

ANALOGY IN THOMAS AQUINAS AND HIS COMMENTARIAT: THE DISCOVERY OF THE ANALOGY OF ATTRIBUTION AT THE NEXUS OF *ENS COMMUNE* AND *IPSUM ESSE SUBSISTENS*

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Abstract: *In traversing the expansive corpus of St. Thomas Aquinas, a marked development observed in his thought is the doctrine of analogy. As a metaphysician, whose concern is with the real (i.e., being qua being), St. Thomas sought to develop a form of analogy that properly reflects the ontological cause-and-effect relation between the God and the creature. Phrased differently, since God, as self-subsistent being (ipsum esse subsistens), is outside the ontological order of the creature (ens commune), the analogy of attribution ad alterum (“one to another”) provides, for St. Thomas, sufficient grounding to speak of creatures as participating in imperfect qualities which find their source in whom they originate and from whom they are communicated—God. Stemming from the development in St. Thomas’ thought concerning the notion of analogy is the diversity of opinion found within the Angelic Doctor’s commentary tradition. Therefore, in addition to elucidating what form of analogy St. Thomas settled upon when considering the matter on the transcendental level (i.e., the analogy of attribution), is the demonstration of how some of his disciples may have taken his doctrine of analogy to conclusions he did not deduce because they were inquiring after solutions to questions he did not consider.*

Keywords: St. Thomas, Cajetan, Scotus, analogy of attribution, analogy of proportionality

Introduction

Surpassing the sheer volume of writings produced by St. Thomas are the commentaries written on his works. There is hardly left untouched any aspect of the Master in *Sacra Pagina’s* works that has not been commented upon by subsequent followers. Within this tradition of commentary, however, is no shortage of opinions on what St. Thomas meant when elucidating a certain topic, most notably his doctrine of analogy.

The function of analogy is important to the Christian tradition because it sets the basis for how we speak of God. Univocal speech concerning God and creation will result in the loss of the transcendence of God. Alternatively, equivo-

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cal speech will result in the creature's inability to obtain any real knowledge of God (i.e., agnosticism). Moreover, on the level of being, analogy likewise sets the foundation for our ontological conceptions of God and creation. A univocal conception of being (*ens*) between God and creation places Him within the creaturely domain (e.g., pantheism). Equivocity separates creation as wholly independent from God. As somewhat of a *via media*, analogy, according to St. Thomas, establishes the proper relationship of diversity and unity between God and creation.²

The matter in dispute amongst St. Thomas' commentators, however, is what form of analogy is utilized by him in reference to the relationship between God and creation (i.e., the transcendental analogy of being). Notable commentators spanning from Thomas de Vio Cajetan³ to Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange⁴ are proponents of the analogy of proper proportionality. On the other hand, more recent commentators have asserted that such usage of the analogy of proper proportionality between God and creation cannot be squared with the thought of St. Thomas himself, stating that "The writings of Scotus forced Aquinas' disciples to search their master's texts for answers to questions he was not considering."⁵ In examining the texts of St. Thomas, what will be demonstrated is that in his mature writings, the analogy of attribution *ad alterum* ("one to another") was favored and settled upon to establish the relationship between God and creation.

²That is common being's (*ens commune*) distinctiveness from self-subsistent being (*ipsum esse subsistens*), yet its dependency upon self-subsistent being for existence.

³Analogates are twofold. Certain ones [are analogous] according to a determinate relation of one to another. Certain others [are analogous] according to proportionality. For example, substance and accident are analogates under being in the first way. But God and creatures [are analogates] in the second way, for there is an infinite distance between God and creature." Cajetan, *In de Ente et Essentia*, q. 3, in Domenic D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2019), 128.

⁴Garrigou-Lagrange states,

The analogy of attribution can express the relation of one thing to another (as of the air to the health of the animal), or of several things to one object (as of the salubrious air and the healthful remedy to the health of the animal). And since extrinsic denomination suffices for this analogy of attribution in the secondary analogates (for the air is not intrinsically healthy), this analogy does not as yet clearly make known in what the analogates are intrinsically alike, when they are truly so alike. Hence, although this analogy is perhaps prior in the way of investigation, yet if we wish to know in what the analogates, which have something intrinsically in common, are intrinsically alike among themselves, we must have recourse to the more profound analogy of proportionality.

Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1943), 399–400.

⁵D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 182.

Not to be neglected is the recognition of St. Thomas' utilization of different types of analogy throughout his corpus, specifically the analogy of proportionality in one early work. Nonetheless, the importance underlying the delineation between such tedious nuances of types of analogy lies not only in conceptual semantics (i.e., the intelligible notion used to speak of a likeness between God and creature) but in metaphysical implications.

The State of the Question for St. Thomas: Conceptual or Metaphysical?

Critical to understanding why there has developed a diversity of opinion amongst St. Thomas' disciples concerning the topic of his use of analogy, especially concerning analogy on the transcendental level, is that, as Bernard Montagnes argues, many followers of St. Thomas have shifted their theory of analogy from "ontology to logic."⁶ Stated differently, how one approaches the matter itself, as a logician or a metaphysician, will greatly influence how St. Thomas is interpreted. For instance, according to Lawrence Dewan, "The logician's outlook is limited to things from the viewpoint of their mode of being in the intellect."⁷ In contrast, it is the metaphysician who "considers beings as beings."⁸

When approaching the matter of analogy between God and creation (i.e., the transcendental level of being), Montagnes terms the respective method of the former as "a metaphysics of the idea of being," and for the latter, "a metaphysics of the degree of being."⁹ The logician's focus, therefore, is upon the concept (i.e., the abstracted phantasm) that is either analogically or univocally used to compare the similitude amongst various analogates. The metaphysician's inquiry, however, is broader. Starting with the thing (*res*) in reality, the metaphysician abstracts from it a mental conception (i.e., a phantasm), thus encompassing the method of the logician, but for the purpose of subsequently comparing the abstracted notion with the real—the formal concept (i.e., the *ratio* in the mind) with the external thing (i.e., the *actus essendi* of the thing).

The force influencing this shift from a philosophy of being to a philosophy of concepts originates, as Domenic D'Ettore claims, from Duns Scotus' critique of Henry of Ghent concerning analogy as a foundation for natural theology.¹⁰ In his *Ordinato*, Scotus asks, "Can the intellect of the wayfarer have a simple con-

⁶ Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004), 132.

⁷ Lawrence Dewan, *Form and Being: Studies in Thomistic Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2006), 84.

⁸ Dewan, *Form and Being*, 85.

⁹ Montagnes, *Analogy of Being*, 158–9.

¹⁰ A summary of this background can be found in D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 21–6.

cept in which God is conceived?”¹¹ The reasoning behind such a question lies in Scotus’ argument that “if there is to be science of God, it must rely on names said through one and the same *ratio* and, therefore, on univocity and not analogy.”¹² Accordingly, if we are to acquire real knowledge of God within the domain of natural theology, the names or concepts man attributes to either God or the creature must in some fashion have identical (i.e., univocal) meaning within the conceptual realm.

Explaining how one is to obtain such univocal concepts, Scotus proceeds to assert,

Every metaphysical inquiry about God proceeds in the following manner: one considers the formal character [*raison*] of something; one eliminates the imperfection that this formal character would have in creatures; one posits this formal character separately by attributing to it the absolutely supreme perfection; and one attributes it to God in this form. For example, the formal character of wisdom (intelligence) or will: considered in and for itself, it includes neither imperfection nor limitation; once the imperfections that accompany it in creatures have been eliminated, one attributes it to God by carrying it to the supreme degree of perfection. Every inquiry about God therefore supposes that the intellect has the same univocal concept there as it draws from creatures.¹³

Once a concept has been abstracted (e.g., wisdom), and through privation removed of any imperfections, this pure concept, according to Scotus, can then be applied to both God and the creature. Phrased differently, the pure concept takes conceptual priority by encompassing the analogates, thus bridging the intelligible gap from creature to God.¹⁴

¹¹ Scotus, *Ordinatio I*, d. 3, pars 1, qq. 1–2, as translated in D’Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 22.

¹² D’Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 26.

¹³ Scotus, *Ordinatio I*, dist. 8, pars 1, q. 3, n. 39, translated in Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*, 119, 120.

¹⁴ Of note is the debate if Scotus would also grant univocity on the metaphysical level. D’Ettore states,

Scotus distinguishes in his *Ordinatio* between conceptual and real diversity, saying that God and creatures are not primarily diverse in concepts, although they are primarily diverse in reality because they agree in no reality. In other words, although Scotus holds that God and creatures agree in one univocal concept—including the concept signified through the name “being”—he also says that the concept of being is not answered by a single reality. . . . Texts such as these have provoked debate on whether Scotus restricts the univocity of being (and presumably other names said

Most notable amongst St. Thomas' followers who would subsequently respond to Scotus' proposition of employing univocal conceptions between God and creation is Thomas de Vio Cajetan. In seeking to be faithful to his master's thought, Cajetan sought to counter Scotus' notion of univocal conceptions by conceiving of an analogical conception between God and creation via the analogy of proper proportionality. The analogy of proper proportionality finds agreement, not between a determinate relationship between the two analogates *per se* (e.g., the analogy of attribution), but it "is rather based on the agreement or similarity of two proportions with another."¹⁵ For example, the notion of sight can be said of vision and understanding in the sense that sight is to the eye and understanding to the mind. Or as John Wippel asserts, "In this way we may say that just as the infinite is to the infinite, so is the finite to the finite. Hence there is this kind of likeness between a creature and God, since just as God has those things which belong to him, so does a creature have those things which belong to it."¹⁶ Therefore, like Scotus, Cajetan admits of a common concept between analogates, but one that "makes the proper formal concept of one analogate an imperfect representation of the others."¹⁷

Elucidating the similarity between Scotus and Cajetan of both holding to a singular concept wherein one can move from the creature to God, Wipplé states,

of God and creatures) to the level of concepts while granting that the realities are metaphysically analogous. In effect, does Scotus hold that being is simply speaking univocal or does he hold that being is univocal to the logician although analogous to the metaphysician?

D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 26–8.

¹⁵John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 200), 552.

¹⁶Wippel, *Metaphysical*, 554.

¹⁷D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 38. Cajetan himself correspondingly asserts,

The sense is that one concept which perfectly represents one of two analogates, as such, imperfectly represents the other. With respect to the external word, however, there is no difference between analogous and univocal characters. . . . As regards the imperfect mental concept, although it is distinguished [from the analogates] just as what is one absolutely from what is many absolutely, nevertheless it is not distinguished from them as the one which abstracts from the many in representation, as is the case with univocal terms. For from the foregoing it is clear that that concept, say, of quality insofar as it is a being, is an adequate representation of one of the analogates, viz. of quality itself, insofar as concerns its relationship to its own 'to be' and does not abstract from the quiddity of quality. Of the other analogates, however, such as quantity and substance, the concept is an imperfect representation insofar as it is similar to them proportionally.

Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, *The Analogy of Names, and the Concept of Being* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 34, 35.

“This common core serves as a bridge, as it were, which enables us to move from knowledge of perfections in their finite and participated state to such a pure perfection considered in itself, and from this to its application to the infinite and unparticipated source of all being.”¹⁸ Accordingly, whether an analogical likeness or univocal pure perfection is used, conceptually, both Scotus and Cajetan’s respective methods subsume the analogates under a common term for the purpose of providing conceptual intelligibility between God and the creature.

What makes Cajetan’s peculiar notion of analogy “proper,” however, is that the analogous term does not merely stay within the domain of the conceptual, but it is formally and intrinsically in each of the analogates. Stated differently, in the analogy of proper proportionality, whether an analogical likeness is attributed to one analogate in a more perfect way, or another in a diminished way, the conceptual form of the term must yet, in some fashion, be present within each respective analogate. Elucidating this particular form of analogy found in Cajetan, George Klubertanz states,

The analogy of proportionality is that analogy in which there is no direct relationship between the analogates themselves; there is instead a relationship within each of the analogates, and these relationships are similar . . . an analogy is called “proper” if the perfection is intrinsic to each of the analogates in question, and “improper” or “extrinsic” if the perfection is present only in one of the analogates. . . . This type alone is analogy in the proper sense, since only in this type does each of the analogates intrinsically possess the analogous perfection, which is proportionately similar in all analogates.¹⁹

Echoing this sentiment, H. D. Gardeil likewise asserts, “What distinguishes this analogy (the analogy of proper proportionality) most sharply from the analogy of attribution is that the nature or idea (*ratio*) signified by the analogous term occurs intrinsically and formally in each of the analogates.”²⁰ Respectively, for Cajetan, why the only proper analogy is the analogy of proper proportionality is because it is not merely extrinsic, but it is intrinsic.²¹

¹⁸Wippel, *Metaphysical*, 571.

¹⁹George P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 7, 9.

²⁰H. D. Gardeil, *Introduction to the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas Vol. 4: Metaphysics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 54.

²¹A summary concerning Cajetan’s view of analogy of proper proportionality can be found in Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*, 127.

Following in the footsteps of Cajetan, Edward Feser states, “Now, the analogy of proper proportionality differs from the univocal use of terms in that the concept expressed is not applied in exactly the same way to each analogate, even if we do not have (as we do in the equivocal use of terms) the expression, in each application of the term, of utterly different concepts. Rather, the concept is applied to all the analogates in an indistinct and indeterminate way on the basis of a real likeness or similarity they bear to one another.”²² Like Cajetan, Feser seeks to establish a shared pure perfection between the analogates, but following further into the Cardinal’s example, he also states that the pure concept is present “in an indistinct and indeterminate way”²³ in each of the analogates. For instance, he writes, “An example of the analogy of proper proportionality would be the predication of life to plants, animals, human beings, and angels. What makes the analogy in question here one of proper proportionality is, first, that life exists intrinsically in each of the analogates (in contrast to the analogy of attribution); and secondly, that it exists formally in each of them.”²⁴

The analogy of proper proportionality’s progression of a singular pure perfection that does not merely remain in the logical but also is intrinsically and formally present in each of the analogates according to proportion comes under critique by Montagnes when he states, “For, once one grants that there is an analogous concept which is truly one, even if the unity of this concept is imperfect and proportional, one is inevitably led to attribute to it properties that belong to the univocal concept.”²⁵ Phrased differently, where it is debated that Scotus was hesitant to bring his univocal conceptions between God and the creature from the domain of logic to the real, Montagnes implies that the logical outcome of Cajetan’s analogy of proper proportionality goes further by placing shared formal conceptions (though differing according to proportion) really within God and the creature.

Although Cajetan’s notion of proper proportionality can be useful on the predicamental level (e.g., the predication of being to dog, man, and angel),²⁶ it yet seems that he collapses the transcendental level of analogy into the predica-

²² Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Books, 2014), 258.

²³ Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 258

²⁴ Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 257.

²⁵ Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*, 134.

²⁶ “What analogy of proportionality can do is help us understand better the divine nature of the divine attributes by comparing them to various human or creaturely qualities and characteristics that we comprehend more fully.” Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2004), 127.

mental level when seeking to establish a relation of proportionality between God and the creature.²⁷ As Montagnes asserts, “While Thomas in the *De Veritate* distinguishes transcendental analogy from predicamental analogy in order to emphasize the separating role of the first, Cajetan unites them into a single one, the analogy of proper proportionality, to which he attributes a unifying function and which is closer, all things considered, to the univocity of Scotus than to the analogy of Thomas.”²⁸ However, one of the difficulties with this, as Battista Mondin argues,

is that when we try to set up a proportionality between God and creatures, e.g. human existence is to human essence as divine existence is to divine essence, there seems to be no similarity between the two proportions; because the relation between the elements of the divine proportion is only logical (since there is no distinction between essence and existence in God) while the relation between the elements of the human proportion is real (since there is a real distinction between essence and existence in man).²⁹

In sum, the problematic nature of Cajetan transferring his type of analogy, which is fitted well for the predicamental level,³⁰ to the transcendental level, is that: (1) There is no “one to another” relation of God to His essence as there is to man and his essence (e.g., God is subsisting wisdom in contrast to man possessing a quality of wisdom). Hence, the four terms required to establish the two couplets in an analogy of proportionality fail because there can only be three terms (e.g., God, man/essence). Furthermore, (2) Cajetan’s analogy according to proper proportionality, as will be demonstrated, inevitably falls too close to what St. Thomas consistently sought to safeguard against. Specifically, any type of analogical or univocal predication that would subsume God and the creature under some common notion or form.

In conclusion, with subsequent disciples of St. Thomas, such as Cajetan,

²⁷For example, Garrigou-Lagrange asserts, “That to attribute being to God is to say that the First Cause is to His existence what the creature is to its existence, just as intellection is to the intelligible what sensation is to the sensible.” Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature II* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), 210.

²⁸Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*, 137.

²⁹Battista Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (Netherlands: Springer Media, 1963), 101.

³⁰“Cajetan’s failures are due to his exaggerated Aristotelianism. Indeed his version of analogy is thoroughly Aristotelian. It does not take into account the long evolution and deep transformation of the notion of analogy, especially by the Neoplatonists and by Aquinas.” Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy*, 51.

coming to the defense of their master by combating Scotus' proposition of univocal conceptions between God and creation, it must be asked: "Did their shift into more of a philosophy of concepts expose them to metaphysical pitfalls that St. Thomas himself sought to avoid?" More narrowly, in searching "their master's texts for answers to questions he was not considering,"³¹ was Cajetan's employment of the analogy of proper proportionality truly authentic to St. Thomas' metaphysical analogy that is grounded in common being's (*ens commune*) causal relation to God (i.e., *ipsum esse subsistens*)? Our subsequent examination will lead us to conclude that it was not. For St. Thomas was first and foremost a metaphysician whose concern was with the real as the basis for the notions of the conceptual. Correspondingly, an analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine of analogy must begin with an examination of being (*ens*) and the relationship to its efficient cause.

Grounding Being in Its Efficient Causality

In the *Summa Theologiae* 1a.2.3, St. Thomas takes up the question of "Whether God Exists?" Of crucial note to his endeavor, St. Thomas is not seeking here to demonstrate the God of the Christian faith *per se*, but the notion of the term "God" (i.e., that a haver of divinity exists). Furthermore, the name "God" is not a proper name in that it does not directly manifest or comprehend the divine essence, but it is a notion that is used to signify the actions of one whose nature it is to transcend all things, is the principle of all things, and is removed from all things (i.e., a transcendent cause).³²

It is, however, the effects of God (not any *a priori* notions of the divine) that gives St. Thomas his entry point into intelligibly answering the question of "Whether God Exists." The reason for this *a posteriori* starting point is the inherent limitation of man's mode of cognition (*modus cognoscendi*) when considering knowledge of God. For when man encounters an individuated thing (*res*) outside of himself, the intellect is awakened to activity by the bodily senses beginning the process of apprehension wherein the determinations of the individuated reality are conceptually assimilated. From this collective deposit gathered by

³¹ D'Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 182.

³² "Because therefore God is not known to us in His nature, but is made known to us from His operations or effects, we name Him from these. . . hence this name "God" is a name of operation so far as relates to the source of its meaning. For this name is imposed from His universal providence over all things; since all who speak of God intend to name God as exercising providence over all;" Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1-49, Vol. 13 Latin/English ed., Trans. by Fr. Laurence Shapcote (Green Bay WI: Aquinas Institute, 2021), 1.13.8.

the sensitive organs, the imagination,³³ to make the external object intelligible, then proceeds to form an internal representation of the external object—which is termed a “phantasm.” Phantasms are what the intellect turns to in order to illumine the form (*quiddity*) that exists in the external object. Subsequently, with the form provided in the phantasm, the intellect is then able to make its judgment by descending back to the external object and attributing to it a formal or universal determination (e.g., “this thing is a human”).³⁴ In short, St. Thomas’ realism “is based upon the double fact that our knowledge truly attains reality because reality is the cause of our knowledge”³⁵ by pressing itself upon our senses. The senses, however, are “only bearers of a message which they are incapable of reading, for only the intellect can decipher it”³⁶ by abstracting the form from the sensible datum. As is evident, knowledge of all forms or universals that man conceives first originate from sense perception of the concrete singular, and not from *a priori* notions.

The limitation of man’s mode of obtaining knowledge, however, is brought to the forefront by the inability of obtaining immediate knowledge of God’s being through the senses. For God’s being is not a composite of substance and existence by which man can extract the form and comprehend it. Stated differently, because God (subject) is identical with the predicate (to exist)—thus placing God outside of the order of created being³⁷—consequently, man cannot know God’s existence (*an sit*) in a self-evident manner because we cannot know His essence (*quid sit*). Therefore, in order to give a demonstration for the existence of God, one must proceed from what is better known to us (i.e., the effects of God) to the cause. As St. Thomas asserts,

³³“The primary and basic power of forming images is imagination. . . . Its operation supposes the persistence of sense impressions after the stimulus which produced these impressions is removed. The proper object of imaginal power, therefore, is something absent. Its product is a phantasm, which is the sensible representation of an original experience.” Robert Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophical Analysis of the Nature of Man* (Tacoma, WA: Cluny Media, 2016), 13. “Sensation is the act of a corporeal organ suited for reception of the particular as such; that is, the universal form existing in an individual corporeal matter. The sensible species, or medium through which it passes, and the sense itself are realities of the same order since they fall, all three, into the genus of the particular. The same is true of the imagination, in which phantasms reside.” Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 217.

³⁴An expanded summarization on epistemology from a Moderate Realism perspective can be found in Thomas White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2016), 121-4. And Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, 1-26.

³⁵Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012), 203.

³⁶Gilson, *Thomist Realism*, 199.

³⁷The principles of created being (*ens commune*) are essence (*essentia*) and existence (*esse*).

When an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.³⁸

An example of this *a posteriori* demonstration is St. Thomas' argument of an efficient cause found in the Second Way (*ST* I.2.3) and the *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, Ch. 15. He states,

We find in the world certain beings, those namely that are subject to generation and corruption, which can be or not be. But what can exist has a cause because, since it is equally related to two contraries, namely being and non-being, it must be owing to some cause that being accrues to it. Now, as we have proved by the reasoning of Aristotle, one cannot proceed to infinity among causes. We must therefore posit something that is a necessary being. Every necessary being, however, either has the cause of its necessity in an outside source or, if it does not, it is necessary through itself. But one cannot proceed to infinity among necessary beings the cause of whose necessity lies in an outside source. We must therefore posit a first necessary being, which is necessary through itself.³⁹

Two arguments are being demonstrated by St. Thomas here. The first is the dependency of created being (*ens commune*) upon an outside efficient cause for its existence (*esse*). The underlying rationale for this dependency of finite being upon an outside cause (or giver of existence) is St. Thomas' conception of all created beings as essence and existence (*essentia-esse*) composites. He states, "Now it is impossible for a thing's existence to be caused by its essential constituent principles, for nothing can be the sufficient cause of its own existence, if its existence is caused. Therefore that thing, whose existence differs from its essence, must have its existence caused by another."⁴⁰ Stated succinctly, a created being cannot be both the active agent and the patient of its own existence; thus, a being's

³⁸ Aquinas, *ST* I.2.2.

³⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Books I-II*. Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 11. Trans. by Laurence Shapcote (Green Bay WI: Aquinas Institute, 2021), 1, 15, 5.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I.3.4.

essence cannot be the cause of its existence. This entails that the existence a being receives or participates in is a contingent existence, therefore resulting in the creature being a contingent being.⁴¹

St. Thomas' notion of being by participation (i.e., finite existence that is both communicated and actualizes a particular being of a given determination) conclusively requires a first and efficient cause who would not be a being among other beings, or contained within common being (e.g., nominalism). Nor would this being be common being itself (e.g., pantheism). Rather, this first cause is himself, whose essence is his existence, self-subsistent existence (*ipsum esse subsistens*). Furthermore, as self-subsistent existence, this efficient cause would be the origin of the participated existence of created being. Phrased differently, all created beings "receive their being from this one, and can therefore participate in existence uniquely because he causes them to exist as Creator."⁴²

As is evident, for St. Thomas, "Esse is the act that constitutes the proper terminus of transcendent causality (creation, conservation) and it is by virtue of this direct causality of *esse* that God operates immediately in every agent. Hence, the derivation of participated *esse* from *esse per essentiam* is direct, and along strict metaphysical lines, as grounded act from grounded Act."⁴³ *Esse*, therefore, is the perfection that unites all beings to one another in a sort of commonality. Moreover, *esse* is that which orders all beings under one common efficient cause (*causa essendi*), self-subsistent existence itself (i.e., God). Accordingly, St. Thomas' doctrine of participation (i.e., the communication of *esse*) not only grounds both the transcendence of God as outside of common being (*ens commune*) and the immanence of God as the efficient and direct cause of all common being's existence, but it also grounds the metaphysical relation of creatures to God as one of effect to cause.

In conclusion, it is this very ontological ordering of creatures to God, as that of effect to cause, that is the foundation for St. Thomas' notion of analogy. More narrowly, it is because every effect in some way is like its cause,⁴⁴ that eliminates recourse to pure equivocal speech between God and creation for St. Thomas. Fur-

⁴¹St. Thomas further adds, "just as that which has fire, but is not itself fire, is on fire by participation; so that which has existence but is not existence, is a being by participation." Aquinas, *ST* I.3.4.

⁴²White, *Wisdom*, 245.

⁴³Fabro, *Metaphysics and Participation*, 87.

⁴⁴"Therefore, if there is an agent not contained in any 'genus,' its effect will still more distantly reproduce the form of the agent, not, that is, so as to participate in the likeness of the agent's form according to the same specific or generic formality, but only according to some sort of analogy; as existence is common to all. In this way all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being." Aquinas, *ST* I.4.3.

thermore, because this efficient cause is of another ontological order, univocal speech, which depends upon a common form, is likewise not a viable option for providing conceptual intelligibility between God and creation. It is, therefore, the notion of analogy, specifically a form of analogy that orders the creature to God as that of an effect to its cause, that St. Thomas will turn to in order to ground the creature's speech of God.

Analogy of Attribution *Ad Alterum* (“One to Another”) in St. Thomas

In q. 13 of the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas takes up the matter of analogy at the transcendental level (i.e., between the creature and God) by asking whether God can be named by us (i.e., names of pure perfections). He begins answering this question by asserting that the names we attribute to God cannot signify the divine essence itself because “the names we attribute to God signify what belongs to material creatures, of which the knowledge is natural to us.”⁴⁵ Said differently, the names attributed to God, whether “abstract names to signify His simplicity or concrete names to signify His substance,”⁴⁶ will fall short of expressing God's mode of being (*modus essendi*) because we cannot know Him as He is (*in se*) according to our mode of cognition.⁴⁷

The distinction being made by St. Thomas is between the concept signified (*res significata*) and the way in which the concept is signified (*modus significandi*). Concerning these distinctions, Wipple states,

On the contrary, they are truly attributed to God as regards that which they signify. What they signify is in some way present in him. But as regards the way in which they signify, this is indeed to be denied of God; for every such name signifies some definite or determined form and cannot be attributed to him in that way. Because such names do not belong to God in the way in which they are signified, they are to be denied of him. And the way in which they signify reflects the way in which they inhere in our intellects.⁴⁸

Accordingly, though the names or perfections we attribute to God exist in Him more properly “because these perfections flow from God to creatures,”⁴⁹ their

⁴⁵ Aquinas, *ST* I.13.1.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *ST* I.13.1.

⁴⁷ Along this same train of thought St. Thomas asserts, “And in this sense there can be a proportion of the creature to God, inasmuch as it is related to Him as the effect of its cause, and as potentiality to its act; and in this way the created intellect can be proportioned to know God.” Aquinas, *ST* I.12.1.

⁴⁸ Wipple, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 528.

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *ST* I.13.6.

mode of signification (i.e., the way in which the concept is signified) applies only to the creature. Hence, every name (i.e., the concept signified) attributed to God by the creature will inherently possess the creaturely way in which the concept is signified. For example, St. Thomas states,

Thus also this term ‘wise’ applied to man in some degree circumscribes and comprehends the thing signified (i.e., how wisdom exists in man); 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. Hence it is evident that this term ‘wise’ is not applied in the same way to God and to man.⁵⁰

It is, therefore, because a creaturely concept circumscribes and comprehends what it signifies in its creaturely mode of existence that the concept itself, when applied to God, is in need of being predicated in a more excellent way (*per viam eminentiae*) and negated of all creaturely aspects (*per viam negationis*). Consequently, whatever name (e.g., wise) that is applied to both God and the creature cannot be done so with the same intelligible content (*ratio*).

This conclusion—that a name applied to both God and the creature cannot share in the same *ratio*—leads St. Thomas to dismiss univocal predication because this would then signify the presence of a shared form between both God and the creature. Moreover, the denial of one shared intelligible concept being the bridge of predication between God and the creature stands in stark contrast to Cajetan’s notion of analogy by proper proportionality. For Cajetan, the analogous perfection (one *ratio*) does not only exist in the domain of the conceptual, but it is intrinsically and formally in each of the analogates (while proportionally differing). Conversely, St. Thomas does not admit of one analogous perfection with the same intelligible content predicated to both God and the creature. The reason is that the concept signified has its creaturely mode of existence intrinsically attached to it, thus the concept must go through the process of eminence and negation before being predicated to God—yet it still is incapable of signifying the divine essence as it is in itself.⁵¹

In stating, however, that God and the creature cannot share in one conceptual notion, it could then be retorted that there is no real intelligibility between the two analogates (i.e., equivocal speech). Preventing St. Thomas from

⁵⁰Aquinas, *ST I.13.5*.

⁵¹“Now it was shown above (q. 12, a. 11, 12) that in this life we cannot see the essence of God; but we know God from creatures as their principle, and also by way of excellence and remotion. In this way therefore He can be named by us from creatures, yet not so that the name which signifies Him expresses the divine essence in itself.” Aquinas, *ST I.13.1*.

falling into this opposite fallacy of equivocal predication, he borrows the Pseudo-Dionysian metaphysical argument that since “God prepossesses in Himself all the perfections of creatures” as their cause, then the effects of God (i.e., creatures) will participate in “some kind of likeness.”⁵² More narrowly, after quoting Pseudo-Dionysius,⁵³ St. Thomas asserts, “Likeness of creatures to God is not affirmed on account of agreement in form according to the formality of the same genus or species, but solely according to analogy, inasmuch as God is essential being, whereas other things are beings by participation.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, the conceptual bridge by which there can be intelligibility between God and the creature is grounded, for St. Thomas, in the creature’s metaphysical relationship to God as a created similitude that proceeds from and is constituted by its cause.

After recourse is given to the imperfect likeness in which the creature participates in as the ground for conceptual intelligibility between creation and God,⁵⁵ St. Thomas then concludes that the particular analogical mode that best suits this metaphysical reality is “according to proportion (*proportionem*).”⁵⁶ Commenting upon St. Thomas’ usage of proportion, Thomas White asserts,

Aquinas himself tends to use the term *proportio* to express the notion of the reference of one to another who is first, or of a multitude to a first (a *pros hen* analogy). Cajetan entitled these forms “analogies of attribution.” A similitude between two different relations (A is to B as C is to D) Aquinas calls *proportionalitas*, and Cajetan named these “analogies of proper proportionality.” The terms from Cajetan tend to be employed constantly in Thomistic as well as Aristotelian scholarship, and so I use them also to designate these two kinds of analogy found in both thinkers’ work.⁵⁷

⁵² Aquinas, *ST* I.13.2.

⁵³ “For the same things can be like and unlike to God: like, according as they imitate Him, as far as He, Who is not perfectly imitable, can be imitated; unlike according as they fall short of their cause, not merely in intensity and remission, as that which is less white falls short of that which is more white; but because they are not in agreement, specifically or generically.” Aquinas, *ST* I.4.3.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *ST* I.4.3.

⁵⁵ “This is not the case with the names we give to God, since they correspond to a relation of cause and effect. There is always, then, this positive feature in what we say about God, that there must be a kind of resemblance, not between God and things, but rather between them and God: the resemblance an effect always bears to its cause, however inferior it may be.” Etienne Gilson, *Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002), 110.

⁵⁶ “Therefore it must be said that these names are said of God and creatures in an analogous sense, i.e. according to proportion.” Aquinas, *ST* I.13.5.

⁵⁷ White, *Wisdom*, 90 n66.

In sum, St. Thomas' analogy according to proportion—later termed analogy of attribution (“one to another”)—is an appropriation of both Aristotle's *pros hen* (Gk.) analogy and the Neoplatonic metaphysical relation of cause-and-effect between the creature and God. More narrowly, God is the primary analogate to which the secondary analogate (i.e., the creature) is related to via its ontological constitution as a created likeness.⁵⁸ As St. Thomas concludes,

Now, nothing is predicated in the same order of God and other things, but according to priority and posteriority [*sed secundum prius et posterius*], since all predicates of God are essential (for he is called “being” because he is being itself, and “good” because he is goodness itself), whereas predicates are applied to others by participation (thus Socrates is said to be a man not as though he were humanity itself, but because he has humanity). Therefore, it is impossible for any thing to be predicated univocally of God and other things.⁵⁹

Once St. Thomas has settled upon a form of analogy (i.e., attribution) that satisfies the metaphysical relation of creatures to God, he then proceeds to delineate between two different types of attribution. The first is a *multa ad unum* (“many to one”) analogy of attribution. This type of analogy exists when many things to which a name is applied are ordered to or under one primary term. In articulating the reason for St. Thomas's rejection of this mode of attribution, White asserts,

It is essential to note in this context that Aquinas wishes to exclude definitively the use of this form of analogy to speak about the relation between creatures and God. This is precisely because it would make both God and creatures fall under a common heading, *multa ad unum*, that of “being.” This would include both God and creatures under a unique subject of study, that of “common being.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸Commenting upon this mode of analogy, Mondin asserts,

Aquinas believes that an adequate interpretation of the God-creature relation can be provided by analogy of intrinsic attribution. Analogy of intrinsic attribution is able to signify both that there is a likeness between primary and secondary analogate, and that the secondary analogate is an imperfect imitation of the primary. Intrinsic attribution is able to stress the likeness between analogates as much as their difference. It says that the analogous perfection is predicated of the primary analogate essentially and of the secondary analogate by participation.

Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy*, 2.

⁵⁹Aquinas, *SCG*, I, 32.

⁶⁰White, *Wisdom*, 90.

Throughout St. Thomas' corpus on the topic of analogy, his consistent resistance is against any type of analogical or univocal predication that would subsume God and the creature under the same order. This type of attribution, therefore, is dismissed because in no way can it be said that God participates in some shared form with the creature.⁶¹

The second type of attribution, an *unius ad alterum* ("one to another") analogy of attribution, provides for St. Thomas the proper metaphysical ordering of the creature to God. More narrowly, the "one to another" type of attribution orders the creature to God by way of participation. For instance, any perfection applied to God is predicated of Him primarily (*per prius*) as the source in which the perfection is perfectly realized.⁶² Subsequently, when the same perfection is predicated of the creature, it is done so secondarily (*per posterius*), or as one possessing the perfection in a relative and partially realized way. Accordingly, the *modus significandi* (i.e., the way in which the concept is signified) of the perfection takes on various senses depending on whether it is predicated of the primary analogate in which it finds its perfect realization, or of the secondary analogates which possess the perfection in a partial and relative way.⁶³

The illustration St. Thomas provides to elucidate this "one to another" concept is Aristotle's well-known analogy of health. As he states, "According as one thing is proportionate to another, thus *healthy* is said of medicine and animal, since medicine is the cause of health in the animal body. And in this way some things are said of God and creatures analogically, and not in a purely equivocal nor in a purely univocal sense."⁶⁴ In utilizing this specific instance of the healthy analogy, what St. Thomas is seeking to convey is the cause-and-effect relation between the two analogates. Correspondingly, the finite qualities in which creatures participate (e.g., wisdom) find their source in whom they originate and from whom they are communicated—God.

Of crucial importance, however, the *ad alterum* type of attribution initially derives the conceptual notion (*res significata*) from the mode of signification (*modus significandi*) that is more knowable and attainable by the intellect, that is

⁶¹"But no name belongs to God in the same sense that it belongs to creatures; for instance, wisdom in creatures is a quality, but not in God." Aquinas, *ST* I.13.5.

⁶²"Thus whatever is said of God and creatures, is said according to the relation of a creature to God as its principle and cause, wherein all perfections of things pre-exist excellently." Aquinas, *ST* I.13.5.

⁶³"But when anything is predicated of many things analogically, it is found in only one of them according to its proper nature." Aquinas, *ST* I.16.6.

Of note, the analogy of proper proportionality does not provide primary and secondary analogates because all analogates are primary. See, Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy*, 101.

⁶⁴Aquinas, *ST* I.13.5.

from the creature—though the notion or perfection is said to exist originally and primally in God. The conception signified from the creature will, therefore, intrinsically possess the metaphysical ordering it has as an imperfect likeness from its cause. In order, then, to be attributed to God, the conceptual notion must go through the process of eminence and negation, thus giving it not only a different mode of signification but also a new *ratio* (i.e., multiple *rationes*). In this way, St. Thomas is able to provide a sort of intelligibility between the creature and God that not only respects the metaphysical ordering of the creature to God, but also does not subsume God into the domain of the creature.

Throughout his corpus, however, St. Thomas did not exclusively utilize the *ad alterum* type of attribution. But where the diversity within the Angelic Doctor's commentariat stems from is his early employment of the analogy of proportionality in the *De Veritate*. Specifically, in *DV* 2.11, St. Thomas distinguishes between two types of analogy of proportion. The first type is what Rocca terms a "narrow sense of proportion,"⁶⁵ because St. Thomas intended to express a determinate relation between two analogates.⁶⁶ For instance, expressing this type of analogy's use on the predicamental level, St. Thomas states, "We find something predicated analogously of two realities according to the first type of agreement when one of them has a relation to the other, as when being is predicated of substance and accident because of the relation which accident has to substance, or as when healthy is predicated of urine and animal because urine has some relation to the health of an animal."⁶⁷

When considering analogy on the transcendental level, however, St. Thomas dismisses the narrow use of proportion, stating, "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."⁶⁸ The refusal of this strict mode of proportion on the transcendental level stems from St. Thomas' resistance to subsuming God and the creature under the same term. Stated differently, to place both God and creature under a determinate relation is to subsume them under the same order of being. Subsequently, St. Thomas proceeds to opt for the second type of proportion that he terms "proportionality" because, according to him, this type of analogy has "no

⁶⁵ Rocca, *Speaking*, 120.

⁶⁶ "There is a certain agreement between things having a proportion to each other from the fact that they have a determinate distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two has to unity in as far as it is the double of unity." Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* (<https://isidore.com/aquinas/QDdeVer2.htm>), q. 2, a. 11.

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11.

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11.

definite relation . . . between the things which have something in common analogously.”⁶⁹ The example he proceeds to give is that of sight, “Sometimes, however, a thing is predicated analogously according to the second type of agreement, as when sight is predicated of bodily sight and of the intellect because understanding is in the mind as sight is in the eye.”⁷⁰ Commentating on this specific usage of proportionality, Fabro asserts that it seems to be a “purely logico-formal way of considering beings.”⁷¹ The rationale behind this statement is that if this proportionality were “proper,” it then would entail a shared form, and this St. Thomas rejects.⁷²

In examining the *De Veritate* as a whole, chronologically, Rocca concludes that “only from mid-1256 to mid-1259 was proportionality even suggested as a possible solution to the problem of relating the finite and the infinite, and only for a few months (however long it took Thomas to write fourteen articles of the *De Veritate*, from 2.3 to 3.1) was it put forward as the only solution.”⁷³ The reason Rocca provides for this momentary usage of the analogy of proportionality on the transcendental level is because of St. Thomas’ retooling and expansion of the meaning of proportion from its limited early Greek usage of finding ratios between numbers, to then expanding its usage to broadly and simply mean “one to another.”⁷⁴ Moreover, Mondin adds,

Analogy of proper proportionality is rarely used by Aquinas, and only in his early works. It is entirely abandoned in his mature works. He arrived at this complete divorce of proportionality both because proportionality is vitiated by serious internal difficulties when applied to God and, more important, because proportionality is inadequate to express at the same time God’s transcendence and immanence. Proportionality is certainly able to express God’s transcendence, but fails to adequately express His immanence, since it cannot express the dependence of the finite on divine causality.⁷⁵

In sum, St. Thomas’ consistent rejection of any type of analogy that could subsume God and creature formally under a common form led him, momentar-

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11.

⁷¹ Fabro, *Selected Works of Cornelio Fabro Vol. 1*, 87.

⁷² “The likeness of the creature to God is imperfect, for it does not represent one and the same generic thing.” Aquinas, *ST I*.13.5.

⁷³ Rocca, *Speaking*, 122.

⁷⁴ Rocca, *Speaking*, 123.

⁷⁵ Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy*, 101.

ily in his career, to opt for the analogy of proportionality because it was more logical in nature. However, as St. Thomas matured and deepened his thought within the Neoplatonic casual notion of being, he began to broaden the usage of proportion to simply infer a relation of “one to another.” This broadened usage of proportion was St. Thomas’ gateway of properly relating the ontological order and dependency of the creature to its unifying cause, God. Accordingly, though various disciples of St. Thomas can and have laid claim to their master’s utilization of proportionality in the *De Veritate*, the particular form of proper proportionality employed by Cajetan and his followers stands in stark contrast to the proportionality found in the *De Veritate*.

Conclusion

In seeking to answer Scotus’ critique against analogical predication, it must be put into question if such disciples as Cajetan stayed thoroughly faithful to his master’s original thought concerning the notion of analogy. The reason given was that “The writings of Scotus forced Aquinas’ disciples to search their master’s texts for answers to questions he was not considering.”⁷⁶ More narrowly, the conceptual emphasis of Scotus forced numerous subsequent disciples of St. Thomas to take his doctrine of analogy to a more conceptual bent in contrast to the metaphysical emphasis found throughout his corpus. As Montagnes asserts, “A philosophy of concepts is substituted for a philosophy of reality.”⁷⁷ Accordingly, there stands a stark contrast between what St. Thomas’ thought is on a particular matter, and seeking to stay faithful to the principles of his thought when considering topics that he himself may not have addressed. In the case of St. Thomas’ doctrine of analogy, this holds true. In order, therefore, to stay faithful to St. Thomas’ doctrine of analogy, recourse must be given again to the proper ontological order and dependency of the creature to its unifying cause, God. From this metaphysical reality of the effect (i.e., the creature) participating in an imperfect similitude that is communicated from its cause, the analogy of attribution *ad alterum* (“one to another”) will be discovered as a fitting instrument by which intelligibility can be had between God and creation.

⁷⁶ D’Ettore, *Analogy After Aquinas*, 182.

⁷⁷ Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*, 137.