

AQUINAS'S TWO CONCEPTS OF ANALOGY
AND A COMPLEX SEMANTICS FOR
NAMING THE SIMPLE GOD

JOSHUA P. HOCHSCHILD

*Mount St. Mary's University
Emmitsburg, Maryland*

THE TOPIC OF “divine names” as treated by Aquinas can be traced back to pagan Greek thinkers, Aristotle and earlier. More proximately, it can be traced to a Christian heavily influenced by that Greek tradition, (Pseudo-)Dionysius. At the beginning of his commentary on Dionysius’s *Divine Names*, Aquinas describes it and three other works of Dionysius in terms of their relation to human reason.

Features of God that pertain to the three divine persons and their essential unity “find no adequate likeness” in creatures; these are mysteries “exceeding the whole faculty of natural reason,” treated in *De divinis hypotyposibus*. There are other truths about God revealed in Scripture that “our intellect cannot conceive” and that “exceed all that which can be apprehended by us”; these are treated in a work on *Mystical Theology*.

There are other divine features that can be investigated by human reason, insofar as “some likeness in creatures is found”; in that case, it is possible for our intellect to be led to conceive of God from creatures. Some of these are merely metaphorical similitudes, as when God is said to be a lion, a stone, or the sun. Such “likenesses” obtain “according to something transferred from creatures to God.” These characteristics, truly in creatures and not properly in God, are treated in a work on *Symbolic Theology*. But some likenesses obtain because of “something that in creatures is derived from God.” Such divine characteristics—

expressed in words like “good,” “just,” “wise,” and “powerful”—are treated in the work *On Divine Names*.¹

Thus, according to Aquinas, Dionysius’s *Divine Names* treats what can be understood of the proper attributes of the one God that are knowable by reason. Though the work clearly draws inspiration from faith, we could anachronistically say that it functions very much as an exercise in “natural theology.” In particular it reflects on how our concepts and language can be extended to God precisely because they are derived from likenesses that emanate from and participate in their preeminent, perfect source. Words express—even if in a very exceptional way—what we know about divine reality. For Dionysius, reflecting on these words and the ways that they express divine realities is a matter not just of theological language, but of theological epistemology and metaphysics: the divine names are an occasion to contemplate divinity and its attributes.

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, proem: “Ad intellectum librorum beati Dionysii considerandum est quod ea quae de Deo in sacris Scripturis continentur, artificialiter quadrifariam divisi: nam in libro quodam, qui apud nos non habetur, qui intitulatur de divinis hypotyposibus idest characteribus, ea de Deo tradidit quae ad unitatem divinae essentiae et distinctionem personarum pertinent. Cuius unitatis et distinctionis sufficiens similitudo in rebus creatis non invenitur, sed hoc mysterium omnem naturalis rationis facultatem excedit. Quae vero dicuntur de Deo in Scripturis, quarum aliqua similitudo in creaturis invenitur, dupliciter se habent. Nam huiusmodi similitudo in quibusdam quidem attenditur secundum aliquid quod a Deo in creaturas derivatur. Sicut a primo bono sunt omnia bona et a primo vivo sunt omnia viventia et sic de aliis similibus. Et talia pertractat Dionysius in libro de divinis nominibus, quem prae manibus habemus. In quibusdam vero similitudo attenditur secundum aliquid a creaturis in Deum translatum. Sicut Deus dicitur leo, petra, sol vel aliquid huiusmodi; sic enim Deus symbolice vel metaphorice nominatur. Et de huiusmodi tractavit Dionysius in quodam suo libro quem de symbolica theologia intitulavit. Sed quia omnis similitudo creaturae ad Deum deficiens est et hoc ipsum quod Deus est omne id quod in creaturis invenitur excedit, quicquid in creaturis a nobis cognoscitur a Deo removetur, secundum quod in creaturis est; ut sic, post omne illud quod intellectus noster ex creaturis manuductus de Deo concipere potest, hoc ipsum quod Deus est remaneat occultum et ignotum. Non solum enim Deus non est lapis aut sol, qualia sensu apprehenduntur, sed nec est talis vita aut essentia qualis ab intellectu nostro concipi potest et sic hoc ipsum quod Deus est, cum excedat omne illud quod a nobis apprehenditur, nobis remanet ignotum. De huiusmodi autem remotionibus quibus Deus remanet nobis ignotus et occultus fecit alium librum quem intitulavit de mystica idest occulta theologia.”

Although Aquinas is deeply informed by this work, when he writes his own theological treatises the topic of “divine names” becomes more circumscribed. In the *Summa theologiae*, question 13 of the *Prima pars* addresses divine naming, but quite a lot is said about God, and about our knowledge of God, in questions 2 through 12. (A comparable structure is evident in the *Summa contra Gentiles*.) We could say that Aquinas is content to engage in divine naming before making it an object of reflection in its own right, but it is clear that, for Aquinas, the topic of divine naming is a more circumscribed part of theology. Rather than encompassing the investigations of natural theology, it is about how, as Lawrence Dewan has described, certain words as applied to God have “a distinctive meaning . . . and a distinctive way of meaning what they mean.”² For Aquinas, as for Dionysius, the “names” in question are not *proper* names, but any true predicates of God. At issue are words like “good,” “just,” “wise,” and “powerful”—even the very word “God” (which is not really a proper name, for Aquinas, but functions more like a common term, albeit a very unique common term). The presumption is that these words can be truly predicated of God. However, given God’s otherness from the creaturely context in which such words are learned, how do these words function when they are predicated of God? In short, rather than encompassing natural theology *tout court*, Aquinas’s own doctrine of divine names is what we might call a theological semantics.

Aquinas’s doctrine of analogy is sometimes taken to be almost coincident with the topic of divine names, or at least the most important element in understanding his answer to the question of divine naming. Thus analogy occupies the largest and central part of Gregory Rocca’s book about Aquinas’s theological language.³ Rudi te Velde expresses a common view, in his chapter on divine names in *Aquinas on God*, that: “The question of divine

² Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas and the Divine Names,” *Science et esprit* 32 (1980): 19-33, at 32-33.

³ Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), esp. part 2, “Analogy and the Web of Judgment,” 77-195.

names is, for [Aquinas], first and foremost a question of how names can be common to God and creatures . . . [and] [w]henver he treats this question his answer is that names . . . are said *analogously*.”⁴ Te Velde does not say—but the reader could easily have the impression⁵—that analogy is the answer to the question of divine naming.

I offer here a corrective to this impression. It is a mistake to treat analogy as the whole of, or even the most important part of, Aquinas’s solution to the problem of divine naming; and it is a mistake to treat divine naming as a single problem and not a set of related questions. These mistakes involve misunderstandings about analogy in general, about the topic of divine naming, and about the role of analogy in addressing the topic of divine names. In fact, Aquinas has much to say about divine naming apart from and without referring to analogy (it is worth noting that in his commentary on the *Divine Names* the word “analogy” [*analogia*] and its cognates do not even appear). By clarifying Aquinas’s understanding of analogy, I want to show its very specific and limited application in his treatment of theological language, and I therefore hope to clarify other linguistic or semantic insights of Aquinas, often neglected or conflated with analogy, that play a more central role in his doctrine of divine names.

In what follows, I will first try to clarify what analogy means for Aquinas. Here I will explain something that is well established but rarely expressed this way, namely, that Aquinas actually has two concepts of analogy. I do not mean that he has two types or classes or modes of analogy, nor two stages in his thought about analogy, but that he has two logically separate concepts of analogy. He learned both of these concepts from Aristotle, and

⁴ Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The “Divine Science” of the “Summa Theologiae”* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2006), 109.

⁵ The impression that analogy is the answer to the question of divine naming is also given by Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas’s “Summa Theologiae”: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63-67, which aptly describes question 13 as a question “discussing ‘God talk’ in general” (62), explained in terms of the question, “how can we think of [words] as truly telling us about God?” (64). Davies then promptly says, “Aquinas’s answer . . . is that some words . . . are to be understood as to be employed analogically” (*ibid.*).

they deserve to be treated separately, even though they can be, and sometimes are, related. Second, I will show that both concepts of analogy are relevant to Aquinas's treatment of divine naming, and that both are also relevant to other areas of Aquinas's thought which have nothing to do with divine naming. Finally, then, I will argue that to appreciate Aquinas's treatment of divine names we have to distinguish different senses of the question, "How can names be predicated of God?", and see that to answer these questions Aquinas appeals to other semantic concepts and distinctions, quite apart from either of the two notions of analogy. Only by attending to these other concepts can we understand how what is special about God is reflected in what is special about the way human language functions when applied to God, and how general assumptions about how language functions can determine what sort of divinity we are capable of conceiving.

I. TWO CONCEPTS OF ANALOGY

It is commonly said that Aquinas did not have a developed doctrine of analogy, and certainly no systematic treatment of the same. His mentions of analogy are always occasional—he invokes it to solve particular problems—and because of this commentators hoping to formulate the Thomistic doctrine on the subject have had plenty to argue about. Is there a theory that could be explicitly stated, or did Aquinas have principled reasons for not developing a systematic theory of analogy? Did his views on analogy develop over his career? Is analogy primarily a metaphysical or a logical teaching for Aquinas? Is there a consistent, or at least most mature, account of different modes or types of analogy in Aquinas? Which later commentator best interprets and systematizes Aquinas? Anyone who ventures into the vast literature on Aquinas on analogy will find that these are the questions that dominate.⁶ Even commentators striving to return

⁶ Many of these conversations take place around evaluation of the Thomism of Cajetan's *De nominum analogia* (1498), a text which haunts modern interpreters of

to a strict exegesis of Aquinas's texts find themselves lost in the thickets of these later interpretive questions.⁷

We can avoid, or at least reframe, many of these questions by observing that there are two very different concepts of analogy in Aquinas. One of them, the more commonly invoked and recognized, conceives of analogy as a kind of relationship between different applications of a word. In this case, analogy is a *linguistic phenomenon*, located between two other linguistic phenomena, univocation and equivocation. This will be familiar to many, and easy for others to learn. In univocation, a term signifies the same content across multiple uses: the dog, the fish, and the bird can each be called "animal" in exactly the same sense. In equivocation, a term signifies very different content in different uses: what I hit the baseball with is not a "bat" in the same sense that the nocturnal flying mammal is a "bat." In between is analogical predication, which involves some degree of difference, but also some degree of sameness. To take the most common example in the Aristotelian tradition, the meaning of "healthy" as predicated of food is related to—but clearly not exactly the same as—the meaning of "healthy" as predicated of a urine sample. I will call this widely recognized concept of

Aquinas. For discussion and citations see Joshua P. Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan's "De nominum analogia"* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 17-32.

⁷ These preoccupations can be found in most of the major works on analogy in Aquinas from the second half of the twentieth century, including: Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of Its Background and Interpretation of Its Use by Thomas of Aquino* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952); George Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960); Ralph McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961); Jacobus M. Ramirez, *De analogia*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Instituto De Filosofia Luis Vives, 1970). Perhaps the most influential is Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires; Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1963), for discussion of which see Joshua P. Hochschild, "Proportionality and Divine Naming: Did St. Thomas Change his Mind about Analogy?" *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 531-58; and Joshua P. Hochschild, review of Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004), *The Thomist* 72 (2008): 336-39.

analogy, describing a relationship between linguistic functions, *associated meaning*.

There is another sense of analogy in Aquinas that is not a category of linguistic relation but a category of likeness, similitude, or unity. It is compared with, and differentiated from, not univocation or equivocation, but other metaphysical categories of likeness or unity: specific and generic. As this context implies, and other contexts make clear, this nongeneric or supergeneric likeness does not involve the sharing of a common form or characteristic (as specific or generic likeness do), but instead must be conceived in terms of a relation of relations: we say that "A" is nongenerically like "X" if "A is to B as X is to Y." Due to this four-term structure, I call this sense of analogy, a metaphysical category of unity or likeness that does not imply sharing a common quality or form, *proportional likeness*.

On the face of it, associated meaning and proportional likeness are not the same concept. One is linguistic (about the relation of words), the other metaphysical (about a kind of unity). It is possible to imagine how they can be connected, to be sure: generic likeness implies that a genus term can be used, and genus terms are univocal; proportional likeness implies that, at least under the concept of proportional likeness, the common term is not strictly univocal but a case of associated meaning, linguistically analogical. On the other hand, not every case where things are in fact related by proportional likeness requires that there be a common term predicated of each; one can notice a similarity of relationship between things that do not share a common name (which is why there is always room for poetic insight to coin a new metaphor). Moreover, proportional likeness is not the only kind of relationship that must hold between two things that receive an analogical predication. Nobody in the tradition says that the food and the urine sample are both "healthy" because they have a proportional likeness to each other or to the health of the animal; they are each called healthy because they have a relation (other than proportionality) to the health of the animal, respectively *cause* and *sign*.

This much is obvious from reflection on the concepts themselves, but it is even clearer when we look at the way they are articulated by Aquinas's source for these ideas, Aristotle. For Aristotle, the Greek term "*analogia*" was used to describe what I am calling proportional likeness: the nongeneric similarity conceived on a four-term schema, extended from mathematical to other contexts. Aristotle also had a notion of associated meaning, but he never referred to this as *analogia*; rather, it was equivocation "*pros hen*," toward one. The very few occasions on which Aquinas brings the two concepts together only serves to emphasize that they are distinct. It is thanks to later history—especially Neoplatonic commentary on Aristotle, Boethius's handling of translation challenges from Greek to Latin, and the Arabic commentary tradition—that these notions came to be more closely related, so that by the time of Aquinas the term *analogia* had migrated from proportional likeness in Greek to cover also (and even primarily) associated meaning in Latin.⁸

Aquinas inherited both concepts of analogy and, depending on the context, uses the term "analogy" for both of them. Associated meaning—analogy as a mean between univocation and equivocation—is the sense of the word "analogy" at work in article 5 of the question on divine naming ("Whether what is said of God and of creatures is univocally predicated of them?"), where analogy is introduced as a way of ensuring that words as said of God have something in common with the way they are said of creatures, but not said univocally. However, the very first sense of "analogy" to appear in the *Summa theologiae* is the other concept, proportional likeness.⁹ In question 4, article 3, addressing whether creatures can be like God, Aquinas distinguishes different senses of likeness, and argues that not every kind of likeness implies membership in a common genus. Both in the body of the response, and in the reply to the third objection, Aquinas invokes analogy as an alternative to specific or generic likeness, a likeness (or sameness or unity) "according

⁸ For more on this, and references, see Hochschild, *Semantics of Analogy*, 4-10.

⁹ I am ignoring a different, nonphilosophical use of "analogy" pertinent to biblical hermeneutics, in *STh* I, q. 1, a. 10.

to analogy.” This passage is not atypical of those in which Aquinas treats analogy as proportional likeness.

A) Analogy as Proportional Likeness in Aquinas

It is undeniable that Aquinas recognized both concepts of analogy throughout his career. Regarding *proportional likeness*, there are several texts that explicitly describe analogy as a kind of unity or likeness characterized in terms of the four-term schema. These texts span Aquinas’s works and they include not only theological works but philosophical commentaries and treatises. Commentators who want to focus on analogy as associated meaning cannot ignore the concept of proportional likeness, even if they find reason to marginalize it.¹⁰

In many passages that describe proportional likeness Aquinas uses the word “analogy” as the name for this relationship; very often, he refers to the relationship with the alternative “analogy or proportion,” as if the two words are synonymous (e.g., *STh* I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 3; *In Boeth. De Trin.*, q. 4, a. 2; *I Phys.*, lect. 10; *II Gen. et Corr.*, lect. 9); and sometimes he does not use the word “analogy” and only calls the relationship “proportion.” To make matters confusing, he sometimes uses “proportion” as the name for any relation at all, in which case when he wants to refer to the proportional likeness of the four-termed schema he will call it “proportionality”—a terminological solution he inherited from Boethius. Aquinas’s language for *naming* this relationship is inconsistent, then, but the *relationship itself* is consistently recognized, across a variety of works throughout his career, and while it does have theological application it also appears in nontheological contexts—for instance in his analysis of cognition, how we learn about prime matter, and other cases.

¹⁰ Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, treats proportional likeness in a chapter called, “Problem Areas.” Ramirez, *De Analogia*, examines proportional likeness in the historical section of vol. 1, but the bulk of his more analytical study in vols. 2-4 is focused on analogy as associated meaning.

There are also certain concepts that Aquinas takes to be implied by the nongeneric relation of proportionality. This relation is therefore often associated with particular words: “likeness,” “image,” “imitation,” “representation,” and “participation.” For all of these, Aquinas seems to recognize that the commonality they suggest is not generic or specific (implying a common form received in the same way in different individuals) but proportional, implying a four-term schema or relation of proportions between different domains—such as the way the parts of a map are like the terrain they map, not because of a common form, but because the relationships of parts of the map represent (because they are proportional to) relationships in the mapped terrain. Aquinas makes this explicit, for instance, in commenting on “image,” in this passage from his *Sentences* commentary:

In response it must be said that the *ratio* of an image consists in imitation, whence its name is taken; for *imago* is said like *imitago*. But in the *ratio* of imitation there are two things to be considered; namely that in which there is imitation, and that which is imitated. Now that in respect of which there is imitation, is some quality, or form signified by the mode of a quality. Whence the *ratio* of image is *similitudo*. But this isn’t enough, but it must be that there is some adequation in that quality, either according to quality or according to proportion. As it is clear that, in a small image, there is an equal proportion of parts to each other as in the large thing of which it is an image; and therefore *adequation* is posited in its definition.¹¹

Although he does not call it “analogy” in this passage, this is the relationship of proportionality that is called analogy in the passage mentioned above as the first use of analogy in the *Summa* (*STh* I, q. 4, a. 3). The question is “whether any creature can be like God,” and here instead of “image” Aquinas talks about an effect as “participating” in a “likeness” of the cause irreducible to generic likeness:

¹¹ I *Sent.*, d. 28, q. 2, a. 1. Cf. II *Sent.*, d. 16, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4: “It must be said that the *ratio* of image is not expounded as *equality of equal parts*, since a large man can be expressed in a small image; but it is expounded as *equality of proportion*, namely as there is between each part of the image a proportion with what is imaged.”

if there is an agent not contained in any genus, its effects 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.

In the replies to objections, Aquinas describes this as a kind of “imitation” (ad 2) and “participation” (ad 3), and the function of an “image” which proportionally represents what is imaged is reprised here by the example of a statue, which is proportionally like that thing of which it is a statue (ad 4).

B) Analogy as Associated Meaning in Aquinas

Most commentators have focused on the way Aquinas uses analogy as associated meaning, that is, the linguistic phenomenon that is a mean between univocation and equivocation, such that a word expresses meanings partly the same and partly different, with a primary meaning to which secondary meanings are somehow related. It is uncontroversial to say that we can find this throughout Aquinas's career. Certainly in different contexts, Aquinas describes different ways of characterizing this kind of analogy, and different ways of distinguishing its subclasses or modes. This is what most commentators have argued about, and this is really what most scholars have in mind when they say that Aquinas has no systematic theory of analogy: they mean he has no consistent, systematic theory of how to distinguish different kinds of associated meaning, nor any account of how analogy can preserve syllogistic reasoning.¹² But it is undeniable that analogy as associated meaning is a consistent concept throughout his writings. Like proportionality, it appears in crucial theological contexts, but in plenty of nontheological contexts as well. Aquinas describes it as involving signification that is partly the same and partly different, where the “partly the same” is understood in terms of the different meanings having an order of

¹² See Hochschild, *Semantics of Analogy*, chap. 4; and Domenic D'Ettore, *Analogy after Aquinas: Logical Problems, Thomistic Answers* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018).

priority (*per prius et posterius*), such that secondary significations make reference to a primary signification, or (as he sometimes puts it) some significations are qualified or modified (*secundum quid*), dependent on an unqualified or absolute (*simpliciter*) signification.

The fact that the two concepts are distinct is only reinforced by those few occasions where Aquinas uses both together. There is a much-discussed text from the disputed questions *De veritate* (*De Verit*, q. 2, a. 11) where proportional likeness is invoked to characterize a particular type of associated meaning.¹³ But there is a much earlier, and nontheological, work, *On the Principles of Nature*, in which we can find the same thing. In the last chapter, Aquinas first introduces analogy as a category of likeness or unity beyond specific and generic unity.¹⁴ Eventually, as we will see, Aquinas characterizes this explicitly in terms of the fourfold schema of proportional likeness. But first he discusses its implications for predication, shifting to the notion of analogy as a linguistic relationship, a mean between univocation and equivocation: *associated meaning*.¹⁵ He then elaborates on analogy as associated meaning, to describe the different ways “being” is predicated of substance and accidents. But at the very end he returns to the other concept of analogy (or proportion) as a kind of agreement or likeness, in order to describe not only how “being” is linguistically analogical, but also how “principle” and “nature” are linguistically analogical. He explains this using the metaphysical relationship of proportional likeness, even explicitly employing the four-term schema:

But the matter of substance and of quantity, and likewise their form and privation, differ in genus, but agree only according to proportion, so that, in the notion of matter, *just as matter of substance is related to substance, so the matter of quantity is related to quantity*. (Emphasis added)¹⁶

¹³ On the interpretation of this contested text, see Hochschild, “Proportionality and Divine Naming.”

¹⁴ *De principiis naturae*, c. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: “Tamen materia substantiae et quantitatis, et similiter forma et privatio differunt genere, sed conveniunt solum secundum proportionem in hoc quod, sicut se

It is illuminating to compare *On the Principles of Nature*, which uses the word “analogy” for each of the two concepts of analogy, with another early work, *De ente et essentia*. Here again, Aquinas employs both concepts, which we might expect given that this is a more explicitly metaphysical and theological context. Regarding associated meaning, Aquinas explores different senses of “being,” describing the linguistic relationship of a term said in a primary or absolute way of one thing and in a secondary or qualified sense of something else: he twice describes “being” and “essence” as said primarily of substance and secondarily or *secundum quid* of accidents; and once he describes a word predicated *per prius* of one, *per posterius* of the other.¹⁷ Regarding proportional likeness, the logic of *De ente et essentia*’s main argument implies that we can learn about separate created substances, and even about God, from composite substances, by analogical reasoning (such as Aristotle described in *Metaphys.* 9.6). Aquinas depends on human inquiry following the four-term schema of the relationship of proportionality to make inferences from the nature of composite beings more knowable to us to the nature of simple beings, reflecting on how distinctions applicable to and learned from composite beings (between being, essence, and particular individual) are the same or different in simple beings. Notably, however, while he exercises both concepts of analogy, the linguistic and metaphysical, Aquinas never uses the term “analogy” in this work.

Thus far we have established three points. (1) There are two concepts of analogy, a linguistic one (associated meaning, a mean between univocation and equivocation) and a metaphysical one (proportional likeness, a kind of sameness or unity beyond

habet materia substantiae ad substantiam in ratione materiae, ita se habet materia quantitatis ad quantitatem.”

¹⁷ *De ente et essentia*, c. 1: “Sed quia ens absolute et per prius dicitur de substantiis et per posterius et quasi secundum quid de accidentibus, inde est quod essentia proprie et vere est in substantiis, sed in accidentibus est quodammodo et secundum quid.” C. 5: “ideo substantia quae est primum in genere entis, verissime et maxime essentiam habens, oportet quod sit causa accidentium, quae secundario et quasi secundum quid rationem entis participant.”

specific and generic sameness and unity). (2) Aquinas employs both concepts of analogy, and is aware that the two concepts can be related but do not have to be related; he can employ either concept with or without using the term “analogy.” (3) Both senses of analogy have metaphysical and theological applications, but they are also relevant to issues other than the signification of “being” or of divine attributes. All of this is important for interpreting the relationship between analogy and divine naming, and is illustrated in the chart on the following page. This chart lists texts from Aquinas, some of which concern divine names, and indicates which concept of analogy is employed in each, and according to which explicit characteristics.

II. THE TWO ANALOGY CONCEPTS AND DIVINE NAMING

To show the important, but very limited, applicability of both concepts of analogy to the topic of divine naming, I will focus on question 13 of the *Prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*.¹⁸ By this point, it has been established in many ways that God is unique, with many reasons to think it should be hard to speak meaningfully about God at all. Immediately after speaking about the existence of God (q. 2), Aquinas treats of divine simplicity (q. 3), with no distinction of matter and form (aa. 1 and 2), of nature and supposit (a. 3), of being and essence (a. 4) and substance and accident (a. 6). Of particular relevance is that there is not even composition of genus and difference: God cannot be defined, and is not contained in a genus (q. 3, a. 5). After and logically following divine simplicity, Aquinas covers divine perfection, goodness, infinity, immanence, immutability, eternity, and unity (qq. 4-11). Together with question 12, on our

¹⁸ Effectively the same analysis would work for the comparable section of *Summa contra Gentiles*: ScG I, cc. 30-36.

TWO CONCEPTS OF ANALOGY	
ASSOCIATED MEANING – LINGUISTIC	PROPORTIONAL LIKENESS – METAPHYSICAL
Aristotle: <i>pros hen</i> equivocation Boethius: <i>analogia</i>	Aristotle: <i>analogia</i> Boethius: <i>proportio, proportionalitas</i>
a. Between univocation and equivocation b. Signification partly same, partly different c. Signification with order of priority <i>i.</i> with reference to a primary <i>ii.</i> <i>per prius et posterius</i> <i>iii.</i> <i>simpliciter vs. secundum quid</i>	a. Beyond specific and generic likeness b. Similarity of relations c. 4-term schema – A:B::C:D <i>i.</i> “analogy” <i>ii.</i> “proportion” <i>iii.</i> “proportionality”

Text*	Associated Meaning						Proportional Likeness					
	a.	b.	c.	<i>i.</i>	<i>ii.</i>	<i>iii.</i>	a.	b.	c.	<i>i.</i>	<i>ii.</i>	<i>iii.</i>
I <i>Sent.</i> , d. 19, q. 5, a. 2		✓	✓		✓							
II <i>Sent.</i> , d. 42, q. 1, a. 3	✓	✓	✓			✓						
<i>De Pot.</i> , q. 7, a. 7	✓	✓	✓	✓								
ScG I, c. 34	✓	✓	✓	✓								
<i>STh</i> I, q. 13, a. 5	✓	✓	✓	✓								
I <i>Peri herm.</i> lect. 5, n. 19		✓	✓		✓							
IV <i>Metaphys.</i> , lect. 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
<i>STh</i> I, q. 4, a. 3							✓				✓	
<i>STh</i> I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 3							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
III <i>Sent.</i> , d. 1, q. 1, a. 1							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
IV <i>Sent.</i> , d. 49, q. 2, a. 1							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
IV <i>Phys.</i> , lect. 12, n. 3							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>De Trin.</i> , 2.4.2.1								✓	✓	✓	✓	
V <i>Metaphys.</i> , lect. 8, nn.11-14							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
III <i>Metaphys.</i> , lect. 10, n. 10								✓		✓	✓	
IX <i>Metaphys.</i> , lect. 5, nn. 5-7								✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>De unit. intel.</i> 5								✓	✓		✓	
ScG II, c. 47								✓	✓		✓	
II <i>De Anima</i> , lect. 3, n. 6								✓	✓		✓	
I <i>Exp. Post.</i> , lect. 12, n. 8								✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>De Verit.</i> , q. 2, a. 3, ad 4								✓	✓			✓
<i>De Verit.</i> , q. 2, a. 11	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
I <i>Sent.</i> , d. 35, q. 1, a. 4	✓	✓						✓				
<i>De Ente</i>					✓	✓			✓			
<i>De Princip. Nat.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

* **Bold** = concerns divine names, not bold = concerns topics other than divine names

manner of knowing God the question on naming God helps to mark the methodological transition from the (supposedly more “negative”) *via remotiois* to the (more positive?) *via similitudinis*. The unique character of God, lacking so many features of created being, together with our real but severely limited ability to know him, raises the question of how we can speak meaningfully about God.

This involves a number of related but separately articulated problems. Question 13 has twelve articles, and is one of the longest questions in the *Prima pars* (only qq. 12, 14, and 79 are longer). Of these twelve articles, only a few use the term “analogy.” It is not mentioned in the answers to such questions as *whether* we can name God (a. 1), whether we can predicate words *substantially* (a. 2) or *literally* (a. 3) of God, or whether all terms said of God are *synonymous* (a. 4). Analogy (as associated meaning) seems specifically to be invoked only to answer the question of whether names are predicated of God *univocally* (a. 5).¹⁹ Having introduced analogy to solve that problem, Aquinas also finds it useful to clarify the sense of priority in the order of naming (a. 6). But after that, analogy (as associated meaning) plays no role in addressing whether relations to creatures are predicated temporally of God (a. 7), and how the very word “God” functions as a special predicate (aa. 8-9). Article 10, which explicitly asks about different ways “God” can signify, invokes analogy; but analogy does not help address the question of God’s most proper name (which God does not share with creatures), “He Who Is” (a. 11). Notably, Aquinas does not invoke analogy when answering the culminating article of question 13, which asks whether we can form affirmative propositions about God (a. 12).

All of the explicit references to analogy in question 13 (in aa. 5, 6, and 10) are to analogy as associated meaning—the linguistic phenomenon, which is fitting enough in a question about how we can name God. Analogy here primarily responds

¹⁹ Lawrence Dewan describes the role of analogy in question 5 as relatively modest: helping to ensure that, while names said of God are distinct in their meaning from names said of creatures, they are not *entirely* distinct; there remains “a commerce” between the two sets of names (“St. Thomas and the Divine Names,” 23).

to a question about what kind of commonality (univocal or otherwise) words have when predicated of creatures and God. In the context of divine naming, analogy as associated meaning is actually quite limited in its function. Analogy is not a general key to understanding how words can be truly applied to God, nor even to how words can be extended to God from creatures. That words can signify the divine substance, that they signify literally and not metaphorically, that we can make true affirmations, that different words signifying the same divine nature are not therefore synonymous—all of this is explained without reference to the linguistic notion of analogy.²⁰ That there are words common to God and creatures, and how they are common, turns out to be articulated with reference to a number of different semantic observations unrelated to analogy. Analogy, as associated meaning, addresses only the specific question of the kind of commonality exhibited: it is not the commonality of univocation, but the commonality of associated meaning, where a term has significations partly the same and partly different.

Despite the limited work done by analogy in this question, article 5 has received a disproportionate amount of attention especially because of a distinction in how analogous names are used: sometimes as “many having relation to one” (*multa habent proportionem ad unum*) and other times as “one having relation to another” (*unum habet proportionem ad alterum*). Many commentators have treated “many-to-one” and “one-to-another” as a distinction of modes of analogy with deep linguistic and metaphysical implications.²¹ But the examples Aquinas uses, and

²⁰ Of course we need not rule out that linguistic analogy is being *exercised* in these explanations, but the point here is that Aquinas does not appeal to the concept of “analogy” as part of the explanations offered here.

²¹ This over-reading is common in the literature, even and especially among very sound interpreters of Aquinas; three examples are John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 547, 565, 568; Reinhard Hütter, “Attending to the Wisdom of God—from Effect to Cause, from Creation to God: A *relecture* of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas,” in Thomas Joseph White, ed., *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

his use of this same distinction elsewhere, make clear that what is at stake is no more than whether the primary analogate—that thing to which all the secondary meanings of the term as applied to secondary analogates is ordered—is included among a given set of things analogically named. So “healthy” said of both medicine and urine is a many-to-one application, since the primary sense of “healthy,” by which it is predicated of an animal, is not included in the multiple items being considered, medicine and urine. But the same word, “healthy,” said of medicine and animal, on the other hand, is a one-to-another application of analogy, because the one primary meaning is one of the two (the health of the animal) to which the other (the health of medicine) refers. All Aquinas wants to say with this distinction is that the primary or focal meaning in divine naming is God, not some third thing signified over and above God and creatures.

In fact, this consideration of the primary analogate leads to the clarification, in article 6, that in the case of divine names we have to distinguish between what is primary in the order of learning and what is primary in the metaphysical order. Even this distinction is formulated in terms of semantic categories: creatures are primary as that *from which* the analogous term is first *imposed* to signify, while God is primary as having or being primarily *what the name signifies*.

The only other explicit mention of analogy in question 13 is in article 10. The puzzle is about how the word “God” applies to things (such as idols, or allegedly multiple “gods”) that are not truly God. The objections describe, in different ways, the same general concern: how can one who knows the one true God be said to be contradicted by someone who calls, say, an idol “God”? Such contradiction seems to require that the word is being used in the same sense, even though the idolater clearly has a different conception of God (obj. 3). Aquinas responds that the related meanings in analogy can be sufficiently similar—with the signification of one included in the signification of the other (*una illarum significationum clauditur in significationibus aliis*)—to

serve as a foundation for contradiction and valid reasoning. Aquinas, like Aristotle, is convinced that analogy is, at least in some cases, sufficiently unified to preserve reasoning.

How this is possible, Aquinas, like Aristotle, does not further analyze.²² The answer may have something to do with the other concept of analogy Aquinas learned from Aristotle. No explicit reference to analogy in question 13 invokes the metaphysical relationship of proportional likeness, but Aquinas does not and could not deny that such a relationship exists between creatures and God; such a relationship has been previously established and it is part of what gives rise to the question of how it is possible for language to apply to God. Analogy as the metaphysical relationship of proportional likeness certainly plays a role in question 13. The notion of proportional likeness is crucial in article 2 when Aquinas says that every creature “imperfectly represents” God—that is, the substance of God is genuinely represented in creatures, but in a manner that falls short. Here and in article 3 the relationship of representation, and the finite way in which a creature manifests what is preeminently in God, suggest a relation of likeness that is not the sharing of a common property, but a relation of proportions, according to the 4-term schema. While Aquinas does not use the word “analogy” in this context to describe this metaphysical relationship of proportional likeness, it is implied by his appeal to “representation” and “similitude.”²³

Moreover, since the emphasis here is on language, it presumes what was stated earlier about our cognition operating through likeness, image, or representation (in q. 12), summarized in terms of the so-called semantic triangle in Aquinas’s response to article 1 of question 13: words are signs of understandings, and understandings are likenesses of things (*voces sunt signa intellectuum, et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines*). There is not

²² This becomes a contested subject of much later commentary especially after Scotus’s insistence that valid reasoning requires univocity. See Aquinas, IV *Metaphys.*, lect. 3; Hochschild, *Semantics of Analogy*, chap. 4; and D’Ettore, *Analogy after Aquinas*.

²³ Representation is linked to imitation in *STh* I, q. 3, a. 3, ad 2, and imitation to likeness, participation, and proportionality in *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3.

a proportional relationship between the *expressed* word (written or spoken) and its object, since that is an arbitrary relationship of conventional language,²⁴ but there is a proportional relationship between the cognitive act which mediates the signification of words (loosely, the “concept,” or what later commentators will call the “formal concept”) and that which the word signifies (the thing signified, what later commentators will call the “objective concept”).

Apart from analogy as a linguistic phenomenon, then, much of what Aquinas tries to say about how language applies to God depends on this understanding of the relationship between language, mind, and reality, and in particular the idea that the human concept is a formal representation of the thing of which it is a concept, and that human truth involves a composition of formal representations in the mind that reflects a genuine, proportionate composition in things.

III. DIVINE NAMING IN REALIST SEMANTICS

The discussion of analogy in question 13 has forced us to consider some other semantic terminology beyond “analogy” as a mean between univocation and equivocation. The following chart summarizes the main issues in question 13, making clear both how isolated any reference to analogy is, and how many metaphysical and semantic considerations other than analogy are brought into play in the course of addressing divine names. (Dotted lines indicate attention to analogy as *proportional sameness*; double lines indicate attention to analogy as *associated meaning*; thick solid lines indicate both senses of analogy in play.)

²⁴ Onomatopoeiae being the exceptions that prove the rule—both in being words that represent sounds, and in being words that imperfectly represent sounds (as evident from the fact that names for animal sounds, for instance, vary across languages).

Summa theologiae, Prima pars, q. 13, “On the Divine Names”

A.	Problem	Solution	Metaphysical consideration	Semantic consideration
1	Can God be named by us?	We can grasp God by his relation to creatures; the mode of conception does not have to reflect the mode of being of what is conceived.	God is cause of creatures	the semantic triangle: words signify realities by means of intellectual conceptions
2	Can God be substantially named?	Words learned from creatures can signify something that we intend to predicate properly of God.	Creatures represent God (what they have in a creaturely way reproduces what God has in a pre-eminent way)	imposition
3	Whether names can be literally (as opposed to metaphorically) applied to God?	Words signify in a manner appropriate to creatures but what they signify is preeminently in God.	God has preeminently what is only in a secondary way represented in creatures.	what the name signifies vs. mode of signification
4	Whether names applied to God are synonymous?	The <i>ratio</i> of what is signified differs, so the names are not synonymous even though they signify the same simple perfection in God.	God is simple, creatures receive perfections in different modes.	<i>ratio</i> vs. what the name signifies
5	Whether names are said univocally of God and creatures?	Words are predicated not univocally or equivocally but analogously or by proportion.	God as cause of creatures	the <i>ratio</i> in analogy is partly the same, partly different
6	Whether names predicated of God are primarily said of creatures?	The order of imposition differs from the order of what the name signifies.	God possesses the perfections, he is not only related to perfections as cause of them in creatures.	imposition, mode of signification again

7	Whether names which imply relation to creatures apply to God temporally?	Words like Creator, Lord, Savior, imply a relation to creatures, and can only be true of God after he creates, rules, saves, which are changes in creatures, not in God.	Real vs. rational relations, relatives <i>secundum esse</i> vs. relatives <i>secundum dici</i>	signifying a relation, vs. signifying the foundation of a relation; extrinsic vs. intrinsic denomination
8	Whether "God" is the name of a nature?	We name God from his operations; "God" is imposed from God's universal providence (one of his operations) but is imposed to signify his nature.	God's nature unknowable, except through his operations	imposition
9	Whether this name "God" is communicable?	God is a unique individual (supposit) identical with his nature, so while "God" signifies God's nature and is not a proper name, it is not communicable.	Identity of God and God's essence	nature vs. supposit
10	Whether "God" is univocal when it is predicated by nature, by participation, and according to opinion?	The term "God" signifies things other than God by reference to God; different meanings are analogically unified.	There is only one God, but other things can be somehow similar to God to improperly receive the name "God."	analogy can be unified enough to cause contradiction or preserve valid reasoning
11	Whether this name, 'He Who Is,' is the most proper name of God?	Yes, because of what it signifies, because of its universality, and because of its consignification (present tense).	God is existence itself; divine simplicity (no real distinction of essence and existence in God)	consignification
12	Whether affirmative propositions can be formed about God?	Affirmative propositions assert unity of subject and predicate.	Divine unity and simplicity	inherence theory of predication

It is instructive to survey the variety and extent of logical or semantic terminology deployed in the question on divine names. One may consider the various categories and distinctions of semantic functions Aquinas uses: the semantic triangle, and the distinction between abstract and concrete terms (a. 1); the notion of imposition (a. 2, and also aa. 6 and 8), and the distinction between mode of signification and what is signified (a. 3); the distinction between the thing signified and its *ratio* (a. 4; *ratio* is crucial also in aa. 5 and 6); the different ways of signifying a relation (a. 7),²⁵ the distinction between nature and supposit (a. 9, and again in a. 12), and the notion of consignification (a. 11); and finally the account of truth in predication (a. 12).

A more complete analysis of question 13 would further explicate each of these semantic notions in detail. For my purposes, it is enough to point out that taken together this represents the terminology of a particular conceptual framework, that of realist semantics. In fact one could almost reconstruct the realist semantic framework from the twelve articles in the question on divine names. Here I will only summarize realist semantics, as it is captured in its account of predication, suggested in article 12. According to this “inherence theory of predication,” in an affirmative proposition, such as “Socrates is a man,” the predicate term “man” signifies a form, humanity; and the predication is true, if and only if that form actually inheres in the thing designated by the subject term, namely, Socrates. So the proposition “Socrates is a man” is true if and only if the person Socrates is being actualized by the form of humanity signified by the term “man,” and the mind thinking the truth of this proposition does so by mentally combining or uniting the form of humanity with Socrates.

Likewise, to affirm the truth of the proposition “Socrates is an animal,” we must understand that animality, signified by the term

²⁵ This is an application of the Scholastic distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic denomination—the question of whether the *form signified* by a word is really in the *thing denominated* by the word. See Joshua P. Hochschild, “Logic or Metaphysics in Cajetan’s Theory of Analogy: Can Extrinsic Denomination Be a Semantic Property?” *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 1 (2001): 45-69.

“animal,” is actual in Socrates. We know that animality and humanity are logically different—something can be an animal without being a man—and so each has its own *ratio* or definition. On the other hand, in Socrates, the reality that is his humanity (Socrates’ substantial form, which actualizes Socrates as the substance he is) is that by virtue of which Socrates is an animal; there does not need to be an additional substantial form, other than Socrates’ humanity, by which Socrates is an animal. (This is the Thomistic doctrine of the unicity of substantial form.)²⁶ But other actualities of Socrates are not identical with his substantial form. For instance, if Socrates is wise, it is because he has the accident of wisdom, an accidental actuality, which is signified by the term “wisdom” in the true proposition “Socrates is wise.” And assuming Socrates is also just, his wisdom is distinct from another accidental reality, justice, signified by the term “just” in the true proposition “Socrates is just.” Finally, the forms or actualities required by a realist account of predication can always be further analyzed in a way that fits with what we learn about the actual states of affairs in reality, thus avoiding a simplistic (and unnecessary) correlation of semantic and metaphysical forms: for instance a relation predicated of one thing may reflect a reality in fact present in something else (e.g., the form of “being seen,” as predicated of a visible object, in fact corresponds to some reality in the eye that sees it, not in the thing seen), and of course the intuitive account of privations (e.g., the form of “blindness” as predicated of something is nothing more than the *nonexistence* of actual sight in that thing).

This account of the truth of propositions seems to work well for the world of finite, composite objects. It reflects a composition of intellectual cognitions, which in turn reflects a composition of the things themselves, unities constituted by substantial forms actualizing matter, accidents inhering in substances,

²⁶ Such explanations would also typically invoke the language of “essence” and “soul.” For clarification of the different roles played by these metaphysical principles, see Joshua P. Hochschild, “Form, Essence, Soul: Distinguishing Principles of Thomistic Metaphysics,” in Nikolaj Zunic, ed., *Distinctions of Being: Philosophical Approaches to Reality* (Washington, D.C.: American Maritain Association/The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 21-35.

different grammatical modes reflecting different ways of signifying these forms (abstract terms like “humanity” naming the forms themselves, concrete terms like “man” naming the things possessing those forms).

The special questions of divine names arise because we want to extend this account of how language works, compositionally, in order to explain how it is possible to speak of a simple substance.²⁷ In God, as he is conceived by Aquinas, there is no composition of matter and form, of accident and substance, of nature and its subject, nor even of being and essence—nor even any composition of different perfections or divine attributes since these are all the same in him. God does not *have* a nature, because he *is* a nature, and his nature is subsisting *esse*. Still, the nature that is God can be named, even though it is so remote from our understanding and known only through his effects, because a word which gets its signification from creatures can still signify something that is in God, insofar as the creature itself is a representation of God (aa. 1 and 2). Our words fall short of God in their mode of signification (abstract vs. concrete) but not in what they signify (a. 3).²⁸ The divine attributes are different in our understanding, and so have different *rationes* and are not synonymous, despite being verified by the same one simple actuality of God. “God,” although grammatically a common name,

²⁷ This is the question Aristotle himself raises in the last chapter of *Metaphysics* IX. There, after having explained how we can learn about incomposite beings (actualities independent of matter) by reasoning analogically (by proportion [*Metaphys.* 9.6.1048a35-48b7] from composite things, he raises the question about how it is possible that our thinking (which takes place by composing and dividing) can apply truthfully to incomposite things (*Metaphys.* 9.10.1051b17ff.).

²⁸ Contrary to some interpreters, I maintain that the distinction between *res significata* and *modi significandi* should not be taken as an account of analogy as associated meaning. See E. J. Ashworth, “Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): 39-67; E. J. Ashworth, “Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context,” *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 94-135; and Irène Rosier, “*Res significata* et *modus significandi*: Les implications d’une distinction médiévale,” *Sprachtheorien in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. Sten Ebbesen (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1995): 135-68.

signifies that in which there is no distinction between nature and supposit, and so it is incommunicable (and the abstract form “divinity” is as appropriate a name for God as “God”) (a. 9). And since in God also the supposit/nature is identical with its being, the most proper name for God is one which suggests this ongoing activity of pure being with no distinction between what is and its being: “He Who Is” (a. 11).

The point of this summary is that the semantic framework to which Aquinas appeals in order to articulate how words apply to God is not an *ad hoc* invention, contrived to solve problems which arise independently of that framework; it is an extension and clarification of the framework within which the problems arise in the first place. Those with an alternative approach to language—medieval nominalists, say, or contemporary analytic philosophers of religion—not only would not solve the problems of divine naming in this way, they would not share the problems themselves. For instance, nominalists had little use for any notion of analogy (in theology or any other context), having done away with the formal principle by which words signify things.²⁹ And contemporary philosophers of religion often find no use for—indeed, they typically find completely incoherent—the notion that in God the nature and supposit are the same: translated (or rather, mis-translated) into a contemporary analytic framework, that sounds like calling God a property.³⁰

But then, as this example shows, it is not only Aquinas’s *semantic questions* about divine naming that would not arise from an alternative semantic framework, but the very *meta-physical theses* themselves which Aquinas wants to express within his semantic framework. Again, the problem of divine naming is the problem of how to extend our language, which is the language of composite rational beings making sense of a world of composite substances, to make true expressions about an absol-

²⁹ Gordan Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 159-62.

³⁰ William Lane Craig is one of many keeping alive this argument, usually traced to Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980). For a response from a Thomistic perspective see Lawrence Dewan, “Saint Thomas, Alvin Plantinga, and the Divine Simplicity,” *Modern Schoolman* 66 (1989): 141-51.

tely incomposite being, a substance *par excellence*, subsistent being itself. How can we even conceive of God this way and why would we believe there is such a being? Within the conceptual framework implied by realist semantics, it necessarily follows from the existence of actual composite beings, which only have or participate in a share of being, that there is a first being, wholly actual, and so with no composition even of potency and actuality; it further necessarily follows that this purely subsistent being is wholly simple and fully perfect, since as fully actual there is no way in which it could be any better than it already is. But within an alternative conceptual framework—that of nominalism or contemporary analytic metaphysics, for instance—none of these steps retains its internal logic. Why must there be a first actuality just because there are some actual beings? How could God be an abstract entity like a nature or a property? How could the many divine attributes not be many properties of God? How could the notion of “pure being” be anything more than the most general, abstract, and conceptually empty notion?

It is very difficult to translate the traditional metaphysical claims of Thomistic-Aristotelian theology into an alternative semantic framework, one that does not analyze truth, signification and predication in terms of actualities or forms.³¹ Thus contemporary philosophical literature on Thomistic metaphysics and natural theology is full of claims that it is incoherent,³² and even thinkers quite sympathetic to Aquinas, attempting to

³¹ One important effort of at least partially translating the work of Aristotelian form into analytic philosophy is as a “truth maker.” See, e.g., Jeffrey Brower, “Making Sense of Divine Simplicity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 3-30.

³² A much discussed example is Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For Thomistic responses see Gyula Klima, “On Kenny on Aquinas on Being: A Critical Review of *Aquinas on Being* by Anthony Kenny,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (2004): 567-80; Brian Davies, “Kenny on Aquinas on Being,” *The Modern Schoolman* 82 (2005): 111-29; Steven A. Long, “*Aquinas on Being* and Logicism,” *New Blackfriars* 86 (2005): 323-47; Joshua P. Hochschild, “Kenny and Aquinas on Individual Essences,” *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 6 (2006): 45-56.

articulate and defend his views, find it challenging and end up expressing them in ways counter to his own logic.³³

If we cannot think within the realist conceptual framework, we will not only fail to follow particular arguments or to understand particular theses, but we will miss what Timothy McDermott called the “seminal idea that unifies and animates the material of the *Summa* from start to last.” McDermott, in the context of criticizing an analytic study of Aquinas, explained:

That seminal idea . . . has as its base the understanding of the onward flowing existence of the temporal universe as owned and served and circulated in various modes by agent substances; at its middle it has that mode of substance that we call “human being,” a prudence which not only occupies existence but is alive to existence (in the way animals not only occupy space but are alive to it, taking it in with intelligence and giving it out with loving care; and at its top it has that creative providence of which human prudence is to be an instrument, and in which the circle operates in reverse, creation starting with the giving out and ending with the taking in. This is the seminal idea which orders the *Summa*: actuality as doing and being displayed in various modes—and which generates the multiplicity of theses with which any student of Aquinas is initially faced.

This seminal idea, McDermott concludes, “if once caught, could properly be called the voice of Aquinas.”³⁴ This seminal idea is not about linguistic analogy or divine naming; it is more fundamental than that. To invoke it, Thomists are used to invoking “the analogy of being,” as well as such ideas as participation,

³³ As evidence of just how hard it is to enter the framework of realist semantics, consider that even Rudi Te Velde’s excellent book *Aquinas on God* is not immune from confusion: it describes divine perfection as logically unrelated to and corrective of divine simplicity (77-83), in part because it finds ambiguity between *ens commune* (the most general notion of being) and *ipsum esse* (pure being) (79-80); and this may be partly rooted in lack of clarity that the *res significata* of a word is not a composite individual or its species (e.g., “man”) but a form (e.g., “humanity”) (84, 99-100). Getting the semantics right is necessary for comprehending doctrines and arguments in revealed theology as well. For correctives to misreadings of Thomistic approaches to the Trinity and the Eucharist, see respectively Joshua P. Hochschild, “A Note on Cajetan’s Theological Semantics: In Response to Timothy L. Smith’s Criticisms of Cajetan,” *Sapientia* 54 (1999): 367-76; and Joshua P. Hochschild, “Substance Made Manifest: Metaphysical and Semantic Implications of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation,” *Saint Anselm Journal* 9.2 (2014).

³⁴ Timothy McDermott, “Everything Flows,” in *Times Literary Supplement* (April 29, 2005).

actuality, formal or exemplar causality, and other concepts. What I have been arguing is that, outside the framework of realist semantics, such ideas will remain empty mantras. What is needed is no more and no less than a thorough articulation of how Aquinas talked about *being*, how he understood the signification of “being”—a surprisingly demanding task.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Analogy, for Aquinas, is not one topic but two. These topics can be related, but they cannot be understood in relation unless they are first distinguished: one is a metaphysical concept, the other a linguistic one. The topic of divine naming, for Aquinas, is not synonymous with “analogy” (in either of its senses) but it fully displays the significant theological stakes, and the complex semantic framework, of Aquinas’s “seminal idea.” Alternatives to the realist semantic framework may seem appealing as more simple and straightforward, but ironically they obscure key metaphysical claims, including especially the doctrine of divine simplicity—not only what it means, but how it is derived from other metaphysical truths, and what further theological truths follow from it. To make Aquinas’s doctrine of divine names, the doctrine of divine simplicity, the relevance of associated meaning and proportional likeness, and the very signification of “being” intelligible to those operating within a different conceptual framework is not a simple matter of translation; it is more a matter of helping those not versed in Aquinas’s language to learn it for themselves.³⁶ From any perspective, the stakes are the standard ones always implicated in philosophical conversation: whether we can achieve mutual understanding. But from a

³⁵ Contemporary analytic philosophers can do no better than to start with Gyula Klima, “The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas’s Metaphysics of Being,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): 87-141.

³⁶ Gyula Klima, “The ‘Grammar’ of ‘God’ and ‘Being’: Making Sense of Talking about the One True God in Different Metaphysical Traditions,” in D. Z. Phillips, ed., *Whose God? Which Tradition? The Nature of Belief in God* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008; New York: Routledge, 2016), 53-77.

Thomistic perspective, the stakes are that much higher: whether we can even share a conception of the one true God, and of ourselves as having received our being from him.