the unlimited power of a man-god.⁴² Such independence meant power without responsibility and dire consequences for the world entrusted to man. He ruled it without taking into account its laws. Hence the criticism of this completely independent subject, which in today's culture is expressed in ecological currents. For the French philosopher, they are a source of hope because they indicate the existence of some external laws that are independent of the subject – the laws of nature. Ecologists say that man has violated the existing order in the world and if he wants to survive and ensure the future of his children, he must return to respecting it. This way of perceiving reality may, according to Delsol, be a way to restore the concept of a person. For it becomes clear that man did not create the world and its laws, but is himself a part of the world and subject to its laws, and that his Creator gave him a special place in creation so that he would care for respecting this order. He must therefore follow the rights given to him by God. Meanwhile, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment artificially separated God from creation, faith and reason, which resulted in a distortion of the autonomy of the subject.⁴³ It is interesting to see that Delsol is seeking for allies not in the realm of speculative philosophy, but in ecological movements. It is only on ecology that she finds a viable (in the sense of meaningful and apprehensible for majority of people) notion of nature.

On the other hand, however, the revision of the concept of an independent subject does not, according to Delsol, take away its autonomy. A proper concept of the person implies both the inner dignity and the autonomy of the subject. It is dif-

⁴¹ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 41–42.

⁴² Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 69.

⁴³ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 71.

difficult to maintain these two values at the same time, because an autonomous subject will try to become absolutely independent and gain full power over others, while the recognition of the inner dignity of each human being requires restraint and limitation of this natural drive. This creates tension that is tiring. This is the cost of freedom and autonomy that must be paid by the individual. This, according to Delsol, greatly contributed to the rise of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. For they removed the burden of freedom and responsibility from an individual. A similar phenomenon occurs in today's Western European countries, which can be called welfare states. As citizens become more and more comfortable, they allow the state to assume the risk of their livelihood. The price a citizen has to pay for this is to be treated like a child who, on the one hand, has very limited responsibility for his own choices, but on the other hand, cannot decide about himself.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the concept of a man as a person assumes treating him as an adult with all its consequences. Man is born in a certain order, which he has not chosen, but which he is to perceive as debt, not fate. For fate is something that cannot be managed, while debt can be struggled with and repaid.⁴⁵

Entering into a certain order gives rise to responsibility, which gives a person an identity, without which his life is empty.⁴⁶ Delsol says that it is not enough to speak only of the universal order of all reality, but that there must be a so-called intermediate groups like family, local community, nation.⁴⁷ Then the responsibility for others becomes tangible and builds an individual who knows his identity (father, mother, mayor, councilor) and can be truly autonomous: "No society can do without intermediate groups; without them there is no bond, and thus also the society itself - communist society is an anti-world."⁴⁸

As in the theology of Erich Przywara maintaining the concept of a human being as a person therefore on Delsol's view requires a balance between the autonomy of the subject and the blurring of the individual in the world.⁴⁹ It is possible, according to Delsol, only in relation to transcendence. Having the idea of God the Creator protects against two extremes: recognizing the world as holy (God is holy and the world is His work) and the arbitrary use of his freedom (man, as a creature, has to submit to the laws that his Creator inscribed in him). In Christianity, this balance is preserved: man does not merge with the world, which allows him to be the subject, on the other hand, he is not the owner and legislator of the world (God is), but a tenant – a gardener who cares for the garden entrusted to him.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 65–66.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 91–92.

⁴⁶ Cfr. Delsol, *Éloge de la singularité*, 102.

⁴⁷ Cfr. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 9

⁴⁸ Delsol, *La Haine du Monde*, 79.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 97.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Delsol, *Éloge de la singularité*, 255.

2.2. Hope as the Foundation of Personal Action

Delsol describes the nature of man by referring to the concept of hope. On my reading of Delsol the notion of hope substitutes the dynamic aspect of the notion of nature expressed by the idea of an optimum of a thing; its natural goal. Hope, according to the French philosopher, is the attitude of a man who believed in a promise and knows how to accept a mystery. Hope directs man to transcendence.⁵¹ The French philosopher illustrates this reality with the figure of the patriarch Abraham, whom he opposes the Greek king Ulysses. The journey of Ulysses, the main character of Homer's *Odyssey*, is his return home after winning the Trojan War. Delsol notes that Ulysses differs from Abraham in that he has a place on earth. He just has to get back to him. Abraham's journey is a journey into the unknown. God tells him to leave his home and go in an unknown direction, relying only on His promise. So from the day he left home, Abraham was in a foreign land, on his way to the Promised Land. It is a symbol of a man who has no spiritual home in this world, but longs for what is not here on earth. This is real hope.⁵²

According to Delsol, the view of the hopeful, or transcendent-oriented man, is closer to the truth about him than the wisdom-oriented approach which recommends that man should be satisfied only with what he has. According to the French philosopher, hope corresponds to the natural structure of man who wants to constantly exceed himself. It concretizes the ontological deficiency in man, which indicates that he is oriented towards transcendence. On the other hand, the wisdom attitude is somewhat false.⁵³ For it is trying to persuade a man to be satisfied with what he has and thus seek his fulfillment. Meanwhile, man has a longing to constantly transcend his nature.⁵⁴

Delsol sums up her reflection on the culture of Western Europe today, comparing her to an orphan whose illegitimate mother died in childbirth and took the secret of her origin to the grave. You can find this origin there. Europe's hope lies in the Judeo-Christian ideas which gave birth to its culture and which it loses by burying Christianity itself. The mysterious source that gives a completely new beginning lies, according to the author, precisely in Christianity, and European culture can confirm its right to exist only by discovering its roots, that is, the idea of the one God-Creator.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 126.

⁵² Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 129–131.

⁵³ In other place, Delsol (*Qu'est-ce que l'homme?*, 28–29) will even say that the sage, by removing the fear of death from his consciousness and by limiting itself to the immanent world, amputates some part of his own being.

⁵⁴ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 131–132, 135.

⁵⁵ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 243.

3. Przywara and Delsol – Comparison

What does a contemporary French philosopher have in common with a German Jesuit writing in the mid-20th century? Firstly, both authors put people at the center of their considerations. Delsol does it directly, showing as the basis of her argument the saving of the concept of a human being as a person. Przywara focuses more on the analogy of being method describing the God-creation relationship, but ultimately man is the center of creation and the embodiment of its most important features. Secondly, both Delsol and Przywara similarly perceive human nature, i.e. as open to transcendence. Przywara describes this transcendent reality towards which man aims as a supernatural goal, that is, as the God of Christianity, who is revealed in Jesus Christ and is still present in the Church.⁵⁶ The best way to realize human nature is, according to him, an analogical attitude, expressed by the formula “in and above.” Man can develop when, without giving up his nature, he strives for a reality that exceeds him. In Przywara’s works, this tension between “in” and “above” does not take the form of Hegelian dialectics, but is expressed in the dynamics of the *Analogia Entis*, in a pendulum of back and forth motion that pushes man towards God and, filled with God’s reality, prompts him to realize his own nature. Delsol, on the other hand, expresses the truth about “above” of man in reflection on hope. Hope is a longing for what man does not know, what does not fit in this world, what is the fruit of a promise (God’s promise). As mentioned, Delsol even argues that there is some falsehood in the wisdom traditions because they try to teach a man to be satisfied with himself, while he carries a deficiency within him that pushes him to transcend his nature. At certain moments in her work we can find a description of the dynamic and analogous human structure expressed almost in the language of Przywara. This is the case, for example, in the reflection on rooting (which would be the equivalent of “in” in Przywara) and emancipation (the equivalent of “above”). Although I underlined the lack of metaphysics in Delsol’s thinking, there are clearly hints at the notion of nature. It would indicate the unavoidability of this concept in the thought inspired by Christianity. Let us take for example a fragment where she interprets a perfection not as an end-point of a being in question, but as an optimum of its existence:

The antinomy of rooting and emancipation makes it possible to understand why there is no final age. Man is faced with two conflicting needs in his relationships with others and with society. Neither of them can triumph, because in both cases the consequences would be dramatic, albeit different. The perfect and final situation is unimaginable because perfection can only be a balance within the antinomy. Perfection, if it exists, is not

⁵⁶ A more detailed description of this dependency can be found in the article: Raczynski-Rożek, „The Church as the Realization,” 752–785.

the extreme point of any system – as when water is said to be completely clean or a building is completely finished. No, it requires skillful and careful dosing of two contradictory necessities. This alchemy can only be used in a specific situation, there is no prescription for it, nothing can be generalized. Excellence can only refer to a specific situation in which we would so intelligently take into account all parameters that in this particular case nothing would be better.⁵⁷

Starting from the same anthropology, Przywara and Delsol reach similar conclusions. This can be seen in the social philosophy that were previously analysed. Przywara claims that a man who rejects God's authority will have to replace him with another and will eventually fall into tyranny, or he will become a tyrant himself. He is also in danger of frustration and criticism because he will continue to be disappointed in other authorities that are not God. Exactly these phenomena are observed by Delsol in today's culture, which rejects the notion of man as a person, and therefore God the Creator. She speaks of the tyranny of totalitarianism that threatens Europe, unless it adopts God's law, which is the only way that can effectively defend human dignity (because it is external and is independent of people's moods or ideology). The French philosopher also notices in today's culture a complete criticism of its own foundations. After the disappointments of 20th century regimes, Western Europe does not believe in any truth and is undermining the roots of its tradition.⁵⁸

Social philosophy of Przywara is concerned with an individual who has to mature to be "in and above" society. On the one hand, it cannot be his mindless cog, on the other hand, it must strive to be responsible in the group. Delsol writes about the same as a phenomenon of European culture. She argues that no culture has developed the capacity to educate individuals to the creative attitude towards tradition. This is a hallmark of Christian culture that is essential for its survival.⁵⁹ Only independent-minded individuals will be able to resist totalitarian systems and attempts to create utopian social structures. At the same time, these units must function in national or territorial groups for which they will be responsible and which will help

⁵⁷ Delsol, *Qu'est-ce que l'homme?*, 179.

⁵⁸ Delsol (*La Haine du Monde*, 13–14) observes that the negation of one's own culture goes much further than the criticism of totalitarianism: "Some of our contemporaries do not like the world in which they live [...] They feel ashamed of their parents, suspecting them of favoring some forms of racism, macism or homophobia. [...] The negation of the world turns into self hatred."

⁵⁹ Education for initiative is expressed, for example, in the idea of the university, characteristic of Europe, where education means not only having certain knowledge, but also preparation for a creative approach to it and its criticism. Universities cannot be compared to Muslim madrasahs or Jewish rabbinical schools, whose task is only to prepare the student to assimilate some resources of knowledge and recreate traditions. For Christians, knowledge matters less than the person of the disciple, who in his freedom can go beyond it and undermine it (cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 81–82). Another French philosopher, Remi Brague, derives this distinctive feature of European culture from its Roman roots (cfr. Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine*, Ch. 5).

them maintain their identity. All these realities, according to Delsol, are under threat today. Western European countries are becoming more and more welfare states that do not treat their citizens as adults and responsible people, but as children who need to be looked after. However, the price of such care is restriction of freedom. It is no longer the citizen who decides about his life, taking the risk and responsibility for his choices, but is assigned thousands of rules of safety and provides external resources to deal with these rules. In this way, the citizen becomes a citizen only on paper.⁶⁰ He becomes incapable of creating and evaluating reality because he receives everything from the state and in return has to obey.

4. Conclusion

In this paper on the example of Erich Przywara and Chantal Delsol I tried to investigate two ways of reintroducing the concept of nature and of natural law into the contemporary theology and philosophy. We could notice that a successful debate with both modern as well as with post-modern philosophy has to take into account the traditional notions of metaphysics even if they are disguised in different theoretical frames. I showed that Przywara accomplished it with his idea of dynamic being expressed in the formula “in-and-above.” The latter phrase successfully replaced the notion of nature in his theology. We also saw that Delsol’s approach was paradoxically less metaphysical (given the fact that she is a professional philosopher) and her approach relies heavily on metaphors. She believes in the inherent value of a human person, but she does not express her conviction by theorizing about the human nature. Rather she describes a person as a gardener, a debtor or a leaseholder. She is (rightfully) convinced that the concept of a person is not a scientific one, but from this premise she jumps to the conclusion that it belongs to the language of religion. On Przywara’s perspective she is missing a language appropriate to rational discussion of human reality. From the point of view of his theology there is nothing surprising that from univocal terms of science she shifts immediately to metaphorical language of religion. It is because she lacks the concept of analogy. This is why in the paper I offered a detailed analysis of Przywara’s theory of *analogia entis*. In my opinion the successful reintroduction of traditional concepts has to go hand-in-hand with a comprehensive reflection of philosophical language. It is perhaps analogy that is the crucial topic in the task of renewal of Christian theology and philosophy.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Cfr. Delsol, *Les pierres d'angle*, 79–80.

⁶¹ One can definitely observe a new wave of interest in the theme of analogy in contemporary philosophy. Cfr. Ross, *Portraying analogy*.

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