ANALOGICAL GOD-TALK:
A THOMISTIC CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUE

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Speaking of God

The Religious Problem of God-Talk

Gregory Nazianzen cites Plato approvingly when the latter said that, "It is difficult to conceive God, but to define Him in words is an impossibility," yet Gregory's own opinion was even stronger: "it is impossible to express Him, and yet more impossible to conceive Him."[1] More recently, Paul Knitter put the matter this way:

> Something else that all religious traditions recognize—something that is often forgotten . . . by the philosophers and theologians . . . The object or content of religious experience and language is beyond final human comprehension. All religions admit, it seems to me, that what they have experienced and proclaim is, in the ultimate analysis, mystery—more than the human intellect and the human perceptive apparatus can ever fully and finally grasp.[2]

This issue would seem to be a serious problem for the Christian. A. W. Tozer claims that, "What enters our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us."[3] What does it say about someone if what enters his mind when he thinks of God is *nothing*?

Further, a premium is placed on knowledge of God by Christian teachers. J. I. Packer states that, "Scripture speaks of 'knowing' God as the spiritual person's ideal."[4] Further, following Carl F. H. Henry, Albert Mohler wrote that, "Preaching is not the business of speculating about God's nature, will, or ways, but is bearing witness to what God has spoken concerning Himself."[5] No less a teacher than Jesus Christ taught that eternal life is to *know* God (John 17:3).[6] It seems, then, that one's inability to conceive of God threatens the possibility of true preaching, attaining to the spiritual life, and the reception of eternal life itself.

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1 Gregory Nazianzen, "Oration XXVII," in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 289. (Apparently the attribution refers to Plato, *Timaeus*, 28E).

2 Paul F. Knitter, "Religious Diversity: What to Make of It . . . How to Engage It? A Conversation with Paul Moser and Keith Yandell," *Philosophia Christi* 11, no. 2 (2009): 315.

3 A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Walker and Company, 1996), 1.

4 J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology : A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1995), 10.

5 R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Relevance of the Trinity," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (Spring, 2006): 87.

6 "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God. . ." (Scriptural citations are from the English Standard Version [ESV] unless otherwise noted). "αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν." The Greek text used when citing the New Testament is, unless otherwise noted, from

Denying knowledge of God also raises problems for theology. Robert Culver argues that, "we must define God by some sort of descriptive statements about Him if we are to discuss theology at all."[7] Norman Geisler argues that ignorance of what God is like leaves us in a self-defeating agnosticism, for we would have to conclude that we "know that we cannot know," and that we can "know enough about God to say that we cannot know anything about God."[8] On this last ground alone it might seem that knowledge of God must be possible.

For the Christian there is additional evidence from Scripture that knowledge of God is attainable. Besides John 17:3 which equates knowledge of God with eternal life, the apostle Paul says that even the pagan knows God (Rom. 1:19-20), even making this the reason they have no excuse for their idol worship.[9] God is also said to be known in Judah (Ps. 76:1), and that knowledge of God would eventually be found throughout the earth (Isa. 11:9). Yet even here, within God's special revelation through the Bible, we have statements that appear to confirm the opposite of those above. Job 11:7-8 reads, "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?"[10] Isaiah asks, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?" (40:18).[11] Thus, there seems to be a tension in God's revelation itself.

The Apologetical Problem of God-Talk

This tension has not gone unnoticed by those outside the Christian faith, and the difficulty in providing a precise definition of God is often itself used as an argument against His existence. In some instances the difficulty is offered as proof that no argument may even get off the ground. George Smith says that the failure to clearly define God actually produces "the major point of controversy between theism and critical atheism."[12] Antony Flew opened a debate with the question of just what the atheist has "not to believe."[13] When J. P. Moreland debated Kai

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Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993). Note that "γινώσκωσιν" here is listed under "coming to know – personally" in *BAGD*, but the term's range of meaning includes "understand, conceive." See William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[7] Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Geanies House, U.K.: Mentor, 2008), 61.

[8] Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two: God and Creation* (Bloomington: Bethany House, 2003), 22.

9 Note that BAGD has the same basic meaning for γνωστός here as for γινώσκωσιν in John 17:3.

10 הַחֵקֶר אֱלוֹהַ תִּמְצָא אִם עַד־תַּכְלִית שַׁדַּי תִּמְצָא: גָּבְהֵי שָׁמַיִם מַה־תִּפְעָל עֲמֻקָּה מִשְּׁאוֹל מַה־תֵּדָע: Unless otherwise noted, Hebrew text from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1996).

11 וְאֶל־מִי תְּדַמְּיוּן אֵל וּמַה־דְּמוּת תַּעַרְכוּ לוֹ:

12 George H. Smith, Atheism: *The Case Against God* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), 39.

13 Terry Miethe and Antony Flew, *Does God Exist?: A Believer and an Atheist Debate* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 1-6.

Nielsen over the existence of God in 1988, Moreland offered several standard theistic arguments, yet his opponent responded with only one argument: that belief in God is irrational due to conceptual problems with the word "God."[14]

Nielsen states that, "if a concept is incoherent, one ought not, even as an article of faith, to take it on trust that the concept in question has application."[15] The problem, as he sees it, is that, "we have no idea how to identify, pick out, a Being so characterized [as an incorporeal / unlimited agent]."[16] The reason for this contention is that, "the concept of God is incoherent because God is not—where God is used non-anthropomorphically—identifiable," and this makes statements concerning God (not to mention arguments) to be "senseless collocation[s] of words."[17]

Like Aquinas, Nielsen argues that this is the case because our language is experience-based and therefore must always refer to common experience if it is to be intelligible.[18] Thus, "'God' when employed non-anthropomorphically, does not denote a reality which even in principle can be identified."[19] Our inability to refer to God using experiential language explains why God-talk often reduces to merely negative statements. To say that God is incorporeal, eternal, infinite, etc. is only to say what God is *not* (following the *via negativa*), and statements such as these do not provide the positive content necessary for verifiability.

> When we ask, "Is God real?" Nielsen states that,
> for someone who understands what he is saying there can be no question of an empirical or experiential identification. . . . To so conceive of God is to commit the category mistake of conceiving of God as a reality within the conceptual framework of the reality of the physical world. But in speaking of God we are speaking of an utterly different kind of reality. God belongs to a category by himself to which no other reality belongs.[20]

Nielsen goes on to admit that given God's *sui generis* reality, that if such an argument is correct, "that we are not talking nonsense when we speak of God, for God, after all, can be identified, though the identification must be conceptual."[21]

It seems at this point that Nielsen might concede the point. Instead, he argues that God's existence remains an open question because we do not know that such a Being necessarily exists.

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[14] J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist?: The Debate Between Theists and Atheists* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), 49-56.

[15] Kai Nielsen, *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* (New York: Herder and herder, 1971), 115.

[16] Ibid., 116.

[17] Ibid., 118.

[18] See ibid., 126-128.

[19] Ibid., 128.

[20] Nielsen, *Contemporary Critiques*, 131-132.

[21] Ibid., 133-134.

He concludes, "We know negatively that it is something of which it is senseless to ask for its causally sufficient conditions, but here we are again back to a purely negative characterization. We do not understand in any positive manner what we are talking about. We are no more able to 'conceptually identify' God than we are able to empirically or experientially identify him."[22] Indeed, "we do not know what we are referring to when we use 'God' in a religiously appropriate way."[23]

Nielsen's criticism is not limited to atheistic philosophers. Nielsen cites Paul Tillich, Frederick Copleston, Athanasius, Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, and others as teaching quite clearly that God is beyond all created being and is thus incomprehensible. William Lane Craig bemoans the problem of negative God-talk when he writes, "While we can say what God is not like, we cannot say what He is like . . . leaving us in a state of genuine agnosticism about the nature of God."[24]

If this is truly the case with God, where can the theologian or apologist go for knowledge about God's nature and existence? "Before we go to the proofs or the evidence for God's existence, the believer must show that we know what we are talking about when we speak of God."[25] This seems to be a reasonable expectation, and one that the Church has attempted to fulfill in various ways.

<div align="center">The Theological Problem of God-Talk</div>

Because theology (whether primarily biblical or philosophical) seems to teach both that in important ways God is both knowable in some senses and unknowable in others, it seems the tension must remain even if it is explained. Louis Berkhof notes that, "The Christian Church confesses on the one hand that God is the Incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known," and that the two ideas of God's knowability and incomprehensibility "were always held side by side in the Christian Church."[26] Even today many Christian theologians find a middle position on the issue of knowing and speaking of God. Charles Hodge begins his article on the knowledge of God by stating, "It is the clear doctrine of Scriptures that God can be known."[27] Hodge quickly follows this declaration up with an important qualification: "This does

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[22] Ibid., 134.

[23] Ibid., 135.

[24] William Lane Craig, *The Coherence of Theism* at http://www.bethinking.org/who-are-you-god/advanced/the-coherence-of-theism-part-2.htm (accessed November 17, 2009). Craig's agnostic stance is the result of his rejection of the doctrine of analogical God-talk which will be discussed below. The full quote is: "While we can say what God is not like, we cannot say what He is like, *except in an analogical sense—which must in the end fail, since there is no univocal element in the predicates we assign to God*—leaving us in a state of genuine agnosticism about the nature of God" (emphasis added).

[25] Ibid., 55.

[26] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 29.

[27] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology in Three Volumes* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 335.

not mean that we can know all that is true concerning God."[28] Diogenes Allen says that, "we may gain a limited but genuine knowledge of God as God is in His essence and as God is related to us."[29] One popular website states it this way: "Can we really define God? Yes and no!"[30]

The Thomistic Solution to the Problems of God-Talk

One of the theologians who holds to this middle way is Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas acknowledges both of the above truths concerning our knowledge of God, and his theology is reflected in his doctrine of God-talk. Aquinas begins his theology with philosophical considerations based on creation, viz. finite, empirically-known, contingent beings reveal an infinite, rationally-affirmable, necessary Being.[31] His arguments result not only in the affirmation of God's existence, but the divine attributes as well. However, there remains an element of "agnosticism" with regard to God's essence, for "we cannot grasp what God is, but only what He is not and how other things are related to Him."[32]

Aquinas taught that men cannot come to know God through the same means that they use for other objects. There are certain truths about God that totally surpass man's ability to know, for, "according to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the sense for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not fall under the senses cannot be grasped by the human intellect except in so far as the knowledge of them is gathered from sensible things. Now, sensible things cannot lead the human intellect to the point of seeing in them the nature of the divine substance; for sensible things are effects that fall short of the power of their cause."[33]

This does not mean, though, that we are forever lost in agnosticism regarding God's existence and / or attributes. This is because "beginning with sensible things, our intellect is led to the point of knowing about God that He exists, and other such characteristics that must be attributed to the First Principle."[34] Thus, God's existence and attributes can be known to be the case via intellectual reasoning based on the empirical data around us.

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 141.

[30] J. Hampton Keathley III, *What God is Like*, http://bible.org/seriespage/what-god (accessed November 24, 2009).

[31] E.g., the famous "Five Ways" found in *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 2, A. 3.

[32] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles—Book One: God,* Tr. Anton Pegis. (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I. 30. 4. "Non enim de Deo capere possumus quid est, sed quid non est, et qualiter alia se habeant ad ipsum," (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 30. 4.).

[33] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 3. 3. "Nam ad substantiam ipsius capiendam intellectus humanus naturali virtute pertingere non potest: cum intellectus nostri, secundum modum praesentis vitae, cognitio a sensu incipiat; et ideo ea quae in sensu non cadunt, non possunt humano intellectu capi, nisi quatenus ex sensibilibus earum cognitio colligitur. Sensibilia autem ad hoc ducere intellectum nostrum non possunt ut in eis divina substantia videatur quid sit: cum sint effectus causae virtutem non aequantes." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 3. 3).

[34] Ibid. "Ducitur tamen ex sensibilibus intellectus noster in divinam cognitionem ut cognoscat de Deo quia est, et alia huiusmodi quae oportet attribui primo principio." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 3. 3).

For Aquinas, though, this is not the same thing as knowing God directly. This is not because God is unknowable *per se*, "since everything is knowable according as it is actual, God, Who is pure act without any admixture of potentiality, is in Himself supremely knowable."[35] Rather, it is because "what is supremely knowable in itself, may not be knowable to a particular intellect, on account of the excess of the intelligible object above the intellect; as, for example, the sun, which is supremely visible, cannot be seen by the bat by reason of its excess of light."[36] In this life, one cannot experience God's essence empirically, and so he is left with rational deductions from what can be empirically known.[37]

In order to obtain a full understanding of Aquinas's position on God-talk one must understand it in the context of his metaphysics and resulting epistemology along with some of his linguistic considerations. To that end, below will be presented an exposition of Aquinas's arguments for the existence and attributes of God, his take on knowledge concerning God, and his resulting doctrine of proper God-talk.

On Being and Essence

What God Is

Nielsen rightly notes that "the concept of God is not only attitude-expressing and attitude-evoking, but that it is a metaphysical concept as well."[38] The only writing of Thomas Aquinas generally considered to be purely philosophical is *On Being and Essence*.[39] In this short text, Aquinas considers what it means to *be* or to *exist*. In order to answer this issue, though, he begins with what it means to be an *essence* or a *being*. As Aquinas will use the terms, a being is "that which signifies the essence of a thing," and, "can be divided by the ten categories [of Aristotle]."[40] This usage limits being to existing things and not simply that which can be used as

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[35] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 12, A. 1. "dicendum quod, cum unumquodque sit cognoscibile secundum quod est in actu, Deus, qui est actus purus absque omni permixtione potentiae, quantum in se est, maxime cognoscibilis est." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Summa Theologiae*, I. Q. 12, A. 1).

[36] Ibid. "Sed quod est maxime cognoscibile in se, alicui intellectui cognoscibile non est, propter excessum intelligibilis supra intellectum, sicut sol, qui est maxime visibilis, videri non potest a vespertilione, propter excessum luminis." (Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, I. Q. 12, A. 1).

[37] Aquinas believes that the blessed in heaven do experience God directly. See *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 12, A. 1.

[38] Kai Nielsen, *Skepticism* (London, Eng: Macmillan Press, 1973), 52.

[39] Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence,* trans. Armand Maurer. 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institue of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 9.

[40] Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 30. Full text: "Unde Commentator in eodem loco dicit quod ens primo modo dictum est *quod significat essentiam rei*. Et quia, ut dictum est, ens hoc modo dictum dividitur per decem genera, oportet quod essentia significet aliquid commune omnibus naturis, per quas diversa entia in diversis generibus et speciebus collocantur, sicut humanitas est essentia hominis, et sic de aliis." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: De ente et essentia*, 1. 3).

subjects in predication.[41] For simplification we can think of essences or beings as "whatnesses" of things. An essence is given in reply to the question, "What is it?"[42]

Aquinas then considers that in substances composed of form and matter, "being is received and limited, because they have being from another."[43] This, however, is not true of God, whose essence is His being.[44] How did Aquinas come to think this way? The answer is based on the distinction between being ("*what* something is") and existence ("*whether* something is"). "Everything that does not belong to the concept of an essence . . . comes to it from outside and enters into composition with the essence. . . . Now, every essence can be understood without knowing anything about its being. . . . from this it is clear that being is other than essence . . . unless perhaps there is a reality whose [essence] is its being."[45] So, for example, one may think of a triangle as "a two-dimensional polygon with three sides joined at three corners" without including any reference to its existing. Further, one may go on to perform intricate mathematical operations on such a thing without there being any existing triangles in extra-mental reality.[46]

Moreover, it is clear that existence cannot simply be added to a thing's definition for then that thing would have to exist in order to be what it is. That this is not the case can be shown by another example—that of a unicorn. We can (and indeed must) define a unicorn without knowing if one exists (for how else would we know if a unicorn existed if we did not know what it was we were considering?). Defining is based on *what* a thing is, not *that* it is. This insight forms the basis for much of what follows.

That God Is

From the above facts one may move on to prove God's existence. The steps are as follwos: (1) a thing cannot cause itself to exist, for it would have to already exist in order to cause, (2) so everything whose existence is distinct from its essence must be getting its existence from another existing being, but (3) this cannot go on to inifity for there would be no efficient

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[41] So, for example, privations (e.g., "blindness," or "hole") may be named but are not to be properly considered as "beings." This does not mean they have no existential import, or cannot function as subjects of sentences—only that they are not given metaphysical status as substances. See Ibid., n.3.

[42] For the purposes of this paper, Aquinas's other distinctions (e.g., quiddity, form, nature, definition, etc.) will only be brought up as necessary.

[43] Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 65. "in quibus et esse est receptum et finitum, propter hoc quod ab alio esse habent" (Aquino, *De ente et essentia*, 5. 10).

[44] See ibid., 60.

[45] Ibid., 55. "Quicquid enim non est de intellectu essentiae vel quiditatis, hoc est adveniens extra et faciens compositionem cum essentia, quia nulla essentia sine his, quae sunt partes essentiae, intelligi potest. Omnis autem essentia vel quiditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo; possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel Phoenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura. Ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia vel quiditate, nisi forte sit aliqua res, cuius quiditas sit ipsum suum esse" (Aquino, *De ente et essentia*, 4. 6).

[46] And indeed they do not. Because triangles are two-dimensional, none can actually exist within the physical universe. See "Geometry" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

cause.[47] Thus, the very existence of created things that cannot account for their own existence demand the existence of a thing that can—and from what was said above, this thing's essence would be its existence. And this is God. [48]

On Essence and Knowledge

Defining Terms

Aquinas then turns to issues of form and matter, as created essences include both. In the cases of creatures, essence refers to a composite nature made up of form (the principle of determination) and matter (the principle of individuation).[49] Together, form/matter composites may be defined according to genus and species. Genus is the more generic term used to set off a group of similar things from other groups, while species picks out individuals within the genus by their specific differences. Genus refers to the matter of a thing, and the specific difference to its form.[50] So a man, for example, is made up of soul (form) and body (matter), and this essence is defined as rational (species) animal (genus). Here the term "human" can be predicated of many individuals but not limited to any one of them (as if to be Socrates is to be human may convert to being human is to be Socrates).

It is important to note in the above discussion that terms such as "genus" and "species" are not referring to extra-mental subsisting realties. [51] These are products of a mind, which attributes these concepts (*ratio*) to things as they are considered by the mind. This does not make these concepts simply unreal, for they are judgments properly founded in reality, but they are not to be confused with essences of things.[52]

Aquinas begins his discussion of God's attributes in *Summa Contra Gentiles* after showing that God exists.[53] The method Aquinas suggests is called "remotion" which refers to the removal of differences between created being and the Being of its Creator. Aquinas says, "For, by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus we are unable to apprehend it by knowing what it is. Yet we are able to have some knowledge of it by knowing what it is not. Furthermore, we approach nearer to a knowledge of God according as

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[47] See Aquinas, *On Being and Essence,* 56-57.

[48] Aquinas's "Third Way" uses these insights as an actual argument for God's existence in *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 2,A. 3.

[49] See Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 34-39.

[50] See Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 64. Aquinas earlier stated that, "Genus signifies the whole as a name designating what is material in the thing without the determination of the specific form." Ibid., 40.

[51] Hence, it would be improper to define man as being made up of *rational* and *animal* as if these terms referred to substances (cf. Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 41 and 45).

[52] See Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 49.

[53] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 1. 14.

through our intellect we are able to remove more and more things from Him."[54] In this way we approach a true understanding of God's nature although it will never be perfect.

The reason for this is that "in the case of the things whose definitions we know. . . . We locate them in a genus, through which we know in a general way what they are. Then we add differences to each thing, by which it may be distinguished from other things. In this way, a complete knowledge of a substance is built up. However, in the consideration of the divine substance we cannot take a *what* as a genus." God is not in a genus for there is no other thing like Him – for He transcends all other things.[55]

This does not mean, however, that we cannot truly and meaningfully affirm or deny things of God. First, it would be self-defeating to say that one knows that he cannot know anything about God.[56] Moreover, as Aquinas himself notes, "we can further consider what it is possible to say or not to say of God, what is said of Him alone, and also what is said of Him and other things together."[57] This consideration is made possible by the fact that God, as creator, "contains the effects He creates and . . . their perfections can be attributed to Him. We know that they are in Him but we do not know how. All we know is that in Him they are what he is."[58] As will be shown below, while the concept a person has in mind when he speaks of God does not correspond to God according to His essence, it can nevertheless be used in a true judgment.

Acts and Products of the Intellect

The distention between concept and judgment is based on the distinction between the acts of the intellect. Peter Kreeft lists these acts as (1) apprehension, (2) judgment, and (3) reasoning. The products of these acts are (1) concepts, (2) judgments, and (3) arguments. These, in turn, are the basis for (1) terms, (2) propositions, and (3) premises/conclusions.[59] Consider the argument, "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal." Here we have the concepts of man, mortality, and Socrates. These are used in the judgments "Men are mortal," and "Socrates is a man." These judgments are then combined to form premises and a conclusion: "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal."

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[54] Ibid. "Est autem via remotionis utendum praecipue in consideratione divinae substantiae. Nam divina substantia omnem formam quam intellectus noster attingit, sua immensitate excedit: et sic ipsam apprehendere non possumus cognoscendo quid est. Sed aliqualem eius habemus notitiam cognoscendo quid non est. Tantoque eius notitiae magis appropinquamus, quanto plura per intellectum nostrum ab eo poterimus removere." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 1. 14).

[55] See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.25.

[56] See Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two,* 22.

[57] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 30. 1. "Ex his etiam considerari potest quid de Deo dici vel non dici possit, quidve de eo tantum dicatur, quid etiam de eo simul et aliis rebus." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 30. 1).

[58] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 105.

[59] Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), 28.

That apprehension precedes judgment may seem backward, for how can we speak of what something is if we do not even know that it exists? A simple illustration should make it clear why this is the case. In order to answer the question, "Do *flubars* exist?" one must first know what counts as a *flubar*. So *flubars* must be apprehended before a judgment about their existence can be made. Thus, apprehension must precede judgment or we will not know of what we are speaking. These distinctions are important to one's understanding of how language communicates truths about God.

Apprehension and Concepts

When Aquinas argues for the existence of God, he not only shows that God exists but that God's essence *is* existence. In *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas considers the relation of essences ("what" things are) to their existence ("that" they are), and concludes that "everything whose being is distinct from its nature must have being from another," and therefore, "there must be a reality that is the cause of being for all other things, because it is pure being. . . . and this is the first cause, or God."[60] So God is proved to be pure being not by empirical observation or apprehension but by rational deduction from metaphysical principles. And because God is pure being, He cannot be apprehended, for as Etienne Gilson notes, "actual existence cannot be represented by, nor in, a concept."[61]

The difficulty for God-talk may now be more clear. If it is the case, as shown above, that men cannot apprehend the essence of God then no concept can be formed. Thus, to speak of God using terms referring to concepts derived from creation (i.e., non-God) must be a mistake. For Aquinas, "God's epistemic transcendence is based upon God's ontological transcendence, which is equated with the infinity of divine being and with the fact that God's essence and being are the same in reality."[62] Therefore, our words cannot refer to univocal concepts derived from finite reality when they are used with reference to God for the simple fact that we cannot form a concept of God in our natural state.[63] It would seem that man is left in complete agnosticism. Aquinas does not think that this is the case, however, for "it is not futile for our intellect to form enunciations concerning God."[64]

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[60]Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence,* trans. Armand Maurer 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institue of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 56-57. "Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res, cuius esse est aliudquam natura sua habeat esse ab alio. Et quia omne, quod est per aliud, reduciturad illud quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res,quae sit causa essendi omnibus rebus, eo quod ipsa est esse tantum. Alias ireturin infinitum in causis, cum omnis res, quae non est esse tantum, habeat causamsui esse, ut dictum est. Patet ergo quod intelligentia est forma et esse et quodesse habet a primo ente, quod est esse tantum. Et hoc est causa prima, quae deusest." (Aquino, *De ente et essentia*, 4. 7).

[61]Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers,* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 4.

[62]Ibid., 69.

[63]Aquinas believes that the blessed in heaven will know God directly. See *Summa Theologica* II.1, Q. 3, A. 8.

[64] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.36.1.

Judgment and Judgments

Aquinas teaches that analogical predication must focus on *being* rather than *concepts*. This is the distinction between logic and metaphysics:

> This occurs when several things are equally matched in the intention of some common note even though that note does not have a being of one and the same sort (*esse unius rationis*) in each of them. An instance of this is that all bodies are made equal in the intention of "body." As a result the logician, who considers only intentions, says that this term body is predicated univocally of all bodies. In reality, however, this nature exists with a being of a different sort in corruptible and incorruptible bodies. Thus, in the eyes of a metaphysician or a philosopher of nature, who considers things according to the being they have, neither body nor any other term is predicated univocally of corruptible and of incorruptible things . . .[65]

Gregory Rocca explains that Aquinas' doctrine of analogy "finds its unity not in an abstract concept but in a concrete reference to one reality; and his analogy is more a matter of judgment than of concept in the traditional narrow sense, for it arises out of those extensions of meaning that occur and must be understood in order for certain truths to be assertable."[66] Rocca goes on to say that,

> Whereas all judgments dealing with a reality that can be bodily experienced are comprised of terms whose objects, in principle at least, are able to be apprehended by direct insight, judgments about God use creaturely names in the very act of claiming something beyond their mundane referents, without at the same time ever having any direct apprehension or insight into the divine reality now meant by the divine name. The divine name is always tied to its source in creatures, can be understood only in relation to our knowledge and naming of creatures, and can never gain one iota more of intuitive content (since we cannot see or define God). But if we understand concept broadly, then

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[65]Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on The First Book of Sentences of Peter Lombard*, ed. Hugh McDonald (Taurini: Marietti, 1954), Id.19.5a.2ad.1. "et hoc contingit quando plura parificantur in intentione alicujus communis, sed illud commune non habet esse unius rationis in omnibus, sicut omnia corpora parificantur in intentione corporeitatis. Unde logicus, qui considerat intentiones tantum, dicit, hoc nomen corpus de omnibus corporibus univoce praedicari: sed esse hujus naturae non est ejusdem rationis in corporibus corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus. Unde quantum ad metaphysicum et naturalem, qui considerant res secundum suum esse, nec hoc nomen corpus, nec aliquid aliud dicitur univoce de corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus" (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, Id.19.5a.2ad.1).

[66]Rocca, 355.

the divine name can be conceived in a way that transcends its creaturely meaning, *but only on the grounds of and by constant reference to the truth of the judgments in which it is used of God.*[67]

So it is not in the concept derived from finite reality that we find our ability to speak meaningfully of God. Rather, we predicate according to a judgment made in the second act of the mind resulting in a meaningful proposition regarding God using finite concepts that we attempt to strip of their inherent inaccuracy in various ways. Thus, in reflecting upon the empirical data of reality the intellect may form finite concepts into propositions and arguments that lead to the judgment that an infinite God exists. Once that is done, arguments can be made for the attributes of this God using language derived from creation. How this linguistic feat can be accomplished may now be examined.

On Knowledge and Language

Concepts and Language

There are essentially three ways that terms can be used in predication: (1) equivocally, (2) univocally, and (3) analogically. When Aquinas considers the last of these, analogy, it is in the context of equivocity and univocity as extremes with analogy being a middle way between them.[68] In order to understand analogy's value one must first understand these two extremes.

Equivocity

Terms are said to be equivocal when "though they have a common name, the definition corresponding with the name differs for each."[69] With equivocity the same word is used to pick out completely distinct things in reality. "Bark" when used of a dog and a tree means completely different things. The fact that they share a common name is accidental to their meaning.

This use of terms is a logical work—it has no bearing on extra-mental reality, for it is an act of a rational mind. "To be named equivocally is not a property things possess independently of our thinking about them."[70] Because of this, we should not expect to be able to learn anything about the subject of equivocal predication in light of another use (e.g., the nature of a dog's *bark* is not informative of the nature of a tree's *bark*). Herein lies the beginning of the problem of equivocal God-talk. Unless there is some common meaning of words used to speak of God and creation, then those words are not informative of God's nature.

Aquinas believes that positive knowledge was required to speak in meaningful ways about a thing. Aquinas points out, "Before knowing whether something exists we cannot properly know what it is, since there are no definitions of nonbeings. Hence the question whether

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[67]Rocca, 193-194 (Emphasis in original).

[68] McInerny, 86.

[69] Aritstotle, *Categories*, 1A1-2 in Ibid.

[70] McInerny, 86-87.

something exists precedes the question what something is. But we cannot show whether something exists unless we first understand what is signified by the name."[71] Aquinas, however, believes that this is possible (as indicated above), and from this we can know of divine things.[72]

Further, Aquinas argues that because creatures are the effects of God, that there must be some likeness to God in creatures.[73] "If, then, nothing was said of God and creatures except in a purely equivocal way, no reasoning proceeding from creatures to God could take place. But, the contrary is evident from all those who have spoken about God."[74] If equivocal God-talk were all we had available to us then "nothing could be known or demonstrated about God at all; for the reasoning would always be exposed to the fallacy of equivocation."[75]

Finally, purely negative God-talk requires, in some sense, positive knowledge. "Should it be replied that through such names we know only what God is not, namely, that God is called living because He does not belong to the genus of lifeless things, and so with the other names, it will at least have to be the case that living said of God and creatures agrees in the denial of the lifeless. Thus, it will not be said in a purely equivocal way."[76] In other words, denying some predicate of God is itself an affirmation.

For all of these reasons, then, it must be that "not everything predicated of God and other things is said in a purely equivocal way."[77] As was said above, the opposite extreme from equivocal God-talk is found in predicating univocally. Problems plague this form of predicaiton as well, however.

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[71]Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, trans. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 2008), 1.2.17. "Et non dicit *quid est* simpliciter, sed *quid est quod dicitur*, quia antequam sciatur de aliquo an sit, non potest sciri proprie de eo quid est: non entium enim non sunt definitiones. Unde quaestio, an est, praecedit quaestionem, quid est. Sed non potest ostendi de aliquo an sit, nisi prius intelligatur quid significatur per nomen. Propter quod etiam philosophus in IV metaphysicae, in disputatione contra negantes principia docet incipere a significatione nominum." (*In Aristotelis Libros Peri Hermeneias et Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio*, 1.2.17).

[72] See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 33. 4.

[73] See Ibid., 1. 33. 3.

[74] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I .33. 5. "Aequivocatio nominis processum argumentationis impedit. Si igitur nihil diceretur de Deo et creaturis nisi pure aequivoce, nulla argumentatio fieri posset procedendo de creaturis ad Deum. Cuius contrarium patet ex omnibus loquentibus de divinis." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 33. 5).

[75] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 13, A. 5. "Unde nullum nomen univoce de Deo et creaturis praedicatur. Sed nec etiam pure aequivoce, ut aliqui dixerunt. Quia secundum hoc, ex creaturis nihil posset cognosci de Deo, nec demonstrari; sed semper incideret fallacia aequivocationis." (Aquino, *Summa Theolgiae*, I, Q. 13, A. 5).

[76] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.33.7. "Si autem dicatur quod per huiusmodi nomina solum de Deo cognoscimus quid non est, ut scilicet ea ratione dicatur vivens quia non est de genere rerum inanimatarum et sic de aliis; ad minus oportebit quod vivum de Deo et creaturis dictum conveniat in negatione inanimati. Et sic non erit pure aequivocum." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 33. 7).

[77] Ibid., I. 33. 1. "Ex praemissis etiam patet quod non quicquid de Deo et rebus aliis praedicatur, secundum puram aequivocationem dicitur, sicut ea quae sunt a casu aequivoca." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 33. 1).

Univocity

Things are said to be named univocally when they have both the same name and the same definition is shared by that name.[78] This would be the case when, for example, "man" is said of Plato and Aristotle. The name is the same both in its symbol or sound and, more importantly, it means the same thing. Both Plato and Aristotle are equally "man." It might be thought, especially given the problems raised by equivocal God-talk, that univocal predication is required if our language is to truly say anything of God. Aquinas, however, disagrees as indicated by his unambiguous response to the issue: "I answer that univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures."[79]

The problem here is that univocal concepts can only be predicated of essences that are the same (e.g., "man" predicated of Plato and Aristotle). Following Aquinas, Maurice Holloway teaches that "since God's perfections are identified with his existence, no perfection can be found in any creature the way it exists in God."[80] Due to the uniting of essence and existence in God, nothing said of God that has as its basis a creaturely concept can apply univocally to God.

> When any term expressing perfection is applied to a creature, it signifies that perfection distinct in idea from other perfections; as, for instance, by the term "wise" applied to man, we signify some perfection distinct from a man's essence, and distinct from his power and existence, and from all similar things; whereas when we apply to it God, we do not mean to signify anything distinct from His essence, or power, or existence. Thus also this term "wise" applied to man in some degree circumscribes and comprehends the thing signified; whereas this is not the case when it is applied to God; but it leaves the thing signified as incomprehended, and as exceeding the signification of the name.[81]

The fact that creatures are made in the likeness of God does not make univocal predication appropriate, for "the forms of the things God has made do not measure up to a specific likeness of the divine power; for the things that God has made receive in a divided and particular way that which in Him is found in a simple and universal way."[82] The effect's

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[78] See Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a6-7.

[79] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 13, A. 5. "Respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est aliquid praedicari de Deo et creaturis univoce." (Aquino, *Summa Theolgiae*, I, Q. 13, A. 5).

[80] Maurice R. Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (St. Louis University, 1959), 208.

[81] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*,, I, Q. 13, A. 5. "cum aliquod nomen ad perfectionem pertinens de creatura dicitur, significat illam perfectionem ut distinctam secundum rationem definitionis ab aliis, puta cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, significamus aliquam perfectionem distinctam ab essentia hominis, et a potentia et ab esse ipsius, et ab omnibus huiusmodi. Sed cum hoc nomen de Deo dicimus, non intendimus significare aliquid distinctum ab essentia vel potentia vel esse ipsius. Et sic, cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, quodammodo circumscribit et comprehendit rem significatam, non autem cum dicitur de Deo, sed relinquit rem significatam ut incomprehensam, et excedentem nominis significationem." (Aquino, *Summa Theolgiae*, I, Q. 13, A. 5).

[82] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 32. 2." Deus est causa, formae ad speciem divinae virtutis non perveniunt: cum divisim et particulariter recipiant quod in Deo simpliciter et universaliter invenitur." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 32. 2).

(creation's) attributes "will not receive the univocal predication of the name unless it receives the same specific form according to the same mode of being,"[83] therefore univocal predication between God and creatures is impossible.

This is also seen in the genus/species distinction mentioned earlier. "Whatever is predicated of many things univocally is either a genus, a species, a difference, an accident, or a property."[84] Since God is not a genus or a species of a genus, no univocal predication can take place between the divine being and any created being.

Aquinas concludes that "nothing is predicated of God and creatures as though they were in the same order."[85] If this is so, it seems that something between univocal and equivocal God-talk is the only option. Between pure equivocation and univocation there exists a middle ground.

To predicate "bark" of both a dog and a tree may be merely an accident of language. To say "man" of a both Plato and a painting of Plato seems to be a different sort of statement. "Man," as used in this example, is not simply a chance similarity of sound or symbol. Rather, "man" here is intending to be informative of what something is (i.e., its essence). This can be seen by the fact that should one contest that the painting is of a man, they would not try to redefine the term "man," but rather point out that the painting does not bear a likeness to "a real man." While it is clear that a man and a painting do not share a common essence, and that therefore univocal terms cannot be applied to both, it is also the case that this is not an instance of pure equivocation. As will be shown, Aquinas saw this kind of middle-of-the-road equivocation as an instance of analogy.

Analogy

In an analogy there is both similarity and difference in predication. This, Aquinas, concludes, must be how language works with regard to God. "From what we have said, therefore, it remains that the names said of God and creatures are predicated neither univocally nor equivocally but analogically."[86] Because God is the creator He can be named from creatures because we come to our knowledge of God from creatures.[87] God can be named from His effects, but this is not as simple as it might at first sound.

Even in mundane matters analogy is often required simply because of the efficiency of language. People instinctively know that words do not always apply in univocal nor equivocal ways to their subjects. For example, when one says that a knife is "good" and a shoe is "good"

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[83] Ibid.,I. 32. 3. "praedicationem nominis univoce non consequetur nisi secundum eundem essendi modum eandem specie formam" (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 32. 3).

[84] Ibid., I. 32. 4." Omne quod de pluribus univoce praedicatur, vel est genus, vel species, vel differentia, vel accidens aut proprium." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 32. 4).

[85] Ibid. "Relinquitur igitur nihil de Deo et rebus aliis univoce praedicari." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 32. 4).

[86] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 34. 1. "Sic igitur ex dictis relinquitur quod ea quae de Deo et rebus aliis dicuntur, praedicantur neque univoce neque aequivoce, sed analogice." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 34. 1).

[87] See Ibid., 1.34.6.

there must exist some similarity in the concept of goodness or else the statements are non-informative. If the concepts were univocal then what makes the shoe good and the knife good would have to be the same thing (sharpness or comfort), but this is clearly not what is being said. Further, the term "goodness" cannot be equivocal because then it could mean anything. The analogy comes from the fact that the knife is ordered to its sharpness as the shoe is to its comfort. This does not make sharpness and comfort univocal terms (because they refer to different properties), nor are they entirely equivocal terms (since these different properties give rise to the same judgment). But what may be instinctual for created things must be made more explicit if God-talk is to be useful. This will be dealt with below.

Analogical God-Talk

Components of Analogy

Before a discussion of analogical God-talk it is necessary to consider analogy itself. Analogy is not a mere likeness. According to Aquinas, analogical names are either as many things are proportionate to one thing or as one thing is proportionate to another.[88] So analogy communicates a relation (whether metaphysical or merely logical) of one object to another. There are several means by which this can take place depending on the types of objects (analogates) being compared.

Denomination

According to Battista Mondin's classification,[89] there are two fundamental modes of analogy: (1) *intrinsic denomination*, in which there is a causal relation between two objects such that the primary analogate is related to the secondary as cause to effect and the attribute is actually found in the secondary analogate, and (2) *extrinsic denomination*, where "the relation to the primary analogate is both the cause (*causa*) and the meaning (*ratio*) of the secondary analogate,"[90] and so the characteristic or attribute predicated properly belongs only to the primary analogate.

The classic examples used to help distinguish these two types of analogy are the words "healthy" and "good." In reality, "health" is said properly only of animals, as it is a property of a sound body. However, "health" can be used to describe many things that are not animal bodies. Food is said to be healthy because it causes health in a body, and urine is said to be healthy in that it indicates health in a body. "Health" as it describes urine or food is only understandable in relation to an animal body. Because "health" is only proper to the primary analogate (animal body) this is extrinsic attribution. Here, "health" is being used univocally as to its logical definition, but it is being predicated in different ways (*is* as "causes," and *is* as "a sign of").

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[88] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 5.

[89] Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), 52-53.

[90] Mondin, 15.

With the word "good," however there is a different relation being expressed. When "good" is predicated of creatures it is because they are caused by God who is the supreme Good *and* because they are good in themselves.[91] Because "good" is proper to both the primary and secondary analogates, this is intrinsic attribution, yet even here "good" is being predicated in different ways. Further, "good" is not being used univocally (except perhaps in a logical, viz., non-ontological, sense).[92] As was said above, when speaking of God and creatures there can be no properly univocal terms.

Proportion

In analogies of proportion there are two major divisions: (1) where two objects are related to a third object, or (2) where two objects are related to each other. This second sort of analogy is twofold: (2a) where the two things are related by a direct proportion of measure (e.g., degree or distance, such as 4 being in proportion to 2 by doubling). This called analogy is called *analogy of proportion*. Or, (2b) the two objects are related to each other by another relation (i.e., a proportion of proportions, such as the proportion of 4 to 2 being itself proportioned to the proportion of 6 to 3). This kind of analogy is called *analogy of proportionality*.

Four Subdivisions

Given the above divisions, Mondin suggests four analogical modes to describe Aquinas's thinking. The two fundamental modes of intrinsic and extrinsic denomination can each be subdivided resulting in four types.[93] According to Mondin, all the other modes of analogy mentioned by Aquinas may be identified with one of these four:[94]

1. ***Intrinsic Attribution*** is a one-to-another analogy based on intrinsic denomination regarding a relation of efficient causality between the analogates.
   Example: God is good and man is good.

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[91] Mondin, 15.

[92] Armand Maurer argues that in we can have univocal concepts in purely logical predication. This is when "something is predicated analogically . . . according to *esse* and not according to conception." This, he says, is due to the difference between the projects of the metaphysician and the logician. "The metaphysician considers things in their actual existence. . . . The logician, on the other hand, considers conceptions or intentions alone." Thus, while the word "body" may be considered univocal with relation to terrestrial and celestial bodies by the logician, the metaphysician would say the term is being used equivocally. See "St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus." *The New Scholasticism* 29, no. 2 (April, 1955): 127-129.

[93] See Appendix: "Analogy According to Aquinas."

[94] Mondin, 53. Note that this is qualified by excluding "the solitary classification of analogy of *In I Sententiarum* Dist. 19, Q. 5, A. 1 ad 2, for which he [Aquinas] uses a terminology entirely abandoned in Aquinas' later works."

2. ***Proper Proportionality*** is a many-to-many analogy based on intrinsic denomination regarding a similarity of relations between the analogates. *Example: The Captain steers the ship and the Emperor steers the nation.*

3. ***Extrinsic Attribution*** is a many-to-one analogy based on extrinsic denomination using proper signification concerning the analogates. *Example: A man is healthy and medicine, urine, and food are healthy.*

4. ***Improper Proportionality*** is a metaphorical analogy based on extrinsic denomination using improper signification concerning the analogates. *Example: A woman is a rose.*

Thomistic Analogy

Thomas on Analogy

The Sentences

In what Mondin says is the "best known of Aquinas' passages on analogy,"[95] Aquinas says there are three ways in which something can be said analogically: (1) according to intention and not according to being, (2) according to being and not according to intention, and (3) according to intention and according to being.[96] So first, some things are predicated only according to what is in the mind but not in the thing, such as when health is said of anything other than an animal (e.g., food or urine), for health is only properly said to be found in animals. Second, some things are predicated only according to what is in the thing but not in the mind, such as when "body" is said of material things and celestial bodies. Both may be bodies but they are not thought of in a similar manner. Third, there are those things which are predicated both

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[95] Mondin, 9.

[96] See Aquinas, *Commentary on The Sentences of Peter Lombard* Lib. I, Dist. 19, Q. 5, a. 2, ad.1. "Ad primum igitur dicendum, quod aliquid dicitur secundum analogiam tripliciter: vel secundum intentionem tantum, et non secundum esse; et hoc est quando una intentio refertur ad plura per prius et posterius, quae tamen non habet esse nisi in uno; sicut intentio sanitatis refertur ad animal, urinam et dietam diversimode, secundum prius et posterius; non tamen secundum diversum esse, quia esse sanitatis non est nisi in animali. Vel secundum esse et non secundum intentionem; et hoc contingit quando plura parificantur in intentione alicujus communis, sed illud commune non habet esse unius rationis in omnibus, sicut omnia corpora parificantur in intentione corporeitatis. Unde logicus, qui considerat intentiones tantum, dicit, hoc nomen corpus de omnibus corporibus univoce praedicari: sed esse hujus naturae non est ejusdem rationis in corporibus corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus. Unde quantum ad metaphysicum et naturalem, qui considerant res secundum suum esse, nec hoc nomen corpus, nec aliquid aliud dicitur univoce de corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus, ut patet 10 Metaphys., ex philosopho et Commentatore. Vel secundum intentionem et secundum esse; et hoc est quando neque parificatur in intentione communi, neque in esse; sicut ens dicitur de substantia et accidente; et de talibus oportet quod natura communis habeat aliquod esse in unoquoque eorum de quibus dicitur, sed differens secundum rationem majoris vel minoris perfectionis. Et similiter dico, quod veritas et bonitas et omnia hujusmodi dicuntur analogice de Deo et creaturis. Unde oportet quod secundum suum esse omnia haec in Deo sint, et in creaturis secundum rationem majoris perfectionis et minoris; ex quo sequitur, cum non possint esse secundum unum esse utrobique, quod sint diversae veritates." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Scriptum Super Sententiis,* Lib. I, Dist. 19, Q. 5, a. 2, ad.1).

according to what is in the mind and what is in the thing, such as "goodness" applied to both God and man. Here, goodness is truly meant and found in both, only not in exactly the same way.[97]

In both the *Sentences' Prologue* and I. Dist. 35, Q. 1, A. 4,[98] Aquinas makes a two-fold distinction when things are related to a third thing and predicated according to priority and posteriority (such as the sharing of both act and potency in being), or when two things are related as an imperfect imitation to another (the relation between creator and creature). With regard to the latter, Mondin notes that according to Aquinas's *Sentences* IV. Dist. 49, Q. 2, A. 1, ad 6 that while there may be an infinite distance between the infinite and the finite, they can be proportioned to each other via proportionality.[99]

Truth

In *Truth* 2.11, Aquinas again divides analogy into proportion and proportionality, but here he adds the idea of *proper* and *improper* proportionality:

> In those terms predicated according to the first type of analogy, there must be some definite relation between the things having something in common analogously. Consequently, nothing can be predicated analogously of God and creature according to this type of analogy; for no creature has such a relation to God that it could determine the divine perfection. But in the other type of analogy, no definite relation is involved between the things which have something in common analogously, so there is no reason why some name cannot be predicated analogously of God and creature in this manner. But this can happen in two ways. Sometimes the name implies something belonging to the thing primarily designated which cannot be common to God and creature even in the manner described above. This would be true, for example, of anything predicated of God metaphorically, as when God is called lion, sun, and the like, because their definition includes matter which cannot be attributed to God. At other times, however, a term predicated of God and creature implies nothing in its principal meaning which would prevent our finding between a creature and God an agreement of the type described above. To this kind belong all attributes which include no defect nor depend on matter for their act of existence, for example, being, the good, and similar things.[100]

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[97] These explanations and examples follow from Mondin, 10.

[98] "Et ideo dicendum, quod scientia analogice dicitur de Deo et creatura, et similiter omnia hujusmodi. Sed duplex est analogia. Quaedam secundum convenientiam in aliquo uno, quod eis per prius et posterius convenit; et haec analogia non potest esse inter Deum et creaturam, sicut nec univocatio. Alia analogia est, secundum quod unum imitatur aliud quantum potest, nec perfecte ipsum assequitur; et haec analogia est creaturae ad Deum." (Aquino, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, I. Dist. 35, Q. 1, A. 4).

[99] Mondin, 11.

[100] Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, Tr. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 2.11. Full text: "Quia ergo in his quae primo modo analogice dicuntur, oportet esse aliquam determinatam habitudinem inter ea quibus est aliquid per analogiam commune, impossibile est aliquid per hunc modum analogiae dici de Deo et creatura; quia nulla creatura habet talem habitudinem ad Deum per quam possit divina perfectio determinari. Sed in alio modo analogiae nulla determinata habitudo attenditur inter ea quibus est aliquid per analogiam commune; et

Mondin notes that here we have the analogies of proportion, proper proportionality, and improper proportionality. As will be seen below, from this early writing forward, Aquinas abandons the language he used in the *Sentences* and follows this "more definite terminology" with respect to analogy.[101]

Later in *Truth*, Aquinas introduces *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* denomination:

> A thing is denominated with reference to something else in two ways. (1) This occurs when the very reference itself is the meaning of the denomination. Thus urine is called healthy with respect to the health of an animal. For the meaning of healthy as predicated of urine is "serving as a sign of the health of an animal." In such cases what is thus relatively denominated does not get its name from a form inherent in it but from something extrinsic to which it is referred. (2) A thing is denominated by reference to something else when the reference is not the meaning of the denomination but its cause. For instance, air is said to be bright from the sun, not because the very fact that the air is referred to the sun is the brightness of the air, but because the placing of the air directly before the sun is the cause of its being bright. It is in this way that the creature is called good with reference to God.[102]

Here we see that something can be analogously predicated when one is both the cause and meaning of the other (extrinsic attribution), or when one is only the cause of the other (intrinsic attribution).[103]

Summa Contra Gentiles

In his famous apologetical work *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas devotes five chapters (30-34) to the issue of God-talk. First, Aquinas establishes that there are three different ways in

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ideo secundum illum modum nihil prohibet aliquod nomen analogice dici de Deo et creatura. Sed tamen hoc dupliciter contingit: quandoque enim illud nomen importat aliquid ex principali significato, in quo non potest attendi convenientia inter Deum et creaturam, etiam modo praedicto; sicut est in omnibus quae symbolice de Deo dicuntur, ut cum dicitur Deus leo, vel sol, vel aliquid huiusmodi, quia in horum definitione cadit materia, quae Deo attribui non potest. Quandoque vero nomen quod de Deo et creatura dicitur, nihil importat ex principali significato secundum quod non possit attendi praedictus convenientiae modus inter creaturam et Deum; sicut sunt omnia in quorum definitione non clauditur defectus, nec dependent a materia secundum esse, ut ens, bonum, et alia huiusmodi." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Quaestiones disputatae de veritate,* 2.11).

[101] Mondin, 13. Cf. Rocca 116.

[102] Aquinas, *Truth*, 21.4. "quod dupliciter denominatur aliquid per respectum ad alterum. Uno modo quando ipse respectus est ratio denominationis, et sic urina dicitur sana per respectum ad sanitatem animalis. Ratio enim sani, secundum quod de urina praedicatur, est esse signum sanitatis animalis. Et in talibus, quod denominatur per respectum ad alterum, non denominatur ab aliqua forma sibi inhaerente, sed ab aliquo extrinseco ad quod refertur. Alio modo denominatur aliquid per respectum ad alterum, quando respectus non est ratio denominationis, sed causa sicut si aer dicatur lucens a sole: non quod ipsum referri aerem ad solem sit lucere aeris, sed quia directa oppositio aeris ad solem est causa quod luceat. Et hoc modo creatura dicitur bona per respectum ad Deum" (Aquino, *de veritate,* 21, 4).

[103] Mondin, 15.

which names are predicated of things: (1) to express a perfection in a supereminent mode (those properly said of God), (2) to express a perfection in a creaturely mode (those said according to likeness or metaphor), and (3) to express a perfection *sans* mode. At this point Aquinas expresses a principle that flows from his previous metaphysical work (viz., chapters 1-29):

> I have said that some of the aforementioned names signify a perfection without defect. This is true with reference to that which the name was imposed to signify; for as to the mode of signification, every name is defective. For by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them. For our intellect, taking the origin of its knowledge from the senses, does not transcend the mode which is found in sensible things, in which the form and the subject of the form are not identical owing to the composition of form and matter. . . . As a result, with reference to the mode of signification there is in every name that we use an imperfection, which does not befit God, even though the thing signified in some eminent way does befit God. . . . And so with reference to the mode of signification no name is fittingly applied to God; this is done only with reference to that which the name has been imposed to signify. Such names, therefore, . . . can be both affirmed and denied of God. They can be affirmed because of the meaning of the name; they can be denied because of the mode of signification.[104]

Here Aquinas brings out one of the central issues with regard to predication of divine names: the meanings of words are first found in composite, finite reality and they remain finite when they are considered by man. Thus they must be denied of God, Who is simple and infinite.[105] This practice leads to the affixing of negative prefixes on to terms of finitude when they are predicated of God (e.g., *in*finity, *e*ternal, *a*seity). On the other hand, words can be affirmed of God so long as this is done according to the correct mode (viz., eminence). This might be said to be accomplished by attaching eminence-affirming prefixes to terms when they are predicated of God (e.g., *omni*potence, *omni*presence, *omnis*cient).

Aquinas argues in chapter 31 that because God is the cause of the effects used to name Him that it is necessary that this be done, for "since we cannot know Him naturally except by arriving at Him from His effects, the names by which we signify His perfection must be diverse, just as the perfections belonging to things are found to be diverse. Were we able to understand the divine essence itself as it is and give to it the name that belongs to it, we would express it by

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[104] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* 30.3. "Dico autem aliqua praedictorum nominum perfectionem absque defectu importare, quantum ad illud ad quod significandum nomen fuit impositum: quantum enim ad modum significandi, omne nomen cum defectu est. Nam nomine res exprimimus eo modo quo intellectu concipimus. Intellectus autem noster, ex sensibus cognoscendi initium sumens, illum modum non transcendit qui in rebus sensibilibus invenitur, in quibus aliud est forma et habens formam, propter formae et materiae compositionem. . . . Et sic in omni nomine a nobis dicto, quantum ad modum significandi, imperfectio invenitur, quae Deo non competit, quamvis res significata aliquo eminenti modo Deo conveniat: . . . Et quantum ad hoc nullum nomen Deo convenienter aptatur, sed solum quantum ad id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur. Possunt igitur, . . . et affirmari de Deo et negari: affirmari quidem, propter nominis rationem; negari vero, propter significandi modum." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Summa contra Gentiles*, 30.3).

[105] See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, ch. 18.

only one name."[106] He follows this with an inspiring promise from Zechariah 14:9, "On that day the Lord will be one, and His name one."

In chapter 32, Aquinas argues against univocal predication based on the fact that both meaning and mode are distinct between creatures and God:

> [Even if] an effect should measure up to the species of its cause, it will not receive the univocal predication of the name unless it receives the same specific form according to the same mode of being. For the house that is in the art of the maker is not univocally the same house that is in matter, for the form of the house does not have the same being in the two locations. Now, even though the rest of things were to receive a form that is absolutely the same as it is in God, yet they do not receive it according to the same mode of being. For, as is clear from what we have said, there is nothing in God that is not the divine being itself, which is not the case with other things. Nothing, therefore, can be predicated of God and other things univocally.[107]

Aquinas goes on to discusses the issue of *priority* and *posteriority*:

> What is predicated of some things according to priority and posteriority is certainly not predicated univocally. For the prior is included in the definition of the posterior . . . . Now nothing is predicated of God and creatures as though they were in the same order, but, rather, according to priority and posteriority. For all things are predicated of God essentially. . . . It is impossible, therefore, that anything be predicated univocally of God and other things.[108]

Because God is being itself, what He is called He simply *is*; while creatures are called what they are called because they participate in that which is predicated of them. Socrates, Aquinas says, is said to be a man, "not because he is humanity itself, but because he possesses humanity."[109]

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[106] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 31.4. "Quia enim eum non possumus cognoscere naturaliter nisi ex effectibus deveniendo in ipsum, oportet quod nomina quibus perfectionem ipsius significamus, diversa sint, sicut et perfectiones in rebus inveniuntur diversae. Si autem ipsam essentiam prout est possemus intelligere et ei nomen proprium adaptare, uno nomine tantum eam exprimeremus." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 31.4).

[107] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 32.3. "Si aliquis effectus ad speciem causae pertingat, praedicationem nominis univoce non consequetur nisi secundum eundem essendi modum eandem specie formam suscipiat: non enim univoce dicitur domus quae est in arte, et in materia, propter hoc quod forma domus habet esse dissimile utrobique. Res autem aliae, etiam si omnino similem formam consequerentur, non tamen consequuntur secundum eundem modum essendi: nam nihil est in Deo quod non sit ipsum esse divinum, ut ex dictis patet, quod in aliis rebus non accidit. Impossibile est igitur aliquid univoce de Deo et rebus aliis praedicari." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 32.3).

[108] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 32.7. "Quod praedicatur de aliquibus secundum prius et posterius, certum est univoce non praedicari: nam prius in definitione posterioris includitur: . . . Nihil autem de Deo et rebus aliis praedicatur eodem ordine, sed secundum prius et posterius: cum de Deo omnia praedicentur essentialiter, . . . Impossibile est igitur aliquid de Deo et rebus aliis univoce dici." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 32.7).

[109] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 32.7. "Socrates dicitur homo non quia sit ipsa humanitas, sed humanitatem habens." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 32.7).

Thus, even when one might think that he means the same thing by the names applied to God and creatures, what the name refers to in reality is two distinct things. Thus, the names cannot be univocal.[110]

For several reasons Aquinas denies that names are said purely equivocally in chapter 33. Not the least of the reasons given is that "if names are said of God and creatures in a purely equivocal way, we understand nothing of God through those names; for the meanings of those names are known to us solely to the extent that they are said of creatures. In vain, therefore, would it be said or proved of God that He is a being, good, or the like."[111] It would be self-defeating to claim (using words) that words cannot be used with reference to God.[112] Thus, in chapter 34 he concludes that they must be said analogically (specifically, via intrinsic attribution based on causality): "Because we come to a knowledge of God from other things, the reality in the names said of God and other things belongs by priority in God according to His mode of being, but the meaning of the name belongs to God by posteriority. And so He is said to be named from His effects."[113]

On the Power of God

Aquinas makes many of the above arguments for analogy in Question 7 of *On the Power of God,* concluding that although what the intellect conceives or asserts about God, truly exists in God inasmuch as they are all like him,

> this species does not perfectly reflect the divine essence, as stated above, and therefore although these terms which our intellect attributes to God from such conceptions signify the divine essence, they do not signify it perfectly as it exists in itself, but as it is conceived by us. Accordingly we conclude that each of these terms signifies the divine essence, not comprehensively but imperfectly. . . . Simply because the perfections which are in creatures by reason of various forms are ascribed to God in reference to his simple

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[110] Mondin notes concerning this passage that in the *Sentences* "Aquinas rejected the view that the predication of divine names is a predication according to priority and posteriority. Here in the Summa Contra Gentiles he seems to adopt the opposite view." But this is because in the *Sentences* "he means analogy of two to a third," while here Aquinas means one to another. (Mondin, 18.)

[111] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 33.6 "Sed si nomina dicuntur de Deo et creaturis omnino aequivoce, nihil per illa nomina de Deo intelligimus: cum significationes illorum nominum notae sint nobis solum secundum quod de creaturis dicuntur. Frustra igitur diceretur aut probaretur de Deo quod Deus est ens, bonus, vel si quid aliud huiusmodi est." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 33.6).

[112] Additional arguments against univocity were presented above.

[113] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 34.6 "Sic igitur, quia ex rebus aliis in Dei cognitionem pervenimus, res nominum de Deo et rebus aliis dictorum per prius est in Deo secundum suum modum, sed ratio nominis per posterius. Unde et nominari dicitur a suis causatis." (Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 34.6).

essence: without limit, because no perfection found in creatures is equal to the divine essence, so as to enable the mind under the head of that perfection to define God as he is in himself.[114]

Again Aquinas notes that analogy works because God is creator and creation is the effect of His causation. Words referring to these effects can be attributed to the cause but not under the same meaning or mode. Aquinas gives the example of a brick hardened by fire. The brick is like the fire when it is heated by the fire which is heat by nature. However, it is also hardened due to the nature of the brick. If we ascribe heat to the brick and fire, we do so properly although we must recognize that heat is said in a more eminent way and with priority regarding the fire. Not only is the fire is hotter than the brick, the brick is only hot by being *made* hot, while the fire is hot by nature. Further, if we predicate hardness of both the brick and the fire it will be untrue unless used only metaphorically.

Accordingly in creatures there are certain perfections whereby they are likened to God, and which as regards the thing signified do not denote any imperfection, such as being, life, understanding and so forth: and these are ascribed to God properly, in fact they are ascribed to him first and in a more eminent way than to creatures. And there are in creatures certain perfections wherein they differ from God, and which the creature owes to its being made from nothing, such as potentiality, privation, movement and the like. These are falsely ascribed to God: and whatsoever terms imply suchlike conditions cannot be ascribed to God otherwise than metaphorically, for instance lion, stone and so on, inasmuch as matter is included in their definition. They are, however, ascribed to him metaphorically by reason of a likeness in their effects.[115]

The difficulty with the latter mode (metaphor) is that one must know the subject and predicate of metaphor in order to recognize its use. For example, if one says, "My wife is a rose," it would be properly concluded that he means that his wife is beautiful, is soft, smells nice, or

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[114] Thomas Aquinas, *On The Power of God,* Tr. the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), Q. 7, A. 5. "Non autem perfecte divinam essentiam assimilat species praedicta, ut dictum est; et ideo licet huiusmodi nomina, quae intellectus ex talibus conceptionibus Deo attribuit, significent id quod est divina substantia, non tamen perfecte ipsam significant secundum quod est, sed secundum quod a nobis intelligitur. Sic ergo dicendum est, quod quodlibet istorum nominum significat divinam substantiam, non tamen quasi comprehendens ipsam, sed imperfecte: . . . Simpliciter dicit, quia perfectiones quae in creaturis sunt secundum diversas formas, Deo attribuuntur secundum simplicem eius essentiam: incircumfinite dicit, ad ostendendum quod nulla perfectio in creaturis inventa divinam essentiam comprehendit, ut sic intellectus sub ratione illius perfectionis in seipso Deum definiat." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, Q. 7, A. 5).

[115] Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, Q. 7, A. 5, ad 8. "Similiter consideranda sunt in creaturis quaedam secundum quae Deo similantur, quae quantum ad rem significatam, nullam imperfectionem important, sicut esse, vivere et intelligere et huiusmodi; et ista proprie dicuntur de Deo, immo per prius de ipso et eminentius quam de creaturis. Quaedam vero sunt secundum quae creatura differt a Deo, consequentia ipsam prout est ex nihilo, sicut potentialitas, privatio, motus et alia huiusmodi: et ista sunt falsa de Deo. Et quaecumque nomina in sui intellectu conditiones huiusmodi claudunt, de Deo dici non possunt nisi metaphorice, sicut leo, lapis et huiusmodi, propter hoc quod in sui definitione habent materiam. Dicuntur autem huiusmodi metaphorice de Deo propter similitudinem effectus." (Aquino, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia,* Q. 7, A. 5, ad 8.)

something of that nature. The method by which "rose" is understood as "beautiful" will probably happen so quickly that it is unlikely to be considered. It seems, however, that a few steps would be required: (1) the hearer would consider the natures of both a "wife" and a "rose" (viz., "married human female" and "flower"), then (2) recognizing that the former and latter are distinct by nature the hearer should compare the known attributes of both, looking for similarities. Finally, (3) the hearer would pick out which of the similar attributes the speaker meant (possibly narrowed down by context). Thus, it would be improper to take "My wife is a rose," as meaning "My wife grows in the ground and photosynthesizes light for food." But without knowledge of both subject and predicate this process would break down. This would seem to be a problem for Aquinas who stated, profoundly, that, "it is because human intelligence is not equal to the divine essence that this same divine essence surpasses our intelligence and is unknown to us: wherefore man reaches the highest point of his knowledge about God when he knows that he knows him not, inasmuch as he knows that that which is God transcends whatsoever he conceives of him."[116] This difficulty must also be overcome in a satisfactory doctrine of analogy.

The Commentaries

In his various commentaries on the works of Aristotle, Boethius, and Pseudo-Dionysis, Aquinas follows the above patterns depending upon which kinds of analogy "are necessary to solve the problems at hand."[117] The liberty with which Aquinas uses analogy is made possible by the fact that "analogy *as a form of predication* is a logical category and the human mind is free to take many different standpoints in its analysis of the relations between different things."[118]

Mondin points out that "things univocal for the logician, and equal in their participation in a common notion, can be unequal for the *naturalis* [philosopher of nature, or, metaphysician] who looks at *genus subiectum*, the matter."[119] That is, when man defines a thing he does so according to genus (commonality) and species (specific difference[s]). Thus, "human" is defined as "rational animal." Here, "animal" might be predicated equally of man and horse because the genus is, logically, equivalent between the two. This is because for the Thomist genus is only logical – there is no "horseness" out there.[120] Clearly, even the "animal-ness" of the horse and man are not ontologically equivalent.

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[116] Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, Q. 7, A. 5, ad 14. "Quod ex quo intellectus noster divinam substantiam non adaequat, hoc ipsum quod est Dei substantia remanet, nostrum intellectum excedens, et ita a nobis ignoratur: et propter hoc illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo quod sciat se Deum nescire, in quantum cognoscit, illud quod Deus est, omne ipsum quod de eo intelligimus, excedere." (Aquino, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia,* Q. 7, A. 5, ad 14).

[117] Mondin, 28.

[118] Ibid. (Emphasis in original).

[119] Ibid.

[120] See Maurer, "Analogy of Genus."

Summma Theologica

Aquinas's S*umma Theologica* is his "most mature theological work."[121] Question Thirteen specifically deals with the nature of analogical God-talk. Having defended the project of Sacred Doctrine, proved the existence of God and several of His attributes, Aquinas moves on to how God is known to us and, finally, to the naming of God.

He starts the discussion with a consideration of language. "Words are," for Aquinas, "signs of ideas, and ideas the similitude of things," therefore, "it is evident that words relate to the meaning of things signified through the medium of the intellectual conception. It follows therefore that we can give a name to anything in as far as we can understand it."[122] Of course this does not alleviate the tension that has been present all along, for "The reason why God has no name, or is said to be above being named, is because His essence is above all that we understand about God, and signify in word," and so, "names fail to express His mode of being, forasmuch as our intellect does not know Him in this life as He is."[123]

Once again we have the problem of language being rooted in creaturely modes from which they cannot escape in the human intellect. From arguments demonstrating God's existence we can know *that* a creator God exists. Being the cause of all created things we can also know that there is a relation of effect to cause between creatures and their creator. From this we can judge it appropriate to ascribe words referring to finite things in reality to the infinite God, but at the same time we also must judge them to be inadequate. Thus, this lack must be indicated somehow in God-talk. Simple negation works to get rid of the difference between creature and creator but, "Negative names applied to God, or signifying His relation to creatures manifestly do not at all signify His substance, but rather express the distance of the creature from Him, or His relation to something else, or rather, the relation of creatures to Himself."[124] Affirmitive names are another issue.

Aquinas considers a few opinions as to how names of affirmation might apply to God. Some think it only conceals an implicit negation. Others say that these only refer to a

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[121] Mondin., 29.

[122] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 1. "Voces sunt signa intellectuum, et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines. Et sic patet quod voces referuntur ad res significandas, mediante conceptione intellectus. Secundum igitur quod aliquid a nobis intellectu cognosci potest, sic a nobis potest nominari. Ostensum est autem supra quod Deus in hac vita non potest a nobis videri per suam essentiam; sed cognoscitur a nobis ex creaturis, secundum habitudinem principii, et per modum excellentiae et remotionis. Sic igitur potest nominari a nobis ex creaturis, non tamen ita quod nomen significans ipsum, exprimat divinam essentiam secundum quod est, sicut hoc nomen homo exprimit sua significatione essentiam hominis secundum quod est, significat enim eius definitionem, declarantem eius essentiam; ratio enim quam significat nomen, est definitio." (*Corpus Thomisticum Sancti Thomae de Aquino: Summa Theologiae*, I. Q. 13, A. 1).

[123] Ibid. "dicendum quod ea ratione dicitur Deus non habere nomen, vel esse supra nominationem, quia essentia eius est supra id quod de Deo intelligimus et voce significamus," "nomina deficiant a modo ipsius, sicut intellectus noster non cognoscit eum ut est, secundum hanc vitam." (Aquino, *Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 1).

[124] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 2. "De nominibus quae de Deo dicuntur negative, vel quae relationem ipsius ad creaturam significant, manifestum est quod substantiam eius nullo modo significant; sed remotionem alicuius ab ipso, vel relationem eius ad alium, vel potius alicuius ad ipsum." (Aquino*: Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 2).

relationship of God toward creatures. Aquinas denies that either can be the case:

> First because in neither of them can a reason be assigned why some names more than others are applied to God. For He is assuredly the cause of bodies in the same way as He is the cause of good things; therefore if the words "God is good," signified no more than, "God is the cause of good things," it might in like manner be said that God is a body, inasmuch as He is the cause of bodies. So also to say that He is a body implies that He is not a mere potentiality, as is primary matter. Secondly, because it would follow that all names applied to God would be said of Him by way of being taken in a secondary sense, as healthy is secondarily said of medicine, forasmuch as it signifies only the cause of the health in the animal which primarily is called healthy. Thirdly, because this is against the intention of those who speak of God. For in saying that God lives, they assuredly mean more than to say the He is the cause of our life, or that He differs from inanimate bodies.[125]

Aquinas concludes from this that, "these names signify the divine substance, and are predicated substantially of God, although they fall short of a full representation of Him."[126] Because creatures are effects, and these effects prexist in their cause, they do represent God in some inferior way. "So when we say, 'God is good,' the meaning is not, 'God is the cause of goodness,' or 'God is not evil'; but the meaning is, 'Whatever good we attribute to creatures, pre-exists in God,' and in a more excellent and higher way."[127]

Another distinction is found Aquinas's *Summa*, this one pertaining to names that can be said of God as the primary analogate and ones that cannot.

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[125] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 2. "ed de nominibus quae absolute et affirmative de Deo dicuntur, sicut bonus, sapiens, et huiusmodi, multipliciter aliqui sunt opinati. Quidam enim dixerunt quod haec omnia nomina, licet affirmative de Deo dicantur, tamen magis inventa sunt ad aliquid removendum a Deo, quam ad aliquid ponendum in ipso. Unde dicunt quod, cum dicimus Deum esse viventem, significamus quod Deus non hoc modo est, sicut res inanimatae, et similiter accipiendum est in aliis. Et hoc posuit Rabbi Moyses. Alii vero dicunt quod haec nomina imposita sunt ad significandum habitudinem eius ad creata, ut, cum dicimus Deus est bonus, sit sensus, Deus est causa bonitatis in rebus. Et eadem ratio est in aliis. Sed utrumque istorum videtur esse inconveniens, propter tria. Primo quidem, quia secundum neutram harum positionum posset assignari ratio quare quaedam nomina magis de Deo dicerentur quam alia. Sic enim est causa corporum, sicut est causa bonorum, unde, si nihil aliud significatur, cum dicitur Deus est bonus, nisi Deus est causa bonorum, poterit similiter dici quod Deus est corpus, quia est causa corporum. Item, per hoc quod dicitur quod est corpus, removetur quod non sit ens in potentia tantum, sicut materia prima. Secundo, quia sequeretur quod omnia nomina dicta de Deo, per posterius dicerentur de ipso, sicut sanum per posterius dicitur de medicina, eo quod significat hoc tantum quod sit causa sanitatis in animali, quod per prius dicitur sanum. Tertio, quia hoc est contra intentionem loquentium de Deo. Aliud enim intendunt dicere, cum dicunt Deum viventem, quam quod sit causa vitae nostrae, vel quod differat a corporibus inanimatis."(Aquino*: Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 2).

[126] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 2. "quod huiusmodi quidem nomina significant substantiam divinam, et praedicantur de Deo substantialiter, sed deficiunt a repraesentatione ipsius." (Aquino*: Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 2).

[127] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 2. "Unde ex hoc non sequitur quod Deo competat esse bonum inquantum causat bonitatem, sed potius e converso, quia est bonus, bonitatem rebus diffundit." (Aquino*: Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 2).

All names applied metaphorically to God, are applied to creatures primarily rather than to God, because when said of God they mean only similitudes to such creatures. For as "smiling" applied to a field means only that the field in the beauty of its flowering is like the beauty of the human smile by proportionate likeness, so the name of "lion" applied to God means only that God manifests strength in His works, as a lion in his. Thus it is clear that applied to God the signification of names can be defined only from what is said of creatures. But to other names not applied to God in a metaphorical sense, the same rule would apply if they were spoken of God as the cause only, as some have supposed. For when it is said, "God is good," it would then only mean "God is the cause of the creature's goodness"; thus the term good applied to God would included in its meaning the creature's goodness. Hence "good" would apply primarily to creatures rather than to God. But as was shown above, these names are applied to God not as the cause only, but also essentially. For the words, "God is good," or "wise," signify not only that He is the cause of wisdom or goodness, but that these exist in Him in a more excellent way. Hence as regards what the name signifies, these names are applied primarily to God rather than to creatures, because these perfections flow from God to creatures; but as regards the imposition of the names, they are primarily applied by us to creatures which we know first.[128]

Returning to the acts of the intellect mentioned above, Aquinas makes it clear here that even the divine names come from creatures first in the order of knowing, for it is creatures that are known and named prior to the application of these words to God. When it comes to names properly said of God, though, one is to recognize that their meaning derives ultimately from God as the cause of their being.

<center>Thomists on Thomas</center>

It seems that the following can be concluded from the above texts: First, for Aquinas there is an ontological, not merely logical, ground for analogical God-talk based on God's causality. That is to say that the relation between the analogates is not limited to the intellect even if analogy is a logical exercise. Second, the ontological basis for similarity in naming does

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[128] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. Q. 13, A. 6. "omnia nomina quae metaphorice de Deo dicuntur, per prius de creaturis dicuntur quam de Deo, quia dicta de Deo, nihil aliud significant quam similitudines ad tales creaturas. Sicut enim ridere, dictum de prato, nihil aliud significat quam quod pratum similiter se habet in decore cum floret, sicut homo cum ridet, secundum similitudinem proportionis; sic nomen leonis, dictum de Deo, nihil aliud significat quam quod Deus similiter se habet ut fortiter operetur in suis operibus, sicut leo in suis. Et sic patet quod, secundum quod dicuntur de Deo, eorum significatio definiri non potest, nisi per illud quod de creaturis dicitur. De aliis autem nominibus, quae non metaphorice dicuntur de Deo, esset etiam eadem ratio, si dicerentur de Deo causaliter tantum, ut quidam posuerunt. Sic enim. Cum dicitur Deus est bonus, nihil aliud esset quam Deus est causa bonitatis creaturae, et sic hoc nomen bonum, dictum de Deo, clauderet in suo intellectu bonitatem creaturae. Unde bonum per prius diceretur de creatura quam de Deo. Sed supra ostensum est quod huiusmodi nomina non solum dicuntur de Deo causaliter, sed etiam essentialiter. Cum enim dicitur Deus est bonus, vel sapiens, non solum significatur quod ipse sit causa sapientiae vel bonitatis, sed quod haec in eo eminentius praeexistunt. Unde, secundum hoc, dicendum est quod, quantum ad rem significatam per nomen, per prius dicuntur de Deo quam de creaturis, quia a Deo huiusmodi perfectiones in creaturas manant. Sed quantum ad impositionem nominis, per prius a nobis imponuntur creaturis, quas prius cognoscimus."(Aquino*: Summa Theologiae,* I. Q. 13, A. 6).

not justify univocity in either meaning or mode of predication. Third, the ontological basis for difference in naming does not justify pure equivocity in meaning. Fourth, God's complete transcendence means that analogy in God-talk is neither two to a third, nor many to one, nor of mathematical proportion, for this would be to place God in a genus and put Him on the level of created things. Fifth, God's knowability (in some sense) removes extrinsic attribution from possible analogical God-talk for this would reduce to complete agnosticism. Sixth, the analogy of proper proportionality is between beings of different species without respect to their relation to God. Seventh, metaphor may be used when speaking of God when mixed perfections are involved. Even if one agrees with these general conclusions, there is still much to discuss.[129]

Etienne Gilson notes that Aquinas's "texts on the notion of analogy are relatively few, and in each case they are so restrained that we cannot but wonder why the notion has taken on such an importance in the eyes of his commentators. Perhaps it is due to a secret longing to redeem from an all too-apparent misery the knowledge of God which St. Thomas will concede us."[130] From this "secret longing" concerning these "relatively few texts" have come multiple interpretations of Aquinas's view on analogy and its role in God-talk. Some of this development will be considered below.

Cajetan's View

Thomas De Vio Cardinal Cajetan "put the interpretation of what St. Thomas has to say about analogous names onto a path it still travels today."[131] Some modern Thomists have taken his three-fold explanation of Thomistic analogy to task, however. Cajetan saw analogy as divided into (1) *inequality*, according to being but not understanding, (2) *attribution*, according to understanding but not being, and (3) *proportionality*, according to both being and understanding. This last included both metaphor and what was called proper proportionality above.[132] Cajetan rejected the first two as not being proper analogies and, rejecting metaphor as well, left only proper proportionality.

Gilson points out that this division is based on a reply to an objection in Aquinas's commentary on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard.* Cajetan built these "accidental differences into 'types' of analogous name, a fateful move which continues to haunt Thomistic interpretation."[133] Ralph McInerny notes that, "there are many texts which treat the analogy of names in a way that calls into question Cajetan's opusculum considered as a statement of St. Thomas' doctrine on

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[129] Many of these are Mondin's (34-35), and not all will agree with all of them.

[130] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of Aquinas,* 105.

[131] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of Aquinas,* 3. Indeed, in a very recent work that includes a discussion of Aquinas's views, proportionality is used to describe analogical God-talk with little discussion of alternate views. See William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint. *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader (Volume 1, To 1500)* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 398-401.

[132] Rocca, 113.

[133] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of Aquinas,* 11.

the subject."[134] He concludes that, "Cajetan far too readily rejects what to all appearances are formal statements by St. Thomas on the analogy of names."[135]

Rocca similarly accuses Cajetan of error, pointing out that beginning in the mid-20th Century some Thomists began to abandon Cajetan's interpretation. Citing Hampus Lyttkens and Santiago Ramírez, Rocca notes that "the two terms dealing with God on one side of the proportionality are themselves analogous, and there can only be an infinite regress if proportionality itself attempts to establish their anologicity."[136] Then, citing George Klubertanz, Rocca states that "after 1256-57 Thomas totally abandoned proportionality."[137]

It should be noted, however, that there remain significant Thomists who continue to follow Cajetan's understanding.[138] Proportionality is not completely abandoned even by Rocca who concludes that, "What analogy of proportionality can do is help us understand better the nature of the divine attributes by comparing them to various human or creaturely qualities and characteristics that we comprehend more fully."[139] It seems, however, that its usefulness will depend on other considerations if an infinite regress is to be avoided.

Mondin's View

Having surveyed Aquinas's thought as it developed through his writings (considered chronologically),[140] Mondin concludes that the ontological ground for the analogy between God and creatures is one of efficient causality. This being the case, Analogy of Proportionality fails because it "does not indicate either the causal nexus between God and creatures or God's priority over His creatures."[141] Univocity, analogies of both two to a third and many to one, measurable proportion and extrinsic attribution, must all be rejected as well.

If this is the case then Analogy of Intrinsic Attribution is the only correct mode for analogical God-talk. Thus, "only the analogy of one to another does justice to the facts. According to this mode of analogy the same absolute perfection is predicated both of God and His creatures, but it is predicated according to priority and posteriority: the same perfection belongs to both of them but not in the same way."[142] In cases such as these, the names "are

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[134] Ralph McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 13.

[135] Ibid., 22.
[136] Rocca, 116.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Rocca lists Eric Mascall, James Anderson, and Jacques Maritain among others. See Ibid., 115.

[139] Ibid., 127.

[140] Primarily in *Commentary to the Sentences*, 1.19.5.2.1; 1.35.1.4; 4.49.2.1; *Truth*, 2.11; 21.4; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.30-34; *De Potentia* 7.5-7; the *Commentaries* on *Aristotle*, *Boethius*, and *Pseudo-Dionysius*; *Summa Theologica* 1.12.1; 1.16.6; 2a.88.1; and *Compendium Theologiae*, 27. Note that this process is similar to Rocca's.

[141] Mondin, 50.

[142] Ibid., 34.

analogous not because of a variation in the meaning of the copula "is" (which has always the same meaning: the possession of the perfection of being by the subject) but because of a variation in the meaning of the concept signified by the word."[143] This is in contrast to extrinsic denomination in which "the predicate attribute is not analogous, since it signifies a univocal concept."[144] Because Mondin sees analogy as a mode of predication, it is analyzable in terms of judgments—placing the issue in the second act of the intellect.[145] The importance of this is made more clear by considering another view that mistakenly attributes the use of univocal concepts to Aquinas.

Geisler's View

Norman Geisler writes that, "every term used properly of God must be *defined* the same way (i.e., univocally); however it cannot be *affirmed* the same way."[146] Geisler thinks this is true because "an analogous concept would lead to agnosticism."[147] Geisler is so convinced of his interpretation that he works it into quotations of Aquinas. When Aquinas writes on analogy in the *Summa Theologica* (1.13.5), he is quoted by Geisler as saying: "For in analogies the idea is not, as in univocals, one and the same [in its application]; yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals."[148] In case there is any doubt that Geisler is out of line with Aquinas, he specifically notes that "Scotus was right that the concept that is applied to both God and man must be univocally understood; but Aquinas was correct in arguing that this concept must be analogically affirmed of God and creatures."[149]

Analogous predication for Geisler is located in what seems to be a proportion of measure. He states that, "when a perfection taken from the finite world is applied to God, it must be applied to God infinitely, since He is an infinite Being."[150] Geisler qualifies his view somewhat by stating, "we can't attribute things to God univocally; [because] there is an infinite difference between an infinite Being and a finite being."[151] Geisler makes this clear when he goes on to say

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[143] Ibid., 60.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 58.

[146] Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two,* 23 (Emphasis in original).

[147] Ibid.

[148] Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan. *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 261. Insertion in original.

[149] Ibid. 263.

[150] Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume One*, *Introduction and Bible* (Bloomington: Bethany House, 2002), 145.

[151] Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two,* 22.

that "negative attribution is simply to assure that all finitude is negated of an attribute before it is predicated of God. . . . the negation only removes the limitation from the perfection."[152]

However, it is clear that for Aquinas, God is not simply *infinitely more than* man. The issue is not, as Geisler has it, simply that "if any attribute were predicated in the same way (i.e., univocally) of both God and creatures, then it would either imply the finitude of God or else the infinitude of creatures."[153] For Aquinas at least, God is not merely *different* from creatures, as if He exists on some continuum with His creatures.[154] Aquinas makes this clear when he says, "names applied to God and to other beings . . . cannot be predicated univocally *because the definition of what is said of a creature is not a definition of what is said of God*" (emphasis added).[155] It is therefore better to say, with Aquinas, that God is utterly *distinct* from them and that univocal concepts cannot apply to God regardless of their mode of predication.[156] It is the very definition (i.e., concept) of the predicate that causes univocal predication to fail, not simply the mode of predication.[157]

Rocca's View

In the case of God and creatures, Aquinas believes that "because we come to a knowledge of God from other things, the reality in the names said of God and other things belongs by priority in God according to His mode of being, but the meaning of the name belongs to God by posteriority. And so He is said to be named from His effects."[158] But this naming involves a process:

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[152] Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two,* 26.

[153] Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume One,* 145.

[154] See Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Milligan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 2.11.

[155] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology,* trans. Cyril Vollert (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1993), 1.27. "nomina de Deo et aliis rebus dicta, non omnino univoce, nec omnino aequivoce dicuntur. Univoce namque dici non possunt, cum definitio eius quod de creatura dicitur, non sit definitio eius quod dicitur de Deo" *Compendium Theologiae.* 1.27.

[156] See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32. cf. Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume One,* ch. 9; and Geisler, *Systematic Theology Volume Two*, 21-27. Gilson correctly notes that, "God is not more good, just, wise, powerful than the healing remedy is healthy" (*Christian Philosophy of Aquinas,* 106).

[157] Geisler cites Armand Maurer for support for this view, but he leaves out Maurer's crucial distinction (made at the end of the very sentence that Geisler partially quotes) between logical and metaphysical concepts. See Geisler and Corduan, 263; cf. Maurer, 143. Note that Geisler somewhat corrects this mistake in *Systematic Theology Volume Two* (e.g., 148-149) – but he still maintains that the difference between the concept and the judgment is based on mere removal of finitude.

[158] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 34. 6. "Sic igitur, quia ex rebus aliis in Dei cognitionem pervenimus, res nominum de Deo et rebus aliis dictorum per prius est in Deo secundum suum modum, sed ratio nominis per posterius. Unde et nominari dicitur a suis causatis." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 34. 6).

When any name expresses such perfections along with a mode that is proper to a creature, it can be said of God only according to likeness and metaphor. . . . for as to the mode of signification, every name is defective. For by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them. For our intellect, taking the origin of its knowledge from the senses, does not transcend the mode which is found in sensible things, ... As a result, with reference to the mode of signification there is in every name that we use an imperfection, which does not befit God, even though the thing signified in some eminent way does befit God. . . . Such names, therefore, . . . can be both affirmed and denied of God. They can be affirmed because of the meaning of the name; they can be denied because of the mode of signification.[159]

Rocca states that Aquinas employs a three step method in speaking of God. "For Aquinas the threefold way is primarily a human method at arriving at the knowledge of God."[160] This threefold way reflects the formula found in Romans 1:20 in Paul's discussion of God's attributes which are (1) invisible, (2) powerful, and (3) divine. These, in turn, require three ways of consideration: (1) negation, (2) causation, and (3) excellence.[161] This is how Aquinas can utilize finite concepts in meaningful predications concerning the infinite God.

Negation refers to the removal of that which is improper in a predication. This can be done through negative propositions with positive predicates (e.g., "God is not a body."), affirmative propositions with negative predicates (e.g., "God is incorporeal."), or affirmative propositions with positive predicates which are actually negative in meaning (e.g., "God is simple."). In each case what is being said of God really tells us what He is not. This is standard negative God-talk.

Because God is the first cause of all other being, there is a relation as cause to effect between God and creatures. Creatures are related to God as being effects of God's causality. Because this is the case, "Aquinas thinks that words used analogously of God and creatures apply primarily to God and secondarily to creatures."[162] Because the perfections in creatures derive their being from God, words applying to them are not merely being applied externally to God. God's transcendence does not negate this relation. Because God is the creator of everything it is not "unqualifiedly false that he is thus and so."[163] But it is inadequate, for God is above all. And so, "negations concerning God must themselves, in a sense, be negated."[164] This is done by asserting God's eminence over creation.

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[159] Ibid., 1.30.2-3.

[160] Rocca, 49.

[161] Rocca, 52.

[162] Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 71.

[163] Ibid., 72.

[164] Ibid.

Although it may sound at first incoherent, our "consciousness of God's preeminence is the primary source of theological negation in Aquinas' eyes."[165] Because we know that God transcends all creation we know that He does not have the same ontological status as anything in the created order. As the creator, however, we can name Him according to His effects provided that we keep in mind both that God is not literally described by the concepts to which our words refer (negation) but that He excels them. Thus we see that "names are often removed from God not because God is lacking in the perfections they signify but because he is above and exceeds all creatures."[166] Thus, in this final step our words must indicate complete removal of imperfection as well as limit. How this is accomplished will take up the final consideration of Aquinas's doctrine of analogical God-talk.

An Attempt at Resolution

At this point the basic issue of how one can communicate truths regarding a non-conceivable Being may be resolved. The solution must account for more than logically satisfactory modes of God-talk, which rob man of ontological truths. Yet it must do so in a way that does not reduce God to creaturely thoughts and definitions. The key may be found in the distinction between concepts and judgments, and how these relate to propositional truth.

Conception and Judgment

Following from the above considerations we can see that Aquinas believes that man has the ability to make meaningful statements concerning God via analogical God-talk. Theological reflection can form meaningful concepts based on prior judgments that are clarified by analogous God-talk that meets the demands of theology that "between God and creature there be difference without equivocity and likeness without univocity."[167] Thus, we can indeed make meaningful statements about God in a way similar to how we do so for creatures.

We cannot, however, on Aquinas's account, have knowledge of God's essence. "We cannot grasp what God is," Aquinas writes, but we can know what He is not, and the relation other things have with Him.[168] We can in no way conceive of God's essence (in the first act of the intellect), and so "to make St. Thomas say that we have at least an imperfect knowledge of what God is is to betray his expressly stated thought."[169] Yet Gilson notes that, "Commentators have gradually come to the stage where they speak of analogy as an almost positive source of knowledge giving us a more or less confused insight into a quasi-quidditative being of God."[170] Rather than attempting to find some positive concept in place when speaking of God, Gilson

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[165]Rocca, 66.

[166]Ibid., 67.

[167]Holloway, 180.

[168] See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.30.4.

[169] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of Aquinas*, 107.

[170] Ibid., 106.

notes, "it is quite enough to interpret them as St. Thomas himself did, not in the order of the quidditative concept, but in that of the judgment."[171] While it is the case that, "on the plane of quiddity, there is no mean between the univocal and the equivocal . . . . this is not the case if we transfer the question to the plane of the judgment."[172]

The God that Aquinas proves from creation turns out to be a being whose existence is his essence. But this act-of-existing is itself unknown. "The illusion that the case can be otherwise," Gilson writes, "comes from the fact that we think we know of what *esse* it is a question when we prove that God exists."[173] Because our knowledge of God "is not that of his essence . . . the concept which we form of this effect [i.e., creation] cannot at all be transformed for us into the concept of God which we lack. . . . Nevertheless . . . we attribute all of them to the same object by way of judgment."[174]

What Gilson is getting at here is that our "knowledge" of God is not conceptual but is rather found in the fact that we can form valid propositions about Him (the second act of the intellect). To put it simply, when we affirm things of God "since God's essence or being is unknown to us, we cannot know how they exist in God, but we can assert them properly of God."[175] Thus, analogical God-talk "is not a way of discovering the nature of the divine being by moving from creaturely perfections to divine ones, but of knowing that certain perfections are to be attributed to God."[176]

<center>Reply to The Objection Based on Univocity</center>

Rocca acknowledges that the doctrine of analogy has come under serious attack in the history of philosophy and theology when he says that, "various critiques have been directed at analogy, one of the most devastating of which sees analogy as blasphemously derogating from God's transcendence on the grounds that analogy is ultimately reducible to a univocal common being shared by God and creatures."[177]

Thomas Howe notes Carl F. H. Henry's position that analogy's "denial of univocal predication seems to many scholars to result not in analogical knowledge but rather in equivocal assertion, and hence excludes valid knowledge of God."[178] Howe notes that, "Those evangelicals

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[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid., 107.

[173] Ibid., 109.

[174] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of Aquinas,* 108.

[175] Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 143.

[176] Allen, 144.

[177] Rocca, 93.

[178] Carl F. H. Henry, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part One, vol. 2, God, Revelation and Authority* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1999), 115; in Thomas Howe, *PH1015 Course Notes* (Charlotte, NC: 2009), 143.

who deny analogical predication universally opt for univocal predication. The most common argument against analogy is that it must, of necessity, employ univocal concepts, in which case analogical predication is merely a smoke screen."[179] Howe goes on to state that,

> it is difficult to see how analogical predication espoused by Mondin, Geisler, and others can escape the charge of univocal predication since the concept is univocal even though the predication is according to being. If the concept is univocal, then what is being predicated is the same quality. It is only infinite with reference to God and finite with reference to man, but nevertheless it is still the exact same (i.e., univocal) quality. How can man and God have univocal qualities?[180]

The issue here is the failure to distinguish between logical and ontological conceptions. "All analogical predication occurs 'according to an order or reference (*respectus*) to something one.' This 'one' is not specifically or conceptually one, but one as an individual reality or nature is one."[181] "The 'one' proper to univocity is a *ratio*, a meaning, but the 'one' characteristic of analogy is a nature or even an *aliquid*, a something."[182] Analogy would "eventually draw analogy back to a common core of univocity if that 'partially same meaning' were on the same conceptual level as univocal meanings; but it is not, for what Thomas is attempting to show is that the moment of identity in an analogical term's various meanings is not a meaning at all but an individual reality to which all the different meanings necessarily refer."[183]

Maurer makes this issue clear when he says that analogical predication is "according to *esse*, and not according to conception."[184] He explains that this occurs when "several things equally receive the attribution of some common concept, but in reality the perfection designated by the concept does not possess an *esse* of the same character as all of them."[185] What the metaphysician and the logician consider when they predicate are two different things, and as Maurer warns: "It is important to keep the order of logic distinct from that of reality."[186] The logician uses terms to predicate according to their definitions (which are necessarily abstract), while the metaphysician considers the terms as referring to actual things.

The logician's process clearly requires concepts that accord with a thing's genus, which as has been shown is a product of the intellect not found in extra-mental reality. Generic concepts "cannot be abstracted from *esse*, and hence they are intrinsically analogical. . . . On the

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[179] Howe, 144.

[180] Ibid., 146.

[181] Rocca, 139.

[182] Ibid., 150.

[183] Rocca, 151.

[184] Maurer, 128.

[185] Ibid., 128.

[186] Ibid., 131.

other hand, genera can be abstracted from existence and its modes by the logician and the mathematician, both of whom are not concerned with existence but only concepts."[187] For example, the term "body" can be said univocally of anything corporeal, but "'bodiness' does not exist equally in all bodies. . . . For the philosopher of nature, then, who considers bodies as they actually exist, 'body' is predicated analogically, not 'according to conception' but 'according to *esse*."[188] Thus, what the logician means is not what *is* (*esse*).

It is the logician, then, who predicates univocally of God, not the metaphysician.[189] However, generic concepts "can become analogical when they enter into the context of judgment in metaphysics."[190] This is why Maurer can agree with Rocca and Gilson that analogy "must be grasped in judgment and not in an act of apprehension, which is properly directed to the understanding of essences."[191] This is why Aquinas's doctrine of analogy "is above all a doctrine of the judgment of analogy, and not the analogy of concept—at least if we mean by 'concept' the expression of an act of simple apprehension."[192]

<div align="center">Judgment and Truth</div>

All this might seem to create a difficulty in ascertaining what would count for or against the truth of a given proposition. But for Aquinas, "the nature of truth consists in two things: in a thing's being, and in the apprehension of a cognitive power proportioned to a thing's being."[193] If truth is based on existence and not essence, then it is discovered in the second act of the mind and not the first. To call a proposition true, then, is to say that there is a correspondence between the thought expressed by a proposition and the state of affairs in reality.[194] But how, if one cannot form an accurate concept through apprehension, can the truth of any proposition be asserted?

Rocca answers that Aquinas has a broader meaning for "concept" and "apprehension" that allows for a concept to be not only the *root* of a judgment, but also its *fruit*.[195] In an

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[187] Ibid.. 143.

[188] Ibid., 129.

[189] Maurer believes that Cajetan made his mistake precisely here. "Nowhere in his description does he bring out the role of *esse* in this analogy [of inequality]" (Maurer, 141).

[190] Maurer, 144.

[191] Ibid., 143.

[192] Ibid. cf. Rocca, 166-173.

[193] Rocca, 160.

[194] "The correspondence theory is often traced back to Aristotle's well-known definition of truth (*Metaphysics* 1011b25): 'To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.'" ("Correspondence Theory of Truth" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

[195] Rocca, 166.

understanding of apprehension that goes beyond mere sensual power to "any act of cognition whatsoever," the intellect can be said to conceive of a proposition.[196] In this case, the concept is a conclusion flowing from previous judgments. "For Aquinas, then, the mind's concept in the broad sense can be a definition, a judgment, or anything at all in which the intellect speaks its interior word."[197]

If this is the case, then true propositions can be formed on the basis of intellectual judgments. This not only satisfies the requirements mentioned above: it accounts for knowledge (and hence, speakability) of ontological truths about God without reducing Him to creaturely thoughts and definitions. This also can help theists deal with an entire category of atheistic arguments that trade in confusion over theistic attribution.

Answering Atheistic Arguments with Analogical God-Talk

Attribute Incoherency Arguments

In Michael Martin's *The Impossibility of God*, more than half the book contains arguments against God's existence based on the rational incompatibility of certain divine attributes.[198] These arguments take the form:

1. If God exists then he has property X.
2. If God exists then he has property Y.
3. If a being with property X exists then A follows.
4. If a being with property Y exists then ~A follows.
5. It is impossible that (A • ~A).
6. Therefore it is impossible for God to exist. [199]

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[196]Ibid., 168.

[197]Ibid., 173.

[198]Michael Martin and Ricki Monnier, *The Impossibility of God* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003).

[199] Since this argument form is valid, for the argument to be proven unsound some premise or premises must be shown to be false.

1.	$G \rightarrow (X \cdot Y)$		A
2.	$X \rightarrow A$		A
3.	$Y \rightarrow ~A$		A
4.	$~~G$		PA
5.	$X \cdot Y$	1,4	MP
6.	X	5	SIMP
7.	Y	5	SIMP
8.	A	2,6	MP
9.	~A	3,7	MP
10.	$A \cdot ~A$	8,9	CONJ
11.	$~(~~G)$	4-10	IP
12.	~G	11	DN

Examples of such arguments include *Perfection vs. Creator:* A perfect being needs nothing but without a need God would not create. *Creator vs. Immutability:* An unchanging being cannot intend to create at one time and not at another. *Immutability vs. Omniscience:* An unchanging being cannot know changing truths (which differ from one time to another). *Transcendence vs. Omnipresence:* A transcendent being cannot be present as well. *Justice vs. Mercy:* No being can both give what one deserves and not give what one deserves.

Single-attribute disproofs seek to generate an inconsistency within one attribute of God. In this form the argument stands or falls on whether or not a given attribute is inherently incoherent—regardless of what kind of being is said to posses it, or what other attributes said being might also be said to possess.[200] These sorts of arguments make up seven out of eighteen arguments in Martin's collection.

Examples of attributes that fuel arguments of this kind might include *Omnipotence:* The ability to do all things must include the ability to not do certain things, for some abilities preclude others by definition. *Omniscience:* No other being can know propositions with certain indexicals (time, location, subject-object, etc). *Supernaturality:* There must be at least one fundamental law of creation which is not a result of God's will – that of God's will being effective. Therefore God's ability to will is also natural.

The importance of both types of incoherency arguments is that, if successful, they provide a logical disproof of God.[201] Among philosophically-minded apologists, several responses have been put forth that produce problems of their own. Below these will be briefly explained and critiqued along more Thomistic lines.

Problem 1: Analytic Philosophy

In his response to these sorts of arguments, William Lane Craig makes two interesting remarks: (1) Scripture gives philosophers a wide latitude with regard to doctrinal formulations, and (2) Anti-theistic critiques can be helpful in forming more adequate conceptions of doctrine.[202] He admits that "two controls have tended to guide this inquiry into the divine nature: Scripture and Perfect Being theology."

> For thinkers in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, God's self-revelation in Scripture is obviously paramount in understanding what God is like. In addition, the Anselmian conception of God as the greatest conceivable being or most perfect being has guided philosophical speculation on the raw data of Scripture, so that God's biblical attributes are to be conceived in ways that would serve to exalt God's greatness. Since the concept of

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[200]A popular single-attribute disproof concerns omnipotence, viz. "If God can do anything, can He create a rock so heavy He cannot lift it?"

[201] For more robust discussions of these arguments see Theodore Drange, "Incompatible-Properties Arguments: A Survey," *Philo* 2 (1998), 49-60.

[202] William Lane Craig, *The Coherence of Theism* at http://www.bethinking.org/who-are-you-god/advanced/the-coherence-of-theism-part-1.htm and http://www.bethinking.org/who-are-you-god/advanced/the-coherence-of-theism-part-2.htm (accessed November 10, 2009).

God is underdetermined by the biblical data and since what constitutes a "great-making" property is to some degree debatable, philosophers working within the Judaeo-Christian tradition enjoy considerable latitude in formulating a philosophically coherent and biblically faithful doctrine of God. Theists thus found that antitheistic critiques of certain conceptions of God could actually be quite helpful in framing a more adequate conception.[203]

This is brought forth in several of the atheistic arguments as well as Craig's and others' responses to them. For example, in his response to problems of God's immutability Craig states that:

Rejection of radical immutability leaves it open for us to affirm nonetheless that God is immutable in the biblical sense of being constant and unchangeable in His character. Moreover, He is immutable in His existence (necessity, aseity, eternity) and His being omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. These essential attributes are enough to safeguard God's perfection without having Him frozen into immobility.[204]

This kind of thinking also leads Craig to deny that God is atemporal. "A second powerful argument for divine temporality is based on God's being all-knowing. In order to know the truth of propositions expressed by tensed sentences like 'Christ is risen from the dead' God must exist temporally. For such knowledge locates the knower relative to the present."[205]

In Craig's thinking, for God to be all-knowing is for God to "know the truth of propositions expressed by tensed sentences." Craig states that "S is omniscient if and only if S knows only and all true propositions which are such that it is logically possible for them to be known."[206] Craig's language here is typical of the analytic philosopher, and it may be here that the problem arises, for the precision with which analytic philosophy must operate is simply not available if the doctrine of analogy is correct.[207]

Craig in fact bemoans the problem of analogy when he writes about divine simplicity: "While we can say what God is not like, we cannot say what He is like, except in an analogical sense—which must in the end fail, since there is no univocal element in the predicates we assign to God—leaving us in a state of genuine agnosticism about the nature of God. Indeed, on this view God really has no nature; He is simply the inconceivable act of being. Why should we adopt so extraordinary a doctrine?"[208] Aquinas devotes considerable space to why we should

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[203] Ibid., Part 1.

[204] Ibid., Part 2.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Craig then proposes a Molinist conception of God's foreknowledge to avoid other problems (viz., human freedom vs. divine sovereignty). (Craig, *Coherence of Theism*, Part 2).

[207] Maurer, 127-145.

[208] Craig, *Coherence of Theism*, Part 2.

adopt "so extraordinary a doctrine," and in doing so he seems to point out some of the very errors that are being made today.[209]

Problem 2: Perfect Being Theology

Concerning "Perfect Being Theology" (PBT), Aquinas points out that "granted that everyone should understand by the name *God* something than which a greater cannot be thought, it will still not be necessary that there exist in reality something than which a greater cannot be thought."[210] The reason for this is that a thing and the definition of its name are said in the same way whether or not it exists, so simply being able to define a thing does not give it existence.[211]

Further, one's view of what qualifies as "perfect" can end up guiding the discussion more than is warranted. For example, Paul Feinberg, writing against a robust view of aseity and impassibility in God, asks, "If God hears and answers our prayers, and if he changes his attitudes toward us when we repent of sin, for example, it seems that his mental and emotional states at any given moment must to some extent be influenced by what we do. But, why is that a deficiency in God?"[212] Granted, the arguments against God's passibility may include reference to a supposed deficiency but they are not the strongest.

Concerning God's infinity, Stephen T. Davis states that an unlimited being is: "(1) a being who possesses all the G-properties that it is possible for a being to possess; (2) a being all of whose G-properties that admit of an intrinsic maximum are possessed to the maximal degree (for example, being omnipotent); and (3) a being all of whose G-properties that admit of no intrinsic maximum are possessed to a degree unsurpassed by any other being that has ever existed or ever will exist (for instance, being more loving than any other actual being)."[213] What Davis calls "G-properties" are great-making properties. But what makes something a great-making property and another not? This is a question that is constantly being exploited by atheists.

Feinberg even believes that some divine attributes admit of degrees. Thus, "infinite" may come to be seen as the "maximal degree" of something instead of being unlimited. Feinberg's version of PBT is also evident in his arguments against a strong view of divine immutability / omniscience:

> The strong conception of immutability associated with the classical theism of Anselm and Aquinas says that God is utterly incapable of any change whatsoever. Theologians

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[209] E.G., *ST* I. Q's. 3-30 and *SCG* Book One.

[210] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 11. 3. Full text: "Ex quo etiam tertia ratio solvitur. Nam sicut nobis per se notum est quod totum sua parte sit maius, sic videntibus ipsam divinam essentiam per se notissimum est Deum esse, ex hoc quod sua essentia est suum esse. Sed quia eius essentiam videre non possumus, ad eius esse cognoscendum non per seipsum, sed per eius effectus pervenimus." (Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* I. 11. 3).

[211] See ibid.

[212] John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*, *The Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001), 241.

[213] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 244.

holding this view reason that if anything changes, including God, it must change either for better or for worse. Since God is already perfect, he could not become more perfect, so any change in God would be for the worse. Since that would mean that he would stop being perfect, there would be no point in such change. . . . It is this strong sense of immutability that process theists and open view proponents find so objectionable. They don't see how such a God matches the biblical portrait of God. . . . the God of classical theism is not a God who attracts worshipers. He is disengaged from his creation, appears unconcerned about what happens in our world, and seems incapable of responding to our needs even if he does care. . . . And there are problems for divine omniscience. For one thing, if God undergoes no changes whatsoever, he could not know from one of our days to the next that it is a different day for us. For him to know such a fact each day would mean a change in his knowledge, but if he is totally immutable, there cannot be any changes in his knowledge.[214]

These arguments ignore the thomistic metaphysical approach, and instead rely on what is or is not going to affect the perfection of God. Feinberg wishes to use Scripture to keep his view orthodox, yet what he allows as metaphorical / anthropological in Scripture is the very subject at issue.

Perfect Being Theology also suffers from the basic issue raised above with analytic philosophy. When linguistic precision becomes the *sine qua non* of philosophical discussion, univocity is the only allowable means of predication. And this is exactly the way many divine attributes are defined. God's omniscience is defined as knowing all true propositions – as if making man's limited knowledge of true propositions unlimited is all that is necessary to describe God's knowledge. This would be the same mistake as saying that God's omnipresence is "unlimited location."

Problem 3: Popular Lay Explanations

Michael Martin notes that "ordinary men tend to understand God in ways that are familiar to them despite the protests of theologians and intellectual ministers. As a result, God tends to be conceived of in the image of a man – a man much more powerful, moral, knowledgeable, and so on than ordinary men."[215] The difficulty for any univocal predication is that even when eminence-affirming prefixes are attached to univocal terms, the terms themselves remain finite in the intellect, and finitude cannot become infinitude by multiplication.[216]

The resulting theological understanding of God's attributes is more difficult to grasp than popular understandings, however. This is why his definitions of God's perfections often sound so obtuse compared to the popular understanding (see examples below).

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[214]Ibid., 264-277.

[215] Martin, *Impossibility of God*, 238.

[216] See**Error! Main Document Only.** William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1979), 65-110.

	Thomistic Understanding:	Popular Understanding:
Omnipresent	God is whole and entire in each and every place as an agent who is acting in all places.[217]	God is everywhere.
Immutable	God has no passive potency.[218]	God cannot change.
Eternal	God possesses perfect, all-at-once, unending life.[219]	God is outside time.
Infinite	God is an unreceived act of existing.[220]	God has no limits.
Omniscient	Being the cause of all that comes to exist, gives God knowledge of all existing things.[221]	God knows everything.
Omnipotent	God can actuate all potentials which do not involve being and non-being together.[222]	God can do anything.

While what are labeled the "popular understandings" above may not always involve problems of merely logical concepts, they most always involve metaphysical problems one the logical concepts are considered as existing realities. When the terms are used as *ontologically* univocal predicates they reduce God's attributes to that of His creatures. To say that these need only be "stripped of their finitude or imperfection" does no good, for once properly stripped these terms no longer refer to the same being. And it is not difficult to see how contradictions can be discovered when an attribute of God is defined as an unlimited version of a necessarily limited concept.[223]

Solution: Thomistic Analogous God-Talk

The resulting paradoxes of the above methods have fueled atheistic divine attribute incoherency arguments. Yet these paradoxes are the very things that are excluded on a Thomistic methodology. Aquinas begins his theology with metaphysics – not "great-making attributes," nor by attempting to remove finitude from (necessarily finite) univocal concepts. His analogy is based on judgments that are themselves the result of metaphysical insights from principles

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[217] Holloway, *Natural Theology,* 260-264.

[218] Ibid., 267.

[219] Ibid., 271 (from Boethius).

[220] Ibid., 285-86.

[221] Aquinas, *ST* I, Q. 14, A. 5.

[222] Holloway, *Natural Theology,* 380-384.

[223] Holloway notes: "An even greater mistake would be to confuse mathematical proportionality with metaphysical proportionality or the analogy of being." *Natural Theology*, 220.

discovered through reason and empirical observation. By avoiding univical concepts *in toto*, the Thomist can avoid finite/infinite paradoxes.[224]

Conclusion

"When all is said and done," writes Armand Maurer, "our judgments of analogy between God and creatures do not yield a positive concept of God in himself."[225] Because of the infinite "distance" between God a creatures, "man reaches the peak of his knowledge of God when he realizes that he does not know him. . . ."[226] When theologians embrace this truth, as well as the fact that, paradoxical as it may sound, this does not spell the end of theology proper, many of the errors of analytical and atheistic philosophers may be resolved. Further, the more pervasive confusion over God's nature and the content of our knowledge of Him.

To do so may sound impious, but if "man has, then, no other recourse here below than to return to God by way of thought, beginning with the sensible knowledge coming from His effects," then in doing so, "we do no more than give philosophical meaning to the words of the Apostle: The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (Romans 1:20). Certainly all theologians and Christian philosophers who have spoken about the existence of God have quoted these words, but St. Thomas took them in all their living force."[227]

Using Aquinas's metaphysical method, one can prove not only *that* God is, but *what* He is, starting from the same point that all men must—creation itself. So long as one does so carefully, he may honor Romans 1:20 without violating Romans 1:21-23.[228]

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[224] Certainly more may be required for a complete response, but at least the Thomist does not create nor sustain the problems he is trying to solve.

[225] Armand Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy,* 2nd Ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), 169.

[226] Ibid., 170.

[227] Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 52.

[228] Respectively:

"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους).

"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things" (διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ηὐχαρίστησαν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία. φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν καὶ ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἑρπετῶν).

APPENDIX: ANALOGY ACCORDING TO AQUINAS

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                          ┌───────────┐
                          │  Analogy  │
                          └─────┬─────┘
              ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
        ┌───────────┐                       ┌───────────┐
        │ Intrinsic │                       │ Extrinsic │
        └─────┬─────┘                       └─────┬─────┘
        ┌─────┴─────┐                       ┌─────┴─────┐
  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐           ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
  │ Efficient│ │  Similar │           │  Proper  │ │ Improper │
  │ Causality│ │ Relations│           │          │ │          │
  └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘           └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘
  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐           ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
  │"Intrinsic│ │  "Proper │           │"Extrinsic│ │ "Improper│
  │Attribution"│ │Propotionality"│     │Attribution"│ │Proportionality"│
  └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘           └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘
  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐           ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
  │ One to   │ │ Many to  │           │ Many to  │ │Symbolical/│
  │ Another  │ │ Many     │           │ One      │ │Metaphorical│
  │          │ │ Two to Two│          │Two to A Third│ │          │
  └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘           └────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘
  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐           ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
  │God is good│ │A Captain │          │A Man is  │ │A Woman is│
  │and Man is │ │steers a  │          │healthy   │ │a Rose    │
  │good.      │ │ship and an│         │and Medicine│ │          │
  │          │ │Emperor steers│       │is healthy.│ │          │
  │          │ │a country.│           │          │ │          │
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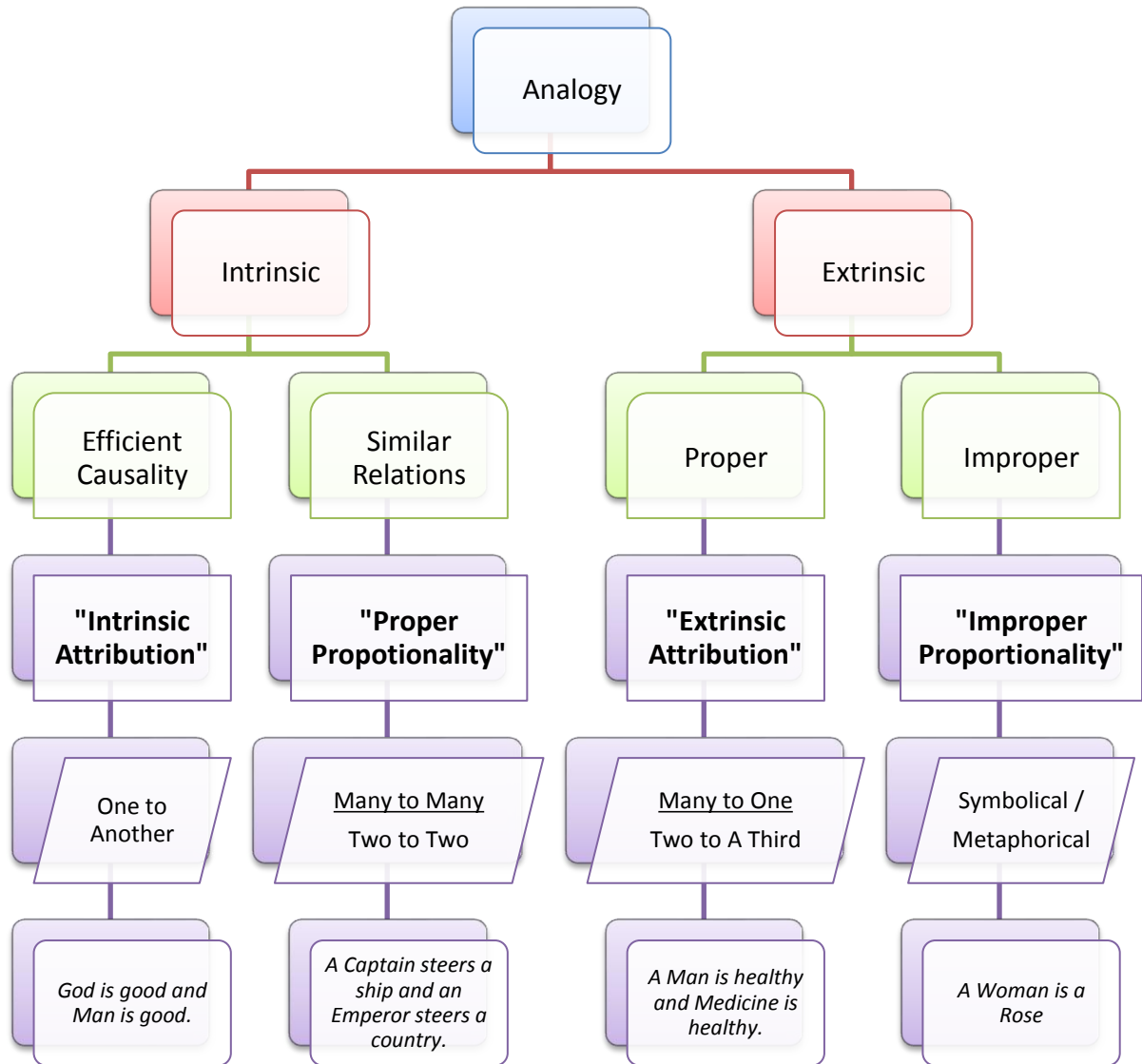
Chart adapted from Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (The Hague: Netherlands, 1963), 52-53.

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