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THE THOMISTIC GROUND OF ANALOGY AND REFORMED  
ECTYPAL THEOLOGY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Master of Theology

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by  
Amos Peck  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE THOMISTIC GROUND OF ANALOGY AND REFORMED  
ECTYPAL THEOLOGY

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Com. de Trin.* Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, Reason and Theology: Questions I-IV of Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*
- De Pot.* Thomas Aquinas, *The Power of God*
- De Ver.* Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*
- SCG* Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Against the Gentiles*
- Sent.* Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences Book I*
- ST* Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*

## PREFACE

This research thesis is the direct result of the kind, faithful, and dedicated aid of two institutions. The first is Southern Seminary's School of Theology which provided me with many years of formal instruction. A debt of particular gratitude is owed to Dr. Gregg Allison for taking on a student he didn't know and graciously bending over backwards to accommodate deadline complications. In addition, much of the content of this thesis grew out of the patient instruction of Dr. Tyler Wittman and the extensive puzzlement it provoked within me. Grateful thanks is also owed to Drs. Bruce Ware and Shawn Wright for the feedback they gave me on background research and writing I did in their classes. The second institution responsible for this research thesis is the institution of marriage. It is hard to express how utterly impossible this project would have been apart from the dedication of a wife who managed to perform most of my home and family responsibilities while finishing her own graduate degree so that I could complete this thesis. Thank you and well done, Kellen.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that Reformed ectypal theology refines Thomistic analogy by supplementing Aquinas' creational account of analogy's ground with a covenantal account. Ultimately, Aquinas presents the ground of analogy as inexplicable but demonstrably real, terminating in the mystery of divine actuality. While Aquinas describes this ground within the doctrine of creation, further description within the doctrines of special revelation and election are both possible and necessary. Far from rejecting Aquinas' ground of analogy, this proposal wholeheartedly takes it up and refines it via Reformed theology in a fashion consonant both with Aquinas' ultimate ground of analogy and Aquinas' overall theology.

This work begins in chapter two by showing how Aquinas' commitment to divine simplicity caused him to affirm a total qualitative distinction between God and creatures, leading him to conclude that God himself is incomprehensible and only known indirectly through his works. This commitment influenced his philosophy of language, where he postulated that creatures signify according to a different mode than God does and therefore all human predication of God is analogical. Analogists face a grounding problem for how they account for both the similarity and dissimilarity of analogy; a survey of the secondary literature shows that Aquinas' approach to analogy and the grounding problem is conceptual but ultimately ontological. The third chapter takes up a primary examination of Aquinas by examining four texts, concluding that Aquinas accounted for the formal similarity of analogy through the efficient causality of God's creative act that reflects his own eternal nature. As such, Aquinas ultimately presents the ground of analogy as really existing but not fully explicable conceptually, terminating in



the incomprehensibility of divine actuality in the three persons of God and the *ad extra* relation to his creatures. The fourth chapter argues that Aquinas' ground of analogy is ultimately correct but that his creational account of analogy requires supplementing from Reformed ectypal theology, providing a covenantal account of the ground of analogy.

## CHAPTER 2

### UNDERSTANDING THOMISTIC ANALOGY AND ITS GROUNDING PROBLEM

This chapter examines Aquinas' theological and philosophical reasons for committing to an analogical understanding of the Creator/creature relation and how he has historically been understood by his readers to account for this relation. The thesis of this chapter is that Thomistic analogy seeks to uphold the Creator/creature distinction along with the real knowledge of God by suggesting that there is a real similarity (but not identity) between the being of God and the being of creatures. This chapter has three parts. The first briefly surveys Aquinas' doctrine of God and concludes that Aquinas viewed God as qualitatively distinct from his creation. The second part presents the issue of signification in thirteenth century philosophy of language and argues that Aquinas located the grounding problem of divine predication in the issue of *modus significandi*. The third part surveys secondary sources on the debate over whether Thomistic analogy has an ontological ground or is merely conceptual, concluding that proponents of an analogy of being present the best arguments.

#### **Theological Background: A Total Qualitative Distinction**

This first section examines Aquinas' doctrine of God to consider how Aquinas arrived at the conclusion that the being of God is utterly unique, leading to the need for analogy over univocity. This starting point is consciously chosen because it is ultimately Aquinas' doctrine of God that determines his philosophy: it is because of divine aseity and simplicity that Aquinas will insist on different *modi significandi*. This subsection argues that Aquinas' understanding of God as *sui generis* and thus totally qualitatively

distinct from creation is a conclusion derived from the logic of divine aseity applied to divine simplicity.<sup>1</sup> For Aquinas, God's perfections are not a superlative form of something common to both God and creatures. Rather, God *is* what he has and therefore has his perfections in a radically different way than his creatures. Establishing Aquinas' qualitative distinction is an essential first step to understanding Aquinas on analogy because if God's perfections constitute a difference of kind, then there must be some discontinuity between divine perfections and creaturely perfections.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since this paper intersects Thomistic analogy with Reformed theology, it is pertinent to note that this paper disagrees with the analysis of Thomistic analogy offered by Cornelius Van Til in *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1969). Van Til's critique is essentially that Aquinas' theory of knowledge stipulates that autonomous human reason is capable of arriving at true knowledge of God and creation that puts God and creation within a common genus of knowability; in other words, Thomistic analogy has no total qualitative distinction. Van Til reviews Aquinas' theological method and concludes that Aquinas' use of natural reason "is evidence that one has accepted a way of affirmation that is not based on the Creator-creature distinction, but on the assumption of a unity that is above this distinction." Van Til, 170. While Van Til's negative view of Aquinas' over-reliance on natural reason is warranted (see chapter 4), his claim that there is fundamentally no overarching Creator/creature distinction in Aquinas is unsustainable. Van Til's assertion of a unity in Thomistic analogy higher than the Creator/creature distinction is perplexing insofar as he provides no primary examples of where Aquinas endorses a unity-above-distinction view. In fact, whenever Van Til encounters core Thomistic teachings that explicitly contradict such a view, Van Til begs the question by dismissing these teachings as unwarranted given Aquinas' overarching Creator/creature unity that (presumably) supersedes the distinction. Van Til does this when treating Aquinas' argument for the identity of *ens* and *esse* in God. The identity of *ens* and *esse* in God necessitates a total qualitative distinction between God and creatures, yet Van Til dismisses the validity of Aquinas' commitment to this distinction because Aquinas "first enveloped God with ourselves in a common universe of abstract rationality" and thus "on his principle of knowledge Thomas cannot relate the existence and the essence of God at all." Van Til, 174. Van Til claims the "whole approach" of Aquinas is to posit that "man does know the relations and even the essence of created things without at all referring them to their Creator and controller." Van Til, 173. On the contrary, Aquinas teaches that God is the *principium* of all things and that nothing can be true except by correspondence to this *principium*. See Aquinas, *ST* I.16.5. At one point Van Til even grants that Aquinas grounds true human knowledge in God himself as the Wisdom who planted knowledge within our nature via his act of creation. Still, Van Til insists Aquinas' theological system has no warrant for grounding truth in God since Aquinas (presumably) uses appeals to autonomous human reason to establish the truth of Christianity and this is a contradiction since "he [Aquinas] has already taken the Christian point of view for granted." Van Til, 172. In short, Van Til's undocumented assertion regarding Thomistic analogy causes him to attribute views to Aquinas that Aquinas denies, ignore positions that Aquinas holds, and dismiss Thomistic analogy as a self-contradictory dialectic between univocity and equivocity. Surely a simpler conclusion is preferable: Aquinas does not posit an overarching unity above the Creator/creature distinction. For Aquinas, natural reason is not autonomous reason, but revelation "planted" in man by God. See Aquinas, *SCG* I.7.2. Aquinas also speaks of natural reason as "light endowed" by God. See Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* 1.1 co.

<sup>2</sup> This paper focuses on the aspect of the qualitative distinction represented by Aquinas' argument that God is *sui generis*. Aquinas depends upon this principle of God as distinct from all created *genera* in his fullest treatments of analogy. See Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 ad. 2; *Com. de Trin.* 1.2 ad. 3-4; *De Pot.* 7.3; *ST* I.3. The form of the *sui generis* argument is most developed in *ST* and is representative of Aquinas' thought for the purposes of this paper. For a more extensive treatment of the qualitative distinction inherent in Aquinas' account of the Creator/creature relation, see Tyler Wittman, *God and Creation in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 74-126.

In *ST*, Aquinas begins his doctrine of God by demonstrating that God is (*an sit*) through the five ways, an exercise in *via positiva* theology.<sup>3</sup> From there he turns to start considering in what way (*quomodo sit*) God exists, first arguing for divine simplicity using the *via negativa* and then arguing for divine perfection and goodness using the *via eminentia*.<sup>4</sup> The use of the three ways reflects Aquinas' view that God's essence cannot be known directly because he is incomprehensible. "Man is directed to God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of reason."<sup>5</sup> If the divine essence is incomprehensible, then it follows first that God is known only by his effects; second, that we cannot say anything about God perfectly except by negation; third, that when we do speak positively of God's perfections, we understand that his perfection is proper to him and thus is present in a more eminent fashion than it is known by creatures. Already the most basic groundwork for a doctrine of analogy has been laid: divine incomprehensibility.

Why would Aquinas think God is incomprehensible? There are many answers to this question but perhaps the best is found in *ST I.3* where Aquinas' apophatic theology first develops. In question three Aquinas argues that God is utterly simple and not composed of anything, and therefore he is *sui generis*, his own unique self-subsistent being.<sup>6</sup> The crucial aspect of composition to the topic of analogy is that of derivation. The doctrine of divine simplicity has always arrived at its denial of parts in God precisely because parts were understood to imply derivation from something more prior and simple. Aquinas' central argument in *I.3.2-5* for divine simplicity is that to be composed of something means to have something through participation in a more prior or "third" thing. As we shall see in the third chapter of this paper, his basic commitment to an

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<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.2.3*.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.3-5*.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.1.1* co.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.4.2* co. "God is being itself, of itself subsistent" (*deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens*).

analogy is based upon his conviction that there can be no more basic or common “third thing” in which God participates.<sup>7</sup> As a result, not understanding Aquinas’ doctrine of simplicity and its *sui generis* conclusion in I.3.5 makes understanding Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy impossible.

After denying that God has a material body in I.3.1, Aquinas begins article two by denying that God is composed of form; if he were, then God’s perfection would come to him through participation in a form instead of being original to him, and Aquinas argues God’s perfection and goodness must not be derivative from a higher form of perfection and goodness. In article three, he argues if God is not composed of form, then he cannot be composed of essence/nature, because there is no form for that essence apart from God himself. In article four, Aquinas argues that the divine essence (*essentia*) cannot have existent being (*esse*) added to it, but instead the two must be the same for God; this is because “to exist” is essential to God and he derives his existence from nothing outside of his own being. In article five, Aquinas argues if God’s essence and his existence are the same, then God cannot be included in a genus. This is because members of a genus are marked by the commonality of their essence and the difference of their individual existent being; but for God, as just shown, his existent being is the same as his essence. Aquinas’ conclusion that God is *sui generis* is what commits him to a so-called “qualitative” distinction instead of a merely quantitative distinction. The fact that God is *sui generis* means that his perfections are not in the same classification as creaturely perfections. The fact that God has his perfections essentially, eminently, and necessarily (instead of through participation) implies that his perfections are not just present to a different degree in him than in creatures, but in a different way or kind: a total qualitative

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<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *Sent. Prol.*, q. 1, a. 2; *De Ver.* 2.11 s. c.; *Com. De Trin.* I.1.2 ad. 3; *De Pot.* 7.7; *SCG* III.54.13.

distinction.<sup>8</sup> This difference of kind means there can be no one-to-one comparison between divine and creaturely perfections, similar to how perfections of one *genera* are analogical to perfections found in another *genera*.<sup>9</sup>

Two important observations follow from this examination of *ST* I.3.2-5. First, all four of these articles are established by the logic of divine aseity. In fact, they could be summarized thus: if God has life originally and necessarily in himself and from no other, then he cannot be derivative in any sense, which is why God does not participate in a common form, a common essence, a common nature, or a common genus. The second observation that follows from I.3.2-5 is that these specific four articles must be denied in order to affirm univocity. This is important because many univocist rejections of Thomistic analogy stem from a rejection of Thomistic simplicity *in toto*, particularly regarding *actus purus* and the identity thesis that stems from *ST* I.3.6-8. Such tenets of strong divine simplicity certainly seem to follow from the “weaker” tenets simplicity and, as we will see at the end of this chapter, are utilized by Aquinas to articulate how the relative opposition between God and creatures reflects the relative opposition within the immanent trinity. Nevertheless, the above treatment shows that even if one rejects *actus purus* and the identity thesis in favor of a “weak” divine simplicity, the need for analogy is not avoided. If God is *sui generis* then he is not in a community of being with creatures and therefore univocal language of God is impossible; and as demonstrated above, to deny that God is *sui generis* undercuts divine aseity itself. Aquinas’ solid theological

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<sup>8</sup> I term this a “total qualitative distinction” to emphasize that it is not distinction of degree in quantity or even quality but an actually different manner in which God is what he is as opposed to how we are what we are.

<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, there is a kind of analogy-within-an-analogy here. The difference between God’s perfections and human perfections are not just different in the same way that human perfections are different from, say, dinosaur perfections. Human perfections are somewhat different in kind from dinosaur perfections but they share multiple things in common such as their hylomorphic being, the contingency of their act of existence, and ultimately their derivative perfections, including existence. Thus, humans and dinosaurs share in several more common categories or *genera*. This makes the example analogous insofar as the difference between a *sui generis* being and creatures is different from the differences between creatures inhering within different genus’ but within a larger common *genera*.

commitments in the doctrine of God lead him to analogical commitments in the philosophy of language (examined in the next chapter section) and to analogical commitments in the philosophy of being (examined in the last section of this chapter).

### **Philosophical Background: Signification**

In this section it will be shown that Aquinas' articulation of his analogical proposal is shaped by the thirteenth century debate in the philosophy of language over the issue of linguistic signification. Failure to understand some technical aspects of the signification debate results in misunderstanding the interplay between linguistics and ontology in Thomistic analogy. In particular, this section argues that Aquinas utilized the technical categories present in the signification debate to outline the chief philosophical problem of divine predication: the problem presented by different *modi significandi*. This section presents the three basic categories of signification and then dwells upon the imposition of meaning and the analogical implications pregnant in the assumption that imposition is determined by different modes of signification.

### **Three Categories of Signification**

In the medieval period, *significare* (signification) did not refer to the mere abstract meaning of a word; rather, it was understood to be specifically the causal property of signs to convey understanding about objects. Signification was broken into three basic categories: *Significatio*, *significatum*, and *res significata*. Roughly speaking, then, *significatio* corresponded to the word signed, *significatum* to the concept signified, and *res significata* to the external thing signified.<sup>10</sup> Restated even more simply, the three categories denote the term itself, the ideas conveyed by it, and the object to which the term refers. In the thirteenth century all generally agreed that terms conveyed concepts

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<sup>10</sup> E. J. Ashworth, "Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): 44, 50-51.

about things in external reality. However, there was a debate about whether the primary substance of signification was the concept signified while the object signified was secondary, or vice versa. Aquinas sided with the view that insisted terms conveyed primarily concepts that in turn have external objects as their referent.<sup>11</sup> “For the idea signified by the name is the conception in the intellect of the thing signified by the name.”<sup>12</sup> The main point here is that Aquinas distinguished between the external referent of the sign and the concept imposed upon the sign and then insisted that signification refers immediately to concepts, not objects. Why? The answer to this question has two parts: *imponitur* and *modus significandi*.

### **Imposition of Meaning**

*Imponitur* refers to the imposition of meaning upon the *significatum*. Recall that signification refers to a causal *property* of words to convey meaning, and that Aquinas prioritized the concept signified over the object signified. This leads to the question of what underlies or “grounds” the conceptual content of a word? Aquinas’ priority of concept over object reflected his metaphysical view concerning universals. In the thirteenth century, the debate over the nature of universals intersected with the debate concerning signification. On one view of universals, common nature actually exists and then is instantiated in individuals; if this is true, then the conceptual content (*significatum*) of a thing (*res significata*) actually exists independent of the one who thinks the conceptual content. Aquinas disagreed, holding to a different view of universals that understood common nature to not actually exist, being rather a conceptual abstraction from individual beings. On this view, the *significatum* would not exist

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<sup>11</sup> “For Aquinas, the signification of concepts was immediate and the signification of external objects mediate.” Ashworth, 45.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.13.4 co.



externally from the one who is conceiving of its content.<sup>13</sup> This is a crucial point in Aquinas' philosophy of signification because it means that a term's causal property must be filled or "imposed" (*imponitur*) by the signifier's conceptual analysis (*ratio*) over the thing signified. Thus, for Aquinas, there is no "real" existing universal that directly grounds the *significatum*; there is only the *ratio* or "analysis" the signifier composes from his or her interaction with the thing signified. This *ratio* or "idea from analysis" is then imposed upon the content of the term (*significatum*).<sup>14</sup> While incredibly confusing and technical, the important point is that Aquinas understood meaning to be imbued into a term by the one using it based upon his or her ideas of the object being signified; there is no real universal that would directly ground the content of a word, only ideas imposed by those who use words to reflect their own ideas concerning external reality.

### **Modes of Signification**

This leads to the second part of the "why" question: the issue of different modes of signification or *modi significandi*. In thirteenth-century logic of grammar, *modus significandi* (also sometimes called consignification) was used in a basic way to denote the additional specific nuances of a word as applied in its context, as opposed to a general sense of the word.<sup>15</sup> The *modus significandi* category was originally used in a primarily grammatical way, such as the mode of predication, gender, singularity, etc. However, these grammatical modes were understood to reflect ontological realities, wherein the mode of predication had to do with accidents attributed to a subject. Thus, one could use the word "girl" to signify that one is girly according to the mode of predication, that one is a female according to the mode of gender, or to indicate one girl

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<sup>13</sup> Ashworth, "Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic," 52. See Aquinas, *ST* 1.13.4 co.

<sup>14</sup> Ashworth, 53.

<sup>15</sup> Ashworth, 53-55.

as opposed to many in accordance with the mode of singularity. This close tie between language and ontology meant that the *modus significandi* became used in a later sense to specifically denote certain modes of being, such as temporality or causality. To give a classic example, the word “health” is used in the mode of subject when referring to an animal, whereas it is in a causal mode when used of food, since food contributes to health, and it is in a preparative mode when used of a potion insofar as a potion prepares an unhealthy person to be healthy again.<sup>16</sup>

Aquinas understood the *modus significandi* primarily in this secondary sense of reflecting the mode of being, a *modus essendi*. Theoretically, the *modus significandi* was understood to signify content according to the *modus essendi* of the referent. However, as has been shown, Aquinas held that the referent object of signification (*res significata*) is only mediate; the concept or *ratio* (*significatum*) imposed by the signifier is what is most immediately signified by a term. As a result, the *ratio* imposed on the *significatum* does not immediately reflect the *modus essendi* of the *res significata*, but rather the *ratio* as perceived by the knower. Yet, since knowers themselves have a *modus essendi* that govern the *modus intelligendi* of their analysis of the referent object, the result is that the *modus significandi* of the *res significata* immediately reflects the knower’s *modus essendi* and only mediately reflects the *modus essendi* of the *res significata*.<sup>17</sup> To simplify: the content signified does reflect the object being signified directly but only as apprehended by the knower and filtered through his or her own mode

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<sup>16</sup> Ashworth, 57.

<sup>17</sup> As Gregory Rocca notes, Aquinas and those who shared his position in the signification debate adhered to a third distinction, that of the *modus intelligendi*. The *modus significandi* reflects the *modus essendi* of the knower precisely because the *modus significandi* is governed by the knower’s intellect, the *modus intelligendi*, which in turn is constrained by the knower’s *modus essendi*. See Gregory Rocca, “The Distinction Between Res Significata and Modus Significandi in Aquinas’s Theological Epistemology,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 55, no. 2 (1991): 178-80.

of being.<sup>18</sup> “For names do not follow upon the mode of being which is in things, but upon the mode of being as it is in our knowledge.”<sup>19</sup> The result is that, when creatures with creaturely modes of being use words to signify God, they fill those words with concepts that correspond to their creaturely mode of being but do not correspond perfectly with God’s mode of being.

This crucial last step in Aquinas’ philosophy of signification reveals the key to understanding how the qualitative distinction between God and creatures necessitates analogical predication. The mode of being affects the mode of signification, and the mode of signification dictates the conceptual analysis of the object being analyzed. Therefore, in the end, the *significatum* or “concept signified by a name to refer to an object” is always delimited by the conceptual ability of the one doing the signifying. As a result, humans who have temporal, composite, contingent modes of being imbue all of their words with these kinds of concepts. Thus, when humans predicate certain words of God, they do so in a way that signifies a *ratio* similar to how God really is but not exactly so, being inevitably shaped by the signifier’s creaturely mode of knowledge that has composition, potency/mutability, contingency, temporality, etc.<sup>20</sup> Thus, no creaturely predication of God can be univocal.<sup>21</sup>

### Section summary and Conclusion

Aquinas takes great pains to distinguish between the *modus significandi* and the *res significata* in order to make an explicit philosophical point: creaturely modes of

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<sup>18</sup> As Ashworth explains, “*modi significandi* are related to the *modi essendi* not as the latter are in things but only as they are understood by us, so that there is nothing odd about the *modi significandi* of a word being inappropriate to what is spoken of.” See Ashworth, 59-60.

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.13.9 ad. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 13.1.ad. 2; *Sent.* 1.22.1.2 ad 1; *De Pot.* 7.5 ad 2; *SCG* 1.30.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas’ only exception to this rule is strictly within the *communicatio idiomatum* of the incarnation; even there, the univocal predication of manhood to God is according to God relatively considered according to person, not absolutely considered according to essence. See Aquinas, *ST* III.16.

being are different than the divine mode of being, and this implies different modes of signification. The distinction between *modus significandi* and *res significata* is not especially problematic when creaturely things are being signified by creatures, for the mode of signification is creaturely in both instances; but when creatures predicate something of God, a disjunction occurs between the divine *ratio* and the human *ratio*.

According to the previous article, our knowledge of God is derived from the perfections which flow from Him to creatures, which perfections are in God in a more eminent way than creatures. Now our intellect apprehends them as they are in creatures, and as it apprehends them it signifies them by names. Therefore as to the names applied to God, there are two things to be considered—namely, the perfections which they signify, such as goodness, life, and the like, and their mode of signification. As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, and more properly than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to Him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God, for their mode of signification applies to creatures.<sup>22</sup>

While the distinction between *modus significandi* and *res significata* is a philosophical distinction, Aquinas stresses it for clear theological reasons: because of the qualitative distinction between Creator and creature, God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways (Is 55:8-9). As such, the concepts attached to divine predicates are different for God than it is for man. To state the point using our technical categories, the *ratio* (idea, analysis) of the *significatum* (conceptual content) meant by a word like “good” (*significatio*) predicated of God (*res significata*) is different for humans than it is for God. However, this qualitative distinction in ontology creates a sticky epistemic situation for creatures who predicate terms of God according to diverse modes of signification. If concepts are most immediate and the object is mediate, and all human predication of God is imbued with creaturely concepts, then what grounds the similarity between creaturely concepts of God and God *in se*? The next section takes up an examination of this so-called grounding problem.

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<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.13.3 co. As Rocca helpfully summarizes, “while the absolute and analogical predicates of positive theology may be predicated of God with regard to their *res significata*, they must be denied of God with regard to their *modus significandi*.” Rocca, “The Distinction Between *Res Significata* and *Modus Significandi* in Aquinas’s Theological Epistemology,” 173.

## The Grounding Problem of Analogy

This section discusses the grounding problem of analogy as recognized and articulated by the most prominent voices in the analogy/univocity debate that took place between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Early opponents and proponents of analogy recognized that analogy must have a “ground” in order to support real knowledge of God. A “ground” in the context of religious language about God refers to the existence of some viable “conceptual unity” or similarity between God and creatures that is ultimately referred to when one speaks of God using creaturely words and concepts. The function of ground in theological language is reflected in the three different positions of divine predication. Equivocity refers to the belief that God is so utterly unlike creatures that no human concepts apply to him and so any divine predication is an exercise of equivocation. There is no “grounding problem” in equivocity simply because equivocity is the position that no common ground exists between God and creatures! In the Christian tradition equivocity has always been a minority position because it struggles to make sense of the clear biblical teaching that God gives man real knowledge of himself (Rom1:21). For that reason, the debate in Christian theology mostly centers on the next two positions of univocity and analogy.<sup>23</sup> In direct opposition to equivocity, univocity is the belief that at least some human concepts correspond identically to how God really is, and thus at least some divine predication will mean identically the same thing for God and creatures. There is no “grounding problem” in univocity either because univocity is the position that a divine predication is identical when applied to creatures. If God is X, and creatures are X, and X is defined identically in each instance, then univocity requires no further ground because it rests upon the law of identity which is axiomatic. Between equivocity and univocity is analogy: human concepts of God are never identical to how God really is, but those concepts are sufficiently similar as to

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<sup>23</sup> Alston, William, “Religious Language,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Wainwright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 232-41.

represent real agreement. But what criteria governs whether two things are sufficiently similar as to allow the same predication of each? We arbitrate between analogy and equivocity every day, but do so in a largely intuitive fashion because, at bottom, the criteria by which one judges sufficient similarity is subjective.<sup>24</sup>

In the field of religious language, analogy postulates that there must be some similarity between God and creatures. But what constitutes a similarity? Analogists and univocists usually disagree on what is necessary to ground real similarity. For analogists, a real similarity does not mean there is some basic identity buried underneath all the contradictions; this is an unhelpful binary that fails to recognize degrees of accuracy. In religious language, analogy is the belief that creatures reflect who God is in every aspect of their being, but in accordance with the mode of their being instead of in accordance with the mode of God's being; as a result, there is no pure identity at any level of the Creator/creature relation, and there is no pure antithesis at any level of the Creator/creature relation. There is similarity and dissimilarity in every aspect of the Creator/creature relation.<sup>25</sup> Univocists oppose analogy on the suspicion that analogy ultimately reduces to equivocity. Since every aspect of similarity implies further dissimilarity, it seems that every ground of analogy depends upon a deeper analogy *ad infinitum*. If there is no ultimate identity residing at the bottom of everything, then it seems there is no ultimate referent for the similarity/dissimilarity spiral. Ultimately, the

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<sup>24</sup> The subjective nature of distinguishing between analogy and univocity is why Aquinas admits that analogy is a kind of equivocation (at least as broadly defined according to Aristotle's categories,) but it is not "pure" equivocity. "The term animal applied to a true and a pictured animal is not purely equivocal for the Philosopher takes equivocal names in a wide sense, including analogous names; because being also, which is predicated analogically, is sometimes said to be predicated equivocally of different predicaments." Aquinas, *ST I.13.10 ad. 4*. What Aquinas means is that analogy is a subcategory of equivocation in a way, since it involves dissimilarity, but is not pure equivocation because it retains some similarity.

<sup>25</sup> Better put, there is similarity within an even greater dissimilarity, reflecting the truth that the finite is contained within the infinite. This "similarity within a greater dissimilarity" language comes from the Fourth Lateran Council. See H. J. Schroeder, "Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV, 1215," in *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), 236–96.

ground of analogy is a problem of the one and the many.

This core critique of analogy as suffering from a grounding problem is nowhere more evident than in classic critique offered by John Duns Scotus, whose analysis has done more to shape the grounding problem of analogy than any other work. While he specifically addresses himself to the account of analogy given by Henry of Ghent, his criticism applies to all forms of analogy, including Aquinas. Duns Scotus held to a highly conceptual account of the univocity of the communicable perfections of God, including the perfection of being. Univocity of perfections can be obtained by taking a creaturely conception of a perfection and removing any distinctly creaturely imperfection from it which results in a flawless *ratio* of that perfection. That Duns Scotus understood this refined concept to be a flawless or “identical” univocity is clear from his strict definition of univocity: such a term must be able to serve as a middle term of a syllogism such that “wherever two extremes are united by a middle term that is one in this way, we may conclude to the union of the two extremes among themselves.”<sup>26</sup> In essence, Duns Scotus claimed a univocal term is one which relies upon the law of identity and as such cannot be both affirmed and denied in reference to the same thing.

Duns Scotus argued that either the *ratio* of a term can be refined in order to apply univocally to God and creatures or no perfection at all can be predicated of God by creatures in any way, even analogously. Why? Two of Duns Scotus’ arguments most clearly establish this claim. The first is his argument against irreducible analogy, the idea that the conceptual similarity of analogy is couched within a greater dissimilarity. Duns Scotus claims the underlying dissimilarity bans us from ever predicating something properly of God, and he concludes this means we cannot know God. His argument is constructed thus: If a pure perfection has a conceptual content proper to God alone, then

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<sup>26</sup> Duns Scotus, *On Being and Cognition: Ordinatio 1.3*, trans. John van den Bercken (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), I.3.1.1-2.

it cannot apply to creatures except analogously; however, if predicated analogously, then given that “a concept of that sort is imperfect in itself, since it is analogous” and that “in nothing is its conceptual content better than what it is not” it follows that “its content does not formally apply to God, which is unacceptable.”<sup>27</sup> Second, Duns Scotus argues against the idea that analogy can be grounded conceptually through the correspondence of creaturely ideas to divine ideas. Duns Scotus claims this tells us nothing about God, since God has knowledge of things that are not himself. To say, “God is wise” according to this kind of analogy, says Duns Scotus, is no different from saying, “God is a stone,” since both correspond to ideas within God.<sup>28</sup>

Understanding Duns Scotus’ critique of analogy is necessary for understanding the centuries of debate that followed concerning the ground of analogy. The Scotistic critique of analogy boils down to a grounding problem: if analogy has underlying conceptual dissimilarity that cannot be overcome then there is ultimately no conceptual reference point between God and creatures upon which to base a predication. Duns Scotus concludes analogy ultimately means that “the formal notions of what applies to God and of what is in creatures are completely different.” As Richard Cross summarizes, Duns Scotus charged analogy with reducing to an equivocation view.<sup>29</sup> An involved rebuttal of Scotus is outside the scope of this paper.<sup>30</sup> Instead, we will focus on the unresolvable differences between Scotus’ assumptions concerning the knowability of

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<sup>27</sup> Scotus, I.3.1.1 n. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Scotus, I.3.1.1 n. 40.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, Great Medieval Thinkers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34.

<sup>30</sup> Briefly, I will say that Scotus’ first argument against analogy seems to not undercut analogical knowledge so much as the possibility of knowledge itself, since creatures have no perfect knowledge of anything, let alone of God. Concerning his second argument, it seems relevant that the divine intellect knows wisdom as a divine perfection identical to the divine essence, while it knows a stone as a thing contingent upon the divine will; therefore, truth concerning a stone is based upon a *principium* while wisdom is its own *principium*. See Aquinas, *ST* I.16.5 co. and ad. 2. Thus, saying that creaturely ideas of wisdom correspond to God’s idea of wisdom says much more about God than saying creaturely ideas of stones correspond to God’s idea of a stone.



God and Aquinas' assumptions. Duns Scotus and Aquinas fall on either side of a longstanding debate in the history of Christian theology: is knowledge of God quidditative or only indirectly known through his effects?<sup>31</sup> Duns Scotus subscribed to the former view which necessarily committed him to a univocal position.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, Aquinas subscribed to the latter view that necessarily committed him to an analogical position. This prolonged analysis demonstrates the essential divide between Aquinas and Scotus. Duns Scotus' emphasis on direct quidditative knowledge yields the result that the knower must be aware of the nature of the similarity between their concepts and the object of their concepts. In contrast, Aquinas' emphasis on indirect knowledge through an act of intellect yields the result that the knower need not be aware of fully aware of the similarity between their concepts and the object of their concepts, provided a similarity does exist in reality.

### **Ockham, Cajetan, and Suarez**

Attempts to solve the grounding problem of analogy drove the debate over analogy and univocity for centuries after Duns Scotus and generated some interesting refinements. Particularly important was the attempt to ground the Creator/creature relation with as modest of a similarity as possible. William of Ockham made this move from a univocist position, while Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas de Vio) made it from an analogist position; Francisco Suarez made this same move through a kind of hybrid of the

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<sup>31</sup> This debate became prominent in the exchanges between Eunomius and the Cappadocian fathers. For a technical treatment of their debate over divine naming, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 96-154.

<sup>32</sup> This view does not mean Duns Scotus thought the divine essence was comprehensible, as if creaturely notions of God could fully encompass God. On the contrary, central to Duns Scotus' theology is a distinction between *theologia in se* which corresponds to God's perfect knowledge of himself and *theologia ad nostra* which corresponds to the knowledge of God made fit for the finite intellect. Duns Scotus' view that humans have quidditative knowledge of God does not deny divine incomprehensibility, it just draws the line in a different place. Specifically, quidditative knowledge reduces divine incomprehensibility to a quantitative account of how much one knows about God instead of a qualitative account concerning the kind of knowledge one has about God. See John Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balic et al., vol. 1 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottus Vaticanis, 1950).

two positions.

Duns Scotus' univocist critique was adopted in a more modest form by William of Ockham, seen in his *Ordinatio* I.2.9.<sup>33</sup> Ockham agreed with Duns Scotus' fundamental argument that an underlying univocity is necessary to ground divine predication but disagreed that creaturely concepts of perfections can be applied univocally to God. Thus, even though he fundamentally agreed with Duns Scotus on the grounding problem of analogy, Ockham sought to minimize the univocity between God and creatures as much as possible. Ockham postulated that divine predication relies upon an underlying singular univocity of bare being itself. Specifically, this common predication of being allows one to predicate things of both God and creatures according to the same mode of signification, even if those predicates themselves have aspects of dissimilarity in the *ratio*. In fact, Ockham thought that every predication except for bare being does in fact contain dissimilarity in the *ratio*. "Nothing is in the creature, either essential or accidental, that has a perfect similitude with anything that is in God."<sup>34</sup> Ockham reduced the Creator/creature relation to the barest univocity he deemed possible, adopting a kind of "analogical" predication of perfections based upon an underlying univocity of being, thus avoiding a grounding problem.<sup>35</sup> Thus only "being" is an entirely simple and univocal predication while predications of other perfections are said complexly and yet also quidditatively because the complexity includes the underlying

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<sup>33</sup> For a full treatment of Ockham's nominalist account of univocal divine names, see Marilyn Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. I. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> William of Ockham, *Ordinatio* I.2.9.3, as cited and translated in Steven Duby, *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics and the Task of Christian Theology* (London: Apollon, 2020), 254.

<sup>35</sup> I call Ockham's predication of perfections "analogical" simply to indicate that it is a kind of qualified analogy since there is some discontinuity in the concept of the perfection as it applies to God and creatures. One could also say Ockham's predication is "univocal." Ockham posits a core univocity at the level of being and suggests this is a simple quidditative concept that can be joined to complex statements about God like perfections. These statements are complex because they are drawn from the creaturely understanding of God *ad nostra* instead of as the perfections are in God *in se*. In short, there is discontinuity and continuity in the predication of divine perfections: discontinuity in the *ratio* of the perfection underlaid with continuity in the concept of being. See Duby, *God in Himself*, 253-54.

univocity of being. This refinement indicates the direction taken by later attempts at solving the grounding problem of analogy: make the similarity as basic as possible. As we will see, Cajetan presented an account of analogy's ground that was as far from an underlying univocity as possible, while Suarez presented an account that was as close to an underlying univocity as possible.

In a way Cajetan is a mirror image of Ockham: he reflects Ockham's desire to minimize the similarity of the Creator/creature relation to as basic of a ground as possible but does so within an analogical framework instead of a univocal framework.<sup>36</sup> In *De Nominum Analogia* Cajetan proposes three kinds of analogy: inequality, attribution, and proportionality.<sup>37</sup> The analogy of inequality is so named because it is strictly according to essence; Cajetan denies that this is even analogy strictly speaking, identifying it with the *univocatio entis* and denying it on such grounds.<sup>38</sup> The analogy of attribution is strictly according to intention. Cajetan says it is an extrinsic analogy, meaning the analogous term is itself conceptually unified but not unified in the essence of the things it signifies, since the term signifies its concept according to different modes, e.g. in the modes of a final cause, efficient cause, material cause, or exemplary cause.<sup>39</sup> The third analogy is

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<sup>36</sup> Some will wonder why I have included Cajetan as proposing his own solution to the ground of analogy instead of in the next section along with other interpreters of Aquinas. It is true that Cajetan relies heavily upon Aquinas and that he was understood for many years to present the definitive Thomistic position. However, two factors cause me to treat Cajetan here. First, because Cajetan's use of Aquinas is not considered to be very faithful according to almost all modern commentators. Cajetan strictly conforms later Thomistic texts to the categories provided earlier in *Sent.*; he over-privileges the account of analogy in *De Ver.*; and he outright misinterprets Aquinas' analogy of proportion/attribution as only extrinsic. This leads to the second reason to treat Cajetan on his own terms: as demonstrated by Joshua Hochschild, *De Nominum Analogia* is first and foremost Cajetan's own defense against Scotus, not an interpretation of Aquinas. Cajetan relies heavily upon Aquinas but not exclusively nor uncritically. In particular, since Cajetan is responding to Scotus' very semantic critique which came after Aquinas wrote his treatments of analogy, Cajetan refines Aquinas in a way he thinks meets this later and unanticipated semantic criticism. Therefore, I have chosen to treat Cajetan on his own terms. See Joshua Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan's De Nominum Analogia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas De Vio, *The Analogy of Names and the Concept of Being*, trans. Edward Bushinski (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1953), n. 3.

<sup>38</sup> De Vio, n. 4-7.

<sup>39</sup> De Vio, n. 8-10.

that of proportionality, which is both according to the intention and according to essence. It is this kind of analogy that Cajetan makes the most use of in solving the grounding problem, since it is an intrinsic analogy that signifies unity both conceptually and really.

Analogy of proportionality will be treated in greater depth as it appears in Aquinas' *De Ver.*, but for now a quick explanation will suffice. Proportionality is the idea that there is no direct comparison (proportion) between two things in different incomparable categories, such as between the material eye and the immaterial mind; but that there can be an indirect relation (proportionality) between a proportion in one category and a proportion in another category, and so one might say "sight is to the body what intelligence is to the soul." This "proportionality" refers specifically to the relation that obtains between two proportions.<sup>40</sup> This kind of analogy is intrinsic and thus refers to something really inherent in the analogates, not merely conceptual/logical.<sup>41</sup> However, Cajetan insists that analogy of proper proportionality has two senses, one metaphorical and one proper. The proper sense is when the analogy is applied to the analogate of whom the *significatum* properly belongs; the metaphorical sense is when the analogy is applied to the analogate of God the *significatum* improperly belongs. Thus, when God is likened analogously to a lion, this is analogy of metaphorical proportionality; when God is likened to wisdom, this is analogy of proper proportionality, since perfections like wisdom properly belong to God. This is improperly or "metaphorically" likened to God.<sup>42</sup>

Cajetan employs this proper analogy of proportion to refute Duns Scotus, asserting it fulfills Duns Scotus' criteria for a "univocal" term because it cannot be both affirmed and contradicted of the same thing. In short, Cajetan argues that Duns Scotus' definition of univocity is so broad as to include something like a proper analogy of

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<sup>40</sup> De Vio, n. 23-24.

<sup>41</sup> De Vio, n. 27.

<sup>42</sup> De Vio, n. 25-26.

proportion.<sup>43</sup> Cajetan's assertion is probably untrue at this point, for Duns Scotus' exact point is that a univocal term must be identical such that to both affirm and deny it in reference to the same thing violates the law of non-contradiction. However, the law of non-contradiction is that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same way, while Cajetan's proper analogy of proper proportionality is an affirmation of a term used in two non-identical ways. For example, "vision" can be predicated both of the body and of the mind, but it is understood in different ways, one corporeal and one intellectual. Cajetan's analogy of proper proportionality does not seem to meet the strict requirements of the law of non-contradiction to which Duns Scotus appeals in his definition of univocity.

However, Cajetan does propose an interesting solution to the grounding problem even if it is not a successful rebuttal of Duns Scotus. Cajetan's proposal demonstrates that a real ground does exist for analogy: since analogy of proportionality is both extrinsic according to intention and intrinsic according to essence, there is in theory a correspondence of real and conceptual unity. However, there are also some shortcomings in Cajetan's proposal. The first also applies to Aquinas' articulation of proportionality and is treated in greater depth in the next chapter. Sufficient for now is the observation that if God's essence is not directly known, then the relation between God/his perfections and humans/their perfections conveys little positive content, since it indicates a relation between a comprehensible thing (humans and their knowledge) with an incomprehensible thing (God and his knowledge.) A critique specific to Cajetan is that his distinction between proper and metaphorical proportionality is a double-edged sword: any analogy of proportionality proper to God is necessary improper or metaphorical to creatures and vice versa. In the end, then, Cajetan's analogy of proportionality reduces to metaphor. If the goal is to demonstrate that a ground does exist, then Cajetan might be

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<sup>43</sup> De Vio, n. 113.

successful; but if the goal is to describe the content of the ground, then Cajetan's proposal falls short. In the final analysis, Cajetan's proposal affirms only the barest of all possible grounds, one that exists but is not describable.

If Cajetan is an analogist mirror of Ockham's univocity, then Suarez is like the man who glances in the mirror and (intentionally) forgets what he sees. Specifically, Suarez rejected the formulations and even paradigms handed down to him in the debate. He criticized Cajetan's insistence that analogy of attribution is only extrinsic and rejecting the ultimately metaphorical ground of Cajetanian analogy.<sup>44</sup> Yet Suarez also criticized Duns Scotus/Ockham on the *univocatio entis*, affirming that there is a conceptual unity of being but denying that it is a univocal unity.<sup>45</sup> In fact, as Ashworth demonstrates, Suarez rejected even the Scotist definition of the grounding problem, attempting to recover a pre-Scotist version of the issue.<sup>46</sup> Suarez' attempt to innovate makes him hard to categorize as an analogist or a univocist. Suarez explicitly claims not to be a univocist, but numerous scholars recognize that his proposal leans more univocal than analogical in actual content.<sup>47</sup> One thing he has in common with Ockham and Cajetan, however, is his attempt to explicate the Creator/creature likeness with as little ontological commitment as he deems possible.

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<sup>44</sup> George Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 11-12.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Hoeres, "Francis Suarez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis," in *John Duns Scotus: 1265-1965*, vol. 3, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 272.

<sup>46</sup> Ashworth, "Suarez on the Analogy of Being: Some Historical Background," *Vivarium* 33, no. 1 (1995): 51.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Hoeres understands Suarez as a univocist, arguing that while Suarez formally repudiated Duns Scotus' *univocatio entis*, his agreement with many of Duns Scotus' arguments explains why he seems to tacitly present his own qualified version of the *univocatio entis*. Hoeres, "Francis Suarez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on Univocatio Entis," 263-90. David Heider disagrees, arguing that Suarez understands the *esse* of his *ratio entis* as actual existence for God but only potential existence for creatures; thus there is asymmetry in the unity of the concept which points towards an analogist position., and David Heider, "Is Suarez's Concept of Being Analogical or Univocal?," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2007): 21-41. Because Suarez is hard to classify as either analogist or univocist, when treating Suarez I avoid speaking of the ground of analogy/univocity but rather describe his account of the unity of predication.

Suarez' proposal is that being is conceptually one and the same between God and creatures, but it is not the same in actuality. Conceptually, being is unified because "if the *ratio* of being as it is in God essentially includes something other than as it is in a creature, that *ratio* cannot be one such that it would be represented by one formal concept and constituted by one objective concept, for one cannot understand that in one concept as such there be an essential variety."<sup>48</sup> In short, Suarez locates the unity of predication in the concept of being, *ratio entis*. However, this conceptual unity is an abstract universal formed through an act of intellect which conceptualizes particular being. This contemplation corresponds "confusedly" or "inadequately" to the being of actual particulars like God who is prime being and creatures who have derivative being. Therefore, the conceptual unity does not translate to real unity of being.

Although the common concept [of being as such], as abstract, is one in itself, however, the reasons constituting the particular being are diverse, and by them, as such, each is constituted absolutely in the existence of being. Then... the common concept of itself postulates such a determination with the order and relation to one [or to a single Being]; and therefore, just as this concept is one, it is not altogether the same, because it is not of itself altogether uniform—a uniformity and identity which univocal require in their meaning—and it is in this manner that the definition of univocal ought to be explained."<sup>49</sup>

The *ratio entis* corresponds differently to particulars because particulars are existing things, and *esse* can be understood as actual or potential. Stated technically, Suarez grounds the unity of predication in the *ratio entis* but understands this *ratio entis* to apply differently to the *esse* of God (who is actual existence) than it does to the *esse* of creatures (who have potential existence that needs to be actualized.)<sup>50</sup>

To summarize, Suarez proposed that God does not actually exist equally within a community of being with creatures; rather, there is an order of being, that of God

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<sup>48</sup> Francisco Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae* 28.3.9 as cited and translated in Victor Salas, "Between Thomism and Scotism: Francisco Suarez on the Analogy of Being," in *A Companion to Francisco Suarez*, Brill's Companion to the Christian Tradition, vol. 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 356.

<sup>49</sup> Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae* 28.3.21 as cited and translated in Salas, 360.

<sup>50</sup> Heider, "Is Suarez's Concept of Being Analogical or Univocal?," 39-41.

primarily to creatures derivatively, and the unity of being shared between them is conceptual like an abstract universal but not identical in the particulars.<sup>51</sup> Suarez' attempt to blend analogy and univocity is ambitious. In the final analysis, however, Suarez' proposal retains the weaknesses of both positions without enjoying their strengths. Suarez' proposal seriously reduces the transcendence of God by locating his uniqueness simply within the realm of order instead of kind, placing God within an ordered *genera*; yet it also struggles to ground analogy because the unity is abstract instead of concrete, existing as an abstract universal but not applying identically to real particulars.

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that analogy has an apparent grounding problem which dominated the analogy-univocity debate for centuries. Duns Scotus and Ockham rejected analogy for this very reason, while Cajetan and Suarez claimed to have solved the grounding problem in a way consistent with analogy. While the burden of this section was not to give a full defense or refutation of the univocist and analogist positions represented by these thinkers, enough warrant was provided to suggest that the question of how to ground the Creator/creature relation was not fully solved by these thinkers. It remains for the rest of this paper to examine Aquinas' specific approach to the grounding problem of analogy.

### **The Modern Debate over Aquinas' Grounding of Analogy**

As shown in the next chapter, Aquinas made several attempts to ground analogy, not all of which seem fully compatible. Basically, Aquinas will speak of analogy

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<sup>51</sup> According to Salas, Suarez' technical departure from Duns Scotus is that Duns Scotus understood the unity of predication to be absolutely basic or "simple" while Suarez understood the unity of predication to be conceptually simple but not absolutely simple. Duns Scotus understood being as a *simpliciter simplex* concept that applies indifferently and without order to all particulars. In contrast, Suarez saw being as an indistinct concept manufactured by the intellect that in reality descends unequally from God to creatures; as such, being is conceptually the same but in actuality is different because it is ordered or asymmetrical. "In contrast to the Scotistic position, being in its descent to its inferiors does not descend equally and thus precludes the possibility of univocity, since, as we have seen, univocity demands an equal descent or indifference, which is incommensurate with the relation or priority or posteriority that the Suarezian concept of being demands." Salas, "Between Thomism and Scotism," 360.



as creatures participating in God through a likeness based on a prior/posterior relation in which God is the source of all being and perfection with creatures imitating him within the boundaries of their creaturely form. Specifically, on the issue of how to ground the analogy of creature's imitative likeness of God, two particular questions arise. First, to what extent was Aquinas concerned with a conceptual/semantic ground for divine predication, and to what extent was he concerned with a ground for the ontological relation between Creator and creature?<sup>52</sup> This question is central to the project of this paper because, as illustrated by Cajetan and Suarez, the ground necessary for a purely conceptual/logical/semantic analogy is extremely different from that needed for an ontological analogy. The second question is important to the extent that it impacts the answer to the first question: to what extent is there continuity and discontinuity within Aquinas' own writing as his thought develops? This point is important because there are definitely stages within Aquinas' thinking on the ground of analogy, and so what Aquinas says at one point needs to be related to what he says at other points. The choice to sketch the debate between interpreters of Aquinas prior to interaction with the primary texts is made because the poles of the debate are so wide. Arbitrating between interpretations of Thomistic analogy through primary demonstration is a vast undertaking performed admirably by many of the authors mentioned below. Such an endeavor is far beyond the ability and scope of this paper; the primary treatment of Aquinas in the next chapter simply cannot document the history of interpretation and arbitrate between it while accomplishing its thesis. Therefore, this section introduces the basic thrusts of the modern debate in the secondary literature and identifies its best arguments in an attempt to narrow the following chapter's interaction with the secondary literature.

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<sup>52</sup> Semantic, conceptual, and logical are used interchangeably in this section even though they are not strictly identical. To be precise, semantics reflects concepts that can either be merely logical or real and logical. Thus, a ground that is only semantic or conceptual or logical is one that falls short of being real. By real is meant "according to substance," i.e. something that is ontological in the classic sense.

Cajetan's *De Nominum Analogia* was received as the definitive interpretation of Aquinas on analogy for centuries, despite the fact he likely was not attempting to offer a pure interpretation of Aquinas. As seen previously, Cajetan understood the analogy of proper proportionality to be the main ground of analogy since it is intrinsic and thus indicates something real as opposed to extrinsic thus merely logical. Modern interpreters of Aquinas almost universally agree that Cajetan does not accurately present Aquinas on the ground of analogy, but they seriously disagree over where Cajetan went wrong. A group of very ontology-friendly analogists best represented by Bernard Montagnes have criticized Cajetan with not being ontological enough in his "Thomistic" ground for analogy. However, another group of semantic-friendly interpreters best represented by Ralph McInerney propose the opposite problem: Cajetan's ground for Thomistic analogy is too ontological. This debate over the logical versus ontological ground of Aquinas' analogy in the modern period is the main focus of this section, which argues that the proponents of an ontological ground of analogy present the best arguments. This section first examines the rise of ontology-friendly interpreters of Aquinas, followed by logic-friendly interpreters and finally a third *via media* position of logic-within-ontology.

The modern controversy over the nature of Aquinas' ground of analogy traces back to the disagreements between Cajetan and Suarez. Since Cajetan did not distinguish where his thinking on analogy from Aquinas, many Thomists read Cajetan's categories and definitions back into Aquinas. Beginning with John of St. Thomas in the seventeenth century, the orthodoxy of Cajetan's interpretation of Aquinas was the dominant view for two centuries.<sup>53</sup> However, Suarez' early questioning of Cajetan's interpretation of Thomistic analogy of attribution as merely extrinsic ensured an enduring criticism of Cajetan among the Suarezians. This criticism blossomed in the early twentieth century

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<sup>53</sup> For a full list of Cajetan's adherents see Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy Between God and the World* (Uppsala, SE: Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952), 215-25.

which saw a growing number of scholars beginning to question Cajetanian orthodoxy, a move attested to by the flurry of specialized defenses of Cajetan which appeared between 1920 and 1950.<sup>54</sup> The advent of Hampus Lyttkens' primary examination of Aquinas in 1952 became a decisive turning point in the debate against the Cajetans. Lyttkens' extensive interaction with primary texts demonstrated what Suarez asserted without documentation: Aquinas' analogy of proportionality is not the only or even main way Aquinas grounds an intrinsic similarity of analogy.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Lyttkens gave good reason to think that Aquinas' writing on analogy reflects much of Aristotle's great chain of being.<sup>56</sup> George Klubertanz continued in Lyttkens' footsteps, compiling an extensive primary source bibliography of Aquinas' references to analogy along with introduction to the main subjects in the debate. Through his almost exhaustive citation of Thomistic texts, Klubertanz was able to definitely demonstrate that Aquinas transitioned away from the categorical statements made in *De Ver.* against analogy of attribution/proportion and solely in favor of proportionality.

From a textual standpoint the absence of any subsequent text which teaches proper proportionality between God and creatures constitutes strong evidence that St. Thomas quietly abandoned this doctrine after 1256. More positively, the numerous texts (prior and subsequent to the two proportionality texts [of *De Ver.*]) in which St. Thomas clearly teaches more direct analogies between God and creatures indicate that proportionality is not the exclusive analogy between Creator and creature as these [two] texts teach.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, Klubertanz' work suggested that although Aquinas abandoned the language of participation for a time, most notably in *De Ver.*, Aquinas reintroduced the concept in a new form that is more explicitly metaphysical.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Lyttkens, *The Analogy Between God and the World*, 236, 244-66.

<sup>56</sup> Lyttkens, 352-53.

<sup>57</sup> Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, 94.

<sup>58</sup> Klubertanz, 105.

Whereas Lyttkens and Klubertanz demonstrate the shift in Aquinas' ground of analogy away from proportionality and towards the categories of act and potency, Bernard Montagnes took up the task of demonstrating why Aquinas' thinking on analogy shifted along these lines. Montagnes' demonstrated that the metaphysical developments in Aquinas' thinking gave way to changes in his conception of the ground of analogy. Aquinas' conception of existence changed from a primarily formalist account to a primarily actual account, i.e. an *actus essendi*. This metaphysical shift accounts for why Aquinas moves from a primarily formal account of analogy in *Sent.* and *De Ver.* to a more actual account in later works like *SCG* and *De Pot.*<sup>59</sup> Due to this shift, Montagnes argued that Aquinas' later works often endow terms used in earlier works with meaning not previously held.<sup>60</sup> This establishment of Aquinas' metaphysical shift causes Montagnes to argue for a slightly stronger position than Klubertanz did on the progression of Aquinas' thinking on analogy in his corpus. Montagnes argues that Aquinas did not only progress beyond his affirmation of proportionality in *De Ver.*; he repudiated it by affirming the very thing he denied: a direct proportion between God and creatures.<sup>61</sup> Montagnes represents the high point of this group of scholars who were very friendly towards the transcendental analogy of being in Aquinas.

Since Montagnes saw Thomistic analogy as primarily an analogy of being, his assessment of Cajetan was that he so thoroughly missed Aquinas' adoption of the Aristotelian chain of being that his ground of analogy in proportionality was far too ontologically modest. Montagnes suggested that Aquinas is quite close to the *analogia entis* present in Aristotle's hierarchy of being.<sup>62</sup> Since Cajetan missed this ultimately

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<sup>59</sup> Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004), 34-42.

<sup>60</sup> Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 42-43.

<sup>61</sup> Montagnes, 72-75.

<sup>62</sup> Montagnes, 28-31.

ontological account of analogy, Montagnes criticizes Cajetan for having “excessively separated the logic of analogy from its metaphysical foundation.”<sup>63</sup> As it turned out, Montagnes could not even get his work published before it was adamantly contradicted. Between when Montagnes wrote his dissertation draft and when it was later published as the book *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to St. Thomas*, Ralph McInerny’s 1961 work *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of Aquinas* was published. In full contradiction of Montagnes’ position, McInerny held that Thomistic analogy was purely logical and not an analogy of being at all. Precisely where Montagnes appealed to the underlying Aristotelian doctrine of the great chain of being in Aquinas, McInerny rejected the existence of such a doctrine in Aquinas, arguing that “Thomas never speaks of the causal dependence in a hierarchical descent of all things from God as analogy. That is, terminologically speaking, there is no analogy of being in St. Thomas Aquinas.”<sup>64</sup> The implication of the McInerny thesis on the ground of analogy is immense, since a purely logical ground is entirely different from an ontological ground; in fact, one can have a logical ground *without* an ontological ground. As one proponent of the McInerny thesis suggests, Aquinas’ “understanding of analogy is... so weak, that it cannot, I would argue, bear any ontological consequences.”<sup>65</sup> McInerny’s separation of Aquinas from a realist account of the analogical Creator/creature relation causes one to question why Thomistic analogy would even be useful in generating real knowledge of God, relegating analogy to the philosophy of language instead of the theological question of how creatures can have real knowledge of their Creator.

The McInerny thesis was immensely influential, pushing some interpreters

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<sup>63</sup> Montagnes, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 162. *Aquinas and Analogy* is McInerny’s mature revision of what was originally published as *The Logic of Analogy*.

<sup>65</sup> Laurence Paul Hemming, “Analogia Non Entis Sed Entitatis: The Ontological Consequences of the Doctrine of Analogy,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 2 (2004): 122.

further down the road of semantic predication than even McInerny acknowledged. While McInerny held that Thomistic analogy was primarily logical, he allowed that ontological inferences can follow, albeit accidentally and unnecessarily.<sup>66</sup> However, the McInerny thesis allowed others to entirely shift the nature of the grounding problem by embracing a kind of pure semanticism. For example, Herbert McCabe offered a self-conscious Wittgensteinian reading of Aquinas and concluded, “Too much has been made of St Thomas's alleged teaching on analogy. For him, analogy is not a way of getting to know about God, nor is it a theory of the structure of the universe, it is a comment on our use of certain words.”<sup>67</sup> If Thomistic analogy is simply a comment on our use of certain words instead of an expression of how creatures know God through a real relation, then the traditional reason to ground analogy is removed. Traditionally, analogy was understood to need a ground because otherwise it would not constitute real knowledge about God and reduce to equivocity. Of course, if one is operating Thomistic analogy within a Wittgensteinian word game, as David Burrell advocates, then there is no reason to fully detail the relation between grammar in one word game (divinity) and the grammar in another word game (humanity).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> McInerny held that logical distinctions and inferences could in fact refer to real distinctions and inferences, but do not have to. This is correct in one main sense: some things may be said according to human conception alone, not reflecting the way something is in reality due to man's inability to grasp a thing as it is in itself. Yet two things must be said on this point. First, there is a greater sense in which something said merely logically and not in reality is actually a reflection of reality insofar as something that is known to be wrong in reality and yet is posited logically is only acceptable if it is deemed to conform the human conception as closely as possible to reality. For example, God is said to be wise and good, which seems to refer to two real things, but in reality they are one and so the statement “God is wise and God is good” is said with a merely logical distinction according to conception, since human conceptions of these two perfections differ even though they are one in God. This leads to the second caveat: the non-reciprocity of logic to reality is not invertible. Logical distinctions don't have to be real distinctions, but real distinctions and inferences must be logical ones. Therefore, those who state a strict non-necessity between logic and being are only partially correct.

<sup>67</sup> Herbert McCabe, “Appendix Four,” in *Knowing and Naming God: Summa Theologiae 1a 12-13*, vol. 3 (Hachette, UK: Blackfriars, 1964), 106. As noted by Anthony Kenny in his forward to McCabe's posthumously published work on Aquinas, McCabe's overall project was to graft Wittgenstein back onto Aquinas. See Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Burns and Oates, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> David Burrell, *Aquinas, God and Action* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 5, 17.

The debate over whether Aquinas offered an ontological analogy with an ontological ground or a semantic analogy with a semantic ground has led to a number of scholars embracing a *via media* approach. As expressed by Gregory Rocca, this *via media* holds that while Aquinas often employs a semantic/logical use of being, it is grounded upon the more primary meaning of “to be” as “the actuality of the real.”<sup>69</sup> In the final analysis, this *via media* approach seems to be the most balanced and best-sourced view of Thomistic analogy and its ground for three reasons. First, it proceeds straightforwardly on the assumption that while Aquinas was no wild-eyed realist, he was also not a nominalist. Aquinas’ modest realism entails the necessity of words to correspond to quiddity in some way, even if indirectly. This leads to the second reason: as demonstrated earlier in the section on the philosophy of predication, Aquinas thinks that concepts correspond in a real way to objects, albeit mediately through the intellect. Alan Philip Darley demonstrates that, “For Aquinas, at least in his later writings, true judgments are based on a correspondence (*adequatio*) between propositions and reality.”<sup>70</sup> The texts Darley cites are overwhelmingly clear, to which can be added the very early text of *Sent.* which does explicitly affirm the intrinsic nature of analogy on at least some level.<sup>71</sup> Third, McNerny’s insistence that Aquinas does not employ an Aristotelian analogy of being is only partially correct. As Montagnes notes in agreement with McNerny, Aquinas applies

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<sup>69</sup> Gregory Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas in the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 164.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Philip Darley, “Predication or Participation? What Is the Nature of Aquinas’ Doctrine of Analogy,” *Heythrop Journal* 57, no. 2 (2016): 319. Here Darley cites *De Ver.* 1.3 and *ST* 1.16.2 co. as support. I concur with his reading and analysis. In *De Ver.* 1.3 Aquinas argues that while truth is “first found” in the intellect, since the intellect is the faculty making the truth judgment, nevertheless what makes the judgment true is “when it conforms to the external reality.” As such, “...the nature of the true consists in the conformity of thing and intellect.” It follows, then, that when the intellect judges there to be a true analogy between God and creatures, this analogy must correspond with the things themselves in external reality—that is, *ontologically*. Similarly, in *ST* 1a, q. 16, a2 resp, Aquinas says “...the intellect, in so far as it is knowing, must be true, so far as it has the likeness of the thing known, this being its form, as knowing. For this reason, truth is defined by the conformity of intellect and thing; and hence to know this conformity is to know truth.”

<sup>71</sup> Aquinas, *Sent.* 1.19.5.2.

significant caveats to Aristotle's being-oriented analogy.<sup>72</sup> Yet as Lawrence Dewan demonstrates through extended exegesis of several texts, Aquinas uses logical terms for analogy which he explicitly describes in ontological ways. As Dewan concludes, Aquinas is not displacing Aristotle's ontological model of analogy with a logical model so much as using logical terms to represent corresponding ontological ideas.<sup>73</sup> For these reasons, Thomistic analogy is best understood to utilize semantic/logical analogy to convey real analogy requiring a real ground.

If Thomistic analogy is fundamentally ontological and only conceptual by extension, then Scotus' conceptual critique of analogy might be avoidable if an ontological ground can be demonstrated. If humans do not know the full extent of the similarities and dissimilarities in analogy, then according to Scotus this is pure equivocation and not real knowledge. In contrast, Aquinas acknowledges the theoretical need for conceptual unity of the analogates but is concerned with what similarities *can be demonstrated to really exist* between God and creatures. If there is similarity between God and creatures in reality, then analogy still has a ground even if creatures do not fully know the extent of the conceptual unity.<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that Aquinas sought to uphold the Creator/creature distinction along with the real knowledge of God by suggesting that there is a real similarity (but not identity) between the being of God and the being of creatures. This

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<sup>72</sup> Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 21, 28-31.

<sup>73</sup> Lawrence Dewan, *Form and Being: Studies in Thomistic Metaphysics*, vol. 45, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 87.

<sup>74</sup> This last point accords with Bruce Marshall's suggestion that Thomistic analogy has an ontological ground for analogy without the conceptual unity being fully explicated. See Bruce Marshall, "Christ the End of Analogy," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 298-303.



was established by examining Aquinas' commitment to divine simplicity in the doctrine of God which implied a qualitative distinction between God and creatures even at the level of being. Aquinas' commitments in the doctrine of God led to his identification of the problem of *modus significati* in the philosophy of language. That this *modus significandi* is based upon the problem of *modus essendi* means the signification problem is based upon an ontological problem. A survey of the secondary literature confirms that understanding Thomistic analogy and its ground is ultimately a question of ontology. In light of these conclusions, the next section provides a primary source treatment of Aquinas to show that his analogy does indeed propose a real similarity between God and creatures ultimately grounded in divine actuality.

## CHAPTER 3

### A PRIMARY EXAMINATION OF AQUINAS' CREATIONAL ACCOUNT OF ANALOGY'S GROUND

This chapter examines four key texts of Aquinas on the grounding problem to see how he grounds the real similarity of the Creator/creature likeness. This chapter argues that Aquinas proposed a ground for analogy articulated in the doctrine of creation through three insights ultimately formulated within an account of divine actuality. This chapter has four parts. Parts 1-3 each treat a key text of Aquinas corresponding to three insights he has on the Creator/creature relation which grounds analogy: inexplicable relation, indirect formal relation, and direct causal relation.<sup>1</sup> The fourth part treats one last text in which Aquinas' mature philosophy of existence and the doctrine of God causes him to synthesize the three stated insights of his earlier thinking within an account of divine actuality.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Inexplicable Prior/Posterior Relation**

Aquinas' early treatment of the ground of analogy appears in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. The contribution of *Sent.* to the grounding problem is found in its assertive nature as opposed to its demonstrative nature: at this point Aquinas thinks it is sufficient to assert a prior/posterior analogical relation between Creator and

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<sup>1</sup> These three main insights roughly correspond to the three main stages identified by Giorgio Pini. See Giorgio Pini, "The Development of Aquinas' Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 499-501.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter relies upon the arguments for an ontological analogy in Aquinas made by secondary sources in the previous chapter. As a result, the use of secondary sources is mostly restricted to clarifying certain technical points in Aquinas' thought rather than documenting which secondary sources agree and disagree with the interpretation given.

creature without attempting to demonstrate any further ground for the analogical relation. Aquinas will later go on to try demonstrating and describing the Creator/creature relation, but this section argues that *Sent.* reflects a truth he will retain in his fuller thinking: the analogical Creator/creature relation is an ultimately grounded on an inexplicable *prius et posterius* relation.

The proposal of *Sent.* can be summarized thus: an imperfect likeness exists through a relation of participation in a more prior instance.

The creator and creature are reduced to one, not by a community of univocation, but of analogy. This is of two kinds. Either it arises from this that things share in something in greater or lesser degrees, as potency and act—and substance and accident—share the notion of being. Or it arises from this that one thing receives its being and definition from another, and such is the analogy of creature to creator: the creature exists only to the degree that it descends from the primary being, and it is called being only because it imitates the first being. Thus it is with wisdom and all the other things which are said of the creature.<sup>3</sup>

Three observations can be made. First, Aquinas clearly sees ontological continuity between Creator and creature as evidenced by the language of reduction to one and community, both of which describe the creature's descent from primary being. This could be understood as a kind of "common being" into which both God and creatures are placed. However, the second observation is that this community is clearly a "community of analogy," which cannot be in the same ontological category because such would be a univocal community. This leads to the third observation, which is that Aquinas denies that God participates in a common category, as if he could "share in something in greater or lesser degrees." The insistence that God does not participate in some prior or third thing is present in virtually all of Aquinas' writing on analogy and represents a constant in his thinking, reflecting his understanding of divine simplicity.<sup>4</sup> The significance is that creatures do not stand in an equal relation to God but in a posterior relation to God as the

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<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *Sent.* I.1.2 ad. 2.

<sup>4</sup> For the most explicit statement of this in the Thomistic corpus Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.7. co.

prior source of their perfection.

Why is Aquinas' account of analogy's ground in *Sent.* so undeveloped? As Montagnes notes, the account given in *Sent.* is essentially the same in vocabulary and form as that given earlier by Albert the Great.<sup>5</sup> This likely reflects the fact that Aquinas' own thinking on the ground of analogy is unformulated at this early point in his writing career. Regardless, Aquinas thinks a further description and demonstration of the grounding problem is unnecessary for the purposes of *Sent.* In other words, Aquinas thinks that a bald assertion that creation is related to God as a posterior related to a prior is ultimately sufficient for his purposes. Of course, Aquinas does go on in his later works to provide a fuller demonstration and description of the ground of analogy. However, as we will argue at the end of the treatment of *De Pot.*, Aquinas' conviction that the ultimate ground of analogy does not need to be deeper than this *prior et posterior* proposal is retained in his mature thinking on analogy.

### **Indirect Formal Relation**

Aquinas picks up the grounding problem of analogy in *De Ver.* For the purposes of this paper, we will point out aspects of *De Ver.* which are abandoned by Aquinas and aspects which are retained. Specifically, this section argues that *De Ver.* proposes an indirect formal relation between God and creatures. Aquinas introduces the issue of a direct or indirect analogical relation in *De Ver.* by asking the question of how the finite relates to the infinite, a question which not only appears in the treatment of analogy but pervades all of *De Ver.* His solution can be summarized as follows: there is an indirect relation of proportionality between God and creatures.

Aquinas maintains the ideas from *Sent.* that there is a likeness between creatures and God but not a univocity of being, and he develops this argument for

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004), 68.

analogy in the explicit categories of *genera*: the creaturely likeness to God is “found between things in a different genera” and so the kind of direct likeness “found existing between things in the same genus... does not exist between creature and God.”<sup>6</sup> Note how the category of *genera* is a formal category: the form of a thing is categorized by its genus, and since God is not in any genus, there is no direct relation between the form of God’s perfection and creaturely perfection. Because of this finite/infinite conundrum, Aquinas is not content with the mere assertion of likeness provided in *Sent.* because he wants to emphasize the qualitative distinction between God and creatures. However, he also wants to explicitly establish that analogy does have a demonstrable ground. “The distance lying between a creature and God cannot prevent a common ground for analogical statement.”<sup>7</sup> How does he arrive at this conclusion?

Following a suggestion made by Albert the Great, Aquinas appeals to the Aristotelian notion of proportion.<sup>8</sup> There are two kinds of proportion which correspond to Aquinas’ comment about likenesses within and outside of a *genera*. Within a *genera* there is a direct proportion: A is to B. This refers to two things which have a determinate distance from each other: when two is compared to six, a discrepancy of four obtains. When comparing members from different *genera*, however, the proportion is indirect: A is to B as C is to D. Such an indirect proportion is called proportionality and refers specifically to the relation between two direct proportions: one is to two as three is to six. Aquinas categorically denies that the first category, an analogy of proportion, can hold between God and creatures. “In those terms predicated according to the first type of

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<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 ad. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 ad. 5.

<sup>8</sup> For Albert the Great on proportionality, see Bruno Tremblay’s treatment of Albert’s commentary on Dionysius’ ninth letter. Bruno Tremblay, “A First Glance at Albert the Great’s Teachings on Analogy of Words,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): 289. For a technical treatment of Aristotelian analogy of proportion and its roots in Pythagorean mathematics, see Roger White, *Talking About God: The Concept of Analogy and the Problem of Religious Language* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 11-72.

analogy [proportion], there must be some definite relation between the things having something in analogously. Consequently, nothing can be predicated analogously of God and creatures according to this type of analogy; for no creature has such a relation to God that it could determine the divine perfection.” However, Aquinas affirms that the second kind of analogy, that of proportionality, does pertain to God and creatures.<sup>9</sup>

Since Aquinas is concerned with the conundrum of relating the infinite to the finite, his treatment of proportionality is numerical: since the proportionality between one and two is not greater than that between three and six, there is no reason to think there can be no “agreement” between the finite and the infinite. However, Aquinas does not leave proportionality in the abstract realm of numbers; he claims that indirect proportionality relates divine perfections to creaturely perfections, his argument for proportionality flowing from a discussion of how divine self-knowledge is related to creaturely knowledge. A careful following of the syntax allows one to see the conjunction of divine perfections, like knowledge, with an analogy of proportionality. “It must be said that knowledge is predicated neither entirely univocally or yet purely equivocally of God’s knowledge and ours. Instead, it is predicated analogously, or, in other words, according to a proportion. Since an agreement according to proportion can happen in two ways” which Aquinas summarizes as “one of proportion, the second of proportionality,” Aquinas concludes “according to the first type of analogy... nothing can be predicated analogously of God and creatures ... But in the other type of analogy, no definite relation is involved between the things which have something in common analogously, so there is no reason why some name cannot be predicated analogously of God and creature in this manner.”<sup>10</sup> This careful contextual reading allows us to make explicit Aquinas’ proposal in a way that he does not exactly state but clearly means in so many words: “divine

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<sup>9</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 co.

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 co.

knowledge is to infinite being what created knowledge is to finite being.”<sup>11</sup>

Does *De Ver.* depart from *Sent.* or refine it? *De Ver.* is likely an attempt to endow the terms in *Sent.* with further meaning. First, in *De Ver.* Aquinas retains his former assertion that God and creatures do not participate on a common third thing, a position which remains constant throughout his thinking on analogy. Yet when he describes the rejected analogy of proportion which has a direct or “definite” relation, he says it is “a likeness that is found because two things share something in common.”<sup>12</sup> Aquinas rejects the idea that God and creatures share in some third thing because, as explicitly noted in 2.11 co., divine simplicity does not allow God to be made up of something more basic than himself. Nevertheless, Aquinas retains the language of “likeness” which means he still sees real formal unity between God and creatures. Second and most interestingly, Aquinas does not use the language of participation in this section. He affirms that creaturely likeness is not God being similar to creatures but rather creatures being similar to God from whom they are made, which is the essential logic of participation. Nevertheless, the explicit language of participation has dropped and, in its place, appears an extended formulation of proportionality. In light of Aquinas’ explicit remark that he is describing a ground for the Creator/creature likeness, *De Ver.* attempts to further define the concept asserted in *Sent.* of a relation by participation: The Creator/creature likeness is not a direct formal participation because the creature’s form cannot be directly compared to God’s form. Thus, creatures bear an indirect formal likeness.

How successful is Aquinas’ proposal for grounding the likeness of analogy?

The argument of *De Ver.* contains some notable strengths. First, Aquinas acknowledges

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<sup>11</sup> Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 70. This conclusion is not accepted by all interpreters of Aquinas, but does seem warranted from the text.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 ad. 4.

that the similarity of analogy requires grounding if it is to work, and a bare assertion of relation, likeness, and participation is not the fullest description of that ground. Second, Aquinas' total qualitative distinction in the doctrine of God is rigorously upheld: the finite cannot contain the infinite! Third, the denial of any direct relation displaces any accusation that the likeness of analogy is grounded in some more basic thing that includes God and creatures commonly. Fourth, proportionality does establish a real relation between God and creatures, albeit in an indirect way, which clearly moves towards a ground for analogy. In short, proportionality is a promising way to maintain the qualitative distinction while still demonstrating there must be a relation between the Creator and creature and thus a ground.

However, there are some shortcomings of the proportionality proposal as well. First, and most importantly, proportionality does not convey much of the actual content of similarity if one of the two proportions is unknown. As mentioned in the last chapter, the grounding problem hinges on divine incomprehensibility since God is simple and *a se*. Proportionality does indeed refer to a relation between two proportions; but if one proportion is incomprehensible, then the relation between proportions must ultimately be incomprehensible. As Ashworth says, "This solution was deeply flawed, given that the problem of divine names arises precisely because the relationship of God to his properties is so radically different from our relation to our properties."<sup>13</sup> Consider this illustration: "X is to Y what mice are to cats." What relation is being conveyed by this comparison? Mice are smaller than cats, scared of cats, food for cats, playthings of cats, etc. Unless each direct proportion is known, the indirect relation of proportionality is nominal: it is there, but inexplicable.

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<sup>13</sup> E. J. Ashworth, "Medieval Theories of Analogy," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/analogy-medieval>. I only partially agree with Ashworth. The solution is deeply flawed as an ultimate solution but, as I argue in the next section, it is true as far as it goes and is retained in a modified form in Aquinas' mature thinking.



Of course, creatures do have some knowledge of God through revelation, and so the divine side of the proportionality relation is not entirely unknown. However, God's revelation to creatures is understood in creaturely categories. Since the grounding problem concerns how one navigates the difference between God as known in creaturely categories and God *in se*, filling the divine proportion with creaturely knowledge of God through revelation does not accomplish any advancement. As Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange summarizes the problem, "How are we then to avoid the Agnostic schema  $\infty/\infty = a/b$  which means  $??/?? = a/b$ ? At least it seems we have but a purely negative and relative knowledge."<sup>14</sup> In the final analysis, then, proportionality only contributes to the grounding problem by demonstrating there must exist a real ground for analogy; it does not explicate that ground with positive content. While *De Ver.* improves on *Sent.* by trading the bare assertion of a relation for a demonstration of an indirect formal likeness, this proposal does not provide the means to explicate that form with positive conceptual content. Aquinas probably agreed with this kind of analysis because he was not content to stop at the formulation of *De Ver.*; in fact, he goes on to repudiate part of it.

### **Direct Relation of Formal Causality**

In his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate* Aquinas reversed his absolute statement in *De Ver.* that there can be no direct proportion between God and creatures. Aquinas instead affirmed a certain kind of direct relation between God and creatures based upon the causal Creator/creature relationship. This section argues that *Com. de Trin.* represents the third main insight in Aquinas' thinking on analogy: there is a direct causal relation between God and creatures and therefore there must be a likeness between them, for an effect resembles its cause.

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<sup>14</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and Nature*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, vol. 2. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), 218. Garrigou-Lagrange is not arguing against proportionality; on the contrary, he goes on to propose his own solution.

In *De Ver.* Aquinas made a categorical statement that “nothing can be predicated analogously according to this type [proportion] of analogy” because it involves a “definite relation.” Aquinas establishes this conclusion on the grounds that there is no direct relation between the form of things in different *genera*, and since God is infinite and man finite, there can be no direct relation.<sup>15</sup> In *Com. de Trin.* Aquinas again raises the point of how finite knowers can know the infinite; yet while in *De Ver.* this point appeared in his response to objections, in *Com. de Trin.* the issue is raised as an objection to be refuted! “Between the knower and the thing known must be some kind of proportion... but between our intellect and God there can be no proportion, as there can be none between the infinite and the finite; therefore our intellect can in no way know God.”<sup>16</sup> Aquinas is perhaps concerned that his grounding proposal in *De Ver.* is so insufficient as to lead to the conclusion that God is not knowable! This is clear in the *sed contra* where Aquinas quotes Rom 1:20 and Jer 9:24 in affirmation of the knowability of God.<sup>17</sup> It seems Aquinas was concerned that his proposal in *De Ver.* taken on its own left so little ground for the likeness of analogy that the knowability of God was in question.

In his response Aquinas affirms that there is in fact a kind of direct formal proportion:

In another way beings are said to be related when they are associated in a certain order; and in this way there is proportion between matter and form, between the maker and the thing made... Such, too, is the proportion of a creature to God: that of caused to its cause, and of knower to the knowable.<sup>18</sup>

This more causal account of analogy’s ground is represented by Aquinas’ phrase “associated in a certain order.” He gives two examples of this relation of order: that of cause and effect, and that of knower to the object known. Concerning the order of cause

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<sup>15</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2.11 co.

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 arg. 2-3

<sup>17</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 s.c. 1-2

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 ad. 3.

and effect, Aquinas notes that a thing can be known in two ways: in its proper form, or through a similar form. Aquinas denies that God is known in his proper form, but since effects are similar to their causes in form, there is a similitude between Creator and created.<sup>19</sup> That God is not known in his proper form but only in a similar form reflects Aquinas' continued rejection of a direct formal relation in the sense of a bare formal comparison. The similitude, Aquinas says, is also like that which exists between knower and that which is known. Recalling the previous section, Aquinas thinks that a knower signifies an object (*res significata*) mediately through the content (*significatum*) of a term (*significatio*). This content is a concept (*ratio*) gained through an act of intellect analyzing the object and then imposing that concept upon the term being used.<sup>20</sup> As such, there is both dissimilarity and similarity between the object known and the knowledge one has of that thing: dissimilarity, since the object itself is mediate and the concept formed immediate; yet also similarity because the concept is fashioned in accordance with the object. This similarity, or similitude, is what Aquinas refers to with the example of the relation between knower and the knowable.<sup>21</sup>

As just demonstrated, Aquinas moves past the bare formal quantitative/qualitative paradigm he used in *De Ver.* in favor of a causal paradigm, yielding a direct relation of cause and effect. Yet Aquinas still denies that God is in a genus which would make him directly comparable to creatures.

Proportion is nothing other than the mutual relation of two things associated by something in respect to which they either agree or differ. Now, agreement can be of

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<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 co. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.1 for Aquinas' discussion of the act of intellect.

<sup>21</sup> Although Aquinas does not provide clarification in *Com. de Trin.*, he should not be understood to imply that there is no difference between the problem of signification between two creatures and the problem of signification between God and creatures. If the problem were identical then God would in fact have the same kind of *modus essendi* that all creatures do and therefore would not be *sui generis*. Aquinas clearly thinks the same thing he says elsewhere: creatures signify according to a different mode than God does, which is why, for example, the divine names (attributes) can have the same *res significata* but not be synonymous because creatures attribute different concepts to them according to creaturely modes of signification. See Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.6 co; *ST* I.13.4; *SCG* I.35.

two kinds. In one way, things may be associated as belonging to the same genus of quantity or quality, as is the relation of... one number to another inasmuch as one excels the other or is equal to it... according to this mode of relation there is no possible proportion between God and creature.<sup>22</sup>

Aquinas still rejects the kind of direct formal relation that he did in *De Ver.* A direct relation of “bare” form is a comparison between quiddities which in turn be classified by the *genera* in which they commonly belong. Aquinas still insists there is no purely common form represented by a genus into which God can be included. The kind of formal proportion Aquinas’ recognizes is one of order, i.e. formal causality, instead of a direct relation of bare formal comparison; it is the relation between a thing and its cause which supersedes it, not a relation between two things related to a third common thing.

The interpretive options for how *Com. de Trin.* relates to *De Ver.* becomes pertinent at this point. If *Com. de Trin.* is understood as affirming the same kind of direct proportion denied by *De Ver.*, then the proposal of *De Ver.* is no longer relevant to Thomistic analogy. This stark view is found among the most adamant proponents of a full analogy of being in Aquinas. For example, Montagnes says “Thomas will never come back to the theory of the *De Veritate*.”<sup>23</sup> Yet while it is undeniable that the vocabulary of proportionality never again explicitly surfaces in Aquinas, this does not mean it has no further relevance nor does it mean that Aquinas affirms everything he denies in *De Ver.*. To clarify the relation between *Com. de Trin.* and *De Ver.* we must resolve on the following question: Does Aquinas explicitly affirm what he repudiated in *De Ver.* that there can be a direct proportion between God and creatures? The answer is yes and no. First, Aquinas clearly rejects the categorical repudiation of any direct proportion and in this sense the answer is yes. However, this does not mean that he embraces the same *kind* of direct proportion described in *De Ver.*, and it is in this sense the answer is no. Recall that *De Ver.* is working within bare formal categories, i.e. a comparison between

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<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 ad. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 72.

quiddities, and is concerned with the issue of how the finite relates to the infinite. As a result, Aquinas rejects a direct formal relation (proportion) in favor of an indirect formal relation of proportionality like double, triple, etc. Of utmost importance is the observation that Aquinas never affirms the *De Ver.* kind of *bare* direct relation of proportion in *Com. de Trin.* On the contrary, Aquinas affirms a *causative* direct relation of proportion. In one sense, then, Aquinas still affirms the kind of indirect relation of proportion proposed in *De Ver.* while also affirming a different kind of direct relation of proportion. To clarify this distinction, one might say *De Ver.* affirms an asymmetrical relation of bare form while *Com. de Trin.* affirms an asymmetrical relation of formal causality. Both formal relations are asymmetrical, meaning that the creaturely form reflects the divine form but the divine form does not reflect the creaturely form. The asymmetrical relation in *De Ver.* is the relation between bare forms and is indirect in that sense, while the asymmetrical relation of *Com. de Trin.* is a causal relation and is direct in that sense while still being indirect in the sense of *De Ver.*

The merit of this interpretation of still denying a bare formal proportion while affirming a causal formal proportion appears in *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 co. 2.

No similitude, however, of whatever kind impressed by Him upon the human intellect, would suffice to make His essence known, *since He infinitely transcends every created form*; consequently God [in his quiddity] cannot be made accessible to the mind through created forms . . . Therefore it remains certain that it is only through the *forms* of His effects that He is known. . . . *Through this latter kind of effect it is not possible to comprehend the power of the agent, and consequently not its essence either; but regarding the cause it can be known only that it exists . . .* Nevertheless, of those knowing that He is, one will know Him more perfectly than another, because a cause is more perfectly understood from its effect the more perfectly the relation of the cause to its effect is apprehended.<sup>24</sup>

This text demonstrates that the direct formal relation proposed in *Com. de Trin.* does not allow for direct quidditative comparison. It turns out that the similitude generated by a direct causal relation of proportion is not enough to affirm a direct formal relation

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<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* I.1.2 co. 2.

because God still infinitely transcends his creation when their bare quiddities are directly compared. Eminent causality doesn't establish anything more than that God, as cause, exists. To be sure, one can understand and describe the truth that God exists in a more perfect way if one has a better understanding of God's effects (one might discover, for example, that he must be *a se* and simple.) Yet this is simply a fuller understanding of the same bare truth: God exists, and we know this because we who are not *a se* exist and thus must be causally related to God.

To conclude, *Com. de Trin.* retains the kind of indirect formal relation proposed by *De Ver.* but postulates a different kind of direct formal relation, one of order/causation.<sup>25</sup> Yet even eminent causation demonstrates only that a ground for analogy must exist; we cannot say more than that since we cannot apprehend divine actuality directly. Surprisingly, this is similar to the conclusion reached through proportionality in *De Ver.*: we can say a ground exists but we cannot explicate its content. It seems, then, that while the proposal of *Com. de Trin.* is based upon a causal formal paradigm instead of the paradigm of bare form in *De Ver.*, both are simply a fuller description of what is ultimately inexplicable but can be demonstrated to exist in reality. However, this third insight on the grounding problem of analogy is progress because, as Aquinas notes, it gives a fuller description of the existence of analogy's ground. As will be seen in the next section, this contribution is maintained throughout the rest of Aquinas' treatment of the ground of analogy but gets refined when Aquinas incorporates a more actual paradigm over the highly formal paradigm utilized in articulating these three insights.

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<sup>25</sup> As will be shown in the treatment of *De Pot.*, Aquinas' adoption of an *actus essendi* account of existence causes him to later formulate this direct formal relation as itself "indirect" in the sense that it relies upon efficient causality. The creature's formal likeness to God is not based upon a Platonic understanding of form but an Aristotelian understanding: form is present in act. Creatures are modeled upon God because they proceed existentially from him.

## **Divine Actuality: The Reality of Relation *Ad Intra* and *Ad Extra***

The last text chosen for a close examination of Aquinas' ground of analogy is *De Pot.* This text is chosen because *De Pot.* is the earliest example of where Aquinas intersects the new account of analogy in *Com. de Trin.* with his more mature systematic theology. As a result, his later treatments of analogy do not significantly diverge from the account in *De Pot.* *De Pot.* is in many ways the earliest full account of his more mature position on analogy. The value of *De Pot.* is that it combines all three insights on analogy's ground noted earlier in this section while explicating them within Aquinas' overall theological proposal of the generation of all things from divine actuality. This section argues that Aquinas ultimately solved the grounding problem of analogy by locating it in the unity and diversity of divine actuality.<sup>26</sup> The section is divided into two subsections. The first documents Aquinas' transition to a primarily actual account of existence and describes how he synthesized his earlier formal insights on analogy's ground within that paradigm. The second subsection demonstrates how Aquinas synthesized his earlier insight on the ultimately inexplicable nature of analogy with this account of divine actuality.

### **Formal Relations and the *Actus Essendi***

This section argues that all three contributions demonstrated in the preceding sections are incorporated in *De Pot.*: an indirect formal relation, a direct causal relation, and an acknowledgement that the ground of analogy is ultimately inexplicable. This

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<sup>26</sup> Grounding the creaturely analog ultimately in divine actuality accords with Cornelio Fabro's interpretation of Aquinas on analogy. "The problem of analogy is intimately bound up with the general structure of Thomist metaphysics, and it develops with a continual and strict harkening back to principles involving the tension of two groups coming together—from act and potency (Aristotle) and from participant and participated (Plato). The two groups evidently require a *reductio ad unum*. The priority and the principal role that the so-called analogy of attribution (*proportionis*) takes in Thomist thought as opposed to the purely formal and posterior analogy of proportionality are based on the very principle of Thomism, viz., on the priority of act over potency (Aristotelianism) and of the act of *esse* over every other act (Platonism)." Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalité*, 527, as translated and cited by Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 9.

argument is treated in three parts: the indirect formal relation, the reality of the causal Creator/creature relation, and its reflection of the inexplicable intra-trinitarian relations.

One of the most difficult aspects of interpreting Aquinas on analogy is that he develops analogy at length multiple times, both before and after his metaphysic shift on the concept of existence. *Sent.*, *De Ver.*, and *Com. de Trin.* were written within a primarily formal account of existence (*esse in actu per formam*). However, Aquinas' well-known syncretization of Plato and Aristotle caused him to ultimately understand existence as an act, *actus essendi*. This accounts for most of the discontinuity between Aquinas' earlier thinking on analogy and his mature view.<sup>27</sup> This trajectory towards a more actual account of existence is present even in the transition from form treated in a bare quidditative sense in the analogical account of *De Ver.* to the formal causality in *Com. de Trin.* insofar as Aquinas began focusing on form as it is in actual particulars. Examining form in actual particulars is only a short step from grounding formal causality upon efficient causality, as is ultimately seen in the primarily actual account of analogy given in *De Pot.* and later texts.<sup>28</sup> Aquinas' shift from a primarily formal ground of the Creator/creature analogical relation to a primarily actual ground is made explicitly in *De Pot.* "Hence the Philosopher [Aristotle in *Metaphysics* V] in giving the species of relations, says that some are based on quantity and some on action and passion. Accordingly, things that are ordered to something must be really related to it."<sup>29</sup> Note that the language of "ordered to something" used to describe formal causality in *Com. de Trin.* is ultimately identified as a statement of act. Moreover, while *Com. de Trin.* also rejected a direct formal relation of quantity, *De Pot.* explicitly rejects a direct quantitative or qualitative formal relation for

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<sup>27</sup> Herve Thibault, *Creation and Metaphysics*: (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), x.

<sup>28</sup> For a more technical treatment of this formal/actual shift and its impact on Aquinas' mature thinking on analogy, see Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, 34-42.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.9 co.



three reasons distinct to the act/potency distinction.

First, a quantitative/qualitative relation is an accident residing in a subject; in contrast, the Creator/creature relation is grounded in the act of God and so “signifies something not as adhering to a subject but as passing from it to something else.”<sup>30</sup> This articulates the *prius et posterius* principle within an actual paradigm. Second, Aquinas rejects the direct formal relations of quantity and quality because they imply a simultaneous relationship. While it was demonstrated that *De Ver.* and *Com. de Trin.* rejected a symmetrical formal relation, Aquinas accomplishes the same by denying a “simultaneous” relation in a way that especially undercuts the qualitative relation implicit in *De Ver.* and *Com. de Trin.* Recall that in *De Ver.* Aquinas suggested that the relation between one and two is double, and the same relation obtains between two and four even though the numbers are larger; thus, in principle, the finite can be related to the infinite through this indirect relation of proportionality, just like “double” holds up between ascending sets of proportions *ad infinitum*. In *De Pot.* Aquinas explicitly denies that these relations can describe a relation between God and creatures because this relation is a simultaneous one. “Those relatives are naturally simultaneous which have the same reason for their mutual relationship, for instance... double and half.” Since the relation between God and creatures is not a simultaneous relation (because God precedes the creature), it follows that no simultaneous relation obtains between God and creatures.<sup>31</sup> Third, Aquinas rejects the direct formal relations of quantity and quality because such a comparative relation cannot obtain between members of different *genera*; however, divine actuality means God is not only the formal model of creation but also its generator. As a result, although God’s being is not contained within a genus with the creature, “he is nevertheless in every genus as the principle of the genus: and for this reason there can be

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<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 co.

<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 1.

relation between the creature and God as between effect and principle.”<sup>32</sup> God is present principally in every *genera* is the strongest statement yet of the relation between the *sui generis* God and the *communis generis* of his creatures. Aquinas does not reject a formal relation between God and creatures; *De Pot.* 7.9 ad. 4 articulates essentially the same formal relation as affirmed in *Com. de Trin.* However, Aquinas grounds formal causality in efficient causality. In short, Aquinas progressed from a primarily formal account of the relation between God’s being and man’s being in favor of an account based upon *actus essendi* and efficient causality.<sup>33</sup>

Aquinas previously affirmed the formal likeness between God and creatures; thus, he already held to a real or ontological likeness. However, couching the Creator/creation relation in terms of act and potency causes him to develop at length the implication which follows: The Creator/creature relation must be a real relation within the creature but not in God. Aquinas argues that the relation between God and creatures cannot be a merely logical relation, such as exists between quantities, but a real relation. This is because a relation based upon act must exist in reality, not just conceptually, since actions cause things in reality. “Now all creatures are ordered to God both as to their beginning and as to their end... Therefore, creatures are really related to God, and this relation is something real in the creature.”<sup>34</sup> The fact that the Creator/creature relation is real means it must exist as part of a substance, i.e. *within* something. It cannot exist within God because this would either imply that God is necessarily related to his contingent creation, which is impossible, or imply that God has the potential to have an accident (a relation) added to his nature, which is also impossible since God does not have parts. Therefore, Aquinas proposes that creatures necessarily imply a Creator who is

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<sup>32</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.2 ad. 9; 7.9 ad. 4

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.9 co.

God, but God does not necessarily imply creatures; thus, the Creator/creature relation inheres within creatures. This satisfies the conclusion that the Creator/creature relation is real without violating divine simplicity. “Accordingly from God’s supreme simplicity there results an infinite number of respects or relations between creatures and him, inasmuch as he produced creatures distinct from himself and yet somewhat likened to him.”<sup>35</sup> “There is no real relation in him to creatures, although creatures are really related to him, as effects to their cause.”<sup>36</sup>

### **The Inexplicability of Divine Actuality as the Ground of Analogy**

The reality of the Creator/creature relation inhering within the creature is the way that Aquinas relates creaturely actuality to divine actuality. In a fascinating way Aquinas has come full circle. In *Sent.* he provided a bare assertion of the *prius et posterius* Creator/creature relation without explication, seeming to think such an assertion sufficient. In *De Pot.* Aquinas includes the insights of *De Ver.* and *Com. de Trin.* but, as shown at the end of the last section, these insights simply describe in further detail one bare truth: the Creator/creature relation must exist, even if nothing further can be demonstrated. In *De Pot.* Aquinas articulates this basic idea within his actualistic paradigm of existence. He grounds the existence and inexplicability of analogy’s ground in the existence and inexplicability of its source, divine actuality. By doing this, he ultimately affirms (in a much more developed way) what he affirmed in *Sent.*: analogy is *prius et posterius*, from God to us, and thus is ultimately inexplicable. This subsection argues that the ground of analogy ultimately terminates in God himself who is inexplicable.

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<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 co.

<sup>36</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.10 co.

To understand Aquinas' move towards divine actuality as the ultimate ground of analogy one must understand the overall project of *De Pot.* It is a treatise on the power of God examined through the effects of generation, and as such is a project which relates the contingent expressions of God's power to God's essential power. This is why Aquinas treats the doctrine of creation first in *De Pot.* and then moves to the doctrine of God, reflecting his conviction that God is known by his works in creation which reflect God in himself. The transition from the doctrine of creation to the doctrine of God begins with question seven on divine simplicity. The two subjects merge in his treatment of simplicity when he addresses the question of how God can be related to his creation in a real way, since (it seems) that if the Creator/creature relation is real then either creation is necessary instead of contingent or God has the potential to add an accidental and contingent relation to himself (which would destroy divine simplicity). This issue of the Creator/creature relation governs the second half of question seven on divine simplicity and is solved by an account of analogy. There, Aquinas proposes that the analogy between God and creatures is grounded on a real relation which exists within creatures but not God, being a reflection of the intra-trinitarian relations. Once establishing this likeness between God and creatures, Aquinas proceeds to treat the divine relations, persons, and act of procession. In short, Aquinas suggests that the conceptual and real similarity yet dissimilarity of analogy results from the Creator/creature relation's reflection of the intra-trinitarian relations that constitute real and conceptual unity within diversity.

This overall project of *De Pot.* is best seen in a rather obscure and technical part of *De Pot.* in which Aquinas argues that the Creator/creature relation is one of relative opposition which reflects the inexplicable mystery of intra-trinitarian relative opposition. Aquinas begins by anticipating a rather obscure objection and refuting it via a technical delve into Aristotelian categories. In *De Pot.* 7.8 arg. 4 Aquinas anticipates an objection to his view that there is a real relation between God and creatures. This

objection is that (1) all related things have relative opposition, and yet (2) an effect cannot be opposite its cause, and so (3) God and creatures cannot be related things.<sup>37</sup> This rather poor objection suffers from equivocation, as Aquinas points out in his reply: relative opposition is not the same as opposition in the most general sense. In the general sense opposite means that one thing is distinguished from another by excluding it due to contradiction or imperfection. For example, good excludes all that which is evil, evil being a privation of good or an “imperfect” good, and so good and evil are opposed to each other. Aquinas points out that these two senses of generic opposition, exclusion and imperfection, do not necessarily apply to relative opposition because relative opposition simply distinguishes between two related things and is “opposite” in the sense that one is positioned in reference to a distinct other.<sup>38</sup> As such, exclusion and imperfection are not definitional to relative opposition; in fact, relative opposition can be inclusive and perfect. A creaturely example of inclusive relative opposition would be like the relative opposition between father and son, in which the son is by nature like his father instead of contradictory to his father’s nature. A creaturely example of perfect relative opposition might be that between siblings, in which both are equally children of their parents.<sup>39</sup>

At this point *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4 transitions from a technical and relatively obscure philosophical distinction to a potent theological claim: “Wherefore relation is more attributable to God than other kinds of opposition.” What is Aquinas getting at? One can see that creatures must be “opposed” to God in some way because creatures are not God—but how can God be opposed to God? The answer is that creatures are not God and thus opposed to him relatively just as the Son and the Spirit are not the Father but opposed to him and each other relatively. Aquinas states that the first kind of relative

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<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4; see also 8.2 ad 3.

<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4

opposition—that of inclusive opposition— exists between God and creatures because creatures participate in God. This reflects the second kind of relative opposition—that of absolute perfection— which exists between the members of the Trinity. “By reason of the second difference, in the divine Persons (in whom there can be no imperfection) there can be relative opposition and no other, as we shall show further on [in question 8].”<sup>40</sup> This idea of human and divine relations of opposition marks the conceptual transition in *De Pot.* from discussing God’s power *ad extra* (creatures) to discussing God’s power *ad intra* (theology proper). It is by this argument for relative opposition that Aquinas ultimately defines the Creator/creature relation; after answering a few additional objections about this relation, he transitions to divine relations of opposition and spends the rest of his work unpacking the doctrine of God within this framework.

Three similarities between the Creator/creature relation of opposition to God and the intra-trinitarian relations of internal opposition stand out, all of which are grounded within even greater dissimilarity: likeness, procession, and therefore realness. The first similarity is found in the idea of procession: all creatures proceed from God, the fullness of being, which reflects the truth that the Son proceeds from the Father while the Spirit proceeds through a dual procession. Yet this first similarity is also marked by dissimilarity because the divine processions remain properly within God; thus, the distinction between divine persons and the divine essence is a distinction between God’s being and his mode of existence. Since God’s being and existence are identical, the distinction employed between modes of existence (persons) and essence is a purely rational distinction.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the Creator/creature distinction is between primary being itself and secondary being which proceeds contingently from it. Therefore, the divine relations are internal to God’s being and thus are essential, while the relation

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<sup>40</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 9.5 ad. 14.

between God and creatures is not in God but rather is in the substance of a creature.

Now operation is twofold. There is an operation that passes from the operator into something extrinsic... Another operation does not pass into something outside but remains in the operator... In respect of either operation we attribute procession to God. As regards the first we speak of divine wisdom or goodness as proceeding to creatures, as Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* ix), and of creatures as proceeding from God. As regards the second we acknowledge in God a procession of word and love; and this is the procession of the Son from the Father (for the Son is the Father's word) and of the Holy Spirit who is his love and life-giving breath (*spiritus*).<sup>42</sup>

The second similarity between God and creatures in the Creator/creature relation is the concept of image or likeness. Procession implies likeness, for that which proceeds from another is like unto the other. Thus, Aquinas argues that creatures bear a likeness to God in three ways: in the similarity of an effect to its cause, in the similarity of rational operation (knowledge and will), and in the similarity of being directed towards the same object, i.e. loving God.<sup>43</sup> That creatures bear the creaturely image and likeness of God reflects the truth that the Son is the perfect image of the father and the Spirit proceeding from both of them fully participates in the same image. "In intellectual substances which are the most noble creatures there is also procession according to the operations of the intellect and will: and in this respect the image of the Trinity is in them."<sup>44</sup> Yet this likeness is also marked by an even greater dissimilarity. The likeness between the members of the Trinity is perfect, which means they must participate in the exact same and identical being.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, the likeness between God and creatures is imperfect, which means God must be ontologically distinct from creatures.

This leads to the third and most important similarity: the real existence of the relation. That the relation between God and creatures is "real," that is, ontological or according to the creature's substance, reflects the truth that the divine relations are real in

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<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 10.1 co.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 9.9 co.

<sup>44</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 10.1 ad. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 9.9 ad. 16.

God. In God, “person formally signifies incommunicability or individuality of one subsisting in a nature.”<sup>46</sup> Aquinas reasons that whatever subsists must be real and thus is signified according to substance instead of being merely a logical conception. “Now the relations in God are properties which constitute the Persons; and person signifies something real. Therefore, the divine relations also must be real.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, it follows “that which is proper to a real relation, namely opposition and distinction, is really in God.”<sup>48</sup> Aquinas attempts to prove that God has real relations which subsist within himself according to relative opposition. That there could be real relation in God is a denial of a strict Aristotelian conception of relation as intrinsically accidental.<sup>49</sup> Aquinas demonstrates that, contrary to Aristotle, relation is not necessarily accidental; in fact, the accidental relations which creatures have ultimately proceed from the necessary and subsisting relations in God.<sup>50</sup> As noted above, Aquinas discusses processions as those which are intrinsic (the divine processions) and those which are extrinsic (creatures). By an intrinsic relation Aquinas refers to the fact that the persons of the Trinity all inhere within the same essence and thus are interior to the subject, God. Yet it is also true that the divine processions are distinct from each other, not in a merely logical way, but in a real way.

The divine Persons are distinct only by their relations. Now this distinction cannot be merely logical, because things that are only logically distinct can be predicated of one another... Hence it would follow that the Father is the Son and the Son the Father: because seeing that names are given in order to distinguish things, it would follow that the divine Persons differ only in name, which is the heresy of Sabellius.

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<sup>46</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 9.6 co.

<sup>47</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.1 co.

<sup>48</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.2 ad. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Aristotle, *The Categories*, trans. E. M. Edghill (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), sec. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.2 co.



It remains thus to be said that the relations in God are something real.<sup>51</sup>

Aquinas' conclusion that the divine persons must be real subsisting relations seems, at first glance, antithetical to his account of divine simplicity. Aquinas' proposed solution is that there is a real distinction between the persons and each other, but not between the persons and the essence. This point is so often overlooked by accomplished scholars that it is worth demonstrating from primary sources.<sup>52</sup> In explicating the divine persons and essence Aquinas employed a number of technical distinctions common in medieval theology. The distinction between divine names (attributes) is nominal, signifying the same thing under different aspects.<sup>53</sup> The distinction between the divine essence and the divine persons is logical, made only according to human conception.<sup>54</sup> The third distinction between the divine persons is a real distinction, or a distinction according to substance.<sup>55</sup> However, this real distinction is a distinction within God, and thus is a real distinction within a thing (*secundum rem relativam*), not between things (*secundum rem absolutam*).<sup>56</sup> This absolutely real vs. relatively real distinction corresponds to what the medieval scholastics called the "real major distinction" which is *between* substances and the "real minor distinction" which is a modal distinction *within* a

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<sup>51</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.1 co.

<sup>52</sup> For example, J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig argue that Aquinas' view of the Trinity is "doubtless inconsistent with his doctrine of divine simplicity" because "it seems obvious that a being that is absolutely without composition and transcends all distinctions cannot have real relations subsisting within it, much less be three distinct persons." Similarly, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. asserts that a Latin view of the trinity is muddled "at crucial places by simplicity theory, i.e., by the notion that in God there are really no distinctions at all—not even between the divine relations and the divine essence." What is astounding in these pronouncements is their claim that Aquinas taught no real distinction of any kind within God despite his explicit statements to the contrary. See J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 586, and Cornelius Jr Plantinga, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *The Thomist* 50.3 (1986): 342-43.

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7.6 ad. 1; *ST* I.13.4.

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.1 ad. 1; *ST* I.28.2.

<sup>55</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.2 ad. 3; *ST* 1.39.1.

<sup>56</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.1 co and ad. 4; *ST* I.28 a.3. For more on the difference between a real absolute distinction and a real relative distinction, see Richard A. Muller, "Distinctio," in *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 94-96.

substance.<sup>57</sup> Hence Aquinas affirms there is a real distinction according to substance, but for God it is within the divine substance; therefore, “The divine relations, though they signify that which is the divine essence, do not signify it by way of essence, since they do not convey the idea of existence in something, but of reference towards something else. Hence the distinction arising from the divine relations does not point to a distinction in the essence but only to respect to another by way of origin.”<sup>58</sup>

This technical defense of real relations in the simple essence of God can be summarized in the following claim: relative distinctions are real due to opposition and thus God is really three, even though the distinction between persons and essence is merely logical and thus God is really one.

Although relation does not add a thing to the essence, but only a point of view, yet it is itself a thing, even as goodness is a thing in God, and yet it does not differ from the essence otherwise than logically; and the same applies to wisdom. Wherefore just as things which pertain to goodness or wisdom, such as intelligence and so on, are really in God, even so that which is proper to a real relation, namely opposition and distinction, is really in God.<sup>59</sup>

Aquinas uses these distinctions to describe the ineffable mystery of the Trinity: unity within diversity. There is one God subsisting in three persons, which is the ultimate expression of the problem of the one to the many. Aquinas solves the problem of the one to the many not by fully explicating it but locating it within the mystery of divine actuality: each of the persons is identical with the divine essence and yet are fully distinct from each other due to the relative opposition which follows from the eternal act of self-existence (paternity, filiation, and spiration.) As was noted earlier, the grounding problem of analogy is also a problem of the one to the many, and Aquinas solves it in the same way: the solution is inexplicable but can be demonstrated to really exist within the

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<sup>57</sup> James E. Dolezal, “Trinity, Simplicity and the Status of God’s Personal Relations,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 1 (2014): 87.

<sup>58</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.2 ad. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 8.2 ad. 3.

incomprehensibility of divine actuality. In fact, the very tension between the semantics of analogy and the ontology of participation proceed via the divine will *ad extra* as an expression of the logical distinctions and the real distinctions which inhere within God himself. Aquinas' obscure statement in *De Pot.* 7.8 ad. 4 that "relation is more attributable to God than other kinds of opposition" and "in the divine Persons (in whom there can be no imperfection) there can be relative opposition and no other" indicates the uniquely theological/philosophical ground of Thomistic analogy in divine actuality.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

While there is undeniable change in Aquinas' thought on the grounding problem of analogy, the core insights which were analyzed from each stage of his thinking are synthesized in his mature solution. *Sent.* asserted a likeness grounded in inexplicable relation. *De Ver.* outlined an indirect formal likeness expressed as proportionality. *Com. de Trin.* proposed a direct relation based upon eminent causality. In analyzing *De Pot.*, all three of these strengths appear in harmony: there is an indirect relation between the bare form of creaturely perfections and divine perfections based upon a real relation grounded in eminent causality, which in turn is grounded upon the efficient causality of God in the doctrine of creation; this efficient causality reflects the inexplicable divine actuality as expressed in the divine act of self-existence (the relations of opposition: paternity, filiation, and spiration). The ultimate ground of analogy is thus inexplicable because God himself is inexplicable. If we could comprehend the divine essence then we would have no need of analogy in the first place because God would not be God. Yet since God is God, all theology ultimately terminates in the incomprehensible divine act. The grounding problem of analogy is no exception.

## CHAPTER 4

### A REFORMED COVENANTAL ACCOUNT OF THE GROUND OF ANALOGY

This chapter accepts the ground for analogy Aquinas articulates from the doctrine of creation but suggests that a further articulation of analogy's ground is necessary from the doctrines of election and revelation, what will be called a "covenantal ground" to distinguish it from grounding analogy via natural revelation in creation.<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that because of the noetic and thelemic effects of the Fall, Aquinas' creational account of analogy's ground should be supplemented with a covenantal account of analogy's ground which can be done using the categories of the Reformed scholastic archetypal/ectypal systemization of revelation without departing from Aquinas' overall analogical proposal or theological positions. The first part of this chapter demonstrates why Aquinas' treatment of the grounding problem in the doctrine of creation needs to be supplemented by a treatment of the problem within revelation and election, providing a distinctly covenantal approach to the grounding problem. The second part is an articulation of such a covenantal ground through the archetypal/ectypal classification of revelation found within the Reformed scholastics. The third section argues that this covenantal account of analogy's ground is implicitly Thomistic, merely extending Aquinas' ultimate approach to analogy's ground in a way consistent with his overall position and generally supported by his theology.

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<sup>1</sup> In one sense these are two different grounds, yet in another sense they are two different articulations of the same ground. Later on, this chapter argues that both the "creational ground" and the "covenantal ground" of analogy are two different accounts starting in different doctrines but terminating in the same ultimate ground of divine actuality. Just as all theology terminates in the mystery of divine actuality and yet we articulate theology in different sections, so analogy's ground terminates in divine actuality but can be denominated as different grounds.

## The Necessity of a Covenantal Ground

One of the perennial cautions of Reformed adaptations of medieval theology is located in the doctrines of man and sin, and analogy is no exception. Aquinas' grounding of analogy within a creational framework is commendable as far as it goes, but according to Reformed definitions of sin and man, Aquinas' ground for analogy does not account for how postlapsarian man can appropriate true knowledge of God. Consider Aquinas' overall proposal: man can reflect upon his own nature and the nature of things around him through an act of intellect and attribute perfections analogically to God, since there is a real Creator/creature relation inhering within man which designates God as his source and his end. This creational account may theoretically function within the framework of the original creation but a problem occurs when sin enters the equation. If the nature upon which man reflects is a broken analog, and if the intellect and will by which he reflects are broken faculties, man finds himself in the position where he effectively has no ground for real knowledge of God.

According to a Reformed understanding of sin, man's nature does not have the original integrity with which he was created. Moreover, the Fall has noetic and thelemic effects which obscure man's conception of God. As a result, although the natural man receives true knowledge of God, he willfully suppresses it in unrighteousness and he is not able to understand the truth about God as he really is, for his faculty of spiritual discernment is corrupted (Rom 1:18-23, 1 Cor. 2:14). Sin places a real barrier between man and true knowledge of God, one that is not overcome by the general Creator/creature relation. This barrier must be overcome by covenantal union with Christ. As Karl Barth observes, "In the Bible, however, it is not a being common to God and man which finally and properly establishes and upholds the fellowship between them, but God's grace."<sup>2</sup> Aquinas' creational account of analogy presents a real ground, to be sure, but

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 2.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 243.

postlapsarian man needs something more: an effective ground. As Cornelius Van Til says, “Man did originally think analogically about nature, and in thinking analogically was able to know God truly...If therefore men would only reason analogically they should be able to reason from nature to nature’s God. But sinners until saved by grace do not reason analogically.”<sup>3</sup> This effective ground is not located in the general Creator/creature relation, but in the special covenantal relation between Christ and his people. For clarity, this location of the ground of analogy in the doctrine of election and special revelation will be called the “covenantal” ground of analogy.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Archetypal/Ectypal Account of Analogy’s Covenantal Ground**

If the perennial problem of a Reformed adaptation of medieval theology is located in the doctrines of man and sin, the standard solution lies in the doctrines of Christ and salvation. Just as Reformed theology has a ready-made critique of Aquinas’ ground of analogy, it offers a ready-made solution in its schematization of revelation. This schematization of revelation incorporates a Reformed view of man and sin with salvation in Christ, yielding a distinctly Reformed articulation of revelation even as it

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<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *In Defense of the Faith: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, vol. 5 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1978), 165. Van Til’s uniquely expressed point is that the natural man is in rebellion against God even in the way his reasoning process functions. To be in rebellion against God is to place God on the same level as the creature instead of submitting to God as a higher authority; as a result, the natural man univocizes God. Van Til is not saying the natural man can just pick up an analogical model and then gain true knowledge of God without regeneration; rather, he is saying that man’s thinking will always be corrupt as long as he refuses to acknowledge the Lordship of his Creator, something he cannot do apart from regeneration.

<sup>4</sup> The language of a “covenantal” ground is an attempt to bring together Barth on election and Van Til on special revelation. Barth’s well-known *analogia fidei* was his attempt to ground analogy in the doctrine of election. Barth was alarmed by the moves he saw within twentieth century Catholicism to use the *analogia entis* as a means of imposing man’s common religious notions onto God instead of starting with the special knowledge of God revealed in Christ. Making an almost identical move, Van Til located the ground of analogy in the doctrine of special revelation. Yet both Van Til and Barth acknowledged the creation realities imbedded within the analogy principle. Barth evolved from calling the *analogia entis* the antichrist to acknowledging that a qualified *analogia entis* was imbedded in his own *analogia fidei*. See Keith Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 160. Van Til similarly affirms the original sufficiency of natural revelation, even as it now is only sufficient for condemnation apart from Christ. See Cornelius Van Til, *In Defense of the Faith: The Doctrine of Scripture*, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1967), 6-12.

appropriates terms and ideas from medieval scholasticism. As such, a thorough description of the schema is in order.

The Reformed scholastics drew from the wells of medieval scholasticism but filtered their findings through decidedly Calvinistic theological commitments. In particular, four aspects of Calvin's thought were formative for the Reformed archetypal/ectypal schema; they are listed here and then shown how they are incorporated in the archetypal/ectypal schema. The first formative aspect was Calvin's distinction between the "uttered word of God" which is scripture and the eternal "substantial Word" of God which is "the wellspring of all oracles."<sup>5</sup> This distinction closely resembles a Christological version of Duns Scotus' distinction between *theologia in se* and *theologia ad nostra*.<sup>6</sup> The second formative aspect is Calvin's deep integration of divine accommodation to his theological system. While many thinkers prior to Calvin utilized the concept of God accommodating himself to creatures, Jon Balsarak demonstrates that Calvin's widespread and sophisticated use of the idea far beyond his predecessors indicates that it is a central element of Calvin's theology.<sup>7</sup> The third formative aspect of Calvin's theology was the ultimately Christocentric nature of accommodated revelation. Since God accommodates himself in his dealings with men, and God's acts center in the

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), I.13.7.

<sup>6</sup> This reflection of Duns Scotus' well-known distinction may not have been unconscious or accidental. According to the analysis of Heiko Oberman, Calvin more closely represents the theology of Duns Scotus than any other scholastic theologian. See Heiko Oberman, *Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin's Reformation* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1991), 117. On the relation between Calvin and scholasticism more generally, see Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39-61. In particular, Muller notes that the *Institutes* reflects the scholastic pattern of argument and technical use of *distinctios* typical of scholastic works.

<sup>7</sup> As Balsarak puts it, "Accommodation does not merely rest on the surface of Calvin's theology but penetrates it." Jon Balsarak, *Divinity Compromised: A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin*, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 186.

mission of Christ, Christ is God's accommodating act *par excellence*.<sup>8</sup> The fourth formative aspect of Calvin's theology was his heavy emphasis on soteriology throughout his theological system generally and in the doctrine of the knowledge of God specifically. According to Calvin, natural revelation does not result in a true knowledge of God within the natural man because he corrupts in his thinking that which he is given. Only regeneration brings true knowledge of God.<sup>9</sup> Calvin's implicit *theologia in se/ad nostra* distinction, his integral use of divine accommodation, the ultimately Christological nature of that accommodation, and the heavily soteriological emphasis of Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God became the foundation upon which the Reformed scholastics build their archetypal/ectypal schema.

Franciscus Junius was the first Reformed voice to propose the terms and formulation of the archetypal/ectypal systemization of revelation in his work *A Treatise on True Theology*.<sup>10</sup> This schema was adopted with minimal refinement in many Reformed scholastic treatments of theological *prolegomena*<sup>11</sup> and was generally assumed

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<sup>8</sup> This is the language used by Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31, no. 1 (January 1977): 19–38. Balsarak disagrees on the grounds that Calvin uses accommodation outside of the "lispering" of revelation and the descent of the incarnation. Calvin certainly appeals to accommodation outside of these narrow senses. See Jon Balsarak, "The Accommodating Act Par Excellence?," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 4 (2002): 408–23. Yet, in a broad sense God is always known through his works, and those works culminate in Christ. See Calvin, *Institutes* I.5.9, 12. Arnold Huijgen makes this point and documents it in Calvin, especially through an extensive treatment of Calvin's commentary on 1 Pet 1:20 where Calvin argues that God accommodates himself not just in word and deed but in his very self through the incarnation. "We cannot believe in God except through Christ, in whom God in a manner makes himself little, that he might accommodate himself to our comprehension; and it is Christ alone who can tranquillize consciences, so that we may dare to come in confidence to God." Arnold Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology*, vol. 16, *Reformed Historical Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 237.

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.12, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Franciscus Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, trans. David C. Noe (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Muller includes Amandus Polanus, Johannes Scharpius, Antonius Walaeus, and Abraham Heidanus in this category as well as others who are similar but do not use Junius' technical vocabulary such as William Perkins, William Ames, Festus Hommius, Lucas Trelocatius, and John Downname. Muller also notes that the archetypal/ectypal distinction was rapidly accepted among the Reformed scholastics, just beginning in the last quarter of the sixteenth century yet so common as to be taken for granted in the first quarter of the early seventeenth century. See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., vol. 1. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 224–25.



by almost all Reformed theologians by the high orthodoxy period.<sup>12</sup> The archetypal/ectypal schema is actually a distinction within a category, and so we do not start immediately with archetypal/ectypal theology. Junius first starts his system with a distinction between true theology and false theology. False theology is that theology which either is incorrect through errors in reasoning or that theology which is based solely upon the natural man's reasoning from natural revelation.<sup>13</sup> At this very point of beginning, Calvin's soteriological emphasis within the doctrine of the knowledge of God informs the archetypal/ectypal schema insofar as Junius places the natural knowledge of God apart from supernatural grace within the *theologia falsa* side of the column. As Junius clarifies at length later in his treatment of natural revelation, only the regenerate man internalizes natural revelation as a *theologia vera*; at the very beginning, Aquinas' optimistic view of natural revelation without further illumination is contravened.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, true theology contains two categories or distinctions: *theologia archetypa* (archetypal theology) and *theologia ectypa* (ectypal theology). Archetypal theology is the knowledge of God absolutely considered and refers to God's essential self-knowledge and is incommunicable in that form. However, this archetypal knowledge as it is considered relative to creatures (*secundum quid*) is known as ectypal theology, a created and communicable form of archetypal theology accommodated for creaturely

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<sup>12</sup> Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 226. E.g. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James. T. Jr Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 1. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Junius, 151-58.

understanding.<sup>15</sup> That ectypal theology is different in form but not subject matter was a major point in the Reformed articulation: because the content of ectypal theology is the same as archetypal theology, the revelation creatures have of God does not reveal something like God yet other than him, but reveals God himself, accommodated without misrepresentation. In other words, while the form of theology changes between archetypal and ectypal, its truth does not; as such, it is true theology in the identically same sense as archetypal theology.<sup>16</sup> As such, the archetypal/ectypal distinction does not introduce species of true theology, as if some forms were more typical of the species and less typical, i.e. more true and less true. One might sum up ectypal theology as follows: ectypal theology does not give us knowledge of God in its fullest form, but it is perfectly true as far as it goes.<sup>17</sup> This archetypal/ectypal distinction reflects Calvin's own implicit distinction between *theologia in se* and *theologia ad nostra*. It also reflects Calvin's heavy emphasis on divine accommodation: if God does not make himself known in creaturely terms and forms, man cannot have true knowledge of God.

Ectypal theology in turn can be considered relatively (*secundum quid*) and has three formal distinctions: *theologia unionis*, the theology of the hypostatic union;

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<sup>15</sup> Junius, 107-20. The terms "communicable" and "incommunicable" are used here to speak of the communication of divine attributes to humans. All of God's attributes are incommunicable in a strict sense because God is one simple essence *sui generis*. But in a loose sense his attributes are communicable because humans are created in the image of God and participate in the divine perfections in an analogous way. The Reformed also used these terms in a strict sense to refer to the communication of the divine essence among the persons of the Trinity. In this usage, the essential divine attributes are communicable in that all persons partake fully of them, while the personal properties of the Trinity are incommunicable because the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son.

<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that ectypal theology implies univocism; on the contrary, Junius insists that ectypal theology is analogical in the scholastic sense, meaning not purely univocal or equivocal but rather containing a real similitude. Archetypal and ectypal theology are identically true in a qualitative sense, meaning both have the quality of absolute truthfulness. See Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 103-04.

<sup>17</sup> Turretin helpfully expands on this point: ectypal theology is one in substance but various in its manners of treatment. It differs in degree of its revelation, just as the New Testament provides a fuller degree of knowledge than the Old Testament, yet it is not different in *kind* because the subject of theology is the same: Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. While the degree of revelation changes, then, its substance is always the identically same. See Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Top. 1 Q.2. XI-XIII, 3-4. It is in this way that Junius says that scripture is one, eternal, and immutable, because while creatures can always have more divine revelation, they can never have divine revelation that is of anything except the one, eternal, and immutable God. See Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 191-93.

*theologia beatorum*, the theology of blessedness; and *theologia viatorum*, the theology of pilgrims. Theology of union is the knowledge of God communicated through the incarnation. As God, Christ has the essential, incommunicable divine self-knowledge identified as archetypal theology; yet as man, he embodies accommodated creaturely knowledge of God in its most perfect form. The most perfect correspondence between archetypal theology and ectypal theology thus occurs in Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> This knowledge is mediated to man because Christ is the mediator between God and man; as such, Christ is the “mother” from whom proceeds the other two forms of ectypal theology, the theology of blessing (*theologia beatorum*) and the theology of pilgrims (*theologia viatorum*). “Thus also the ectypal theology of union in Christ our Savior is the common principle of the rest of theology.”<sup>19</sup> Calvin’s theology is again formative on this aspect of the archetypal/ectypal schema in that God not only accommodates himself to man, he does so ultimately in the person of Christ, the one of whom the scriptures bear witness as the Son of God sent for man’s salvation. Thus, true human knowledge of God has not only a Christological emphasis but a Christological ground.

The other two main subtypes of *theologia ectypa secundum quid* are a kind of “union of union” insofar as a person’s union with Christ unifies him or her with the hypostatic union of archetypal and ectypal theology. The *theologia beatorum* refers to that knowledge of God humans possess when their union with Christ is fully realized in the glorified state where they see not through a mirror darkly but will fully know.<sup>20</sup> The *theologia viatorum* refers to the knowledge of those united with Christ who are on the

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<sup>18</sup> Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 121-27.

<sup>19</sup> Junius, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Junius, 129-33. Knowledge of God is so Christ-mediated in the Reformed tradition that there was a debate over whether creatures would eventually attain knowledge of God directly even in the beatific vision or whether even then the God-man will continue to mediate knowledge of the infinite to the finite. Polanus represents the first view (he calls it a *notitia intuitiva*) while John Owen represents the latter (and more minority) view. See Duby, *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics and the Task of Christian Theology*, 41-43.

way to their glorification.<sup>21</sup> This third category of *theologia ectypa secundum quid*, the theology of pilgrims, is that kind of revelation with which the Church militant is concerned. As formulated by later Reformed thinkers, this revelation contends with a triple handicap: finitude, sin, and the individual knower. First, theology must cross the barrier between the infinite and the finite, and so its form is accommodated for finite capacity (*theologia ectypa*). Second, ectypal theology must be mediated not just to finite humans (*theologia viatorum*), but to sinful humans whose capacities will not function as they should until the glorified state (*theologia viatorum post lapsum*). Third, revelation to sinful pilgrims is further limited by the particular capacities, energies, and struggles of each individual person (*theologia in subiecto*).<sup>22</sup> This is because, while some revelation is infused by nature, revelation is also acquired through the discursive processes of the human faculty.<sup>23</sup> In short: revelation (*theologia ectypa*) as the Christian actually has it on earth (*viatorum post lapsum*) is relative to the subject (*subiecto*); it is not internalized in the identically same form as what revelation is absolutely considered.

The account provided by the Reformed archetypal/ectypal systemization of revelation provides covenantal categories by which to solve the sin problem faced by Aquinas' creational ground. It was noted that an *effective* ground for true analogical knowledge of God does not obtain in a creational account of analogy's ground because the noetic and thelemic effects of the Fall. To utilize the technical categories explained above, all natural knowledge of God is *viatorum post lapsum* and so there is no *theologia vera in subiecto* apart from the supernatural revelation of Christ given through covenantal union with him. In contrast, the archetypal/ectypal schema allows us to chart a covenantal

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<sup>21</sup> Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 135-39.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Muller, "Theologia Ectypa," in *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 360-61.

<sup>23</sup> See Amandus Polanus on innate, infused, and acquired knowledge in *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* (Geneva: Jacob Stoer, 1617), I. syn. and IX syn.

ground for analogy based upon election and special revelation. The significance of this covenantal ground is that the created analog is not corrupted and thus corresponds to God as it should, unlike our own sinful nature and faculties. To illustrate, we can place the covenantal ground of analogy into Aquinas' indirect formal relation of proportionality: *theologia archetypa* is to *theologia archetypa secundum quid* what *theologia ectypa* is to *theologia ectypa secundum quid*. The *secundum quid* phrase is used because the Reformed scholastics themselves use this language of archetypal/ectypal theology absolutely considered and relatively considered (*secundum quid*) inviting the very kind of proportionality relation presented above. Archetypal theology considered relative to creation is what generates ectypal theology. In turn, ectypal theology relatively considered is what generates the theology of union which is in turn mediated to pilgrims and to the blessed. A less technical way to write the covenantal ground analogy would be to say "archetypal theology is to ectypal theology what ectypal theology is to the theology of union, pilgrims, and blessed." This formula is simply to repeat Barth's simple observation: "In the Bible, however, it is not a being common to God and man which finally and properly establishes and upholds the fellowship between them, but God's grace."<sup>24</sup>

Analysis of the covenantal ground of analogy yields a dual strength: it overcomes the effective barrier of sin and even supplements the creational ground as considered in its prelapsarian sense. First, the covenantal ground overcomes the barriers presented by the Fall because, while man's nature absolutely considered is now corrupted, ectypal theology absolutely considered is not corrupted. Therefore, the covenantal ground of analogy ensures a *theologia vera* for all who are in Christ despite their indwelling sin. Second, the covenantal ground helpfully supplements the creational ground even when considering a prelapsarian creation. God's special self-accommodating

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<sup>24</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2.1, 243.

act of covenantal revelation is a more exact form of true theology than that which can be gained by human reflection upon the perfections of human nature. Recall that Scotus argued that the correspondence between created things and the divine ideas of those created things does not ground real knowledge of God any more than the correspondence of a stone to the divine idea of a stone yields real knowledge of God. The covenantal ground of analogy is especially impervious to this critique because, while ectypal theology is created and thus contingent, it is just as identically true as its *principium*, archetypal knowledge, which is its own *principium*. Such a claim is demonstrated in two steps. First, since archetypal and ectypal theology are unified in the hypostatic union, the very revelation which man apprehends in Christ corresponds to its created *principium*. Second, this created *principium* itself corresponds perfectly to its uncreated *principium*, the divine essence. Because God is the one who accommodates himself to man, and because God's works are perfect, God's created knowledge of himself corresponds perfectly to the *principium* of his essence. This perfect correspondence of God's accommodated revelation to himself is why the Reformed insisted that ectypal theology is just as perfectly true as archetypal theology, despite its difference in form. The significance of this perfect correspondence for the covenantal ground of analogy is that it is God's perfect act of accommodation, not man's creaturely perfections, which is the content of the analogical unity. Special revelation of Christ attested by Spirit-inspired scripture is God's self-accommodated revelation of himself and thus corresponds more closely to who he is than the revelation of nature. In short, the covenantal ground of analogy helpfully supplements the creational ground because God's accommodating act *par excellence* was not in creating man, but in sending Christ. This necessity of a covenantal ground for analogy is what Junius notes when he distinguishes between the theology of pilgrims in the Adamic state and the theology of pilgrims after the Fall, subsuming both under the need for the theology of union to be mediated to them. Man was never created to function apart from the special accommodating act of God in Christ,

even if he maintained his integrity in the covenant of works.<sup>25</sup> The knowledge of God in Christ has always been the fullest ground for analogy, even before the Fall when creation was an effective ground; now, after the Fall, the true knowledge of God is gained exclusively in the covenant of grace.<sup>26</sup>

### **Continuity Between Aquinas and a Covenantal Ground of Analogy**

The previous section noted certain Reformed departures from Aquinas; the last part of this chapter is to demonstrate the continuity between the Reformed covenantal ground of analogy and Aquinas' creational ground. The first and most basic commonality between the Reformed scholastics and Aquinas is their overall continuity on an analogical proposal. Junius insists that ectypal theology is analogical and not univocal, explicitly clarifying that he is referring to the terms as they appear in the scholastic debate. Polanus insists that God's creation, particularly man, has an analogous similitude to God's archetypal perfections.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Richard Muller's extensive survey of the Reformed scholastics demonstrates that the overwhelming consensus among the

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<sup>25</sup> Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, 151-54. This account comports with the simple narrative of Gen 2-3. God created man in his image such that man by nature represented the glory of God; then God established his covenant with man by revealing supernatural revelation, his law: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). Thus we see a creational ground for true knowledge of God which was supplemented by an even more full covenantal ground. It was the breaking of God's covenant with creation that triggered the need for further covenants to restore a covenantal relation between God and the children of promise.

<sup>26</sup> To reiterate, the Reformed covenantal view does not contradict the biblical teaching that all men have knowledge of God. The Reformed view contends that the natural man has corrupted knowledge of God, receiving true revelation but suppressing it in unrighteousness; as a result, the truth revealed *to* him does not result in truth *within* him. God is truly revealed but untruthfully internalized in the natural man, and it is in this sense that true knowledge of God can be gained only in the regeneration found in the covenant of grace. As Junius and others state, natural theology after the Fall can only lead to true knowledge of God in the regenerate person.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Tipton, "Defining 'Our Theology': Amandus Polanus on the Fundamental Task of the Theologian," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 10, no. 4 (2016): 299.

Reformed scholastics was an analogical position.<sup>28</sup>

The second commonality between Aquinas the Reformed scholastics appears even at the same point they diverge: their understanding of the necessity of supernatural revelation. While the Reformed scholastics disagree with Aquinas' view that natural theology can effect true knowledge of God without further illumination, Aquinas fundamentally agrees that supernatural revelation is necessary to know God to the extent he intends to be known.

There are some intelligible truths to which the efficacy of the active intellect does extend, as, for example, those first principles which man naturally knows, and those truths which are deduced from them; and for such knowledge no new light of intelligence is required, but the light with which the mind is naturally endowed suffices. But there are other truths to which the aforesaid first principles do not extend; e.g., the truths of faith and things that exceed the faculty of reason, such as knowledge of future contingent events, and the like; and such things the human mind cannot know unless it is divinely illuminated by a new light, superadded to that which it naturally possesses.<sup>29</sup>

Aquinas' largely philosophical formulation of the grounding problem within the signification debate steered him towards a very philosophical solution articulated through the language of metaphysics. For all that, Aquinas' philosophical thinking must not be divorced from his theology. Aquinas and the Reformed scholastics are in fundamental agreement that the Father is revealed in the missions of the Son and the Spirit, and as such Christ is the centerpiece of revelation expressed through the dual principle of creation (natural revelation) and re-creation (salvation). Just as the Reformed scholastics did not deny the existence of a creational ground of analogy, so Aquinas would not have denied the existence of a covenantal ground of analogy. On the contrary, both are necessary; creatures cannot have special revelation of God if their natures are not

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Muller, "Not Scotist: Understandings of Being, Univocity, and Analogy in Early-Modern Reformed Thought," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14, no. 2 (2012): 145. Muller finds only one clear univocist outlier. Of the few equivocists, Muller suggests that some of them were actually using the term in a broadly Aristotelian way that conforms to Thomistic definitions of analogy. Of the analogists, most articulated Thomistic notions of participation and proportionality.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *Com. de Trin.* 1.1 co. See also *ST I.12.12-13*.



made to know and reflect God, and creatures cannot know and reflect God as they should unless God acts in them by with special covenantal grace.

Third, while the Reformed scholastics modeled their archetypal/ectypal distinction on Scotus' *theologia in se/theologia ad nostra* distinction, Aquinas would have accepted such a distinction.<sup>30</sup> Aquinas held that that all true things known by created intellects are true because they correspond to what is known by God himself in his own being. Creatures do not know the principle of things, for that principle is the incomprehensible God. Therefore, all creaturely knowledge is in a creaturely form and is true insofar as it corresponds to Truth in the divine essence.

Truth is found in the intellect according as it apprehends a thing as it is, and in things according as they have being conformable to an intellect. This is to the greatest degree found in God. For His being is not only conformed to His intellect, but it is the very act of His intellect, and His act of understanding is the measure and cause of every other being and of every other intellect, and He Himself is His own being and act of understanding. And so it follows not only that truth is in Him, but that He is truth itself, and the supreme and first truth.<sup>31</sup>

When Aquinas' correspondence theory of truth is applied to the knowledge of God's perfections, the result is not meaningfully different from the archetypal/ectypal distinction. "He is truth itself, and the supreme and final truth."<sup>32</sup> Creatures also have truth, but not in this archetypal form: they have it in a creaturely form which corresponds to the created objects they are apprehending which, in turn, correspond to their archetypes in God. "The truth of our [human] intellect is according to its conformity with its principle, that is to say, to the things from which it receives knowledge. The truth also of things is according to their conformity with their principle, namely, the divine

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<sup>30</sup> Polanus, the earliest synthesizer and refiner of Junius' work on archetypal/ectypal theology, attributed the distinction directly to Duns Scotus. Tipton, "Defining 'Our Theology': Amandus Polanus on the Fundamental Task of the Theologian," 291, 298.

<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.16.5 co.*

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas, *ST I.16.5 co.*

intellect.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, true human knowledge is ectypal, modeled upon the divine archetype of Truth.

Aquinas’ treatment of the principium of truth segues into the fourth commonality: all truth, including true theology, is appropriated in the Son. Aquinas says that all truth known by creatures corresponds to its principle in God, but this cannot be said of the Truth that is in God essentially because there is no principium of God. Yet he further clarifies that while there is no absolute principium of God, there is a relative principium *within* God. The conformity of truth to its principle “cannot be said, properly speaking, of divine truth, unless perhaps insofar as truth is appropriated to the Son, Who has a principle [in the Father.]”<sup>34</sup> While this isn’t a statement of the incarnation explicitly, it does indicate the same direction taken by the Reformed scholastics to ground the real analogical knowledge of God in the theology of union.

The move in theology proper towards the Son as the appropriation of all truth yields a decidedly Christocentric nature to Aquinas’ view of revelation when he eventually treats the incarnation. While Aquinas’ treatment of the incarnation in *ST Tertia Pars* is far removed from his discussions of analogy and true knowledge of God in *ST Prima Pars*, they are not disconnected. In order to see this, one must follow the relation between Aquinas’ treatment of truth in theology proper and grace in Christology and soteriology. In the doctrine of God Aquinas speaks about truth abstractly as it corresponds to the divine essence and is appropriated in the person of the Son. This is as it should be, since Aquinas is engaged in theology proper. Yet what is said about truth in theology proper extends to what one says about revelation, since revelation is the making known of the truth of God. As one progresses to Christology and soteriology, what one says about true revelation is then extended to how one speaks of grace, since revelation is, at

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<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.16.5 ad. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.16.5 ad. 2.

its most fundamental level, an expression of the grace of God. Thus, categories in theology proper meet categories in soteriology and Christology precisely in their intersection in the doctrine of revelation: revelation is gracious truth about God. Therefore, when Aquinas speaks of the grace of Christ in the incarnation for his people, implications follow for the doctrine of revelation.

Now the end of grace is the union of the rational creature with God. But there can neither be nor be thought a greater union of the rational creature with God than that which is in the Person. And hence the grace of Christ reached the highest measure of grace. Hence it is clear that the grace of Christ cannot be increased on the part of grace. But neither can it be increased on the part of the subject, since Christ as man was a true and full comprehensor from the first instant of His conception. *Hence there could have been no increase of grace in Him, as there could be none in the rest of the blessed, whose grace could not increase, seeing that they have reached their last end [in him.]*<sup>35</sup>

To summarize, there are four reasons to see continuity between Aquinas and the Reformed scholastics on the grounding problem of analogy despite their treatment of the problem within different doctrines: they are both analogical; they are both committed to the necessity of supernatural revelation despite recognizing natural revelation in creation; they both recognize a distinction between essential truth in God and creaturely forms of that truth; they both ultimately committed to understanding Christ as the center of all revelation. To this may be added a fifth observation: neither think the conceptual content of analogy can be fully explicated, either in a creational context or a covenantal context. Whether speaking of creation or re-creation, the ground of analogy terminates in the divine actuality of the trinitarian persons and missions. As such, the ground of analogy is ultimately incomprehensible, but it is also known to really exist and can be described in real ways, even if not fully. In short, the ground of analogy reflects only so much as we know about God himself. This is as it should be.

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<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *ST III.7.12 co.*, emphasis added.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that the Reformed estimation of the noetic and thelemic effects of the Fall make it necessary to ground analogy within the doctrines of election and special revelation and election, not just creation; yet this so-called covenantal ground is consonant with Aquinas' creational ground, his ultimate ground of analogy in divine actuality, and his theological system as a whole. Specifically, it was shown that the covenantal ground of analogy has always been necessary in addition to the creational ground. Moreover, the covenantal ground corresponds most closely to who God is because God's act of accommodating self-revelation (in the Word and thus in the word) is the purest of all forms of creaturely perfection, correspondingly directly to the principium of divine self-knowledge.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that Reformed ectypal theology can and should refine Thomistic analogy by supplementing Aquinas' creational account of analogy's ground with a covenantal account. It was first shown that Aquinas' commitment to divine simplicity caused him to affirm a qualitative distinction between God and creatures; this commitment influenced his philosophy of language and lead him to affirm an analogical proposal that was not merely semantic but ontological. Four key texts of Aquinas were examined, concluding that Aquinas thought there was an indirect formal relation (likeness) between God and creatures based upon a direct causal relation which really inheres within creatures and reflects the relative opposition of the Godhead; thus Aquinas ultimately presented the ground of analogy as really existing but not fully explicable conceptually, terminating in the incomprehensibility of divine actuality in the three persons of God and the *ad extra* relation to his creatures. Aquinas' ground of analogy is ultimately correct. While his creational account of analogy requires supplementing from Reformed ectypal theology because of the noetic and thelemic effects of the Fall, a covenantal account of analogy and its ground from Reformed ectypal theology is commensurate with Aquinas' creational account of the grounding problem and in line with is overall theological proposals.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE THOMISTIC GROUND OF ANALOGY AND REFORMED ECTYPAL THEOLOGY

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Reformed ectypal theology can refine Thomistic analogy by supplementing Aquinas' creational account of analogy's ground with a covenantal account. Aquinas presents the ultimate ground of analogy as inexplicable but demonstrably real, terminating in the mystery of divine actuality. While Aquinas offers a creational account of this ultimate ground, further description of this ground with a covenantal account is both possible and necessary. Far from rejecting Aquinas' ground of analogy, this proposal wholeheartedly takes it up and refines it via Reformed theology in a fashion consonant both with Aquinas' ultimate ground of analogy and Aquinas' overall theology.

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