

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Early-Modern Irreligion and Theological Analogy: A Response to Gavin Hyman's *A Short History of Atheism*

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Historically, many Christians have understood God's transcendence to imply God's properties categorically differ from any created properties. For multiple historical figures, a problem arose for religious language: how can one talk of God at all if none of our predicates apply to God? What are we to make of creeds and Biblical passages that seem to predicate creaturely properties, such as goodness and wisdom, of God? Thomas Aquinas offered a solution: God is to be spoken of only through analogy (the doctrine of analogy). Gavin Hyman argues Aquinas's doctrine of analogy was neglected prior to the early-modern period and the neglect of analogy produced the conception of a god vulnerable to atheistic arguments. Contra Hyman, in this paper, I show early-modern atheism arose in a theological context in which there was an active debate concerning analogy. Peter Browne (1665–1735) and William King (1650–1729) offered two competing conceptions of analogical predication that were debated through the 19th century, with interlocutors such as the freethinker Anthony Collins (1676–1729), theologian/philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753), and skeptic David Hume (1711–1776). Lastly, I discuss the 18th century debate over theological analogy as part of the background relevant to understanding Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

## 1. Introduction

According to Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), God transcends all created categories (Turner 2004, 187–190). The terms native to human languages fail to describe God because human languages developed to discuss matters subsumed by created categories. God can only be referred to by analogy: the *doctrine of analogy* (herein: DOA) (see, for example, *ST I*, Q13, A5). Some theologians link a neglect of DOA to modern secularization. For example, Radical Orthodox theologians present a history according to which theological changes after Duns Scotus (1266–1308), in which God's being came to be seen as univocal – as opposed to analogical – with that of creatures, eventually resulted in modern secularization (for an outline of this historical narrative, see chapter 3 in (Smith 2004)). Richard Muller describes a related historico-theological narrative as follows:

The Lortz thesis [. . .] claimed [. . .] Luther's theological revolt was precipitated by the decadent theology and philosophy of the later Middle Ages, specifically the developments that took place after Duns Scotus [. . .]. With the Radical Orthodox writers [. . .] the thesis has become more focused

on Scotus and his understanding of the univocity of being. According to their theses, Scotus' understanding of univocity created a profound problem, identifying the being of God with the being of creatures but nonetheless placed at an infinite distance from them, undermining traditional teaching concerning divine transcendence. [. . .] This problematic theological and philosophical understanding then carried over wholesale into the Reformation, rendering Protestant theology highly flawed from the outset and, in the version of the thesis espoused by [historian Brad] Gregory, yielding a defective understanding of the relationship of God and world, reason and theology, ultimately bringing about a new and highly secularized worldview as an unintended result of the Reformation (Muller 2012).

Or, as James K.A. Smith describes, "Scotus's shift away from a metaphysics of participation to an ontology predicated on the univocity of being rent the cords of suspension that hooked the immanent to the transcendent, the material to the more than material. The result [. . .] was modernity's 'flattened ontology', which eventually issued in nihilism" (Smith 2004, 93). Gavin Hyman takes Radical Orthodoxy's historical explanation of secularization one step further and argues early modern atheism arose because of DOA's prior neglect (Hyman 2007; 2010).

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Other authors agree that the redescription of God as a being ushered in atheism: “The bringing about of God as a being means the bringing about of one who can also be declared to be dead” (Hemming 1999, 95).

Still other theologians posit a neglect in God’s transcendence, as conceptualized in terms of theological analogy, resulted in an idolatrous conception of God atheists rightfully reject. As Paul Tillich describes, God, properly conceived, transcends the created order of beings and is not a being at all (Tillich 1951, 235–237). Common idolatrous conceptions of God, Tillich argues, were the cause of modern atheism because they cannot serve our existential needs, lead to illiberal politics, and are susceptible to atheistic attacks (Tillich 1952, 182–185). Popular religious apologists, such as Karen Armstrong (2009), follow Tillich in asserting the modern rejection of God was due to the ascendancy of a false idol and the neglect of a pre-modern God concept. For both Hyman and Armstrong, specifically modern God concepts were prerequisite for the rise of New Atheism (e.g. the post-9/11 movement of aggressive atheist authors as typified by authors like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens) over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup>

For Hyman, DOA’s neglect rendered atheism “almost inevitable” (Hyman 2007, 40). According to Hyman, prior to early modernity, God was reconceived as part of the creaturely realm instead of wholly Other:

“God is not only liable to appear incredible or unbelievable [. . .] but [. . .] as the world becomes more self-explanatory and self-sufficient, increasingly superfluous”. Reconceiving God as part of the creaturely realm, and finding God does not fit the creaturely realm, resulted in atheism (Hyman 2007, 43). In this paper, I put aside philosophical, normative, and theological questions and show, contra Hyman’s historical narrative, (a) anglophone theologians prior to and during the eighteenth century did not neglect DOA and (b) at least some of the eighteenth-century thinkers skeptical of religion responded to the debates over theological analogy. Furthermore, eighteenth-century critics of religion incorporated concerns about theological analogy in their irreligious arguments.

First, I distinguish between two forms of DOA as they appear in Aquinas’s works: the analogy of proportion (AOP1) and the analogy of proportionality (AOP2). Aquinas sided with AOP2. As I show, AOP2 was not neglected in the anglophone context in early modernity. I examine a debate over the nature of DOA and show the debate was directed to and influential on freethinkers and skeptics such as philosopher/freethinker Anthony Collins (1676–1729) and Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776).

## 2. Aquinas’s DOA

Aquinas distinguishes three modes of predication: equivocal, univocal, and analogical. Creaturely predicates are those predicates that apply to objects or beings in the created order, i.e., “good”, “bad”, “blue”, “right-handed”, “square”, and so on. In equivocal predication, creaturely predicates do not apply to God. But if creaturely predicates

do not apply to God, one cannot use human languages – which, according to Aquinas, contain only creaturely predicates – to speak meaningfully about God. On the other hand, if one applies creaturely predicates to God (as in *univocal* predication between God and creatures), then one is anthropomorphizing God and the result is idolatrous (ST1, Q13, A56). Aquinas suggests we should apply predicates to God analogically as a mean between the two (ST1, Q13, A5).

The two kinds of analogy – AOP1 and AOP2 – result from two corresponding conceptions of proportion. Sometimes, we say that there is a proportion between two objects in virtue of, for example, their relative sizes. A one centimeter by one centimeter portrait of George Washington can be said to be in proportion to a five meter by five meter poster of George Washington. Both pictures, while of different sizes, are not of different kinds. If creatures are related to God in virtue of AOP1, then God is an infinitely amplified version of a creature. Thus, if DOA is understood in terms of AOP1, then God’s intellect (for example) is an infinitely amplified intellect of the same kind as those of creatures. However, another way of taking about proportion relates objects of two fundamentally different kinds. For example, there is a correspondence between a painting of a pipe and a pipe. For AOP2, God’s properties are of a different kind from those of creatures. Aquinas rejected AOP1, arguing that there can be no proportion between the created intellect and God’s uncreated intellect because the former is finite while the latter infinite (SS, IV, d49, q49, q2, a1). More generally, Aquinas maintained there is no proportion between creaturely and Divine properties. However, there can be an analogy between God and creatures in another way: AOP2, where a comparison between two things is identified with a comparison between two other things (SS, IV, d49, q2, a1). For example:

feet : shoes :: hands : gloves

Similarly, Aquinas argued the relationship between creatures and their properties can be identified with the relationship between God and His properties:

creature : intellect :: God : Intellect

The difference in meaning of the term “Intellect” when applied to God and when applied to creatures has been signified with the use of the capital /I/. In Hyman’s account, early modern philosophers and theologians reified God and reduced God’s transcendence “to such an extent that [God] becomes a ‘thing’ himself” (Hyman 2007, 38–39). According to Hyman, philosophers and theologians committed the ontotheological error: mistakenly understanding God to have the same kind of being (*ens*) as creatures, when God transcends all created categories, including being (Adams 2014, 1–12; Turner 2004, 26–29, 187–190). Aquinas argues instead for the *analogia entis*, or the analogy of being, according to which being cannot be predicated univocally of God and creatures (Muller 2012, 135). For Hyman, ontotheology leaves theism vulnerable to

atheological attacks. Failing to find either God or justification for God in the world, atheism appeared “almost irresistible” (Hyman 2007, 43).

Hyman's claim is contrary to Richard Muller's recent scholarship on early-modern theology (Muller 2012). Muller has identified 20 reformed theologians from across Europe who denied the univocity of being between 1590 and 1700, many of whom either affirmed or responded to the *analogia entis*. Five of the 20 reformed theologians Muller identifies lived in the anglophone context (Richard Crakanthorpe (1567–1624), William Twisse (1578–1646), Thomas Barlow (1607–1691), Theophilus Gale (1628–1678), and Robert Baron (1593?–1639) (Muller 2012, 129). Furthermore, orthodox theologians engaging freethinking authors in the anglophone context continued to reference DOA into the eighteenth century. In the next section, I show that an eighteenth-century debate over DOA in the anglophone context references the *analogia entis* and was directed to and influential on freethinking authors.

### 3. The DOA in the Eighteenth-Century Anglophone Context

The Spanish Jesuit theologian Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) revived the seventeenth-century debate over theological analogy by arguing for the univocity of being (Muller 2012, 129; Armogothé 2012, 309). Several theologians throughout Europe responded critically to Suárez (Muller 2012). By the start of the eighteenth century, the debate over theological analogy had become widespread. French Huguenot philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) states in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* he “formerly examined this Dispute [over the analogy of being], which is very famous in the Schools” and “[t]hey, who deny the *Univocation of Being*, have the Crowd, the Many, on their Side” (Bayle 1734, 488. English translation). In 1728, English encyclopedist Ephraim Chambers (1680–1740) wrote (emphasis in the original) “[t]he schoolmen have long disputed about the univocation of being, i.e. whether the general idea of *being* agree in the same manner, and in the same sense, to the substance and the accident; to God, and the creature?” (Chambers 1728, 325).

For Bayle and Chambers, the dispute over theological analogy and its relation to being was live, ongoing, widespread, active throughout the first part of the eighteenth century, and most importantly for my purposes, hardly neglected. Furthermore, while Bayle's status as a clandestine atheist has long been disputed, Bayle's influence on early modern critics of religion is not contested (Lennon 2014; Heyd 1977, 157–165; Berman 2013, 159–162.).

At the start of the eighteenth century, the anglophone theological debate over DOA centered on two Irish theologians: William King (1650–1729) and Peter Browne (1667–1735). From the beginning of the eighteenth century to at least the mid nineteenth century, the theological positions first articulated by King and Browne formed two competing theological conceptions of DOA (Buchanan 1864, 10). In what follows, I describe King and Browne's respective theological programs.

#### **King's Theological Program**

The Problem of Evil asks how God, if all powerful and perfectly good, could create and maintain a world containing evil. Bayle composed a dialogue in the footnotes of his *Historical Dictionary* in which one character argues Manichaeism – the view that there exist two gods, equally powerful, one of which is evil and the other good – is a better explanation of our world's mixture of good and evil than traditional theism. On a literal reading, Bayle uses his character's argument as justification to doubt the human mind's ability to reason about the Divine. Manichaeism is false, Bayle says, but one would have concluded Manichaeism were true if one incorrectly attempted to use Reason in place of Faith (Bayle 1734, 95). *Radical fideism* is the view that one should rely on faith in place of reason. Logically, the arguments Bayle presents for radical fideism entail atheism or other unorthodox views (i.e. Manichaeism); for this reason, Bayle's response to the Problem of Evil did not sit well with the theologically conservative King.

King delivered his 1709 sermon, *Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge, Consistent with the Freedom of Man's will*, partially in response to Bayle. In the sermon, King uses his conception of theological analogy to sidestep a number of arguments he thought threatening to Christendom (King, 1709). For King, God's properties bear an analogous similarity to those of humans, while atheistic arguments mistakenly assume God's properties to be univocal with those of humans. For example, the problem of evil assumes God's goodness is an infinitely magnified version of creaturely goodness, so that we can know God would be unlikely to make a universe with evil by reflecting on creaturely goodness. However, as King points out, God's properties are unlikely to be like creaturely properties.

On King's view, when the Bible describes God as having various limbs, the Bible should not be understood as saying the same as is meant when we say humans have limbs. Biblical limb-talk should be understood analogically. The same is true for other properties of God; just as God lacks limbs, so too God literally lacks foreknowledge, goodness, and a number of other attributes one might have otherwise literally ascribed to God. God possesses properties merely analogous to those of creatures which one might call divine foreknowledge and goodness. Since God's properties only bear an analogical similarity to those of humans, we should not expect God to behave as a perfectly good human, who possessed foreknowledge, would behave; humanly goodness – even if infinitely perfect – would remain categorically distinct from God's. Thus, King concludes, Manichaeism, and other unorthodox positions, do not explain our world better than traditional Christian theism.

On King's account, any apparent inconsistency between the appearance of the world – such as the existence of suffering – and God's attributes – such as God's goodness – is illusory. Thus, according to King, the thought that God would not allow suffering in the world because God is infinitely good is mistaken (King 1709, 4–10). God does not literally possess goodness and whatever property God possesses, analogous to goodness, may or may not allow

for suffering. We cannot understand God's properties, so any argument opposing theism on the basis of God's properties is, on King's account, mistaken. As Collins summarized King's position, "[...] no Man [sic] can object to he knows not what, all Objections supposing a meaning to the Proposition objected against" (Collins 1710, 11).

From the perspective of many of his contemporaries, King confused analogy with metaphor.<sup>2</sup> As Browne explained, metaphor is purely the result of the human mind, while analogy "is the Result of Reason viewing the *True Nature* of Beings". For Browne, when we say God possesses limbs, we are speaking metaphorically but not analogically: metaphors are "an *Appearing or Imaginary Resemblance and Correspondency*" (Browne 1734). Thus, to say God is analogically good, in King's sense, involves denying God is good at all.

Collins responded directly to King, and in defense of those skeptical or critical of religion,<sup>3</sup> in his *Vindication of Divine Attributes* in 1710. As Collins maintains, King's version of analogy renders natural theology impossible. A consequence of the impossibility of natural theology is the impossibility of proving the existence of God through evidence of design in nature.<sup>4</sup> For Collins, King's account of analogy leaves us no conception at all of God's properties, rendering "religion" impossible.<sup>5</sup> Collins concludes King's sermon was nothing more than a tacit acceptance of defeat. On one interpretation of Bayle's arguments, if God exists then either God does not have foreknowledge or humans do not possess free will. In King's response, God possessed a property merely "analogous", in King's sense, to foreknowledge; to Collins, this read as King conceding God's lack of foreknowledge. From Collins's perspective, we should not call a being without foreknowledge "God". Likewise for goodness: if King's God is not literally good, then in what sense is King's deity God? Collins proceeds to argue King's conception of God destroys both the project of natural theology and of religion generally, leaving the Christian little room in which to stand.

For Collins, King's conception of God destroyed natural theology because theism could no longer be proven from evidence of design in nature. King is unable to prove the existence of God, Collins argued, due to the radical semantic underdetermination of "God"; all King could possibly mean by "God" is a "General Cause of Effects" (Collins 1710, 13). Collins states: "if that be all that is meant by the term ['God'], I see not why Atheists should not come into the Belief of such a Deity; for they, equally with Theists, allow some general Cause of all Effects to have eternally existed; but [ . . . ] differ from them in the Attributes of that general Cause" (Collins 1710, 13–14). According to Collins, King, and other theists, cannot provide any further "King's account seemed to entail that any attempt to refer to God's attributes would fail, leaving theism without substance. King's conception of God destroys the project of religion generally, Collins maintained, because one cannot prove, from such vague conceptions of God, that one should worship God, that there is an afterlife, or that there was once a human who was fully God and died for our sins.

### ***Browne's Theological Program***

Browne advocated a view of theological analogy in which humans and God have more in common than they do in King's view. Nonetheless, Browne, like King, asserts we cannot know what the term "goodness" means when applied to God (Browne 1733, 82) and cites Aquinas for support (Browne 1733, 84). For Browne, God's properties are inexpressible in creaturely languages and this finds its clearest expression in Aquinas's works: "But of all whom I have yet met with, the Angelic Doctor [Aquinas] hath set this whole Matter in the truest Light" (Browne 1733, 93). After explaining Aquinas's distinction between univocal and equivocal predication, denying that each of these hold between God and creatures, Browne explicates Thomistic analogical predication (i.e. AOP2) and asserts God's properties may only be predicated analogically of God and creatures. Browne then discusses analogical predication in relation to Aquinas's distinction between essence and existence (Browne 1733, 93–96).

Browne's fame was owed to a response he wrote to deist John Toland (1670–1722) entitled *A Letter in Answer to a Book Entitled Christianity not Mysterious* (published in 1692). Later, Browne responded to other heretical views, each time utilizing DOA in defense of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>6</sup> Browne's student, philosopher and Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753), answered the debate between King and Collins in chapter IV of his *Alciphron or: The Minute Philosopher A Defence of the Christian Religion against the So-called Free-thinkers* (1732), in which the titular character represents Collins.<sup>7</sup> For Berkeley, analogy had come to be seen as a weapon of the atheists. Berkeley argues that the atheistic weaponization of analogy is based on a misunderstanding of analogy and the use of AOP2 would disarm the atheists.

The admission that God exists, while failing to admit any of God's properties, is the admission only that there is some object or other that one calls "God" and not the admission that the object has any particular description. But, without any particular description, the object in question could be any object whatsoever, including objects the atheist readily admits to exist. One of Berkeley's characters is a religious skeptic who advances Collins's argument in order to show that admitting the existence of God is not admitting much at all. An admission to God's existence grants the existence of God in only an "indefinite sense", in which God is understood to "properly speaking, [have] no knowledge or wisdom at all". That is, following Collins, the skeptic maintains only that there is some object one could arbitrarily call "God" (if one so chose) and not that the object possesses any of the divine attributes. Berkeley's skeptic goes on to explain that such conceptions entail disastrous consequences for natural theology, as very little can be shown from attributes that are either unknown or possessed in an unknown sense. Berkeley's skeptic concludes: "Since, therefore, nothing can be inferred from such an account of God, about conscience, or worship, or religion, you may even make the best of it. And, not to be singular, we will use the name too, and so at once there is an end of atheism" (Berkeley 1732, 248–249).

One of Berkeley's theistic characters responds that skeptics have misunderstood DOA. According to the character, if DOA is understood as Aquinas described – using proportionality – then the semantic underdetermination evaporates. Berkeley's theist proceeds through a history of DOA referencing both Aquinas and Suárez. Berkeley's theist notes, in a proper theological understanding of analogy, being – or existence – is analogical and not univocal between God and creatures (the *analogia entis*):

At that time the scholastics generally held that even Being should be attributed to God and to created things only analogically. That is, they held that God—the supreme, independent, self-causing cause and source of all beings—mustn't be supposed to exist in the same sense of "exist" as that in which created beings exist; not that he exists less truly or properly than they do, but only that he exists in a more eminent and perfect manner (Berkeley 1732, 255).

Lastly, against those who, like King, confuse analogical predication and metaphor, Berkeley distinguishes "metaphorical analogy" (e.g. equivocal predication) and "proper analogy" (AOP2), noting that DOA should be understood in terms of the latter (Berkeley 1732, 257).

### **Hume Enters Stage Left**

While Hume has been variously interpreted as an agnostic (Noxon 1966), irreligious (Russell 2008), a skeptic (Price 1965), and a deist (Gaskin 1978), Hyman maintains Hume "dispens[ed] with God altogether" (Hyman 2010, 36). At times, in agreement with Noxon, Hyman describes Hume as an agnostic and not an atheist. Nonetheless, Hyman is explicit that, whatever Hume's views were, Hume was not a theist. In what follows, I follow Hyman in assuming Hume was a non-theist whose arguments lend themselves to atheistic conclusions. Unlike Hyman, I will examine Hume's engagement with theological analogy and religious language. Importantly, as I demonstrate, Hume's engagement with the King/Browne/Berkeley exchange was important in Hume's irreligiosity. I will conclude, contra Hyman, the neglect of analogy cannot explain the rise of early-modern anglophone atheism.

Hume maintains a tension throughout his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* between "anthropomorphic" theology, according to which God's properties differ only in magnitude, and not in kind, from those of creatures, and a theology according to which God is completely beyond human understanding and categorically distinct from creatures. The former seems necessary for inferring God's existence from evidence of design in nature. After all, when one infers nature was produced by an infinitely wise being for particular ends, one compares God to humans. However, the latter seems necessary for maintaining a traditional notion of God's transcendence. The tension can be understood in terms of its implications for religious language: the god inferred through design arguments is one whose properties are univocal with creaturely properties. To render God more transcendent is to

render the predicates applied to God and creatures ever more equivocal.

Hume's *Dialogues* involve three characters: Philo, the skeptic (often understood to represent Hume), Demea, the mystical theist and pietist, and Cleanthes, who presents design arguments for God's existence. Demea and Philo accuse Cleanthes of "anthropomorphism" while Cleanthes and Philo accuse Demea of presenting God as so radically transcendent as to render theism indistinct from atheism. Towards the close of part III, Cleanthes presents a design argument, citing the intricate way in which each part of nature is fit for another, so that even the sexes were designed for each other (Hume 1947, 154).

Demea responds that Cleanthes presents a strong argument, but at the cost of reducing God's transcendence: "it must be acknowledged, that, by representing the Deity as so intelligible and comprehensible, and so similar to a human mind, we are guilty of the grossest and most narrow partiality" (Hume 1947, 156). Demea explains God forms an incomprehensible unity, so that God cannot be subdivided in terms of His properties (divine Simplicity). Thus, none of God's properties are univocal with those of humans, whose properties, unlike God's, are not identical to their essence (Hume 1947, 158). In response, Cleanthes argues divine simplicity is tantamount to atheism because an incomprehensible timeless unity is not capable of performing acts or having sentiments, successive ideas, thoughts, reason, will, love, hatred, or even a mind because all of these properties require time and constitution. To describe an incomprehensible, timeless unity as God would be an "abuse of terms" (Hume 1947, 159).

However, divine Simplicity was important for Aquinas's conception of theological analogy. For Aquinas, one reason we require theological analogy to talk about God is that creatures possess their properties in a fundamentally different way than God possesses His properties. Aquinas argues that God is Simple, by which he means that all of God's properties are identical to God's essence. There is no distinction between God's Being (*ens*) and God's Essence (*esse*) (ST P1 Q3, especially article 4). However, humans', and other creatures', properties are distinct from their essence, so, in creatures, there is a distinction between *ens* and *esse*. On Aquinas's view, God's essence is incomprehensible to the created intellect in the present life and, consequently, the manner of God's existence is incomprehensible to the created intellect in the present life. Hume's Demea agrees and notes that, "the manner of [God's] existence" is "mysterious" to "[f]inite, weak, and blind creatures" (Hume 1947, 141).

Thus, by rendering incoherent one reason that God-talk might be analogical, Cleanthes's argument contra Simplicity indirectly undermines theological analogy. As Philo indicates, Cleanthes painted all of the "orthodox divines" as atheists and has painted himself as the only orthodox individual in the world (Hume 1947, 159). In any case, if, as Hyman argues, we interpret Hume as a non-theist, then Hume's rejection of God involved Hume's

reaction to theological analogy and not, as Hyman contends, because theological analogy had never been made available to him due to prior neglect.

Elsewhere, Hume continues the theme of identifying a radically transcendent God with no god at all. Several commentators have noticed a strong similarity between Hume's argument in chapter XII of *Dialogues* and chapter IV of Berkeley's *Alciphron*.<sup>8</sup> In that chapter, Philo argues that there is only a verbal distinction between atheism and theism.

Philo begins by posing a question for theists: do they allow a "great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible difference between the human the divine mind"? The more pious the theist wishes to be, the more they will commit themselves to God's radical transcendence. Turning next to the atheist, Philo asks whether atheists disallow that the "rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the structure of human thought" could "bear some remote analogy to each other". Philo imagines atheists will answer in the affirmative without hesitation. Philo asks whether there could not be "some remote inconceivable analogy" between what Unknowable Thing caused the universe and "the other operations of nature", including "human mind and thought". Because any two things have some similarity or other between them, to deny that whatever created the universe possessed something or other analogous to a mind would be absurd. Thus, the dispute between theists and atheists has been dissolved: there is no distinction between theism and atheism after all (Hume 1947, 217).

Philo goes on to consider those who believe the "whole of Natural Theology" has been reduced to "one simple, though somewhat ambiguous" or "at least undefined proposition": "That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence". Philo states the conclusion is inevitable and cannot be avoided, but does not amount to much. Assenting to some remote Something or Other bearing a vague analogy to a mind may be "the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian", but the Christianity assented to is not obviously distinct from atheism.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Gavin Hyman argues early modern atheism arose due to a neglect of theological analogy. I have argued that in fact religious skeptics broadly discussed and debated theological analogy. Browne, King, and Berkeley, each a prominent theologian of the period, used the doctrine in their defense of what they understood as orthodoxy. Even the irreligious Hume addressed theological analogy, arguing that it rendered atheism and theism only verbally distinct. Thus, Hyman's explanation of the appearance of atheism in modernity as a result of a prior neglect of DOA is without support. Several questions remain. In what follows, I offer several brief suggestions for future work.

Although early-modern irreligious figures did not neglect theological analogy, twentieth-century analytic philosophers have largely neglected the analogy of being. Philosopher Kris McDaniel describes the "apparent

consensus among contemporary analytic metaphysicians is that believing [. . .] things can exist in different ways [e.g. the analogy of being] is silly or confused" (McDaniel 2010, 689). As McDaniel notes, analytic philosophers after Quine have generally maintained existence is whatever the existential quantifier denotes and so is univocal. Religious disbelief is common among analytic philosophers (Bourget & Chalmers 2014) and those pursuing a revised version of Hyman's historical narrative may ask whether analytic philosophy's anglophone hegemony, with the associated univocity of being, is responsible for the rise of atheism among contemporary philosophers. Moreover, one may ask how the rise of atheism among anglophone philosophers affects the rise of the non-religious and the secular in the broader culture. (I take no position on this issue here.)

Future work may be done to explore the relationship between analytic philosophy's anglophone ascendance and the genealogy of the univocity of being. For example, Kant's response to Anselm's ontological argument – that existence is not a predicate – was incorporated into Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic* as the existential quantifier (Labenz 2006). Frege's definition of the existential quantifier influenced Quine's work and thereby late twentieth-century analytic metaphysicians. How did Quine's work on existential quantification influence analytic philosophy of religion or the cultural debates over God's existence? Few authors have engaged these questions.

The influence of Quine and other analytic metaphysicians on most New Atheist authors is far from obvious (Daniel Dennett excepted). However, some debate over the efficacy of Richard Dawkins's central atheistic argument in *The God Delusion* has centered on Dawkins's supposed lack of theological sophistication. Dawkins considers Creationist arguments that ask whether a random process – like a tornado plowing through a junkyard – would be likely to produce a Boeing 747. As Creationists point out, the odds are vastly opposed to junkyard tornados spontaneously assembling aircraft; so, the argument continues, natural processes are even more unlikely to produce living things, themselves vastly more complex than a Boeing 747. Dawkins agrees; natural processes are unlikely to produce life, but God is even less likely to exist since God must be even more complex than His Creation (Dawkins 2008, 137–139). Critics say Dawkins has misunderstood (or failed to respond to) the most sophisticated conceptions of God, in which God is Simple. While Dawkins neglects divine simplicity, Hume did not. Analytic philosopher Erik Wielenberg argues atheists and theists alike should put down Dawkins and pick up Hume's *Dialogues*, in which, as I explained in section 3, Hume argues against the coherency of a Simple God (Wielenberg, 2009).

Nonetheless, whether Dawkins should have considered a Simple God is unclear; God's Simplicity is notoriously difficult to make sense of and, if McDaniel is correct, analytic philosophers are likely to consider conceptions of God that utilize Simplicity (especially if taken to entail the doctrine of analogy) "silly or confused" (McDaniel 2010, 689). Daniel Dennett, a more philosophically sophisticated

New Atheist than Dawkins, considers the view that God is beyond being tantamount to atheism (Dennett 2010). Similarly, as Mikael Stenmark observes, analytic philosophers of religion, whether atheists or theists, commonly retort that a God beyond being is nonsense (Stenmark 2015, 5); however, Stenmark (2015) makes inroads towards bringing into dialogue those who endorse and those who deny the analogy of being. Whether Stenmark's attempt is successful is, as yet, unclear.

### Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Theologian Michael Buckley offers another view according to which the early modern neglect of important theological doctrines resulted in atheism. For Buckley, the neglect of Christology, instead of analogy, resulted in the rejection of Christianity (Buckley 1987). An analysis of Buckley's thesis is beyond the scope of this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> Aquinas covers this issue in *ST* 1 Q13 A3 and his comments mirror Browne's. Analogical predication is literal, not metaphorical, even though the meaning of terms when applied to God is incomprehensible to the created intellect.
- <sup>3</sup> Whether Collins himself was an atheist is unclear, but see chapter 3 in Berman (1988).
- <sup>4</sup> However, Collins's argument is more general – and damning for King's theism – than simply showing that natural theology is impossible. The implication of Collins's pamphlet seems to be that it is impossible to prove anything about King's God (including through the use of a priori reasoning) due to the kind of radical underdetermination in King's view.
- <sup>5</sup> In this context, the term "religion" is used in actor's categories (Collins 1710).
- <sup>6</sup> *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* in 1728 and *Divine Analogy, or Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* in 1733.
- <sup>7</sup> The claim that Berkeley's character Alciphron should be identified with Collins is from Berman (1993, 10).
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Berman's (1993, 5–6).
- <sup>9</sup> Paul Russell describes Hume's assent to theism, as a vague assent to Something or Other, "thin theism", as distinguished from the theologically thick theism of orthodox religion (2010, 282–283). Although Russell argues Hume's orientation is best described as *irreligious* (ibid, 279–300) – as opposed to an atheist or an agnostic – his interpretation of Hume's views is compatible with the one I offered in this paper.

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