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Poetry as Analogy and Anathemata: Rhythm, Sacrament, and Secularity in Hopkins, Jones, and Przywara

IAN COOPER

Abstract

The article shows how Przywara's view of analogy as rhythm or relation-in-difference is shared by Gerard Manley Hopkins and David Jones. Following discussion of the theological and historical claims of Jones's essay 'Art and Sacrament', and of Hopkins as a precursor of Przywara, Przywara's account of rhythm in *Analogia Entis* (1932) is compared to Jones's long poem *The Anathemata* (1952). The rhythm both works describe moves between being and subjectivity. It is argued that the rhythm's fulfilment is manifest in sacrament, to which poetry stands in analogical relationship (and difference). Because analogical rhythm incorporates subjective freedom, it can be comprehended as an underlying theological rhythm of secular modernity. The article concludes by clarifying the terms on which poetry, as a secular form, expresses the relation of philosophy and theology without being the same as either.

"For Nicholas Boyle at 80"

Introduction

In 1955, the British poet and artist David Jones contributed an essay to a book called *Catholic Approaches*.¹ Jones's essay was entitled 'Art and Sacrament', and it is one of the seminal

¹ *Catholic Approaches*, edited by Elizabeth Pakenham (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955).

twentieth-century reflections on the relationship between artistic creativity and religion. For Jones, this means the relationship between art, understood to encompass all human making, and the specifically religious form of making, notably involving Sacrament ('with a capital S'), in which the meaning of making as such might be seen to be manifest.² At the heart of the essay is a theory of making as sign-making, and the two terms named in its title are held together throughout by the implications of a statement by the French theologian Maurice de la Taille on what happened at the Last Supper, which Jones quotes at the very end of his essay: 'He placed Himself in the order of signs' (EA 179).

My aim in what follows is to explore how, underlying Jones's account of art and Sacrament, there is a concealed concern with rhythm: not just poetic rhythm in a straightforward sense, but a rhythm between secular subjectivity and its Sacramental ground, a rhythm of modernity. Doing this requires help from a term which Jones centrally, but also rather glancingly, invokes in his essay, namely analogy. For we know from the foremost modern thinker of theological analogy, the German-Polish Jesuit philosopher Erich Przywara, that analogy is rhythm, or relation-in-difference. Przywara showed too that analogy does not, intellectually speaking, confine itself to Thomist or neo-Scholastic paths, but intersects with the post-Kantian secularized conception of the self, or subject. Analogy as a two-way traffic between ontology and Idealism, or as a rhythm of being and subjectivity, is unsurprising in the poetic context when we consider Gerard Manley Hopkins, described by Jones as a 'very great influence' on him.³ Hopkins's deep insight into the rhythmic relation of self and world touches jointly, we shall see, on Jones's essay, on Przywara's metaphysics, and on the complex long poem of Jones's maturity,

² 'Art and Sacrament', in David Jones, *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings* (Faber and Faber, 2017 [1959]), 143-79 (163). Henceforth EA.

³ 'Letters to H. S. Ede', edited by John Matthias, *PN Review* 22 (1981): 11-16 (15).

The Anathemata.⁴ But the more we attend to this rhythm, the more we are pointed beyond just these texts. As the apprehension and development of meaningful difference, analogy as presented by Jones, Hopkins and Przywara should enable us to begin understanding all poems (not just ‘religious’ ones) which take seriously the subject’s relationship to its world, as expressing a theological truth—and as doing so through their difference from theology. With this in mind we can look further at the claims, theological but also historical, of ‘Art and Sacrament’.

Art, in Jones’s encompassing sense, expresses freedom. Like human beings themselves, it is gratuitous or intransitive (EA 149); it embodies meaning, and opens itself to interpretation. It is not simply functional.⁵ All art does this, but there are different ‘ends’ of art (EA 152), and art which shows something forth rather than inserting itself into the realm of practicality embodies most clearly the gratuitous character of being human. Because it embodies meaning, art is of the nature of a sign. Moreover, Jones argues, signs are necessarily sacred signs, since the meaning they embody resides ultimately in whatever it is that creates the human capacity for gratuitous response. All signs partake, then, in an ultimate expression of freedom through sign-making that is the same as the gift of freedom, a gift which must be understood as love: ‘He placed Himself in the order of signs.’ Signs are sacred because they have their fulfilment in that sacrifice, which continues to be made real in the sacrifice of the Mass. But the making real in Sacrament, in a sign which contains what it signifies, only makes sense because it consummates humanity’s sign-making ‘nature’, which, argues Jones, ‘is sacramental’ (EA 176) in the sense of ‘sacrament with a small s’ (EA 177).

⁴ On Hopkins and Przywara see also Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty: Metaphysics and Hermeneutics of the Image* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), 628-9.

⁵ See Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (Continuum, 2005), 84.

Sacrament with a small s seems to be envisaged here in terms of what theology, since the thirteenth century, has called ‘sacramentals’, or signs pointing to sacred realities but not containing them.⁶ Jones applies this definition to human making since earliest times; all pre-Christian making anticipated its culmination in the Upper Room. What he does not explicitly say is that once, following Christ’s redeeming act, sign-making can actually be named as pointing to grace, a tension arises. There can be no limit to the number of sacramentals, since there is no limit to the number of ways in which the sensible and linguistic world can signify divine reality. And if the sensible and linguistic world is constantly capable of yielding such signs, then their sign character is irrespective of their formal definition as sacramentals. Nevertheless, it remains the case that because ‘the Church is committed to “Sacraments” with a capital S, she cannot escape a committal to sacrament with a small s’ (EA 177).

Underlying ‘Art and Sacrament’ as its implied historical rationale, but never quite stated, is the tension first announced by sacramentals: a theological tension, but possibly reflective of shifts in social and economic relationships occurring as the feudal High Middle Ages began to wane and the material, or secular, world took on greater spiritual significance. Jones in effect invites the reader to supply the insight that sacraments with a small s leave Sacrament and Church behind, and to understand this process as issuing, ultimately, in a predicament for modern art to which his essay sees itself as responding. For not only can they leave them behind. They can seek to usurp them, from the position of a secular substitute, arrogating to itself its own capital letter, as eventually happened in the Romantic conception of ‘Art’. Strong appeal is then made to the freedom which art expresses, especially to the freedom of the ‘self’, the ‘subject’. But freedom’s condition, or gift, recedes from view. Humans’ sacramental nature, and the basis

⁶ I am grateful to Kevin Hart for this reading, or as he sees it revision, of Jones’s argument.

of that nature in love (made explicit in Sacrament) is forgotten, even as the sacramental activity carries on. Freedom becomes forgetting, and art, we can surmise, may become unknowingly complicit with other expressions of freedom tending towards emancipation from love, such as capital and technology: the presumable vehicles of what Jones calls ‘an unprecedented metamorphosis in human society all over the world and at every level’ (EA 173). A later essay entitled ‘The Utile’ refers to ‘our present technocracy’ (EA 181), in which all relationships are ‘wholly functional’ (EA 180). In this situation, then, the proper calling of art that aims to show us something is to show us the sacramental human activity reconnecting to the sacramental human nature—we might perhaps say the existence reconnecting to the essence—in the face of forces which would pull them ever further apart.

The unstated historical tension in Jones’s premises, however, produces an equally unstated, and equally large, implication of his vision. For if art’s work of reconnection involves gathering the world of sacrament with a small s into its originating truth, then this can involve nothing less than grasping the secular, the whole vast horizon of human freedom which sacrament with a small s defines for itself—run through as it is with subjectivity, and haunted by the subject’s capacity for forgetting—in a necessary relation to that gift of freedom, in love, which is recollected and made present in Sacrament.

Whether it knows it or not, art makes “‘really present’” (EA 175), it re-presents. It does so not ‘in the particular sense used by the theologians, but in a certain analogous sense’ (ibid.). ‘I can’, Jones goes on, ‘speak only by analogy’ (ibid.). Despite the conscious vagueness with which he uses the terms ‘analogous’ and ‘analogy’ here, there is no reason to think Jones did not take them theologically seriously. For they open the question of how artworks do relate to making really present in the sense used by the theologians: how sacrament relates to Sacrament, or how,

in the classical language of analogy—which Jones will certainly have known—they are like in ever greater unlikeness.

Analogy touches the question of freedom because the relation-in-difference named in analogy can be understood as presenting itself in the relation-in-difference of subjects and objects. Jones is not as far from this idiom as he might appear. Notwithstanding the impeccably neo-Scholastic terms—of *ars* and *prudentia*—in which he derives his theory, to make a meaningful sign is to communicate something that has meaning to me to another, to share that meaning, such that it is both subjective and objective. It is also to work on, and in turn be shaped by, some objective thing. Speaking specifically of *The Anathemata* (1952), in which the structure of the Mass intertwines vertiginously with the deep natural, archaeological and mythic history of Britain, Jones was as insistent as Hopkins on nature as the objective correlative of sign-making. ‘For the artist’, writes Jones, ‘the thing called “the past” is very much what the thing called “nature” is to him’ (EA 139). To say this is to locate the sign-maker—the poet—as a self in relation to a realm of objectivity. Since the eighteenth century, the self which discovers its historicity in nature is a secular self: a subject. Nature is the site at which the theological meaning of ‘secular’, ‘subjectivity’, and so too freedom, can first become apparent.

Instress and Analogy

We have moved to talking specifically about poets and poetry. Poetry is sign-making as an explicit naming of relations in the world in embodied language, and so in embodied time. Humans discover themselves, in things and in human others, in time, and this process is intelligible only as rhythm—as meaningful repetition, or meaningful difference, as Przywara

recognized. The insight that this involves a conjunction of subjective activity and objective nature, and that the conjunction is a necessary medium of incarnational truth, comes from Hopkins. The joyously realized reciprocal interrelation of subject and object animating Hopkins's nature poetry becomes possible in the modern turn to the self and to nature. A self recognizes itself in encounter with an object, and does so in time, but in such a way that it is drawn into the inexhaustible residue in the meeting, into that difference-in-relation of the object which is enabling the self-recognition to happen, and which extends through all encounterable objects, through what Hopkins called the 'object world': 'part' of which, he said, is 'also part of the very self in question'.⁷ So the self sees itself in the object world, but the object world is not reducible to the self. This is a statement neither of identity nor of opposition, but of relationship. Historically, it frames the question of the possibility of self-consciousness which Fichte made central to philosophy after Kant.

Prompted initially by Hölderlin, Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* sought to answer this question by arguing that when subjective looking is looked at by the other which it looks at, it acquires a relatable otherness, an ability to be looked at from the outside, an objective being ('Anderssein').⁸ This is not far from Hopkins's definition of 'instress' as the coincidence of 'the flush and the foredrawn', that is, as the meeting point of 'the fluid informing principle of Being [and] the bounding definition in which such force draws together as a unity.'⁹ We need only add that such 'bounding definition' is provided, not by being itself, but by the presence of the

⁷ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Sermons and Spiritual Writings*, edited by Jude V. Nixon and Noel Barber, S. J. (Oxford University Press, 2018), 354.

⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel, 20 vols. (Suhrkamp, 1970), III, 28-9. See Hegel's '*Phenomenology of Spirit*', translated by A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), 14.

⁹ 'Flush and the foredrawn': Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, edited by Lesley Higgins (Oxford University Press, 2006), 311. 'Fluid informing principle': Daniel Brown, *Hopkins's Idealism: Philosophy, Physics, Poetry* (Clarendon, 1997), 174.

viewing subject for whom being has a certain discernible shape (the shape of the object), and that the ‘unity’ Hopkins has in mind is neither the unity of being independent of the subjective recipient, nor the unity of the subject independent of any real object, but the unity of both together.

The Romantic distortion to this picture may be traced to Schelling, who in many respects discovered rhythm as a modern philosophical category.¹⁰ The distortion involves absorbing being into consciousness. Here the self—or the artwork as the expression of the self’s essential unity—seeks to own its difference from nature by seeing itself as the origin of difference, or by making itself a point, as Schelling said of the artwork, of ‘indifference’ (‘Indifferenz’).¹¹ Hopkins, criticizing Wordsworth, identified a lack of ‘emphasis of structure’ in Wordsworth’s devotion to the natural principles and rhythms of language, to ‘nature and the language of the sense’, as ‘Tintern Abbey’ put it.¹² A lack of emphasis is a lack of stress, of defined relationship. Indeed, we could say that a lack of emphasis marks a certain indifference. It is by virtue of this indifference that ‘organic time’ in Wordsworth tends to become indistinct from the ‘mechanical time’ against which it is being summoned.¹³ Hopkins saw this.

His formal counterproposal, sprung rhythm, displays a non-identical repetition, or an overlap-within-difference between ‘self’ and ‘object world’, because the regular strong beat is

¹⁰ See Andrew Bowie, ‘The music of German Idealism’, in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, vol. III: *Aesthetics and Literature*, edited by Nicholas Boyle, Liz Disley, Christoph Jamme, and Ian Cooper (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 182-203 (191).

¹¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Werke*, edited by Manfred Schröter, 13 vols. (Beck, 1946-62), III, 400.

¹² Hopkins, *Oxford Essays and Notes*, 121. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads 1798-1802*, edited by Fiona Stafford (Oxford University Press, 2013), 90, l. 109.

¹³ Terms taken from Geoffrey Hill’s discussion of Hopkins: *The Lords of Limit: Essays on Literature and Ideas* (Deutsch, 1984), 97.

made to take its bearings from the variable and frequently irregular pattern of weaker beats around it. Just, we might say, as the self in nature gives unity to what it sees but can only know itself as the author of that unity because its unifying capacities are given to it by what it looks at—with the result that unity is both felt and yet escapes regularization in any final scheme. In the tension which sprung rhythm produces between conventional metrical stress and recitational stress, Hopkins's nature sonnets in particular—with their variations within a tightly prescribed formal structure—make us feel both a slippage and a coalescence between the self's activity in giving definition to a moment, and the receptivity which is the precondition of its doing so.

In 'The Windhover', this tensed coalescence might be best described as a crosswind. The poem unfolds from the conjunction of active and receptive implicit in its first phrase ('I caught'), which, having instilled an accentuated iambic pattern of what it was I caught ('this mórning mórning's minion [...]'), meets with the transformation (rather than the mere counteraction) of that pattern in the gliding motion of the bird itself.¹⁴ When Hopkins at l. 7 (the sonnet's halfway point: where it is part 'object', part 'self'?) writes 'Rebuffed the big wind', the heavy, sprung stresses take their weight from the attendant flattening of the expected, and metrically inviting, iambic pattern ('rěbúffed thě big') into three weak beats ('rebuffed the'), and this evokes a parallel change to the original iambic pattern of the I's 'catching' activity. The poise of the bird's flight, its 'hurl and gliding', carried on the wind but undominated by it, comes from its suspension of activity in its movement, the density that it manifests beneath effort and that is gathered in the weak stresses, which together are quietly forceful but have no need to break out into iambic assertiveness and extension. It is this dense lightness, grace without gravity, which 'I

¹⁴ Hopkins's poetry is cited from Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poetical Works*, edited by Norman H. Mackenzie (Clarendon, 1990).

caught', and which therefore ripples back through 'my' activity of catching or seeing and, rhythmically speaking, springs it. In the windhover's still motion, then, the viewer's subjective activity has its real origin. Only, though, in the moment of meeting with that activity of a viewing, feeling self—with 'my heart in hiding'—is the complex of natural shape and expression which the bird presents realized in the objectivity of its own being.

A self ecstatically able to recognize itself (to take itself as a being) in objects, and objects which yield their being through fulfilment of their own active indwelling orientation towards perception by a self, are at their most explicit at the moment of encounter in 'Hurrahing in Harvest': 'These things, these things were here and but the beholder | Wánting; which two wén they ónce méet [...]'. The 'beholder', the world-constituting subject, appears as the grammatical object, and yet in so appearing frees the object-world into its own completeness. Subject and object terms are both utterly intermingled and fully distinct; probably the only precedent, in the European lyric, for what Hopkins does here are Goethe's early nature poems of a century before.

In his reflections on the object world, Hopkins goes on to say that the 'part' of the self which is also '[p]art of this world of objects' is 'in man's case his own body, which each man not only feels in and acts with but also feels and acts on.'¹⁵ The self is an object to itself because the body is an object in the world around it. A self that knows it is a tangible object for others knows itself. Moreover, bodies give themselves in time freely. They express an irreducibly subjective identity that is nonetheless directed towards being experienced by others as an object: and in this process, those others are taken as objects themselves. Because of this mutual self-realizing, it is

¹⁵ Hopkins, *Sermons and Spiritual Writings*, 354.

possible to translate these terms into a slightly different idiom and say that we are here touching a mystery of love.

Invoking love brings us to the Christological heart of Hopkins's poetry. It also marks the point of connection between analogy and rhythm, and therefore Hopkins's foundational contribution to a poetic and theological context in which Jones and Przywara are, respectively, the twentieth-century culminations. Hopkins has been called a firm exponent of the 'analogical imagination'.¹⁶ I believe that the movement of analogy in these poems is grounded in the rhythm of consciousness and being, the interrelation-in-difference of subject and object which Hopkins's sprung rhythm seeks to make adequately manifest in language. Analogy itself suggests rhythms of non-identical repetition (likeness in ever greater difference), manifest in an apprehending of objects by temporal subjects who are themselves involved in the process of participation that is being discovered.

Let us now take the question of analogy a little further. At the moment of 'instress' there is a revelation of the natural thing as created, and the full imparting of being to the self to whom this is revealed. The subject experiences what, by its constitution as subject, it is not and does not have, and experiences this as a difference which encompasses its whole relation to the object. Starting from the bidding resistance of the encountered object, it recognizes a relationship between its own orientation towards the difference of things and the relationship of things to what created them. Because the relationship between these two relationships also consists in their difference from each other, it is an analogical relationship. Yet it is only a relationship at all because the relation-in-difference of subject and object is capable of being lived in a way which

¹⁶ Anthony Domestico, *Poetry and Theology in the Modernist Period* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 57.

is complete, and which allows it to be seen as related to and different from another order of relation-in-difference which makes it possible. The subject cannot live it in this way by its own resources, however, because the subject denies the independent reality of the object until it is interrupted by it, and so denies too its own being (for anything else). This, we could say, is the subject's original sin. The relation can only be lived in this way by one whose subjectivity, or freedom, is absolutely instinct with their objectivity, or being for others. This is freedom as gift, in love: even to the point of becoming an object without hope of reciprocity, on what Jones would think of as the obtusely utile cross.

Hopkins's celebrated 'Buckle!', precipitated by the *volta* of the 'The Windhover' (dedicated 'To Christ our Lord'), is the buckling of the objectified, crucified body, and therefore it is the fullness, or complete accomplishment, of the encounter between lyric self and natural world which the poem narrates. This is the concomitant sense of 'Buckle!' here as 'wed, fuse'¹⁷: as a joining, in which the relationship of subject and object has been perfected. Christ, then, turns out to be the relationship of relationships, or the analogy between the life of subjects and objects and another relation-in-difference encompassing it: what Hopkins calls the inexpressible 'grandeur of God' manifesting itself in creation. Christ is the perfect proportion by which each of these orders is other to the other, in a way which is not univocal, because God's way of relating in difference is different from ours, and which sustains the two in tension rather than allowing them to collapse: either into an immanence empty of love, or into a transcendence incapable of communication.

¹⁷ See commentary in Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, 382.

Przywara and Jones

Our guide in exploring this further will be the most inventively rigorous, not to say stubbornly impenetrable, account of unity-with-the-other which European theology in the twentieth century has to offer. Przywara's work opens to a poetic context, because he is attempting to describe, theologically, the rhythmic experience of non-identical repetition from the inside. We shall see that this brings us back to David Jones—one of Przywara's few true rivals in obscurity of idiom—and specifically to the deep rhythms at work in *The Anathemata*.

Analogy, or relation-in-difference, is for Przywara the name of the structure of non-binary self-encounter we have been describing. Przywara built a theory of analogy in which the event of Christological interruption makes intelligible the relation between God and creature, because it brings into contact, and shows departing in ever-increasing distance, what Przywara calls two analogies, to be thought of as oscillating rhythms ('Schwingsungs-Rhythmen').¹⁸ These oscillating rhythms link the creature respectively to God as origin, or ground, and to God as horizon, or telos. The first of the oscillating relations describes metaphysics, the second religion. Przywara thinks of the 'analogy of being', or the relation between the two relations, as comprising and displaying their oscillation with each other. The reason he describes this complex of relations in terms of rhythm is that the creature's orientation to anything takes the form of a tensed balance between consciousness and being ('Spannungs-Schwebe zwischen Bewußtsein und Sein', AE/G 28; AE/E 124), the act of knowing and the object of knowing. So we are still talking about the relation of thinking and being. Metaphysics, for Przywara, concerns itself with

¹⁸ Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, translated by John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 418. Henceforth AE/E. Original: *Analogia Entis: Metaphysik: Ur-Struktur und All-Rhythmus* (Johannes, 1962), 323. Henceforth AE/G.

the interrelation of knower and known, subject and object, and this interrelation is temporal, having the processual character of a mutual ‘towards’, or ‘to one another’ (‘zu einander’, AE/G 27; AE/E 123). Przywara explicitly rejects any absolute self-identity, either of consciousness or of being (‘Absolutheit einer Selbst-Identität von Bewußtsein oder Sein’, AE/G 28; AE/E 124), insisting that both are constituted by the tension between them. He is resisting, then, the dual temptations of on the one hand post-Kantianism, and on the other of neo-Scholasticism—both a “‘pure” Idealist’ and a doggedly realist construction of experience.¹⁹

The creature’s capacity to know objects, and to know itself as knowing objects, within the temporal horizon in which its capacity unfolds or becomes (‘das Werdehafte der Rück- und Vorbeziehung’, *ibid.*), involves it in repeating itself non-identically through its moments of encounter. This in turn means that the truth of knowing, uncovered only in encounter with the known, is a known truth but one in which the creaturely knower has never yet fully arrived. It opens more of difference, both of objects and of whatever it is that gives subjects and objects their movement of ‘zu einander’. Because the movement of convergence is simultaneously a genuine realization of self-awareness—and therefore of the creature’s freedom—and an opening of a surplus of difference, the creature ‘oscillates’ between freedom and freedom’s ground. What Przywara more specifically means by this—and this is his ingenious, and powerful, recasting of post-Kantian ideas about subjectivity in the terms of a radicalized Thomism—is that the creature’s essence is always in excess of its existence. The creature’s essence is always in the process of becoming (‘*semper fieri*’, AE/E 217; AE/G 123); its actualization is always both

¹⁹ Rowan Williams, ‘Dialectic and analogy: a theological legacy’, in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, vol. IV: *Religion*, edited by Nicholas Boyle, Liz Disley, and Nicholas Adams (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 274-92 (285).

underway and deferred, because the creature ‘only “is” [...] as a “coming to be” of essence’.²⁰ Creatureliness, and, to the considerable extent to which Przywara makes it the same, subjectivity, is structured by ‘essence in-and-beyond existence’ (AE/E 141) (‘Sosein in-über Dasein’, AE/G 45). The creature is ever realizing its essence and ever failing to realize it, and therefore all its objects of encounter, which must also include itself, are signs of its essential origin and signs of its origin’s greater difference. They are analogies.

Departing for a moment from Przywara’s explicit concerns, we could say that language which adequately interprets the creaturely movement of encounter in this way centrally involves not just analogy, but metaphor: the ‘carrying across’ of one thing into the terms of another which is implicit in the ‘Zueinander’ (AE/G 28; AE/E 124) of metaphysical expression. But just as the ‘Zueinander’ must remain a tension or balance, a moving of two things into mutual difference, so as not to reify into the ‘absolute’ self-identity either of consciousness or being, so the metaphorical language it engenders must open up a scope within which it is itself possible, and which, moreover, is not metaphor.

Such is the operation of language in Jones’s *Anthemata*. Through constant and myriad processes of linguistic othering, Jones’s poem shows things as ‘not only what they are’, in a phrase of Jacques Maritain, who influenced Jones.²¹ Hence it shows them as signs, expressions of freedom from mere functional use and narrowing desire. The metaphor underpinning the whole poem is that of transubstantiation. It begins during the Mass *in medias res*: ‘We already

²⁰ John R. Betz, ‘Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two)’, *Modern Theology* 22, no. 1 (January 2006): 1-50 (26).

²¹ Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton University Press, 1953), 127. Cf. Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 60-1. On the influence see Thomas Dilworth, ‘David Jones and the Maritain Conversation’, in *David Jones: Diversity in Unity*, edited by Belinda Humfrey and Anne Price-Owen (University of Wales Press, 2000), 43-55.

and first of all discern him making this thing other.’²² And the idea of transubstantiation has force, in the poem, because it is a metaphor, and only a metaphor. For language and metaphor are processes of becoming; they are creaturely, so can speak of themselves only in terms which are a ‘coming to be’ of what they really are. To say the poem employs ‘the metaphor of transubstantiation’²³ is to say it employs a properly poetic, creaturely means of indicating that it is doing something actually more dissimilar to transubstantiation, but that what occurs in transubstantiation is the key to understanding the poem’s capacity to express creaturely relationships (Przywara’s ‘Zueinander’) in a way that is free from utile imposition. It is the key, then, to understanding the poem’s capacity to be a sign. Ricoeur locates ‘an effect of metaphorical meaning within analogy’, in which ‘analogy and metaphor separate and intersect.’²⁴ The presence of metaphor within analogy, as something distinct from analogy, seems to equate both to the possible implications of Przywara’s argument for language, and certainly, as far as poetry is concerned, to the statement of Jones’s in ‘Art and Sacrament’ with which we began, that art makes “‘really present” [...] in a certain analogous sense.’

For Przywara, the movement of ‘Zueinander’, which we have said can properly give rise to metaphorical language, takes place on the plane of what he calls the ‘intra-creaturely analogy’ (AE/E 217) (‘innergeschöpfliche Analogie’, AE/G 121). Here God is present to the creature but manifest in it as potentiality. Because the creature’s potentiality, and so its freedom, is the result of God’s actual presence to it, the creature in its potentiality can come to see itself as absolutely other from God in his actuality. This occurs to the point, Przywara says, where the creature can

²² David Jones, *The Anathemata* (London: Faber, 2010 [1952]), 49.

²³ Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 61.

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 279.

say no to God ('bis zur Möglichkeit des Nein gegen Gott', AE/G 135; AE/E 230). At this extreme, the intra-creaturely analogy produces the secular subject's felt emancipation from God. Presumably—Przywara does not say this—the creature-subject's oscillation between freedom and origin here becomes intense and frenetic, as it shuttles between the infinity of its potential and its unfulfillable longing to be that potential's actual ground. The tense balance, or 'Zueinander', of subject and object, consciousness and being, risks collapse into the inertia of the creature's mere unthematized desire. Rather like Fichte's absolute ego, the creature is trying to posit its being through the operations of its consciousness, rather than seeking their unity in difference, displayed in its relationship to an object. In Przywara's terms, it is seeking that 'absolute self-identity' which the 'Zueinander' holds at bay.

What prevents self-identity from concretizing, and the intra-creaturely tension from collapsing into empty desire, is the fulfilment of the intra-creaturely analogy, in Christ. Przywara's Christology is completely continuous with Hopkins's 'analogical imagination'. Christ, in Przywara's scheme, is the 'archetype' of 'essence in-and-beyond existence',²⁵ because his subjective freedom, his way of inhabiting the apprehended fact *that* he is, coincides fully with *what* it is that all creatures are, namely expressions of the love which created them. And since love wills only the freedom of its object, perfect love transcends subjective willing in the act of embodying it, meaning that Christ's love leads him completely 'beyond' subjective desire in a way that is nonetheless utterly willed by it. The result, for the creature, is that its relation to objects can only be fulfilled by giving itself to them in love, and that this fulfilment of its freedom, which the creature can never fully achieve because its essence—as love—has never fully become, has already been made real. By extension, we could add, since the perpetual

²⁵ Betz, 'Beyond the Sublime', 32.

becoming of the creature, as a subject in relation to objects, expresses itself most properly in the temporal medium of language, so too does the realization that this becoming is already complete, the subject already transcended in the act of being a subject. Language feeling this realization might be a definition of poetry.

Przywara offers a surprisingly fitting account of the experience of reading *The Anathemata*. He speaks of the creature as experiencing an ‘unsystematizable surd left behind by the plenitude of historical configurations’ (AE/E 310) (‘das unsystematisierbar Restliche der geschichtlichen Gestalten-Fülle’, AE/G 206). This experience of a sheer resistant residue in history is that which, paradoxically, enables the creature to oscillate ‘unhindered’ (AE/E 310), or with ease (‘unverkrampft schwingt’, AE/G 206), that is, to reconcile itself to its inability to be what it is, and to grasp its creaturely limitation as a limitless opening up beyond itself of its entire movement of becoming (‘unumgrenzbare[s] Offensein der Werde-Bewegtheit’, AE/G 206; AE/E 310). In *The Anathemata*, the multiplicity or surd-ness of ‘historical configurations’ both overwhelms the poem’s capacity to give it form, and yet takes on a distinct shape because the poem recognizes that its own movement of becoming, which at its deepest level is metaphor, has been completed and therefore transcended. But the poem recognizes this only from within the movement of its language itself, which is necessarily still becoming, and so does not transparently yield up its essence. The poem’s restless concentric motions—indeed oscillations—of natural and human history, pre-Christian and Christian mythologies, of Celtic culture, ‘Angle-Land’ and *Romanitas*, all converge on the Upper Room and on Calvary—the ‘garnished supper’ and the ‘Axile Tree’ (*Anathemata*, 243)—but they meet these in a flickering focus which the poem and the reader need effort to hold, and which frequently, but not meaninglessly, breaks up, in such a way that the metaphorical process of connecting all these things to what the poem calls

‘the re-calling’ (79) seems itself to be made other. Metaphor, or poetry, thus moves towards its ground in eucharistic sacrifice, and in doing so moves away from it, into the correlated difference of analogy.

What occurs each time the creature’s pattern is interrupted by history is the reconfiguration of that pattern as already perfected, though not yet finally known, in the Christological perfection of intra-creaturely rhythm. Moreover Christ, through his radical being-for, opens the creature’s rhythm to the rhythm in which God relates to the creature, with the result that the creature’s oscillation between its possibilities and its ground oscillates, or intersects, with God’s own oscillation between divine actuality and creaturely potentiality. This latter oscillation is ‘the analogy between God and creature’ (AE/E 216) (‘zwischen-gott-geschöpf-liche[] Analogie’, AE/G 121), also known as the ‘transcending analogy’ (ibid.) or, as a shorthand, the ‘theological analogy’.²⁶ Here God is ‘above-and-beyond’ (AE/E 235) (‘[ü]ber-hinaus’, AE/G 139) the creature. Because of this co-oscillation, God is apprehended no longer just as the creature’s unfathomable ground, but as its end, the context and possibility of its creaturely future (AE/E 228; AE/G 133).

Jones’s *Anathemata* is the poem of the creature’s oscillatory participation in the infinite otherness of God, through Christ, and it is an embodiment of the rhythms of this process as Przywara defines them. Centrally, to say that Christ ‘placed Himself in the order of signs’ is to say that he fulfilled sign-making, which is the expression of human freedom, in the same way that he fulfils the freedom experienced in Przywara’s intra-creaturely analogy. By his words and actions at the Last Supper, he made himself a sign that is absolutely one with what all signs

²⁶ Lexi Eikelboom, *Rhythm: A Theological Category* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 154. Eikelboom links the structure of Przywara’s thought to poetry (163), but does not in this context mention any poems.

signify: with that which makes freedom possible at all by overcoming mere utility and objectivization, mastery and ultimately death, namely love. We should say that the poem repeatedly identifies sign-making as creaturely. Early on we read of the palaeozoic maker who ‘brights his ichthyic sign | so brights he the middle-zone | where the uterine forms | are some beginnings of his creature’ (74). The references intensify in the final section, ‘Sherthursdaye and Venus Day’, where the poem’s various currents explicitly converge on the act of sacramental institution (e.g. 235).

The Anathemata as a whole not only narrates the coalescence of these multiple strands of becoming in the complete becoming of creaturely essence in Christ, but does so from within the rhythmically embedded, epically extended perspective of the human creature. Above all, and perhaps in Jones’s case surprisingly, it does so from within the creature’s constitution as a subject. The poem’s ‘epic’ qualities are, after all, repercussions of its occasioning, much more typically ‘lyric’ moment, in which a self begins to reflect on what it sees happening in church, and the poem in its subsequent entirety flashes through the mind. This self is a subject whose capacity for meaning-making is defined by an illimitable range of intelligible otherness, a ‘surd’ of historical configurations which impinge resistantly on it, and in that inexhaustible relation realize the subject as simultaneously what Maritain, echoing a conceptual pairing established by Hegel, called a person.²⁷ The formal demands of *The Anathemata* result from Jones’s attempt to render the openness of this relation: a recognizable whole, a sign made by *this* creature, but without any subjective ‘self-identity’—and showing forth, from out of an excessive entirety of past becoming, a future of this creature and all creatures.

²⁷ Maritain, *Creative Intuition*, 142. For the relation of ‘person’ and ‘subject’ in Hegel, see the two opening sections of his *Philosophy of Right*.

A continual raising up, in the poetic sign, of creaturely becoming as always incomplete, and yet completed, is the fullest possibility of *anathema* itself, as Jones's preface to the poem describes it. He speaks of 'things set up, lifted up', the raising up of 'the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that somehow are redeemed' (28-9), because God has entered into them. Rhythmically, this dual movement of blessed and cursed is encompassed in what Hopkins, in his notes on sprung rhythm, called 'Rocking Rhythms', units of stress which tip back and forth, pendulum-like: 'if the Stress is between two Slacks there will be Rocking Feet and Rhythms.'²⁸ What Hopkins is describing here, though he does not name it, is the metrical foot known as the amphibrach (weak-strong-weak). The closing section of *The Anthemata* 'rocks' at a subterranean level with this rhythm, for example in two instances, appearing in close succession, of a word we have associated with the poem's oscillatory motion, 'concentric' ('cōncēntrīc') (231, 233). Rocking rhythm might also belong to sign and creature themselves, but as comprehended in the Sacramental action which displays the rhythm as a unified movement, accomplished and complete: 'under the sign of thāt crēatūre' (227); 'He whose greater signs are | *per creātūrām aquam*' (235).

Anathema, as 'set up, lifted up', is closely linked to analogy. Przywara says that God opens a new attributive analogy working from above ('von oben nach unten', AE/G 139; AE/E 235), in which the creature becomes futural because it receives the call to service ('zur "Dienst-Leistung" "gesendet"', *ibid.*), to offer itself upward into the ever-greater difference ('je größere Unähnlichkeit (*maior dissimilitudo*)', *ibid.*) of God. It can do this because of the perfect service of the Son who opens the difference up for the creature in the first place. Because of this the creature knows divine difference as both a wholly transcendent otherness and yet, precisely

²⁸ Hopkins, *Poetical Works*, 115.

therefore, as ‘never exhaustively [just] the other of creation’.²⁹ When the creature names itself as this self-offering—therefore free—being, and especially when it does so in language and so in the embodied rhythm of becoming and of becoming’s interruption, it raises signs which are properly called *anathemata*.

Poetry, Theology, Philosophy

What, then, of poetry being related ‘in a certain analogous sense’ to the eucharistic sacrifice? To say that they are analogous, theologically speaking, is to say that they are different, and more different than they are similar. But it is also, following both Jones and Przywara, to say that they exist in a necessary rhythm with each other. Poetry uniquely expresses the fulfilment of sign-making, but it is not the fulfilment itself, nor is it the perpetuation of the fulfilment in the efficacious sign of the Mass. Poetry is the experience of that fulfilment in language, or creaturely rhythm, in this rhythm’s natural habitat, namely at the point of ‘what is cursed’, of ‘profane things’. It expresses the fulfilment from a perspective entirely steeped in the temptations of the creature, or of the subject: in all possible ways of ‘saying no to God’. More specifically, poetry speaks from within the epochal denial, or curse, represented by what Jones, in his preface, called ‘the Break’ (*Anathemata*, 16), meaning modernity’s dissociation of signs from their sacral bearing, and the absolutization of utility.³⁰ It is completely secular, not-God.

²⁹ Williams, ‘Dialectic and analogy’, 288.

³⁰ Cf. W. David Soud, *Divine Cartographies: God, History, and Poiesis in W. B. Yeats, David Jones, and T. S. Eliot* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 105.

Poetry, though, reveals the secular, the freedom to say no to God, as the proper site of God's difference-in-relation to the creature, that is, as the site of incarnation. It does so in the ways mapped out in Przywara's metaphysics, which speaks from the same implied historical standpoint as Jones in his reflections. Accordingly, we can say, with Jones but also with Przywara, that poetry speaks of love, giving itself in death, as the ground of all freedom and hence of all signs. But it is important to note that the condition for a poem doing so is not that it should understand itself to be speaking thus. It is that the poem be committed to embodying a meaning which it knows is given to it by the world of others with which the poem, in turn, shares it. To be committed in this way is already to recognize that the poem's subjectivity is embedded in the 'to one another' of a relation, or analogy, between free creatures, and so to express what makes it a relation and preserves it from dissolving into mere identity. Goethe, who eschewed Idealist identity philosophy and whom Przywara passingly, but surely rightly, allies with Kant (AE/E 542; AE/G 463), furnishes supreme examples of this: poems which express a relation of subject and object in wholly secular terms, but whose substance will not reduce to 'freedom' because it is describable only as (transcendental) love.³¹ Conversely, *The Anathemata* begins in church but quickly leaves it, only to find the Church, as the continuing recalling of love, definitely and always present—though often hardly recognizable—in the fissiparous *saeculum* the poem traverses.

Poetry's relation to secularity can in fact be deduced from the fundamental terms of Przywara's 'creaturely' scheme. Analogy presents itself, for him, because the possibility of

³¹ 'Mir bleibt genug! Es bleibt Idee und Liebe!' ('Die Jahre nahmen dir...', l. 10). *Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, seventh edition, edited by Erich Trunz, 14 vols (Wegner, 1965), II, 39. On the theology of this line, and the direct relevance of Kantian regulative 'Ideas', see Nicholas Boyle, 'Postscript', in *The Present Word: Culture, Society and the Site of Literature: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Boyle*, edited by John Walker (Legenda, 2013), 195-201 (199).

giving an account of the relations which metaphysics takes as its object will arise as a philosophical question—meaning, in the modern German tradition of which Przywara is part and to which he looks, a question about freedom. But it will entail a theological one, because, Przywara says, metaphysics has to consider its ‘proper object (“the creature”)’ (AE/E 170; AE/G 75), which philosophy defines, as ‘perfected’ (‘ausgeformt’, *ibid.*), as having a shape that places it definitively in relation to what it is not: to an otherness which has the character of a ‘mystery’ (AE/E 183; AE/G 89). Moreover, this meeting of philosophy and theology is one in which they ‘interpenetrate’ while each retains its ‘independence’ (AE/E 187; AE/G 93). Philosophy and theology are, as it were, ‘zu einander’. We have already seen how the movement of ‘zu einander’ is explicitly temporal, and, implicitly, linguistic. Poems, we are then bound to add, are the adequate (that is, properly ‘ausgeformt’) expression of philosophy’s relation to theology: in a fully subjective yet fully embodied, fully free yet fully given shape which is neither that of philosophy nor of theology, but realizes both in what Przywara calls their ‘one truth’ (AE/E 187; AE/G 93), which analogy grasps.

Seeing poems as the expressed analogical relation of philosophy and theology is a way of seeing them as efficacious signs after all, as what Jones called ‘signs that not only have the nature of a sign, but are themselves, under some mode, what they signify’ (*Anathemata*, 29). It means that poems express the ‘perfection’ of the creature in the mode of what such perfection is not: the mode of freedom (to resist perfection) which philosophy describes. Poems do this because as fully formed, temporally unfolding signs they show that mode touching its perfection in the mystery of love, the granting of freedom, which theology communicates, and which religion in the eucharistic sign makes real. Just as the perfection of which theology speaks is

encountered in Sacrament, so the perfection of which philosophy cannot speak is shown to be actual by poetry. But it is the same perfection.

Analogical relation-in-difference, such as we have now articulated, with Jones, between poem and Sacrament, can, as Przywara frequently points out, be read in both directions. Though Jones never says so, and, given his views on liturgy,³² may well not have accepted, this implies that the context of Sacrament (the Mass) draws its own meaning from its analogical relationship to secular difference—a conclusion anticipated in the historical emergence of sacramentals long ago. From our discussion, it also follows that this movement too passes via poems. Przywara does provide terms for reading the analogy back in this way, arguing that the ‘real historical church’ (AE/E 592) (‘[das] real Geschichtliche[] der Kirche’, AE/G 519) constantly undergoes new ‘nihilations’ (‘Nichtungen’, *ibid.*) as God’s intersection with ‘nothingness’ (with what is not God) becomes manifest. As Przywara acknowledges, the philosophical ghost at this feast is undoubtedly Hegel (AE/E 592; AE/G 518). For Hegel, Christianity empties itself out, or secularizes itself, into subjectivity in order to rediscover itself there; conversely, subjectivity can only realize itself as freedom through unity with what it is not, with its (religious) other. Notwithstanding Przywara’s suspicion that he wants ‘to grasp the mystery “as” concept’ (AE/E 189; AE/G 94), and so deny that other, Hegel is in fact the thinker who defines the historical truth underlying—but not fully explicit in—Przywara’s exposition of analogy, which is that the secular is the becoming real of the sacred. To conclude, though, only a poem can show this.

A fitting poetic account of what, developing Przywara, we could call this ‘secular analogy’, is offered by Jones’s successor Les Murray, who can certainly stand as the poet of

³² See for example his letter published in *The Tablet* of 2 December 1967.

Przywara's term 'unverkrampt'. Unlike Jones, Murray appears fully at ease in the familiar lived world, and has a more straightforward sense of how that world's flattening, 'utile' dimensions may themselves become occasions of fulfilment. Yet unlike, for example, Seamus Heaney, he is fully committed to that world's Sacramental ground. More strikingly than perhaps any other modern poet, Murray combines a dedication to the extensive, inhabitable givenness of things in time, and an insistence on what Przywara thinks of as the theological accomplishment of the relationships between them. In an essay on 'Embodiment and Incarnation', Murray wrote that:

We only half-notice, consciously, that our breathing has tightened and altered, submitting to commands from beyond ourselves. It shifts in and out of this sympathetic obedience as the experience oscillates within us, coming and going in its successive small peaks of intensity. We may say that the poem is dancing us to its rhythm.³³

What Murray describes here is, explicitly, an oscillation between creature and poem, in which the poem quietly breaks open the reader's rhythm and makes it part of its own, more expansive rhythm, while never destroying or coercing it. The poem, in its gratuitousness, is inviting us and responding to us in ways which we immediately recognize as human, and is calling us into a relationship with what the fullness of such human solicitation could be. In one of his own finest poems, 'Poetry and Religion', Murray finishes, with a possible deep echo of 'The Windhover',

³³ 'Embodiment and Incarnation', in Les Murray, *The Paperbark Tree: Selected Prose* (Carcamet, 1992), 251-69 (259).

by seeing poetry and religion as comprising two distinct rhythms opening to each other, and together tracing a relation in a free blue space of sky:

[...] Both are given, and intermittent,
as the action of those birds—crested pigeon, rosella parrot—
who fly with wings shut, then beating, and again shut.³⁴

³⁴ Les Murray, *New Collected Poems* (Carcenet, 2003), 265.