

The Aristotelian Epistemic Principle and the Problem of Divine Naming in Aquinas

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Abstract: In this paper, I engage in a preliminary discussion to the thorny problem of analogous naming in Aquinas; namely, the Maimonidean problem of how our conceptual content can relate to us any knowledge of God. I identify this problem as the First Semantic/Epistemic Problem (FSEP) of religious language. The primary determination of semantic content for Aquinas is what I call the Aristotelian Epistemic Principle (AEP). This principle holds that a belief is related to some experience in order to be known. I show how an examination of the extent the AEP engenders the problem and allows us to find a way out of the FSEP. For example, through such an analysis, we can see how the AEP relates to Aquinas's use of the distinction between the *res significata* and the *modus significandi*; the latter which includes the intension of being a created being where the former does not.

Thomas Aquinas envisioned philosophy as a handmaiden to theology; a way in which our purview is widened to accommodate and proportion the profundity of theological beliefs to limited human understanding.¹ As ordered to this Herculean task, perhaps there is no Thomistic doctrine more fundamental and controversial than that of analogy. Analogy is a semantic tool developed to provide epistemic security to the recondite and unwieldy doctrine of being and to provide justification for intelligible and true language about God.² There have been many involved studies attempting to present the semantics of analogy as a coherent and grounded theory.³ It has also been the subject many sustained criticisms, with one critic claiming that “*either* the doctrine of univocity is true *or* everything we say about God is in the most straightforward sense unintelligible.”⁴ To say the least, much criticism of the doctrine of analogy has arisen from deep interpretive problems and unclarity regarding the extent and nature of the doctrine itself. However, I believe that there are two preliminary ways of clarifying the doctrine and deflecting the force of its critics. The first is to pin-point and articulate the originating conditions that engendered the necessity for such a doctrine. Through this task, we can clearly see the conditions that need to be satisfied for the originating problem to be

resolved. Along these lines, we shall begin our discussion by identifying exactly how what I call the Aristotelian Epistemological Principle creates a need for constructing a semantic theory of analogy. The second is to identify and extricate a cluster of distinct issues—specifically, semantic and epistemic—that are grouped around the Thomas's analogy doctrine in hopes of clarifying the problems surrounding the doctrine as a whole. In this paper, I identify one such preliminary problem, which I call the First Semantic/Epistemic Problem (henceforth, FSEP), and then present Aquinas's way of dealing specifically with it.⁵

Formally articulated and developed in the Western tradition by Moses Maimonides, the essence of the FSEP is familiar to students of Aquinas's thought.⁶ The FSEP can be posited as follows:⁷

1. A positive judgment about extramental entities can only be true when the semantic content of this judgment pertains to, in some way, an extramental entity that is the subject of the judgment (Premise).
2. The only way that semantic content of a true positive judgment pertains to an extramental entity (or entities) that is the subject of a judgment is through acquaintance with that extramental entity (or entities) (Premise).
3. Only a created extramental entity is the kind of entity with which we can be acquainted (Premise).
4. Therefore, the only way through which the semantic content of a positive judgment can pertain to some extramental entity (or entities) is through acquaintance with the created entity that is the subject of the judgment (from 2, 3).
5. Therefore, a positive judgment about extramental entities can only be true when the semantic content pertains to the created extramental entity that is the subject of the judgment with which we are acquainted (from 1, 4).
6. In order for a positive judgment about God to be true, the semantic content of that judgment must pertain to an extramental entity with which we are acquainted (from 5).
7. However, God is not a created extramental entity (Premise).
8. God is an extramental entity (Premise).
9. Therefore, God is an extramental entity with which we are not acquainted (from 3, 7, 8).
10. Therefore, no positive judgment about God is true (from 4, 9).
11. Therefore, nothing positive can be known about God (from 10).

I need to address a few terms found in these premises. First, by 'positive judgment' is meant, in a broad sense, a non-negative judgment. A negative judgment is merely a proposition in which something is said to be not true of a subject. However, both negative and positive judgments each have logical and ontological meanings. A logical non-negative judgment pertains to the form of the judgment only, namely,

that the term 'not' is not part of the predicate. But, in the ontological and narrower sense, a non-negative judgment asserts that the entity expressed by the subject itself possesses rather than lacks some real attribute.⁸ For Aquinas, the model for understanding the nature of positive judgments according to its ontological sense is by appeal to common natures. A necessary condition for a common nature is that it is something that can exist either mentally as semantic content (as a universal), or extramentally as an individual essence of a being. Thus, a judgment is positive when the predicate asserts that that which is expressed by the subject term has a common nature (that can exist as an individual extramental essence) expressed by the predicate.⁹ A vital role that common natures play for Aquinas is that they serve to ground the relation between our conceptual semantic content and the extramental things represented by them.¹⁰ Regarding religious language, FSEP calls into question that any positive judgment—in which some real aspect is ascribed directly to God, such as 'Wisdom,' 'Joy,' 'Love'—can be truly predicated of God. This is very different from negative assertions of God in which God is said to lack some attribute, such as 'hatred,' or 'evil.'

Also, because I am using the term 'acquaintance' in a unique way, it needs to be identified. Underlying my use of the term is what can be cited generally as 'The Aristotelian Epistemic Principle' (henceforth, AEP), which asserts that a belief is related to some experience in order to be known.¹¹ In other words, some perceptual experience is a necessary condition for every instance of knowledge. Within the AEP I place the notion of 'acquaintance.' To be acquainted with *x* is to know *x* where *x* is some possible object of direct perceptual experience. It is important to note that the way that I use 'acquaintance' here is quite broad.¹² For example, insofar as I have had some experience of some dog, it is often enough for me to have some acquaintance with some other dogs that I have never directly experienced. This is because although direct perceptual experience is a necessary condition for knowing something, it is not sufficient. It is not sufficient (among other reasons) insofar as one has the cognitive ability to extend one's knowledge beyond an instance to a universal grasp of a kind. Thus, in virtue of the fact that from the necessary condition of some experience I can grasp a universal attribute in a direct perceptual experience, it is true that I am acquainted with some dog with which I have had no direct experience.¹³

With this in mind, in premise (2) of FSEP is the condition that in order to hold a true proposition one needs to be acquainted with that extramental entity which is the subject of one's judgment. In this case, it is sufficient that I be acquainted with what it means to be a dog in order for me to be acquainted with some dog with which I have no direct experience. So, when I know my belief that "The offspring of my dog Fifi will be a poodle," my knowledge arises from the fact that the semantic content of "poodle" possessed by me allows my acquaintance with the extramental entity that is the first-born offspring of my dog Fifi. This is true despite the fact that the first-born offspring of Fifi does not exist and so is not something of which I have had direct perceptual experience. In fact, due to the fact that knowing a kind allows us to extend our acquaintance beyond what we have experienced, we can be acquainted with things that are far removed and foreign to us. For example, I can

be said to be directly acquainted with rationality through my experience of my own rational function and that of other human beings. Because I am acquainted with this property I can predicate this of entities with which I have no direct perceptual experience, such as Martians, and it is possible that such a judgment would be true because it does not trespass against the AEP.¹⁴

Premise (3) of the FSEP claims that any created thing is the kind of thing that can be known through acquaintance. As mentioned above, we are able to extend what we know in some direct experience beyond the scope of that given experience by identifying a universal kind or attribute in that experience. This allows us to extend our acquaintance very broadly. However, (3) claims that the broadness of acquaintance is limited to the created order for the following reason: given the conditions of the AEP, it follows that the kinds with which we are acquainted in experience are themselves limited by possible perceptual experience. As a result, since only created things are the only things with which we can be acquainted, created things function as a limit for knowledge.

This conclusion is supported by another principle that accounts for how one can be acquainted with those things with which one has had no direct perceptual experience. Namely, the reason why I can be said to be acquainted with the future off-spring of my poodle Fifi without direct perceptual experience of it is because of the relation of similarity between these two entities that are understood under a common kind.¹⁵ However, this principle cannot be true of any created thing and an uncreated thing.

In addition, we need to point out that (3) asserts that if a thing is something with which we are acquainted, it is created, but it does not assert that every created thing is something with which we are, or can be, acquainted since it is possible that there are created things that are beyond the scope of acquaintance.

In short, FSEP asserts that since God—an extramental entity—is in no way related to the created order, and since the fundamental meaning for all of our concepts through which extramental entities are represented to us are given to us through acquaintance with things in the created order, it follows that our semantic content cannot represent God in any positive way. The argument asserts that our semantic content simply does not pertain to God, making God completely, and literally, inconceivable. FSEP is an appropriate name because a problem regarding the possibility of religious language is generated from a combination of epistemic and semantic conditions given in the AEP. Specifically, the epistemic conclusion, (11), follows from a complete semantic failure of our concepts to represent some positive aspect possessed by God.

If FSEP is sound, it would seem that our knowledge of God would have to be dependent on purely negative descriptions of Him. This certainly was Moses Maimonides's conclusion. Although Aquinas was influenced by Maimonides's claim that there is no relation of similarity between our concepts of things in the created order and those of God, Aquinas abandons neither positive, nor literal, expressions of God.¹⁶ In fact, Aquinas argues that even negative knowledge of God runs into its own fatal epistemic problems.¹⁷ Instead, Aquinas offers a way of resolving the

FSEP by rejecting some of its premises. Ultimately, Aquinas's answer to the FSEP is found in the doctrine of analogous naming; that we name God using non-univocal terms of God and creatures. Implicit in the doctrine of analogy, are two views held in tension: (A) on one hand, only those concepts originally derived from experience are foundational for knowledge of God. (B) On the other hand, our knowledge is not limited to that with which we are acquainted, but rather the original concepts with which we are acquainted are adapted or changed to no longer pertain to the creaturely order but are made to correctly apply to God.¹⁸ Thus, before we turn to the doctrine of analogy proper, we need to address how Aquinas understands the possibility of maintaining (A) and (B).

To do so, we turn to question thirteen of the *Summa theologiae*. This question is entitled "The Names of God," and is a window into Aquinas's perspective on religious language and his attempt at resolving problems of knowing God in conjunction with the AEP and the concerns that generate the FSEP. Among other things, question thirteen analyzes the manner in which the semantic content of our concepts relate to God in our naming Him. Much of the impetus for the question is the conclusion of question twelve: that God's essence can be known neither naturally by us nor in this life (which is expressed in (9) of the FSEP).¹⁹ Given the FSEP it is a question of considerable difficulty whether any name can be understood correctly to apply to God at all. As argued by Maimonides, any name predicated of God is tantamount to an idolatrous act.²⁰ This seems to follow from the fact that since the very concepts through which God is named are derived from, and ultimately about, the created order, understanding God through such concepts is equivalent to ascribing creaturely properties to God; and, to entertain such an idea is idolatrous. In other words given the AEP the creaturely origin of our names cannot be transcended to accurately name the Divine uncreated Being. So, when we say that "God is wise" we unintentionally are thinking of God in terms of the creaturely concept of wisdom—our concept of wisdom as we know it through our acquaintance with wise human beings.

But as identified in the FSEP, there are epistemic concerns specific to Divine naming that differ from concerns regarding the semantics of Divine naming, even though certainly the latter affects the former. The epistemological concern regards how we can know that God really is *P*, whereas the semantic concern involves our understanding of the incommensurability between the origin and meaning of our concepts and the reality of God. Yet, clearly the epistemic question cannot be answered unless the semantic one is resolved. To illustrate this, take the name 'wise' with respect to God. Certainly to know what "wisdom" means does not entail that we know that God is wise, and so this epistemological question stands alone. However, since any name has semantic content that is incommensurate with how God actually is, then it follows that we cannot know anything about God expressed by any of these names. As a result, an epistemic conclusion (11) follows directly from the semantic condition.

Aquinas takes up the issue about whether it is possible to give a name to God in the first article of question thirteen. In terms of the FSEP, Aquinas would definitely

accept premises (7), (8), (3) and (1). (7) is a dogmatic teaching of the Church and obtained by Aquinas's proofs for God's existence. (8) merely states that God does not depend on some mind in order to exist (other than his own). (3) involves the AEP, which is firmly held by Aquinas since, following Aristotle, Aquinas is committed to the idea that all knowledge is derived from experience of the created world around us in conjunction with intellectual operation. (1) asserts that semantic content represents its extramental entity in some way, a position advocated by Thomas with his doctrine of common natures and his epistemic realism in which that which is represented by a concept stands in a relation of similarity to that concept.

However, Aquinas rejects premise (2) as such, although he would accept an altered version of it from which the conclusion of the FSEP cannot be implied. Regarding (2), although he holds that in general the words that function in the signification of things through a formed concept are made possible by the fact that there is a relation of similitude between concepts and things,²¹ he does not think that a given concept needs to be limited absolutely to representing the original thing (or things) with which that concept had its original similarity. This is contrary to (2) which suggests that concepts are inflexibly fixed in semantic content to some specific type of extramental thing with which we are acquainted. From this, along with the assertion that God is not an extramental entity with which we are acquainted, it would seem to follow that it is impossible to know anything about God.

Certainly, Aquinas holds that all our concepts of extramental entities arise through experience with extramental entities but Aquinas also holds that there is a flexibility that semantic content has to the extramental things with which we are familiar. This flexibility allows for semantic content to apply to things with which we are not acquainted through a process of altering that original semantic content in some way. At the same time, Aquinas maintains that as a result of this alteration of semantic content, the distinctive similitude between our concepts derived from experience and God who is understood through such concepts is lost.²² In other words, whichever concepts are used to represent God have to be dissimilar to those extramental things that they were originally formed to represent. One result of this process is that it is impossible to know God's essence in the same way that we know the essences of creatures because knowing something's essence involves, among other things, having a concept that has a relation of similarity with the invariant structure of a specific extramental thing.²³ For example, we know the essence of human beings through our concept of "human" because there is a relation of similitude between them. However, despite this limitation, Aquinas argues, we can still know God non-essentially through our knowledge of creatures both as the cause of creatures and negatively (by remotion).²⁴

Aquinas's revision of (2) raises two further questions about how it is possible to alter the meaning of our concepts so radically to apply to something other than those original extramental things with which we are acquainted. First, even if it is possible to stretch the meaning of a concept to incorporate other entities with which we are not familiar (even if one is willing to countenance acquaintance with things like angels as being of the same generic kind as something that perceive in experience,

such as agency, reason or substance)²⁵ is it not beyond the capacity of our thought to represent a non-created entity! To wit, there is no possible point of comparison or similarity to bridge the semantic gap between what is experienced in the created order and God; even in its broadest possible conceptualization.

In light of this incredulity, in article three, Aquinas raises the objection that since all our concepts are derived from creatures, all language of God is merely metaphorical and not literally true of Him.²⁶ To dissolve this objection, Aquinas identifies two semantically relevant aspects in any instance of naming: the extramental attribute itself that is signified by the naming term, and its mode of signification.²⁷ The first semantic component is the specific content of the concept through which some extramental entity is represented and signified. The second semantic component is the way through which that content is expressed—its mode of signification, or the manner in which the content is expressed. The modes of signification of a concept are the attributes possessed by the semantic content beyond that expressed by the first semantic component that are peculiar to the individual person signifying that extramental entity. For example, take the semantic content of the concept “stone.” When used to signify an extramentally existing stone, the first semantically relevant aspect is that component that directly represents the extramental stone. The second aspect is the way through which that stone is signified, such as “immaterially,” “universally,” “positively,” or for our purposes here, “through acquaintance.” These are all attributes of the semantic content of the person signifying the stone that goes beyond the immediate semantic content of the concept. The importance of this distinction is in the fact that one asserts only the first semantic component of the extramental entity itself that is the subject of its judgment and not the second component. Regarding religious language, attributes expressed by the Divine Names are correctly understood to be possessed properly by God *via* the first semantic component, whereas the way through which God is signified by them is not relevant to the truth of the judgment. This is seen in the stone example: the first aspect is attributed to the stone but the second is not; one is not saying that a stone is itself universal, immaterial, nor something with which we are acquainted, even though this is an attribute of its mode of signification. Likewise, when we apply names to God, the mode of signification “something with which we are acquainted,” (or, as Aquinas says, “a mode of signifying that is appropriate to creatures”) is not attributed to God.²⁸ In this way, the limitation through which the semantic content fails to represent God is positively excluded from one’s understanding of an attribute as it is applied to God. This also addresses the problem about how we can name God according to non-synonymous names in face of the fact that God is Himself absolutely simple.²⁹ The thing signified—namely, God—is accomplished through a complex mode of signification without undermining its truth.

The second problem that arises from Aquinas’s alteration of (2) regards whether the content of the altered creaturely concept expresses anything at all. If we are not acquainted with the concepts through which God is understood how do we know that they are not just fictions or inherently unintelligible? How do we know that such semantic content has any reference at all (regardless of the fact that God exists)

given the necessity of acquaintance for all regular knowledge? In answer to this, one need only point out that such a question follows from a confusion of semantic and epistemic concerns. The question is not how we can know that the semantic content of concepts with which are not acquainted is true or not about God; for this question is one that we shall take up shortly. The question at this point is whether or not the semantic content has proper signification; the question is whether or not the semantic content has sense and reference. Well, regarding sense, it certainly does, since one has altered an original concept with which one was acquainted to a new concept with a new meaning. Regarding reference, it seems that this is fixed independently of whether one has direct knowledge of the thing to which it refers; it is something external to us. Just because our first concepts are necessarily formed from those things with which we are acquainted does not mean that all our concepts refer only to those things with which we have acquaintance. There is no intrinsic limit placed on the reference of a concept from the fact that it is originally obtained through acquaintance with creatures, since this only constitutes its mode of signification and not the semantic content that identifies some extramentally existing attribute.

To conclude, there is much still left to be done to rehabilitate Aquinas's doctrine of analogy. However, I believe that the answer to providing a coherent view of it is dependent on discussing semantic and epistemic conditions that give rise to its need. I hope that in what I have presented here is a good beginning toward achieving this great task.

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Notes

1. Special thanks to Robert Miner for his very helpful and in-depth comments. I would also like to thank Michael Waddell for raising some important points relevant to the paper.

2. For seminal work on the prior influences on Aquinas's view of analogy, see E. J. Ashworth's, "Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context," in *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 94–135; and E. J. Ashworth's, "Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy," in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (1991): 39–67.

3. Some of the more influential and involved treatments on analogy in Aquinas include Tommaso de Vio, *The Analogy of Names and the Concept of Being*, trans. E. A. Bushinski and H. J. Koren (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1953); G. P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960); H. Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of Its Background and Interpretation of Its Use by Thomas of Aquino* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952); R. M. McNerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996); R. M. McNerny, *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1961).

4. Thomas Williams, "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutory," *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 579–580. See also, J. S. Morreall, *Analogy and Talking about God: A Critique of the Thomistic Approach* (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1979).

5. Specifically, I focus on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Pars Prima et Prima Secundae*, ed. P. Caramelo, Leonine edition (Torino-Roma: Marietti, 1952) (henceforth, *ST*); *De veritate*, ed. R. M. Spiazzi, Leonine edition (Taurini: Marietti, 1949) (henceforth, *DV*). Throughout I keep fairly closely to English translations in *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae*, ed. Thomas Gilby, O. P., Vols. 1–61 (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964–1980); and *Truth*, trans. and ed. R. W. Mulligan, J. V. McGlynn and R. W. Schmidt, Vols. 1–3 (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1952).

6. Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines, 2 Vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

7. Aquinas can be seen to be wrestling the basic problem involved in the FSEP. For example, Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1.13.6: "Videtur quod nomina per prius dicantur de creaturist quam de Deo. Secundum enim quod cognoscimus aliquid, secundum hoc ilud nominatum, cum nomina secundum Philosophum, *I Perihermeneias*, sint signa intellectuum. Sed per prius cognoscimus creaturam quam Deum. Ergo nomina a nobis imposita per prius conveniunt creaturis quam Deo." Or, *ST* 1.13.1, "Praeterea, nomina significant substantiam cum qualitate, verba autem et participia significant cum tempore, pronomina autem cum demonstratione vel relatione. Quorum nihil competit Deo, quia sine qualitate est, et sine omni accidente, et sine tempore, et sentiri non potest ut demonstrari possit; nec relative significari, cum relativa sint aliquorum antedictorum recordativa, vel nominum, vel participiorum, vel pronominum demonstrativorum. Ergo Deus nullo modo potest nominari a nobis."

8. This view is essentially related to his inherence theory of predication. For central discussions on this, see Gyula Klima, "The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): 87–141; Gyula Klima, "Aquinas' Theory of the Copula," *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 5 (2002); Allan Back, "Aquinas on Predication," *Aristotle's Peri hermeneias in the Latin Middle Ages*, ed. H. A. G. Brakhuis and C. H. Kneepkens (Groningen: Ingenium Publishers, 2003).

9. For example, Aquinas talks about predicates that signify things that fall under one of the ten categories of extramental things, and privations, which do not. See Thomas Aquinas, *Liber II Scriptum super librum Sententiarum*, ed. P. Mandonnet (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), Vol. 2, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2.

10. In this way, common natures, or natures absolutely considered are a way of addressing the problem of universals. Aquinas and others thought that the doctrine of common natures saves epistemological realism without having to claim that universals are things that exist extramentally. See, his *De ente et essentia. Opera Omnia*, Leonine Edition (Roma: Editori di san Tommaso, 1976), Vol. 43.

11. It is, or course, not hard to come up with the basis of the AEP in Aquinas's texts. For example, in *ST* 1.84.7, Aquinas asserts: "Respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum nostrum, secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata."

12. Admittedly, I use the notion in a way different from its normal use, following after Bertrand Russell's articulation of it in his, *Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912).

13. Although Aquinas does not use language of acquaintance, the general idea is held by Aquinas. For example, in *ST* 1.84.3, where Aquinas rejects the notion that there are innate species in the soul, Aquinas addresses the central issue of Plato's *Meno* in which it appears that all cases of learning is really only reminiscence (of innate species). His answer is revealing to the notion that we are in a way acquainted with individuals not directly known by us when we come to know a thing's species: "Ad tertium dicendum quod ordinata interrogatio procedit ex principiis communibus per se notis, ad propria. Per talem autem processum scientia causatur in anima addiscentis. Unde cum verum respondet de his de quibus secundo interrogatur, hoc non est quia prius ea noverit; sed quia tunc ea de novo addiscit. Nihil enim refert utrum ille qui docet, proponendo vel interrogando procedat de principiis communibus ad conclusiones, utrobique enim animus audientis certificatur de posterioribus per priora."

14. The reason why I am extending this notion of acquaintance to include such foreign things from our common or direct experience is in order to establish the absolute limit of our knowledge as those things in the created order. For example, through some experience we may come up with a species that includes some immaterial entity, such as an alien. Aquinas holds that even immaterial things like angels can be known through generic concepts logically in common with material entities; for example, both angels and humans logically fall under the genus of substance. However, this is the limit since no concepts are univocally common among God and creatures. For example, *ST* 1.88: "Ad quartum dicendum quod substantiae immateriales creatae in genere quidem naturali non conveniunt cum substantiis materialibus, quia non est in eis eadem ratio potentiae et materiae, conveniunt tamen cum eis in genere logico, quia etiam substantiae immateriales sunt in praedicamento substantiae, cum earum quidditas non sit earum esse. Sed Deus non convenit cum rebus materialibus neque secundum genus naturale, neque secundum genus logicum, quia Deus nullo modo est in genere, ut supra dictum est. Unde per similitudines rerum materialium aliquid affirmative potest cognosci de Angelis secundum rationem communem, licet non secundum rationem speciei; de Deo autem nullo modo."

15. For Aquinas, there is a relation of similarity between the thing outside of the mind and the thing as understood. Aquinas puts this notion as follows in *ST* 1.85.2, "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod intellectum est in intelligente per suam similitudinem. Et per hunc modum dicitur quod intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu, inquantum similitudo rei intellectae est forma intellectus; sicut similitudo rei sensibilis est forma sensus in actu. Unde non sequitur quod species intelligibilis abstracta sit id quod actu intelligitur, sed quod sit similitudo eius." However, not only is there a relation of similarity between things in the mind and outside of the mind, but also there is such a relation holding between two things existing outside of the mind that fall under the same species.

16. Aquinas was not only influenced by Maimonides in this respect, but also by Pseudo-Dionysius. See especially, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, trans. J. Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980).

17. Aquinas, *ST* 1.13.2: "Dicendum quod de nominibus quae de Deo dicuntur negative, vel quae relationem ipsius ad creaturam significant, manifestum est quod substantiam ejus nullo modo significant, sed remotionem alicujus ab ipso, vel relationem ejus ad alium, vel potius alicujus ad ipsum. Sed de nominibus quae absolute et affirmative de Deo dicuntur, sicut bonus, sapiens, et hujusmodi, multipliciter aliqui sunt opinati. Quidam enim dixerunt quod haec omnia nomina, licet affirmative de Deo dicantur, tamen magis inventa sunt ad aliquid removendum a Deo quam ad aliquid ponendum in ipso. Unde dicunt quod, cum

dicimus Deum esse viventem, significamus quod Deus non hoc modo est sicut res inanimatae; et similiter accipiendum est in aliis; et hoc posuit Rabbi Moyses, in lib. qui dicitur doctor dubiorum.”

18. Given Aquinas’s answer to the FSEP, we can see that John Duns Scotus misapprehends how exactly Aquinas’s analogous naming is a possible resolution of the FSEP. For example, Scotus argues in *Ordinatio* 1, d. 3, pars 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 26–55, that it is not “worthwhile to distinguish between knowledge of God in a creature and in Himself, since if knowledge is had through a creature, so that discursive cognition beings from the creature, I ask in what term this cognition comes to a halt. If in God in Himself, I have the proposed position, since the inquiry concerns the concept of God in Himself. If it does not come to a halt in God, but in a creature, then the same will be the end and the beginning of the discursive process, and so no knowledge will be had of God.” To this, in light of Aquinas’s answer to the FSEP, Aquinas would answer that it is relevant to distinguish between knowledge of God in a creature and in Himself because the issue is not about whether it is God or a creature that is depicted (or is the term of the cognition) through a concept, for this is clearly the case. Rather, the issue concerns how it is possible for a concept, that always has a relation of similarity with created things can in principle represent God, with no relation of similarity between the concept and God. So, the relevance of distinguishing between the two is that in a sense, the term of the cognition is creatures (because there always remains a derivation and similarity with created things), and in another sense the term of the cognition of God (because God is known in some way through such a concept).

19. Aquinas, *ST* 1.12.4: “Dicendum quod impossibile est quod aliquis creatus intellectus per sua naturalia essentiam Dei videat.”

20. Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 1.56.

21. Aquinas, *ST* 13.1: “Dicendum quod secundum Philosophum, 1 *Perihermeneias*, voces sunt signa intellectuum, et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines.”

22. For example, Aquinas says that following in *ST* 1.13.2: “Unde quaelibet creatura intantum eum repraesentat, et est ei similis, inquantum perfectionem aliquam habet, non tamen ita quod repraesentet eum sicut aliquid ejusdem speciei vel generis, sed sicut excellens principium, a cujus forma effectus deficiunt, cujus tamen aliquaem similitudinem effectus consequuntur.”

23. *ST* 1.12.9: “Cum enim quaecumque uni et eidem sunt similia sibi invicem sint similia, virtus cognoscitiva dupliciter assimilari potest alicui cognoscibili. Uno modo secundum se, quando directe ejus similitudine informatur, et tunc cognoscitur illud secundum se.”

24. Aquinas, *ST* 13.1.

25. See note 13 above.

26. Aquinas, *ST* 13.3, obj 1.

27. Aquinas, *ST* 13.3: “In nominibus igitur quae Deo attribuiamus, est duo considerare, scilicet perfections ipsas significatas, ut bonitatem, vitam, et hujusmodi, et modum significandi.”

28. Aquinas *ST* 1.13.3: “Quantum igitur ad id quod significant hujusmodi nomina, proprie competunt Deo, et magis proprie quam ipsis creaturis, et per prius dicuntur de eo. Quantum vero ad modum significandi, non proprii dicuntur de Deo; habent enim modum significandi qui creaturis competit.” One may take exception to the notion that acquaintance is a mode of signification. However, Aquinas says that creatures are signified according to a

mode distinct from how God is signified. This, as we defined above, is signification through acquaintance. So, with a specific semantic content according to the first semantic component it is signified through the mode of signification proper to creatures, namely, through acquaintance with things that are experienced. This is not true of these concepts that are expressive of God.

29. Aquinas, *ST* 1.13.4.