

327

THE ARTICULATION OF TRANSCENDENCE

THE ARTICULATION OF TRANSCENDENCE:  
AQUINAS AND THE NAMES OF GOD

By

MARK JOHN FRANKLIN B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

August 1978

MASTER OF ARTS (1978)  
(Philosophy)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Articulation of Transcendence: Aquinas and the  
Names of God

AUTHOR: Mark John Franklin, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor John. E. Thomas

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 115

## ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with St. Thomas Aquinas interpretation of religious language. Particular attention is given to his theory of analogy and its employment in religious language. The first of our four chapters examines Thomas' treatment of univocity and equivocity. Its importance is twofold. First, it introduces the reader to some of the major considerations that lead Aquinas to eventually appeal to analogy in order to explain the meaning of the divine predicates. Secondly, it brings to light certain key metaphysical elements that underpin his analysis of univocity and equivocity, elements which will re-emerge in his application of analogy to religious language. The second chapter examines Thomas' theory of analogy and its employment in the predication of names to God. The third chapter focuses upon a crucial distinction that Aquinas makes between a term's modus significandi (mode of signification) and its res significata (the thing signified). There we provide an account of this distinction and show how it relates to Thomas' interpretation of religious utterances. In the fourth chapter we move towards a critical assesement of Aquinas' handling of religious language. Therein we consider two basic problems that afflict his treatment of the divine predicates. The first involves the agnostic

character of Thomas' analysis of these predicates. The second is tied up with the problem of the ratio communis of analogous terms. We conclude the thesis with a number of summary observations on the difficulties that are found in Aquinas' interpretation of religious language.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. John E. Thomas, my first reader, for his patience and supervision. Thanks also go to Dr. Ian Weeks for being my second reader. I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation to Dr. G.B. Madison for the interest that he has taken in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Gail and David Jardine for their continuing support and for typing this thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		page iii
Acknowledgements		v
Introduction		1
Chapter I	Univocity and Equivocity	7
Chapter II	The Theory of Analogy	21
Chapter III	The <u>Modus Significandi-</u> <u>Res Significata</u> Distinction	58
Chapter IV	Aquinas' Agnosticism and the Problem of the <u>Ratio Communis</u>	79

## INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of religion has, in recent times, displayed a marked preoccupation with religious language. This concern has been expressed in a number of inquiries which have sought to determine the nature and status of such language.<sup>1</sup>

It is fair to say that the contemporary interest in religious language derived its initial impetus from the condemnation of metaphysical and theological statements in A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of what Ayer calls the "criterion of verifiability"<sup>3</sup> theological statements are rejected as meaningless. This rejection finds expression in Ayer's claim that "all utterances about the nature of God are non-sensical".<sup>4</sup>

One of the major results of Ayer's critique of religious language was that it stimulated a number of philosophers and theologians to concentrate on the nature and structure of religious discourse. Attention was now focused on the problem of discovering some way in which the meaning of religious utterances could be understood and defended against Ayer's attack. The upsurge of interest in this subject resulted in a radical shift in the way in which religion was approached by philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, philosophers of religion had been primarily interested in the truth of the statements advanced by the theist. Symptomatic of this type of



approach is the preoccupation with the various traditional arguments for the existence of God. In this case, the philosophical concerns involved considerations about the validity of the argumentative structure, and the truth of the constitutive premises. By contrast to this, in contemporary philosophical treatments of religion the emphasis has, in part, shifted from questions about the truth of religious utterances to questions about the meaning of such utterances.

The seriousness with which the problem of the meaning of religious language has been viewed in recent years is amply reflected in the volume of literature that has appeared on the subject.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the literature reflects a variety of differing views on the nature of religious discourse. Amidst such diversity there still remains an element of commonality, for all of these accounts are trying to come to grips with the question:

"How are religious utterances to be understood?"

The current fascination with religious language has its analogue in the thought of the scholastic philosophers. In this context, the most notable figure is St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas' concern with the meaning of religious discourse can be seen to have its basis in his theological interests. Aquinas was "first, last, and always a theologian",<sup>7</sup> and in his capacity as a teacher of Holy Scripture (magister in sacra pagina) his interests centred upon clarifying and

explaining the truths of the Scripture. In view of this, Thomas' concern with religious language is quite understandable, for the job of clarifying recalcitrant Biblical passages would require that he first of all settle the question of the meaning of the Divine predicates:

St. Thomas was, by profession, a theologian. His primary concern in his works is to explain and rationally justify the Word of God. To accomplish this task he must constantly remember to clarify both for himself and for his readers the meaning and value of religious language.

8

As a theologian, Aquinas was also called upon to defend the Scripture against attack and misinterpretation. In his view an instance of the latter lay in the recommendation that the meaning of the divine names be interpreted either univocally or equivocally. Both forms of usage were unacceptable to Aquinas because they lead to disastrous theological consequences.

9

For instance, consider what happens when a univocal reading is adopted for the following sentences: (1) Man is good. (2) God is good. Here the common term (ie., "good") is understood to function univocally in both (1) and (2). If we rely upon Thomas' account of univocity, this entails that the term "good" has exactly the same meaning in both instances of use.

10

When understood along univocal lines, the meaning of religious discourse is rendered clear and intelligible. Any difficulty which one may have had in discerning the meaning

of the divine predicates would now seem to be eliminated. However, a closer look at the situation reveals that all is not well.

Let us reconsider our preceding example. The admission that "good" has exactly the same meaning in both (1) and (2) implies that the goodness of God is no different than the goodness of man. Clearly, this conclusion is anathema to Aquinas because it entails anthropomorphism. In this case, Aquinas' rejection of univocity is part and parcel of his conception of God. For Thomas, God is transcendent or "other",<sup>11</sup> being essentially different from man. Accordingly, any account of religious language that would be at odds with this view must be rejected.

The second account of religious language would claim that "good"<sub>1</sub> and "good"<sub>2</sub> function equivocally.<sup>12</sup> Here the equivocation is total as the meanings of "good"<sub>1</sub> and "good"<sub>2</sub> are mutually exclusive.<sup>13</sup>

The major drawback with equivocation is that it evacuates meaning from the divine predicates. For if "good"<sub>2</sub> is completely different in meaning from "good"<sub>1</sub>, then it would seem that we are unable to know anything about the meaning of "good"<sub>2</sub>. This consequence emerges because our touchstone<sup>2</sup> for intelligibility, which is our understanding of human goodness, has been said to have nothing in common with the notion of divine goodness. Since God's goodness, on the equivocal account, is completely different than what we

understand by human goodness, the latter cannot help to elucidate the former. On this reading, any link between "good<sub>2</sub>" and "good<sub>1</sub>", which would preserve the intelligibility of the former, has been severed. The upshot of this is agnosticism, as we are unable to specify any meaning for the term when it is predicated of God.

There is an additional difficulty with equivocation, one that threatens the theological enterprise itself. Aquinas viewed theology (sacra doctrina) as a science that relied upon rational argumentation. The adoption of an equivocal account of the divine names would seriously undermine this conception of theology, for any argument that employed such names would be subject to the fallacy of equivocation.<sup>14</sup>

In view of the inappropriateness of both univocity and equivocity, and the need to provide some account of the meaning of the divine predicates, Aquinas' problem amounted to the following: Without relying upon either univocity or equivocity, how could one explain religious language in a way that would allow it to be meaningful and informative?

Thomas Aquinas offers a solution to the preceding problem by way of a particular interpretation of religious language. The purpose of this study is to examine his interpretation. In view of the importance that analogy assumes in this matter, we shall consider in detail his theory of analogy and his application of it to the divine predicates.<sup>15</sup> While primarily interested in analogy and the

theological use Aquinas puts it to, we shall also examine a number of other elements that are at work in his analysis of religious language.

Aquinas' treatment of the divine names merits examination for a number of reasons. Firstly, his position constitutes an ingenious attempt to come to grips with a problem that continues to trouble both theologians and philosophers. Secondly, one finds that a number of recent studies on religious discourse have recommended an analogical reading of the divine names.<sup>16</sup> In view of this, Aquinas' position assumes major significance, as he was the first philosopher to systematically consider the employment of analogy in religious language. His influence is still being felt in this area. Even a cursory reading of the relevant literature bears this out, as most discussions of analogy and religious utterances take their cue from Aquinas.

## I

### UNIVOCITY AND EQUIVOCITY

We shall commence our study of Aquinas with a discussion of his views on univocal and equivocal predication. The re-examination of univocity and equivocality is undertaken for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides us with some insight into the considerations that lead Thomas to eventually appeal to the theory of analogy. Secondly, and most important, a study of Aquinas' position on univocity and equivocality introduces the reader to certain fundamental metaphysical principles that undergird his treatment of religious language. As we shall see, the influence exerted by these principles is substantial both in Thomas' analysis of univocity and equivocality and his subsequent application of analogy to religious discourse.

In searching for some way to explain the meaning of religious utterances, Aquinas initially considers two possibilities. (1) Terms that are employed in statements about God function univocally with respect to their use in ordinary discourse. (2) Terms used in statements about God function completely equivocally with respect to their use in ordinary language.

Univocal predication is eventually rejected by

Thomas as being inappropriate for explaining the meaning of religious language. In the present context, however, we are interested in discovering the reasons behind his condemnation of this form of predication. We can begin to do this by considering a passage from the Summa Theologica where Aquinas replies to the question of whether names are predicated of God univocally.

It is impossible to predicate anything univocally of God and creatures. Every effect that falls short of what is typical of the power of its cause represents it inadequately, for it is not the same kind of thing as the cause.

17

Stated baldly, without any accompanying explication, Aquinas' response strikes one as exceedingly obscure. As this argument against univocity depends upon a number of points that have yet to be made explicit, it should come as no surprise that Thomas' reply seems obscure. Accordingly, if we hope to make sense of what Aquinas is saying here it is necessary to consider those points that the argument implicitly relies upon, for they are vital to the case he is trying to make. <sup>18</sup> Stated briefly, they are as follows:

(a) There is no effect that does not bear some sort of likeness or resemblance to its cause. (b) The likeness obtaining in a causal relationship is to be understood in terms of a distinction between univocal and equivocal causes. <sup>19</sup> (c) With respect to God and creatures (most notably man), there is a causal relationship that adheres to the principle stated in (a).

In turning to the first of these three points, we find a principle that Thomas thought applicable to all causal relationships. This principle holds that there is no effect which does not bear some degree of likeness to its cause.<sup>20</sup> Involved in such a notion of causality is the view that the qualities of an effect are received from its cause. Because of this, the effect can be said to have something "in common" with the cause. A. Kenny, in his work, The Five Ways,<sup>21</sup> observes that heating and wetting are often taken as paradigms for this type of causal phenomenon. For example, if A, in the role of causal agent, heats B, then B is thought to receive the quality (or form) of heat from A.<sup>22</sup> This example is an instance of the more general view that

...if  $\phi$  takes the place of any such verb [eg., "heating", "wetting"], when A  $\phi$ s B, A produces  $\phi$ ness in B, B receives  $\phi$ ness from A, and A changes B.

23

The likeness in this case is, for Aquinas, to be understood in terms of the " $\phi$ ness" that B receives from A. In its reception of the " $\phi$ ness" B becomes like A. Admittedly, this causal principle is rather obscure, yet Mondin, in his study of analogy provides us with a general account of this principle that helps to mitigate the difficulty:

...Aquinas believes that it is of the essence of efficient causality to be exemplary (ie., it is of the essence of efficient causes to produce effects like themselves) and, consequently, it is of the essence of an effect to resemble its cause....Causes are like artists. The artist tries to reproduce in



his work his preconceived model. A cause tends to produce in its effect the degree of likeness with itself that corresponds to the degree of the effect's immanence in the cause.

24

In describing this causal principle, Aquinas recognizes that it is important to specify the kinds of similitude existing between an effect and a cause. He attempts to do this by making a distinction between univocal and equivocal causes. In De Potentia Aquinas presents this description of univocal and equivocal causality:

The form of the effect is in the natural agent in as much as the agent produces an effect of like nature, since every agent produces its like. Now this happens in two ways. When the effect bears a perfect likeness to the agent, as proportionate to the agent's power, then the form of the effect is in the agent in the same degree; thus it is in univocal agents, for instance fire generates fire. When, however, the effect is not perfectly likened to the agent, as being inproportionate to the agent's power, then the form of the effect is not in the same degree in the agent but in a higher degree; this is the case in equivocal agents, for instance the sun generates fire.

25

Univocal causes produce effects that are of the same species as their cause. In such a form of causality, the "perfect likeness" that Thomas talks of consists in the effect being of the same species as its cause. Animal generation provides an example of this type of causality. For instance, a pig would be considered a univocal cause because both it and its offspring belong to the same species.

26

The preceding point is sometimes expressed in a different way by saying that the "perfect likeness" consists in a commonality of form obtaining between the cause and its effect. In univocal causality, the cause and its effect "share a common form of the same type to the same degree."<sup>27</sup>

Equivocal causes differ from those that are univocal because the likeness between the effect and its cause does not involve a sameness of species.<sup>28</sup> Later we shall have more to say about this form of causality. We now proceed to consider another important point that is presupposed in Thomas' argument against univocal predication.

For Aquinas, the primary instance of the principle that claims a likeness of effect to cause is found in the relation that obtains between God and creatures. This relation (or proportion) is clearly causal in nature, for God is viewed as the cause of finite beings, which as His effects,<sup>29</sup> depend upon Him for their very existence.<sup>30</sup> They also rely upon God's causal activity for the perfections that they possess.<sup>31</sup> While this relationship is unique it still remains causal in character, and for this reason it exemplifies the causal principle we have been discussing. This point is important for it implies that man, as a created finite being, must bear some sort of resemblance to God.<sup>32</sup> As God is the cause of finite beings and the source from which there issues all creaturely perfections, human beings and their perfections have a resemblance to the divine cause.

When the relationship between man and God is seen in this way, two important questions arise: (1) In terms of Aquinas' division of causality, what type does God exercise in relation to creation? (2) What is meant by the term "likeness" when used to characterize this relationship?

In response to the first question, Thomas would say that God's causality is to be viewed as equivocal.<sup>33</sup> It should come as no surprise that Aquinas opts for this type of causality in describing the relation of God to finite beings. Given the univocal/equivocal division of causality presented by Aquinas, the only other alternative would be univocal causality and this would entail placing man and God in the same species. The consequence of this would be anthropomorphism, a position Aquinas constantly sought to avoid in his natural theology.

Thomas would begin to answer the second question by saying that the likeness in this relation is not specific. Nor does the similitude consist in a sameness of genus, for Aquinas claims that God is not in a genus with any other created being.<sup>34</sup> With the rejection of specific and generic likeness, there remains analogical likeness, and it is this that Aquinas sees as applying to the God/creature relationship.<sup>35</sup>

St. Thomas is, to put it mildly, not very specific in his descriptions of this likeness or similarity. Throughout the corpus of his works there occur numerous references to the God/creature relation, yet in each case little is said

about the nature of the likeness that obtains. On this count Thomas displays a marked reticence. At times he will explain such likeness in a negative fashion, saying that it does not consist in a sameness of species. Positive accounts are usually couched in the language of imperfection and deficiency. The following are representative of this form of approach:

The diverse perfections of creatures. . . imperfectly represent the divine perfection. For from the fact that some creature is wise, it to some extent approached likeness to God.

36

. . . it is manifest that in man there is a likeness to God, copied from God as from an example; yet this likeness is not one of equality; for such an exemplar infinitely exceeds its copy. Therefore, there is in man a likeness to God; not, indeed, a perfect likeness, but imperfect.

37

As Dionysius says, when the scriptures state that nothing is like to God, they are not denying all likeness to Him. For the same things are like and unlike God; like insofar as they imitate as best they can him when it is not possible to imitate perfectly; unlike insofar as they fall short of their cause.

38

Admittedly, the notions of "imperfection", "deficiency" and "falling short" do not take us very far in our attempt to clarify the likeness that Aquinas is talking of in connection with the God/creature relationship. Perhaps it is possible to alleviate this difficulty by considering Chapter 29 of the Summa Contra Gentiles, for in this chapter, St. Thomas expressly deals with the likeness of creatures to God. Therein he states that;

Effects that fall short of their causes do not agree with them in name and nature. Yet, some likeness must be found between them, since it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produce its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act. The form of an effect, therefore, is certainly found in some measure in a transcending cause, but according to another mode and another way. For this reason the cause is called an equivocal cause. Thus, the sun causes heat among these sublunary bodies by acting according as it is in act. Hence the heat generated by the sun must bear some likeness to the active power of the sun, through which heat is caused in this sublunary world; and because of this heat the sun is said to be hot, even though not in one and the same way. And so the sun is said to be somewhat like those things in which it produces its effects as an efficient cause. Yet the sun is also unlike all these things in so far as such effects do not possess heat and the like in the same way as they are found in the sun. So too, God gave things all their perfections and thereby is both like and unlike them.

39

From the standpoint of explaining the difference between God and creatures, the preceding paragraph provides some assistance. In attempting to shed some light on the likeness and difference that characterizes the God/creature relation, St. Thomas turns to the example of the causal relationship between the sun and the sublunary bodies. Both of these things are said to be hot. In scholastic terms this means that they possess the perfection (or form) of heat. Aquinas observes that while possessed by both, the form of heat is found in each in different ways. The sublunary bodies are hot (i.e., possess the perfection of heat) by virtue of their relation to the sun which is the cause of such heat. As effects, these bodies are described as "imperfect" or "deficient" because they depend upon the causal activity of something else

(i.e., the sun) for the perfection they exhibit. In addition, St. Thomas would say that the perfection in question possesses a derivative existence. Here there emerges the element of difference, for unlike the sublunary bodies, the sun does not exhibit such a dependency, as it is hot by reason of its very nature. To the extent that the sun lacks this dependency, Aquinas will say that it possesses heat in a more perfect way than the sublunary bodies. Similarly, in the case of God and creatures, the perfections of the latter are deemed imperfect because they are dependent for their existence upon the causal agency of God. God's eminence with respect to His perfection is founded upon the lack of such a dependency.

So far we have considered Thomas' comments with an eye to their usefulness in explaining the way in which finite beings (most notably men) differ from their divine cause. On this count, the preceding passage from the Summa Contra Gentiles is of some help, for it introduces the notion of derived existence which provides a basis for understanding the difference that Aquinas is talking of.

In considering Thomas' comments from the standpoint of their utility in explicating the likeness between creatures and God we find little assistance being provided. In the earlier passage from the Summa Contra Gentiles, Aquinas, in addressing himself to the question of likeness, only tells us that as effects, finite beings resemble God. In repeating this point, Thomas does not provide any additional elaboration. The upshot

of this is that we are still left in the dark about what Aquinas means when he says that finite beings bear a resemblance to God. At this point in our study we shall simply acknowledge Thomas' lack of specificity regarding this matter. Later we shall take up the question of likeness again, for it is vital to an understanding of Thomas' use of analogy in religious language.

We began this chapter with a discussion of Aquinas' rejection of univocity. Our intent was to discern the reasons for this position. We soon realized that such an objective could only be attained if we considered certain key points that the argument against univocity presupposes. As we have now examined these points we can proceed to incorporate them into a final account of Aquinas' thinking on univocal predication.

Aquinas' treatment of univocal predication proceeds within the framework of the causal relationship between God and creatures.<sup>40</sup> This relation entails that creatures, as the effects of God's causal agency, bear a likeness to God. Within such a relationship, univocal predication would be possible only if the following condition was met. Both subjects of predication (i.e., God and man) would have to possess some properties that were the same. This follows from our earlier definition of univocity which requires that there be a sameness of properties with respect to what is signified by the univocal term in both its instances of use. Considered in the causal context that Aquinas is working in, this demand for sameness of proper-

ties could only be met if the causality being exercised were univocal. This type of causality readily accomodates univocal predication because it requires that the form of the effect be specifically the same as the form of the cause.

Aquinas' main point, which he repeatedly makes in <sup>41</sup>De Potentia, <sup>42</sup>Summa Theologica, <sup>43</sup>Summa Contra Gentiles and <sup>44</sup>De Veritate, is that the causal relation between God and creatures does not admit of the preceding condition. For Thomas, this relation between the infinite and the finite is not to be taken as an instance of univocal causality. In other words, the likeness (or similitude) of creatures to God does not consist in a sameness of form. Rather, as Thomas repeatedly says, the likeness is imperfect or deficient. God does not produce effects that are similar in a way to make univocal predication possible. An effect which recieves a form specifically the same as that of its causal agent can have ascribed to it univocally the name arising from that form. <sup>45</sup> We have seen that in the causal relation between God and Creatures, the effects do not recieve a form specifically the same as that of the causal agent. From this Thomas will conclude that univocal <sup>46</sup>predication is not possible with respect to God and man.

It is accurate to say that the basis for St. Thomas' arguement against univocity is located in his conception of the God/creature relationship. Throughout his works we find him repeatedly appealing to this relationship to expose the shortcomings of univocal predication. While the question of whether



terms are to be applied to God and man univocally is one about a particular use of language, it should be evident by now that St. Thomas' answer relies upon factors that are more metaphysical than linguistic.<sup>47</sup> In turning to Aquinas' treatment of equivocity and analogy (as applied to religious discourse) we shall find that there is a similar type of approach repeatedly emerging. This form of approach is characterized by the following features. Initially we find Thomas considering the applicability of certain terms taken from ordinary language. In the subsequent treatment of this matter we find him drawing increasingly upon elements that can be best characterized as metaphysical.<sup>48</sup> Upon these he builds his case. When viewed this way, we discover that the linguistic considerations entertained by Aquinas are dependent upon an underlying metaphysic: that of the God/creature relationship. In the following pages we shall attempt to show the important role this relationship plays in Aquinas' handling of questions concerning the relevance of certain ordinary linguistic expressions for religious discourse.

<sup>49</sup> Aquinas' approach to equivocal predication proceeds in two ways. The first can be described as a metaphysical one in character because it depends upon the recognition that as the effects of God, creatures bear a likeness to their divine cause. The second type of approach is epistemological in nature, centering upon the question of what we can know of the meaning of terms when they are predicated equivocally of God.

The textual evidence for the metaphysical approach is found in the following passage from the Summa Contra Gentiles:

. . .when there is pure equivocation, there is no likeness in things themselves; there is only the unity of a name. But, as is clear from what we have said, there is a certain mode of likeness of things to God. It remains then, that the names are not said of God in a purely equivocal way.

50

The point that Aquinas is making can be briefly outlined. In a case of complete equivocality, the only thing that the subjects of predication have in common is the equivocal name ascribed to them. There is no likeness or similitude on the part of what the equivocal name signifies in both its instances of use.<sup>51</sup> For Aquinas, this is at odds with the nature of the God/creature relationship, for here we do have a real likeness between God and finite beings. In this relationship there is an element of likeness, one which goes beyond a mere sameness of name.<sup>52</sup> The acceptance of equivocal predication directly implies a denial of this, and for this reason it is not acceptable to Aquinas. Here again we see that Thomas' conclusion about a certain use of language has its basis in his conception of the God/creature relationship.

Textual evidence for the epistemological approach to equivocal predication is found in this passage from the Summa Contra Gentiles:

It is also a fact that a name is predicated of some being uselessly unless through that name we understand something of the being. But, if names are said of God and creatures in a purely equivocal way, we understand nothing of God through those names; for the meanings of those names are known to us solely to the extent that they are said of creatures. In vain, therefore, would it be said or proved of God that He is being, good, or the like.

53

Leaving aside the comments on proof, Aquinas' complaint with equivocal predication comes down to this. Complete equivocity results in a discontinuity of meaning between a term's use in a theistic setting and its use in an ordinary context. Our touchstone for understanding the meaning of terms is their employment in the finite dimension. If these terms are then transported from this more familiar context to the realm of the infinite with the ensuing claim that their present meaning bears no similarity to their non-theistic meaning, then the result would be the evacuation of all meaning from religious language. The consequence of this is clearly agnosticism, for the introduction of complete equivocity effects an irreparable fracture between the meaning of terms as used in religious discourse and their ordinary meaning.

This chapter has focused upon Aquinas' examination of univocity and equivocity vis à vis their applicability to religious discourse. According to Thomas, either form of predication reveals itself to be inadequate. Univocity is inadequate because it is at odds with Aquinas' conception of the God/creature relationship. Equivocity is inadequate because it also is at odds with this relationship. Furthermore, equivocity entails the unacceptable consequence of agnosticism.

## II

### THE THEORY OF ANALOGY

In view of the failure of both univocity and complete equivocity to do justice to our discourse about God, Aquinas suggests that analogical predication be employed to rectify these shortcomings.

From what we have said, therefore, it remains that the names said of God and creatures are predicated neither univocally nor equivocally but analogically, that is, according to an order or reference to something one.

54

Before we proceed to examine Thomas' use of analogy in religious language, we should pause and consider what has been called his "theory" of analogy. Talk of a "theory" in this case is inappropriate as it is difficult to extract from Aquinas' voluminous writings something that could be termed a "theory" or "doctrine" of analogy. Thomas never wrote a formal treatise on the subject of analogy intended as a definitive statement of his position. We find instead, that his comments on analogy are scattered throughout his works, and occur in connection with a variety of subjects in different contexts. In addition, Thomas does not adhere to a fixed classification of analogy; for, we find in moving from his earlier works to his later ones, a considerable degree of modification occurring in his division of analogy. In view of the preceding, it

becomes a formidable task for one to try to distil from the many references which Thomas makes to analogy, a "doctrine" or "theory" of analogy that authoritatively expresses his thinking on the subject.

In spite of the preceding interpretive difficulties, we still think it possible to secure an adequate understanding of the main features of Thomas' teaching on analogy. This can be effected by a detailed examination of the relevant sections in the Summa Theologica, Summa Contra Gentiles, and De Veritate. Additional assistance is also provided by Cajetan in his work, The Analogy of Names. As one of the most important commentators on Aquinas' doctrine of analogy, Cajetan has been criticized by a number of scholars who question whether his classification of analogy is an accurate account of Aquinas' position.<sup>57</sup>

While we are aware of these criticisms we shall, nevertheless, employ Cajetan's classification for these reasons.<sup>58</sup> Firstly, his classification and account of analogy provides one with a way of imposing some order on Aquinas' handling of analogical usage. Secondly, Cajetan's treatment provides one with a way in which to expand upon some of Thomas' more perfunctory descriptions of analogy. Finally, one should bear in mind that Cajetan's classification of Aquinas remains fairly accurate in a number of respects. For example, we shall find that the kind of analogy described by him as the analogy of attribution corresponds to what Thomas calls the analogy of two to a third.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the second form of analogy

that Cajetan considers is termed the analogy of proper  
<sup>60</sup>proportionality, and this can be readily identified with Aquinas'  
<sup>61</sup>analogy of proportionality.

In the Summa Theologica Aquinas distinguishes between  
<sup>62</sup>"two kinds of analogical or 'proportional' uses of language.  
 For the moment we shall concentrate on the first type of analogy.  
 Here we find a term being predicated of two things by virtue  
<sup>63</sup>of the relation that each of them has to some third thing.  
 For example, the term "healthy" is ascribed to both a diet  
 and a complexion "because each of these has some relation to  
<sup>64</sup>health in man". In this case, the diet is related to the  
 health of man as a cause, and the complexion is related as a  
<sup>65</sup>sign or symptom.

The correspondance between Thomas' analogy of two to  
 a third and what Cajetan was to later call the analogy of  
 attribution becomes evident when we consider this selection  
 from The Analogy of Names:

Those things are analogous by attribution which have  
 a common name, and the notion signified by this name  
 is the same with respect to the term but different as  
 regards the relationships to this term. For example,  
 the name healthy is common to medicine, urine, and  
 animal, but the notion of all insofar as healthy  
 expresses different relationships to one term,  
 namely, health. For if anyone describes what an  
 animal is insofar as it is healthy, he will say  
 that it is the subject of health, and that urine  
 insofar as it is healthy is a sign of health,  
 whereas medicine insofar as it is healthy will  
 be mentioned as a cause of health. In this example  
 it is perfectly clear that the notion of health is  
 not entirely different, but to a certain extent the  
 same and to a certain extent different. For there is

a diversity of relationships, but the term of those relationships is one and the same.

66

Following St. Thomas, Cajetan employs the familiar "healthy" example to illustrate the structure of the analogy of attribution. Here the term "healthy" is predicated of different things such as medicine, urine and animal. All of these things receive the common name (ie., "healthy") only by virtue of their relations to one other thing - the health of the animal. Here we have the case of one word being used of a number of things because of the order or relation that each of them has to something else. Thus, urine is designated as healthy because it is a sign of health, and therefore stands in a certain relationship to the health of the animal. Similarly, medicine is called healthy because it is the cause of health, and thus stands related to the health of the animal in a specific way. Finally, the animal is said to be healthy in as far as it possesses the property of health. In Cajetan's example we can see that there is a certain unity among those things that are called healthy. This unity consists in medicine, urine and the animal having a common reference to one thing (ie., the health of the animal). This common reference, in turn, comprises the basis for these things receiving the common name.

Cajetan, unlike Aquinas, provides a systematic treatment of this kind of analogy which entails citing certain conditions that pertain to it. The most important of these states that

This analogy is according to extrinsic denomination only, so that only the primary analogate realizes the perfection formally, whereas the others have it only by extrinsic denomination.

67

The point that Cajetan is making with this first condition can be brought out by reconsidering the "healthy" example. Here the animal is said to be healthy because it alone possesses the property of health as something intrinsic to it. Accordingly, the analogate in question (ie., the animal) is denominated intrinsically, meaning that it has the common name predicated of it because the property signified by the name is possessed by the analogate itself. In addition, the animal is regarded as the primary analogate for it alone possesses the property signified by the analogous name.

The other analogates, such as medicine and urine, are denominated as healthy not because they themselves possess the property of health, but because they are related in differing ways to the analogate to which the property of health is intrinsic. For this reason, medicine and urine are said to be denominated extrinsically, and are termed secondary analogates as they do not possess the property of health as something inhering in them.

On the basis of this distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic denomination we can see that one of the major features of the analogy of attribution is that only one of the analogates formally possesses the property signified by the analogous name.



The second condition cited by Cajetan for the analogy of attribution holds that

the one thing which is the term of the diverse relationships in analogous names of this type in one not merely in concept but numerically.

68

To illustrate what is meant by this condition Cajetan returns to the "healthy" example:

...health is not multiplied numerically in animal, urine and diet, since there is not one health in urine, another in animal, and a third in diet.

69

Cajetan's point is that when we talk of healthy urine, a healthy diet, and a healthy animal, all of these things are so named by reference to the health that inheres in the animal, and this is positively one in number. Thus, in an analogy of attribution, that which all of the analogates relate to is only found in one of the analogates.

The third condition of the analogy of attribution states that "the primary analogate is put into the definition of the others with respect to the analogous name".<sup>70</sup> This point is brought out in more detail in the Summa Theologica:

Whenever a word is used analogically of many things, it is used of them because of some order or relation they have to some central thing. In order to explain an extended or analogical use of a word it is necessary to mention this central thing. Thus you cannot explain what you mean by "healthy" diet without mentioning the health of the man of which it is the cause; similarly you must understand "healthy" as applied to a man before you can understand what is meant by a "healthy" complexion which is the symptom of that health.

71

In terms of Aquinas' "healthy" example, we find that if one seeks to explain the meaning of "healthy" when predicated of diet and complexion, it is necessary to first of all know what is meant by this term when it is predicated of a man. Thus, if we want to define the term "healthy" as applied to a diet and a complexion, it is necessary that reference be made to the health of the man, for it is only by reference to this that diet and complexion are denominated healthy in the first place. Terms analogous by attribution are therefore interdefined because any definition of such a term in it's primary sense must involve the definition of the term in it's secondary sense.<sup>72</sup>

In Cajetan's example of the analogy of attribution he talks of the "notion of health" (i.e., the meaning of the term "healthy") as being "not entirely the same nor entirely different" when it is predicated of medicine, urine, and the animal. This observation is an important one as it expresses the basic scholastic dictum that analogous terms constitute a via media between complete equivocity and univocity. For Aquinas, Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, the meaning of analogous terms are neither completely the same (i.e., univocal) nor completely different (i.e., totally equivocal) in their various occurrences. Rather, they occupy a position midway between these extremes:

It is clear that those things which are predicated in this fashion (that is analogously) are halfway between univocal and equivocal predicates.

It is a general and commonly received view that analogy is intermediary between pure equivocality and univocity, inasmuch as the thing signified is neither absolutely the same, as in univocals, nor absolutely diverse, as in equivocals. . . .

74

Another point to note is that the meaning instances of analogous terms are complex in nature such that both similarity and difference can be specified with respect to them. This element of complexity is present in terms analogous by the analogy of attribution, for as Aquinas notes in his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics:

With those things which are said in the way mentioned [i.e., analogously], the same name is predicated of diverse things according to a notion (ratio) partly the same and partly diverse; diverse with respect to diverse modes of relation, the same, however, with respect to that to which the relation is made.

75

Aquinas' remarks on the analogy of attribution are important because they constitute an attempt to show where the elements of similarity and difference are to be located in this type of analogy. This task can be made easier if we consider the following statements: (a) Peter is healthy, (b) Medicine is healthy, (c) Urine is healthy. <sup>76</sup> Here the term "healthy" is understood to be analogous by the analogy of attribution. The first thing to note about statements (a) to (c) is that the grammatical subjects differ, yet, at the same time there is a common predicate term. Further, in view of Cajetan's first condition of the analogy of attribution, it is clear that only the subject in (a) formally (i.e., intrinsically) possesses the

property signified by the analogous term.

As mentioned earlier, analogous terms are complex in meaning. This feature becomes apparent with the following analysis of the analogous term "healthy" as it occurs in (b) and (c):

"Healthy" in (b) = cause of + health

"Healthy" in (c) = sign of + health

With this in mind we are now in a position to account for the similarity and difference that characterizes the meaning of "healthy" <sup>b</sup> and "healthy" <sup>c</sup>. In considering both instances of the analogous term we find that the element of similarity is to be equated with univocity. With respect to "healthy" <sup>b</sup> and "healthy" <sup>c</sup> we find a common core of meaning, for in the above analysis, the term "health" has partially the same meaning in both of its occurrences. The element of univocity becomes apparent once we realize that what medicine is the cause of and the urine the sign of, is one and the same thing, namely the health of the living organism called Peter.

While there is a degree of univocity present in the meaning of the analogous term, the univocity is not total for <sup>77</sup> there is also a degree of difference present. And it is this that saves the analogous term from being completely univocal. This element of difference can be accounted for in the following way. The term "healthy" as it occurs in (b) means "cause of health", and in (c) "sign of health". The relations in each case

to the health of Peter differ, and as these comprise, in part, the meaning of "healthy" in (b) and (c), the analogous term will not have the same meaning in both instances of its use. In this way complete univocity is avoided.

Now that we have examined the structure and features of the analogy of attribution (or what Aquinas would call the analogy of two to a third) we are in a position to offer the following definition of this form of analogy.<sup>78</sup>

Term "X" is used by the analogy of attribution in sentences (a) and (b) if:

- (1) Term "X" occurs as a predicate in two or more indicative sentences of the form (i) "R is X" (ii) "S is X"
- (2) Term "X" in (i) signifies a property X of R.
- (3) Term "X" in (ii) signifies a relation of S to R where S is either a cause of R's having property X or is in some respect an effect or affected causally by R's having property X.
- (4) There is only one (numerically) instance of the property X of "X" in (i) and it belongs to the subject R.
- (5) The term "X" in sentence (ii) cannot be defined unless the entire definition of the term "X" in sentence (i) is made part of its definition.
- (6) Term "X" in both of its instances in (i) and (ii) is neither completely univocal nor totally equivocal.

In the preceding section we sought to examine the structure of the analogy of attribution. With this accomplished we now move on to consider the analogy of proper proportionality.<sup>79</sup> In the Analogy of Names, Cajetan provides this description of the analogy of proper proportionality:

. . . we say that those things are called analogous by proportionality which have a common name, and the notion expressed by this name is proportionally the same. Or to say the same in a different way, those things are called analogous by proportionality which have a common name, and the notion expressed by this name is similar according to a proportion.

80

There are a number of things to note about this description of the analogy of proportionality. Firstly, the term "proportion" should be understood to mean "relation". Originally, the notion of proportion arose within the context of mathematics where it was used to signify "a definite relation of one quantity to another"<sup>81</sup>. Such usage is to be found in the case of our saying that the proportion of 2 to 4 is "two" (or "twice"). With the Scholastics (notably Aquinas and Cajetan) the term "proportion" comes to be extended beyond the domain of mathematics so as to mean any relation of one thing to another:

Proportion in the proper sense is found in quantities and means a definite measure of two quantities which are compared to one another. . . . Nevertheless, the name proportion has been widened to mean any relationship of one thing to another.

82

Now that we have explicated the meaning of the term "proportion" we can go on to consider the term "proportionality". An initial move towards understanding this notion can be made by examining what Aquinas says about it in De Veritate:

Since an agreement according to proportion can happen in two ways, two kinds of community can be noted in analogy. There is a certain agreement between things having a proportion to each other from the fact that they have a determinate distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two

has to unity in as far as it is the double of unity. Again, the agreement is occasionally noted not between two things which have a proportion between them, but rather between two related proportions -- for example, six has something in common with four because six is two times three, just as four is two times two. The first type of agreement is one of proportion, the second of proportionality.

83

Aquinas' example of proportionality is quite appropriate for the notion of proportionality arose within the context of mathematics. An example of such usage is the mathematical proportion of 2:4::4:8. Here we have an instance of proportionality, as the relation of 2 to 4 is the same (i.e., identical) as the relation of 4 to 8.

While Aquinas and Cajetan draw upon the mathematical model (i.e., A:B::C:D:) for their notion of proportionality, both would readily admit that there is a major difference between their notion and the model. We saw that the mathematical model is characterized by an identity of relations. In contrast to this, both Aquinas and Cajetan would claim that the term proportionality, when employed outside of the domain of mathematics, signifies a similarity of relations. Thus, in its non-mathematical usage, proportionality becomes weakened so as to mean only a similarity of relations. This point is brought out by Cajetan in The Analogy of Names:

The name proportionality is given to a similitude of two proportions; e.g. we say that eight is to four as six is to three, because both are twice as much in proportion, etc. However philosophers have transferred the term proportion (from the sphere of mathematics and use it) to express any relationship of conformity, commensuration, capacity, etc. As a result they have extended the use of the term proportionality to every similitude of relationship.

85

An example of such a proportionality is to be found in our claim that both the calm in the sea and the stillness in the air are "tranquil". Here we find a proportional similarity obtaining between the calm in the sea and the stillness in the air. By this we mean that the calm in the sea is related to the sea in a way that is similar to the relation of the stillness in the air to the air. In this analogy of proper proportionality there is a similitude of proportions, and because of this we are justified in applying the analogous term "tranquil" to both things. While the subjects of predication are different, they are not completely different, as both bear a proportional likeness to each other which allows them to receive a common name.

Another illustration of this type of analogy can be found in Cajetan's The Analogy of Names<sup>86</sup>. With this example we find the term "principle" being predicated of the heart (with respect to the animal) and the foundation (with respect to the house). Here again we find a proportional likeness as the relations of the heart to the animal is similar<sup>87</sup> to the relation of the foundation to the house. By virtue of this similitude of relations, the heart and the foundation have the analogous term ascribed to them.

With the preceding examples in mind we can now outline some of the main features of the analogy of proportionality. Firstly, this form of analogy applies to the situation in which two things, A and B, receive a common name. Secondly, A stands in a relation, R, to some property, thing or event,



and B stands in a relation,  $R_1$ , to some property, thing or event.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the analogy of proportionality displays a four term structure with a relation obtaining between each pair of terms. The third and most important feature of this form of analogy is that the relations  $R$  and  $R_1$  are similar and not identical.<sup>89</sup> This last feature should be seen as the most crucial one as it provides the basis for the imposition of the analogous name.

In comparing the analogy of proportionality with the analogy of attribution (or Thomas' analogy of two to a third), we find that there is an important difference. One of the major characteristics of the latter is that different things (eg., medicine, urine and diet) receive the analogous name by virtue of the relation that each of them bears to some one thing (eg., the health of the living organism). With the former type of analogy the foundation for analogical predication differs, as the analogous name is applied because of a proportional likeness obtaining between the things so named.

Another point of difference emerges when we consider an additional feature of the analogy of proportionality that Cajetan outlines in The Analogy of Names. Cajetan observes that in this type of analogy the analogous name signifies, in both its instances, a property that is intrinsically possessed by each of the analogates.<sup>90</sup> In as far as the analogy of

proportionality "predicates perfections that are inherent in each analogate,"<sup>91</sup> it is to be distinguished from the analogy of attribution for,

In the latter case, there is only one numerical instance of the property signified by both instances of the analogous term, whereas in the former case there must be one instance of the property for each instance of the term as predicate of a sentence with a different subject.

92

The preceding feature is an important one, for it allows us to distinguish between the analogy of proper proportionality<sup>93</sup> and the analogy of improper or metaphorical proportionality.

An instance of the latter form of proportionality is found in the predication of the term "smiling" of a blooming meadow or a good fortune. In this case neither thing can actually smile,<sup>94</sup> rather they are said to do so only by figure of speech.

Another example of this usage is to be found in the statement, "The lion is the king of beasts." The lion is likened to a king because its relation to savage animals is thought to be similar to the relation that a king bears to his subjects. Thus, the basis for predicating the metaphorical name is a proportionality. Because there is a proportional likeness between the lion (with respect to savage animals) and the king (with respect to his subjects) there is an analogy of proportionality present. This analogy is, however, improper because the name "king", when applied to the lion, does not signify a property (ie., kingship) inhering in the nature of the lion. In this case and others, the analogy is designated as improper because the subject to which

the metaphorical term is applied does not possess the property signified by the term.

Now that we have examined the main features of the analogy of proper proportionality, we can offer the following definition of this form of analogy.<sup>95</sup>

Term "A" is analogous by the analogy of proper proportionality in sentences (a) and (b) if:

- (1) Term "A", in both its instances in (a) and (b), is a dyadic relational term of the form "xRy".
- (2) As a dyadic relational term, "A", in both its instances, signifies a relation A obtaining between x (x being a property, action, event or thing) and T (where T is an individual thing), and between y (y being a property, action, event or thing) and R (where R is an individual thing).
- (3) TAx and RAy are proportionally similar (ie., A in TAx is similar and not identical to A in RAy).

The preceding forms of analogy do not exhaust the division of analogy found in Aquinas' later works.<sup>96</sup> As noted earlier, in the Summa Theologica we find Thomas dealing with analogy in terms of a twofold division between (1) the analogy of two to a third (analogia duorum ad tertium) and (2) the analogy of one to the other (analogia unius ad alterum):

We can distinguish two kinds of analogical or 'proportional' uses of language. Firstly, there is the case of one word being used of two things because each of them has some order or relation to a third thing. Thus, we use the word "healthy" of both a diet and a complexion because each of these has some relation to health in a man, the former as

a cause, the latter as a symptom of it. Secondly, there is the case of the same word used of two things because of some relation that one has to the other - as "healthy" is used of diet and the man because the diet is the cause of the health in the man.

97

The first kind of analogical usage can, as we have seen, be readily identified with what Cajetan was to later call the analogy of attribution. The second form of analogy is named the analogy of one to the other, and in it we find a common name being predicated of only two things.<sup>98</sup> The basis for the predication of the analogous name is the relation that one of the things has to the other. In Aquinas' example, we find that medicine is termed "healthy" because of its causal relation to the property of health in man, who, in turn, is called "healthy" because he possesses the property of health.

In Thomas' works we find references to the analogy of one to another, the analogy of two to a third, and the analogy of proportionality.<sup>99</sup> In view of this, and Thomas' claim that religious language is to be interpreted analogically, one is prompted to ask the following question: Which of the preceding types of analogy did Aquinas view as being most relevant to religious discourse? This is a difficult question and little unanimity is to be found in the answers that various scholars provide. The division lines in this matter are, however, clearly drawn between those who favour the analogy of (proper) proportionality<sup>100</sup> and those who favour the analogy of one to the other.<sup>101</sup> While there exists this variance in opinion, all would

102

nevertheless agree that the analogy of attribution does not have a role to play in religious language.

Before we present our answer to the preceding question, we shall consider the reasons for Aquinas' condemnation of the analogy of attribution. We can begin by considering the following statements: (1) God is good, (2) Man is good. The term "good" in (1) and (2) is said to be analogous by the analogy of attribution. Following our earlier analysis of this form of analogy, the term "good" is taken to mean "cause of goodness (in man)". Thus, the analogous term in (1) signifies a relation of God to man where the former is cause of the latter's having the property signified by "good". Bearing in mind Cajetan's distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic denomination,<sup>2</sup> we find that God is to be viewed as a secondary analogate which receives the common name not by virtue of its possessing the property of goodness, but rather because it is related in a certain way (ie., as a cause) to that analogate (ie., man) which intrinsically possesses the property of goodness. Aquinas seems to be aware of this consequence. For example, in the thirteenth question of the Summa Theologica we find him considering the position of Alan of Lille which offers a causal interpretation of divine predicates. On the basis of such an approach the sentence "God is good" would mean "God is the cause of goodness in things".<sup>103</sup> Aquinas observes that with this type of interpretation

...it would follow that everything we said of God

would be true only in a secondary sense, as when we say that a diet is "healthy", meaning merely that it causes health in the one who takes it, while it is the living body which is said to be healthy in a primary sense.

104

While Aquinas does not make explicit mention of the analogy of attribution in this passage, we think that he does have it in mind. There are a number of factors that point to this. Firstly, the example used by Thomas (ie., the predication of "healthy") is usually employed to illustrate the analogy of attribution. Secondly, Thomas' earlier analysis of the statement "God is good"<sup>105</sup> yields results that are the same as those when the statement is subject to the analogy of attribution. Finally, Aquinas' expression "true only in a secondary sense" clearly suggests the notions of the secondary analogate and extrinsic denomination, both of which are traditionally associated with the analogy of attribution.

Aquinas' main complaint with the employment of the analogy of attribution has its basis in his conception of the God/creature relationship. As we have seen, this relationship entails that God is the source of the existence and perfections of finite creatures. What is germane to our present interests is the additional point that God possesses such perfections in a more eminent fashion. The use of the analogy of attribution to predicate names of God does not bring out this essential point. In fact it obscures it, as with such usage the terms ascribed to God only signify his particular relation to man. Aquinas' point

is that such terms means a good deal more than this -- they also signify perfections that belong to the very nature of God:

. . . words of this sort [i.e., those used in a non-metaphorical sense], do not only say how God is a cause, they also say what he is. When we say he is good or wise we do not simply mean that he causes wisdom or goodness, but that he possesses these perfections transcendently.

106

"God is good" therefore does not mean the same as "God is the cause of goodness". . . It means that what we call "goodness" in creatures pre-exists in God in a higher way.

107

There are additional grounds for not applying the analogy of attribution to religious language. One of these, while not mentioned by Aquinas, follows directly from our earlier analysis of the analogy of attribution. Consider the over-worked "healthy" example: (1) Peter is healthy, (2) Urine is healthy, (3) Medicine is healthy. Taking into account Cajetan's first condition regarding extrinsic denomination, we know that only the subject in (1) formally possesses what is signified by the analogous name. Further examination reveals that "healthy" in (2) means "sign of health", and "healthy" in (3) means "cause of health". Clearly, there is an element of univocity present, for what urine is the sign of, and medicine the cause of, is one and the same thing -- the property of health in Peter.

The preceding can be applied to our earlier example: (A) God is good, (B) Man is good. If "good" functions analogously

by the analogy of attribution in sentences (A) and (B), we find that a univocal core of meaning is introduced with respect to the instances of "good" in (A) and (B). In this case, "good" in (A) means "cause of goodness" and "good" in (B) means "subject of goodness". Bearing in mind traditional theism's aversion to univocity and its entailed anthropomorphism, it should come as no surprise that the analogy of attribution is not assigned a role in religious language.

We find another objection to the theistic use of analogy of attribution being offered in the Summa Contra Gentiles:

Now, the names said of God and things are not said analogically according to the first mode of analogy [i.e., the analogy of many to one], since we should then have to posit something prior to God. . . .

108

To understand Aquinas' objection we must again return to the "healthy" example. In the case of medicine and urine we say that both are healthy by virtue of the relation that each of them has to some third thing -- the health of the living organism. It is this that is prior, for "the two things must be preceded by something to which each of them bears some relation."<sup>109</sup> Thus, in the analogy of attribution the primary analogate exercises a degree of priority over the secondary analogates. Such a state of affairs could not apply to God for there is nothing that is prior to Him in which the perfection signified is realized more properly and formally.<sup>110</sup> On the contrary, the perfection that is signified is realized most properly in God Himself, for He is the cause of all creaturely per-



fections.

With the exclusion of the analogy of attribution, the possible candidates for employment in religious language are reduced to the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of one to the other. As noted earlier, there is little agreement as to which form of analogy is most suited for use in religious discourse. Some scholars champion the analogy of proportionality. In doing so, they are adhering to the position of Cajetan who thought that the analogy of (proper) proportionality was the only true form of analogy, excelling all others in both dignity and name.<sup>111</sup> For Cajetan, this type of analogy is to be regarded as the one most applicable to metaphysics and religious language.

Opposed to the preceding view is that which claims that Aquinas adopts the use of the analogy of one to the other in religious language. This position originates with Francisco Suarez who charges Cajetan, in his role as Thomas' commentator, with misinterpretation. For Suarez, the most marked instance of such misinterpretation is to be found in the emphasis that Cajetan places on the analogy of proportionality. Suarez claims that a reading of Aquinas' works<sup>112</sup> will reveal that the analogy of proportionality has no significant role to play in Thomas' thought on religious language.<sup>113</sup> Suarez also notes that in Aquinas one finds not only the notion of extrinsic denomination but also that of intrinsic denomination. On the basis of this, and his devaluation of the importance of proportionality, Suarez

concludes that the analogy of one to the other according to intrinsic denomination is, for Aquinas, the form of analogy most applicable to religious language.<sup>114</sup>

With respect to this debate over the forms of analogy most relevant to religious discourse, we shall side with Suarez and suggest that Thomas opts for the analogy of one to another. Our argument in support of this position shall consist of the following steps. Firstly, we will attempt to show that the analogy of proper proportionality does not occupy a prominent position in Aquinas' theory of analogy. Secondly, we shall proceed to make a case for Aquinas' analogy of one to another claiming, as Suarez and others have,<sup>115</sup> that it is characterized by intrinsic denomination.

The major reference for the analogy of proportionality is found in question two of Aquinas' De Veritate.<sup>116</sup> Here we find St. Thomas dealing with the question of whether the term "knowledge" is predicated of God and man purely equivocally. He responds that the term is predicated analogically. In the ensuing discussion he makes a distinction between three modes of analogy: (1) analogy of proper proportionality, (2) the analogy of proportion, (3) the analogy of improper or metaphorical proportionality.<sup>117</sup> Aquinas concludes his discussion by observing that names are predicated of God and man according to the analogy of proper proportionality. Aquinas seems to assign a major role for the analogy of proper proportionality in religious discourse. Unfortunately, certain textual considerations reveal that Thomas' position on the matter is not as

clear cut as one would suppose. Firstly, we should bear in mind that De Veritate is an early work (approx. 1256-1259). More extensive treatments on analogy and religious language were to follow in Aquinas' mature theological writings. <sup>118</sup>

In comparing the relevant passages in these works with those of De Veritate, one is surprised to find that in these later works there is no mention of the analogy of proportionality. In both the Summa Theologica and the Summa Contra Gentiles there are major treatments of analogy and religious language, yet in such sections where, in view of the De Veritate text, one would expect the inclusion of the analogy of proportionality, none is to be found. <sup>119</sup> Aside from this obvious omission, one also finds Aquinas clearly suggesting that names are predicated of God and man according to the analogy of one to another. <sup>120</sup>

On textual grounds alone, the exclusion of the analogy of proportionality from his later works strongly suggests that Aquinas had come to abandon this form of analogy. Klubertanz in his work, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, offers such a conclusion.

From a textual standpoint the absence of any subsequent text [after De Veritate] which teaches proper proportionality between God and creatures constitutes strong evidence that St. Thomas quietly abandoned this doctrine after 1256.

121

At best we could say that the analogy of proper proportionality was taught by St. Thomas for a short period of

time in his career. After this, it drops out of sight. Again we find Klubertanz's comments germane to this point:

For a period of some months around the year 1256, St. Thomas either held or considered holding proper proportionality as the intrinsic analogy explaining the ontological similarity between God and creatures. This position he had not held previously and would never develop again in subsequent writings.

122

In view of the omission of proportionality in the later works, one naturally wonders why Aquinas came to abandon this form of analogy. In attempting to answer this question we find ourselves in the province of speculation for nowhere does Thomas provide any reasons for his change of thought.

One possible reason for the abandonment of this type of analogy is found in its very structure and the consequences this has for the Judeo-Christian conception of God. We will recall that this type of analogy has a four term structure. In addition it is claimed that the analogous name, in both its instances of use, signifies a property intrinsically possessed by each of the analogates.<sup>123</sup> For example, when we say that both man and God are "good", this entails that what "good" signifies in each instance is possessed by both God and man.

In its theistic employment, this form of analogy claims that there is a proportional likeness obtaining between the way in which certain attributes of God are related to His nature and the way in which certain attributes of creatures are related to their natures. Schematically, this has often been expressed in the following manner:

God's qualities

creature's qualities

=

God's nature

creature's nature

We are cautioned not to interpret the equality sign mathematically, as the relation between the two proportions is only similar and not identical.

It is primarily the relational structure of this form of analogy that creates difficulties, as the following clearly indicates:

Ingenious as this theory is [i.e. the analogy of proper proportionality], it nevertheless creates serious difficulties of its own. It relies upon the possibility of establishing a ratio between two mutually incommensurable orders, the temporal and the eternal, which shall justify us in asserting: as the finite is to the finite, so the infinite is to the infinite. But according to Aquinas' own teaching, this would seem to be impossible. A finite substance, such as a man, does indeed stand in relation to its own attributes, so that we can speak of a man possessing the quality of goodness. But Aquinas himself has claimed to demonstrate that God is not a substance, and that in him there are no accidents. God does not possess goodness, God is goodness. Goodness and being in him are identical. We have assumed that there is a differentiation in the infinite corresponding to the relation of substance to quality of which we are aware in the finite; but our assumption is false, for such differentiation is incompatible with the divine simplicity.

124

The preceding difficulty centres upon a tension between the structure of proportionality and the simplicity of God. The analogy of proportionality demands that a distinction be made between God's nature and his qualities. While one can do this with respect to man's nature and his qualities, such a distinction is not possible in the case of God. This follows from Aquinas'

insistence that God is neither subject to composition nor composed of substance and accidents. Thus it would seem that the very structure of this species of analogy is at odds with Aquinas' conception of God. Possibly, Aquinas came to realize this.

If so, it would perhaps explain the omission of proportionality from his mature works.

In his later writings, Aquinas repeatedly considers analogy in terms of a two-fold division that includes (a) the  
 125 analogy of many to one and (b) the analogy of one to another. 126  
 The following passages from the Summa Contra Gentiles and the Summa Theologica clearly display Thomas' use of this division:

From what we have said, therefore, it remains that the names said of God and creatures are predicated neither univocally nor equivocally but analogically, that is, according to an order or reference to something one. . . . This can take place in two ways. In one way, according as many things have reference to something one. . . . In another way, the analogy can obtain according as the order or reference of two things is not to something else but to one of them. . . . Now the names said of God and things are not said analogically according to the first mode of analogy, since we should then have to posit something prior to God, but according to the second mode.

127

We must say, therefore, that words are used of God and creatures in an analogical way, that is in accordance with a certain order between them. We can distinguish two kinds of analogical or "proportional" uses of language. Firstly there is the case of one word being used of two things because each of them has some order or relation to a third thing. . . . Secondly, there is the case of the same word used of two things because of some relation that one has to the other. . . . In this way some words are used neither univocally nor purely equivocally of God and creatures, but analogically.

128

While taken from different works, these selections have a number of features in common. Firstly, in both we find no mention of the analogy of proportionality. This tends to support our earlier claim regarding Aquinas' abandonment of this form of analogy. Secondly, while the analogy of attribution is mentioned, it is not assigned a role in religious language. This is not surprising in view of what was said earlier about its shortcomings. Thirdly, and most important, we discover Aquinas singling out the analogy of proportion as the type of analogy most suitable for predicating names of God and man. This emphasis upon the analogy of proportion is not peculiar to the Summa Theologica and the Summa Contra Gentiles. One also finds it in considering relevant sections of De Potentia and the Compendium of Theology <sup>129</sup> .

Those who stand in the tradition of Suarez would agree with this point regarding the primacy of the analogy of proportion in Thomas' later thought. They would also claim that this analogy is characterized by intrinsic denomination. This additional qualifier occasions a fair amount of dispute between those who adhere to the Cajetanian interpretation and others who favour the Suarezian approach. The latter accord priority to analogy of proportion according to intrinsic denomination. Further, they view the analogy of proportionality as having no significant role to play in Aquinas' doctrine of analogy. The Cajetanians stand firmly opposed to this view on a number of

counts. Firstly, they emphasize the analogy of proper proportionality. Secondly, they classify the analogy of proportion as an instance of the analogy of attribution, and thus they view it as being characterized by extrinsic denomination.

In this dispute, we find ourselves siding with the Suarezian point of view. As a first move in defence of such a position we would claim that the Cajetanian insistence on the primacy of proportionality cannot be supported. This has already been established on textual grounds, for we have found that in his later works, Aquinas makes no reference to proportionality when he discusses analogy and religious language. In addition, textual considerations strongly suggest that the Suarezians are correct in claiming a major role for the analogy of proportion in religious discourse. Aquinas' repeated comments on the importance of this analogy for such discourse offer strong support to the Suarezian claim.

The second point in the Suarezian position is more difficult to establish, for nowhere does Aquinas clearly come out and say that the analogy of proportion is subject to intrinsic denomination. In spite of this reticence on Thomas' part, we do think that one can argue in favour of the Suarezian demand for intrinsic denomination. The basis of such an argument is to be found in Aquinas' insistence that the names predicated of God express something of what He is.<sup>130</sup>

In the thirteenth question of the Summa Theologica we find Aquinas claiming that names are predicated of God "in



the category of substance."<sup>131</sup> By this Thomas means that such terms refer to the nature of God, signifying something that is intrinsic to His nature. Terms predicated in this fashion are substantial because they express something of what God is. For example, when we say that "God is good", the predicate term is to be understood as signifying something that is in God, this being the property or "perfection" of goodness. In other words, Thomas is arguing for an interpretation of the divine names that emphasizes their intrinsicity.

Given Aquinas' concern for substantial predication, and the twofold division of denomination into the intrinsic and extrinsic varieties, it would seem that intrinsic denomination most readily accomodates his desire for predication "in the category of substance". We will remember that this form of denomination entails that the analogous name, in both instances, signifies a property that inheres in each of the analogates. Clearly, extrinsic denomination is not at issue here, for it merely provides one with a relational account of the divine names. For Aquinas this is not sufficient, as the names ascribed to God must say something of what he is. Given Aquinas' concern, intrinsic denomination becomes necessary for it guarantees that when a term is used analogically of God, it will signify something that is intrinsic to His nature. The demand for substantial predication can be met only if one allows for the element of intrinsic denomination in the analogical ascription of names to God.

The preceding remarks about intrinsic denomination complete our presentation of the Suarezian interpretation of Aquinas' position on analogy and religious discourse. In defending this view we have attempted to argue two points. Firstly, that the analogy of one to another (i.e., the analogy of proportion) is the form of analogy that Aquinas views as being the most applicable to religious language. We tried to show that this follows from (a) the omission of the analogy of proportionality in Thomas' later works and (b) his repeated claim that names are ascribed to God and man on the basis of the analogy of proportion. The second point we dealt with focused on the claim that the analogy of proportion is characterized by intrinsic denomination. While admitting that this was a more difficult point to establish, we suggested that this type of denomination is required in view of Aquinas' insistence that the divine names be predicated substantially.

For those who stand in the Cajetanian camp, the Suarezian account remains unacceptable because of a consequence which is thought to arise with the adoption of intrinsic denomination. The problem can be clarified by considering these statements: (1) Peter is good, (2) God is good. Here the common term is understood to be analogous by the analogy of one to another. In addition, the analogy is claimed to be subject to intrinsic denomination. This crucial qualifier means that the analogous name, in both (1) and (2), signifies a property (i.e., goodness) that is formally possessed by each

of the analogates. For the Cajetanian this constitutes the crux of the difficulty. He would claim that its inclusion is tantamount to saying that both analogates (ie., God and Peter) share in a common property. Now if this is the case, it would seem that the common term has lapsed into univocity. On this reading the appeal to intrinsic denomination appears to open the door to univocity and its attendant anthropomorphism.

The Suarezian response to this objection draws upon Aquinas' conception of the God/creature relationship. We will remember that in this relation, God is viewed as the cause of creaturely perfections. Further, His causality is not to be construed as univocal in character. On the contrary, it is equivocal or, as Aquinas sometimes says, analogical. With this in view, the Suarezian would make the additional point that the theological use of the analogy of proper proportion (ie., the analogy of one to another) is squarely based upon the causal relationship between God and creatures. Now if we bear this in mind, the Suarezian argues, it then becomes difficult to see how the inclusion of intrinsic denomination leads to the univocal consequences alledged by the Cajetanian. The elucidation and justification of this point turns upon an analysis of the similarity and difference that is at play in the God/creature relationship. With respect to this relation, we know that the likeness obtaining between a created perfection and its divine counterpart is not of the type that leads to univocity. In terms of the preceding example, this means that the commonality between

man's goodness and God's goodness is not reducible to a sameness of form. For Aquinas, the likeness (ie., commonality) is to be regarded as analogical.

If we turn to consider the element of difference that holds between man's goodness and divine goodness we find, the Suarezian claims, additional grounds for rejecting the Cajetanian objection. Aquinas repeatedly says that created perfections are imperfect and deficient with respect to their divine counterparts. Such deficiency stems, in part, from the fact that created perfections exhibit a dependent and composite mode of existence. If we consider this point in relation to human goodness, it then becomes apparent that such a perfection cannot be said to be the same as the divine goodness. Thus, it would seem that there is no foundation for univocity in this case.

The preceding points about the similarity and difference that obtain between the created and divine perfections should, the Suarezian claims, effectively serve to overcome any fear that the use of intrinsic denomination in theological analogy leads to univocity.

In the preceding sections we dealt with a number of issues relating to Aquinas' discussion of religious language. We have seen the reasons underlying his rejection of both univocity and equivocity, along with his subsequent turn to analogy as a way to account for the meaning of the terms ascribed to God. We also considered the question of the type of analogy Aquinas thinks most applicable to religious language.

While recognizing the difficulty in providing a definitive answer to this question, we suggested that the analogy of one to another (analogia unius ad alterum) was the most likely candidate for the job. In addition, we tried to show that this form of analogy is consistent with intrinsic denomination.

During the course of these investigations we have also been trying to display the importance of an underlying metaphysics in Thomas' handling of religious language.<sup>132</sup> His handling of univocity and equivocity are indicative of this; for, in both cases we find Aquinas repeatedly appealing to the God/creature relationship so as to establish and justify his case. This way of treating matters clearly suggests, we think, that Aquinas' response to questions concerning religious language<sup>133</sup> is dependent upon and conditioned by his conception of this relationship between the finite and the infinite. Nowhere is this dependency upon an underlying metaphysics more pronounced than in the analogical application of terms to God and man, for the very possibility of such usage rests upon the unique relationship obtaining between creatures and God. Aquinas' comments in the Summa Theologica bear this out:

In this way some words are used neither univocally nor purely equivocally of God and creatures, but analogically, for we cannot speak of God except in the language we use of creatures, and so whatever is said of both God and creatures is said in virtue of the order that creatures have to God as to their source and cause in which all the perfections of things pre-exist transcendently.

The attempt to articulate this dependency that Aquinas is talking of requires that we consider one fundamental condition that must be met in order that theological analogy be possible.<sup>135</sup> For Aquinas such usage is only possible if there exists a likeness on the part of the things to which the analogous name is applied. It is this similitude that justifies the imposition of the analogous term in the first place. In the absence of this "ontological" likeness,<sup>136</sup> equivocity would result; for, in equivocation we have a sameness of name, but no likeness on the part of what the term signifies in its instances of use. The basic requirement for the analogical extension of terms to God is that there be some sort of likeness obtaining between creatures and God.

With the recognition of this requirement, the God/creature relationship assumes crucial importance; for, it provides the requisite element of likeness. We will remember from our earlier discussion that this relationship between God and man (creatures) is a causal one. In this scheme God is viewed as the cause of creatures and the source of the various perfections they exemplify. In so far as this relationship is causal it must adhere to the principle which claims that there is no effect that does not, in some way, resemble its cause. This means that creatures, as the effects of God, bear a likeness to their creator. With the recognition of this similitude Aquinas feels that he has the warrant for claiming that certain terms can be predicated analogically of

man and God. Because creatures are ordered to God in such a way as to resemble Him,<sup>137</sup> one is therefore justified in employing names, culled from the former, to say something about the latter. The sort of likeness required by theological analogy is to be located in the God/creature relationship; for, on the basis of it there is a similarity obtaining between what the analogous term signifies when used of man and what it signifies when used of God. Thus, the final justification for theological analogy lies within the God/creature relationship:

Aquinas' justification of theological language rests on his interpretation of the God-creature relationship. According to his interpretation of this relationship, finite reality bears some similarity to Him because every effect resembles its cause. This interpretation of the God-creature relationship authorizes the use of human language, because finite reality itself points to God.

138

Before concluding this section we should like to make some general comments on the way in which Aquinas handles the subject of religious language. In dealing with matters pertaining to such usage, Aquinas repeatedly displays an approach that is both linguistic and metaphysical in character. His consideration of univocity and equivocity is a case in point. While each have to do with a certain form of linguistic usage, we find Aquinas evaluating them upon the basis of certain metaphysical facts—most notably the relation of creatures to God. Similarly in the case we have just examined, the metaphysical element goes hand in glove with that of the linguistic. On the one hand we find Thomas recommending and describing a particular form of usage (ie., analogical) which he thinks is most applicable

to religious discourse. From this perspective the discussion has a definite linguistic character about it. However, on the other hand we find Aquinas quick to observe that such usage has a metaphysical backbone because it is based upon the likeness of creatures to God. All of this goes to show that in Thomas' thinking on religious language, metaphysical considerations are never far removed from those of the linguistic sort. This is, we think, an important point to bear in mind, especially in light of the current tendency to view Aquinas' handling of analogy and religious discourse in purely linguistic terms. One finds this type of approach repeatedly emerging in the contemporary literature on the subject.<sup>139</sup>

Our basic complaint with this type of treatment is that it provides a rather one-sided view of Aquinas. With its emphasis upon usage, it only provides a partial account of Aquinas' position; for, it often tends to ignore (or at least minimize) the important metaphysical elements that provide the underpinning for his position. The preceding investigations into univocity, equivocity and analogy have repeatedly attempted to show the significance of the metaphysical dimension in Aquinas' examination of religious language. We hope that such considerations have also shown that an adequate understanding of Aquinas' thinking can only be achieved when both the linguistic and metaphysical character of his enterprise is taken into account.



### III

#### THE MODUS SIGNIFICANDI-RES SIGNIFICATA DISTINCTION

We now turn to consider yet another strand in Aquinas' treatment of analogy and religious language, namely, the distinction between a term's mode (or way) of signification (its modus significandi) and the thing (or object) that the term signifies (its res significata).<sup>140</sup> This distinction has relevance for "the words we use to attribute perfections to God"<sup>141</sup>. From an interpretive standpoint this distinction presents a difficulty. This is mainly due to a lack of detailed explanation on Aquinas' part. While he repeatedly appeals to this distinction in his handling of religious language, one finds that his accounts of it are quite brief. In addition, little assistance is provided by way of the commentators, as they, for the most part, are divided on the question of how this distinction is to be understood.<sup>142</sup> In spite of St. Thomas' brevity on the matter, and the preceding lack of unanimity, we still think that it is possible to provide a fairly thorough account of the res/modus distinction. We shall now proceed to do this in a somewhat roundabout fashion by briefly examining Aquinas' theory of signification.<sup>143</sup> Once this is accomplished, we shall then offer an account of the distinction itself. The consideration of the

theory of signification is undertaken for the following reasons. Firstly, the res/modus distinction functions as a component within Thomas' theory of signification. Accordingly, the theory provides the necessary framework within which to best understand this distinction. Secondly, and most important, Aquinas' account of the res and modus of a term draws upon a number of points that are tied up with his theory of signification.

Thomas' conception of signification can be seen to have its basis in Aristotle.<sup>144</sup> Following Aristotle, Aquinas regards names as signifying things as they are known to exist in reality. The signification is, however, not direct, for between the name and the thing (or object) it is imposed to designate there stands the intermediary of thought. We find this point being brought out in De Potentia:

But it must be observed that the signification of a term does not refer to the thing immediately but through the medium of the mind: because words are tokens of the souls impressions, and the conceptions of the mind are images of things, according to the philosopher.

145

A similar view on the signification of names is to be found in the Summa Theologica:

Aristotle, says that words are signs for thoughts and thoughts are likenesses of things, so words refer to things indirectly through thoughts. How we refer to a thing depends on how we understand it.

146

For Aquinas, a name signifies a thing via a concept or idea (often termed a ratio) that the intellect has formulated of the referent. Strictly speaking, what a word immediately refers

to is not a thing, but rather the result of an act of understanding -- the concept or ratio.<sup>147</sup> In turn, the concept is thought to be a representation of the object.

Aquinas' theory is characterized by a triadic view of signification, for there is the name, the concept and the thing or object that the name is employed to designate. In this scheme the concept assumes some importance as it is thought to constitute the meaning of a name.<sup>148</sup>

In this theory of signification we find an intimate relation obtaining between thought and language. This should already be evident on the basis of our comments about the triadic character of signification and the identification of a name's meaning with the concept of what it signifies. For Aquinas,<sup>149</sup> words are imposed upon things as signs of what we know of them. Conception plays an important role in this scheme, for the designation of an object by means of a name is dependent upon thought:

I reply that it should be said that since, according to the Philosopher, names are signs of what is understood, it is necessary that the process of naming follow the process of cognition.

150

Aquinas' point about the dependency of language upon thought is also expressed in De Veritate.<sup>151</sup> There he makes two important observations. Firstly, he says that the "interior word" (i.e., the concept or ratio) is "naturally prior" to the "exterior word", (i.e., the written or spoken word). Later, in the body of the article, he goes on to note that the inner word

is to be seen as the final cause of the outer word, for the purpose served by the spoken (or written) word is that of expressing the interior word.<sup>152</sup>

The close relationship between language and thought also finds expression in Thomas' repeated dictum that we name things as we know them.<sup>153</sup> This observation should come as no surprise in view of his insistence that names are imposed upon things as signs of what we know of them. For St. Thomas, the very possibility of our being able to employ a name to signify a thing depends upon our having some knowledge of it. Thus, a basic requirement for the use of a name is that there be a knowledge of the thing that is to be signified. The epistemological foundation in the naming process becomes apparent once we realize that names presuppose concepts that are themselves expressive of what is known of the objects that are named.

Before leaving Aquinas' theory of signification one additional point needs to be made. His conception of the naming process should not be taken to imply a bi-furcation of language and the world. In as far as names immediately signify intellectual conceptions (conceptiones intellectus) they do, albeit indirectly, have a foothold in the real order, for these conceptions are thought to be representations of material things. In Aquinas' view, the sounds and marks of spoken and written language do engage us with reality because they immediately signify rationes which are themselves about things.<sup>154</sup>

Having outlined Aquinas' theory of signification, we shall now proceed to offer an account of the res significata — modus significandi distinction. <sup>155</sup> While Aquinas discusses <sup>156</sup> this distinction in a number of works, we shall begin our account by examining Question Thirteen, Article Three of the Summa Theologica (Prima Pars). There we find Thomas saying that there are two things to consider in "the words we use to attribute <sup>157</sup>perfections to God." Firstly, there are "the perfections <sup>158</sup>themselves that are signified -- goodness, life and the like" . Secondly, there is the "way in which they are signified." <sup>159</sup>

The first part of this distinction refers to the res significata of a term, while the second refers to a term's modus significandi.

For Aquinas, the res significata is to be understood as the "thing", or more precisely, the perfection that the word signifies. For example, the res significata of the term, "good", would be the property of goodness. It is important to note that the terms Aquinas is concerned with here are of a special type - being those that signify "simple perfections".

Such terms

...simply mean perfections without any indication of how these perfections are possessed - words, for example, like "being", "good", "living", and so on.

160

Although the idea of simple perfection is rather obscure, the basic point seems to be this. Some terms have a certain indeterminacy about them because they signify perfections that are not bound to any one mode of realization. For instance, the term

"knowledge", with respect to what it signifies, is not limited to either human knowledge or animal knowledge. This name, along with others of its type, signifies a given perfection independent of any specific mode of realization. Aquinas' way of expressing this is to say that the perfection is signified without any indication of how it is possessed. Such terms are the only ones that can be predicated analogically of God.

In contrast to the preceding type of names there are those that signify "mixed perfections".<sup>161</sup> For Aquinas, these terms denote perfections that are irrevocably bound to a specific mode of realization. In effect, this means that they are the names of perfections that can only be found in finite, material things. For example, the term "sensation" is of this sort because it signifies knowledge in its specific mode of realization in an organic faculty.<sup>162</sup> The term "stone" would also be grouped in this class because it signifies something that is inextricably bound to the material and finite dimension. For Aquinas, terms of this sort cannot be used analogically of God as they signify perfections that are limited to the corporeal world.<sup>163</sup>

With the first part of the res/modus distinction explained, we now turn to the second part. A term's modus significandi can best be understood by viewing it within the context of Aquinas' theory of signification. In focusing on the modus of a term Aquinas is, in effect, considering the way (or mode) in which it signifies a given perfection (i.e., the term's res significata). At this point the theory of signification

comes into play, for on the basis of it we know that the term signifies the perfection by way of a concept that the intellect has formulated of the perfection. This accords with Thomas' basic principle that "words signify things by way of thoughts."<sup>164</sup>

In view of the importance that thought or conception assumes here, we offer the following account of the modus. For Aquinas, a term's modus significandi is to be identified with the way in which the human intellect understands or conceives of perfection that is signified by a term.<sup>165</sup> In saying this, we would be the first to acknowledge that such an interpretation of the modus differs from other accounts.<sup>166</sup> On the other hand, we are not alone in adopting this approach to the modus significandi, for one finds a similar account being provided by Copleston and Maritain.<sup>167</sup>

Up until this point we have been explaining the res/modus distinction apart from the specific context within which Aquinas considers it — the predication of certain terms of God. In viewing terms this way, Aquinas makes two important observations about their res and modus. Firstly, he claims that terms, with respect to their res significata, apply most properly to God.<sup>168</sup> Secondly, he notes that terms, with respect to their modus significandi, are used inappropriately of God, for they<sup>169</sup> "have a way of signifying that is appropriate to creatures". Thus, in the names we use of God there is a mixture of both propriety and impropriety.

The first point about the appropriateness of a term's res significata can best be understood within the context of Aquinas' conception of the God/creature relationship. We will remember that according to this scheme, God is viewed as possessing all of the perfections that He causes in creatures. For example, the perfection of goodness as realized in creatures, is claimed to pre-exist in God in a much more eminent (or transcendent) way.<sup>170</sup> From this point of view, we find that terms, with respect to the res significata, can be properly attributed to God for the perfections they signify truly exist in God.<sup>171</sup> Accordingly, Aquinas observes that:

So far as the perfections signified are concerned the words are used literally of God, and in fact more appropriately than they are used of creatures for these perfections belong primarily to God and only secondarily to others.

172

Earlier we said that the modus significandi primarily refers to the way in which the intellect understands the res significata of a term. In view of our current interests, this characterization of the modus assumes some importance, as the intellect's way or mode of understanding constitutes one of the reasons for Aquinas' condemnation of the modus significandi. This point becomes apparent with a consideration of Aquinas' account of the human understanding.

Aquinas views the human intellect as being able, in cognition, to grasp the essence or universal element (i.e., the intelligible form) that is inherent in material things. This



much is clear from his discussion of the name "intellect":

The name intellect arises from the intellect's ability to know the most profound elements of a thing; for to understand (*intelligere*) means to read what is inside a thing (*intus legere*). Sense and imagination know only external accidents, but the intellect alone penetrates to the interior and to the essence of a thing.

173

The proper object of the human intellect is "a nature or 'whatness' found in corporeal matter".<sup>174</sup> While admitting this,

Aquinas is also quick to point out that the intellect is very much dependent upon sense experience; for, it is this that

furnishes the material from which there is derived the intelligible elements necessary for intellectual knowledge.

175

The dependency of the intellect upon this empirical

foundation finds expression in the well-known principle,

"nihil in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu" (nothing is in the intellect that is not first of all in the senses).

Another indication of this dependency is to be

found in Thomas' claim that the human intellect can only

understand by having recourse to sense images or phantasms:

176

It is impossible for our intellect, in its present state of being joined to a body capable of receiving impressions, actually to understand anything without turning to sense images.

177

Earlier, we noted that the proper object of the intellect is an intelligible form or nature as found in union with matter.<sup>178</sup>

The recognition of this leads Aquinas to say that what the intellect understands is not a bare form (or

nature) as such. Rather, in the act of understanding the intellect apprehends the formal element as it exists within a particular thing. Thus, the form of a material thing cannot be truly known "except in so far as it exists in a particular thing".<sup>179</sup> With this in mind, the dependency of the intellect upon the senses readily emerges:

Now we apprehend the particular through the senses and imagination. Therefore if it is actually to understand its proper object, then the intellect must needs turn to sense images in order to look at universal natures existing in particular things.

180

In explaining a term's modus significandi, we found that the notion of understanding was central; for, to talk of the modus is, in effect, to consider the way in which the intellect understands the perfection that is signified by the term. At this point the preceding epistemological considerations become germane for they serve to delineate the nature and scope of such an understanding. With respect to the res/modus distinction, these epistemological observations imply that our intellect is able to understand a given perfection (ie., the res significata) only upon the basis of our sensible experience of the perfection as it exists within finite things. This is the import of Aquinas' insistence that the intellect only understands by recourse to sense images, and the additional claim that it always grasps the form as it exists within a particular material object. Illustrative of this is the term, "good". From the perspective of the res significata, the term

denotes the property of goodness. Because of the nature of the human understanding, we cannot help but conceive this perfection in terms of its existence in those things that we are most familiar with experientially. In effect, this means that we understand goodness by way of our experience of human goodness. It cannot be any other way, given Thomas' account of the intellect's mode of understanding. Thus our understanding of what a term signifies proceeds upon our experience of the perfection as it is found to exist in creatures. Accordingly, we find Aquinas saying this:

...God is known from the perfections that flow from him and are to be found in creatures, yet which exist in him in a transcendent way. We understand such perfections, however, as we find them in creatures and as we understand them so we use words to speak of them.

182

Because we have to rely upon our experience of creaturely perfections in order to understand a term's res significata, Aquinas will say that terms "have a way of signifying that is appropriate to creatures". Another way that Thomas expresses this is by saying that "words have a bodily context not in what they mean but in the way they signify it."

183

184

As we shall see, the inappropriateness of the modus derives, in part, from our understanding being structured in such a way as to require that we advert to our experience of created perfections so as to understand the res significata of a term. Yet this is only part of the story, for the

impropriety of a term's modus significandi also stems from the nature of those things that the intellect has recourse to in its attempts to understand the res significata. These things are to be identified with the perfections that are found in creatures. Their relevance to Aquinas' characterization of the modus begins to emerge when we consider them within the context of the God/creature relationship. From what we have seen of this relationship we know that these perfections are the effects of God's causal agency. As caused by God, they are thought to bear some degree of likeness (or resemblance) to the divine perfection.<sup>185</sup> While resembling God, they are also thought to be dissimilar. Aquinas usually expresses this by saying that the created perfections are merely deficient or imperfect likenesses of God.<sup>186</sup> Thus, in considering the goodness of creatures we find him saying that

One may therefore call things good and existent by reference to this first thing [ie., God], existent and good by nature, inasmuch as they somehow participate and resemble it, even if distantly and deficiently.<sup>187</sup>

The imperfection and deficiency that Aquinas is talking of follows from the recognition that creaturely goodness exists in a derivative mode; for, it is caused by God. In contrast to this, God is said to be good by nature. An additional point of difference emerges when we realize that the goodness of the creature exists in such a way as to involve composition. In effect, this means that created goodness is always found to exist in something, thus presupposing a

distinction between "the haver and the thing had".<sup>188</sup> This subsistent mode of existence, and the composition it involves, is peculiar to the perfections of creatures. It does not pertain to God who is devoid of composition, being absolutely simple.<sup>189</sup>

In view of the preceding discussion about the intellect's mode of understanding and the nature of created perfections we can now offer an account of why Aquinas deems the modus of a term inappropriate when it comes to be used of God.

Earlier we said that the modus significandi is to be identified with the intellect's way of understanding a term's res significata. In the context of Aquinas' analysis of human intellection, such an understanding can only be obtained through our experience of the perfection as it is found in creatures. For example, this would mean that we understand the res significata of the term "intelligence" by way of our experience of human intelligence. If our conception of the term's res significata arises in this way, then we would have to admit that such a conception is imperfect and deficient, as it is derived from things which do not, in their likeness to God, fully conform to His perfection. Accordingly, in the predicating of the term "intelligence" of God, Thomas would say that its modus significandi is inappropriate and must be denied;<sup>190</sup> for, it refers to a way of understanding the res significata that is determined by an experience of human intelligence, and this, he insists,<sup>191</sup> is different from the divine intelligence. In this

case and others the denial of the modus serves as a prohibition against understanding a term's res significata in our customary way.<sup>192</sup> While it is only natural for us to understand the res significata of a term by way of its embodiment in creatures, we should, nevertheless, realize that this procedure can lead to anthropomorphic consequences when the term is used of God. For instance, in affirming the term "intelligence" of God we could all too easily be led to think of its res significata exclusively in terms of our conception of intelligence which is of the human sort. The denial of the modus significandi is undertaken in order to circumvent this tendency.

The preceding analysis has achieved two objectives. Firstly, it has shown why Aquinas thinks that the modus significandi of a term is inappropriate when it is predicated (analogically) of God. Secondly, our analysis has revealed the key features that are at play in Aquinas' notion of the modus significandi. Broadly speaking, we can say that these features are epistemological and ontological in character.

As already noted, the modus significandi of a term primarily refers to the way in which the human intellect understands the perfection (i.e., the res significata) signified by a given term. In considering the nature and scope of such an understanding, we are, in effect, focusing upon the epistemological side of the modus significandi. Here we find that the intellect is naturally ordered to knowing material things. Specifically, Aquinas would say that the intellect seeks to comprehend the

intelligible form (or nature) of the material object. As we have seen, this can only be accomplished by recourse to sense experience. In the final analysis this means that the intellect's understanding of a term's res significata is squarely based upon a sensible experience of the perfection as it exists in material things.

The ontological side of the modus significandi arises in the wake of the preceding epistemological considerations. This becomes apparent when we realize that the perfection, as found in material things, is what the intellect has recourse to in its attempt to comprehend the res significata of a term. This involvement of the created perfection in the intellect's process of understanding constitutes the ontological factor that is at play in the modus significandi.

In the preceding section we explained the res/modus distinction and began to show how it is employed by Aquinas in the predication of names of God. We can continue to do this by considering Question Seven, Article Five of De Potentia. In this section we find Aquinas briefly discussing the res/modus distinction. After this he goes on to observe that, as regards their meaning, the names ascribed to God are rather vague.<sup>193</sup> Such vagueness is thought to result because the modus significandi of these terms is not appropriate to God.<sup>194</sup> Following the lead of Pseudo-Dionysius, who figures prominently in Thomas' thinking on religious language, Aquinas goes on to talk of the three steps that are involved in the attribution of names to God.

. . .these terms are applied to God in three ways. Firstly, affirmatively: for instance, God is wise: since we must needs say this of God because in him there is a likeness to the wisdom that derives from him --- Nevertheless seeing that wisdom in God is not such as that which we understand and name, it can be truly denied, so that we may say: God is not wise. -- Again, since wisdom is not denied of God as though he were lacking in wisdom, but because in him it transcends the wisdom we indicate and name, we ought to say that God is super-wise.

195

For Aquinas, these three steps apply to any name that is predicated analogically of God. They reflect, in their movement, a growing awareness of what one is up to when they speak of God. These steps are important because they serve as a means whereby our discourse about God can be made increasingly appropriate.

The first step is primarily concerned with a term's res significata. Here we find that in applying a term to God we are, in effect, affirming that it's res significata truly exists in Him. For example, we affirm the term "wisdom" of God, meaning by this that He possesses the property (or perfection) of wisdom. The warrant for such a move is, as we have seen, located in Aquinas' conception of the God/creature relationship.

In moving to the second step in this naming process, we find ourselves focusing upon a term's modus significandi. With this stage we also find a growing sophistication emerging on the part of one who predicates names of God.

The second step differs substantially from the first, for rather than affirming "wisdom" of God, we find ourselves denying it, saying that "God is not wise". In doing this we are



not, Aquinas insists, suggesting that God lacks the property of wisdom. Rather, this move is a dramatic way of making the point that the modus significandi of the term is not appropriate when it is applied to God. <sup>196</sup> From our point of view what we understand and name first of all is the property of wisdom as it is found in finite things. In subsequently applying this term to God we must realize that its res significata is not the wisdom that we are familiar with. The denial of the statement "God is wise" seeks to bring this point home, impressing upon us the fact that God's wisdom "is not such as that which we understand and name." This move towards negation is a sophisticated one because it proceeds upon a recognition of the difference between God's perfections and those of creatures.

In part, the second step in the process of applying terms to God is undertaken by Aquinas to head off an undesirable consequence that could arise from the first step. For instance, in affirming that God is wise we could unwittingly be led to think of such wisdom along the lines of human wisdom. This is quite possible in view of the empirically oriented character of human thought and language. This trait is clearly evident in the human intellect's dependency upon sense experience, and its habit of relying upon creaturely perfections in order to understand the res significata of a term. Language also partakes of this feature, for words in St. Thomas' scheme immediately signify conceptions which are themselves about things. If left unchecked, all of this could conspire to lead us into thinking

and speaking of God in a thoroughly anthropomorphic fashion. Such a consequence is something that Aquinas will try to avoid at all costs.<sup>197</sup> Accordingly he attempts to circumvent it in a rather startling way in the De Potentia passage by saying that "God is not wise". In doing this, Aquinas hopes to lead us to the recognition that God's wisdom "transcends the wisdom we indicate and name".

The third and final step in the naming process has a two-fold objective. Here, in saying that "God is super-wise", we are trying to make the point that the preceding denial of the statement "God is wise" is not to be understood to imply that God lacks the perfection of wisdom. More positively, the statement "God is super-wise" expresses the point that wisdom exists more perfectly in Him than it does in creatures.

The preceding steps, peculiar to the ascription of names to God, amply attest to Aquinas' commitment to the via negativa and via affirmativa. Both have their basis in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius<sup>198</sup> who Aquinas readily admits he is following in his account of the three steps. As employed in Dionysius, and subsequently by Aquinas and others, the positive and negative ways are regarded as two ways of approaching God. The former is concerned with affirming of God those created perfections that are thought to be appropriate to His nature. Such things are said to exist in God, although in a more perfect fashion.<sup>199</sup> The possibility of such an affirmation is based upon the principle which claims "that the perfections of creatures

must be found in the Creator in a super-eminent fashion."<sup>200</sup>

The first step in the naming process described in De Potentia clearly reflects Aquinas' adherence to the via affirmativa. There we saw that a name is applied to God affirmatively because it is thought that its res significata really exists in Him. The third step of this process is also expressive of the via affirmativa, for when one says that "God is super-wise" they are, in effect, claiming that this perfection exists in God in a more transcendent or excellent fashion.

The negative way<sup>201</sup> functions, in part, as a device<sup>202</sup> for securing some knowledge of God. The procedure itself consists in denying of God those characteristics peculiar to finite things which are incompatible with His nature. By means of a series of such denials it is thought that one is able to<sup>203</sup> attain a limited knowledge of God :

Now, in considering the divine substance, we should especially make use of the method of remotion. For, by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus we are unable to apprehend it by knowing what it is. Yet we are able to have some knowledge of it by knowing what it is not.

204

The knowledge arrived at is of a peculiar sort, consisting of the awareness that God is different from all other things.<sup>205</sup> In part, the aim of negative theology (i.e., the via negativa) is to elicit such a knowledge. There is, however, another side to it, one which seeks to dissuade us from thinking that we can formulate adequate conceptions of the perfections that are affirmed of God.<sup>206</sup>

In this context, the via negativa can be viewed as an attempt, on Aquinas' part, to instill an "intellectual asceticism" within us. <sup>207</sup> This type of asceticism endeavours to discourage us from thinking that because we can attribute perfections to God we are therefore capable of fully understanding such things through our creaturely conceptions of them. For example, in affirming goodness of God, we could be lead to believe that this can be completely understood in terms of our conception of goodness which is derived from an experience of created goodness. In this case and others, Aquinas would say that the disparity between our conception and the perfection we are trying to understand is so great that the former cannot <sup>208</sup> allow us to fully grasp the latter.

Nowhere is the need for this peculiar brand of asceticism more pressing than in the process of applying names to God. For here we do have a natural propensity to view the res significata of such names within the framework of conceptions that are derived from, and most appropriate to, creatures and their properties. Accordingly, we do find the element of negative theology emerging in the second step of the process described in De Potentia. The procedure Aquinas employs here is quite similar to that of the via negativa, for he proceeds by way of denial, saying that "God is not wise". Again a similarity is to be found in terms of purpose, as Thomas undertakes such a denial in order to show us that God's wisdom is not to be identified with the wisdom we understand and name (i.e., the created

sort). By means of this move we are lead to realize that God's wisdom is different from its created counterpart. This accords with negative theology's goal of making the difference between God and all other things known. Through emphasizing such a difference, negative theology also seeks to dissuade us from thinking that our conceptions can adequately represent God. In showing us that God's wisdom transcends the wisdom we understand, Aquinas can be seen as pursuing a similar goal, for with this he is attempting to discourage us from thinking that we can form an adequate conception of the divine wisdom by recourse to our idea of created wisdom.

In a more general way we find Aquinas' use of negative theology vis à vis the divine names being expressed in his claim that the modus significandi of a term be denied when it is predicated (analogically) of God. In effect, this move amounts to a denial of those finite elements peculiar to our understanding of the res significata which are not compatible with God's perfection. Moreover, the denial also serves to emphasize the great difference that exists between the divine perfection and its created counterpart.

#### IV

### AQUINAS' AGNOSTICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF THE RATIO COMMUNIS

The preceding chapter dealt with Aquinas' modus significandi-res significata distinction. In our treatment of this distinction, we wanted to show its significance and role vis à vis religious language. In order to do this, we found it necessary to consider the place that the via negativa assumes in Aquinas' account of the divine names. Undoubtedly, the res/modus distinction and the via negativa comprise important aspects of Thomas' position. At the same time, however, it is important to realize that there is another element in Aquinas' interpretation of religious language, namely agnosticism. As we shall see the agnostic element overshadows, and, in fact, renders problematic Thomas' treatment of religious discourse.

St. Thomas' agnosticism is acknowledged, for example, by F. Copleston in his work Aquinas. Therein he offers us the following description:

In Aquinas' account of our natural knowledge of the Divine nature there is. . . a certain agnosticism. When we say that God is wise we affirm of God a positive attribute; but we are not able to give any adequate description of what is objectively signified by the term when it is predicated of God. If we are asked what we mean when we say that God is wise, we may answer that we mean that God possesses wisdom in an infinitely

higher degree than human beings. But we cannot provide any adequate description of the content, so to speak, of this infinitely higher degree; we can only approximate towards it by employing the way of negation. What is affirmed is positive, but the positive content of the concept in our minds is determined by our experience of creaturely wisdom, and we can only attempt to purify it or correct its inadequacies by means of negations. Obviously enough this process will never lead to an adequate positive understanding of the objective meaning of (that is, of what is objectively signified by) the terms predicated of God.

209

Clearly, this is a peculiar form of agnosticism, for it does not mean that Aquinas has doubts about the existence of God. Nor does it imply that he thinks there can be no knowledge of God. Rather, this type of agnosticism, in taking its cue from the finite character of human cognition and the transcendence of God, claims that in our thought and speech we cannot grasp the nature of God. Try as we may, God still remains Deus Absconditus. On this point Aquinas is quite insistent:

The first cause surpasses human understanding and speech. He knows God best who acknowledges that whatever he thinks and says falls short of what God really is.

210

The most we can know of God during our present life is that He transcends everything that we can conceive of Him -- as is clear from Dionysius.

211

In this case, the inadequacy of thought and language stems, in part, from the limited knowledge we have of God. This knowledge comes to play a key role in explaining the limitations inherent in our thought and speech about God when we view it in relation to Thomas' dictum that we name things as we know

212

(or understand) them. Religious discourse is not exempt from

this principle as is evident in Aquinas' observation that  
 "we speak of God as we know Him"<sup>213</sup>. For Thomas, the knowledge  
 we have of God precedes and renders possible any discourse  
 about Him. Thus if we had not knowledge of God, we could  
 not say anything about Him.<sup>214</sup>

The importance of the epistemological factor also follows from what we have said about Thomas' theory of signification. We will remember that in talking of this theory we noted that things can be named only to the degree to which they are known. Names, as signs of what we know, presuppose concepts which are themselves expressive of what is known of the things that are named. Thus, the employment of names to designate objects is, for Aquinas, dependent upon a prior epistemological foundation. To the extent that religious language is concerned with the predication of names to God, it too must possess such a foundation.

In addition, Aquinas would also claim that the character of what we say of God is very much dependent upon the nature of the knowledge that we have of Him. Thus, if our knowledge of God is comprehensive and thorough, then our language about Him will be precise and unambiguous. On the other hand if our knowledge of Him displays some imperfection, then our language about Him will also be imperfect.<sup>215</sup> Aquinas' allegiance is with the second position and because of this we find a marked degree of agnosticism in his analysis of religious language. If we are to more fully understand the nature and scope of this



agnostic element it becomes necessary, in view of what we have said, to consider Aquinas' account of man's natural knowledge of God.<sup>216</sup>

In his treatment of man's knowledge of God we find Aquinas repeatedly saying that the essence (or nature) of God remains unknown to the human intellect in this life.<sup>217</sup> This observation about the unknowability of God's nature is found in the Summa Theologica<sup>218</sup>, the Summa Contra Gentiles<sup>219</sup> and in De Veritate<sup>220</sup>. The basis for this position is, for the most part, to be found in Thomas' view of the human knowing process. The following would seem to bear this out, as it suggest that the nature of human cognition prevents man from knowing the essence of God:

The knowledge that is natural to us has its source in the senses and extends just so far as it can be lead by sensible things; from these, however, our understanding cannot reach to the divine essence.

221

As we noted earlier, the human intellect is very much dependent upon sense experience for the knowledge it obtains. Through the process of abstracting from sense images, and by the use of such images in the act of intellection, the understanding comes to know the formal natures of material things. To the extent that the human intellect is bound in its knowledge to a knowledge of finite material things which has its source in sense experience, the intellect cannot come to know the essence of that being (i.e., God) which is neither corporeal, finite nor an object of sense experience. For Aquinas, the intellect is primarily ordered to

knowing the nature of material reality and for this reason a knowledge of God's essence is thought to be unattainable. Such a knowledge is outside of the scope of what can be known by the human understanding. By way of concluding these remarks, we turn to Gilson who provides the following account of how the nature of human knowledge precludes one from grasping the divine essence:

In Thomas' own words, "in this life, our intellect has a determinate relationship to the forms that are abstracted from sensations". Such objects are finite. Consequently, no natural knowledge thus formed by the human mind can represent God; His immaterial essence cannot be attained by means of abstraction from material things. Generally speaking, there are no material data from which the knowledge of a purely immaterial object can possibly be abstracted. Moreover, since all objects naturally knowable to man are finite, no knowledge of them is obtainable by means of abstraction from sense can possibly represent an infinite being, such as the essence of God. In other words, the twofold fact that human knowledge has to be abstracted from sense, and that it deals only with finite objects, makes it impossible for us to grasp the very essence of God, such as it is known by the blessed.

222

While Thomas claims that the human intellect cannot know the essence of God, this should not be taken to imply that man is incapable of knowing anything about God. On the contrary, Aquinas thought it indeed possible that the intellect could attain a limited natural knowledge of God. With this said, the question arises as to how such knowledge is possible. In light of what has been said about the sense-dependent character of human knowledge it would seem that Aquinas' claim is doubtful. On the basis of his epistemological position, there would appear to be little possibility of attaining a natural knowledge of

God:

On the principle, nihil in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu, how can we attain knowledge of God when we cannot say quod Dues prius fuerit in sensu? In other words, once given the Thomist psychology and epistemology, it would appear that Thomist natural theology is inevitably invalidated: we cannot transcend the objects of sense and are debarred from any knowledge of spiritual objects.

223

The way in which Aquinas mitigates the preceding difficulty and shows how, in spite of his epistemology, it is possible to come to know something of God, has its foundations in his view that finite creatures bear a likeness to their cause, which is God.<sup>224</sup> For Thomas, the human intellect is capable of securing some knowledge of God through the medium of sensible things because, as God's effects, they serve to represent, albeit imperfectly, something of Him. While the intellect's meditation upon finite things does not lead to a knowledge of God's essence, it can, nevertheless, bring one to the point of knowledge that God exists.<sup>225</sup> In other words, by way of finite beings one can be brought to know that God is, yet with this one still cannot know what He is:

Sensible creatures are effects of God which are less than typical of the power of their cause, so knowing them does not lead us to understand the whole power of God and thus we do not see his essence. They are nevertheless effects depending from a cause, and so we can at least be lead from them to know of God that he exists.

226

We have seen that it is possible for man to know of God that He exists. Can the human intellect increase it's knowledge of God beyond this point? Aquinas thinks that this is possible. One way in which this can be done is by considering more closely the causal relation between creature and God. We have said that finite beings and their perfections are ordered to God as effects to a cause. This implies the following: if God has created finite creatures which possess certain perfections (i.e., properties), then we must know that He also contains these perfections.<sup>227</sup> This point follows from what Aquinas says in Question 4, Article 2 of the Summa Theologica. There he notes that any perfection which is found in an effect must also exist in the cause of that effect. This principle applies to both material reality and divine reality, and on the basis of it we are enabled to know that every perfection which is found in finite creatures must also be found in their Creator.

The preceding comments about the scope and limits of man's natural knowledge of God constitute a formidable obstacle in attempting to delineate the semantic content of those terms that are predicated analogically of God. This point can be clarified by considering the following statements: (a) John is good, (b) God is good. Here the term "good" is understood to be analogous by the analogy of one to another in both its instances of use.<sup>228</sup> In trying to come to grips with the meaning of "good" as used in (b), we should remember that the investigations will

be subject to the restrictions that arise in connection with Thomas' analysis of man's knowledge of God.<sup>229</sup> In addition to these restrictions, there is another one that complicates the matter further. While we can know that God possesses the perfections of creatures, albeit in a more perfect way, Aquinas would add that we cannot conceive of the way in which He has these perfections, nor can we conceive of their nature as they exist in Him:

All that which is found in God's effects necessarily is first in him as their cause. So we can be sure that every perfection found in creatures also is included in the creator. Only here again we know that they are in him; what they are in him, that is, how they are in him, we do not know.

230

This restriction, along with the others, has the following import for the analogical use of the term "good". To begin with, we find that the perfection of goodness can be ascribed to God, for as the cause of created goodness, God can hardly be lacking in this perfection. And in saying this we are, in effect, admitting that the res significata of the term "good" is applicable to God. Difficulties readily emerge however once we realize that our understanding of this perfection is bound to a conception of goodness that is derived from our sensible experience of those finite entities that manifest this perfection. And since the property of goodness as found in such things, is derived as an effect from God, and thus only imperfectly represents his goodness, we find that our conception of goodness will be inadequate for the purposes of understanding the nature

of God's goodness. Thus, to the extent that our conceptions have such a finite reference, they do not enable us to make much headway in our attempts to comprehend the meaning of the perfections that are affirmed of God. For Aquinas, this constitutes the basic reason for his claim that the res significata of terms such as "good" exceed our comprehension when they are predicated (analogically) of God.

As noted earlier, the situation is made all the more difficult with the admission that the human intellect cannot comprehend a perfection's mode of existence or nature when it is attributed to God. With respect to our preceding example, this restriction has the following import. First, it suggests that our knowledge of the perfection only amounts to knowing that goodness exists in God. Secondly, the restriction lands us in the position of being unable to know the nature of God's goodness and its mode of existence.

If we consider the preceding points vis à vis the question of what can be known about the meaning of the divine names, we find that there is a major degree of agnosticism present in Aquinas' analysis of religious language. The agnostic feature is further highlighted with the admission that the divine perfections are identical with God's essence which, in turn, is said to be unknowable.<sup>231</sup> This point, and the others mentioned earlier, place us -- when predicating the term "god" of God -- in the agnostic position of being unable to clearly understand just what it is that is being affirmed when God is said to be

good. The semantic impoverishment we experience in this case applies to all the terms that can be predicated analogically of God<sup>232</sup>. This consequence, pessimistic as it may be, is inescapable in the face of Aquinas' observations about man's<sup>233</sup> (natural) knowledge of God.

Another way one can bring out the agnostic element inherent in Thomas' treatment of religious language is by reconsidering the modus significandi. Our earlier discussion identifies the modus of a term with the way in which the intellect understands the res significata of the term. We saw that this is effected by recourse to one's experience of the perfection as it is found in creatures. Given Thomas' analysis of human cognition it cannot be any other way. In terms of our earlier example, this means that our understanding of what "good" signifies is squarely based upon our experience of human goodness. Yet at the same time Aquinas repeatedly recommends that the modus significandi of a term be disregarded when it is predicated of God. If we cannot think of goodness except in terms of created goodness, and if our conceptions of this are, as Aquinas insists, radically inappropriate to the divine goodness and therefore must be disregarded, what then remains in the way of some intelligible content when the term "good" is predicated of God? It would seem that very little, if any remains, for the denial of the modus significandi in this case amounts to a denial of the applicability of our conception of goodness. From this the agnostic conclusion readily follows. Interestingly

enough, Aquinas seems to be aware of this. In the Summa Theologica he writes:

Dionysius says that affirmations about God are vague or, according to another translation, incongruous, inasmuch as no name can be applied to God according to its mode of signification.

234

In attempting to mitigate the agnostic consequences of Aquinas' position, a theist could perhaps adopt the following strategy. In considering our preceding example he would say that some meaning is retained when the term "good" is used of God because we are affirming that goodness does indeed exist in Him.<sup>235</sup> When viewed in this way, the statement "God is good" would mean that "God possesses [goodness] in an infinitely higher degree than human beings."<sup>236</sup> Unfortunately this move still does not allow for some positive idea of the divine goodness; for, if this exists in an infinitely higher degree so as to transcend the only goodness that we can understand and name (i.e., the human sort), then the agnostic conclusion would still seem to result. This approach brings us not closer to an understanding of the res significata of the term "good" when it is predicated of God. In fact, by stressing the disparity between created and divine goodness to such a degree, it serves to underwrite the agnostic position.

With the failure of the preceding strategy, the theist could adopt another approach. This could consist in saying that the intelligible content of a divine predicate can be filled in, to some degree, by appealing to the via negativa.<sup>237</sup> For



instance, it is thought that we can approximate towards some idea of the divine goodness by removing the imperfections and limitations attendant upon our conception of goodness (i.e., a conception of human goodness). We find this type of approach being advanced by Copleston in his studies of Aquinas<sup>238</sup> and in his work Contemporary Philosophy.<sup>239</sup> In the latter work Copleston is concerned with the perennial problem of explaining the meaning of the divine predicates. After talking about the need for analogy in this matter, he introduces an interesting distinction between a term's "objective meaning" and its "subjective meaning".<sup>240</sup> For Copleston, the objective meaning of a term is to be identified with "that which is actually referred to by the term in question."<sup>241</sup> On the other hand, the subjective meaning of the term refers to "the meaning-content which the term has or can have for the human mind."<sup>242</sup> In effect the two modes of meaning constitute a distinction:

. . . between that which is objectively referred to or "meant" by a term and my understanding or conception of what is referred to.

243

When this distinction is applied to an expression such as "God is intelligent" the following results. The objective meaning of the term "intelligent" is to be identified with the divine intelligence.<sup>244</sup> The subjective meaning of the term is "its meaning-content in my own mind", which, Copleston observes, is derived from an experience of human intelligence. The situation becomes further complicated with the realization that:

. . .the "objective meaning" of the terms predicated of God transcends our experience. Hence it cannot be positively and adequately described.

245

In the face of this one undertakes to purify the subjective meaning of the term "intelligent". This process of purification is effected by recourse to the via negativa.<sup>246</sup>

In the present context, the negative approach will seek to eliminate those elements comprising the subjective meaning of the term that are incompatible with God's intelligence. Because the subjective meaning of the term is based upon human intelligence, the via negativa will, in effect, be concerned with the elimination of those features peculiar to such intelligence.

The appeal to the via negativa is made for the following reasons.<sup>247</sup>

Firstly, it avoids anthropomorphism and serves to bring the subjective meaning of a term more in line with its objective meaning (i.e, the divine intelligence). Secondly, it is thought that by employing the negative way one can, through the purification of the subjective meaning, approximate towards some idea of the divine intelligence.

Clearly, there are a number of problems with the preceding type of approach. Firstly, the employment of the via negativa could easily result in a complete loss of meaning when terms are predicated of God. As we saw, the recommendation that the subjective meaning of the term "intelligent" be purified involves the elimination of those imperfections attendant upon human intelligence. At the same time, however, Copleston acknowledges that human intelligence is that from which the meaning-

content of the term is derived. Now if we proceed to purify the meaning-content by way of negations, would we not also find ourselves gradually evacuating any positive meaning that the term could have for us? For that which is being eliminated by the via negativa is precisely what constitutes the meaning-content of the term for us -- those features characteristic of human intelligence which are not compatible with God's intelligence. 248

Copleston would attempt to mitigate this difficulty by saying that complete agnosticism is avoided by acknowledging the objective meaning of the term. Presumably he means by this that the term "intelligent", when used of God, retains some intelligible content because it signifies a property that He truly possesses. This response is quite ineffectual for if, as Copleston readily admits, the divine intelligence (i.e., the objective meaning of the term) transcends our experience, then one can have no knowledge of it.

An additional difficulty with the use of the via negativa originates from a presupposition that it seems to require. In talking of the negative way, Aquinas observes that it is dependent upon some prior knowledge of God:

The meaning of negation always is founded in an affirmation, as appears from the fact that every negative proposition is proved by an affirmative one; consequently, unless the human understanding knew something of God affirmatively, it could deny nothing of God.

Thus, the via negativa requires, for its very possibility, some positive knowledge of God. Only when we already know something of God are we then able to deny of Him those things that are incompatible with His nature.<sup>250</sup> In terms of Copleston's account this would have the following implications. In order to purify the subjective meaning of the term "intelligent" we would, on Aquinas' admission, have to possess some prior knowledge of God. For example, one could pin-point a specific feature of human intelligence,<sup>251</sup> say, the ability to grasp conclusions quickly, and claim that this must be eliminated because it is not compatible with God's intelligence. But how could one possibly know this unless they had some knowledge of God's intelligence that would enable them to see that the preceding feature of human intelligence was not appropriate to God?<sup>252</sup> Such a knowledge however does not seem possible on Copleston's account, for he insists that the "objective meaning of the terms predicated of God transcend our experience." Further, without this positive knowledge of God being available, how could one know what to deny in purifying the subjective meaning of the term? How would one know how far to go in this process? How could one know they were proceeding in the right way?<sup>253</sup> In the absence of some positive knowledge of God, we would have no basis for guiding us in these matters.

In view of the preceding difficulties, it would seem that the appeal to the via negativa to establish some content in

the divine predicates is destined to fail. For one thing it is a dangerous undertaking because it can all too readily lead to agnosticism. In addition, the procedure itself presupposes a knowledge of God that does not seem available.

In the preceding section we attempted to show that Thomas' employment of analogy to predicate names of God is much more agnostic and negative in effect than has usually been supposed. We tried to establish this conclusion by considering Aquinas' theological use of analogy in relation to his comments on man's natural knowledge of God, and his employment of the res/modus distinction.<sup>254</sup> These points along with his theory of signification suggest the following. In view of the God/creature relationship, one can affirm that certain perfections exist in God. This is to say that the res significata of those terms that are predicated analogically of God can be claimed to truly exist in Him. At the same time, however, one finds themselves in the agnostic position of not being able to understand the res significata of the terms that are used in this way. Admittedly, this conclusion is quite agnostic in character; yet, we do think that it is justified in view of our examination of the above points. In addition, we recognize that it is clearly at odds with some interpretations of Aquinas<sup>255</sup> which suggest that his use of analogy serves to underwrite the intelligibility of religious language. If our analysis has been correct, it would seem that such optimistic assessments of analogy are fundamentally mistaken.

Oddly enough, our conclusion would probably have little effect upon Aquinas. He would, we think, agree with our admittedly agnostic reading of theological analogy. We have tended to regard the presence of the agnostic element in Thomas' analysis of religious language as proof that the appeal to analogy does not, as regards the divine names, effect to any appreciable degree, their semantic clarity. For most, this rather pessimistic conclusion would have little, if any, positive value. In contrast, Aquinas would view this matter in a radically different way.

In his examination of what man can and cannot know of God, Aquinas observes that the human intellect reaches the point of perfection in its knowledge of God when it realizes that His nature remains unknown. The most supreme knowledge of God that the intellect can attain <sup>256</sup> consists in knowing that God's essence (or nature) transcends all that can be thought and said of Him.

The first cause surpasses human understanding and speech. He knows God best who acknowledges that whatever he thinks and says falls short of what God really is.

257

Thus, the summit of our natural knowledge of God consists of a type of "learned ignorance" <sup>258</sup> wherein we advance to the point of knowing that we do not know His essence:

For it is then above all that the mind dwells more perfectly in the knowledge of God, when it is

known that His essence is above everything that can be apprehended in the present state of life. And so, though the deity remains unknown according as it is in itself, there is (to a higher degree than ever) knowledge of God according as He is.

259

Throughout his writings, we find Aquinas repeatedly emphasizing the point that God is to be understood as Deus Absconditus. According to Aquinas, our conceptual and linguistic attempts to grasp God do not alter this situation. What we take to be the failure of theological analogy - its inability to provide any determinate semantic content for the divine predicates - is, for Aquinas, something of an achievement. For, in realizing that we cannot adequately comprehend the res significata of those terms that are used analogically of God, we are, in effect, coming closer to apprehending God as he truly is.<sup>260</sup> In the final analysis, the employment of analogy to predicate names of God manages to achieve something positive, for it serves to elicit an awareness of how little we know of God. And this, Aquinas would say, is an extremely significant piece of information.

In the preceding section, we examined in some detail the agnostic element that arises in Aquinas' treatment of religious language. We suggested that the appeal to analogical usage does not serve to clarify the semantic content of the divine predicates. In the final analysis, Aquinas' appeal to analogy does no more than encourage us to soldier on in ignorance, secure in the knowledge that God does indeed possess the perfections we attribute to Him, even though we

are at a loss to understand them.

Clearly, these results are problematic for one who would claim that analogy can provide an intelligible account of religious language while avoiding the theistic pitfalls of anthropomorphism and agnosticism. Even if it were possible to mitigate, in some way, the preceding agnostic difficulties, there would still be other problems with the theological use of analogy. Perhaps the most formidable of these involves the issue of the ratio communis of analogous terms.

The expression "ratio communis" is usually taken to mean "common notion" or "common meaning". Among students of analogy there exists substantial agreement on the importance of this notion for analogical usage. In talking of the ratio communis one is, in effect, focusing on the "common core of meaning" that renders a term analogous in its instances of use. In the absence of such a common core of meaning a term would become completely equivocal. Most commentators, both medieval and modern, would therefore agree that in some sense there must be a ratio communis in all analogous predications of the same term. Thus, the possibility of analogical usage and the ratio communis are irrevocably bound together.

The difficulties surrounding the ratio communis become all too apparent when attempts are made to provide a detailed explanation of it. Illustrations of this are found in the recent studies by P. Hayner, I.M. Bochenski, and



W. Norris Clarke which seek to elucidate the meaning of the ratio communis of analogous terms. As we shall see, each of these accounts is subject to certain failings. At the same time however they merit examination because they serve to highlight the major problems that are associated with the notion of the ratio communis.

In an article entitled "Analogical Predication", Paul Hayner undertakes an examination of the use of analogy in religious language. He begins his article with a brief exposition of the Thomist position. <sup>261</sup> We shall however bypass this part of the article as the subject has already been considered in the preceding pages of this study. After outlining the Thomistic viewpoint, Hayner proceeds to offer this critical assessment of it:

This account of the analogy between God and His creatures can scarcely be regarded as satisfactory. Despite the denial that agnosticism is its necessary result, its supporters are at a loss to explain in what way it makes possible true statements about God. Indeed it must be admitted that the perfections attributed to God are in Him in a way which is "wholly incommensurable with their mode of being in creatures". To invoke the use of analogy at this point is merely to beg the question. For it is clear that a "perfection" such as "intelligence" may be attributed to God only as a finite effect of that which is its Infinite Cause. And to say that such an effect can be said to resemble God "solely according to analogy" is, in the absence of any specific or generic likeness, to invoke another analogy to explain the analogy in question, and thus to fall into an infinite regress of analogical explanations. The ignorance which we suffer at this point is as it should be, according to Gilson, since we can never know God's essence in this life. But if so, the appeal to analogy in the first place loses its point.

In view of these agnostic consequences, Hayner suggests that a reformulation of the analogy theory is in order:

...what we need is a redefinition of 'analogy'. This term itself must be so defined as to enable us to use it without ending in agnosticism. But at the same time we want to remain faithful to the tradition which maintains at least a difference in kind between God and things.

263

Hayner's redefinition of analogy incorporates the following proposal:

The suggestion here proposed is that, in order to employ analogical predication in religious discourse, we must hold that any two entities standing in an analogical relation to each other, including the Deity, must have a minimum of one property in common.

264

Hayner feels that this account of analogical usage avoids the problems of both anthropomorphism and agnosticism. A closer look at his interpretation of analogy reveals how this is effected. To begin with, consider the following statements: (1) A child loves her father. (2) A girl loves her boyfriend. The term "loves" is thought to function analogically in both its instances of use. In view of Hayner's redefinition of such usage, this entails the following.

The term "loves" (ie., as used of a child) signifies  
1  
a complex or combination of properties (eg., BAC) and "loves"  
(ie., as used of a girl) signifies another combination of  
2  
properties (eg., XAT).  
266  
In this scheme, univocity or identity

of meaning is avoided because the complex of properties signified by "loves" is different from the combination of properties signified by "loves". At the same time complete equivocity is also avoided because at least one of the properties signified by "loves" is identical with one of the properties found in the signification of "loves". That which is common to the term "loves", in both its instances of use, is the property A.

Hayner proceeds to claim that this interpretation also holds good for the analogous predication of names to God and man. For example, when the term "love" is employed analogically of man and God we find the following:

..."love" when predicated of God is understood to signify a combination of properties which is different from the combination of properties signified by "love" when predicated of man. On the other hand, the statement [i.e., "God is love."] is not completely equivocal either, for the combination of properties signified by "love" when predicated of God includes at least one property in the combination of properties signified by that term when predicated of man.

270

Hayner's account of analogy and religious language amounts to this. In the sentences "God has love for his creation" and "A father has love for his children", the common term is used analogically. In each instance of use, the term "love" is thought to signify a combination of properties. Thus, "love" (i.e., "love" as used of God) signifies the properties XYZ, and "love" (i.e., "love" as used of a father) signifies the properties FYT. The reason for claiming that "love" functions

1

analogically with respect to "love"<sup>2</sup> lies in the admission that both have at least one property in common. The "common notion", or what the Scholastics would call the ratio communis of the analogous term, is to be identified with the property Y which is common to the signification of "love" in both its instances of use. Following Hayner we could say that Y stands for the property of "having tender concern".<sup>271</sup>

With this interpretation the problem of agnosticism is clearly avoided; for, the ratio communis of the term is readily discernible.<sup>272</sup> Any difficulty with the meaning of "love"<sup>1</sup> would be quickly alleviated with the recognition that the term signifies, among other things, the property of tender concern which is also included in the signification of "love"<sup>2</sup>. The vital link that relates the meaning of "love"<sup>1</sup> to that of "love"<sup>2</sup> is the property of tender concern which both God and man share.

One should realize that the preceding account openly grounds analogical usage on a univocal core of meaning. For example, the term, "tender concern", which constitutes the ratio communis of "love"<sup>1</sup> and "love"<sup>2</sup>, signifies the same property in both instances of its use. Accordingly, it can be seen to function univocally.<sup>273</sup> For Hayner, analogy is no more than a variation on a univocal theme.

It is to Hayner's credit that he anticipates the

theistic objection that his account of analogy may do violence to the "majesty" or transcendence of God.<sup>274</sup> Presumably the theist thinks that by relying upon a sameness of properties, Hayner's position on analogical usage opens the door to anthropomorphism. In response to this worry Hayner observes that

I believe such "majesty", or transcendence is preserved by the circumstances that the terms predicated of God signify a combination of properties which is unique and hence qualitatively different from those signified by the same terms when predicated of other things. The fact that God may be said to share some properties with His creatures does not, in itself, necessarily impugn His "majesty" inasmuch as He may still be regarded as, in some sense, qualitatively "above" His creatures.

275

In terms of our earlier example, Hayner's point can be illustrated in this way. Anthropomorphism is thought to be circumvented by the stipulation that the combination of properties signified by "love"<sup>1</sup> (i.e., XYZ) is different from the combination of properties signified by "love"<sup>2</sup> (i.e., PYT). Presumably by this Hayner means that the properties X and Z in "love"<sup>1</sup> have nothing in common with the properties P and T in "love"<sup>2</sup>. With this Hayner thinks that a sufficient degree of difference is present so as to safeguard the transcendence and majesty of God.

The attractiveness of Hayner's treatment of analogy is to be found in its clarity. It is particularly appealing in view of his earlier comments about the inability of the Thomist position to provide an adequate account of the likeness (i.e.,

the ratio communis) that obtains in analogical usage.

There is little doubt that Hayner's redefinition of analogy is a neat piece of work. The theist, however, would find it totally unacceptable.<sup>276</sup> The reason for this should already be evident. For Hayner, analogical usage is dependent upon the analogates having one or more properties in common. In effect, this means that such usage has a univocal core of meaning. In their treatment of religious language, Aquinas and others clearly display a marked aversion to univocity. This form of usage is to be avoided at all costs because of the anthropomorphic consequences it effects. The prohibition against univocity in religious discourse has its basis in a conception of God that views Him as having no properties in common with creatures.<sup>277</sup> Accordingly, the theist could hardly accept a theory of analogy that would violate this conception of God. Hayner's attempt to answer the charge of anthropomorphism would not placate the theist; for, no matter how much he talks of a difference in combinations of properties, the fact still remains that God and man have some properties in common. This admission and its univocal consequences would be anathema to the theist.

There are additional problems with Hayner's approach to analogy. Firstly, in admitting that analogical usage has a univocal foundation, his account stands opposed to the Scholastic dictum that analogy is a true via media between total univocity and total equivocality. Secondly, Hayner's

redefinition of analogy does not address itself directly to the problem as envisioned by St. Thomas and others. More than anything else it constitutes an evasion of the difficulty. Aquinas was clearly aware of the alternative of a univocal account of religious language. For a number of reasons he found it completely unacceptable. The real problem for Aquinas centred upon providing some explanation of the meaning of the divine predicates that was not grounded upon either univocity or complete equivocity. Hayner's proposed solution merely bypasses Aquinas' problem by presenting an account of religious language that rests upon something Thomas was aware of and subsequently rejected.

I.M. Bochenski provides us with an approach to the problem of the ratio communis of analogous terms which relies upon formal logic. His formulization is presented in a work entitled The Logic of Religion. There Bochenski undertakes an examination of the theory of analogy. On this account

...whenever a term of PD [i.e., profane discourse] is used in RD [i.e., religious discourse], the meaning it has in PD is partly identical with that which it has in PD, and partly different.

278

With this definition in view, Bochenski proceeds to deal with the issue of the ratio communis by attempting to delineate the identical element that is present in both instances of the analogous use of a term. <sup>279</sup> He begins his analysis by considering "absolute properties" and relations as possible candidates for the role of the identical element.

The alternative of "absolute properties" is quickly rejected because its employment would be at odds with traditional theism's emphasis upon the transcendence of God. Specifically, it would not square with the claim that God and man can have no properties in common.<sup>230</sup>

The preceding difficulty leads Bochenski provisionally to claim that the common (i.e., identical) element in analogical usage is relational. He soon realizes however that the move to relations is also problematic. The relations which comprise the meaning of a term in PD are not, Bochenski claims, to be found in its meaning when used in RD. For example, consider the term "father".<sup>231</sup> Bochenski observes that in ordinary usage this term means a "set of relations" that display physiological, psychological, and sociological characteristics. However, when we turn to consider the use of this term in connection with God, we find that none of these relations obtain. For instance, one can hardly say that the meaning of "father", as applied to God, is comprised of a physiological relation; for, God is traditionally believed to be incorporeal.<sup>232</sup>

It would then seem that a relational account of the ratio communis is inadequate because of the preceding difficulties. There is, however, another alternative that is raised by Bochenski. It consists in claiming that the common (i.e., identical) element in the two meanings of an analogous term are "the formal properties of relations".<sup>233</sup> Properties of this type are exemplified in the logical features of symmetry and transitivity.<sup>234</sup>



The present account constitutes Bochenski's final position on the question of the ratio communis of analogous names. The explication of the ratio communis in terms of common formal properties reflects, as Bochenski notes elsewhere, the concept of "isomorphy" which refers to

...the identity of two formal structures, i.e., of two networks of relations, similar only in their purely formal properties, but in these identical.

285

In considering Bochenski's account of the ratio communis it is important to note that the concept of isomorphy only pertains to the analogy of proper proportionality. On Bochenski's view, this is the most appropriate species of analogy for religious discourse. In contrast, we find that the analogy of attribution is not assigned a role in religious language.

286

With respect to the analogy of (proper) proportionality, Bochenski's account of the ratio communis applies in the following way. We remember that this type of analogy is characterized by a relational structure. Specifically, it consists in a similarity that obtains between two relations (proportions). According to Bochenski, this similarity is reducible to an identity between the formal properties that characterize both of the relations. In this is to be found the ratio communis of those terms that are analogous by the analogy of (proper) proportionality.

There can be little doubt that Bochenski's interpretation of the ratio communis stands as a valuable contribution to the

study of analogical usage. Its principle merit consists in its elucidation of the logical structure of such usage. At the same time, however, one should realize that it is subject to some major shortcomings.

To begin with, we should note that Bochenski's account does not possess a sufficient degree of latitude to resolve fully the problem of the ratio communis. Earlier, we remarked that the notion of isomorphy only extends to the analogy of (proper) proportionality. For this reason Bochenski's account is unable to provide us with any assistance in explaining the ratio communis of terms that are subject to the analogy of two to a third (i.e., Cajetan's analogy of attribution) or the analogy of one to another. This lack is particularly troublesome with respect to the latter type of analogy; for, Aquinas seems to claim a key role for it in religious language.

From what we have said it is apparent that Bochenski's analysis proceeds upon a purely formal level. As such, it has little bearing upon the actual meaning content of analogous terms. For example, consider these statements: (1) A father loves his children, (2) God loves his creation. Here the term "loves" is understood to function analogically according to the analogy of proper proportionality. On Bochenski's reading, the common (i.e., identical) element amounts to the set of formal properties that characterize the relational term "loves" in both (1) and (2). From a semantic viewpoint, this type of approach cannot but help appear inadequate because it offers

no insight into the commonality of content that pertains to the meaning of "loves" in (1) and (2). Bochenski's mode of analysis cannot assist us in this vital matter because it does not address itself to the semantic factor that is at play in the ratio communis of analogous terms. For this reason, his constitutes an inadequate approach to the problem of the ratio communis.

An approach that is quite different from Hayner's or Bochenski's is to be found in W. Norris Clarke's article, "Analogy and the Meaningfulness of Language About God". Here we find a discussion of analogy and religious language from the Thomist viewpoint. In part, Clarke's article can be seen as a response to a number of criticisms made by Kai Nielsen.<sup>237</sup> Among other things, Nielsen takes issue with the Thomist dictum that analogy is a true via media between univocity and total equivocity. Specifically, he claims that the similarity amidst difference characteristic of an analogous term in its instances of use can only be intelligibly explained by appealing to a property or set of properties that the analogates share in common.<sup>238</sup> In effect, this means that analogical usage rests upon a univocal core of meaning.<sup>239</sup>

In considering this account of analogy, Clarke rightly observes that between Nielsen and the Thomist tradition there exists a major difference in their respective approaches to analogical usage.<sup>290</sup> This can be expressed more specifically by saying that the point of difference centers upon the way in

which each party understands the ratio communis of the analogous terms:

Thomists would admit... that in some significant sense there must be some common core of meaning in all analogous predications of the same term, for otherwise it could not function as one term and concept. But they insist, on the other hand, that this common core of meaning is not therefore univocal, but remains analogous, similar-in-difference, or diversely similar.

291

It would seem that the differences in this matter are clearly drawn. On the one hand there are those such as Hayner and Neilsen who insist that the common core of meaning can only be explained by recourse to common properties. In turn, this means that analogy has a univocal foundation. On the other hand, we find Clarke and much of the Thomist tradition rejecting this univocal interpretation, suggesting instead that the ratio communis of analogous terms is itself analogous or "diversely similar".

292

Clearly, there are a number of advantages with Clarke's position. Firstly, it is not at odds with the Scholastic conception of analogy as a via media between univocity and complete equivocity. Secondly, when applied to religious language, his account of analogy does not violate Aquinas' basic dictum that nothing is said of God and man univocally. Thirdly, inasmuch as Clarke's position does not depend upon a univocal element, it does not lead to anthropomorphic consequences when used in religious discourse.

In spite of these benefits, the Thomistic interpretation

of the ratio communis is still subject to a number of problems. Perhaps the most serious of these arises in connection with the use of analogy in religious language.

Consider the following sentences: (1) God loves his creatures, (2) A father loves his children. A theist who adopts the Thomist position would claim that the term "loves" functions analogically in both (1) and (2). With this said he would also have to admit, on pain of rendering such usage completely equivocal, that there is something common to the term "loves" in both its instances of use. The admission of the ratio communis follows from the observation made earlier by Clarke that there must be "some common core of meaning in all analogous predications of the same term." <sup>293</sup> In the present context, the ratio communis of the term "loves" could be designated by the expression "tender concern". Now the question would arise as to how this expression is being used. The alternative of complete equivocity would be unacceptable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the adoption of such usage would render the term "loves" in (1) completely equivocal with respect to its occurrence in (2). In turn, this would result in agnosticism, something the theist seeks to avoid. Secondly, an equivocal account of the ratio communis would violate the Thomist conception of analogy as a via media between univocity and total equivocity.

With the rejection of the equivocal approach one could ask the theist if "tender concern" functions univocally.

Clearly, this suggestion would also have to be rejected by the theist; for, if he accepted it would constitute an exception to Aquinas rule that terms cannot be predicated of God and man univocally. In addition, its employment would open the door to anthropomorphism.

In view of the failings of univocity and equivocity, the theist would have no other alternative than to admit that "tender concern" is being used analogically. This amounts to the claim that the ratio communis of the term "loves" is itself analogous. The process has not, however, come to an end; for, if the expression "tender concern" is used analogically there must be some common core of meaning present in both its instances of use. Here the ratio communis could perhaps be designated by "yearning"<sup>294</sup>. In view of the inappropriateness of either univocity or equivocity, the theist would be compelled to say that "yearning" is being employed analogically. With this admission, the process is again repeated and so on ad infinitum. In effect, one finds himself adrift on a sea of analogical explanations, unable to grasp the common notion that is at work<sup>295</sup> in the analogical use of "loves".

From a conceptual point of view the results seem quite similar to those that stem from a completely equivocal reading of the term's usage. To the extent that one is incapable of knowing just what it is that is being commonly affirmed by the term "loves" in (1) and (2), they find themselves facing the agnostic consequences that the theist

is anxious to avoid. This result is clearly at odds with the theist's desire to provide an account of the divine predicates that would not lead to an evacuation of their intelligible content.

Instead of providing one with an insight into the ratio communis of the term "loves", the theist's account has resulted in an infinite regress of analogical meanings and the subsequent failure to specify, in any determinate way, the common core of meaning. The upshot of this is agnosticism; for, if one cannot grasp the element of similarity obtaining between the divine predicate and its secular counterpart, one is therefore unable to determine the meaning of the divine predicate.<sup>296</sup> In view of this, it would seem that the analogical account of the ratio communis leads to consequences that seriously undermine the effaciousness of analogy in religious language.

Those commentators who are aware of the preceding difficulties suggest that they can only be avoided by accepting a univocal account of the ratio communis. From what we have seen, the theist would have no other alternative than to reject this proposal. In view of his aversion to univocity, the theist seems condemned to upholding a position that regards the ratio communis as analogous; and, in so doing he is also committed to accepting the consequences that follow from this position.<sup>297</sup>

There can be little doubt that these consequences are

disasterous, especially when viewed in relation to the task that Aquinas and others thought analogical predication would accomplish. For one thing, Thomas believed that the employment of analogy in religious language would avoid the agnostic results that stem from a purely equivocal account of the divine names. More positively, he thought that the appeal to analogy would grant some degree of meaningfulness to religious discourse. In view of our preceding analysis it would seem that both of these points are undermined by the results that stem from an analogical reading of the ratio communis.



Concluding Remarks:

Throughout this thesis we have attempted to show that Aquinas' theological employment of analogy rests upon an elaborate metaphysics. We have also tried to indicate what is involved in his position and how it is related to the linguistic enterprise of predicating names analogically of God. For some this metaphysical underpinning may constitute the strength of the Thomist position. However, they would have to be counted in the minority, given a growing tendency to treat such matters with suspicion. Regardless of this, the fact still remains that if one were to adopt the Thomist treatment of religious language, they would still have to provide some justification for the underlying metaphysics. Among other things, one would have to demonstrate the truth of the following:

- (a) that God is the cause of creatures and their perfections,
- (b) that creatures do in some way bear a likeness or resemblance to God,
- (c) that there is no effect that does not in some way resemble its cause.

The preceding is a tall order to fill and one could expect much disagreement on whether it could be done.

Furthermore, the appeal to analogy has often been made in order to guarantee the intelligibility of religious discourse and silence criticisms about its meaningfulness. While one is free to make this move we think it cannot be justified. If one takes Aquinas' efforts as the paradigm in this matter, it soon becomes apparent that the appeal to analogy delivers

far less than intended. For as we have seen, his discussion of the limitations involved in man's natural knowledge of God renders his account of the divine names much more agnostic in effect than has usually been supposed. Perhaps one could get around this difficulty by allowing for a more comprehensive knowledge of God - one that would extend to His essence. However, this would be at odds with what Aquinas and much of the Thomist tradition have had to say about man's knowledge of God.

Finally, the agnostic character of the Thomist use of analogy in religious language has some basis in the way in which the question of the ratio communis is handled. Earlier we noted that an analogical reading of the common notion has the merit of avoiding univocity and its attendant anthropomorphism. This is offset, however, by a number of disadvantages which include the problem of the infinite regress of analogicals and the failure to specify the "something common" that is at work in the analogous employment of a term. The latter consequence seriously undermines the effectiveness of theological analogy; for, if one cannot discern the element of similarity (i.e., the ratio communis) that relates the meaning of the divine predicate to that of its secular counterpart, then one can have no clear idea of what the divine predicate means.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations will be employed in the notes to follow, with paginations indicated. The complete citations for the works listed below shall be found in the BIBLIOGRAPHY.

### Works by Aquinas, Cajetan and John of St. Thomas

<u>ST</u>	<u>Summa Theologica</u>
<u>SCG</u>	<u>Summa Contra Gentiles</u>
<u>DP</u>	<u>De Potentia</u>
<u>DV</u>	<u>De Veritate</u>
<u>CT</u>	<u>Compendium of Theology</u>
<u>TAN</u>	<u>The Analogy of Names</u>
<u>ML</u>	<u>The Material Logic of John of St. Thomas</u>

### Other Works

<u>LA</u>	Ralph McInerny, <u>The Logic of Analogy</u>
<u>SA</u>	-----, <u>Studies in Analogy</u>
<u>PA</u>	Battista Mondin, <u>The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology</u>
<u>SAP</u>	-----, <u>St. Thomas Aquinas' Philosophy</u>
<u>AGW</u>	Hampus Lyttkens, <u>The Analogy Between God and the World</u>
<u>AOA</u>	George Klubertanz, <u>St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy</u>
<u>HP</u>	F. Copleston, <u>A History of Philosophy</u>
<u>A</u>	-- -----, <u>Aquinas</u>
<u>JP</u>	-- -----, <u>Contemporary Philosophy</u>

AP Paul Hayner, "Analogical Predication"

AMLG W. Norris Clarke, "Analogy and the  
Meaningfulness of Language about God"

TGDA Kai Nielsen, "Talk of God and the Doctrine  
of Analogy"

ARMRL James Ross, "Analogy as a Rule of Meaning  
for Religious Language"

TAA -----, A Critical Analysis of the  
Theory of Analogy in St. Thomas Aquinas

LR J.M. Bochenski, The Logic of Religion

HFL --- -- -----, A History of Formal Logic

---

## NOTES

1 The following is a partial list of some of the works which are expressive of this interest. A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (eds), New Essays in Philosophical Theology, (London: SCM Press, 1969); B. Mitchell, (ed.) Faith and Logic, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957); I. Ramsey, Religious Language (London: SCM Press, 1957); Dallas High, New Essays on Religious Language, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); F. Ferre, Language Logic and God, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

2 A.J. Ayer, Language Truth and Logic, (London: Penguin Books, 1971),

3 Ibid., pp. 48. This criterion is basically a testing procedure for distinguishing between those statements that are meaningful and those that are not. For criticisms of Ayer's verifiability theory of meaning see the following: W. Alston, Philosophy of Language, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 73-79; I. Berlin, "Verification" in The Theory of Meaning, G.H.R. Parkinson, (ed), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 15-34.

4 Ayer, op. cit., pp. 153.

5 One could say that Ayer's critique of religious utterances was partially responsible for this shift of emphasis. Another factor contributing to this shift is the linguistic character of much of the contemporary philosophical enterprise. In light of this, it was perhaps inevitable that the interest in meaning, which has characterized a good deal of analytical philosophy, would come to be extended into the area of religious language.

6 The literature in this case reflects a number of diverse interpretations on the nature and function of religious language. For example, Braithwaite, in his work An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Language, emphasizes the emotive character of religious discourse. On the other hand, I.T. Ramsey, in Religious Language, stresses the logical oddness of such discourse and its capacity to elicit a religious disclosure. We also find I.M. Crombie stressing, in The Possibility of Theological Statements, the paradoxical and anomalous features of religious language.

7 Marcia Colish, The Mirror of Language, (London : Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 177.

8 SAP., pp. 89.

9 For Aquinas' discussion of univocity and equivocity, see ST., Ia, 13, 5; DP., 7,7 and SCG., bk. 1, chapters 32,33.

10 For his account of univocity see ST., Ia, 13, 5. A more contemporary definition of univocity would be as follows. A term "X" functions univocally in sentences (a) and (b) if "X" in (a) signifies the same property as "X" in (b). This definition is borrowed from Ross. see ARMRL., pp. 40.

11 Admittedly, this is a very simplistic characterization of what is involved in Aquinas' conception of God. For a more detailed account of this one should consult Questions Three and four of Thomas' ST. There he delineates the nature of the difference between God and creatures by employing the categories of form/matter, substance/accident, potency/act. A similar account is also found in SCG., Bk. 1, chapters 15-29.

12 "good"<sub>1</sub> = "good" as employed in sentence (1), "good"<sub>2</sub> =  
"good" as used in sentence (2).

13 For Aquinas' characterization of equivocity, see ST., Ia, 13, 5. There Thomas also notes that this interpretation of religious language is held by Averroes and Maimonides. A more current rendition of complete equivocity would be this: Term "X" functions totally equivocally in sentences (a) and (b) if there is no property which is included both in the signification of "X" in (a) and in the signification of "X" in (b). Again, this account is taken from Ross. See ARMRL., pp. 40.

14 ST., Ia, 13, 5.

15 One should bear in mind that we are not concerned with analogical argumentation. Our interests center upon the analogical use of the terms in religious discourse.

16 For instance, see Copleston, CP., pp. 87-102 and Ross, ARMRL., pp. 35-70.

17 ST., Ia, 13, 5. Also see SCG., bk. 1, ch. 32, DP., 7,5.

18 AGW., pp. 201.

19 One should bear in mind that the expressions "univocal" and "equivocal" are being employed in an unusual way. Ordinarily, these expressions refer to the semantic content of certain forms of linguistic usage. On occasion, Aquinas employs them in this familiar way. At other times, however, he uses them to describe different types of causality. The present context is a case in point.

20 PA., p.86.

21 A. Kenny, The Five Ways (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp.39-40.

22 Ibid., p.40.

23 Ibid., p.40.

24 PA., p.87.

25 DP., 7,1,ad.8. Also see AOA., pp.71-72. Aquinas does not always adhere to this division. Sometimes he offers a three-fold division of causality: (a) Univocal, (b) Equivocal, and (c) Analogical. On this see AOA., pp.72.

26 DP., 7,5.

27 ST., 1a, 4,3.

28 PA., pp.92. Equivocal causes differ from univocal ones because the form of the effect is not identical to the form of its cause.

29 DP., 7,10.

30 ST., 1a,4,3. This point about the existential dependence also follows from Aquinas' third argument for the existence of God. See ST., 1a,2,3.

31 The "perfections" of creatures are to be equated with their properties or characteristics. On the derivation of perfections from God see SCG., Bk.I, ch., 29, #2; ST., 1a,4,2; 13,2.

32 A more complete treatment of this resemblance will be given in a later section.

33 See SCG., Bk.I, ch. 29,31; DP., 7,5. When employing the three-fold division of causality, Aquinas' regards God's causality as being analogous. On this see, AOA., p.72.

34 ST., 1a,3,5: SCG., Bk.I, ch.25.

35 AOA., pp.72-73; ST., 1a,4,3.

36 AOA., pp.49-50.

37 Ibid.

38 ST., 1a,4,3. Also see AOA., pp.73; ST., 1a,13,2; 13,5, ad.2.

39 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 29, #2.

40 This is evident from the way he handles the matter in ST., 1a, 13, 5 and SCG., bk. 1, ch. 32.

41 DP., 7, 5.

42 ST., 1a, 13, 5.

43 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 32.

44 DV., 2, 11.

45 One should bear in mind that univocity also results when the effect and the cause belong to the same genus.

46 A generic basis for univocity is also ruled out in this case, because Aquinas insists that the likeness between creatures and God does not involve a sameness of genus.

47 In effect, this means that Thomas' treatment of univocity relies upon his conception of the God/creature relationship.

48 There are three of these metaphysical elements. The first involves the notion that there is no effect that does not bear some degree of likeness to its cause. The second centers upon the idea that a causal relationship obtains between God and creatures. The third amounts to the claim that creatures bear a resemblance or likeness to God.

49 In effect, Thomas' handling of equivocity constitutes a critique of Averroes and Maimonides who held to an equivocal interpretation of the divine names.

50 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 33, #3. Also see DP., 7, 7; ST., 1a, 13, 5.

51 This would follow from our earlier account of total equivocity. See note # 13.

52 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 33, #3.

53 Ibid., #6.

54 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 34.

55 One finds references to analogy in ST., 1a, 13, 5; SCG., bk. 1, ch. 34; DP., 7, 7; DV., 2, 11; IT., 27 and the Commentary to the Sentences, lib. 1, dist. 19, Q. 5, a. 2.

56 For instance, compare DV., 2, 11 with ST., 1a, 13, 5. The former work includes the analogy of proportionality in the division of analogy that is presented. The latter makes no mention of this mode of analogy.



57 Cajetan's critics include McInerney and Mondin. See PA., pp. 40-51; LA., pp. ~~3~~23 .

58 Cajetan's classification is found in TAN., pp. 9-29 .

59 See ST., 1a, 13, 5, and SSG., bk. 1, ch. 34., where Thomas describes this mode of analogy as the analogy of many things to one.

60 TAN., pp. 24-5.

61 DV., 2, 11. In view of the correspondence between the kinds of analogy described by Cajetan and those described by Thomas, we shall, on occasion adopt the terminology of Cajetan in talking about Aquinas' division of analogy.

62 ST., 1a, 13, 5. Also see DP., 7, 7.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 TAN., pp., 15. Also see ML., pp. 155-156.

67 TAN., pp. 16. Also see DV., 21, 4, ad. 2.

68 Ibid., pp. 18. Also see ML., pp. 159.

69 Ibid., pp. 19.

70 Ibid.

71 ST., 1a, 13, 6.

72 TAA., pp. 65. A term would be used in it's primary sense when it is predicated of the primary analogate. The term is employed in a secondary sense when it is predicated of the secondary analogate.

73 ACA., pp. 36, #7.

74 ML., pp. 152.

75 Cited in SA., pp. 18.

76 The following discussion is based upon John E. Thomas' analysis of the analogy of attribution. See his Analogy and the Meaning of Religious Utterances (an unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Duke University) 1964, pp. 40-41.

77 Cajetan points to this when he says that " a name that is analogous in this manner does not have one definite meaning common to all its partial modes, i.e., to all its analogates." TAN., pp. 20.

78 The definition of the analogy of attribution is borrowed from Ross. See TAA., pp. 70 and ARMRL., pp. 40-41.

79 The terminology is Cajetan's. Aquinas talks of this kind of analogy in DV., 2, 11.

80 TAN., pp. 24-5.

81 Ibid., pp. 25.

82 DV., 23, 7, ad. 9 (cited in TAN., pp. 25, note #3.)

83 DV., 2, 11.

84 Another difference can be noted. The mathematical model admits of a continuous proportion (e.g. A:B :: B:C). We do not invariably find this feature in the non-mathematical employment of proportionality. The theological use of proportionality is a case in point.

85 TAN., pp. 25. cf. DV., 2, 3.

86 Ibid., pp. 26.

87 Here the similarity would be one of function.

88 ARMRL., pp. 63.

89 Ibid. This is in line with Cajetan's observation that in its non-mathematical use, the notion of proportionality becomes weakened so as to only mean a similarity of relations.

90 TAN., pp. 27. cf. VL., pp. 157.

91 Ibid., pp. 27.

92 TAA., pp. 92.

93 TAN., pp. 25-6. Cf. ML., pp. 157; DV., 2, 11.

94 TAN., pp. 26. For John of St. Thomas, metaphorical proportionality constitutes a "sort of abuse of language." ML., pp. 157.

95 This definition is a hybrid, being comprised of elements taken from the accounts offered by Ross and J.E. Thomas. See TAA., pp. 119-120, ARMRL., pp. 42, and J.E. Thomas, op cit., pp. 53-4.

96 Noticeably absent is what Cajetan calls the analogy of inequality (TAN., pp. 11.) Aquinas mentions this form of analogy in his Commentary on the First Book of the Sentences. There it is called an analogy according to being and not according to intention" (see 1 Sent., dist., 19, Q. 5, a. 2, ad, 1). Its importance in the analogy theories of both Aquinas and Cajetan is slight. Cajetan goes so far as to say that it constitutes "a misuse of the term" (TAN., pp. 13), meaning by this that it is not a true form of analogy. Aquinas does not seem to attach much importance to it, for it is only mentioned in the Commentary. It is not to be found in the divisions of analogy that Thomas provides in subsequent works. In view of its unimportance we shall, in lieu of an extensive analysis, provide the following summary account of the analogy of inequality. Term "X" is used analogously by the analogy of inequality in sentences (a) and (b) if: (1) term "X" has exactly the same meaning in both instances of use and (11) the property signified by "X" in (a) and (b) differs in degree owing to some standard of comparison. (The preceding is based upon Ross' account in ARMRL., pp. 40). Clearly, this mode of analogy would have no role to play in religious language, for it involves a marked degree of univocity.

97 ST., 1a, 13, 5.

98 For Cajetan and his followers, the analogy of one to another is merely an instance of the analogy of attribution. When seen in this way it is subject to all the conditions that Cajetan cites for this form of analogy. The most notable of these is extrinsic denomination. As we shall see, the Cajetanian approach to the analogy of one to another is not without problem. For example, in Aquinas' major theological works (i.e., SCG and ST) we find him repeatedly claiming that names are predicated of God and creatures according to the analogy of one to another. At the same time, he clearly gives the impression that he does not want such predication to be subject to extrinsic denomination. These considerations lead one to be suspicious of Cajetan's claim that the analogy of one to another can be classified as an instance of the analogy of attribution. More of this later.

- 99 Here one should also include the analogy of inequality.
- 100 The most notable exponents of this view are Ross, Anderson, Phelan and Copleston.
- 101 Representative of this position are Mondin, Gilson and Hayner.
- 102 That is, what Aquinas calls the analogy of two to a third, or the analogy of many to one.
- 103 ST., 1a, 13, 2.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Where the statement means "God is the cause of goodness in creatures".
- 106 ST., 1a, 13, 6.
- 107 Ibid., 1a, 13, 2.
- 108 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 34, #1.
- 109 DP., 7, 7.
- 110 This point is made by Aquinas in DP., 7, 7. There he rejects the analogy of two to a third because "nothing precedes God."
- 111 TAN., pp. 27.
- 112 Most notably, the ST. and SCG.
- 113 AGW., pp. 236. cf PA., pp. 41.
- 114 Ibid., pp. 237-238. cf. PA., pp. 41.
- 115 PA., pp. 85.
- 116 Specifically, DV., 2, 11.
- 117 PA., pp. 13.
- 118 WE have in mind ST., SCG., and the Compendium of Theology. One could also include DP.
- 119 In DP., 7, 7 one also finds no mention of the analogy of proportionality.
- 120 ST., 1a, 13, 5; SCG., bk. 1, ch, 34; DP., 7, 7.
- 121 AOA., pp. 94.

122 Ibid.

123 This follows from Cajetan's observation in TAN., pp. 27.

124 Robert L. Patterson, The Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1933), pp. 244. cf M.S. O'Neill, "Some Remarks on the Analogy of God and Creatures in St. Thomas Aquinas." in Mediaeval Studies, vol. xxiii, 1961, pp. 207-208.

125 On occasion Aquinas refers to this type of analogy as the analogy of two to a third. See ST., 1a, 13, 5.

126 For the sake of convenience we shall, on occasion, refer to this as the "analogy of proportion".

127 SCG., bk. 1, ch.34.

128 ST., 1a, 13, 5. cf DP., 7, 7.

129 DP., 7, 7. CT., ch. 27.

130 ST., 1a, 13, 2. We shall refer to this as the demand for substantial predication

131 Ibid. This demand for substantial predication is presented by Aquinas as an alternative to the view that interprets the divine names relationally. In effect, this position claims that when we predicate a name of God we do nothing more than signify His relation to creatures.

132 In this context, the term "metaphysic" refers to Aquinas' conception of the God/creature relationship.

133 The following are some of the questions he entertains: "Are terms used of God and creatures univocally?" "Are terms used of God and creatures equivocally?" "Do any of the terms ascribed to God express something of what He is?"

134 ST., 1a, 13, 5. cf. ST., 1a, 13, 2; 13, 9, ad, 3; SCG., bk., 1 ch. 34, #6; DP., 7, 7.

135 The expression "theological analogy" (or "theistic analogy") refers to the specialized use that is made of analogy when it is employed to predicate certain terms of both man and God. It is not another mode or type of analogy. Rather, the expression merely refers to the use of a certain form of analogy (i.e., the analogy of one to another) in religious language.

136 The expression "ontological likeness" refers to a similitude that obtains between things that are signified by the analogous name.

137 As we noted earlier, such likeness is neither specific nor generic. Rather, Aquinas views it as analogical.

138 PA., pp. 85. This point is made by a number of other commentators. See HF., pp. 355, AGW., pp. 283, Per Erik Persson, Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), pp. 95-6, A., pp. 137, Robert Meagher, "Thomas Aquinas and Analogy: a Textual Analysis" in The Thomist, vol. 34, (April, 1970), pp. 252.

139 For e.g., see ARVRL, TAA.

140 ST., 1a, 13, 3. cf. DP., 7, 5; SCG., bk. 1, ch. 30.

141 ST., 1a, 13, 3.

142 E.g., compare the accounts that are offered in ARVRL., pp. 119-126, TAA., pp. 93-102, and A., pp. 135-6, HF., pp. 351-3.

143 In effect, this constitutes his theory of meaning.

144 LA., pp. 61.

145 DP., 7, 6.

146 ST., 1a, 13, 1.

147 David Burrell, "Aquinas on Naming God" in Theological Studies, vol. 24, 1963, pp. 194.

148 McInerny makes this point about the triadic character of signification. See SA., pp. 74. The identification of meaning with the concept is found in ST.: "What we mean by a word is the concept we form of what the word signifies" (1a, 13, 4).

149 LA., pp. 54.

150 SA., pp. 22.

151 DV., 4, 1.

152 Ibid. The importance of conception or thought in the employment of names is also brought out in Aquinas' observation that the inner word is the "efficient cause" of the outer word (Ibid.)

153 See Aquinas' introductory comments to ST., 1a, 13. cf. ST., 1a, 13, 1; LA., pp. 54.

154 On this point see Maurer's introduction to his translation of Aquinas' On Being and Essence, (Toronto: the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), pp. 13.

155 For the sake of convenience, we shall call this the res/modus distinction.

156 DP., 7, 5; SCG., bk. 1, ch. 30.

157 ST., 1a, 13, 3.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

160 ST., 1a, 13, 3, ad. 1.

161 The expression "mixed perfections" is taken from Mondin (PA., pp. 94). For Aquinas' account of this type of perfection see ST., 1a, 13, 3, ad. 1.

162 PA., pp. 94. cf. AGW., pp. 377.

163 Because of this they can only be used metaphorically of God (ST., 1a, 13, 3, ad. 1).

164 ST., 1a, 13, ad. 1. cf. SCG., bk. 1, ch. 30 where he says ". . . by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them." (#3)

165 We acknowledge that this interpretation of the modus significandi is not based upon any direct textual evidence. Instead, the interpretation we are urging has been arrived at indirectly by way of considering Aquinas' theory of signification.

166 For instance, compare this account with TAA., pp. 93-102, and D. Burrell, Analogy and Philosophical Language, (London: Yale University Press, 1973) pp. 136-139.

167 A., pp. 135, HP., pp. 351. J. Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 227.

168 ST., 1a, 13, 3. DP., 7, 5. SCG., bk. 1, ch. 30.

169 Ibid.

170 For this idea see ST., 1a, 4, 2; 13, 2.

171 Aquinas would add the qualifier that they exist in God in a more perfect or eminent way.

172 ST., 1a, 13, 3.

173 DV., 1, 12.

174 ST., 1a, 84, 7.

175 This is a very superficial sketch of an extremely complex process. For a detailed account of what is involved in the knowing process see John Feifer, The Mystery of Knowledge, (Albany: Magi Books, 1962).

176 For Aquinas, "phantasms" are images that represent the material objects perceived by the external senses.

177 ST., 1a, 84, 7.

178 Aquinas makes this point in ST., 1a, 84, 7: "The proper object of the human intellect, which is united to a body, is the quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter."

179 ST., 1a, 84, 7.

180 Ibid.

181 On this see A., pp. 135, HP., pp. 353-4.

182 ST., 1a, 13, 3. Our emphasis.

183 Ibid.

184 Ibid., ad. 3.

185 This point about likeness follows from the principle that there is no effect that does not, in some way, resemble its cause.

186 ST., 1a, 4, 3, ad. 1 ; 13, 2.

187 ST., 1a, 6, 4. For Aquinas, the notion of participation is bound up with an ontological scale that displays a hierarchical configuration. On this view things are said to participate to a "higher" or "lower" degree in the given perfection (e.g., goodness). The degree of participation in the perfection is determined by the thing's place on the ontological scale.

188 DP., 7, 4.

189 On God's simplicity, see ST., 1a, 3.

190 DF., 7, 2; 7, 5.



191 In this case the difference is not total. While admittedly imperfect, the created perfection does bear an analogical likeness to its divine counterpart.

192 Prima faciae this would seem to introduce a marked degree of agnosticism into Aquinas' account of the divine predicates. The question of St. Thomas' agnosticism will be discussed at length in a later section.

193 DP., 7, 5; ST., 1a, 13, 12.

194 Later, we shall have more to say about this.

195 DP., 7, 5.

196 In view of this Aquinas will say that the modus significandi of a term must be denied (or dropped) when it is predicated of God.

197 Even at the cost of introducing an agnostic element into his interpretation of religious language. More on this later.

198 The principal works of Pseudo-Dionysius are the Divine Names, and Mystical Theology. For a brief account of his teachings on the via affirmativa and the via negativa see HP., pp. 93-4.

199 Ibid., pp. 94.

200 Ibid., pp. 357.

201 This has also been referred to as the "way of remotion" or "negative theology". In the following pages, the expressions via negativa, negative way and negative theology will be used interchangeably.

202 SCG., bk. 1, ch. 14. On this see also HP., pp. 347-8, A., pp. 131-132.

203 For e.g., in denying materiality and composition of God, Aquinas would say that we achieve some knowledge of God, for now we know that He is neither of these things. In employing the via negativa. Thomas would be the first to acknowledge that it yields an imperfect knowledge of God. This is because the via negativa does not allow for a knowledge of God's nature.

204 SCG., bk. 1, ch, 14, #2.

205 Ibid. eg. Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy, (New York: Double and Company, 1960), pp. 112. Hereafter referred to as ECP.

206 Such a conception would be one that would coincide with (i.e., be isomorphic with) the perfection in question.

207 ECP., p.110. The importance of negative theology in Aquinas' handling of religious language is acknowledged by a number of commentators. For example, see PA., p.98. Burrell, op. cit., pp.164, P. Sherry, "Analogy Today" in Philosophy, vol. 51, Oct.1976, p.434. In this context, Gilson's comments are of interest:

However careful one may be to stress the positive meaning of the names attributed to God, one would betray the deepest intention of Thomas Aquinas by not letting negative theology have the last word. (ECP., p.144)

208 Admittidly, this is a fairly agnostic interpretation of the situation. Later, in discussing Aquinas' "agnosticism", we shall try to justify this reading.

209 A., p.136. Also see D. Burrell's, "Aquinas on Naming God" in Theological Studies, vol.24, 1963, p.199.

210 Cited in A., p.136.

211 DV., 2,1, ad.9.

212 See Thomas' introductory remarks to ST., 1a, 13.

213 ST., 1a, 13, 2.

214 E.L. Mascall, Words And Images, (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1957), p.103. Also see, SAP, p.90.

215 SAP., p.90.

216 This is the knowledge that the human intellect obtains of God through the use of its cognitive powers.

217 While Thomas almost always holds to this point, he suggests in ST., 1a, 12, 11, that there may be exceptions. In certain unique cases man can come to see the essence of God in this life. Such an occurrence is wholly dependent upon God's grace, and is to be viewed as a miracle.

218 ST., 1a, 12, 11.

219 SCG., Bk.1, ch.3; Bk.3, ch.47.

220 DV., 10, 11.

221 ST., 1a, 12, 12.

222 ECP., pp. 108.

223 HP., pp. 393.

224 On the likeness of creatures to God see SCG., bk. 1, ch, 29; ST., 1a, 4, 3; 13, 2.

225 Here, Aquinas' Five Ways assume importance, for they exemplify his point about a knowledge of God's existence being obtainable via finite things.

226 ST., 1a, 12, 12. Also see SCG., bk. 1, ch. 3, #3.

227 Aquinas would add the qualifier that these perfections exist in God in a higher or more transcendent way. On this see ST., 1a, 4, 2.

228 Here, the adoption of the analogy of one to another follows from our earlier claim that this mode of analogy is the one that Aquinas' thinks most applicable to religious language.

229 These restrictions amount to the following: (1) man cannot know the essence or nature of God, (11) man can only know that God exists and that he contains the perfections of creatures in a more eminent way.

230 E. Gilson, The Spirit of Thomism, (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1964), pp. 77.

231 Ibid.

232 This would be the class of terms that signify "simple perfections".

233 Perhaps one could mitigate this consequence by allowing for a more thorough knowledge of God, one extending to His nature or essence. For Aquinas, such a knowledge is not possible.

234 ST., 1a, 13, 12.

235 This way of dealing with the problem of agnosticism is, we think, representative of Thomas' position on the matter.

236 A., pp. 136. cf HP., pp. 351.

237 Again this strategy can be seen as a constitutive element in Aquinas' thinking on religious language. Copleston's account, while different in terminology, is nevertheless closely akin to Aquinas' outlook. Both place a good deal of emphasis upon the importance of the via negativa in their respective treatments of the divine names.

238 e.g. see A., pp. 135-6.

239 JP., pp. 96-7.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid.

243 Ibid.

244 Ibid.

245 Ibid., pp. 97.

246 Ibid., pp. 96-7.

247 Ibid. This is done by eliminating those elements peculiar to human intelligence that would not be compatible with the divine intelligence.

248 This problem is closely akin to the one that results from the denial of the modus significandi. See pp. 88 above.

249 Cited in ECP., pp. 140.

250 See P. Hayner, "Analogical Predication" in Journal of Philosophy, vol. LV, #20, 1958, pp. 859.

251 For Copleston, human intelligence constitutes the basis for the subjective meaning of the term "intelligence".

252 AP., pp. 859.

253 Hayner raises a similar objection. See AP., pp. 859.

254 Aquinas' theory of signification and his observations on man's natural knowledge of God provide one with another way in which to establish the agnostic conclusion. On the one hand, Thomas says that the meaning of a term is to be identified with the concept or ratio that the intellect has formulated of the thing that is signified. On the other hand, in considering the terms predicated analogically of God, he acknowledges that the res significata of such terms transcends our powers of comprehension. While we can affirm that the res significata of such a term exists in God, we cannot conceive of its nature or the way in which it exists in Him. The preceding points strongly suggest, we think, that the meaning of the divine predicates is at best ambiguous and, at worst, unknowable.

255 e.g., see ARMRL.

256 The qualifier would be "in this life".

257 Cited by Copleston in A., pp. 136. See also DP., 7, 5, ad 14.

258 This expression is borrowed from Gilson. See ECP., pp. 110.

259 Cited by Maritain, op. cit., pp. 237.

260 That is, as that which is unknown, transcending both human thought and speech.

261 AP., pp. 856-7.

262 AP., pp. 857. The critical point that Hayner is making shall be considered in a later section where we examine an alternative approach to the ratio communis of analogous terms.

263 AP., pp. 859-60.

264 For Hayner, commonality is equivalent to identity. As we shall see, this interpretation is quite different from the one offered by the Thomists.

265 This example is a modified version of the one Hayner offers. See AP., pp. 860.

266 Ibid.

267 Presumably this difference results from  $B \neq X$  and  $C \neq T$ .

268 AP., pp. 860.

269 Ibid., pp. 860-1.

270 Ibid., pp. 861.

271 Ibid.

272 The exact nature of this agnosticism shall be explained in a later section which examines the problem of the infinite regression of analogical terms.

273 This would follow from what we said about univocity in note # 10.

274 AP., pp. 861.

275 Ibid.

276 Here we are talking of a theist who stands in the Thomist tradition.

277 In this case, "common properties" are understood to be those that are identical with one another. Aquinas does not subscribe to the view that the properties or perfections of creatures in no way resemble the perfection of God. If he were to admit this he would, in effect, be laying the ground for a complete equivocal reading of the divine names. As we have seen, St. Thomas thinks that created perfections do bear an analogical likeness or similitude to the perfection of the Creator. For e.g., he would say that the goodness of man is an analogue, albeit a dim one, to the goodness of God. In saying this he would, at the same time, insist that such resemblance does not mean that the goodness of the former is identical with that of the latter.

278 LR., pp. 114.

279 Ibid., pp. 115.

280 Ibid., pp. 116. In this case "common" is equivalent to "identical".

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid.

283 Ibid., pp. 117.

284 Ibid. Symmetry and transitivity can be explained as follows: the relation  $Fxy$  is symmetrical if and only if  $(x)(y)(Fxy \supset Fyx)$ . The relation  $Fxy$  is transitive if and only if  $(x)(y)(z) [(Fxy \cdot Fyz) \supset Fxz]$ . Reference for this can be found in H. Kahane, Logic and Philosophy, (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 175-6.

285 HFL., pp. 386.

286 This would also apply to Aquinas' analogy of one to another.

287 TGDA., pp. 32-60.

288 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

289 Ibid., pp. 40, 50-51.

290 AVLG., pp. 65. Here, Hayner could also be mentioned as his handling of analogy and the ratio communis is quite similar to Nielsen's account.

291 Ibid.

292 It goes without saying that Aquinas holds to the view that the ratio communis of analogous terms is itself analogous.

293 AMLG., pp. 65.

294 This expression is borrowed from J.E. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 125.

295 Here we have Hayner's problem of the "infinite regress of analogical explanations." See AP., pp. 857. The problem of the infinite regress of analogicals is also noted by Ross and J.E. Thomas. See TAA., pp. 191-193, Thomas, op. cit., pp. 124-125, 159, and J.E. Thomas, "On the Meaning of 'Analogy is Analogical'" in Laval Theologique et Philosophique, vol. XXII, (1966), pp. 76.

296 Hayner seems to be suggesting this in his criticism of the Thomist position. See AP., pp. 857.

297 As noted earlier, the consequences amount to the following: (I) the infinite regress of analogicals, (II) the failure to pinpoint the common core of meaning that is operative in the analogical use of a term, (III) the inability to fix the meaning of the divine predicates.

298 There is an additional problem here. Aquinas wanted to adopt an account of religious utterances that would not undermine theological argumentation. Thus, we find him rejecting an equivocal reading of the divine predicates because it invalidates such argumentation by making it subject to the fallacy of equivocation (3<sup>m</sup>., 1a, 13, 5). Presumably, Thomas thought that an analogical interpretation of religious utterances would prevent such an outcome. However, in our examination of the Thomist account of the ratio communis we saw that it lead to agnostic consequences. In other words, we find that the meaning of terms predicated analogically of God are at best uncertain and at worst, unknowable. It would therefore seem that any theological argument which turns upon such terms would be so ambiguous as to be rendered invalid. For some, this constitutes one of the major problems with the theological use of analogy: To avoid the fallacy of ambiguity we must make sure each term is used in the same sense throughout the argument. Theological arguments contain terms "subject to analogy", i.e., terms whose precise sense is unknown to those using them. Theologians, then, can never be sure of avoiding the fallacy of ambiguity in their arguments. Their readers are of necessity in the same unhappy plight. So while a theologian can propound what look like arguments, neither he nor his readers can possibly tell if they have any force. All theological reasoning here below is in practice a

void for uncertainty.  
H. Palmer, Analogy, (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 89.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bochenski, J.M.. A History of Formal Logic. I. Thomas, trans.  
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964.

-----, ----. The Logic of Religion. New York: New York  
University Press, 1965.

Burrell, David. "Aquinas on Naming God". Theological Studies.  
vol. 24, 1963, pp. 183-212.

-----, -----. Analogy and Philosophical Language. New Haven:  
Yale University Press, 1973.

Chapman, Tobias. "Analogy". The Thomist. vol. 39, 1975, pp.  
127-141.

Clarke, W. Morris. "Analogy and the Meaningfulness of Language  
about God: A Reply to Kai Nielsen". The Thomist. vol. XL,  
1976. pp. 61-75.

Colish, Marcia. The Mirror of Language. New Haven: Yale University  
Press, 1969.

Copleston, F.C. A History of Philosophy. London: Burns Oates and  
Washbourne, 1950.

-----, ----. Aquinas. London: Penguin Books, 1963.

-----, ----. Contemporary Philosophy. London: Burns and Oates,  
1956.

De Vio, Thomas Cardinal Cajetan. The Analogy of Names. E.A.  
Bushinski and H.J. Koren, trans. Pittsburgh: Duquesne  
University Press, 1959.

Gilson, E. Elements of Christian Philosophy. New York: Doubleday  
and Co. 1960.

-----, -. The Spirit of Thomism. New York: P.J. Kenedy and  
Sons, 1964.

Hayner, Paul. "Analogical Predication". The Journal of Philosophy.  
vol. LV, 1958, pp. 355-362.

John of St. Thomas, The Material Logic of John of St. Thomas.  
Y. Simon, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, .

- Kahane, Howard. Logic and Philosophy. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1969.
- Klubertanz, G.P. St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960.
- Lyttkens, Hampus. The Analogy Between God and the World. Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1952.
- Maritain, Jacques. The Degrees of Knowledge. G.B. Phelan, trans. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.
- Mascall, E.L. Existence and Analogy. Hamden: Archon Books, 1967.
- McInerney, R.M. The Logic of Analogy. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.
- , ---. Studies in Analogy. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.
- Meagher, R. "Thomas Aquinas and Analogy: A Textual Analysis" The Thomist. vol. 34, 1970, pp. 230-253.
- Mondin, Battista. St. Thomas Aquinas' Philosophy. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975.
- , -----. The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968.
- Nielsen, Kai. "Talk of God and the Doctrine of Analogy". The Thomist. vol. XL, 1976, pp. 32-60.
- O'Neill, M.S. "Some Remarks on the Analogy of God and Creatures in St. Thomas Aquinas". Mediaeval Studies, vol. XXIII, 1961, pp. 206-215.
- Palmer, H. Analogy. London: Macmillan, 1973.
- Patterson, R.L. The Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1933.
- Peifer, J. The Mystery of Knowledge. Albany: Magi Books Inc. 1962.
- Persson, P.E. Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas. R. MacKenzie, trans. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970.
- Prellar, V. Divine Science and the Science of God. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

- Ross, J.F. "A Critical Analysis of the Theory of Analogy of St. Thomas Aquinas". A doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy, at Brown University, 1958. Published by Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- , ---. "Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language". in Aquinas. A. Kenny ed., London: MacMillan, 1970, pp.93-138.
- , ---. "Analogy and the Resolution of Some Cognition Problems". The Journal of Philosophy. vol.LXVII, 1970, pp.725-746.
- Schmitz, K.L. "Restitution of Meaning in Religious Speech". International Journal for Philosophy of Religion. vol.5, #3, 1974, pp.131-151.
- Sherry, P.J. "Analogy Today". Philosophy. vol.51, 1976, pp.431-436.
- Thomas, J.E. "Analogy and the Meaning of Religious Utterances". A doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy of Duke University, 1964.
- , ---. "On the Meaning of 'Analogy is Analogical' ". Laval Theologique et Philosophique. vol.XXII, 1966, pp.70-79.
- Thomas Aquinas, St. De Veritate. translated as The Disputed Questions on Truth. J. McGlyn, trans. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953.
- , -----, ---. De Potentia. translated by the English Dominican Fathers, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1934.
- , -----, ---. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book I. A. Pegis, trans. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.
- , -----, ---. Summa Theologica. vols. 2,3,12. New York: McGraw Hill and Eyer and Spottiswoode, 1964.
- , -----, ---. Compendium of Theology. C. Vollert, trans. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1958.