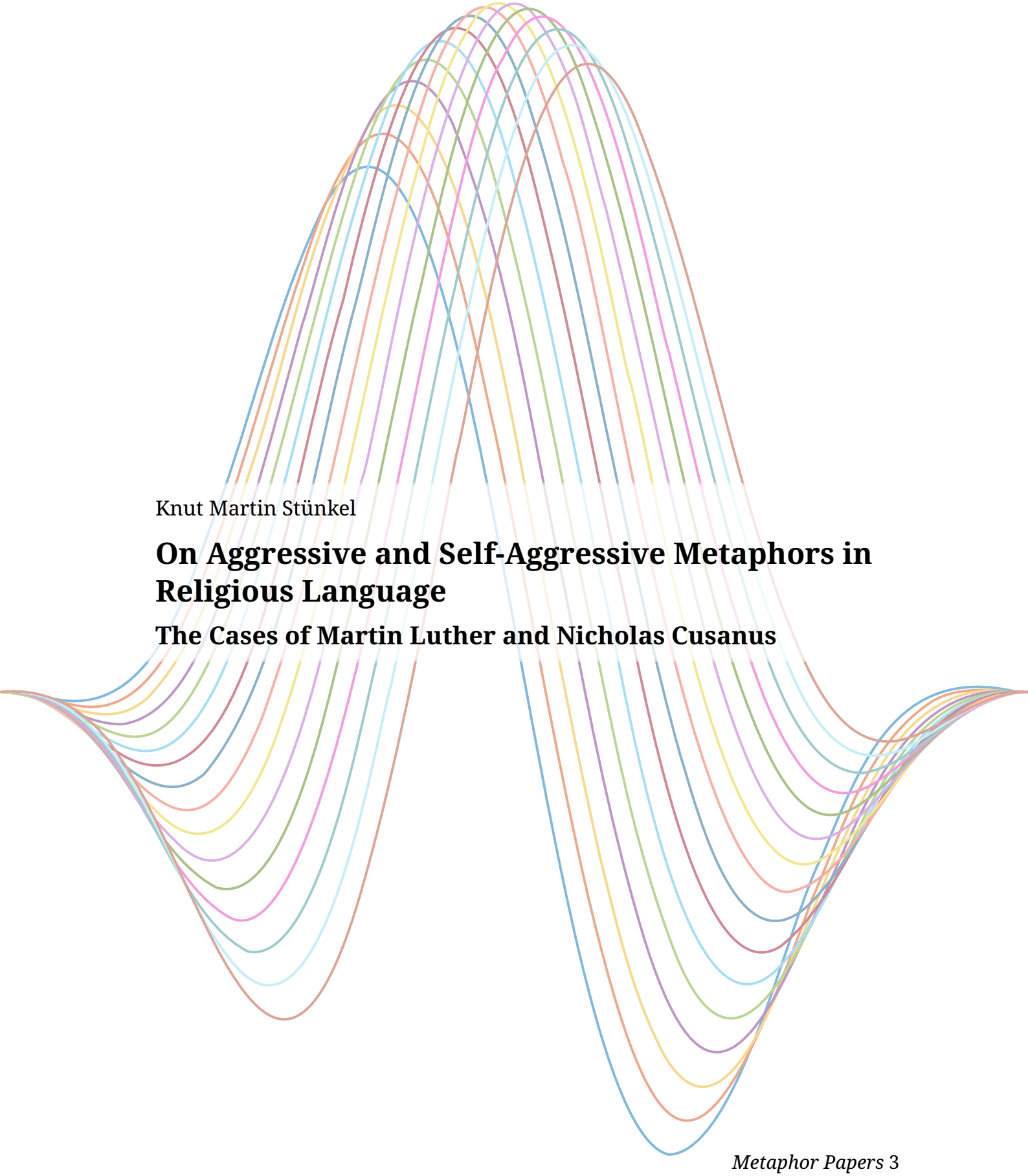

Knut Martin Stünkel

On Aggressive and Self-Aggressive Metaphors in Religious Language

The Cases of Martin Luther and Nicholas Cusanus

Metaphor Papers 3

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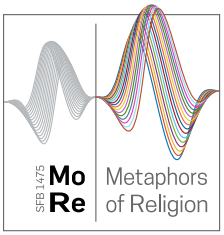

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On Aggressive and Self-Aggressive Metaphors in Religious Language

The Cases of Martin Luther and Nicholas Cusanus

Knut Martin Stünkel

ABSTRACT Religious language is not all hymns and prayers. This paper intends to indicate challenges concerning the examination of the role of metaphors in religious language, i.e., the ways metaphors generate religious meaning. The case of aggressive metaphors, as exemplified in the works of Martin Luther and Nicholas of Cusa (Cusanus), shows that metaphors change the domains they are employed in. In Luther, the use of aggressive and offensive metaphors is part of the theological agenda and profoundly changes religious language. In Cusanus, self-aggressive metaphors are employed to cataphorically change religious language to reach the divine asymptotically.

KEYWORDS aggressive metaphors, Luther, Cusanus, domain-mapping, religious language

Introduction

Religious language is a multifaceted phenomenon that is well-recognized in scholarship. [1]
For example, the "Manual of Basic Notions in Religious Studies" (*Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*) lists five basic forms of religious language: First, the revelational language of the Gods, the teaching and promising language of the Gods, prayer, and "expressive language" under the heading of "communication" (*Kommunikation*), second "performativity" (*Performanz*) which comprises the effective word, the creative word, the effective word in history, the hypostatic word and the magical word. Third, there is "representation" (*Vergegenwärtigung*), divided into myth as the representation of the world of Gods, and ritual language, followed by fourth "interplay" (*Wechselwirkung*) of language describing, reporting, and passing down religious experience, which in turn influences the use of language itself. Finally, there is the possibility of *Entsprachlichung*, the "elimination of language (and thought)" as to be found in mysticism to gain the highest level of religious experience which cannot be grasped in language at all (Wonneberger 2001, 94–101). Regardless of whether this list captures the

full scale of possible phenomena or not, one may still ask: If the multiplicity of forms is a relevant element for the analysis of metaphors used in the corresponding form of religious language, does each form of religious language have its own metaphors? Is there a difference between performative metaphors and metaphors of interplay, or metaphors of interplay and metaphors used in the process of 'Entsprachlichung,' elimination of language? If so, the subject of "metaphors of religion" indeed opens a vast spectrum for scholarly research. This gives rise to the question of genre: Does it make a difference if a metaphor is employed in a narrative, a treatise, a prayer, a eulogy, or a polemic? Connected to that is the question of the modus of speech (imperative, jussive, optative) and its relation to the use of metaphors.[1]

In short, religious language does not only consist of prayers, eulogies, blessings, hymns, [2]
or theological assertions concerning the divine, which is addressed in due respect and devotion. There are also laments, curses, damnations, and there are religious polemics that are outright 'hate speech.' It is no surprise that this kind of religious language also employs its particular metaphors. So far, in researching metaphors of religion, scholars tended to concentrate on comparably cozy and homely expressions like—to name examples often used in the work of the CRC—'The Lord is my shepherd,' 'grammar of the heart' or 'We are all children of God' that have a somewhat elevating and poetic appeal to the unbiased observer. But what about more prosaic statements such as 'The pope is a farting ass?'[2] (fartzesel zu Rom) or "who does not want to have bitter Christ will guzzle himself to death on honey" ("wer den bittern Cristum nicht wil haben, wirt sich am honig todfressen") (Thomas Müntzer, leading to the concept of the 'salty Christ,' see SB 222, 22–24[3]) or "it is Luther's habit to wallow in all the puddles and pits of the heretics, and if he finds something in there, he will pull out the dirt and blot" ("wie dann des Luthers brauch ist, das er all pfitzen vnd gruben der ketzer durch kreücht, vnd wa er etwas darin fint …. so zeücht er den vnnflat vnd schandtfleck her für") (Johannes Eck). There seems to be a difference between the former and the later examples. Here, metaphors become aggressive.

Due to the geographic and chronological frame of the CRC sub-project C03, "Metaphors [3]
of Everyday Life"—1430–1550, Italy and Germany—I restrict myself to examples from this region and period of time. Coincidentally, aggressive metaphors are very much in vogue in religious texts and material objects such as paintings, printings, or woodcuts at this time. One can be positive, however, that corresponding examples can be found in the material from other periods and geographical areas.

As an expression of religious contact—the basic feature of the history of religions [4]
(see Krech 2012)—religious polemics and their particular linguistic instruments are indispensable elements of religious language. Among them, aggressive metaphors hold a prominent position. As always, there are many forms of aggressive metaphors imaginable. The ones I quoted are only significant examples that can be used to analyze

1 Section C of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1475 'Metaphors of Religion' deals with 'the social' as a matter of 'in-between.' The main application reads: "Section C, 'The Domain of the Social,' examines social semantics as the source domain of religious metaphors, in particular, the religious metaphorization of the IN-BETWEEN as a third entity mediating opposites." Of course, this perspective on social semantics as the source domain includes phenomena of the asocial/anti-social,

possible common features of these kinds of metaphors and, hopefully, also of metaphors as such. However, some basic characteristics of aggressive metaphors can be emphasized provisionally. The aggressive metaphor seems to be a particular case of deliberate metaphors that are a primary concern of the CRC. One fundamental feature of these kinds of metaphors is the high degree of astonishment they cause (*Frappanz*). Their employment not only affects one's notions of decency but also violates expectations connected to the subject matters they are intended to characterize. Through aggressive metaphor, the addressee and/or reader becomes what French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion has called an *interloqué;* somebody who is dumbfounded by a new word during the process of communication (Marion 1998, 200). Rhetorically, they are employed not only to 'move' the audience as recommended by the classics Aristotle and Quintilian (Stolt 2000, 34) but to shake one's foundation, causing the audience to rethink fundamental assumptions. Not least, aggressive metaphors are characterized by the *Fallhöhe* (height of fall) they introduce into an argument.

[5] Famously, Paul Ricoeur has claimed the 'semantic impertinence' connected to the collision of meaning in metaphorical utterances (Bielfeldt 1990, 127). This impertinence might become quite explicit. Harald Weinrich has made another attempt in this direction with his considerations on the 'bold metaphor' (*kühne Metapher*) (1976). Usually, aggressive metaphors are bold, if not daring (*tollkühn*). The bold metaphor connects areas of meaning that usually are not associated with each other or are even considered mutually exclusive and creates an effect of contradiction or paradox. Thus, the audacity of the metaphorical expressions lies in paradoxically yoking together low and high, common and extraordinary, trivially human and divine qualities and attributions. This device of metaphorically linking opposite terms produces a particular effect: It makes us see the transcendent world as coming close to or even merging with the immanent world and thereby bridges the distance between the two spheres. Therefore, religious metaphors are apt to serve as self-reflexive figures inviting the readers or listeners to rethink a basic distinction underlying their notion of religion.

[6] Aggressive metaphors are particularly distinct metaphors (*prononcierte Metaphern).* Their distinctness is a vital part of their efficacy. Provisionally, one might distinguish two kinds of aggressive metaphors regarding the context they are used in. One obvious context in which aggressive metaphors are used is polemics. Another, less obvious one, is metaphysics and epistemology. In the following, I will analyze examples of both in religious texts; Luther for the first and Cusanus for the second case. However, as we will see, the basic way these metaphors function is similar.

not least asocial/antisocial linguistic behavior that is, after all, a well-known everyday social reality as being used in polemics or offensive speech.

2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are by the author.

3 On Müntzer's metaphorology of nourishment (as opposed to the 'sweetness of Christ') see Battafarano (1992, 95). In an astonishing revision of central metaphors, Müntzer claims for 'salt and water' instead of 'bread and wine' as symbols for the truth and clarity of God's word (1992, 97).

Luther's Offensive Metaphors

The first case—as the more obvious one—is the use of aggressive metaphors in Luther's works. To many, Luther might be the foremost, and even paradigmatic, example when it comes to aggressive metaphors due to his many well-known robust public arguments with his diverse opponents in times of the emerging reformation movement. One should, however, keep in mind that at the same time, even catholic authors warned their audience about Luther's dainty and delicate language—an opinion on his rhetoric that Luther himself apparently shared (see WA 30/II:634 in Luther 1883–2009; Stolt 2000, 32). Additionally, of course, he was not the only one to employ bold means in his rhetoric; his opponents and collaborators were no better than him. For a good reason, in German scholarship, the term 'Grobianismus' had been coined to characterize a particular style of argument at this time; aggressive metaphors were a popular (and, in fact, long-resonating) instrument to prevail in the public discussion on theological issues. [7]

To understand this particular kind of metaphor, I first analyze Luther's general thoughts about metaphor and figurative language. Here, I follow the considerations of the Lutheran theologian Joachim Ringleben, who devoted two pathbreaking articles to the subject (1997, 2003). In any case, for Luther, metaphors were a practical success story. It is well-known that the metaphors Luther employed in his translation of the Bible are still used in today's German language, not least because of their medial usability (Lohmiller 2017, 262). Metaphor itself is a recurring subject in Luther's thinking, as he admits that it is a persistent question to him why human beings so much like to hear and speak figuratively and why such language displays such a particular energy, causing deep affection in the mind.[4] [8]

Luther is of the opinion that human beings feel attracted to this kind of language due to its particular e-motional potential or energy. Quoting Horace on the subject matter, Luther insists that metaphoric energy manifests in an intellectually productive linguistic blend that provides new meaning (De arte poetica 47–48: "Dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum / Reddiderit iunctura novum") (Ringleben 1997, 337). [9]

Accordingly, in Luther's writings, one finds a case of a proponent of religious object language aiming at developing meta-language, in this case concerning the role and importance of metaphor. Of course, his thoughts emerge not just anywhere but in the context of his theology. Metaphors are based on the simultaneity of difference and similarity—that is, not of words but of matter of fact: "non solum est verborum, sed et rerum metaphora" (WA 8:8) (Ringleben 1997, 344). What is their main function, then? In Luther's consideration, they are directly related to God's actions. In his treatise from 1528, titled *Vom Abendmahl Christi. Bekenntnis*, Luther states: [10]

> For Holy Scripture does in talking as God does in deeds. Now, God creates all ways that happened before the parable, and after that, there follows the correct essence and fulfillment of the parables. Thus, the Old Testament [11]

4 "Nescio enim, quae sit figurarum energia, ut tam potenter intrent et afficiant, ita ut omnis homo natura et audire et loqui gestiat figurate" (WA 8:84 [Rationis Latomianae confutatio (1521)]).

> precedes as a parable, and the New Testament follows as fulfillment. Scripture acts in the same manner when it comes up with *tropos* or new words: that it takes the old word which is a parable and gives it a new meaning, which is its correct essence.[5]

To Luther, metaphors are theologically and even metaphysically important. Above all, they are important if not essential elements of Scripture. By introducing metaphors ("wenn sie tropos odder newe wort macht"), Scripture acts linguistically and realizes God's creative actions.[6] Thus, metaphors are linguistic abbreviations of God's eschatological works, and the linguistic structure of a metaphor reflects God's actions as such (Ringleben 2003, 229–30). Luther describes metaphors as follows: [12]

> And […] Scripture is full of such ways of speaking; in grammar they are called *tropus* or *metaphora* if one addresses two things with one name because of that which is a parable in both of them. And the name is literally one word, but *potestate ac significatione plura*, but by potential, usage and explanation two words, an old one and a new one […][7] [13]

Metaphors are transitional (*transitus*) as an innovative eschatological process; they are a translation from the created world to the World of Splendor beyond—and, as such, instances of divine language in human language (Ringleben 2003, 232, 233).[8] A metaphor is a transformative eschatological *kairos* (2003, 236) in the sense of 1 Cor 15,51-52: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."[9] Luther, thus, analogizes the aesthetic gain, its affective appeal or energy, of figurative speech and metaphor, with the soteriological gain of God's action (Ringleben 1997, 349). They change and maintain at the same time: As transformations, metaphors save. [14]

This article is not the place to decide whether Ringleben's linguistic-theological interpretation works for the exegesis of Luther. However, the formal process of metaphor in religious language described here deserves closer consideration in our present context. Metaphor does not merely connect or transfer between domains, but it is also about real [15]

5 "Denn die heilige schrifft helt sich mit reden, wie Gott sich helt mit wircken. Nu schafft Gott alle wege, das die deutung odder gleichnis zuvor geschehen und dar nach folge das rechte wesen und erfullunge der gleichnissen, Denn also gehet das alte testament als ein gleichnis furher und folget das newe testament hernach als das rechte wesen, Eben also thut sie auch, wenn sie tropos odder newe wort macht, das sie nympt das alte wort, welches die gleichnis ist und gibt yhm ein newe deutunge, welche das rechte wesen ist" (WA 26:382,25–383,3).

6 On the salient role of Scripture in Luther's concept of metaphor compare Saarinen (1988, 31).

7 "Und […] ist die schrifft solcher rede vol und heißt tropus odder Metaphora ynn der grammatica, wenn man zweyerley dingen einerley namen gibt, umb des willen, das ein gleichnis ynn beiden ist. Und ist denn der selbige name nach dem buchstaben wol einerley wort aber potestate ac significatione plura, nach der macht, brauch, deutunge zwey wort, ein altes und newes […]" (WA 26:273).

8 "Metapher […] ist *transitus*, Übergang bzw. Übertragung des Zeitlichen ins Eschatologische, ist als gesprochenes und gehörtes Wort Gottes der eschatologische Vorgang selber: metaphora als translatio, nämlich als endgültige translatio imperii—vom Reich der Schöpfung ins Reich der Herrlichkeit."

9 "Luther denkt *metaphora* als den lebendigen Einstand von Zeit und Ewigkeit (d.h. als Kommen des Ewigen in die Zeit und Gehen des Zeitlichen in die Ewigkeit), von Gottes Wort und Menschenwort, von menschlicher Rede und göttlichem Schöpferwort" (1997, 348).

change, about transformation (*Verwandlung*) of a context of understanding which is revolutionized (in the process, not only words but also domains are changed). This process is astonishing and likely to cause amazement which is the precondition of (complete) renewal.

[16] Theology has to reflect God's action as its main religious task and is mediated via speech (sermon) and script. Luther is convinced that the Holy Ghost is the best poet: "spiritum sanctum esse optimum Poetam et Oratorem, qui sciat regulas artis dicendi et persuadendi" (WA 40/III:270). Can aggressive metaphors, then, possibly appear in religious texts that claim to be inspired by the best poet?

[17] Apparently, they can. One of Luther's most notorious, albeit often-quoted, works is his late polemics *Wider das Papsttum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet* (Against Roman Papacy founded by the devil) from 1545, published one year before his death, his last and most ferocious writing against the papacy that is, as an eminently theologically relevant matter, described as being founded by the devil himself. Just recently, Markus Hundt has intensely analyzed the text in a highly recommendable study (Hundt 2022). With his polemics, Luther reacted to a tract of Pope Paul III in which the latter accused the emperor Charles V of being too conciliatory with the Protestants. Among Luther's other vitriolic late texts, such as his infamous work against the Jews, it is often considered, and, in fact, pacified as the expression of the psychopathology of an aging, embittered, and disappointed man whose former intellectual brilliance had turned into vulgar *grobianism.* Regarding content, the sharp distinction between a revolutionary 'young' and a reactionary and consolidating 'old' Luther is dubious anyway.[10] Regarding religious language, however, things are not that easy to explain, for certain parts of Luther's work might be considered one of the most apparent cases of religious meaning-making via metaphors.

[18] This is closely related to his astonishing use of aggressive metaphors, not least in his many intense polemics accompanying his theological career from early times onwards and dealing with issues considered theologically significant. Having a certain image about the style and dignity of theological, or rather, religious writings in mind, one could argue that polemics, invectives, derision, and aggressive metaphors employed here are not necessarily manifestations of religious language. However, examples from the text ostensibly obviously show the close connection, this time via an imagined dialogue between Luther himself and the pope, where Luther sets the theme and tone of his following considerations:

> [19] "So we, in our decrees, have established that the pope alone shall summon councils and name persons." "However, dear: is that right then? Who ordered you to establish?" "Quiet, heretic, that what comes from Our mouth that one should do." "I hear that. What mouth do you mean? Where the farts come from? (that one you shall keep closed) Or the one the good *Korso* flows in? (a dog shall shit in that)." "O you disgraceful Luther, do you talk to the pope in

10 See on the reasons for this scholarly distinction Oberman (1988, 436). With regard to rhetoric, compare Stolt (2000, 184–85).

> that way?" "Shame on you depraved and desperate villains and coarse asses, do you talk to an emperor and the empire in that way?"[11]

This is only one occasion of many in which the impregnating metaphor of the ass[12] or 'coarse ass' (and of 'fart' or 'farting') appears. However, this happens for some more profound reason. To Luther, on an object-language level, polemics and devastatingly ridiculing one's opponent are not only necessary to the theological argument but also indispensable to establishing proper Christian existence through drastic exhortation. The language appeared popular, placative, and oscillating between abuse and ridicule (Lohmiller 2017, 258). Of course, Luther's invectives do not simply serve as an *argumentum ad hominem*. In his *Wider das Papsttum*, Luther himself reflects on the problem of his intense mockery and connects it to a well-known *topos* of weakness in succession of the apostle Paul and his method of propagation of the faith: [20]

> I do mock with my humble mocking to let them know who lives now and will come after us, what I thought about the pope, that cursed antichrist. And those who want to be Christians, let them be warned about that abomination.[13] [21]

Offensive language served religious means; it was even part of theology itself. Bearing fearless and uncompromising witness in public discourse and, thus, unmasking hidden evil[14] is a performative act of practical theology and religiosity that gained prominence in the early years of the Reformation and may be practically exemplified and theoretically elaborated by figures such as Luther's follower Ulrich von Hutten (1490–1525) (see Stünkel 2016). It can also be found in Luther's opponent Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525), who famously polemicized *wider das geistlose sanft lebende Fleisch zu Wittenberg, welches mit verkehrter Weise durch den Diebstahl der heiligen Schrift die erbärmliche Christenheit also ganz jämmerlich besudelt hat* (A Highly Provoked Vindication and Refutation of the Unspiritual Soft-Living Flesh in Wittenberg) (see Battafarano 1992, 102). Taking part in the *duellum mirabile* between Christ and the Adversary (Rieske-Braun 1999), Luther used the most drastic and astonishing means. Not the least among them is unrestrained redundancy (*argumentum ad nauseam*), as in *Wider das Papsttum* no less than 82 times the metaphor of the ass is employed to characterize the pope and [22]

11 'Ja wir habens hernach also gesetzt in unsern Decretalen, das allein der Bapst solle Concilia beruffen und personen nennen.' Lieber, ists aber war? Wer hats euch befolhen, also zu setzen? 'Schweig, du Ketzer, was zu unserm mund aus gehet, das sol man halten!' Jch hoeres. Welchen mund meinstu? da die foertze aus faren? (das magstu selbs halten!) oder da der gute Korso einfleust? (da scheis ein hund ein!). 'Ey du schendlicher Luther, soltu mit dem Bapst so reden?' Ey pfui wider, jr lesterliche verzweivelten buben und groben Esel, solt jr denn auch mit einem Keiser und Reich also reden?' (WA 54:221)

12 See Müntzer's metaphor for Luther: the *kulckrabe* as closely connected to vice and death (Battafarano 1992, 108). For Luther as for Müntzer, their struggle is a struggle of good and evil and no mere argument between theologians.

13 "Jch spotte allein darumb mit meinem schwachen spotten, das die, so jtzt leben und nach uns komen, wissen sollen, was ich vom Bapst, dem verfluchten Antichrist gehalten habe, Und wer ein Christ sein wil, sich fuer solchem grewel lasse vermanen" (WA 54:215).

14 "Hitherto, the antichrist and the curia could operate under the cover of darkness and thus catch the souls of the Christians unawares. Now his invasion of the Church is publicly exposed" (Oberman 1988, 444).

the institution of the papacy (Hundt 2022, 131–32). Likewise ostentatious is his use of scatology. To Luther, who wrote and preached as someone standing between God and the devil at the end of time, eschatology and scatology belonged together (Oberman 1988, 435), and that from a very early time in his life onwards, at least since his 1515 so-called election sermon (1988, 442–43). For religious reasons, Luther desperately needs attention. Regarding his particular way of expression in matters of theology, he writes: "I am practically forced to shout too loud and cry out 'May God strip Satan speedily and unmask him'; in order to expose him—then it will help that (= what) we now shout so loud."[15] Correspondingly, Ulrich von Hutten, in his anti-papal *Bulla vel Bullicida,* states: "Quasi non bene dictum sit hoc, malis cum maledicitur"—to curse evil means to bless (Hutten [1859–1861] 1963, 4:311). The result of this conviction is statements such as the following. On the relation of temporal and spiritual power, as expressed in the papacy, Luther writes:

> What does the pope say? Come, Satan, and if you had more worlds than only this one, I would accept them all and not merely worship you but also lick your arse. These are the words of his decrees, in which there is nothing about the belief in Christ but only teachings about the pope's splendor, majesty, power, and lordship over churches, councils, emperors, kings, and over the whole world and also over heaven. But everything is sealed with Devil's dirt and written with pope-asses' farts.[16] [23]

Here, Luther uses a not very subtle pun on the German term 'Dekret' that he replaces with 'Dreck' in the concrete sense of feces: "He who wishes to hear God speak shall read the Holy Scripture. He who wishes to hear the devil speak shall read the pope's dirt (Drecket) and bulls."[17] Thus, Luther reinforces the metaphor of the ass scatologically (*fartzEsel zu Rom,* WA 54:265) (Hundt 2022, 24), not only to ridicule his opponent's cognitive abilities as being stubborn and dumb like an ass but also to put the pope's utterances in the context of a perverted inspirational speech: in case of the God-inspired speaker the mouth overflows—but in case of the devil-inspired speaker things (and processes) are different. [24]

There are many further examples in which Luther uses aggressive metaphors that nowadays are (to a certain degree) amusing but also on the verge of becoming tedious [25]

15 "Ich werde schier gezwungen alzu lautt schreyen und sagen, Gott wollte dem Satan schnell die hautt abzihen und an den tag bringen, so wirtts denn helffen was wyr itzt schreyen" (WA 12:66).

16 "Wie spricht aber der Bapst? Kom her, Satan, und hettestu noch mehr Welt denn diese, Jch wolt sie alle annemen, und dich nicht allein anbeten, Sondern auch im hindern lecken. Das sind die Wort seiner Decreten und Decretalen, darin nichts vom Glauben Christi, sondern alles und alles von seiner Hoheit, Maiestet, Gewalt und Herrschafft uber Kirchen, uber Concilia, uber Keiser, uber Koenige, und uber alle Welt, auch uber den Himel geleret wird. Jst aber alles mit Teufels dreck versiegelt, und mit Bapstesels foertzen geschrieben" (WA 54:265).

17 "Wer Gott wil hoeren reden, der lese die heilige Schrifft. Wer den Teufel wil hoeren reden, der lese des Bapsts Drecket und Bullen" (WA 54:263). See Hundt (2022, 20): "Aus den Dekreten werden die Drecketen. Mit diesem Sprachspiel wird der Urheber der Dekrete, der Papst zusätzlich beschimpft, weist doch die Ausdrucksseite des veränderten Wortes schon mit hinreichender Deutlichkeit darauf hin, was von den Inhalten päpstlicher Dekrete zu halten ist: Sie enthalten eben nur oder sind eben nur Dreck."

(and also well beyond that). Aggressive metaphors fulfill a mobilizing function via deliberate use of boldness that introduces a particular *Fallhöhe* to the matter metaphorized (the pope and the institution of the papacy) and between the domains that are mapped in this process. In this way, subject matters and domains are transcended in a—so to speak—downward direction. Aggressive metaphors, thus, introduce a hierarchy into the mapping because of polemical reasons or reasons for denunciation.

[26] However, there is still more to the aggressive metaphor than its mere reduction to an expression of *grobianism* might notice. In his struggle, Luther does not restrict himself to the printed word. His approach is multi-media. The aggressive metaphor of the pope-ass also mobilizes iconological knowledge for which Luther himself is responsible. In 1523, Luther edited a pamphlet with Philipp Melanchthon, titled *Deuttung der czwo grewlichen Figuren, Bapstesels czu Rom vnd Munchkalbs zu Freyberg ynn Meyssen funden (The Pope-Ass Explained)*. Here, a 'monstrous' hybrid creature, supposedly found in the year 1496 in the Tiber River, is depicted and theologically interpreted by Melanchthon as the pope. The ass mentioned in the 1545 tract is, therefore, not merely the common animal, but readers might have an image in mind that it is already modified by polemic artistic reworking (see figure fig. 1).

[27] Another important point is that Luther's aggressive metaphors not only join two domains semantically—in this case, the human and the animal sphere—but also connect *the religious text to formal linguistic structures* such as sayings or proverbs. The domains are, thus, to be characterized more closely. These structures provide established means to secure common understanding. Scholarship has counted about 5,000 occasions. Luther made use of sayings and proverbs in his writings (Zimmer 2016, 99). As the expressions of popular wisdom, these sayings enable him to connect theological argument to formulae of (popular) everyday knowledge. Luther even inscribed some of these proverbs on the walls of his dining room as an invitation to discuss them. Moreover, in his polemics, Luther makes intense use of this connectability:

> [28] Also, Carolus Magnus at Rome, at Frankfurt, and in France, and his son Ludwig at Aachen, and other emperors have held councils. Dearest, such fine bishops and emperors should rather have done wrong and are condemned only because the farting ass in Rome (what else can he do?) sets it out of his own confused head and farts it out of his nasty belly, that it is not proper for the emperor to set up a council, nor to order persons to it, or to name them. Oh, how the coarse ass is so pleased! He cries out for someone to put a stick on his sack so that his loins may be bent.[18]

[29] The exclamation highlighted has its correspondence in Luther's collection of proverbs

18 "Auch Karolus Magnus zu Rom, zu Franckfort und in Franckreich, und sein son Ludwig zu Ah, und ander mehr Keiser Concilia gehalten haben. Lieber, solten solche feine Bisschove und Keiser darumb haben unrecht gethan und verdampt sein, das der fartz Esel zu Rom (was kan er sonst mehr?) aus seinem eigen tollen kopff setzt und aus seinem garstigen bauch fartzet, Es gebuer dem Keiser nicht, an zu setzen ein Concilium, noch personen dazu zu ordenen, oder nennen. O wie ist dem groben esel so wol! Er ringet nach einem, der jm einen stecken auff den sack leget, das jm die lenden sich beugen muesten!" (WA 54:222)

Figure 1 Anonymous: Der Papstesel zu Rom (sixteenth century). License: CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34906192.

(nr. 324 *Es ist yhm zu wohl*). It is repeatedly used in Luther's writings in connection with the metaphor of the ass (see WA 5:333, Thiele 1900, 296–97). The proverb Luther alludes to is still well-known in contemporary German: "Wenn es dem Esel zu wohl wird, geht er aufs Eis" ("complacency makes one reckless"). In his 1545 pamphlet, the notion of the (farting) ass on ice becomes a *Leit*-metaphor:

> O dear pope-ass, do not lick, most dearest ass, do not. For this year, the ice has frozen to a slippery state because there had not been much wind, so you may fall and break a leg. And if, in falling, you should fart, then the whole world would laugh about you and say: Yuck, how the pope-ass has shit himself [...][19] [30]

The aggressive metaphor allows Luther to associate his considerations on the pope and his relationship to the temporal powers with the well-known and easily understandable famous sayings that Luther considers to contain moral authority and rich experience.[20] He uses well-proven and refined ready-made linguistic structures, often as easy examples, in order to instantiate general truths and religious teachings (Zimmer 2016, 100), not least regarding the spreading of God's Word. The same process of connecting to established structures can be witnessed in Luther's references to theological traditions, such as in his use of the 'Leviathan on the hook'-metaphor (Rieske-Braun 1999, 252–53). By using these structures, he established a complicity of metaphor that makes such metaphors good insults (Camp 2017, 51). [31]

Accordingly, it is not the ass (animal sphere) as such the pope is metaphorically mapped upon, but rather the ass in a particular context, within a particular narrative, a popular literal sphere that might be different from the animal sphere as such. To Luther, popular forms of speech open up a new linguistic world as instrumental for spreading God's Word. It is not the concrete world of experience but the everyday world of popular experience as conceptualized by common linguistic formulae. In this sense, the everyday meaning of terms remains important for Luther in religious discourse—as a sign of incarnation.[21] [32]

To summarize: It is not only to better understand the meaning of the concept 'pope' or 'papacy' that Luther employs the aggressive metaphor of the ass in such a high degree of repetition. A single occasion could have done the trick for that. Rather, Luther aims [33]

19 "Ah liebs Bapst Eselchen, lecke nicht, Aller liebstes Eselin, thus nicht! Denn das Eiss ist dis jar seer glat gefroren, weil der wind still ist gewest, du moechtest fallen und ein bein brechen. Wo dir denn im fallen ein fortz entfuere, so wuerde doch alle welt dein lachen und sagen: Ey pfu Teufel, wie hat sich der Bapstesel beschiessen [...]" (WA 54:221).

20 "Es sind besonders der in den Sprichwörtern enthaltene Erfahrungsschatz und ihre hohe moralische Autorität, die ihn interessieren. Zudem sind sie geläufig und in ihrer Formulierung allgemeinverständlich, ideal also, um sie bei der „Verbreitung des Gotteswortes" ausgiebig einzusetzen. Es war Luthers besondere Predigttechnik, das Volk, aus dem er als Bauern- und Bergmannssohn selber hervorgegangen war, in seiner vertrauten Sprache anzusprechen und dabei bekannte und zustimmungsfähige Sprichwörter zu nutzen. Eine statistische Auswertung hat ergeben, dass Luthers Gebrauch von deutschen Sprichwörtern und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten über die Jahre stetig anwuchs" (Zimmer 2016, 99).

21 See Dennis Bielfeldt's claim: "It is important to preserve the original meaning of a word even within a theological context if one is not to compromise God's real incarnation in theological phrases like"God is in Jesus" or "Christ's body is in the bread." Luther's emphasis on the importance of the everyday sense of words in Biblical interpretation holds also for theology" (Bielfeldt 1990, 125).

to transform the meaning of the target that he wishes in the future to be associated with—and only with—the negative elements of the source domain (stubbornness, stupidity, and indecency of the ass).[22] He activates and commits the full aggressive potential of the metaphor in ostentatious explicitness. This case, therefore, shows that source and target domain are not unchangeable elements in the process of metaphorizing that influences its very elements. In this case, Luther seeks to *change* the religious target notion by the comparatively blunt instrument of repetition of the source notion. The astonishment (*Frappanz*) caused by the association of scatological metaphorical elements supports this aim of using metaphor for the sake of transformation. After all, Luther claims to propagate God's word, and God's Word must cut the hearer to the quick (Stolt 2000, 100).[23] The connection with everyday knowledge in the form of proverbs, then, gives rise to a sudden insight (*Aha-Erlebnis—raptus*) that is all the more convincing as it seems to correspond to generally accepted simple and evident truths. In this case, the pope is not a simple ass but an ass already unveiled or interpreted as epitomizing certain characteristics. So, it is the crucial question of what kind of domain is mapped in this process of aggressive metaphorization.

Cusanus's Cataphoric Metaphors

In their attempt to analyze and express the transcendent with immanent means by employing metaphors, the religious aims of Luther and Cusanus meet. Both refuse to propagate the *sacrificium intellectus* but use a *docta ignorantia* (*learned ignorance*), for which metaphors are both expressions and instruments (Saarinen 1988, 38). However, as Cusanus is mentioned only four times in the 127 volumes of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* of Luther's works, a direct influence of the former's teaching on the latter is highly improbable. Still, certain corresponding elements in their teachings permit, if not comparison, but the indication of significant similarities that allow for tentative generalizing ideas on the use of metaphor and its role in religious meaning-making. [34]

Although Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) is not as notorious for his verbal aggression as Martin Luther, the cardinal, Lord Bishop, and papal legate is well able to employ [35]

22 See Hundt (2022, 132): "In der neueren Forschung ist dieser Vorgang auch als 'Framing' beschrieben worden: durch die wiederholte Rahmung und kontextuelle Einbettung von Konzepten mit jeweils bestimmten anderen Konzepten (hier Metaphern/negative Attribute) wird die Konzeptualisierung des Zielkonzepts (PAPST) selbst allmählich verändert. Es geht dann dabei nicht nur darum, das Zielkonzept (PAPST) durch den Rückgriff auf ein bestimmtes Quellkonzept (ESEL) besser zu verstehen; dies wäre im Sinne der kognitiven Metapherntheorie durch eine einmalige Gleichsetzung bereits möglich. Sondern es geht darüber hinaus darum, diese Gleichsetzung durch die penetrante Wiederholung so zu verfestigen, dass die vom Quellkonzept übertragenen Bedeutungsanteile ('dumm,' 'störrisch,' 'unbelehrbar') zu einem konstitutiven Bestandteil des Zielkonzepts (PAPST) selbst werden."

23 On the corresponding result of the metaphor of the 'great struggle' or 'wonderful duell' in Luther's text see Rieske-Braun (1999, 257): "Mit den aus den Vorstellungshorizonten des Kriegsgetümmels, des Tierreiches oder speziell aus dem mythischen Themenkreis vom überlisteten Leviathan gewonnenen Bildspendern vom 'Erwürgen', vom 'Fressen' des Todes und von der 'zähnezerreißenden' destructio diaboli vollzieht sich der 'raptus' der credentes, die von deren Überzeugungskraft hineingezogen werden in die Macht des Victor Christus selbst. Die divinitas Christi raubt den verschlingenden Tyrannen im duellum mirabile ihre Macht, die sich im zugesprochenen verbum evangelii erweist."

astonishing aggressive metaphors in his theological and philosophical writings. Perhaps he is more subtle in his means: in the end, however, I would argue that the process and the effects of aggressive metaphorizing, that is, of semantic impertinence, are quite similar, indicating a function of metaphors in religious language that has to be analyzed more closely.

Particular characteristics of Cusanus's metaphors have already been recognized in current scholarship, not least by Meredith Ziebart, who described the "aggressive metaphors" of Cusanus book *De visione Dei* (1453), which "insisted that mystical ascent is best achieved through the violent confrontation of reason with its own limits" (2015, 58). What is more, the lesson the 'layman' (*idiota*) of Cusanus's famous dialogue teaches is "a lesson in intellectual and spiritual humility aimed primarily at learned clerics" (2015, 47); the metaphor thus turning explicitly and also offensively against Nicholas's learned colleagues—and, ultimately, against himself. [36]

Aggression is subcutaneously present in Nicholas's writings. His theoretical language is demanding; see, for example, the Anti-Aristotelian idea of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, which seems to contradict the basic logical law of non-contradiction. Moreover, he also connects explicit demands to his philosophic-theological considerations, addressed to the audience of his sermons or the readers of his work. His jussive *Una sit religio* (Let there be one religion) from his *De pace fidei* is a telling example as it demands the introduction of a general notion of religion in order to guarantee peace on earth (Stünkel 2013). It demands revolutionizing one's thinking to approach the human intellect's final goal, God. As such a demand, his language functions aggressively against established truths. One could add Cusanus' 'sifting' (*cribratio*) of the Qur'an, which has the surprising result that this book becomes a proof and expression of the truth of Christianity. [37]

Like Luther, Cusanus reflected intensely on the question and role of metaphor and figurative speech. In sermon XLI *Confide filia!* from the year 1444, he connects his consideration of metaphors metaphorically to the work of the baker, who is a metaphor for the preacher. [38]

> And thus Christ often uses meals or foods for the body as symbols of the nourishment of the Spirit, in that he himself, the Word of God, invites to the meal, preparing it, serving it, etc. [39]
>
> Therefore I believe that a preacher is like a baker or a cook of a dish, who receives a Word of God from the abundance of writings/scriptures and bakes or cooks it for a meal.[24] [40]

Christ himself employs figurative speech, and the preacher follows this practice in faithful succession, using ingredients from scripture to combine for a nourishing dish; his sermon is the spreading of the Word. By speaking figuratively, the preacher follows God's example. [41]

24 "Et hinc saepe de refectione spiritus Christus dat figuras cenae et refectionis corporis, quo modo ipse, qui est 'logos' Dei, vocat ad cenam, parat, 'ministrat' etc. Sic arbitror praedicatorem esse quasi pistorem seu coquum refectionis, qui recipit de latitudine Scripturarum verbum Dei et pistat et decoquit pro refectione" (Nicolai de Cusa 1932–2002, h XVII:140).

Throughout his work, one finds many examples of aggressive metaphors. In his dialogue *Idiota de mente,* the famous spoon, or rather, the process of making a spoon, is at first sight considered to be unsuitable for theological discourse because its ordinariness offends the participants' sense of appropriateness. In his sermons, for instance, Cusanus repeatedly used metaphors of agriculture, the production of food, nourishment, and not only that but also of the corresponding bodily functions. As his sermons are mainly homilies, these metaphors are employed to better understand the words of Scripture—that are to be combined and digested like bread. Some of these metaphors are quite disturbing, such as the connection of God and our process of metabolism as developed in sermon 178: [42]

> God is the food of our spirit. For our spirit digests the food of his life via the warmth of love (*amor*) in faith, purifies in hope and unifies in love (*dilectio*). Therefore, God or Wisdom or Word is the food of our intellect, and our intellect is the food of the Word.[25] [43]

If not outspokenly aggressive, this metaphor is at least bold and, perhaps, offending. A telling and paradigmatic example of the religiously significant role aggressive metaphors play in Cusanus' thinking is his search for the name of God, which is, ultimately, a walk of penance (walk of shame) for the human mind. [44]

According to Cusanus, the name of God is only to be approached asymptotically by an intensifying process of trial and error due to the insurmountable 'walls of paradise' (*murus paradisi*). Through this, at the same time forbidding and promising metaphor, Cusanus illustrates the insurmountable limits of the human mind, characterized by this tendency to process in distinctions. An adequate notion of God can only be reached by continuously transcending (*transcendenter*) rational limitations. This insight has twofold results, for it is both a humiliation and a motivating challenge to the reflective human mind. [45]

Stressing the hardships of his endeavor, Cusanus employs a spatial metaphor of movement (pilgrimage) while investigating the concept of the divine. At some points on his pilgrimage, Nicholas even congratulates himself on having found the best name,[26] but these moments of triumph are rare and only momentary. His sublime aims prove a mission impossible for limited human intellectual capacity. In his 1453 religious multilogue *De pace fidei*, Nicholas describes both the human longing for God's true name and the problems associated with it: [46]

> You, then, who are the giver of life and of existence, are the one who is seen to be sought in different ways in different rites, and You are named in different [47]

25 "Deus est cibus spiritus nostri. Nam spiritus noster cibum vitae suae mediante calore amoris digerit fide, sublimat spe, et unit dilectione. Deus igitur seu sapientia sive verbum est cibus intellectus nostri, et intellectus noster est cibus verbi" (h XVIII:287).

26 On the diverse suggestions Nicholas makes for the name of God in the course of his thinking, see Gómez (1965).

> names; for as You are [in Yourself], You remain unknown and ineffable to all.[27]

According to Nicolas, God's true name, being identical to truth, is a shared desire of all, as the perception of truth is happiness itself. He who gives life is often called upon and is named in many different ways, but all of them are unsuccessful. God's unrecognizability, however, is not the end of human efforts and actions. Despite this, there remains a dire longing for understanding in all humans. Although Nicholas, in his best moments, seems to grasp a glimpse of conceptualization and, thus, arrives at the mere possibility of theo-logy (i.e., of speaking about God), such momentary insight is overcome at the next instant by God's overwhelming inexplicability. Nicholas explains this with a very skeptical-sounding statement: [48]

> That it is neither the case that He is named or is not named nor the case that He both is named and is not named. Rather, whatever can be said disjunctively or conjunctively, whether consistently or contradictorily, does not benefit Him (because of the excellence of his infinity), so that He is the one Beginning, which is prior to ever thought formable of it.[28] [49]

God is beyond even the conjunction of being named and not being named, as he is the primary principle. This reflection on the name of God leads Nicholas, himself a cardinal of the Church, directly to the audacious statement that being itself cannot be attached to Him, as He is beyond this contradiction. [50]

What does this mean? Every time some adequate transcending name for God has been found, it turns aggressively against the intellectual capacity of its employer. In Nicholas's description, rational thinking truly finds its limits. However, it is precisely at this point of deep humiliation that fortune turns, and rational thinking transcends itself (again). Nicholas celebrates the turning point enthusiastically though it might be painful to experience. His *De visione dei* reads: [51]

> And You, O Lord, who are the nourishment of the full-grown, have encouraged me to do violence to myself, because impossibility coincides with necessity. And I have found an abode wherein You dwell unveiledly—an abode surrounded by the coincidence of contradictories. And [this coincidence] is the wall of Paradise, wherein You dwell. The gate of this wall is guarded by a most lofty rational spirit; unless this spirit is vanquished the entrance will not be accessible. Therefore, on the other side of the coincidence of contradictories You can be seen—but not at all on this side.[29] [52]

27 "Tu ergo, qui es dator vitae et esse, es ille qui in diversis ritibus differenter quaeri videris et in diversis nominibus nominaris, quoniam uti es manes omnibus incognitus et ineffabilis" (h VII:6, translation by Hopkins).

28 "Quod neque nominatur neque non nominatur, neque nominatur et non nominator, sed omnia, quae dici possunt disiunctive et copulative per consensum vel contradictionem, sibi non conveniunt propter excellentiam infinitatis eius, ut sit unum principium ante omnem cogitationem de eo formabilem" (h IV:8, translation by Hopkins).

29 "Et animasti me, domine, qui es cibus grandium, ut vim mihi ipsi faciam, quia impossibilitas coincidet cum necessitate. Et repperi locum, in quo revelate reperieris, cinctum contradictoriorum coincidentia.

It is the force *vis*,[30] a process that turns against the user in a very special way, thereby overcoming his most esteemed ability of rational thought (*altissimus rationis)*. However, it is also the way to gain intellectually satisfying nourishment, or rather, to transcend the walls of paradise.[31] [53]

Nicholas employs a strong form of a specific transcendence-immanence distinction expressed via a liminal spatial metaphor. An insurmountable wall is erected between God and human understanding, guarded by pure reason. However, is mystical silence the only possible reaction to this situation? No, for Nicholas shares Proclus' opinion that God is beyond every theology as He is beyond silence. Therefore, the way of language is still open; it is, in fact, the only path. Reaching the wall is not the end of human effort but rather the beginning of deeper religious insight. Nicholas points insistently at the dynamic relationship of assertion and negation, or rather, of both *theologia negativa* and *theologia affirmativa*, that coincide with the permanently transcending theology, for which Cusanus coined the term *docta ignorantia*. [54]

What does this mean for the use of metaphors in the (or rather as the) process of transcending? The interplay of assertion and denial in thought work formally asserts a special concept or notion to be used here to continue transcending. All statements and concepts concerning God must maintain the contradictory balance of negation and affirmation. They cannot be used for definitions but merely as *indications of a process that both transcends and allows further human philosophical or theological speculation*. In fact, a new language is needed to state and transcend human inadequacy.[32] Innovative language is the ladder that leads human thinking to divine spheres. Consequently, conceptual experiments such as bold or daring metaphorization to Nicholas are not idle linguistic games. Rather, these experiments gain ontological significance by leading human thinking to transcend itself through a process of perpetual approximation. In reflecting on the name of God, Nicholas does not promote a self-sufficient system of true assertions as the final goal of human knowledge but rather a methodologically-derived opening for various ways of *transcending one's own limits*. [55]

Accordingly, the status of language in Nicholas's thinking cannot be overestimated. The special status of the human being as a *Deus secundus* was founded on the fact that man was created to be the image of God, mirroring God's creativity.[33] There is an important conclusion to be drawn from this first God-related anthropological definition. Formally, words used in a religious context are figural *indications* of God's creative powers; they are not identifications of objects. Man's creative power in devising notions represents the One that enables and grounds this power while not being any subject to this power. [56]

Et iste est murus paradisi, in quo habitas, cuius portam custodit spiritus altissimus rationis, qui nisi vincatur non patebit ingressus. Ultra igitur coincidentiam contradictoriorum videri poteris et nequaquam citra" (h VI:34–35, translation by Hopkins).

30 On the importance of the concept of *vis* in Cusanus's reformation of metaphysics, see Leinkauf (2012, 97).

31 On the image of the wall of paradise in Cusanus, see Borsche (1995, 248). Compare also Haubst (1989).

32 On Cusanus's linguistic quest, see Hans Gerhard Senger's summarizing assertion: "Es kann also nur darum gehen, verbesserte Aussageweisen zu suchen, d.h. nach einer neuen Sprache mit anderen Begriffen, Wörtern, Denk- und Grammatikstrukturen zu suchen, durch die das Unnennbare nennbarer werden könnte" (1979, 86).

33 Compare Cusanus' *De Beryllo* (h XI/1:9).

Human reason is only, but also not less than, a reflection of divine action in creating things: "conceptio divinae mentis est rerum productio; conceptio nostrae mentis est rerum notio."[34] The notion of God does not directly signify God, but by permanently transcending itself, it signifies his creative power and thus indicates him indirectly. However, as only an indication, it also points to its own inadequacy.[35]

In almost all of his writings, Cusanus transcends the usual theological language and [57]
courageously experiments with neologisms. For example, the word *possest*, which appears in a 1459 dialogue, combines the indefinite *posse* with the finite *est* and is the linguistic sign for the notorious *coincidentia oppositorum*. One of the more famous proposed names of God, developed by Nicholas later in his life, is the *non-aliud*. In his text *Directio speculantis seu de li non aliud (On the Not-Other)* he gives a definition of the *non-aliud* that is likely to cause consternation: "Not-other is no other than Not-other" (*'non aliud' est non aliud quam non aliud*).

Considering this, it becomes quite obvious that other proposals, for example, the [58]
attempt to take the Name of God for an analogy or a simile or even as a descriptive metaphor are not very promising. Analogies seem too one-sided, being only resemblances and not, as Nicholas wants them to be resemblances, similarities, and differences in one communicating process. However, the most important objection is as follows: The names (of God) are not mere analogies or descriptive/comparative metaphors because their use has a certain revolutionizing effect on the person who uses them for theological reasons. Using God's name is not, as a primitive understanding of metaphors would suggest, a non-authentic way of speaking but rather the opposite—if one considers the effects the use of the name has on the thoughts and language of the speaker.

In his *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie (Paradigms for a Metaphorology)*, Hans [59]
Blumenberg, with reference to Cusanus's *docta ignorantia*, has developed the idea of the absolute metaphor. Here, the structure of the metaphor itself is metaphysically important. The metaphor indicates something that cannot be captured by it, so it is only in difference that it can be true. Blumenberg explains:

> For this is the precise representation of the function of the absolute metaphor, [60]
> which stands in the blank space, which cannot be fulfilled by concept or understanding and testifies in its own way. … it gives an image instead of a concept and conceptual comprehension, and its reproduction is both metaphor for the reproduced and metaphor for the impossibility to reach it.[36]

The notions of God in Cusanus' text share this quality of both indicating and, at the [61]
same time, denying the possibility of reaching the truth. Additionally, the absolute

34 Nicolai de Cusa, *Idiota de Mente* (h V:109).

35 See Senger (1979, 99–100): "So faßt man beide Sprachebenen in ihrer Realisierung durch die Normalsprache vielleicht besser als Verweissprachen auf wegen ihres Verweisungscharakters auf das nicht rational Erkennbare und Benennbare."

36 "Denn dies ist doch die genaue Darstellung der Funktion der 'absoluten Metapher', die in die begreifend-begrifflich nicht erfüllbare Lücke und Leerstelle einspringt, um auf ihre Art auszusagen…. Sie gibt ein ‚Bild' anstelle des Begriffs und des Nachvollzugs im Begreifen, sie bildet nach im wörtlichen Sinn, und ihr Nachbilden ist zugleich Metapher für das Nachgebildete und Metapher für das Nichterreichenkönnen" (Blumenberg 1999, 177).

metaphor involved here is able to express and carry out a certain process (Blumenberg 1999, 178). Thinking about the name of God does not only claim a certain attitude (*Haltung*), thus becoming pragmatic or even a performance (1999, 183); rather, it completely and utterly shakes and changes a state of mind, which is symbolically expressed by the struggle against the custodian of Paradise, namely highest or rather, pure reason. If any, it proves to be a divine performance.

[62] Therefore, I suggest considering the names of God to be highly aggressive metaphors or cataphors (not to be understood in the common linguistic sense as opposed to anaphors) to point at their basic functionality and the intellectual and ontological process of an overwhelming turnover of thinking which follows their introduction. As I understand the notion, a cataphor does not only mean the total revolution of one's conceptual framework. It profoundly changes its user. It is also a shift in the sense that the very thing that should be grasped by a certain cataphorical concept itself grasps the user of the notion. They somehow change positions; by cataphorical language, the researcher becomes the object of research. Now it becomes obvious that the discussion on the name of God is not only a matter of theory and abstraction but has very practical effects on the very existence of the people discussing. The ultimate insight of Cusanus's thinking is, therefore, not human understanding of God but vice versa, the humble insight in being understood by God's understanding that is the joy of self-content in the face of the absolute maximum. The metaphorical notion of God does not identify God but shows the result of the inexplicable on conceptual thinking. The investigator thus proves to be investigated. In the words of *De vision dei:* Seeing you is nothing else than being seen by you. Every indicating notion of God is a catastrophe for human thinking showing its inadequacy and thus forcing it to reverse its basis to gain a new standpoint for another catastrophic attempt that is a leap not into belief but into theology.

[63] To summarize: In contrast to the examples taken from Luther, Cusanus's aggressive metaphors, to a considerable part, turn forcefully (*vis vocabuli*) against their employer. They become self-aggressive metaphors. Reasonable thinking employing metaphors painfully learns about its limitations. Not only does Cusanus cause astonishment by showing the desperate limitation of reason concerning its own goal, he even multiplies this astonishment by claiming the necessity of reason being transcendent by employing reasonable thinking. The transcending names of God Cusanus suggests are catastrophic to the human ability to understand. The metaphor of the 'wall of Paradise' expresses, like few others, the tormenting mixture of, at the same time, reason's closeness to the divine and reason's inability to reach it, thus insulting its abilities in the face of its ultimate longing.

Conclusion

[64] In his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, Hans Blumenberg points out that a metaphor always has generated a surplus of the power of assertion (1999, 9). On a semantic, syntac-

tic, and pragmatic level, aggressive metaphors are important examples of Blumenberg's case.

This power is manifested in historical reality. Aggressive metaphors tend to be successful, although their very success might veil their intended religious meaning. In 1521, the papal legate to Germany, Girolamo Aleandro (1480–1542) dryly remarks that, to him, the Germans, in fact, are not moved by the basics of Luther's teachings but rather by his curses and Hutten's satires (Bayer 2017, 226). [65]

More than others, aggressive metaphors tend to be explorative metaphors that open new ways of understanding and meaning, supported by a sense of astonishment. They are, thus, *interactive* metaphors in the sense of Max Black (1962, 31–46; see Bielfeldt 1990, 127). As it seems, aggressive metaphor might be used to open up new possibilities of expansion. However, they do so by making use of certain formulae of every-day knowledge, such as in Luther's case the proverbs, thus greatly enhancing the possible scope of understanding and applicability of the metaphor in question. The mapping the aggressive metaphor expresses is brought to cognition through the collision of the 'associated commonplaces' (or connotations) of the words involved (Bielfeldt 1990, 127). [66]

Once a metaphor is employed, the domains involved in the mapping change dramatically in some cases. This seems to be important regarding the process of re-metaphorization (*Weitermetaphorisierung*). Furthermore, individual cases associated with one domain, such as the ass as a case of animal life, in metaphorical usage may not refer to the concrete animal but rather to the animal as conceptualized by every-day language—for example in particular sayings: After having gained status, the book is not simply an element of the domain of media. After being introduced, the notions of bread and wine are no longer simply words belonging to the domain of nutrition. Moreover, what happens if they are aggressively metaphorized as (mere) salt and water (Thomas Müntzer)? [67]

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