

## THE ABSENCE OF ANALOGY

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### I

SUPPOSE AN INQUIRER WERE TO ASK what analogy might best be taken to signify. The new standard reference work for philosophy as an intellectual discipline today, the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* edited by Edward Craig and published in 1998, is all but silent on the question proposed. Volume 1 of the ten volume work runs from “A-posteriori” to “Bradwardine,” but, on page 211, there is no entry titled “analogy.” Even the entry for “Analogies in Science” is no more than a cross-reference: “see Inductive Inference; Models.”

If we look to the familiar slightly older standard, the superb *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* edited by Paul Edwards and published in 1967 by Macmillan, we find that the opening volume too has no entry on analogy simply, but only one titled “Analogy in Theology,”<sup>1</sup> whose author informs us that the doctrine of analogy was “developed to satisfy certain systematic demands within Christian theology,” which is hardly true if we consider that “theology,” discourse about that upon which the changeable universe depends in its being as such, was (along with “first philosophy”), one of Aristotle’s two names for what only much later came to be called “metaphysics.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, that point

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Ferré, “Analogy in Theology,” in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 1:94–7.

<sup>2</sup> See my discussion, “The Problem of Interpreting the Term ‘First’ in the Expression ‘First Philosophy,’” in *Semiotics 1987*, ed. John Deely (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 3–14. For a Latin rationale of the three names for this common philosophical pursuit, see Aquinas, *In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis exposito*, “Proemium,” *in finem* (B 4:391a). Note that here, and throughout this essay, all references to the writing of Aquinas are based on the seven-volume *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia ut sunt in indice thomistico*, ed. Roberto Busa (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980), indicated by “B,” followed by a space, the volume number, page number, and the concluding “a,” “b,” or “c” indicating from which column of text on the page the citation is made (thus: Busa volume 4, p. 391, first of the three columns, in the present citation).

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aside, it remains that even the 1996 *Supplement* volume to the Edwards encyclopedia goes from “African Philosophy” (page 18) to “Analytic Feminism” (page 20) with nary a pause.

As one who grew up intellectually on the Latin writings of Aquinas, the relatively dismissive treatment given analogy as a subject matter of philosophical importance or interest in these standard contemporary works came as a surprise to me. I better understood, after having consulted them in this particular, how Kant felt that consulting with Hume had awakened him from a dogmatic slumber. For while I well knew that the doctrine of analogy was developed by and after Aquinas in relation to the understanding possible for human beings of the dependency of the physical universe on a source for its existence throughout, an idea among others abbreviated into the term “God,” I was also well aware of the fact that “analogy” for Aquinas and after referred to a phenomenon all but universally at play in human discourse, a phenomenon already singled out early in philosophy’s long history with Aristotle’s identification of being as that which is “said in many ways.”

In fact, analogy names not so much a category of terms but a process whereby one term modifies the meaning of another term. Analogy, in short, is a quintessential part of the human use of signs, so much so, we may say, that it needs to be understood as naming the most distinctive aspect of species-specifically human communication through linguistic signs. Analogy, I think I can bring the reader to see, is but a name for the most distinctive aspect of the action of signs (“semiosis,” as that action has come to be called) at play in human language. Like the notion of sign itself, analogy is one of those philosophical doctrines that developed indigenously within the Latin Age of philosophy’s history as the distinctive epoch of European intellectual development between the loss of familiarity with Greek writings after Augustine and the loss of familiarity with Latin writings after Poinsoot and Galileo.

To judge from the status accorded the discussion of analogy within the encyclopedias of philosophy standard in today’s English-speaking world, neither the central development of analogy as distinctive of the Latin Age nor the relevance of that development to the understanding of human language as a postmodern development are matters of common understanding today. My aim in the present essay is to set the record straight on both counts, and my bet is that the

reader who sees the essay through will come away agreeing that no fully self-respecting encyclopedia of philosophy in the future will again have "Analogy" as a blank among the entries of its first volume.

The doctrine of analogy as the Latins came distinctively to develop it pretty much began its philosophical life in the Stagirite's reply to the Parmenidean One doctrine. There is no one way to say being, replied Aristotle, but, on the contrary, many ways; irreducibly many. At least, as we will see, this was the point from which it developed among the Latins after Thomas Aquinas, who took up Aristotle's point more fully and in some strikingly different ways than is suggested by the Greek of Aristotle. We will see that precisely for want of an understanding of the foundational implications of Aquinas's doctrine of analogy and his corollary doctrine of the transcendental "properties" of being, most of his late modern followers, in their battle against Descartes and the idealism in general that became the hallmark of modernity, fell into that trap (native to the way of things) of proceeding "as if a philosophy of being could not also be a philosophy of mind,"<sup>3</sup> and quite missed the problem of being-as-first-known, as shall appear.

## II

*The Question of Analogy.* The doctrine of analogy at its highest point undertakes to explain the proper nature of the unity of the concept by which being as such is presented objectively as an object distinctive of human understanding. In other words, analogy is a phenomenon consequent upon the fact that the human animal alone and uniquely experiences objects in relation to itself as possessing a dimension or aspect which does not reduce to that experience of them. With that experience the notion of "being" is born in the human mind, neither sensible being (*ens sensibile*) nor metaphysical being (*ens ut sic, ens commune*), but quite simply being-as-first-known (*ens primum cognitum*) out of which will develop through the experience of various changes within perception and life the coordinate notions

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<sup>3</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. from the 4th French edition under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Scribner's, 1959), 66: "comme si une philosophie de l'être ne pouvait être aussi une philosophie de l'esprit."

alike of “real being” (*ens reale*, mind-independent being) and of “purely objective being” (*ens rationis*, mind-dependent being).

When being is said in many ways, what is expressed through the saying when it is true and not rather mindless chatter? Curiously, though the term “analogy” runs all through Aquinas’s writings when this or some kindred question comes up, he himself never pulled his various contexts of usage together into a unified treatise. Aquinas left the materials for a doctrine of analogy, but he did not explicitly formulate it as anything like a separate treatise.

Moreover, as already said in our opening aside, the question of analogy is not merely a technical problem. We confront here an essential characteristic of natural language, a universal semiotic phenomenon, namely, the fact that human discourse is rife with only imperfectly controllable relations among different uses of words. The same phenomenon is exhibited in the so-called transcendental concepts mentioned above, linguistic expressions conveying a content that cannot be stipulatively restricted to any one category of existence. But if we confine ourselves to the writings accomplished by Aquinas himself, his main interest in the doctrine of analogy is in the context of the divine names, where the philosophy of being reaches its outermost limit, the outermost limit of human understanding.

### III

*Analogy in the Texts of Thomas Aquinas: A Function of Naming.* So it is not surprising that the discussion of analogy in Aquinas finds its roots in the observation by Aristotle in the 4th and 7th books of his “first philosophy” that “being is said in many ways”; for the philosophy of Aquinas is before all else a philosophy of being, and of being understood in terms of the ultimate actuality of all the forms of being which is itself accordingly capable of no further participation, namely, the act itself of being, existence. As grace presupposes nature, so for Aquinas theology presupposes the intelligibility of being and the intellectual tools whereby that intelligibility is rendered actual and brought to expression in human discourse, both the inward discourse and its outward expression (the exaptation of language to communicate) in the formation of a linguistic community, upon which

all else in religion, as in civilization generally, depends, in the main. In other words, for Aquinas, theology is unthinkable apart from philosophy of being, but the philosophy of being cannot be thought only in terms of theology without betraying its proper nature as human understanding. Ecumenism, for Aquinas, is rooted first in the commonality of human understanding, and only through that in faith, just as grace does not supplant but perfects human nature. Philosophy is prior to theology, if not in ultimate importance as wisdom, yet as that without which theology degenerates into ideology and fideism, and religion becomes in spite of itself a degenerate *Lebenswelt* indistinguishable in function, for all its difference in content, from the closed *Umwelt* of the nonlinguistic animals.

Now this brings us to a very interesting matter, and that is the lack of terminological isomorphism between the language of ancient Greek philosophy and the language of medieval Latin philosophy in the matter of what mainly interests Aquinas under what he calls *analogia* or *analogice dictum*, “analogy” or “spoken analogically,” which is the matter of the fact that being is said in many ways. For Aristotle does not at all speak of ἀναλογία in this context, but rather of πλεοναχῶς λεγέσθαι. This last is the Greek expression that the Latins render *multipliciter dicitur*, “said in many ways,” for which St. Thomas offers as a synonym *analogice dicitur*, “said analogically.” The notion that transliterates from Aristotle’s Greek as *analogia*, by contrast, is nothing more than the proportion of relations in mathematics. The analogy that Aquinas is interested in, however, is not that of a science restricted to the order of *ens rationis*, purely objective being; he is interested in a sense of analogy that applies directly to the knowledge of *ens reale*, physical being objectified. In other words, the many ways in which being can be spoken, to which Aristotle never applied the Greek transliterate counterpart of the Latin *analogia*, is precisely what Aquinas begins by extending the notion of ἀναλογία to; and he does so precisely to draw “God talk” within the purview of his doctrine of being:

A proportion can be spoken of in two ways. In one way, a proportion is a definite relation of one quantity to another; and in this way of speaking double, triple, and equal are different types of proportion. In another way, any relation of one thing to another can be called a proportion, and in this way of speaking there can be a proportion of creatures to God, insofar as they are related to him as effect to cause, and as potency to act;

and in this way of speaking a created intellect can be proportionate to knowing God.<sup>4</sup>

So the ancient Greek doctrine of *αναλογία* becomes the Latin doctrine of analogy; but in the Greek it concerns mathematical relations, whereas in the Latin it is extended to cover any relations whatever among objects, and physical relations of effect to cause in particular. This becomes the heart of Aquinas's doctrine of the knowledge of God that is possible within the orbit of philosophy, or, what comes to the same thing, possible for human understanding as such:

The knowledge natural to us takes its origin from sense, whence our natural knowledge can extend only so far as it can be led by sensible things. But from sensible things our understanding cannot reach so far as to attain to a seeing of the divine essence, because sensible creatures are effects of God that do not adequate the divine causal power. Whence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known, nor consequently can his essence be seen. But because sensible things are his effect depending upon a cause, we can be led from them to know that God is; and to a knowledge of those things about him which are necessary for him to be the first cause of all beings exceeding all of his caused things. Whence we know of him his relation to creatures, to wit, that he is the cause of all of them. And we know the difference of creatures from him, to wit, that he is not anything of those things which are caused by him; and that the creatures caused by him are not separated from him because of his deficiency, but because the transcendent unity of his perfections so far surpasses the multiplication of perfections in finite beings.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4; B 2:198c: "proportio dicitur dupliciter. uno modo, certa habitudo unius quantitatis ad alteram; secundum quod duplum, triplum et aequale sunt species proportionis. alio modo, quaelibet habitudo unius ad alterum proportio dicitur, et sic potest esse proportio creaturae ad deum, in quantum se habet ad ipsum ut effectus ad causam, et ut potentia ad actum, et secundum hoc, intellectus creatus proportionatus esse potest ad cognoscendum deum."

<sup>5</sup> *Summa theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 12; B 2:201c: "naturalis nostra cognitio a sensu principium sumit, unde tantum se nostra naturalis cognitio extendere potest, in quantum manuduci potest per sensibilia. ex sensibilibus autem non potest usque ad hoc intellectus noster pertingere, quod divinam essentiam videat, quia creaturae sensibiles sunt effectus dei virtutem causae non adaequant. unde ex sensibilibus cognitione non potest tota dei virtus cognosci, et per consequens nec eius essentia videri. sed quia sunt eius effectus a causa dependentes, ex eis in hoc perducere possumus, ut cognoscamus de deo an est; et ut cognoscamus de ipso ea quae necesse est ei convenire secundum quod est prima omnium causa, excedens omnia sua causata. unde cognoscimus de ipso habitudinem ipsius ad creaturas, quod scilicet omnium est causa. et differentiam creaturarum ab ipso, quod scilicet ipse non est aliquid eorum quae ab eo causantur; et quod haec non remouentur ab eo propter eius defectum, sed quia superexcedit."

So our names of God, say, “good,” gain their primary meaning from experience of sensible beings; and when we apply them to God they retain this primary meaning through which now we discourse not about a sensible but a supersensible being concerning which we understand that he is himself good and the cause of the good we experience, while being good—capable of excellence in operation—in a way that is in the line of but beyond the reach of any excellence of operation that we can directly experience.

So we see that in St. Thomas the doctrine of analogy is entirely an epistemological doctrine, not an ontological one. That is to say, it is a doctrine about our knowledge of things and use of language to express that knowledge to others; it is not as such a doctrine about the things that are independently of our knowledge, a doctrine of being. We name things as we know things and in no other way. When the knowledge is confused, the naming is confused. But when the knowledge is based on one thing, good experienced, let us say, or being experienced, or again truth experienced, and so on, and the name is applied to another thing that we do not experience yet know that it is existing, and existing as good, being, true, and so forth—then what is signified is signified as being true of creatures and true of the cause of creatures, the creator. Yet this mode of the signifying is inseparable from the mode in which the perfection signified is directly experienced, that is to say, as diversified in creatures which are more unlike God than like him yet still partial or limited reflections or icons of their ultimate existential source. What is signified is the same in creator and in creature, but it is signified adequately in application to the creature and inadequately in application to the creator. So what is signified is partly the same in the two cases and partly different, but the difference is what makes the application to the creator an analogous use of whatever the term might be—existence, being, one, true, good, and so forth. Nor can the difference be removed, because to remove it we would have to change the conditions under which we know.

The creature is known first, not as creature but simply as something, some being. In the creature are experienced directly perfections and imperfections. Thus the notion of perfection itself comes from experience, and is multiplied (or differentiated) also by experience. Those experiences in which perfection and diversity of perfections are learned directly remains the primary reference point for the concept of perfection and perfections. When these concepts are

applied to what is known to exist in the truth of a proposition (namely, that there is a being whose very essence is to exist, and that as cause of the existence of all beings whose essence is distinct from their existence, since existence is what gives final actuality to all formal perfections in that which exists, this *ipsum esse subsistens* is therefore perfect in uniting in itself all that is perfect in creatures in divided ways), the truth of that proposition is also augmented by our coming to understand what was implied in its original, primarily existential application. So we know of God that he is, but also that he is one, that he is good, that he is creator, and so on, by a strictly logical development that has experience as its referential ground but God known or objectified as its term.

Now we see the importance of Aquinas saying that we know the existence of God through the making of a proposition, not through direct experience. In late modern philosophy, a huge literature will develop arguing over whether existence is a predicate. In the Latin Thomistic tradition, later authors introduced a simple distinction between existence as exercised and existence as signified. Existence as a predicate signifies existence as exercised. Our only direct experience of existence (outside of mystical experience as Aquinas defines it) is the existence of sensible things. Here we directly encounter existence as exercised, and from this experience we formulate the concept of existence. This concept has for its object not a sensible thing but existence as signified, the idea of something which exercises an act of being, something which is or possesses an actual exercise of existence; and this concept can be applied to sensible things (as when we think of a friend, rightly or wrongly, that he has not died yet) or to spiritual things (as when we judge, rightly or wrongly, that there are purely spiritual substances). It is just such an application, for example, that occurs in the *quinque viae*, “five ways to demonstrate rationally the reality of God” offered by Aquinas early in his *Summa theologiae*. Now we see how the doctrine of the divine names follows from the discovery in discourse of the reality of the divine existence as subsistent existence, as existence which is the very essence of that which exists—a pure existence knowable by us in philosophy only through the truth of a proposition. We can now see expressly what was true of the truth of that proposition all along: the knowledge that God exists already was an instance of knowledge through analogy. So



it is hardly surprising to realize that all the names we can truly form of God are likewise analogous uses of language.

So we see how the doctrines of the knowability and unknowability of God, in the thought of Aquinas, are reconciled through his notion of analogy. The point is so central to his thought that it is possible to multiply the citation of texts practically without limit from the range of his writings. I was tempted at this point simply to let one of his late modern followers speak on his behalf in terms of making a summary of the point; for no later author has stated the situation better than Maritain,<sup>6</sup> standing as he did at the far boundary of modernity and the frontier of postmodernity, well cognizant the while of the great Latin tradition in metaphysics the moderns had all but succeeded in obliterating. But not even the incomparable Maritain brings together in a single text the point of Aquinas that we are able to know God through creatures for the very same reason that God is aware of creatures through himself, and that the reason why some of the words we both invent and learn over the course of our life experience are more applicable to God than are others is that some reflect more directly what is true of being as such even though all of them reflect directly limited beings. That is to say, all of our words that apply to objects experienced in the physical environment reflect existence formally diversified through the essential structures which are what distinguish the being of creatures from the divine being in whom all diversity is reduced to the single surpassing perfection of existence itself subsisting (so that, as Aquinas puts it, “knowledge in God is the

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<sup>6</sup>“In the case of metaphysics, analogy constitutes the very form and rule of knowledge. God is not attained in virtue of His incommunicable nature and selfhood, according to the indivisibility of His pure and simplest essence, but only according to that which is shown in His reflections (reflections that, by the way, are truthful) and in the analogical participations which things proportionate to our reason offer us of Him. His essence is not attained as such [no more, to repeat, than his existence], but only inasmuch as creatures, by their very nature, speak of it to our understanding. Thus, not only is the mode of knowing human, but, in addition, the object itself as proposed to the mind and made the term of knowledge (*sub ratione primi entis*) is taken as He condescends, so to speak, to human reason in the mirror of sensible things and by the analogy of being. Metaphysics is poised at the summit of the created world, and from that vantage point, it looks upon the inaccessible entrance toward which all created perfections converge—but without seeing Him in Himself. It grasps His purest light only as it is broken up in the multiplicity of these perfections”; Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, 251.

same as to exist as knowing”<sup>7</sup>). Among the designative terms of natural language we find some which, although formulated on the basis of our experience of a diversity of objects, yet express perfections whose intelligible core does not of itself imply the limited conditions under which we experience and from which we abstract (or presciss) that intelligibility and give it expression in the diversity of our conceptions:

Nor can it be said that whatever is said of God and of creatures can be predicated completely equivocally, because unless there were some agreement of creature to God according to reality, the divine essence would not be the exemplar of the creatures; and so by knowing his own essence God would not know creatures. For the same reason we would not be able to arrive at a knowledge of God from created things; nor would there be any reason why any one of the names suited to creatures should say something more of him than does any other, because in equivocal sayings whatever name is stipulated makes no difference,<sup>8</sup> from the fact that none of them express an agreement in reality. Whence it must be said that neither wholly univocally nor wholly equivocally is the name of knowledge predicated of the knowledge of God and of our knowledge, but according to analogy, which expresses no more than a relational similarity.<sup>9</sup>

We know that we know, but that “to know” is other than to be, other than the fact that we are; whereas in the case of God, we know that for him to be is to be knowing, and since knowing is his very existence he knows everything that does or could imitate that existence in finite ways; and we, for our part, knowing those finite ways come to know something of God, both that he is and that he is not knowable in the way that creatures are knowable. Knowing that he is and that he is infinitely knowable, it is not surprising that we can develop a doc-

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<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2, a. 11; B 3:16c: “ita scientia est idem quod esse scientem in eo.”

<sup>8</sup> That is, all are equally irrelevant—or relevant—because none say anything that has a bearing on the referent.

<sup>9</sup> *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2, a. 11; B 3:16c: “nec tamen dici potest quod omnino aequivoce praedicetur quidquid de deo et creaturis dicitur, quia nisi esset aliqua convenientia creaturae ad deum secundum rem, sua essentia non esset creaturarum similitudo; et ita cognoscendo suam essentiam non cognosceret creaturas. similiter etiam nec nos ex rebus creatis in cognitionem dei pervenire possemus; nec nominum quae creaturis aptantur, unum magis de eo dicendum esset quam aliud; quia in aequivocis non differt quodcumque nomen imponatur, ex quo nulla rei convenientia attenditur. unde dicendum est, quod nec omnino univoce, nec pure aequivoce, nomen scientiae de scientia dei et nostra praedicatur; sed secundum analogiam, quod nihil est dictu quam secundum proportionem.”

trine of divine names without ever exhausting the object so progressively expanded within our awareness. For no matter how much or how little we come to know or think we know, we know always that he is more than whatever we have been able to conceive or will be able to conceive.

So we can see how God can be said both to be a being and to be above being and nonbeing.<sup>10</sup> God is a being insofar as our term “being” is taken from our experience of actually existing things and applied therefrom, by analogy, as we have seen, to the case of the being for whom to exist is the essence, *ipsum esse subsistens*. But insofar as “being” names finite being capable of ceasing to exist, then God is not a being but beyond being and nonbeing. So St. Thomas, with due deference to the Neoplatonists, can say (from the Latin of the preceding note) that “according to the truth of the matter, the first cause is above being, in that it is the infinite act of existence itself; while being is that which participates in the act of existence finitely.”

Finally, we should note that Aquinas, in developing his doctrine of analogy as far as he does with an eye to his principal interest, which is the explanation of how there can be a true and valid philosophical discourse about God, is careful to point out that this extreme use of analogy at the far frontier of human understanding is consonant with other, more ordinary, examples of analogy within human discourse. His perhaps favorite example is the quite earthy one of a healthy organism. A healthy organism, he notes, produces healthy urine. The healthy organism is the cause of the urine, urine an effect; yet as effect it is a sign of that which produced it. Should the sign reveal that the producing organism is not healthy, some medicine may be called for. The medicine now hopefully will play the role of cause, whose effect will be health—the restoration of health—in the organism; and the proof of the success or failure of the medicine will be the next urine

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<sup>10</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *In librum de causis*, lect. 6; B 4:511a: “secundum rei veritatem causa prima est supra ens in quantum est ipsum esse infinitum, ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse, et hoc est proportionatum intellectui nostro cuius obiectum est quod quid est ut dicitur in iii de anima.” Compare *St. Thomas Aquinas Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 51–2. In his text of c. 1254–6, *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. 1 (B 3:584a), he even refers to the “substantia prima simplex, quae est deus” as the ultimate “causa eorum quae composita sunt.”

the organism produces. “Health,” thus, is said directly of the state of the organism, but, on the basis of or from that usage, “health” may be applied secondarily—analogously—to such related other things as medicine and urine. But these are healthy only by reference to the organism as healthy. So Aquinas provides us with *a rule* which, at least as he presents it himself, is *proposed as holding for all analogous use of language without exception*, whether we are talking about finite being or about God, and if about God whether we are speaking metaphorically or about perfections that exist more properly in God than we experience their existence in creatures:

in all the cases of names which are applied to different things analogously, all the applications must needs be made with respect to one thing, and so must it needs be that that one thing be contained in the definition of all. And because the rationale which a name signifies is a definition, as is said in Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, the analogous name in question necessarily applies first to that thing whose definition is included in the definition of the others, and secondarily or consequently to the other things [whose definition includes other considerations as well], according to the order in which they are more or less proximate to that first thing.

So, for example, the health which is said of an animal falls within the definition of health which applies to medicine: a medicine is called “healthy” insofar as it causes health in an animal; and the health said of an animal falls likewise within the definition of health which applies to urine, which is said to be “healthy” insofar as it provides a sign of the animal’s health.

So the names applied to God metaphorically apply first to creatures rather than to God, because said of God they signify nothing other than resemblances to the creatures in question. . . . So the name “lion” applied to God signifies nothing more than that God goes about his works as fiercely as a lion goes about his. And so it is clear that according as such [metaphorical] terms are applied to God their signification cannot be defined except through that which is applied to creatures. Concerning other names which are said of God not metaphorically . . . these names apply to God not merely causally but also essentially, . . . without this in any way gainsaying the fact that, as regards the stipulated or conventional meaning by which the name signifies, such names are applied by us first to creatures, which are what we primarily know. Whence too even the names of perfections which creatures have from God as their cause and which belong more eminently to the divine being than they do to the finite being of creatures and in this sense apply with ontological priority to God yet retain the mode of signifying which belongs to the perfections as found in creatures, as we explained above.<sup>11</sup>

That is the doctrine of analogy we find primarily in Thomas Aquinas’s own writings reduced to the main point that even in the

case of names applied properly if supereminently to the divine existence, the acquisition of signification by these names within the context of sensible experience remains regulative. The reason why we can know God is the same as the reason why God can know creatures: because they are finite and partial imitations, external to God, of the perfection found infinitely and wholly internal to the purity of the divine *Esse Subsistens*.

About ten years before he undertook his *Summa*, in question 2, article 11 of his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* written between 1256 and 1259, Aquinas had added a distinction between an analogy of proportion and an analogy of proportionality. The former occurs when we speak by analogy of two different things which yet belong to the same order, as “health” said of an animal, of medicine, and of urine.<sup>12</sup> The latter, an analogy of proportionality, occurs when we speak by analogy of two things belonging to entirely different orders, for example, one to the order of *ens reale* and the other to the order of

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<sup>11</sup>*Summa theologiae* I, q. 13, a. 6; B 2:203c: “in omnibus nominibus quae de pluribus analogice dicuntur, necesse est quod omnia dicantur per respectum ad unum, it ideo illud unum oportet quod ponatur in definitione omnium. et quia ratio quam significat nomen, est definitio, ut dicitur in iv metaphys., necesse est quod illud nomen per prius dicatur de eo quod ponitur in definitione aliorum, et per posterius de aliis, secundum ordinem quo appropinquat ad illud primum vel magis vel minus, sicut sanum quod dicitur de animali, cadit in definitione sani quod dicitur de medicina, quae dicitur sana in quantum causat sanitatem in animali; et in definitione sani quod dicitur de urina, quae dicitur sana in quantum est signum sanitatis animalis. sic ergo 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. . . . 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 nominibus, quae non metaphorice dicuntur de deo, . . . 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, quantum ad rem significatam per nomen, per prius dicuntur de deo quam de creaturis, quia a deo huiusmodi perfectiones in creaturas manent. sed quantum ad impositionem nominis, per prius a nobis imponuntur creaturis, quas prius cognoscimus. unde et modum significandi habent qui competit creaturis, ut supra dictum est.”

<sup>12</sup>*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2. a. 11; B 3:16c: “quaedam convenientia inter ipsa quorum est ad invicem proportio, eo quod habent determinatam distantiam vel aliam habitudinem ad invicem, . . . sicut ens dicitur de substantia et accidente ex habitudine quam accidens ad substantiam habet.”

*ens rationis*, or one to the order of created being and the other to the order of uncreated being, where there is an absence of proportion between the two things talked about.<sup>13</sup> In such a case we speak of a parallelism of relations, of a ratio, in effect, as constituting the ground of the analogy; and only in this latter way can we speak analogically of God and creatures, and even then with some further qualifications.<sup>14</sup> This is what Cajetan will invoke as justifying his claim that there is a uniquely metaphysical analogy of what he calls proper proportionality and that only this analogy has claim to the status of a doctrine of first philosophy.

In between this text of the *Disputed Questions on Truth* question 2, article 11 and the text of the *Summa* question 13, article 6 examined above came the *Commentary on the Divine Names*, of circa 1265–7, written just before or partially overlapping the writing of the first part of the *Summa*. There and elsewhere<sup>15</sup> he was reminded more forcefully by the Pseudo-Dionysius of the simpler trick of the

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<sup>13</sup> *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2. a. 11; B 3:16c: “convenientia etiam quandoque attenditur non duorum ad invicem inter quae sit proportio sed magis duarum ad invicem proportionum. . . . sicut nomen visus dicitur de visu corporali et intellectu, eo quod sicut visus est in oculo, ita intellectus in mente.”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*: “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 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 dependet a materia secundum esse, ut ens, bonum, et alia huiusmodi.”

<sup>15</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, especially q. 9, a. 7 (B 3:258a); compare also the analysis by McInerney of the *De veritate* text in question, in *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 113–15. This Dionysian trick, Dr. Ed Houser reminded me, was already cited by Aquinas in his writing of the first book (c. 1254) of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, for example, distinction 3, “divisio primae partis textus” (B 1:10a).

threefold way of simple affirmation followed by qualified negation followed by an affirmation of eminence: not only can no perfection that intrinsically implies limitation (like good muscle tone, which presupposes body) be affirmed of God, but even any perfection that has no intrinsic link with limitation, such as living, intelligent, good, being (even though we encounter it in experience according to limited manifestations) cannot be simply affirmed of God in the manner that we affirm it of creatures. Thus, I exist and God exists; but existence is not exercised in God in the manner that it is exercised in my being; existence in God is exercised in a manner that transcends my understanding but is nonetheless actual existence. This method, always remembering the distinction between perfections whose very definition or concept implies limitation and perfections whose very definition or concept does not imply limitation even though our direct experience of them is limited, achieves the same results more simply than does the application of the distinction between proportion and proportionality to the case of analogy.

The bottom line, then, is that analogy as Aquinas treats it is a doctrine about how we use words to express what we know, and transfer words from one meaning to another in order to illumine related things and to develop their connections in discourse. Aristotle calls it “equivocation by design”;<sup>16</sup> Aquinas calls it “analogy.” Pure equivocation, of course, is the use of two terms in two entirely unrelated senses, like the “bark” of a dog and of a tree. Terms used in the same sense, like “animal” said of a human being and of a chimpanzee or of a cat, both Aristotle and Aquinas call “univocal.” When one term is brought into

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<sup>16</sup> Strictly speaking, the distinction between *aequivocatio a casu* (pure equivocation) and *aequivocatio a consilio* (equivocation by design) is implicit in the opening of Aristotle’s *Categories*, but becomes explicit among the Latins after Boethius. McInerny, in his summing up of the Latin discussions, puts it thus: “We have seen how often Thomas will speak of analogous names when there is no occurrence of *analogia* in the Aristotelian text on which he is commenting. What we find in the text is rather discussion of things said in many ways but with reference to one among them, *pros hen* equivocals [πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα]. Our contention is that what Aristotle means by such controlled equivocation, and the accounts he gives of it, are exactly what Thomas means when he speaks of analogous names”; McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 45–6. See further discussion of *pros hen legomenon* by G. E. L. Owen, “Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle,” in *Articles on Aristotle 3. Metaphysics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 13–32; and in the same volume G. Patzig, “Theology and Ontology in Aristotle’s Metaphysics,” 33–49.

relation with another term in such a manner that the meaning of the first term is made relevant to the understanding of the other, then we are in the domain of analogy: the bark of a dog and the bark of a tree have this much in common, that they both sometimes provide protection; in this sense the two terms otherwise equivocal can be rendered analogous through a prior reference to protection (or in some other way): as the bark of a dog protects a house from intruders, so does the bark of a tree protect the underlying conductive tissue from insect marauders.

Notice too that in the matter of the divine names, the ways of speaking about God, Aquinas notes that whether we are talking about perfections ontologically prior in God or mere imaginary resemblances fashioned by the mind to give to the being of God some intelligibility relative to the being of creatures, as when Augustine likens God to “a pure eye, because he sees all,” in either case our knowledge, the development and expression of which is what analogy primarily concerns, goes from creatures to God. In this precise particular, the heart of the matter, it makes no difference that we find, paradigmatically, that existence is more proper, that is to say, ontologically prior, in God, whereas fierceness is clearly an operational property proper to lions and only said of God metaphorically.

Regardless of the ontological situation, whether the relations involved are mind-dependent or mind-independent relations does not matter.<sup>17</sup> What makes a use of terms analogical for Aquinas is the placing of the definition of one term within what is understood of the definition of some other term. It is an activity of thought in relation to the objects of thought, and ranges across the whole field of objects to which thought extends: from the pure potentiality of prime matter which, because it cannot be directly experienced, Aquinas pointed out, is known only by analogy to what we do directly experience, all the way to the pure actuality of God which, because it cannot be directly experienced, Aquinas pointed out, is known only by analogy; in between these two extremes are included the intermediate cases, such as that in which “bark” is seen in the light of protection, or medicine and urine in the light of health. As a late modern Scotist put it,

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<sup>17</sup> McInerny puts it this way: “Thomas is noting that there are inequalities, orderings *per prius et posterius*, among things talked about that do not affect our way of talking about them”; Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 9–10.



“clearly the order of the being of things, the order of knowing them, and the order of designating them do not agree.”<sup>18</sup> Thomas could not agree more. Analogy pertains to the use of vocabulary whereby a philosopher is able to sort out these competing differences. It is, we might almost say, that part of the doctrine of signs which pertains to the critical use of intelligence in science and philosophy and to what Peirce will call “the ethics of terminology”; but that would get us too far ahead of the story.

#### IV

*Analogy in Thomistic Tradition: A “Concept of Being.”* I hope the reader has found the doctrine of analogous names just set forth straightforward and clear, for that is how it appears in the limpid Latin texts of Aquinas himself. After Aquinas, within what would become his own school of commentators, for a long time nothing in particular happens respecting his doctrine; although outside of that specific intellectual line not enough study of Scotus has been done to know if indeed his doctrine of being is as antithetical to that of Aquinas as the superficial contrast between analogous and univocal terms would make it seem; for we now see that there is nothing in a term as such that makes it analogous, but only its deployment within the field of our apprehensions. “Being” is an analogous term not by reason of any properties of its letters or their combination but because it is said in many ways, because it is something verified proportionally in quite different things, namely, existence in this or that capacity or even, in the restricted case of finite existents, a capacity for existence, with all the variety that implies—because, in short, with respect to this character string “being,” a cultural code has been established within and through the exaptation of language to communicate a universe of discourse created specifically for the purpose of revealing what was implied in Aristotle’s discovery that there was something in human experience (“being” he is said to have called it, though he spoke no English) which is verified within each category but which cannot be confined within any category and so is said in many ways.

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<sup>18</sup> See page 19 of the published dissertation of Cyril L. Shircel, “The Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Philosophy of John Duns Scotus,” Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1942.

So it is not without interest to discover that the first author formally to attempt a unification of the texts wherein Aquinas deals with the subject he terms “analogy” was an author who happens also to have been vehemently opposed to the success in philosophy of the writings of Duns Scotus, as he was to the success in religion of Martin Luther. Thomas de Vio Cajetan (20 February 1469–10 August 1534), christened James de Vio, took “Thomas” as his “name in religion” on joining the Dominican order in 1485, at the age of 16. He was destined to become known most commonly after his place of birth, Gaetanus. This is the man known to history as Cajetan, the cardinal of the Catholic Church once considered for pope who failed in his attempts to tame Luther but whose commentary on the *Summa* of St. Thomas is enshrined in print to accompany the best edition of that masterwork that has ever been prepared over these last eight centuries, the one commissioned by Pope Leo XIII and completed initially<sup>19</sup> between the years 1888 and 1906.

Like every man, Cajetan is best understood if one considers his times, and his were turbulent times indeed. He was the first, as was said, to undertake to thematize the notion of “analogy” in terms of its role in the thought of St. Thomas. But it would seem that his doing so was ill-fated by the importance attached in his milieu to the renewed knowledge of Greek language that had come to Italy especially in large measure as an unexpected side benefit of the Islamic conquest of the city of Constantinople in May of 1453. Cajetan was at the forefront of those who came quickly to recognize the overwhelming importance the knowledge first of Greek, and later of Hebrew and other semitic languages, was bound to acquire for scriptural studies and hence, eventually, for theology itself. It is to his credit—so many things fall to his credit and discredit, it is astonishing that as yet no proper biography has been written—that he pressed at the highest levels of university and ecclesiastical life for the renewed study of Greek. So—what can we say—why should not history strike yet another of its stunning ironies in making his very appreciation of Greek Cajetan’s downfall as the expositor of the theme of analogy in the Latin of Aquinas?

Cajetan under the best of circumstances inclined to be arrogant. You can still feel his *hauteur* radiating between lines of his *Commen-*

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<sup>19</sup>“Initially,” for the early volume is now being redone.

tary on the *Summa*, or from the whole of his sermon of 1503 on human immortality.<sup>20</sup> Weisheipl,<sup>21</sup> who would have known, if anyone of the last modern generations had known, what influences shaped Cajetan's approach to St. Thomas, passed over in silence the question of Cajetan's intellectual formation, which gives us a measure of how much work remains to be done in the area. Be that as it may, Cajetan seems to have imbibed, if not the love of Plato, at least something of the traditional Byzantine attitude of the superiority of the Greek language for the treatment of speculative problems returned to Rome from Constantinople, with the expatriation there of John Cardinal Bessarion—dead when Cajetan was but three, yet a giant presence still, as we can imagine, in the Rome and College of Cardinals of Cajetan's mature years—for Cajetan browbeats his Latin peers as “abusers of language”<sup>22</sup> for not following the regulative usage of the Greeks in the matter of analogy, leaving it unsaid or perhaps unnoticed that the primary abuser on the point was Thomas Aquinas himself.<sup>23</sup> Cajetan, for his own part, will indeed take the Greek usage as regulative when, in 1498, he sends forth his to-be-famous work entitled *The Analogy of Names*. The title was felicitous if the doctrine flawed; but the flaw in the doctrine revealed itself soon enough in his letter of

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<sup>20</sup> Cajetan, “On the Immortality of Souls,” trans. James K. Sheridan, in *Renaissance Philosophy: New Translations*, ed. Leonard A. Kennedy (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 46 and following. From this text of 1503, in which he grandly demonstrated the affirmative, Cajetan underwent a full conversion evidenced through a series of writings—his *Super libros de anima* (Rome, 1509); *In Epistolas Pauli*, especially Romans 9 (1519); *In Evangelia Matthei*, chapter 22 (Gaeta, 1527); and *In Ecclesiasten*, chapter 3 (Rome, 1542)—over the course of which he came categorically to assert, with no apologies for or mention of his polemics of 1503, that no philosopher ever has or could, as a *praeambulum fidei* or any other way, demonstrate the immortality of the individual human soul, although he considered such immortality to be a truth known by divine revelation.

<sup>21</sup> James A. Weisheipl, “Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio),” in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 2:1053–5. See also Pierre Felix Mandonnet, “Cajétan (Thomas de Vio dit),” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1905), 2:1313–29.

<sup>22</sup> “Abusiva tamen locutio est,” is how Cajetan puts it in his *De Nominum Analogia* of 1498, n. 21 (in the bilingual edition of Hyacinthe-Marie Robillard, *De l'Analogie et Du Concept d'Être* [Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1963], 48). The claim is echoed in his 1507 commentary on the *Summa*, q. 16, a. 6 ad 2 (in the four-volume Lyons edition “apud haeredes Iacobii Iunctae” of 1617, tomus primus, p. 102).

<sup>23</sup> See the detailed discussion in McNerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 21 and following.

1509 that has come down in history under the more ominous title “the concept of being”; for it is not as a concept that being is analogous, it is rather as a way of speaking involving necessarily and irreducibly more than one concept derived from experience.

But why should Latin usage conform to Greek usage, unless Greek usage is somehow superior, somehow regulative? The Byzantines had always considered it so, and their theology developed accordingly, followed by their civil censures. The very idea is not incredible. It is simply false. No one familiar with linguistics today would subscribe to such a notion as a historical language superior in general, true as it might happen to be in some particular areas on some particular points. The question that interests us here is whether analogy as Aquinas thought of it is just one of such areas or points? There is no doubt that Aquinas does not use *analogia* in a manner isomorphic with Aristotle’s use of the Greek *αναλογια*. The only author I know of who has approached the texts of both authors in exactly this light concludes that, on the basis of a detailed comparison of the texts,

we would have to say that where Thomas is talking of analogous names, names analogously common to many, Aristotle speaks of things said in many ways, with reference to one and the same nature, and not equivocally. Rather than chide Thomas [for an abuse of language], we should perhaps draw some such conclusion as the following. When Thomas speaks of analogous names he does not mean to echo a linguistic expression of Aristotle’s, since in the texts which occasion talk of analogous names in Thomas’s commentary Aristotle uses such phrases as ‘said in many ways in reference to one’. Aristotle clearly means to contrast that kind of talk with univocally common and equivocally common terms. Thus, *what* Thomas and Aristotle are both talking about is the same, but they do not *label* it in the same way. There is no fixed relation between Aristotle’s use of the Greek term [*αναλογια*] and Thomas’s use of the [Latin] loan word [*analogia*].<sup>24</sup>

Yet even the expression “loan word” concedes too much in Cajetan’s misguided direction. It is not a question of a term “on loan”; it is a question of the development of a terminology appropriate to expressing the problem as Aquinas sees it. Aquinas did not speak Greek nor read it well enough to comment directly on Greek texts; nor have we clear evidence that Cajetan knew Greek well enough to justify his browbeating of the Latins in this matter. For certainly his subsequent

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<sup>24</sup>McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 33–4.

exposition of what was supposed to be “the mind of the divine Thomas” (*ad mentem D. Thomae*) went far enough astray.

In bare essentials, Cajetan distinguishes (following Aristotle) the two extremes of words applied to different objects but with exactly the same sense—as “human being” said of every student in a class—which are univocal terms; and words apparently the same but which apply to objects in completely diverse senses, as “bark” of a dog and of a tree, which are usually (but, as we have seen, far from necessarily) so understood as to exemplify equivocal terms. Between these two extremes are words which are used with different but related senses, and this is the case of analogous terms. So far so good.

However, the case of analogous terms is not simple, and there are many discussions of subdistinctions of metaphor under the heading of “analogy” in Latin authors. The case of metaphor Cajetan calls the “analogy of improper proportionality,” passing over expanded discussion as irrelevant to his interest (and despite its very clear interest for the doctrine of the divine names), Cajetan remarks little more than that terms may have senses related through a similarity in their objects which is extrinsic and accidental to the nature of the objects, as “a bright sun” and “a bright smile,” a “smiling girl” and a “smiling meadow.”

Cajetan calls the case where what is really in the referent of one of the related terms is attributed to the referent of the other on the basis of a causal relation between the two, “analogy of attribution.” For example, words may be related in sense because what they apply to are related through causality, as “healthy” said of an organism and of urine the organism produces. Health is in the organism intrinsically, but in the urine only as reflecting that health. Or we speak of a “healthy environment,” because, like medicine, it tends to promote health in the organism.

Now Cajetan comes to his main thesis. When words have related senses as a result of a property which is intrinsic and essential to the objects designated by each, the result is what he calls “analogy of proper proportionality.” This alone is what Cajetan titles the analogy of being. Two things quite different, a frog, say, and a meteorite, yet both exercise existence. “Being” said of anything actual expresses something intrinsic to that thing, and yet the being is differentiated according to the form or type of thing that exercises it. Being then becomes a matter of a proportion, a *proportio ad esse* or “proportion to

existence,” a powerful and attractive notion, not least of the attractions of which is that it returns *analogia* to the primary use of *αναλογία* in the ancient Greek writings, which is that of a mathematical proportion, “two is to four as four is to eight”: as a frog exercises existence in its own way as a frog, so does a man exercise existence in the way proper to a man.

The fly in the ointment appears especially in Cajetan’s identification of the lowest level of analogy, what he calls “analogy of inequality.” A fly and a human are both animals, both beings. “Animal” said of both is said in the same sense, that is, univocally. A man is an animal in just the sense that a fly is an animal: both are capable (in Thomistic terms) of receiving the impressions of the forms of other things in such a way as to relate cognitively to those things as physical elements of the environment become and made part of an objective world or *Umwelt*. Both are beings, too. In the hierarchy of being, a fly is lower than a human being. Therefore, however they may be equal as animals, as beings they are related as lower and higher. Therefore, whatever the logician might think and say, the philosopher, who prefers wisdom over mere logic, has to say that fly and human as animal are not equal but unequal. Animal, in such a case, that is to say, with reference to the hierarchy of being, is not a univocal term as logic would have it but an analogous term, a term analogous by inequality. What logicians see as univocal terms appear in the superior wisdom of philosophy as terms analogous by analogy of inequality, inequality in being.

That then there are absolutely no such things as univocal terms seems not to have occurred to anyone. At least I have not seen this made as a point in the literature. Now this may seem on the face of it ridiculous, and I think it is; but as usual there is more to the situation than meets the eye. One needs to realize, for example, that “body” was regarded by the Latins, by Thomas himself, as an equivocal term as between qualitatively immutable celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies subject to generation and corruption. So Cajetan, with his analogy of inequality, was giving voice to and linguistically marking a conception much broader and more in the air of his time than any narrow reading of logical texts and doctrines would reveal. His idea is not ridiculous, at least not in the immediate way that might appear to a sufficiently ignorant postmodern reader. Yet it is wrong, as is always the mischief wrought by philosophers when they concoct a doc-

trine that mysteriously renders them *Übermenschen*, supermen, superior to the requirements of logic in the manner that binds lesser minds.

The problem lies in the idea that “being,” because it turns out that it must be said in many ways, is an intrinsically or irreducibly analogous term, when no term is intrinsically or necessarily (outside of the manner in which it is here and now deployed) anything according to signification. The key to the problematic, I suggest, lies in the fact that we experience many different things existing in many different ways, and we experience the need somehow to bring all this diversity under a common designation for conveniences of discourse, to be sure, but also for the purpose of a discourse which can express the truth about things as a matter of philosophical doctrine. When we reach the conclusion that not all being is material, we indeed express a judgment that, as Aquinas remarked, precludes physics, whether in the ancient sense or in the modern sense, from the status of first philosophy, for if not all being is material then being cannot be adequately understood in physics however completely we come to understand and even dominate the world of bodies in motion, any more than relation can be adequately understood if we restrict our perspective to the reality of relation as it exists independently of the mind.

The judgment of separation, the abstraction of “being” as a concept presenting an object not restricted to the material or to the spiritual order but capable of verification in both orders, makes it possible to unify the knowledge of the diversity of beings in an understanding of being as such, thereby providing a subject of possible thematic investigations so specific and distinctive that the unity of the science (or rather the doctrinal unity, as we should say in the wake of modernity<sup>25</sup>) so constituted is ensured. The unity of a true philosophical knowledge, however, as Schillaci said,<sup>26</sup> “is not a rigid set of restrictions but an organic ‘oneness’ like that of a living thing in that it permits the science to come into existence, to contact and assimilate reality, to develop according to its own nature and to reach the end of that

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<sup>25</sup> See the entry “Doctrine,” in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, ed. T. A. Sebeok et al. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 1:214.

<sup>26</sup> See page 511 of Anthony Schillaci, “Separation: Starting Point of Metaphysics,” Ph.D. diss., International Pontifical Athenaeum “Angelicum,” 1961. Abstracted and summarized in central thesis by John Deely, “Finitude, Negativity, and Transcendence: The Problematic of Metaphysical Knowledge,” *Philosophy Today* 9 (Fall 1967): 184–206.

nature.” If we may conclude in this respect that a metaphysics that does not come to treat of God has not reached its natural finality, we may claim with all the greater ferocity that a metaphysics that claims God or even *esse ut exercitum* for its proper object would so have misunderstood itself in so radical a way as to have betrayed its nature. Between these two extremes lies the idea of being and the realm of *ens commune* that idea constitutes under the discursive heading of “analogy.” Within that realm lies the meaning and possibility of metaphysics, one of the features distinctive of the human *Lebenswelt* in its difference from the perceptual *Umwelt* of the animals without language.

## V

*Beyond the Analogy of Names and Concept: “Analogy of Being.”* Cajetan set the terms of the subsequent discussion of analogy within and beyond the Thomistic tradition. Some have claimed to find grounds for dissatisfaction with Cajetan’s presentation as a faithful expression of the thought of St. Thomas expressed early in no less an authoritative voice than that of Sylvester Ferrariensis (c. 1474–1528), in his *Commentary on the Summa Contra Gentiles*, written between 1508 and 1517 and first published in 1524, now published to accompany that work of Aquinas in the critical Leonine edition as Cajetan’s commentary accompanies the Leonine *Summa*. McInerny grants that “on the points where Sylvester has offered his independent view, a basis is provided for a bifurcation in subsequent interpretations”; but he thinks that “it would be wrong to say that Sylvester presents us with a clear alternative to Cajetan’s interpretation.” For in the work of Ferrariensis what we find, after all, are “not so much different interpretations as different emphases: the basic outlook of Cajetan is retained.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, to whatever extent Ferrariensis did or did not point out something early on of the rather different tenor of Aquinas’s own treatment of analogy from that set forth by the learned Cajetan, it remained the voice of Cajetan that continued to be heard and attended

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<sup>27</sup> Ralph McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 30. See the whole of section 2, “Sylvester of Ferrara,” 23–31.



to within and beyond Thomistic circles over the subsequent centuries, including the late modern Neothomistic revival.

In Neothomistic circles, not universally, though quite broadly, the renewed discussion of analogy took an even more radical turn away from the actual presentation of Aquinas. Dissatisfaction with Cajetan was everywhere expressed,<sup>28</sup> yet nowhere for quite the right reasons—the main reason being that he had distorted St. Thomas by failing to understand the lexicological and accompanying syntactic differences that accompanied the transliterate pair *analogia/αναλογία*. These differences are in themselves without any necessary significance for philosophical doctrine; but Cajetan made them significant by (mis)taking the two words as names for the same phenomenon in the two languages, contrary to fact. As a result, the doctrine of *analogia* in Aquinas and the doctrine of *analogia* in Cajetan are not the same doctrine. Even though the doctrines of Cajetan and Aquinas partially overlap, as do the respective Latin and Greek terms, nonetheless, by moving away from the overlap in the direction of the Greek syntax rather than in the direction of the rather different Latin syntax developed in the wake of the doctrine Aquinas himself developed, the net result in Cajetan was an attempt to outline a scheme of analogy in which it was argued that corresponding to the term “being” itself, which must be used in different ways, there is a single concept itself that is analogous. So the criticism of Cajetan began mainly along the line that he had essentialized being, that in reducing being to a concept he was too formalistic—in a word, that he had missed the point of *esse* in the thought of St. Thomas.

What was needed, it came to be thought, was not a logical doctrine of analogy nor a doctrine of the concept of being as analogous but a doctrine of being itself in its full extramental reality as analogous. Just as we saw in dealing with the transcendentals that there

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<sup>28</sup>The effort of Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960) is worth mentioning here as well repaying study. The same holds for Gerald B. Phelan, *Saint Thomas and Analogy* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1941); Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être de après saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1963); André Marc, “L’Idée de l’être chez Saint Thomas et dans la scolastique postérieure,” *Archives de philosophie* 10 (1933): bk. 1, and the same author, “L’Idée thomiste de l’être et les analogies d’attribution et de proportionnalité,” *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 35 (1933): 157–89.

can be, as Poinset put it, “a twofold understanding of truth, the one in being, the other in knowing,”<sup>29</sup> so why might there not be a twofold doctrine of analogy, the one in knowing and yet another, more fundamental one in being itself? Why not an analogy of being itself, not of the term “being” or of the concept “being,” but an analogy in the very order itself of *ens reale*? This is what the late modern Neothomists came to postulate in the works of Przywara, Geiger, and Fabro,<sup>30</sup> to name a prominent few.

But there is no parity in the two cases. Even if we remember the origin of the very term “hierarchy” in the forged writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, yet there is an even more sure giveaway. The authors in question, in order to develop their analogy of being, “very often use the style and manner of speaking which was used by the Platonists, which had ceased to be customary” among those who moved in Thomas’s circle.<sup>31</sup> The development in question amounts to a recrudescence of Neoplatonism in the very heart of Neothomism,<sup>32</sup> without the excuse of the false authority of the Pseudo-Dionysius. When the epistemological doctrine of analogy actually found in the writings of Thomas is transformed by some late modern alchemy into an ontological doctrine as such, we are back to the situation of attributing to objects as known a status and relations which belong not to them otherwise than as known, without, however, any longer being able to tell the difference between which order of being we are dealing with, since we have conflated everything into a doctrinal milieu that is no longer that of Thomas, but once again that of a Christian Neoplatonism, now in the wake of distinctively modern idealism.

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<sup>29</sup> John Poinset “De Veritate Transcendentali et Formali,” in *Joannis a Sancto Thoma O. P. Cursus Theologici Tomus II*, ed. Solesmes (Paris: Desclée, 1934), 590: “est duplex acceptio veritatis, alia in essendo, alia in cognoscendo, seu alia transcendentalis, alia formalis.”

<sup>30</sup> Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1962); Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *Participation dans la philosophie de saint Thomas*, 2d ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1953); and Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalité selon S. Thomas d’Aquin* (Louvain and Paris: Nauwelarts, 1961).

<sup>31</sup> Appropriating for the occasion the observation of Aquinas in his “Prooemium” to *Super librum Dionysii de divinis nominibus*; B 4:542a: “accidit etiam difficultas in praedictis libris ex multis: primo, quidem, quia plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur platonici, qui apud modernos est inconsuetos.”

There are analogies in being as experienced and understood, but *ens reale* is not an analogy, it only requires analogy to be brought within the orbit, however imperfectly, of human understanding. Those who make of being itself an analogy perforce “have to resort to the style and manner of speaking of the Platonists”<sup>33</sup> without the excuse of having to preserve “sacred and divine dogma by concealing it from the eyes of the infidels,”<sup>34</sup> as Aquinas generously wrote to excuse Dionysius, not knowing that he was going out of his way to protect a common (or uncommon) thief.

Throughout his work, as Henle best and most completely showed,<sup>35</sup> Aquinas fought against the confusion and conflation of our

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<sup>32</sup> For example, Edward T. Foote writes: “It is because things really are analogous that the universe presents itself, a unity, attractive to intellect, and penetrable by knowledge which excels science. It is because things are analogous that mind can course up and down the grades (the ‘steps’) of perfections—where univocal unities would be futile—can freely range transversely from category to category. By analogies man can go from himself, the being he knows best, far down to the truth, the goodness, the beauty of all inferior creation, which is ordered to him; he can rise to know something of what it means to be a creature without matter. Finally, since beings are analogous to Being [there we encounter early the magical capitalization later to become so familiar in contexts where existential Thomists try to expropriate for their wholly foreign purpose the Heideggerian *Sein*], from the existence and perfections of finite things, man can have knowledge of the transcending excellences, the very subsistence of God”; Edward T. Foote, “Anatomy of Analogy,” *The Modern Schoolman* 18 (November 1940), 12–16.

Pure Neoplatonism unconscious of itself. Of course, that is to begin, not to end, a story. For the idea of “participation,” central to two of Aquinas’s *quinque viae*, is precisely an originally Platonic doctrine which becomes central for the metaphysics of *esse*, precisely because, as St. Thomas puts it, “ipsum esse est communissimus effectus primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus; et ideo soli deo competit secundum virtutem propriam talis effectus”; and “ubicumque est virtus divina, est essentia divina,” because of the indistinction whereby the divine essence is the divine existence; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 3, a. 7; B 3:202b. But this particular story of Thomism and Neothomism I here have place only to mention, not to enter upon. See the intriguing beginning in A. F. Russell, “The Semiotic of Causality and Participation: A New Perspective on the Cajetan-Fabro-Montagnes Controversy over the Analogy of Being,” in *Semiotics 1987*, ed. John Deely (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 467–72.

<sup>33</sup> *Super librum Dionysii de divinis nominibus*, Prooemium; B 4:542a: “plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur platonici.”

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: “ut sacra et divina dogmata ab irrisione infidelium occultaret.”

<sup>35</sup> Robert J. Henle, S.J., *St. Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the Platonic and Platonic Texts in the Writings of St. Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956). An exhaustive, definitive, and magisterial study.

ways of knowing with the ways of existence exercised by natural beings. To salvage what Neoplatonism made of being it was necessary to speak of divine rather than human ideas, a concession Aquinas generously made to the Pseudo-Dionysius only because he took him at his word for who he was.<sup>36</sup> To play the same game today without the same excuse is to risk betraying the heritage Aquinas worked so hard to leave through his commentaries on the philosophers and his reverence toward the scriptures alike.

## VI

*In Conclusion.* Analogy is but secondarily a class of terms within language. Primarily and essentially analogy is rather a process within language, the process whereby two terms come to be understood through the meaning of a common third, and so a part of the larger process whereby language is a living reality, wherein, by a variety of—often of unexpected, simply chance events, the meaning of one linguistic element enters into and modifies the meaning of another previously unrelated term. The term “nigger” as relegating a dark-skinned person to inferior status among fully human beings had no relation historically or etymologically to the Danish derived term “niggardly” as designating a chintzy, mean-spirited approach to some matter. But after the events in the city government of Washington, D. C., in late January of 1999, where one government official, upon hearing another use the term “niggardly,” immediately supposed it on the basis of sound to imply “acting in a humanly inferior fashion, acting in the fashion of a nigger,” it is probable that the new meaning has so publicly entered into the original meaning of “niggardly” as to become for future usage a part of that meaning. Analogy strikes again—a process so ubiquitous that even ignorance provides it fodder.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>*Super librum Dionysii de divinis nominibus*, Prooemium; B 4:542b–c: “haec igitur platoniorum ratio fidei non consonant nec veritati, quantum ad hoc quod continet de speciebus naturalibus separatis, sed quantum ad id quod dicebant ‘de primo rerum principio’ verissima est eorum opinio et fidei christianae consona”—“nor is this rationale for belief of the Platonists consonant with truth insofar as it contains separated species of natural relations, but as regards that which it leads them to say of the ‘first principle of things’ it is true indeed and the opinion they express is consonant with Christian faith.”

Indeed, perhaps the most interesting lesson of logic in the Aristotelian tradition is the realization that every time we say “X is Y,” we change the meaning of X with which the sentence begins by making a part of it the meaning of Y with which the sentence ends. That, indeed, is the essence of how a statement (a *dicisign*) differs from a term (a *represign*) as a subjective or predicative part. Analogy, in short, is the name for a phenomenon and process pervasive of linguistic communication, and is the very reason why language is a living reality that constantly changes over time in largely uncontrollable ways, as any contemporary English speaker can easily assure himself by reading first Locke’s original text of 1690 in the *Essay concerning Humane Understanding*, and proceeding thence to an edition of Chaucer faithful to the original manuscripts rather than dolled up for today’s students.

Analogy is time’s way of marking language. It is the underlying reason and process whereby, as Peirce concisely put it, “Symbols grow.”<sup>38</sup> Analogy, in sum, is that in the absence of which language withers on the vine of understanding.

If we wish to speak of being itself, of that which is, in terms of analogy, we are better advised to realize that a requirement finite being imposes upon discourse is that discourse itself, in order to develop understanding of what is, must take account of the dependencies among things in the very order of their continued existence—of children upon parents, of living beings upon particular features of the environment, of parts of organisms upon other parts, even of rocks in their shape and composition to surrounding conditions in the environment which themselves are emphatically not rocks. These ontological dependencies are the food of analogy, but they are not themselves analogical. The hierarchy of being, insofar as it consists in a whole series of interlocking causal dependencies whereby higher evolutionary levels come about through and depend upon lower levels, is more properly stated under the rubric of transcendental relation (*relatio secundum dici*)—the fact that we can increase our understanding of

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<sup>37</sup> In the pitiful case cited, my colleague Dr. Ciapalo informed me that he and Dr. Curtis Hancock had predicted the occurrence some years ago as but a matter of time.

<sup>38</sup> From his *Grand Logic* of 1893, in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), par. 302.

any one finite being only by considering it in relation to other finite beings which it itself is not but apart from which it would not be as it is (even the deceased parent has left its mark in the distinctive being of the offspring, for better or for worse, whence some understanding of that parent remains essential fully to understand the offspring, even though as substances the two are quite independent in *esse*). The proper counterpart to the epistemological phenomenon of analogy, in short, is not an ontological phenomenon of analogy of being (for there is no such phenomenon independent of intellectual imagination), but the ontological phenomenon of causal interaction and consequent real relations which, when they have ceased to be real as intersubjective relations (as when the offspring is orphaned or the parent loses its child), yet remain in their foundations as suprasubjective requirements of knowledge to guide such relations of apprehension as future knowers will form when their understanding is true to the subject under discussion, the subject of discourse objectively grasped. Analogical relations as such may always be epistemological, but the uniqueness of relation as a mode of being is such that nothing prevents physical relations too from forming a part of understanding, according to circumstances. Whence analogical relations may indeed enfold and incorporate real relations, but the analogical relations, as epistemological, transcend the circumstances upon which real relations as such depend in order to be real, which is why they are intrinsically and essentially bound up with sign relations, triadic and ontological, but not themselves transcendental.

The Neothomist doctrine of analogy of being, in sum, is an unsound attempt to capture a truth the first Thomism, the original Latin florescence of Thomistic commentary between Capreolus (c. 1380–1444) and John Poinset (1589–1644), better formulated in the contrast between ontological relation (*relatio secundum esse*) and transcendental relation (*relatio secundum dici*). The understanding of that contrast puts us squarely in the arena of semiotics—what Peirce called, following exactly the course of the late Latin pioneers of this area, the “doctrine of signs.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Mauricio Beuchot and John Deely, “Common Sources for the Semiotic of Charles Peirce and John Poinset,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 48 (March 1995): 539–66.