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The Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics (S.M.L.M.) is a network of scholars founded with the aim of fostering collaboration and research based on the recognition that

- recovering the profound metaphysical insights of medieval thinkers for our own philosophical thought is highly desirable, and, despite the vast conceptual changes in the intervening period, is still possible; but
- this recovery is only possible if we carefully reflect on the logical framework in which those insights were articulated, given the paradigmatic differences between medieval and modern logical theories.

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If you are interested in joining, please contact Gyula Klima (Philosophy, Fordham University) by e-mail at: klima@fordham.edu

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ABOUT THIS VOLUME

Volume 2 of PSMLM contains papers presented at the philosophy sessions of the

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in Cincinnati, OH

**Editor’s note**

Several of the contributions presented here are considered by their authors as still constituting “work-in-progress”. However, since the aim of this publication, in the spirit of our Society’s manifesto, is the promotion of the exchange of ideas in the working relations of a network of scholars (as opposed to the otherwise worthy aims of lengthening our lists of publication and boosting our academic prestige), even these authors have graciously contributed their pieces, and await the comments of our readers.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS VOLUME .............................................................................................................2

Jorge J. E. Gracia: Categories vs. Genera: Suárez’s Difficult Balancing Act .....................4

William McMahon: The Medieval Sufficientiae: Attempts at a Definitive Division of the Categories ..................................................................................................................12

Stephen Theron: Metaphysical Analogy ..............................................................................26

Gyula Klima: Thomas Sutton and Henry of Ghent on the Analogy of Being ...............34

John N. Martin: Proclus on the Logic of the Ineffable ....................................................45

Alan Perreiah: Skepticism and Mysticism in Meister Eckhart’s and Augustine’s Apophatic Theolog[ies] ...................................................................................................................58

Jason Lawrence Reed: The Temporal’s “Presentness” to Divine Eternity in Thomas Aquinas ...............................................................................................................................68

Peter Weigel: Simplicity and Explanation in Aquinas’ God ...........................................77
It is not clear what kind of answer we would get if we asked an ordinary person what a category is. If the person has had some exposure to philosophy, then most likely the answer would repeat what he or she has been told it is, but even this cannot assure us of what the answer would be. The reason is that philosophers speak about categories in many different ways. There is one initial, and rather substantial, difference between those who include a very large number of items under categories and those who include only a very small number. The first regard such different things as human, green, animal, thought, and justice, as categories; the second speak only of very general items such as substance, quality, relation, and the like. Among those who have a very broad understanding of categories are such philosophers as Gilbert Ryle. Those who speak only of a short list, such as Roderick Chisholm, are usually thinking in more traditional terms, of the kinds of things that Aristotle, the scholastics, and most early modern philosophers thought. Because Suárez is a scholastic, I shall speak only of a very limited list of items.

The disagreement concerning categories, however, does not end there. Even if we restrict our discussion to a small number of items of the sort that Aristotle regarded as categories, there are many questions that remain to be answered about them and about which philosophers disagree. For example, we may ask about the exact number of categories, for although the list is supposed to be small, authors have frequently disagreed on this. Aristotle listed up to ten categories, but gave the impression that the ultimate number is not settled at all. Plotinus and Spinoza reduced the number radically, but their views did not by any means establish themselves as definitive.

More controversial even than the number of categories is what might be called their ontological status. The main disagreement here is among four positions. According to one, categories are linguistic entities—call them words—such as the words ‘quality’ and ‘relation,’ with which we speak about things. According to another, categories are mental acts—call them concepts—such as the concept of quality or the concept of relation, with which we think about things. Categories are also thought to be extra-mental features that things about which we think and speak have—call them properties—such as the properties of being a quality or the property of being a relation. Finally, there is a view that tries to integrate all of these three positions into one, arguing that categories are words, concepts, and properties but in different ways. Of course, these four views are not the only choices available and, indeed, I have suggested an entirely different way of thinking about categories elsewhere.1 But these four ways are the most popular views among philosophers and the ones that were considered by scholastics. They are, therefore, the most pertinent for our discussion of Suárez, which accordingly is going to concern the issue of ontological status.

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The Questions

Now, the problem concerning the ontological status of categories in a scholastic context becomes particularly complicated because the same words that are used to refer to categories are also used to refer to what scholastics called highest genera. Scholastics generally accepted the list of categories they found in Aristotle’s texts, namely: substance, quality, quantity, relation, and so on. And they also held that, corresponding to these, there are also ten genera: substance, quality, quantity, relation, and so on.

In order to have a full picture of the ontological status of categories, then, we need also to understand how they are related to the highest genera, in which ways they are like or unlike the highest genera, and the ontological status of the highest genera. Moreover, we need also to determine the kind of distinction that holds between categories and highest genera, and to have as clear a definition or description of both as possible. Finally, we need to establish the discipline or disciplines in which categories and highest genera are studied. Let us keep these questions separate and put them in a certain order to make them clear:

1. What is the proper definition of categories?
2. What is the proper definition of highest genera?
3. What is the ontological status of categories?
4. What is the ontological status of highest genera?
5. What distinguishes categories from highest genera?
6. What kind of distinction holds between categories and highest genera?
7. In which discipline of learning (scientia) are categories studied and why?
8. In which discipline of learning are highest genera studied and why?

Having formulated these questions with some precision, one would think it would be easy to proceed to give them answers. However, right at the outset we run into what appear to be insurmountable problems.

The Problems

The difficulty with questions (1) and (2), that ask for definitions of categories and highest genera, is that it is not at all clear that proper definitions of these can be given. A definition, as understood by Suárez and other scholastics, consists in a sentence with two parts, the definiendum which refers to the entity to be defined, and the definiens or defining expression. Thus in ‘Man is a rational animal,’ ‘Man’ is the definiendum and ‘rational animal’ is the definiens. The latter is tied to the former by a copula that explains their relation. Now, the definiens of a definition has two parts. One is the genus or larger class to which the entity being defined belongs, such as animal in the example given. The other part is the specific difference that sets apart the particular class to which the entity being defined belongs, which is rational in the example.

This poses a serious difficulty for the definition of categories and genera in that these are supposed to have no genus above them, for being, which is supposed to be what these categories and highest genera “divide” is not itself a genus according to the scholastics, who followed Aristotle on this. Moreover, these categories and genera, precisely because they are the highest, cannot differ through
some specific difference that sets them apart, for there is nothing beyond them that could function as such a difference. The categories and highest genera differ by themselves, something Suárez and other scholastics expressed by saying that they were “diverse” from each other, rather than “different” from each other. Man is different from cat because, although he is like cat in the genus animal, he is unlike cat in that he has the capacity to reason. But substance is not different from quality because substance and quality have no genus in common and there is nothing that could be used to distinguish them within a genus. The categories and highest genera are completely different from each other, that is, diverse by themselves. Substance does not differ from quality in something that it does not share with quality while sharing all sorts of other things with it; it differs from a quality completely, in that it is substance and quality is quality: Neither has anything in common with the other. In short, it does not seem possible that we can have proper definitions of the categories or highest genera, for definitions require both higher genera and also differentiae, and neither the categories nor the highest genera can have these. There is no genus to which substance belongs, and substance has no differentia that distinguishes it from other categories and highest genera.

Something similar can be said about questions (3) and (4) which are concerned with ontological status. To determine the ontological status of cat, for example, is to establish the kind of thing a cat ultimately is. By this, contemporary philosophers usually mean to identify the category in which cat fits. For an Aristotelian like Suárez, this would mean to establish whether cat is a substance, a relation, a quality, a quantity, and so on. And the same would apply to white. Determining the ontological status of white would entail trying to determine whether it is a quality (as Aristotelians thought) or a quantity (as some modern philosophers thought), and so on. Note, however, that although scholastics were very much concerned with the issue of categorization, they did not speak about “ontological status.” This is a contemporary expression and therefore should be taken with a grain of salt. Indeed, the term ‘ontology’ did not appear in philosophy until the seventeenth century.

But here, in the area of ontological status, again we run into a serious difficulty because in order to provide an ontological categorization we need to have categories in which the thing being categorized falls. The ontological categorization of cat is possible because we have the category substance in which cat fits. This, however, does not seem to be possible when we try to apply this procedure to categories and highest genera, for they do not have any category above themselves. A quality is just that, a quality, and so is a relation and so on. There are no supra-categories.

Someone might object to this that perhaps the so-called transcendentals could function in this way. But this is incorrect. The transcendentals, for Suárez and other scholastics, are being and the properties of being. The latter were generally identified as unity, goodness, and truth. The distinctive character of the transcendentals is that they apply to items in all categories: A substance is a being, one, good, and true; a quality is a being, one, good, and true; and so on. However, neither being, nor its properties, function as categories. Being and good, for example, are not categories in which substance and quality fit as cat and dog fit in the category of substance. They are rather on a par with substance and quality, except that, unlike these, they apply to everything.

Now, the difficulties raised with questions (1)-(4) which we have discussed affect also question (5) and (6), because (5) is concerned with what distinguishes categories from highest genera and (6) with the nature of this distinction. And if we cannot determine what distinguishes categories from highest genera, it does not appear possible to determine the kind of distinction in question, that is, whether it is real (e.g., between a cat and a dog), conceptual (e.g., between the father of Clarisa and the husband of Norma), or merely nominal (e.g., between ‘man’ and ‘rational animal’), say, which were the most common kinds of distinctions accepted by scholastics.
Something similar applies to the last two questions posed earlier, numbers (7) and (8), concerned with the disciplines of learning in which categories and highest genera are studied respectively. One reason is that, for scholastics, the discipline in charge of a particular subject matter often depended on the ontological status or nature of the subject matter in question. They thought, for example, that logic studies concepts and their interrelations, whereas metaphysics studies being or reality. So, if we cannot determine the ontological status of categories and highest genera, how are we to decide on the discipline under which they are studied? Another reason is that sciences are concerned with definitions and, as we have seen, definitions impose certain conditions that neither categories nor highest genera can satisfy.

Clearly, the scholastics face a serious problem if they attempt to answer the questions raised earlier. Interestingly enough, this problem does not seem to deter them from making claims about the answers to each and every one of those questions. The issue for us is, why? How do they obviate these difficulties?

In this very brief presentation I propose to give an answer to this question by looking at Suárez’s view of categories and highest genera, for he gives explicit answers to some of the questions raised earlier and one can also gather what his answer would have been to some of the others, even if he did not address them explicitly. Once his view is established, then we shall be able to identify the strategy he uses.

What Suárez Says and Means

Suárez actually says very little when it comes to the questions raised earlier. But there are two short texts that give us enough information to form an opinion of his views on these matters. Let’s begin with the shortest one:

...a category is nothing other than the appropriate disposition of genera and species from a supreme genus to individuals.² (My emphasis)

This text is very clear in stating what Suárez thinks a category is. Indeed, he explicitly says that a category is this and nothing else. And what is it? It is an “appropriate disposition.” There are two things about dispositions that are relevant for us to keep in mind when trying to understand this text. The first is that a disposition is generally classified as a species of quality, and this entails that a disposition is required to have something it qualifies, namely a substance. After years of driving, for example, I have the disposition to engage in certain actions when I sit on the driver’s seat of an automobile. I also have the disposition to hold the fork with my left hand when I eat because that is the way I was taught to use it at home. These dispositions are qualities of my mind that affect the way I act, or so the scholastics thought.³

The second important aspect of a disposition is that it is directed toward something. Dispositions are relational in the sense that my disposition to hold the fork in a certain way is a quality of my mind

² Francisco Suárez, Disputationes metaphysicae (henceforth DM) 39, 1; in Opera omnia, ed. Carolo Berton (Paris: Vivès, 1861), vol. 25, p. 504b: “Nam predicamentum...nihil aliud est quam generum et specierum usque ad individua conveniens dispositio sub aliquo supremo genere....”

³ But these examples should not suggest that dispositions are always found in minds. This is not entailed by what I have said.
that directs me to hold the fork in that way. There is then a relation between the fork and me which is explained because of the disposition I have.

So we are entitled to ask: If a category is a disposition, where is this disposition located, and toward what is it directed? The text cited does not tell us anything about the location of the dispositions Suárez identifies with categories, but it does identify the terms of the relation in question: The disposition holds between the genera and species (such things as animal and human) to which individuals belong (such as this animal or this human) and a supreme genus (such as substance). But this is rather odd, isn’t it? The oddity comes from two sides. First, in the exact nature of the relation and, second, in the fact that dispositions generally apply to sentient beings. I return to the second oddity later, but with respect to the first one could say perhaps that Suarez has in mind that categories are certain dispositions of the genera and species to which individuals belong toward some highest genus. In an example, a category is the disposition that the species human has toward one of the highest genera, namely substance.

What Suárez tells us, even if meager, also reveals something very important if we take it as a kind of via negativa. For, if categories are dispositions of genera and species toward highest genera, then they are not themselves genera or species. So presumably, categories cannot be at all the same thing as the highest genera. This means that, although the category substance has the same name as one of the highest genera, it is not the same thing as the genus with which it shares its name.

This is not yet sufficient, however, for our understanding of categories and highest genera in that, in the first place, we need to know where these dispositions are located—the first problem raised earlier—and we also need to know something more about what they are. Let us look at the second text to which I alluded and see if we can squeeze the answers we need out of it. It reads:

...a category is nothing other than the appropriate disposition and coordination of essential predicates, of which those which are predicated essentially of the individual are placed above it, in a direct line, going up from the lower to the higher; and this line, just as it does not begin but with the lowest, that is the individual, does not end but in a highest genus....

In this text, Suárez repeats that categories are dispositions, but he adds another term to describe them, namely ‘coordination.’ A category is the coordination or, we might say, the arrangement of essential predicates. Note that in this text Suárez speaks of predicates rather than genera. All the same, I think we are on safe ground if we interpret him as speaking about genera. Why? Because the term ‘predicate’ was used ambiguously by scholastics, and also by Suárez. Often they meant to refer to linguistic terms (as many of us do today), but at other times they meant to refer to the denotations or connotations of those terms. ‘Predicate,’ then, in this context, can very well stand for what a term denotes or connotes, which for our purposes is a genus.

Now, then, we can say that this coordination of genera goes according to a pattern of essential inclusion which extends from the lowest to the highest genera. By this Suárez seems to be saying that such categories as quantity or quality, for example, are not themselves genera, but ways in which genera are coordinated or arranged, as I have suggested. Still the matter is not quite clear, for there

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4 DM 39, 2, 30, p. 518b: “praedicamentum nihil aliud est quam debita dispositio et coordinatio essentialium praedicatorum, ex quibus ea, quae in quid praedicantur de individuo, supra illud in recta linea collocantur, ab inferioribus ad superiora ascendendo; haec autem linea sicut ab infimo, id est, ab individuo incipit, ita non terminatur nisi ad aliquod genus summum....” The use of ‘conveniens’ in the first text cited and of ‘debita’ here do not appear to be significant. In both cases Suárez has in mind a disposition which is appropriate for something to have in accordance with its essence or nature.
are at least two possible interpretations of what he says. In one way, he might have in mind that the category *quantity*, for example, establishes how *big* is related to *human being*, and the category *quality* establishes how *black* is related to *cat*. The emphasis on essential predicates, however, poses a problem for this interpretation, for *black* is not related essentially to *cat*. So what could Suárez mean, then? One could argue that he means to refer only to essential predicates, such as animal and rational for human. But this does not seem right in that it would be too restrictive. I think he has in mind that the categories are the ways in which genera are essentially constituted: Categories explain the ultimate kinds of things that genera are by relating lower genera to highest genera. Thus, after all, the category *quality* does tell us something about *red*, namely, that it is the kind of thing that is a quality, that is, that it adheres to an individual in a certain way.

Even if we accept this explanation, however, we are still lacking some key answers to our questions. For example, we still do not know where these dispositions and coordinations are located. Where is it that categories are to be found? Are they found in the world or in the mind? Are they relations among things or among concepts?

A third, most important text sheds some light on these issues. Suárez tells us:

> However, because mental concepts are about real things, and are founded on real things, [the logician also] treats of real things, although not to explain their essences and natures, but only in order to coordinate the concepts in the mind; and in this sense he deals with the ten [supreme] genera in order to establish the ten categories.⁵ (My emphasis)

Here Suárez is concerned to tell us something about the subject matter of logic, that is, the kinds of things with which the logician deals in his discipline. And what he tells us is that the logician deals with the ten highest genera in order to establish the ten categories. So, this makes clear where we are to find the ten categories. These are not genera themselves, not are they found in the world, rather they are located in the logician’s mind. Categories are dispositions in the logician’s mind that coordinate genera in the way described earlier. That is, these dispositions direct the logician to establish the ways in which lower genera are related to the highest genera, thus explaining what these lower genera ultimately are and how they are related to individuals. This is one very important point made clear by this text.

The second important point is a corollary of the first. It is that categories are mental in the sense that they are the ways in which we think of the relations among genera. The ontological status of categories, then, is mental, not extra mental or linguistic. For this reason, it is the logician who properly treats of categories, for categories are ways in which concepts are appropriately arranged in the mind. However, because these concepts reflect the ways things are outside the mind, that is, the natures and essences of things in the world, the logician also deals, albeit only indirectly, with natures and essences in order to be able to introduce the proper order among them in the mind.

There is also another byproduct of what has been said, and this applies to the highest genera. How are these to be conceived? From the cited text as well as from others, it is clear that for Suárez the highest genera are real in the sense that they are not mental entities. This is the reason why they are studied in metaphysics rather than logic, for the metaphysician deals directly with the ten supreme genera, not

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⁵ *DM* 39, 1, p. 504b: “Quia vero conceptus mentis circa res versantur, et in rebus fundantur, ideo de rebus tractat, non ut earum essentias et naturas declarat, sed solum in ordine ad conceptus mentis coordinandos; et hoc modo agit de decem generibus in ordine ad decem praedicamenta constituenda.”
with ways of arranging concepts in the mind. The purpose of metaphysics is to determine the essences of things and these are expressed by definitions which make reference to genera.

This brings us to the discipline under which the categories are studied. Suárez tells us that the division into nine genera (he is speaking of the accidental highest genera, although what he says applies also to substance), is proposed not only by metaphysicians, but also by logicians in treatises on categories. However, it properly belongs to first philosophy, that is, metaphysics, rather than logic. The reason is that, whereas the metaphysician studies the ten supreme genera in order to explain their natures and essences, the logician does not have this purpose. Logic is directed toward the operations of the mind, rather than toward natures and essences, and its purpose is to establish rational ways of thinking. Logic, then, deals with the concepts of the mind insofar as these concepts can be arranged in accordance with certain rules. Metaphysics, on the other hand, deals with real being.

**Summary of Suárez’s Position**

It seems that now we have the answer to some of the questions raised earlier. Suárez does not tell us anything about the first two questions concerned with the definition of categories and highest genera, and the reason is that he is aware of the problems we raised with respect to them. But what he says about categories appears to be sufficient to answer question (3) concerned with the ontological status of categories. His answer, as we saw, is that categories are mental dispositions whereby the logician coordinates the concepts that correspond to the relations between lower genera to the highest ones. About the highest genera, he only tells us that they are real, by which presumably in this context he means to say they are not mental. And this gives perhaps the answer to question (5): Categories are distinguished from highest genera in that categories are mental and the highest genera are not. But what kind of distinction is this, between mental and non-mental entities? I have no time here to elaborate on this point, but I believe it is a real distinction insofar as mental entities are considered by Suárez to be acts in the mind and as such are in reality distinct from whatever is outside the mind. Now, the answer to questions 7 and 8, concerned with the respective disciplines that study categories and the highest genera, is clear. Categories pertain to logic and the highest genera to metaphysics.

**Back to the Beginning**

Now that we have a summary of Suárez’s position with respect to categories and genera, we can go back to the issues raised at the very beginning: Can Suárez legitimately say what he says about categories and genera, in view of the difficulties raised at the outset? Can he balance the need to

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7 *DM* 39, 1, p. 504b: “Divisio haec non solum a metaphysico traditur, sed etiam a dialectico, in ea parte in qua de praedicamentis disputat; altiori tamen magisque exacta ratione ad primum philosophum pertinet, ut ex his, quae de objecto huius doctrinae diximus, constare potest. Dialecticus enim non considerat decem suprema entium genera, ut eorum naturas et essentias exacte declaret; id enim extra institutum ejus esset, cum dialectica solum sit quaedam ars dirigens operationes intellectus, ut artificiose et cum ratione exercantur. Unde directe ac per se agit de conceptibus mentis, ut dirigibiles sunt per artem, seu de forma et ordinatione conceptuum, quatenus per artem tribuit potest.” And also *DM* 39, 2, p. 505a: “At vero metaphysicus directe et ex proprio instituto hanc tradit divisionem, ut proprias rationes et essentias rerum inquirat.”
understand categories “scientifically,” that is, involving definition and ontological characterization, and his view of them as most general? And can he do the same with the highest genera?

With respect to categories, I see no difficulty, for Suárez claims that categories are concepts through which we think about the relations between lower genera and the highest genera. To say that they are concepts in this way avoids the difficulty identified earlier insofar as the ontological description, or even definition, of a category is not that of something like substance or quality, that is, of the highest genera. The ontological categorization of categories amounts to that of the concepts through which we think of these genera, and concepts are certainly not one of the highest genera. A concept can be, therefore, not only ontologically characterized, but also defined. And, indeed, there is precedence for this procedure (e.g., John Duns Scotus).

When we come to the highest genera, however, matters are quite different, and here Suárez remains silent, as he should. The only thing he tells us about them is that they are real in the sense of not being mental. But this does not create the difficulty mentioned earlier, for to say this is not to categorize them either ontologically or in a definition.

One last point in parting. From what has been said, it should be clear that one should be very careful in the characterization of Suárez’s view of categories. Strictly speaking, if the question asked is about Suárez’s view of categories, then it is clear that he thinks these are mental entities of the conceptual sort and, therefore, that he is a conceptualist to this extent. But if one asks what he thinks substance, quality, relation, and so on are, then his view is that they are both mental and non-mental insofar as these terms refer both to categories and genera. So he comes across as someone who has a comprehensive view of substance, quality, relation, and so on, in that he accepts that these can be both ways of thinking and ways of being. Of course, I am assuming that he would also say that there are words that correspond to these and thus that they are also ways of speaking.
William McMahon:

The Medieval Sufficientiae: Attempts at a Definitive Division of the Categories

Let me begin with a brief history of the discussion of this subject. A generation ago there was something known in Thomistic circles as a “transcendental deduction” of the Aristotelian categories (see Breton 1962, Wippel 1987). I first encountered it in the readings for a comprehensive exam at Notre Dame. It was a division of the categories according to principles which appeared to yield a complete list, with each member independent of the others. The textual basis was a passage in St. Thomas’ Commentary on the Metaphysics (1950: lect.9, 891-892).

A few years later I was teaching medieval philosophy, using the Shapiro text (1964: 266-293), in which there was a translation of Albert the Great’s Commentary on the Liber Sex Principiorum. The commentary contained a division of the categories similar to the one in St. Thomas. Still later, in 1981 I was doing a sabbatical in Copenhagen with Jan Pinborg and Sten Ebbesen. I asked them about this matter, and they showed me some more texts. Under their tutelage I edited Radulphus Brito’s treatment of the subject (McMahon 1981). We then noted that these “deductions” of the categories were known as sufficientiae. About the mid-80’s Robert Andrews, a student of Norman Kretzmann’s at Cornell, did a thesis consisting of an edition and translation of Peter of Auvergne’s Commentary on the Categories. Andrews found further sufficientiae and discussed them in detail. So to date the definitive treatment of the subject is in Andrews’ thesis (1988: 72-103).

Let me then sum up what we presently know about the sufficientia movement, raising what seem to be the interesting questions. For about 50 years, roughly 1260 to 1310, there was a strong interest in showing that there are ten and only ten categories. It appears to have begun with people like Albert and Thomas, is continued under those who are generally sympathetic to their philosophical outlook, and fades away with the ascendency of the terminist/nominalist movement.

So the first question is, who started this business, and why? We don’t really know the answers, but I originally posited some, and Andrews’ findings tend to confirm my speculations. My 1981 article takes note of sufficientiae by Albert (1890a: I, Ch.7; VI, Chs.1-2; 1890b: I, Chs. 1, 6), Thomas (1950:V, lect.9.891-892), Simon of Faversham (Ottaviano 1930: Q.XII, 274-275), and Radulphus Brito (McMahon 1981: 90-92). Subsequent research has added another one by Thomas (1954: III, lect.5.322; see also Wippel 1987), and ones by Peter of Auvergne (Andrews 1988: 381), Augustinus Triumphus (see Andrews 1988: 80), Walter Burley (1497: 18rA-B), and Peter Bradlay (Synan 1967: 290-291). There are quasi-sufficientiae in such works as the pseudo-Aquinas Summa Totius Logicae (1927: II, 19-21). And even in post-medieval thought, where Scholasticism carries on in such places as the Iberian peninsula, one finds discussions of the subject (e.g., Suarez 1960-66: V.Disp 39, Sec. 2.13-16, 717-720).

Let me try to place the medieval sufficientiae in a rough chronological order.¹

¹ Albert is the most difficult to date, as his commentaries are not ascribed to his period as an arts teacher, but rather to a later endeavor to do an encyclopedic treatment of Aristotle. Glorieux (1933: I, 67) gives the probable date of Albert’s Categories commentary as about 1262 and also provides material concerning the careers of the others. Weisheipl (1974:
Albert the Great—late 1250’s/early 1260’s, Thomas Aquinas—1270-72, Peter of Auvergne—c. 1275, Simon of Faversham—c. 1280, Augustinus Triumphus—1280’s?, Radulphus Brito—c. 1300, Peter Bradlay and Walter Burley—1300-1310. Regarding the question of who created the first sufficientia there is a pseudo-problem, generated by Thomists who are inclined to believe that all good ideas originated with the Angelic Doctor\(^2\). Suffice to say that they were unaware of Albert’s contribution to the subject. It seems certain that Albert’s are the earliest known medieval sufficientiae, and since he was Thomas’ teacher, it is probable that Thomas got the idea from Albert. In looking for common denominators among the sufficientiae (independently of content, which will be treated later), it is tempting to say that the movement is mainly among members of the Albert/Thomas “school”. However, labels are somewhat gratuitous, and as Roensch (1964: vii-ix) notes, “Thomist” has a loose meaning in the late 13th century. Furthermore, scores of arts masters commented on the Categories, and the logico-semantic issues therein have little to do, e.g., with whether someone holds that there are one or many substantial forms in human nature. Hence I cannot agree with van Steenbergen’s (1966:13) contention that such Aristotelian conceptions as “les categories … sont tout a fait etranges a un saint Augustin.”\(^3\)

There may be a clue to the origins question in Radulphus Brito (McMahon 1981:86-92). Radulphus distinguishes between the “expositio antiqua” and the “sufficientia Simplicii”. This suggests that the translation of Simplicius’ commentary on the Categories by William of Moerbeke in 1266 is a key event in our story (see A. Pattin in Simplicius 1971-75: I, xi-xxiii). Thomas, of course, was closely associated with Moerbeke, and Albert would at least have known of him through Thomas. (see Weisheipl 1974:148-153). The late Greek author Simplicius defended the ten-category system and answered neo-Platonic objections to it. His treatment and the word ‘sufficient’ therein may well be the source for the sufficientia movement. However, Albert’s divisions probably antedate the Moerbeke translation, so my guess is that Albert is either the source for the “expositio antiqua” or one of its leading exponents. That may derive in some way from the Liber Sex Principiorum (LSP) (Minio-Paluello 1966), a treatise erroneously ascribed to Gilbert de la Porree, which supplements Aristotle by dealing more extensively with the last six categories. In attempting to legitimize these categories, whose status had previously been somewhat shaky, the LSP would seem to have provided an impetus for strict adherence to a set of ten and only ten categories. Furthermore, the sufficientia era seems to coincide with the period in which it was fashionable to do commentaries on the LSP. Later, one notes, e.g., in Buridan (1983: 3.12.19), disdain for both. Let me speculate just a bit further by suggesting that there may be sources for Albert’s divisions in early 13th century treatments of the categories, many of which are not yet edited.

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375-376) states that Thomas’ Physics commentary was done in 1269-70, while James Doig (1972: 15) maintains that Book V of the Metaphysics was commented on in 1270-71.


\(^3\) Not only does Augustine’s De Magistro (1967: 20-33) manifest understanding of the categories, but also there was in the logic tradition a work entitled Categoriae Decem (or Paraphrasis Themistiana), which was erroneously ascribed to Augustine (see Minio-Paluello 1961: lxvii-xcv). It evidently comes from the school of Themistius in the late 4th century.

In attempting to reconstruct the motives for doing sufficientiae, one encounters some curious facts. First, authors aren’t always consistent; as we shall see, they sometimes present conflicting sufficientiae in their works, or distinctions in the divisions which are not employed in the substantive discussion of the categories. These considerations lead Robert Andrews (1988: 85) to surmise that “sufficientiae are to be considered as exercises in systematization and improvisation, and not as a source for theories of the categories.” So the question here is whether sufficientiae have more than aesthetic/cosmetic value. I think they do and would like to comment on this matter without getting too entangled in discussing the epistemic status of medieval theories. Obviously, people who posit sufficientiae believe in the sufficiency of the ten-category system. That this is true is given indirect support by the fact that opponents of the categories either ignore or debunk the sufficientiae. It is rather maddening that an author’s sufficientiae don’t always accord with his other statements about the categories, but there is usually a rough correlation, with some of the ideas in the sufficientiae being expanded on later. So in that sense sufficientiae have a status akin to that of “one liners”, but they don’t really amount to “throwaway comments.”

Furthermore, there is a sense of “science” (as meaning “knowledge” in a broad sense) here that fits the dividing of the categories. As suggested above, the idea of “knowledge” among the medievals is ambiguous, as they were fuzzy regarding the epistemic status of their views. They clearly saw that not all mainstream beliefs could be justified within a deductive science, and if pressed, would have had to concede that many theoretical statements did not even fall within a scientia quia, which argues probabilistically from facts to their explanations. There were other, less rigorous, notions of science floating about. One such is that of scientia divisiva, which is productive of knowledge by dividing a subject into its conceptual components. That may be what some were thinking of here, but there still remain a number of unanswered questions, such as those regarding the lack of overall coherence in some of the commentaries.

Turning now to the content of the sufficientiae, after the primary distinction of substance and accident the division of the accidents turns upon two main distinctions. The first is that between “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” accidents. The immediate source for this is the Liber Sex Principiorum (LSP), although more remotely, it can be said to be in Boethius (1918: 22-24). To explain the intrinsic-extrinsic distinction I shall invoke a formulation which was suggested to me many years ago by the late Jan Pinborg: The substance of a particular is an essential property, whereas the accidents are contingent properties. But the contingent properties appear to be further divided into “necessarily contingent” and “contingently contingent” items. Essential properties can be regarded as necessary for the concept of an individual, i.e., of what it is. Intrinsic accidents are not considered necessary in this sense but rather necessary for having an image or mental picture of a particular. That is, a full blown particular as depicted via an image must be extended and hence have some size and shape, and must have qualitative characteristics such as color. But the extrinsic properties would be even

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5 In addition to Buridan, cited above, Duns Scotus was skeptical about the categories (see 1997: 5.6.464; also comments of editors in 1997: xxvii-xxix and 1999: xxxix). In the place where one usually finds a sufficientia, the response to the question, “Utrum Sint Tantum Decem Genera Generalissima” (1999: 11.343-354), Scotus gives none, which I regard as significant.

6 E.g., Radulphus Brito’s Commentary on the LSP (Q.1, Ad.3, f.111vA35-40) says, “… triplex est scientia: Quaedam est collativa, et illa habet cognoscip per demonstrationem. Alia est definitiva, et illa habet cognoscip per definitionem. Tertia est divisiva, et illa habet cognoscip per divisionem… cuius non est demonstratio, illius non est scientia collativa. Tamen eius potest esse scientia definitiva vel divisiva. Et sic est de sex principiis, ipsa enim describuntur, et in species dividitur, ergo etc
contingent to the imagination, and therein lies their externality. Putting this in terms of modal logic and the semantics of possible worlds, one can say that essential properties (kinds) are necessary in the strictest sense. That is, a particular such as Socrates necessarily has an essence; necessarily, Socrates is human. He also necessarily has, as an observable physical object, certain accidents, quantitative and qualitative determinations. He necessarily (in all possible perceptual worlds) has some accidents belonging to the categories of quantity and quality, such as having a color, shape, and extension in three dimensions. But any specific accident within these categories, e.g., whiteness, being 5’6” tall, or being stout, would only belong to Socrates contingently. Furthermore, any properties within such categories as action, passion, when, or where would be “contingently contingent”. Hence it would not only be contingent whether he is walking, jostled by Alcibiades, or in the agora at a certain time, but it would also be contingent as to whether he is acting or acted upon per se, or whether he be located in space-time at all. In other words, he could be both conceived of and imagined as not being spatio-temporally located, and neither doing anything or being acted upon. Putting this yet another way, in current parlance, substance “supervenes” upon the accidents, and quantity and quality supervene upon the six principles.

Another way of looking at this is by means of the “onion metaphor”(see Adams 1985: 175). The innermost layers of a physical object, the core, is the substance. The intrinsic properties constitute the layer just beyond, while the extrinsic properties belong to the outer layers. In this format, however, the status of the category of relation is as yet undetermined. Breton (1962: 16) takes it as the median point between interiority and exteriority, using the appealing metaphor that “relation is the middle term of a kind of syllogism in action.” This introduces the second main distinction governing the sufficientiae—between relational and non-relational properties. For sufficientiae may be differentiated primarily in terms of how they treat relations, and medieval Aristotelianism provides three ways of treating them: (a) as intrinsic properties, (b) as extrinsic properties, and (c) as neither.

(a) This seems to be the mainstream, or “standard” approach. Given that Aristotle considers relation along with the intrinsic properties, and the LSP separates out the last six properties as extrinsic, the inference is that items in the category of relation must be intrinsic in some way. This seems to be the position alluded to by Radulphus Brito (McMahon 1981: 91-92) as the expositio antiqua. This is the scheme presented in Diagram 1, from Thomas’ Commentary on the Metaphysics (1950: V, lect.9.891-892). It also occurs in Simon of Faversham (Ottaviano 1930: Q.XII, 274-275), Peter Bradlay (Synan 1967: 290-291), Peter of Auvergne’s commentary on the Categories (Andrews 1988: 381), and is one of two presented by Walter Burley (1497: 18rA-B). For some unknown reason, Albert’s formulations aren’t quite as simple as this, although some remarks of his suggest this interpretation.7

Because relations are taken as monadic properties this approach incurs conceptual difficulties, which to some philosophers seemed insurmountable. That is, since it is difficult to say how relations are “in” a subject, some (e.g., Henry of Ghent 1961: VII, 2.259rD) were led to deny the reality of relations. Albert (1890a: IV, Ch.1) tries to finesse the point by saying relations have “some being”, but not as much as the absolute accidents.” The best discussion of the Thomistic position that I know

7 In his Categories commentary (1890a: VI,Ch.1) Albert divides the modes of predication into simple and non-simple ones, and then the simple into absolute and relative ones. However, there is an apparent contradiction in the text, as it is said that simple modes “praedicat res absolutas,” and it is suggested that relational predication is of that sort, but with the added qualification, “ut modus aliorum comparatus.” One thus wonders whether the author is confused or the text is corrupt.
of is in Henninger (1989: 17-25), who puts it this way: We can consider relations both in regard to their esse-in and their esse-ad. Relations are founded on the absolute accidents, and so the esse-in of a relation (being larger than) is identical with the accidental being of its foundation (a given quantitative property). But then we must account for the status of the relation’s esse-ad, i.e., whether it is real or merely conceptual, whether it is identical with or distinct from the esse-in. Henninger notes that for Aquinas the esse-ad of many relations is something real; hence the need for a distinctive category. But the distinction between, e.g., esse-in quantitatis and esse-in relationis is only conceptual.

(b) I myself doubt whether that is really satisfactory and hence find some of the alternative formulations more interesting. One of these would be that relations are extrinsic properties; a sufficientia to that effect can be found in Albert’s commentary on the *Categories* (1890a:I,Ch.7) (Diagram 2), where, as can be seen, relation is clearly among the extrinsic categories. Some accompanying remarks suggest that Albert takes it as the mode of relatedness simpliciter; along with action and passion it is a “simple mode” of relatedness, arising from the whole substance rather than just the matter or form alone.

This formulation raises the question of the relationship of the category of ad aliquid to the six principles. Albert sees (in a way in which Thomas evidently did not) that those six categories express modes of relatedness (dicuntur secundum aliquam modum ad alium se habere), but he still wants to regard relation as a separate category. If we don’t do that, then the suggested division of the categories is: substance, intrinsic accidents, and extrinsic relations. This would not, however, yield a ten-category sufficientia, but rather a system of four or nine categories. That is, either relation is a major category, with the other six subsumed under it as subcategories (species), or ‘relation’ is a catch-all term for the six genuine predicaments. This approach is of course what one finds in category-collapsers like Henry of Ghent (1961: VII,2.259rD; 1991: 88-91,94; see also Paulus 1938: 172-177).8

(c) But the constructors of sufficientiae are against collapsing categories into one another; their texts refute theories positing more or fewer categories than ten. Let us then look at the third possible kind of sufficientia, in which relations are neither intrinsic nor extrinsic, but in a class by themselves. This viewpoint has the virtue of being most appealing to modern logicians, in that it allows for treating relations differently from monadic predicates, i.e., as polyadic. Let me consider a couple of examples of sufficientiae which lend themselves to this interpretation, closing with some comments about Simplicius, whose approach seems to be closest to this one. In his LSP commentary (1890b: I, Ch.1, Ch.6) Albert gives a sufficientia (Diagram 3) which separates relations from the other categories. His accompanying commentary is again rather vague, as we are told that members of the category “frequenter per intrinseca nascitur”, or that they are often based on other genera or the things belonging to other genera. But his intentions may perhaps be clarified by looking at a couple of subsequent sufficientiae (Diagrams 4 and 5). The first occurs in Suarez (1960-66:V, Disp.39, Sec.2.16, 720), where it is labelled the “Scotist sufficientia”, although it is not in Scotus per se, and its origin is as yet unknown. The second is from Radulphus Brito. In addition to allocating a separate

8 Nevertheless, Henry (1991: 94-106), like Albert, wants to retain relation as an independent (conceptual, not real) category. His reasoning is that relation per se is founded on the absolute accidents of quantity and quality. This somehow makes it quasi-intrinsic, “being rooted in a completely absolute foundation” (Paulus 1938: 175). The six principles, however, are founded on motion, and are either aspects of it (actio, passio) or result from it (quando, ubi, situs, habitus) (Henry 1991: 96-99).
status to ad aliquid, these generate the six extrinsic relations by means of a threefold division, but the two divisions differ slightly. Both divide relations in terms of cause/effect and measure/measured, but one uses the part/whole relationship and the other containment, which result in putting the categories into different pigeon holes.

Now Radulphus (McMahon 1981: 91) claims that his sufficientia “concordat cum sufficientia Simplicii”, which is curious because it does not. As Andrews (1988:73-74, 86) points out, Simplicius (1971-75: I, 90-91) does provide a sufficientia (albeit a bit skimpy) where he comments on Aristotle’s initial listing of the ten categories in Chapter 4 (1941: 4. 1b25-2a4). Simplicius first differentiates existing things from potency and act, using the latter distinction to generate the categories of passion and action. Existentiae are then divided into substances and accidents, which are further divided into properties secundum habitudinem or sine habitudinem. Note that Simplicius does not employ the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction; what he does invoke is one between relational (according to a respect or habitudo) and non-relational properties. The latter are of course quantity and quality. Those involving habitudines are divided into what might be called relations simpliciter, which flow or change from one thing into another, and those which have a respect or relation to something other than an entity, such as a place or time or situation or surrounding.

So Simplicius does not take relations as intrinsic properties, and he does regard them differently from the other six categories. In those senses his outlook is similar to the third way of looking at the categories, while lacking the later refinements. Hence it is not clear whether authors of the later sufficientiae were actually influenced by Simplicius’ thoughts or whether they merely invoked him as an authority to justify what they wanted to say anyway.

As noted, while some were constructing sufficientiae, others were debunking them. The belief that the categories were essentially frivolous became amplified more and more so that by the time of Kant (1924: 67) they were commonly regarded as completely arbitrary. Today, however, it is arguable that the advocates of the categories were really on the right track, as recent work in lexical semantics (e.g., Frawley 1992) has resurrected the categorial distinctions and restored their honorific status. Some even claim that they are valid, not just for a thing-ontology viewed within the perspective of an Indo-European language, but even from the standpoint of any human language. That is, our conceptual framework is inevitably bound to distinguish physical objects, their monadic properties, actions, and relations. Regarding the latter, it is contended (see Jackendoff 1990: 23-24, 125ff.) that basic semantical fields include action and causation, spatial location and motion, scheduling of activities (or temporal location), and possession. And although one should be cautious about saying that there is a simple list of semantical primitives, it does seem reasonable to maintain that Aristotelians had unearthed most of the major ones.

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9 According to Simplicius (1971-75: I,91): “Eorum vero quae secundum habitudinem hae quidem dicuntur ‘prosantisrefunda’ (quasi ad aliquld contraversa), quas omnes continet ipsius ad aliquid praedicamentum...”

17
DIGRAM 2

22
REFERENCES


24

MANUSCRIPT

Stephen Theron:

Metaphysical Analogy

When treating of language and semantics in relation to a putative reality the question has been, what sort of access do we have to this reality, such that we might know and distinguish the real from the merely apparent, it being understood that such access is intellectual but yet dependent upon (sense-) experience and, for purposes both of reflection and of expression, language. The perspective shifts when we come to treat of analogy, since this is a notion, a real relation rather, which is instantiated both by words and by the things which words stand for, the one analogy indeed causing the other.

“The analogy of being”; this is a ready-made phrase, handed down from our philosophical past. It covers an analogy between the (acts of) being of the various individual beings in the world (though there is no reason to exclude entia rationis) but also an analogy between God (any possible God) and the world or creation as a whole. The analogy of being is thus itself an analogous concept, extending over analogous states of affairs. It refers indeed to a situation, a set of relationships, as not yet defined, so that no one need feel bound regarding previous positions about it, taken up by Cajetan, Suarez, Ramirez or McInerny, say. One only has to be sure, for purposes of communication, that one is not talking about something completely different, such as similarity or ontologism, not leaving analogy (or talking about analogy) for equivocation, that is to say. According to theology, just for starters, any intra-mundane relation whatsoever is more unlike than like the relation of God to creation. Nor are the analogies, it seems clear, between the actus essendi of any two created beings analogous to an equal degree, e.g. between two men or between a man and a hedgehog. John of St. Thomas, though within the Thomist school, seems to deny, in his Ars Logica, that there is analogy between the being of two intra-specific individuals.

Awareness of analogy follows upon the reflection that the (universal) nature or “form” as thought of, after “abstraction”, is in some sense a construction (by the active intellect). It is not found in things in this separated or “pure” condition, but alio modo, inseparable from concrete individuals. For nominalists and the like it is not found there at all, whereas the “moderate realists” will stress the instrumental role of the concept (or species) thus formed for achieving knowledge of the reality, even under its universal aspect, by its means. The inseparability entails that no individualized instance of the form will be the same, though we are forced to speak of it (or them) univocally. This is especially the case, one thinks, in regard to the being of things.

A large part of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, accordingly, is devoted to distinguishing “notions” as they are in themselves from notions as they exist in our thought of them. One might rather say natures than notions. This enterprise Kant wrote off as impossible, making his philosophical task that much simpler. It emerges, nonetheless, that notions logically (logikos) considered differ from the content of these notions as found in reality (physikos). For the mind has to form a (univocal) notion with which it can deal, that of body, for example. In reality, Aristotle seems to show, what most actively and effectively determines a thing to be what it is, right down through all its being, is the ultimate specific or even, in some philosophies, individual difference. This occurs of necessity just insofar as these

1 Aquinas, ST Ia 85, 2.
things are unities, and not, for example, a hierarchic bundle of forms idly reproducing in reality our minds’ abstractive way of taking things apart. So the ultimate difference modifies upon its own pattern the more general or generic nature. Hence Aquinas will say that our example, body, though treated as a univocal term by the logician (maybe), need or should not be so regarded in metaphysics (or in biology where this is concerned with capturing the real).

Thus a plant has a very different body from an animal, the bodies of dogs are canine, of horses equine, of humans human. Nor is there reason why being this or that individual horse or man will not have the same individualizing effect, as we might call it, upon the whole body. We human beings see the differences in our bodies as very personal, as we do our bodily pains (if we expect to find analogies between sense- and intellective cognition). This will remain true even if we refuse, with Aquinas, to equate individuality with any formal characteristic, be it a genetic code, the clothes one has on, fingerprints or the sum total of one’s life history.²

Each one of these individuals is and is in its own way, quite obviously,³ fundamentally unlike anything else along with which it might be classified. Everything is inalienable, down to the individual’s basic matter. This would mean, to remain consistent, that this too is determined, “formed” from above, inclusive of all the individual circumstances of dimensive quantity. There is thus a matter prior to that, equatable with sheer mutability or perishability, why not say potentiality, which is, we suggest, the condition for individualization. Quantity, that is, comes as an accident or property to substances, not to matter.

It is in relation to this individuality of real beings, in its irreducibility requiring analogy as transcending the identity of any meaning attaching to a plurality, that we need to see that being itself cannot be divided up. It has no parts, since it in no way forms a class or nature (but nor, of course, is it simply “the truth of a proposition”), in which anything participates in any usual sense of that term. Thus in existing we do not “participate” in the divine being, which is God’s own act most unique to himself, this otherness, it seems germane to mention, being the root of “the idea of the holy”. All the same our own act of being is ours alone too, giving rise to our sense of the private and inviolable (in our being, it is natural to say).

There are all manner of likenesses between things, but only because things are separate and individual in the way that this Aristotelian metaphysics makes clear. Species or genus, by contrast, are not beings, i.e. they are “beings of reason”, univocist mental constructs (not to be confused with “extensionalist” accounts of biological species as the collection of the relevant animals or beings, and Darwinism is certainly an explanation of a web of analogies with respect to causality).

So everything exists in its own way and this works backwards (or downwards) into accidents such as individual activities like sleeping or thinking. Whenever we consider sleeping univocally, as we must do when seeking the general characteristics of anything, then we have first abstracted it from the analogical and real context where your sleeping is not my sleeping. It becomes (is caused to be, rather) analogical in reality because of the primal analogy of being, or between beings.⁴ Yet being

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² Matter is the “principle” of individuation in the sense of its indispensable condition. See E. Gilson on this in The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy (New York 1940). Gilson refers to A. Forest’s interpretation.

³ Apparently, for St. Augustine, the distinguishing mark of a creature, as against God who non aliquo modo est, sed est, est... (Confessiones).

⁴ Even in thinking early modern epistemologists stressed possible unlikeness and a consequent mere analogy between different persons’ understandings of things or terms. This was clarified by the Frege-Wittgenstein distinctions between
itself cannot be abstracted to be considered on its own, univocally, because everything, inclusive of
the differences, is being. What we do abstract, when we start to think about being on its own, so to
say, is precisely its notion in our minds, a rather empty one when not assimilated to that of truth
(*veritas propositionis*) merely. One might speak here of “analogical sets” (Yves Simon).

When, as we indicated already, we start to look at our notions, and at their representation in our
language, we encounter not so much a second but less fundamental *level* of analogy as, rather, a
particular instance of a general (metaphysical) relation. Just because there are not as many words as
there are existing things so we need to have common names for similar but non-identical things and
ultimately for similar *types* of things,⁵ which is to say that words (naming concepts or “types”) will
have analogous meanings. The term “analogy”, however, is prior to that of “meaning”, since it
signifies likeness in unlikeness of thing or meaning (*significandum* or *significatio*, even *significans*)
indifferently within a “three-tier” semantics of word(s), mental representation and thing or *rés*.⁶

There is thus an analogy between analogy itself and *suppositio*. Just as one “name” can have different
but related meanings or *significationes* (analogy), so it can have different modes of signifying or
representing/denoting (the various kinds of *suppositio*). But here we say that the analogy of terms is
itself *univocal* (the use of the term “analogy” when speaking of an “analogy of terms”) with respect
to the analogies (inclusive of that of being) between things. Alternatively we can say that since all
analogies are analogous with one another there is no *further* analogy in the case of the analogy of
names. Names too are things (this, after all, is why in supposition theory a name can name itself).

Another way of putting this is to say that the *being* of logic can be thus ontologically considered⁷ as
well as can any other being, for truth too is a being, i.e. it is “something”. Names are entities as are
dogs or virtues. The only real division then would be between the analogy between finite created
things and the analogy between God and such creatures, a relation we might wish to call analogously
analogue.

It makes for clarity to bring out that analogy is thus differentiated in its object merely and not in its
sense. Likenesses of meaning, indeed, are often related to different relations of *causality* (i.e. as
producing analogy or likeness in unlikeness), the so-called prime analogate also acting as a prime
cause. This, the first meaning of whatever term is in question, signifies it as causing a related
meaning (by real causality) in something else, as health in healthy people produces healthy
complexions, though it is also by reference to them that what might cause their health (e.g. fruit) is
called healthy. The complexion, indeed, is a *sign* of health, even linguistically, precisely as caused by
it. The principle that like causes like, even under superficial unlikeness (hair dries, ice melts, in heat),
unites these allegedly two kinds of analogy, logical and metaphysical, as scientific language strives to
reflect the newly discovered common factors (of kinetic energy or natural selection).

Attempts to delimit this ubiquitous likeness in unlikeness have yielded accounts in terms of
“proportion” (between meanings) and “proportionality”, improper (mere metaphor) or proper, such
that one can reason over two analogates as middle term in a syllogism, e.g. from God’s and creation’s

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⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *De soph. el.* 165a 7-16.

⁶ The term “object” would be worse than useless here, contaminated as it is by its use in a history of attempts to replace
this scheme itself.

goodness. Clearly these are analogous terms only because they denote analogous realities, for which they stand and which they mean, suppositio and significatio being intimately related when considering denoting phrases. It is however within the significatio that the real analogy should be represented, as two related meanings causally connected though not exclusively so (as in Maimonides’s view of this example). The varieties of suppositio only begin where there is a basic unity of significatio which awareness of analogy both broadens and weakens.

So analogies dependent upon causality are not neatly separable as analogies “of attribution” only. The apple called healthy as causing health really is healthy as an apple, or it would not itself cause health, whatever we would say of the fermented or rotted ingredients of apple-cider. Composite food which is healthy as health-causing need not in logic consist always of naturally healthy ingredients. However, the causative property in such food must be related to a certain constant proportion of non-harmfulness to the human organism, so that even here mere attribution exceeds itself in an ontological direction. A more pure example of analogy of attribution might be the Friday we call (in English) “good”, though even here the causality of likeness is at work (meanings, simply, are not extended in disregard of things).

Analogy is in general the effect of the real world’s impinging upon our mental processes as indeed determining them in many respects. It is what leads us to use terms analogously and with varied suppositio or reference and indeed meaning. How far Aquinas, for example, may have treated this issue directly is not of principal interest, though we note with Gregory Rocca that “Aquinas can at times use the term analogia with an ontological sense that is not to be confused with his theory of analogous names” - not confused, but not held separate either. It is incidentally worth noting that Aristotle speaks in the Categories of synonymous things, things, that is, which bear the same name and, unlike homonymous things (sic), have the same notion. The Greek term for synonymity, as Gilson points out in his book on Scotus, is simply transliterated by the Latin univocitas, univoca, to which analogica, like equivoca, is proportioned, i.e. it is also rooted originally in a discussion of things and not words only.

* We pass now to the thesis of the necessarily analogous character of any created and, just as such, finite being in relation to any first and, just as such (though this requires demonstration), infinite principle. Such a “first cause”, says Aquinas, is “what all call God”. This dependence relation, as understood here, has nothing to do with any temporal beginning.

The question of the analogy, the impossibility of univocity (between God and the world), arises from understanding that what we may agree to call (the) divine reality cannot be added to; nor can there be anything else or independent for the divine to know (or be surprised by); nor could there be some change in this being corresponding to the new appearance of any created being, which hence can never, strictly speaking, be called newly created. In Aquinas’s terms, the creature is really related to a

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creator who can have no real relation to the creature (because the latter has no being that is “on all fours” with the divine being).\(^{10}\)

But if created being does not add more being to God, to reality, and yet is really being, in our terms, then (stepping outside those terms, from “notions” to “things”) it is analogous being. It is because for God too (or especially) it is analogous being only, that Aquinas astonishingly claims that God does not know creatures in themselves but in his idea(s) of them. This can only mean, or follow from the position, that creatures are not in themselves.

When dealing with the analogy of terms one proceeds in the opposite direction, from our created language as applied, it may be univocally, to things to our use of it when speaking of God, where it is then this second use that is analogous.

The infinite being, subject to no cause or any essence less than its own act of being and (as such) limiting it, is and has to be infinite in every respect. It has to be infinity itself, one must ultimately say, and judge, since there is no pre-existent measure against which God is found to be infinite (any more than “he” finds himself in existence). Like eternity, infinity is what he is, one with him.

This analogy, between God and the world, will not be the same metaphysically as analogies within the world. It will itself be analogous to them. Otherness between creatures is itself an analogue merely of that between creator and creation.\(^{11}\) A sign of this is the uniqueness of the linguistic problem in regard to God, that of which one otherwise indeed “cannot speak”. Univocal discourse does very well for much of our other transactions, even if it may lead us into a purely conceptualist world of inter-connected “representations” (“relational” theories of meaning) if we are not careful. So the idea of God, again (to “thematize” it), just is the idea of something ending such discourse, substituting either silence or analogy, where, for example, God is to his goodness as we to ours, even though his is not a separable property. This says more than that his goodness is the cause of ours, like causing like again. He is more truly good than we are.

It is fundamental to analogy to be found between two dissimilar things, the unlikeness in the case of God even being necessarily greater than any possible likeness. Analogy, then, is a different notion from similitude, as Aquinas takes for granted, saying

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\text{A creature’s likeness to God (is asserted) only by analogy, because God is essential existence, } \text{esse, whereas all other things are beings by participation.}\]

For Bonaventura, comments Gilson in his study of him, analogy and univocity appear to be species of similarity, but analogy is more usually seen in later thought, at least in scholasticism, as a (logical) variant on equivocity, a position for which support could be found in Aristotle. In this way metaphysical analogy fell more easily into the background, not being much adverted to in the micro-macrocosmic systems of Cusanus or Leibniz.

Analogy, all the same, can hold, does hold, where similarity holds as well, propter communicationem in forma, but supremely and more exclusively it holds between any two or more beings, just as

\(^{10}\) This notion is frontally attacked not only by atheists but by many (“process” or other) theologians, such as Hans Küng in his Existent Gott?, who fail, however, to show convincingly that they have appreciated the philosophical grounds for such a position, freed from a mist (as it can be) of inherited piety.

\(^{11}\) Hence the dialecticians have rightly seen that our materially based negations are not absolute. Cf. L. Elders, “The Origin of Negation”, Autour de saint Thomas d’Aquin I, Tabor, Paris 1987.

\(^{12}\) Aquinas, ST Ia 4, 3 ad 3um.
beings, rather than, say, between two animals or rabbits alike just as animals or rabbits. This is because there is no form of being in which two things can communicate. Being is not some supreme genus. Communicating in being, rather, is just what makes each one this being (and hence this animal and rabbit) and not that being. They do not communicate in an essence of being since being, esse, is understood in contradistinction to essence.\textsuperscript{13} Rather, each one has being entirely. Nothing shows this more clearly than the fact that the so-called analogy of inequality, as discussed by Cajetan for example, is expressly a matter of unequal participation in a nature or essence, not in being. In this sense at least being is not participated.

There are indeed claimed to be degrees of being, of more or less, but each thing is absolutely a being, as it is not, for example, absolutely hot, even if it is not the absolute being either. For this absoluteness is just what is participated in if one can be said, by analogy indeed, to participate in being. Only in consequence is a thing then absolutely a rabbit in a similar sense. There is a democracy among rabbits as among beings, but whereas each rabbit exemplifies the species each being is being and not just a being, even though enumerable substance be identified by Aristotle with being since substance, too, does not admit of more or less. Everything is perfectly a substance, but among substances there are grades, inequalities, of perfection.

A thing’s being is that thing’s most intimate and individual act, that which it cannot share with anything else. It is in virtue of their acts of being that two things are two and not one. There is, in this view, no form making one an individual, even if there could be one making one to be this individual and not another. Such a form though, like that of the “separated substances”, would need its own act of being to begin at all.

A real and an imagined animal may have rabbithood in common (an imagined animal should not be confused with a portrait of a real or imagined animal), but there is, in this case, only one rabbit. What makes a real rabbit is its esse, perfectio perfectionem, not its rabbithood. This latter actually limits its being, Aquinas argues. Thus knowledge, cognition, appears as a way of overcoming this limitation. The “spiritual” being is able itself to have the form of the other as other, i.e. intentionally, in anima, which is thus open to becoming in that sense all things (\textit{quodammodo omnia}).

The reality of knowing helps one to see that being is not parcelled out. Parmenides was thus far right, though he need not have denied the world of multiplicity in consequence. At a concert each individual hears the full symphony without taking from the others. This aspect comes to the fore in the ontologies of Cusanus and Leibniz, mentioned above, exemplifying the metaphysical analogy they scarcely mention. Each thing mirrors everything else rather, even contains it, according to its mode. Aquinas speaks of a sympathy uniting all things, as the analogy founded upon their otherness draws them together. If they did not have separate acts of being, which accordingly, to achieve plurality, have to be analogous, then they would coalesce into one substance, as with Spinoza.

Analogy, that is, is the condition for plurality of beings, or, hence, plurality of just anything. It is a better candidate for this than is matter, that pure potentiality, potential being in fact, which Aquinas gives as an example, along with the human soul, of created necessary being,\textsuperscript{14} in the sense of

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{13}] This presumably is why Scotus wrote that he did not know, “nescio”, what it was, knew of no such act of being, other than the act of the essence itself.
  \item[\textsuperscript{14}] Cf. Patterson Brown, “St. Thomas Doctrine of Necessary Being” in \textit{Aquinas} (ed. A. Kenny), Macmillan, London 1969, pp.15-175; Aquinas, ST Ia 104, 4: “Matter… is incorruptible, since it is the subject of generation and corruption.”
\end{itemize}
something imperishable. Yet imperishable *materia prima* itself posits perishability, change, essentially, as a principle of it. That is what it is, prior to the advent to it of the accident of quantity.

God may have created matter, by free choice, but not the possibility of analogous being, since this is intrinsic to his creative omnipotence, able to create being other than itself. Matter itself is maybe his most distant analogy, as time images eternity. It must then be analogy, and not the matter, i.e. the potentiality which is a condition for it (and hence *principium individuationis*), which makes possible a plurality without which the accident of quantity is not to be thought, all accidents of course being accidents of *substance* and not of pure matter. With quantity, and not before, come space and time. Thus it is that the analogy of being, the truth of it, is the first condition for finite beings. It is not just that being is said in many ways but that being can be in many ways. *Analogia entis* is no more than that. On this conception extension belongs to the limitations imposed by essence and is not a property of matter in itself. It is not the matter which is extended but things themselves and, to some degree, the particles composing them.

We mentioned that it is because our own merely analogous being is out of all proportion to the one infinite and hence uncreated act of being (it is created being which each substance possesses absolutely, as described above) that Aquinas considers that God knows us and all things in his own ideas of them. Each of these ideas, if he has them, must be one with his eternal and simple being. This being does not know us as we are in ourselves, i.e. we *are* not primarily in ourselves but in God.\(^15\) Now if the idea of each of us, like any divine idea, is one with God’s infinitely simple being then a continuity of Aquinas with Cusanus, Leibniz, Eckhart and even much in later idealism is undeniable, such as those calling themselves transcendental Thomists have been anxious to spell out according to their lights. If our idea is one with God’s being then, undeniably, we have our being there where he knows us (“in him we... have our being” writes even the apostle Paul). God’s very knowledge, Aquinas will insist, is the principle of all that we are, suffer and do, including our free actions, of which God is immediate mover, thus making them free (free of secondary causality in the first place). Having an intellect *means* being immediately moved by God; hence Aristotle said that intellect “comes from outside”.

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But we are not simply retailing Aquinas here. A study of Cajetan’s essay on analogy (of names) will show that he too does not just retail but seeks to extend or build upon and maybe systematize what Aquinas had to say\(^16\) on the matter, at times working on mere hints (even more the case with Aristotle). It is futile though to fault him upon real or fancied divergences from Aquinas which could well be deliberate. He, like we, was concerned with truth, not philosophical history; thus he was content to use the language in vogue among his opponents.

It is anyhow significant that Cajetan wrote a special treatise upon the topic, the topic, that is to say, of the semantics of analogy, as is clear from his title, rather than our topic here of metaphysical analogy. Of course for him, unlike some later logicians, it was essential for logic, and therefore for semantics,

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16 *I Sent.* 19, 5, 2 ad 1um; *de Pot.* 7,7; *de Ver.* 21, 4c ad 30; *Comm.* I Eth., lect. 7. The recent study by Joshua Hochschild shows indeed how Cajetan does much more than this, providing a formally semantic account of analogy.
to have the *intentio* of truth, and therefore of reality, but only and precisely as intended in our language and formal categories. He was not anyhow writing a commentary of any kind.¹⁷

Regarding Scotists speaking of “being” as a transcendental univocal term (not prescinding from its differences) as distinct from a universal univocal term (prescinding in the usual way), we might wonder if one can pass from term to reality with these categories. In historical perspective this Scotist move might seem more a logical than a metaphysical decision; Scotus does not give more independent weight to created being over against God than does Aquinas. Still, the being from which such a term would not prescind is not just being over again but that unique act of being which each thing has along with its individual difference. If there is such a prime *actus* to a thing’s actuality apart from that given by the form (which Scotus denied) then such “transcendental” being has to be analogical.

The scholastics developed all manner of criss-cross classifications for analogy, which increasingly interested them most under its logico-linguistic aspect, and sorting these out has become quite an industry. We argued though that this is more a difference of object than a type of analogy. Thus metaphysical analogy seems near enough to Cajetan’s analogy of proper proportionality in so far as this might be in things and not in names alone. All beings, that is, exist in a similar relation to their being which is yet intrinsically various (since they are many beings). Being is not a genus determined as to its members by differences extrinsic to it; not that each thing participates being but each thing *is* being. Only the essence or nature, individualized or “separated”, limits this being, the thing’s most intimate act upon which all others depend. This situation is somewhat general, extending to being red, for example, as opposed to mere redness. Anything red is entirely red or, rather, absolutely is red. It does not merely “participate in redness”. Redness is not a “whole” and so is not existent. Hence the divine idea of red is not the abstract predicate redness.

Being, again, is not parcelled out. We might rather think of degrees of being, of, in *this* sense, participation in the One. The more lowly the less intensely the thing is, the more vulnerable to non-being. Hence cognition, the power, is an access of being to a thing as overcoming its limitation by and to its own essence.

Someone might ask, why cannot there be many beings without analogy, just as there are many other things? This is to forget that there are no things which are not beings, which is why “This is red” says so much more than “This is a member of the class of red things”. Analogy of being is the fact and precondition of any plurality at all.

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¹⁷ Gilson’s influential critique (*Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 1953) on these scores has been found mistaken by several scholars.
Gyula Klima:

Thomas Sutton and Henry of Ghent on the Analogy of Being

Introduction: ontological intuition and semantics

In an earlier paper, I compared Thomas Sutton’s and Henry of Ghent’s contrasting views on human nature, as grounded in their equally contrasting views on the relationship between essence and existence. That is to say, in that paper I attempted to reduce their anthropological differences to differences in their metaphysical principles. In this paper I will attempt to dig further to the roots of their disagreements, trying to establish those primary logical-semantic differences that may have motivated their conflicting intuitions concerning these metaphysical principles. In doing so I believe I am following Aristotle’s advice in the Metaphysics, according to which disagreements concerning metaphysical principles—since they cannot be demonstrated from prior principles—have to be settled with reference to the significations of the terms they involve, that is to say, with reference to semantic principles.

To be sure, this is not to say that metaphysical principles are to be derived from, or somehow justified in a weaker sense on the basis of, semantic principles. Metaphysical principles, being first principles using the most general terms, such as the transcendentals and the categories, cannot be derived from prior principles, and their terms cannot be defined on the basis of more general terms. What semantics can do, however, is that it can provide the principles of interpretation of metaphysical principles. On the basis of these principles of interpretation the implications of metaphysical principles are more clearly delineated, which then can be used in their evaluation in dialectical disputations concerning their acceptability in the interpretations thus clarified. Furthermore, if the semantic principles of interpretation are made explicit, they can also be subject to further evaluation, in a disputation on a different level, the sort appropriate to the comparison of different logical theories.

In the particular case of Henry’s and Sutton’s disagreement, the most striking difference I have found in their metaphysical intuitions is that while according to Sutton the assumption that a thing’s essence is really identical with its actual existence entails that the thing in question has to be God, since in


2 Cf.: “Philosophus in IV Metaphysicae, in disputacione contra negantes principia docet incipere a significacione nominum.” Aquinas, in PA lb. 1, lc. 2, n. 5.

3 This sort of enterprise is pretty much like the scenario in which two players start playing a game according to partially overlapping rules. At first they may not even notice that they are not playing exactly the same game until one makes a move that the other deems illegitimate. At that point they have to start disputing the rules, which is a contest radically different from the one involved in the game itself. It is usually at this point that people tend to lose their patience and either resort to violence or give up on the game and isolate themselves to keep the peace. These typical and understandable emotional reactions, however, need not be the only possibilities. An investigation into the grounds for holding this or that set of partial rules may still yield a mutually acceptable compromise.
that case the existence in question has to be unlimited, for Henry this implication is not valid. According to him, just because an essence is identical with its existence it does not follow that this existence is unlimited, for if it is identical with a limited essence, then, precisely for that reason, it must be limited too. Accordingly, while Henry thinks he can consistently maintain the real identity of essence and existence in creatures, Sutton uses what he takes to be the absurd implication of Henry’s claim (namely, that a creature would be God) to reject this claim. So, the question naturally arises: what accounts for these radically different logical intuitions concerning the same metaphysical claim? What is it in the interpretation of the claim that a creature’s essence is identical with its existence that accounts for Sutton’s intuition that this claim would entail that the existence of the creature would be unlimited, and Henry’s opposite intuition that this entailment does not hold?

Both authors agree that what distinguishes created existence from uncreated existence is the participation of the former in the latter. They both agree that what accounts for this participation is the limitation that creaturely essence imposes upon the perfection of the existence that realizes this essence. How is it possible, then, that on the basis of so much agreement they have diametrically opposed intuitions as to what follows from the assumption of the identity of essence and existence?

Before attempting to provide an answer to this particular question, I first have to recapitulate some details of Henry’s and Sutton’s respective metaphysical positions. Then I will try to find the clue of their conflicting metaphysical intuitions in their semantic conception concerning the relationship between the notions of being and essence. Having identified the differences in their semantic conceptions, I will show how these differences provide the answer to our particular question.

**Henry’s and Sutton’s metaphysical principles concerning essence and existence**

Concerning creaturely essences, Henry and Sutton share a common Avicennean platform. In particular, they would both endorse the following two principles:

1. A form or essence of any creature, considered in itself, is indifferent to existence and non-existence and to unity or multiplicity.\(^4\)

2. Nevertheless, such a form is multiplicable in actual existence only if there is something to distinguish one of its instances from another.\(^5\)

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\(\text{4}\) It must be added here that, according to Henry, just the opposite is true in the case of divine essence: “Nulla ergo essentia creaturae, ratione ea qua essentia est, habet rationem suppositi aut actualiter subsistentis. Ita quod nulla earum, quantum est ex se, de se sit singularitas quaedam, nullaque earum, sicut neque effective, sic nec formaliter est suum esse sive sua existentia, sed hoc est privilegium solius essentiae divinae quod ipsa ex se formaliter sit singularitas quaedam et idem in eo sunt essentia et existentia.”, HQDL 2. q. 8, p. 39. (Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet II*, Leuven 1983. Henceforth: HQDL 2. In general, Henry’s *Quodlibeta* are going to be referred to by this abbreviation followed by the number of the quodlibet in question. Page numbers refer to the pagination of the edition of Henry’s *Opera Omnia* published in the Ancient and Medieval Philosophy series (Series 2) of the De-Wulf Mansion Centre.) Importantly, this principle seems to be shared by Sutton, as part of the “common stock” of principles deriving from Avicenna.

\(\text{5}\) Again, this principle is also shared by Sutton. Indeed, he presents for it a brief argument in QORD q. 27, p. 749. (Thomas of Sutton, *Quaestiones ordinariae*, München 1977. Henceforth: QORD.) But then he goes on to use this same principle to prove the opposite conclusion, namely, that it is impossible for angels to be multiplied in the same species, for it is only designated matter that can be the distinctive constituent required for numerical distinctness within the same species, but angels cannot have matter, whence they cannot be thus distinguished. Of course, the question is whether Sutton manages to establish that it is only designated matter that can play this distinctive role.
However, Henry and Sutton disagree on exactly what may distinguish creaturely essences from each other in their actual existence and how. The essences of creatures may differ in their actual existence numerically or specifically. For both Henry and Sutton, specific difference is a difference in form, in the sense that specifically distinct individuals cannot have the same specific nature in the absolute consideration of their natures, whereas merely numerically distinct individuals do have the same specific nature in the absolute consideration of this nature.

However, for Henry, the same specific nature can be multiplied in distinct singulars simply on account of the distinctness of their acts of existence: one singular entity is distinct from another in the same species just because the one realizes the same absolute nature in this act of existence and the other in that.

So, the primary cause of the individuation of a created nature is God’s creative act producing a singular creature of that nature, whose act of being is nothing but its being created by God, and it is the singularity of this act which determines the otherwise common nature of the creature in question to be had by this singular entity as opposed to that, in which the same nature would be realized in a numerically distinct act of existence. As he says, concluding his discussion of the individuation of two angels:

“… therefore, the first and efficient cause of their individuation is to be said to be God, who gives subsistence to both separately in effect.”

However, according to Henry, the act of existence which sets apart one individual of a created nature from another cannot be regarded as a distinct thing added to the nature in question; rather it has to be something merely intentionally distinct from the essence to which it is added. As he says:

“But such an addition can be understood to be diverse from the thing or essence itself either really or merely intentionally. But a separate immaterial essence cannot be distinguished by means of the first sort of addition, whether it is substantial or accidental. Not by the addition of something substantial, for that would have to be either matter or form; but this cannot be, for here by our assumption we are considering immaterial and specific essences, under which there is no more specific substantial form and to which no matter is subjected. Nor could such an essence be diverse from another by some accidental [feature], for neither by some specifically nor by some numerically different [accident]. [It could] not [differ] by some specifically different [accident], for specifically the same substantial essence, as far as the nature of the species is concerned, necessarily gives rise to specifically the same accidents: for to the same, insofar as it is the same, the same is apt to belong. [And it could] not [differ] by some merely numerically different [accident], for any substance that receives accidents in itself has to subsist earlier (and so it has to be individuated earlier) than it can become the subject of something else ... And so the multiplication of an immaterial essence can in no way be understood to take place by means of the addition of some really distinct thing. Therefore, it can come about only by means of the addition of something merely intentionally distinct.”

6 “... ideo causa individuationis eorum prima et efficientis dicendus est Deus, qui dat utrique eorum subsistentiam in effectu et seorsum. “ HQDL 2, q.8, p. 51.

7 “Sed tale additum potest intelligi diversum ab essentia ipsa vel re, vel intentione tantum. Additione diversi primo modo non continget essentiam separatam immaterialem numero distinguiri, quia neque per diversum additum substantiale neque accidentale. Non per substantiale, quia illud non posset esse nisi materia aut forma, quod quidem non potest fieri, quia per positionem haec essentia est immaterialis et specifica, sub quae non est exterior forma substantialis et cui non est materia subjecta. Neque per accidentale diversum hinc inde, quia neque per diversum specie neque per diversum numero. Non per diversum specie, quia ad eandem essentiam substantiale specie necessario sequuntur, quantum est ex ratione...
Henry explains in more detail how he conceives of the intentional distinction between essence and existence in creatures in question 9 of his first Quodlibet. Although the notion of intentional distinction is difficult to capture (indeed, according to Sutton it is downright inconsistent)\(^8\), Henry’s idea here seems to be that we have to assume this type of distinction whenever one and the same absolute thing is also inherently related to something else, whence the same absolute thing, on account of its own nature, also has to be conceived in terms of a relational concept or intention. Therefore, since all created essences exist only insofar as they are created and kept in existence by God (whence in their actual existence they are inherently related to God), and, in virtue of the previous argument, their existence cannot be another thing added to them, a created essence and its existence (that is, its being created by God) also have to be regarded as intentionally distinct, although they are one and the same thing when the essence is produced in actual existence. As Henry explains:

“… we should not imagine the essence of a creature as it were something like the air that is indifferent to dark and light, but rather as a ray of light capable of subsisting by itself, produced by the sun not by necessity but by free will. Therefore, if the sun were able to produce by free will a light ray capable of subsisting, that light ray, as far as itself and its own nature are concerned, would be indifferent to being and non-being, and of its own it would be nothing. On the part of the sun, however, it could receive being in itself, and would receive it when it would be produced in effect by the sun, and this light ray would be made, and would stand in itself, as light by its essence, and a similitude of sunlight, thereby participating in the light of the sun. And so that light ray would be a certain participation of the sunlight by and in its essence, and not by something added to its essence received in it, and really different from it, as the light received in air differs from the air. And what goes for this light ray of the sun, which participates in the light of the sun in that it is, being in its essence the sun’s similitude, the same goes for a creature and God, insofar as the creature participates in God’s being insofar as it is in its essence a similitude of God, just as the imprint of a stamp, if it subsisted outside of the wax, it would be a similitude of the stamp in its essence, not by reason of something added to it. And thus in any creature its being is not a thing other than its essence, added to it so that it can exist. Rather, its essence itself, by reason of which any creature is what it is, has being insofar as it is an effect and similitude of divine being, as we have said.\(^9\)”

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9 “Non enim debet imaginari creaturae essentia sicut aer indifferentem ad obscuritatem et luminositatem, sed sicut radius quidam in se natus subsistere, a sole producere non necessitate naturae sed libera voluntate. Unde, si sol libera voluntate posset radium per se subsistentem producere, radius ille, quantum est de se et natura sua, indifferentem esset ad esse et non esse, et quantum esset de se, esset non ens quoddam. Quantum autem est ex parte solis, posset esse in se recipere et recipere cum fieret in effectu a sole, et esset ille radius factus et stans in se, lumen quoddam secundum suam essentiam, et similitudo lucis solaris, participans per hoc ipsa luce solis. Et ita esset ille radius quaedam participatio lucis solaris per suam essentiam et in sua essentia, non per aliquid additum suae essentiae receptum in ipsa, re differens ab ipsa, sicut lumen receptum in aer differt ab ipso. Et sicut est de isto radio lucis et luce solis, quod participat luce solis in eo quod est, in sua essentia existens, quaedam eius similitudo, sic est de creatura et Deo. Quod ipsa participat esse Dei in eo quod est in sua essentia quaedam diviniti esse similimito, sicut imago sigilli, si esset in se subsistent extra ceram, in sua essentia esset quaedam simililitudo sigilli, non per aliquid additum ei. Et sic in quacumque creatura esse non est aliquid re aliud ab
So much for Henry’s position. Sutton, while sharing the starting points of Henry’s conception, very clearly sees where he has to part company with Henry. He opposes Henry’s conception not only in its conclusion concerning the possibility of identity of being and essence in creatures, but also concerning the very idea of how the participation of being in creatures is to be construed:

“… essence participates being not in such a manner that it would have being limited by a difference contracting being to the constitution of essence which would include being in its notion, so that it would be said to partake in being because it would take a part of being, for [being] is of its essence, which is limited, just as the species partakes in the genus. But it is necessary that what has essence participate in being in such a way that it does not receive the entire perfection of being, but only a part, insofar as being is limited by the essence in which it is received; and this essence is limited to a determinate genus and species. And being is limited by essence in this way, just as the form of horse is limited by its being received in matter, as in a susceptible participant. For it is in this way that act is participated by potency, and what is participated in this way is really different from what participates and is not included in the notion of the latter. It is clear, therefore, that they are wrong who say that essence participates in being in such a way that the essence caused receives from God itself including its being, so that its being is part with respect to the divine being, and that it does not receive anything other than itself in reality, but between the recipient and what is received there is only a relation of reason, whereas between the recipient and God from whom it receives there is a real relation. This position is erroneous, for it entails several absurdities, as we have said, if it is assumed that essence participates being in such a way that being is included in its notion; for then it follows that nothing is caused in the nature of things, and that everything is eternal.”

The contrast between these conceptions is brought out by Sutton in a particularly vivid manner in his Tractatus de esse et essentia, where he uses the analogy of the sun and its light, which was also used by Henry in his description of his own conception:

“… some people … say that being does not posit any absolute thing in an essence or over and above the essence, but rather it is really identical with it, beside the fact that it adds a certain relation to the creator, insofar as the essence is in effect. To support this claim, he distinguishes between two sorts of being, namely, the being of essence and the being of actual existence. The being of essence is

ipsa essentia, additum ei ut sit. Immo ipsa sua essentia, qua est id quod est quaelibet creatura, habet esse in quantum ipsa est effectus et similitudo divini esse, ut dictum est.”  HQDL 1, q. 9.

10 HQDL 10 q. 7; HQDL 11 q. 3.

11 “… essentia non sic participat esse, quod habeat esse limitatum per differentiam contrahentem esse ad constitutendum essentiam, de cuius intellectu sit esse, ut ideo dicatur participare esse, id est partem eius capere, quia est de essentia eius quae est limitata, sicut species participat genus. Sed oportet quod habens essentiam sic participet esse, quia capitis non totam perfectionem essendi, sed partem, in quantum esse limitatur per essentiam in qua suscipitur; quae essentia est limitata ad genus determinatum et ad speciem. Et sic limitatur esse per essentiam, sicut forma equi limitatur per hoc, quod recipitur in materia tamquam in susceptivo participante. Isto enim modo actus participatur a potenti, et isto modo participatum realiter differt a participante et non est de intellectu ipsius. Unde patet quod male dicunt, qui ponunt essentiam participare esse sic, quod essentia causata capitis adeo se ipsum includentem esse, quod esse est pars respectu esse divini, et quod non capitis alium a se secundum rem, sed quod est inter cipientis et captus rationis tantum, sed quod inter cipientis et deum quod capite est relatio realis. Istud dictum est erroneum, quia sequuntur multa inconveniencia, ut dictum est, si ponatur quod essentia sic participet esse, quod esse sit de suo intellectu; sequitur scilicet quod nihil sit causatum in rerum natura et quod omnia sint aeterna.” QORD q. 26, p. 730. Cf. also “…falsa est imaginatio, qua aliqui imaginantur quod per creationem esse imprimatur essentiae, sicut per generationem forma imprimitur materiae. Sed vera imaginatio est quod tam essentia quam esse producuntur per creationem; essentia scilicet determinati generis participans esse ab esse separato, quia alio modo esse multiplicari non potest nisi per diversa participantia. Unde ponere essentiam non differre ab esse, est ponere tantum unum ens quod est esse separatum, ita quod nihil aliud habeat esse.” QDL 3, q. 8, pp. 396-397. (Thomas of Sutton, Quodlibeta, München 1969, Henceforth: QDL.)

12 Cf. text quoted at n. 9.
nothing but the essence having its idea in God, and this is the being that is signified by the definition [of the thing] for the definition signifies that which is for the thing to be what it is. The being of actual existence, however, is the very same being, only it adds the relation of dependence on the producer of the thing, insofar as the thing is actually produced in effect, so that the essence of the thing is said to be insofar as it is created or insofar as it is the effect of the creator, and not on account of a thing added to it. Accordingly, it is said that any creature participates being insofar as it is a similitude expressed in effect by God; just as if the sun produced a light ray by will, the ray produced in this way would be a similitude of the sun without the addition of another thing, in the same way, they say, a creature voluntarily produced by God participates in divine being not because of the addition of something representing a thing other than the essence. We should not imagine, therefore, that essence would participate in being as if it were some substrate of being itself, so that being would be something informing and perfecting the essence of the creature, just as form perfects matter subjected to it, for this imagination is false; thus, he concludes that being is the same as essence, adding only the previously mentioned relation 13."
As can be seen, Sutton here sharply contrasts two fundamentally different conceptions as to how being can be said to be participated. According to Henry of Ghent’s “Augustinian” theory, participating in existence is nothing but being just a “fragmentary” act of existence meted out directly by the divine will to the capacity of a creature, which is determined by the creature’s idea in the mind of God. Accordingly, the realization of these ideas is nothing but their participation in divine being, which, in turn, is just the act of their being created, an inherently relational act, merely intentionally distinct from the individual instances of the nature it realizes.

An important consequence of this conception is that the real identity along with the mere intentional distinction between an essence and its actual existence does not entail that this essence/existence has to be the unlimited act of divine existence/essence. An act of created existence is a directly and per se delimited act, insofar as it is a singular realization of a per se limited essence, different from any other essence on account of their per se opposite differences.

By contrast, on Sutton’s conception, the participation of being by a creaturely nature is not to be identified with the intrinsic per se limitations of this nature, which itself would be a limited act of existence as soon as God realizes it in creating an individual of that nature. For Sutton, what effects the limitation of the act of existence of a creaturely essence, namely, the essence in question itself, has to be receptive of this act of existence, for if it were not receptive of it, but were identical with it, then it could not delimit it, for nothing delimits itself.

On this conception of participation, therefore, creaturely existence is but a “dimmed” or “toned-down” version of what existence itself would be, were it not for the receptive, delimiting factor that simply cannot receive more of it, precisely in the way in which the colored pieces of glass in a stained glass window can only receive part of the fullness of bright white light. So, putting the point in non-metaphoric terms, Sutton’s point seems to be that what is truly and primarily existence has to be unlimited in itself, and what has existence only in a secondary, derivative way has to have it as a result of the limitation imposed upon this act of existence by the limited essence of the thing. Accordingly, we cannot say that the thing that has existence in this limited way is even something that truly exists. It only exists with some qualification, insofar as its existence is the actualization of its limited nature. So, for such a thing to be is not really and truly to exist without any qualification, since for such a thing to be is just for it to be actual in respect of its limited essence. But being actual in some respect is not being or existing simpliciter, but rather just being or existing secundum quid, as is clear when we compare the being of substance with the being of accident.

But from this remark it should be obvious that on Sutton’s Thomistic conception of the participation of being there is a necessary conceptual connection between the idea of the participation of being and that of analogical predication of being, which does not seem to be integral in the same way to Henry’s conception.
The participation, analogy, and predication of being

So what is this necessary conceptual connection in the Thomistic theory between participation and analogy that is not present in Henry’s “Augustinian” theory?

After all, Henry also insists that the concept of being is analogical, that there is no one real common concept whereby we could comprehend both God and creatures, and this is so precisely because of the infinite distance between participated, created being, and non-participated, uncreated being. So what is it that distinguishes Henry’s conception in such a way that it allows the real identity of creaturely essence and existence, which Sutton’s conception excludes?

My suggestion is that the clue to the answer lies in the difference between the ways Sutton and Henry conceive of how the various analogically related concepts of being are determined by the concepts of different essences, be they created or uncreated, or substantial or accidental.

In fact, the distinctive idea of Sutton’s Thomistic conception is very clearly stated by Aquinas himself in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*:

> …. being cannot be narrowed down to something definite in the way in which a genus is narrowed down to a species by means of differences. For since a difference does not participate in a genus, it lies outside the essence of a genus. But there could be nothing outside the essence of being which could constitute a particular species of being by adding to being; for what is outside of being is nothing, and cannot be a difference. Hence in book III of this work (see n. 433) the Philosopher proved that being cannot be a genus. Being must then be narrowed down to diverse genera on the basis of a different mode of predication, which flows from a different mode of being; for ‘being [esse] is signified,’ i.e., something is signified to be, ‘in just as many ways as something is said to be a being [ens dicitur],’ that is, in as many ways as something is predicated. And for this reason the first divisions of being are called predicaments [i.e., categories], because they are distinguished on the basis of different ways of predicating. Therefore, since some predicates signify what [something is], i.e., substance; others of what something is like, [i.e., quality]; and yet others how much [something is, i.e., quantity]; and so on; it is necessary that for each mode of predication, being should signify the same [mode of being]. For example, when it is said that a man is an animal, ‘is’ signifies [the mode of being of] substance; and when it is said that a man is white, is signifies [the mode of being of] quality; and so on.\(^1\)

The main point of this passage is that the division of being into the categories is not like the division of a genus into its species by means of specific differences. This contrast is made even clearer in the following passage:

> … there are two ways in which something common can be divided into those that are under it, just as there are two ways in which something is common. For there is the division of a univocal [term] into its species by differences by which the nature of the genus is equally participated in the species, as animal is divided into man and horse, and the like. Another division is that of something common by analogy, which is predicated according to its perfect concept [ratio] of one of those that divide it, and of

\(^{15}\) “… ens non potest hoc modo contrahi ad aliquid determinatum, sicut genus contrahitur ad species per differentias. Nam differentia, cum non participet genus, est extra essentiam generis. Nihil autem posset esse extra essentiam entis, quod per additionem ad ens aliquam speciem entis constitut: nam quod est extra ens, nihil est, et differentia esse non potest. Unde in tertio huius probavit philosophus, quod ens, genus esse non potest. Unde oportet, quod ens contrahatur ad diversa genera secundum diversum modum praedicandi, qui consequitur diversum modum essendi; quia quoties ens dicitur, idest quot modis aliqul praedicatur, toties esse significatur, idest tot modis significatur alicuius esse. Ex propter hoc ea in quae dividitur ens primo, dicuntur esse praedicamenta, quia distinguuntur secundum diversum modum praedicandi. Quia iigitur eorum quae praedicantur, quaedam significant quid, idest substantiam, quaedam quale, quaedam quantum, et sic de aliis; oportet quod unicum modo praedicandi, esse significet idem; et cum dicitur homo est animal, esse significat substantiam. Cum autem dicitur, homo est albus, significat qualitatem, et sic de aliis.” In *Metaphysicum* 5.9, n. 5.
Sutton makes the same point at length in his main argument for the analogy of being. Since the participated kinds of being are to be distinguished according to the diverse modes of predication in such a way that the essences of the categories are to be regarded as adding some delimiting qualifications on the otherwise unqualified notion of being, the key to this conception is the logical distinction between the predication of something simpliciter and secundum quid, when the latter is construed as the predication of something with the addition of some diminishing qualification.

Accordingly, the predication of being within the categories is always to be understood with the implicit or explicit qualification referring to the nature or essence of the thing in question. Therefore, what determines the actual analogical sense in which being is truly predicable of a thing of a given category is the implicit or explicit diminishing qualification referring to the essence of the thing added to the unqualified notion of being. But then, this unqualified notion of being has to be that notion according to which it predicates the totally unlimited fullness of being, which is applicable only to God. So, it should come as no surprise that Sutton concludes his discussion with the following remark:

For with regard to God everything else is rather non-being than being. So Augustine says in c. 32 of The Trinity that perhaps only God should be said to be an essence. For only He exists truly, since He is unchangeable.

So, only God can be said to be without any qualification, while everything else is only in a diminished, limited sense, determined by its limited essence.

But what does this have to do with the issue of the real distinction of essence and existence in creatures? After all, apparently, Henry of Ghent would also make the exact same claims concerning the different senses of being as it is predicable of God and creatures and substance and accident, yet he would deny the thesis of real distinction and he would still not hold that from this denial any absurdity would follow.

Now it is crucial to see here that despite all apparent similarities between what Henry and Sutton say about the analogy of being, there is a fundamental difference between how they conceive of the determination of the analogical notion being to this or that kind of thing. For Henry, the original

16 “… est duplex modus dividendi commune in ea quae sub ipso sunt, sicut est duplex communitatis modus. Est enim quaedam divisio univoci in species per differentias quibus aequaliter natura generis in speciebus participatur, sicut animal dividitur in hominem et equum, et hujusmodi; alia vero divisio est ejus quod est commune per analogiam, quod quidem secundum perfectam rationem praedicatur de uno dividendum, et de altero imperfecte et secundum quid, sicut ens dividitur in substantialit et accidens, et in ens actu et in ens potentia: et haec divisio est quasi media inter aequivocum et univocum.” In Secundum Sententiarum 42.1.3, in corp. Cf.: “Unum enim eodem modo dicitur aliquid sicut et ens; unde sicut ipsum non ens, non quidem simpliciter, sed secundum quid, idest secundum rationem, ut patet in 4o Metaphysicae, ita etiam negatio est unum secundum quid, scilicet secundum rationem.” In Perihermeneias 2.2, n. 3.

17 QORD q. 32. esp. pp. 882-883.

confused and indeterminate signification of ‘being’ insofar as it is equally and indifferently predicable of anything becomes determined by specifying what kind of being we are talking about. This determination by specification selects that particular sort of concept out of the analogical cluster of concepts of being which is properly applicable to the thing in question, whether God or creature, or substance or accident. This sort of determination has obviously nothing to do with the separate ontological issue of whether the kind of being we are talking about has its limited or unlimited essence as distinct from or identical with its actual existence.

Accordingly, this conception of the determination of the appropriate sense of being in a true predication might be expressed by the following scheme:

\[ X \text{ is in the sense appropriate to its nature } Y \text{ iff } X \text{ is of nature } Y \]

Obviously, in this case it makes no difference in the determination of the sense of ‘is’ whether \( Y \) is the same as or distinct from the being of \( X \), signified in it by the appropriate sense of ‘is’, specified by \( Y \).

On the Thomistic conception, however, the determination takes place by delimitation: a true predication of being of a certain kind of thing is construed as a predication of being with qualification, where the qualification refers to the essence of the thing in question. Accordingly, the corresponding schematic analysis has to be the following:

\[ X \text{ is in the sense appropriate to its nature } Y \text{ iff } x \text{ is-with-respect-to-its-nature-}Y \]

Now in this case, however, the identity or distinctness of \( Y \) and the act of being signified by the predicate ‘is’ in the thing has everything to do with the determination of the appropriate sense of being. For clearly, if \( Y \) is the same as this act of being, then \( Y \) cannot impose a limiting, diminishing determination on the act of being signified, for then \( Y \) is nothing but this act of being and an act of being certainly does not delimit itself.

Indeed, in general, and as a matter of logic, if the qualification in a predication with qualification refers to the significate of the unqualified predicate, then the qualification cannot be diminishing. For example, in the predication ‘\( x \) is white-with-respect-to-its-whiteness’ the qualification is non-diminishing, precisely because what the qualification refers to is nothing but the significate of the unqualified predicate. So the qualification can be diminishing only if what the qualification refers to is distinct from the significate of the unqualified predicate, for otherwise the qualification simply determines the unlimited, non-diminished sense of the predicate.

But then it is clear that if in the previous Thomistic scheme \( Y \), the nature of the thing, is the same as the act of being of the thing, then the only sense of being determined by this scheme can be the sense in which it signifies the absolutely unlimited act of being of God. This is, I think, the ultimate reason why for Sutton the identification of essence and existence inevitably leads to the conclusion that the thing in question that exists in the sense determined by this assumption can only be God.

Accordingly, however slight the difference in Henry’s and Sutton’s metaphysical conceptions may appear in their principles, no wonder they arrive at vastly different conclusions based on the logically prior difference in their interpretation of how the essence of a thing determines in what sense the

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thing can be said to exist. But then it is certainly not without reason that Aquinas began his little treatise on being and essence with the famous quote from Aristotle: *parvus error in principio magnus est in fine*.
John N. Martin:

Proclus on the Logic of the Ineffable *

Abstract

A informal introduction to the semantic theory in the Neoplatonic system of Proclus. It is sketched how the Neoplatonic order can be understood as ranked by scalar adjectives as understood in modern linguistics, and how Proclus’ exposition, especial his use of privative and hypernegation, presuppose the syllogistic of Aristotle.

1. Introduction

Proclus (412-458) is well known for having detailed doctrines about negative knowledge of the One, and in a vague way he is also thought of as a logician. After all, he advances original proofs in geometry and he employs syllogisms and other logical terminology in his philosophy. What is not clear and what I would like to explore in this essay is how deeply logic runs in his metaphysics. Within the limits of this paper I can only sketch the story, but I shall describe a methodology that employs logical concepts only recently studied in modern theory. These concern scalar predicates and negation.

Proclus faced a dilemma. On the one hand, he accepts Plotinus’ doctrine that the fundamental structure of reality is that of a linear causal ordering emanating from the One. On the other hand, in working out his ideas and arguing for them, he makes use of logic. Like other philosophers of his time he makes use of the logical theory available, especially the syllogistic and definition per genus et differentiam. But these ideas were developed for the radically non-linear metaphysics of Aristotle. In this paper I shall be recounting how Proclus reconciles Aristotle’s logic to Neoplatonic ontology. He does so by exploiting properties of what is now known as scalar predicate negation. Using scalar negations he transforms the tree provided by “Aristotelian” definition into a linear “Neoplatonic” structure appropriate for syllogistic reasoning.

The method may be outlined as a series of steps. It begins with Neoplatonic diairesis—the collection of information in the form of Aristotelian definitions as described by Porphyry in the Isagoge. As Proclus sees it, each division in Porphyry’s tree is accomplished by means of negation. Beneath animal, for example, is man and not-man. Moreover this negation is not the ordinary classical variety. It is not merely a syntactic marker that lacks any commitment to the true “negativity” in reality of the property picked out by the negated predicate. Rather, Proclus’ negation is scalar. It presupposes that there are in reality genuine “positive” and “negative” degrees of comparison among properties. Negations of this sort come in pairs and Proclus uses both. These we shall call hyper and privative

* This paper, which will appear in the author’s collection Themes in Neoplatonic and Aristotelian Logic: Order, Negation and Abstraction (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003) is an introduction in non-technical terms to the much fuller investigation in “Proclus and the Neoplatonic Syllogistic,” J. of Philosophical Logic 30 (2001), (also in the collection). The present account contains some textual support referred to summarily in the longer paper.
negation, following his usage. The hypernegation of a term moves it up a background scale; its privative moves it down.

In division the set of a node’s immediate descendants is ranked by these negations. Apart from the least of the immediate descendants, each is the hypernegation of another in such a way that an order is determined: if \( x \) is the hypernegation of \( y \), then \( x \leq y \). This “priority” relation corresponds with causation in reality. Privative negation yields the same ranking by moving down the steps of causation. The whole group of a node’s immediate descendants is called a \textit{taxon} by Proclus, and the node from which they descend is the immediate cause of the first of the descendants and is called the taxon’s \textit{monad}. The tree together with the order on the immediate descendants of each node is called an ordered tree, and an ordered tree determines a line. In Proclus’ metaphysics the tree of diairesis with taxa ranked by causation determines the linear order of ontic causation.

What is logically interesting about Proclus’ account is this structure and its operations. These force the validity of various formal inferences. The valid moods of Aristotle’s syllogistic, for example, are usually thought of as describing structures of Boolean sets. So they are understood in mediaeval logic and in modern model theories for the syllogistic. But the syllogistic moods turn out to be valid also in the linear structures generated by trees ordered by scalar negation. Hence Proclus legitimately may use the syllogistic to expound his philosophy. A statements (e.g. All \( x \) is \( y \)) turn out to be non-trivial propositions that express causal order and may be written \( x \leq y \). (Here for algebraic reasons 0 is adopted as the ideal supremum and \( x \leq y \) is to be read \( x \) is \textit{higher than} \( y \) or \( x \) \textit{causes} \( y \).) O statements (e.g. Some \( x \) is \( y \)) express their contradictory opposites, and because the ordering is linear, \( Oxy \) may be written \( x \sqsupset y \), which in a linear structure is equivalent to \( y < x \). In Proclus’ linear structure \( I \) and \( E \) statements turn out to be trivially true and false respectively, but this limitation is overcome by the presence of non-traditional hyper and privative negations.

These predicate operators add expressive power that goes well beyond the traditional syllogistic to sanction new valid arguments. By progressive applications of hypernegations to a predicate, the predicate becomes true of progressively higher stages of the causal structure. Likewise, by progressive applications of privative negation, a predicate moves down the order. Hence one may infer “what a point in a higher taxon is not” by knowing “what the point in a lower taxon is.” Affirmation, in Proclus’ dictum, generates negation: from \( x \leq y \), it follows that \( \text{hyper-} x \leq \text{hyper-} y \). Knowledge of the higher hypotheses can be obtained by logical inference from predications true of the lower. The \textit{via negativa} literally becomes progressive steps of inference in scalar logic.

The purpose of this short paper is not to amass all the textual evidence that supports this interpretation. Nor will I be able to prove the logical claims. But I shall try to cite enough texts to make the interpretation plausible and to explain the logical ideas in a clear and non-technical way.

2. Proclus’ Mixed Parentage

2.1. Proclus as an Aristotelian

Since they accept Plato’s method of diairesis, Neoplatonists understandably also accept its development by Aristotle in his theory of definition. Plotinus himself occasionally employs diairesis
using Aristotle’s terminology of genus and species,¹ and in the Isagoge Porphyry summarizes the theory in what was to be its standard form in the Middle Ages.² Proclus describes the method as follows:

In demonstrations and definitions the particular (ton mekpion) must be subordinate to the universal (tou kathalou) and the definition (ton horismon). Definitions of common features in particular do not take in the particulars as a whole. How, for instance, is the whole of Socrates comprehended by the definition “rational mortal animal,” when there exists in him other elements also which make up his so-called ‘personal quality’? The reason-principle of Man (ho tou anthropou logos) in us comprehends the whole of each particular, for the particular comprehends unitarily all those potencies which are seen as being involved in the individuals. In the case of “animal” and likewise, the instance of it in particulars is less comprehensive than the particulars themselves or the species; for it does not have in actualized form all the differentiae, but only potentially, wherefore it becomes a sort of “matter” to the specifying differentiae that super-impose themselves upon it. The “animal” inherent in us is greater and more comprehensive than “man,” for it contains in unified form all the differentiae, not potentially, like the concept, but actualized. If we are, then, to discover the definition which will serve as the beginning of demonstration, the definition but must of an entity of such a sort as to comprehend everything more particular than itself.³

Proclus is combining Aristotelian definition and demonstration in a single method that he calls logic. This is the first stage of enlightenment, which is followed by philosophy (Platonic intellection) and theology (religious and mystical understanding), and much of his exposition is formulated in these Aristotelian categories.⁴ For example, he reasons about the heavens using Barbara,⁵

All great circles bisect one another

Circles in the Heavens are great circles

Therefore, all circles in the heavens bisect one another

and about the higher hypotheses using Baroco (Proclus treats singular propositions as universal with singular terms as “degenerate” common nouns):⁶

The One is not receptive of multiplicity

The unequal is receptive of multiplicity

Therefore, the One is not unequal.

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⁴ Proclus employs this method throughout both IP and PT. For general descriptions of his method see IP 1070-72, M&D 424-5. PT I:4, S&W 17:15-25.


⁶ IP 1208:11-24, M&D 553. For an explicit Bocardo see IP 1208:11-24; M&D 553.
Likewise \textit{modus ponens} and \textit{modus tollens} which a modern logician would symbolize $\forall x (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$, $Fc \vdash Gc$ and $\forall x (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$, $\neg Gc \vdash \neg Fc$ are treated as cases of Baroco and Bocardo respectively, as in the example:\footnote{For \textit{modus ponens} and \textit{modus tollens} see IP 1098:2-27, M&D 444-45. IP 1055:2 to 1057:4, M&D 413-14. IP 1208:11-24, M&D 552-3.}

\begin{align*}
\text{If something is not an animal, it is not a man.} \\
\text{It is not an animal} \\
\text{Therefore, it is not a man}
\end{align*}

In practice, for reasons we shall touch on below, Proclus eschews \textbf{E} and \textbf{I} statements in his logical analysis.

\section*{2.2. Proclus and the Chain of Being}

Though Proclus adopts much of Aristotelian logic, he is very much a follower of Plotinus. While he uses diairesis and logical analysis to reveal the tree-like structure of reality, he also uses the metaphor of a chain to describe causation as having what we would call today a “linear” order or, more precisely, a order that is partial (reflexive, transitive, antisymmetric) and total ($x \leq y$ or $y \leq x$). This ordering is the causal progression of hypotheses from the One. He describes it frequently, for example in some of the basic propositions from the \textit{Elements of Theology}. The order has a unique maximal element:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Proposition 11.} All that exists proceeds from a single first cause.
\end{itemize}

It forms a causal line, and the line is partitioned into mutually exclusive non-overlapping \textit{taxa}. Each taxon is also preceded by a first element, its \textit{monad}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Proposition 14.} All that exists is either moved or unmoved; and if the former, either by itself or by another, that is, either intrinsically or extrinsically: so that everything is unmoved, intrinsically moved, or extrinsically moved.
  \item \textbf{Proposition 21.} Every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad.
  \item \textbf{Proposition 100.} Every series of wholes is referable to an unparticipated first principle and cause; and all unparticipated terms are dependent from the one First Principle of things.
  \item \textbf{Proposition 147.} In any divine rank the highest term is assimilated to the last term of the supra-jacent rank.
\end{itemize}

Proclus frequently describes the descent in the line as consisting of triads, minimal taxa as it were:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Proposition 67} Every whole is either a whole-before-the parts, a whole-of-the parts, or a whole-in-the-part.\footnote{See also PT III:8, S&W 31:20-23, and III:9, S&W 39:20-40:1, and the discussion in Lucan Siorvanes, \textit{Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy of Science} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996)., pp. 102-105.}
\end{itemize}
He goes on to give a theoretical analysis of why this tripartite breakdown holds as a basic fact of metaphysics:

**Proposition 81.** All that is participated without loss of separateness is present to the participated through an inseparable potency which it implants.

For if it is itself something from the participant and not contained in it, something which subsists in itself, then they need a mean term to connect them, one which more nearly resembles the participated principle than the participant does, and yet actually resides in the latter……Accordingly a potency or irradiation, proceeding from the participated to the participant, must link the two; and this medium of participation will be distinct from both.

On the basis of such passages and his many examples of triadic analysis, I think it is fair to attribute to Proclus the view that any point is susceptible to a deeper analysis in which it is followed by a triad further detailing the causal descent. That is, Proclus posits a kind of causal density: between any two points $x$ and $y$ such that $x$ causes $y$, there is a deeper analysis in terms of which there is a triadic descent from $x$ considered as a monad of a taxon the points of which intervene in the causal process between $x$ and $y$.

It is clear that the points in a triad are ranked. The entire discussion in the *Platonic Theology* is organized around triads at the various levels of the hierarchy, and Proclus carefully explains the ranking within the triad. For example, beneath the gods comes the triad angels, daimons, and heroes. He clarifies their order as follows:

Again we thus come to see that pre-existent properties are indivisibly and uniformly divided among the three fathers, and likewise the demiurgic triad participates in the demiurge’s unity as a result of the monad’s unlimited superiority, likewise in its priority the monad contains the triad as befits its causal power.\(^9\)

A central question remains. How can the reality both be a tree and a line? How can the tree of Porphyry also be the chain of being? How can syllogisms be used to reason about hypotheses? Proclus’ answer is no less than a reconciliation of Aristotle’s logic to Neoplatonism and is to be found in his theory of negation.

### 3. Scalar Predicates and Negation

Proclus gives names to the points in his causal hierarchy. Indeed he is the father of the doctrine of the “divine names” applied to the higher nodes of the hierarchy, and he goes on at great length in the *Platonic Theology* to gives names to the lesser nodes of the hierarchy as well. He also describes the hierarchy in relational terms. He uses comparative adjectives for this purpose, *e.g.* more real (ousióteron), more general (katholikóteron, holikótero, and merikóteron), more causal (aitióteron), more perfect (telió tikon), holier (timióteron), more powerful (dunatóteron), and more infinite (apeiróteron). The following passage from the *Elements of Theology* is typical of Proclus’ use of comparative adjectives:

…the higher cause (aitioterón), being the more efficacious (drastikóteron), operates sooner upon the participant (for where the same thing is affected by two causes it is affected first by the more powerful

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\(^9\) *PT* VI VI:7, S&W 32:21-26. Translations from *PT* are the author’s.
(dunatōteron); and in the activity of the secondary the higher is co-operative, because all the effects of the secondary are concomitantly generated by the more determinative cause (aitiōteron).

....

All those characters which in the originative causes have higher (huperteran) and more universal (holikōteron) rank become in the resultant beings, through the irradiations which proceed from them, a kind of substratum for the gifts of the more specific principles (merikōteron).¹⁰

Proclus’ family of names describing ordered points together with the comparative adjective ranking them form what modern linguists call a family of scalar adjectives.

Monadic scalar adjectives have a semantics that presupposes a background ordering, which we shall name ≤, that is referred to by a comparative adjective associated with the family. The ordering forms a line. In algebraic terms it is a total partial ordering. Typically the predicates are ranged along the order from an intuitively identifiable “good” or “positive” extreme to a “bad” or “negative” extreme, and often there is a midpoint predicate. Consider, for example, the heat and happiness families associated with the comparatives is hotter than and is happier than:

boiling, hot, warm, tepid, cool, cold, freezing
ecstatic, happy, content, so-so, down, sad, miserable

To the logician these families are interesting because of the properties of the presupposed ordering relation ≤. At a minimum, ≤ orders all points so that no point is left out; no two points are at the same rank; and every point either comes before or after another. The names and comparatives of Proclus’ metaphysics form such a scalar family. Causation is the background relation described in the various comparatives in the previous passage, and the casual stages in the ontic hierarchy are the points that he names in his metaphysical research. But the story is richer.

Since ≤ puts items into a rough line, it already imposes a considerable amount of structure. But scalars typically impose additional organization as well, and this is associated with various negative affixes and particles that natural language employs in association with scalar predicates. To each such negative expression in language there corresponds a “negation operations” in the semantic structure of points ordered by ≤. The operation pairs a point with its “negative.” Scalars are particularly interesting because there are a number of different negations of this sort. Three are particularly relevant to Proclus.

First there are negations that associate points to others that are higher or lower in the ordering. The negation that moves to a higher point is called an intensifier. In English we have super (from Latin) and hyper (from Greek), as in super-happy and hyperactive. Greek has the alpha-intensivum recognized in classical grammar and modern linguistics,¹¹ as well as huper which in later Neoplatonism (especially pseudo-Dionysius) becomes the technical maker for specialized uses of

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hypernegation in theology. Proclus identifies this operation and calls it hypernegation, the term we shall use here. We shall symbolize it by $\sim$. 12

The negation that associates a point with one lower is called in traditional grammar the alpha-privative. In English we may express it by the all-purpose particle not, as in he is not well, but we have specialized markers for it as well, like sub (from Latin) as in subnormal and sub-par. Greek has hupo. We shall abbreviate it by $\sim$.

A third variety of scalar negation, which we shall represent by $\delta$, associates a point corresponding to some degree $n$ to the point $\delta n$ that is “equidistant” from the midpoint on the opposite extreme. In English we indicate this negation by the prefix un. For example, intuitively unhappy is synonymous to sad which stands for a point as many points below the midpoint of the happiness scale as the point picked out by happy is above the midpoint. We shall see that Proclus allows for such an operation relative to the analysis of points within a causal taxon.

4. The Logic of Negation and Syllogisms in Proclus

In two well known passages Proclus distinguishes senses of negation. In the In Parmenidem he writes:

Being, after all, is the classic case of assertion whereas Not-Being is of negation.... So then in every class of Being, assertion in general is superior to negation. But since not-Being has a number of senses, one superior to Being, another which is of the same rank as Being, and yet another which is the privation of Being, it is clear, surely that we can postulate also three types of negation, one superior to assertion, another inferior to assertion, and another in some way equally balanced by assertion. 13

Again in the Platonic Theology he draws the distinction this way:

In truth my view is that negations come in three sorts, one sort is for beings of a form more fundamental than affirmations. These are generative and perfective of those things generated in affirmation. Another type is placed at the same level as affirmations, and here affirmation is not in any way more worthy that negation. Finally, there are those with a nature inferior to affirmations, namely privations of affirmations. 14

Proclus is referring to hyper and privative negation. The first of the senses he lists is hypernegation; it is appropriate for picking out entities that are “higher” than those in the taxon of Being. The third sense is privative, appropriate for entities “lower.” The middle sense is that appropriate for moving up and down within the taxon of Being. As we shall see, both hyper and privative negation are appropriate here as well depending on whether one wants to pick out an entity lower or higher in that series.

The modern semantics for scalars is very abstract and imposes no content on the ordering $\leq$ other than its minimal structural properties. It need not be causation. Nor need it be a genuinely privative process. Privative processes, however, do fit the requirements of a scalar ordering, and privative negation was an important tool in Greek philosophy. Its role in Greek logic, however, was less

12 IP 1172:35.
13 IP 1072:28-1073:8, M&D 426
14 PT II:5, S&W 38:18-25.
developed. Aristotle defines it.\textsuperscript{15} But investigations of the formal logic of negation were limited to the negative qualities of syllogistic sentences and to Stoic sentential negation, neither of which captures the key ideas of either hypernegation or privation. Neither of the scalar negations, for example, conforms to the laws of double negation or contraposition, but to its own laws:

1. \(\text{hyper-hyper-happy} \leq \text{hyper-happy} \leq \text{happy} \leq \text{sub-happy} \leq \text{sub-sub-happy}\), and in general, \(\text{hyper-hyper-happy} \neq \text{happy} \neq \text{sub-sub-happy}\).

2. \(\text{happy} \leq \text{content}\) does not logically imply contrapositively either that \(\text{hyper-content} \leq \text{hyper-happy}\) or that \(\text{sub-content} \leq \text{sub-happy}\).

But in an important sense, as the earlier propositions from the Elements of Theology attest, privation is at the heart of Neoplatonic metaphysics. The causal ordering is a process of diminishment. Logic had to wait for Proclus for an exploration of the formal and inferential properties of privatives.

Perhaps the best known logical law that he identifies for these two negations is the one he expresses in saying \textit{negation gives birth to affirmation}.\textsuperscript{16}

\[\text{...the first mentioned [forms] are more general, while these latter mentioned are more particular. For this reason by eliminating the earlier ones, he eliminates those that follow them in the hypotheses.}\]

In another passage he states the rule more generally:\textsuperscript{17}

\[\text{If, then, the negations generate the affirmations, it is plain that the first negations generate the first and the second the second.}\]

That is, if \(B\) is earlier (higher) in the causal ordering that \(A\), then the negation of \(B\) is earlier than that of \(A\): \(\neg A \leq \neg B\) iff \(A \leq B\) iff \(\neg A \leq \neg B\). When these laws hold the operations are said in algebra to be \textit{isotonic}.

These laws encapsulate Proclus’ version of the \textit{via negativa}.\textsuperscript{18} For example he says, “... The soul orders affirmations to negations,”\textsuperscript{19} and

\[\text{...these are the only characteristics that pertain to being \textit{qua} being, the ones which are asserted by the Second Hypothesis and are denied by the First.}\textsuperscript{20}

More generally,


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{IP} 1087:2-6, M&D 435.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{IP} 1099:32-35.

\textsuperscript{18} See the discussion of the doctrine and its role in the exposition of these two works in L.G. Westerink H. D. Saffery, “Introduction,” in \textit{Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne} (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968). For statements of the principle in addition to the texts cited below see \textit{IP} 1133:3-5 and \textit{IP} 1056-1060, M&D 413-16.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{PT} 1:12; S&W 58, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{IP} 1086:27-29, M&D 435. See also \textit{IP} 1099:32-35, M&D 446, and \textit{IP} 1208:22-24, M&D 553.
To the extent that it pre-exists all others, we celebrate this cause only by negations, while we reveal the high things both negatively and affirmatively, to the extent that it is transcendentally superior to inferiors, we reveal the inferiors negatively, but to the extent that they are part of their predecessors, we reveal them affirmatively.\textsuperscript{21}

This discussion of hyper and privative negation then allows us to conclude that Proclus imposes the special structural requirement on scalar ordering that the operations \( \sim \) and \( \lnot \) be isotonic.

The third scalar negation \( \lnot \) is logically interesting because when combined with the total ordering \( \leq \), it allows for the development of full sentential logic for the connectives \( \sim \) (not), \( \land \) (and), and \( \lor \) (inclusive or). In order for the semantics of this negation to be well defined, however, it must be possible to associate a numerical rank to the points indicating their distance from the midpoint of \( \leq \). This measurement would then allow for the definition of standard truth-functions for the connectives in a manner first explored by Lukasiewicz and later standardized by Kleene, in his so-called \textit{strong connectives}.

Let the measurement values be set so that the midpoint is 0, higher values being positive, lower negative. In Kleene’ semantics \( A \land B \) has as its value the minimum value (as measured on \( \leq \)) of the two values of \( A \) and \( B \). The value of \( A \lor B \) is the maximum of the two. The value of \( \lnot A \) is the negative of the value of \( A \). The resulting logic validates only inferences that are valid in classical two-valued Russellian logic, but fails to validate a special set of classical inferences in which the premises and conclusions violate relevance conditions.\textsuperscript{22}

In the special cases in which a scalar metric can be defined, scalars then have structural properties that lend themselves to the full development of predicate logic with grammatically complex adjectives made up with the operators \( \land \), \( \lor \) and \( \lnot \), as well as by \( \sim \) and \( \lnot \).

Though I do not think there is textual ground for thinking that Proclus identified a single ontic midpoint about which reality pivots, he does often speak of the points relative to a single taxon as causally ordered in a symmetric manner. This is particularly true in the many instances in which he analyzes causal descent in a triad. As I have indicated, there is some ground for believing he held that division is in principle always triadic. In any case, it is clear that he thinks that each taxon of the hierarchy is countably finite.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Proposition 149.} The entire manifold of divine henads is finite (\textit{peperasmenon}) in number.
\item \textbf{Proposition 179.} The entire intellectual series is finite (\textit{pas ho noeros arithmos peperastai}).
\end{itemize}

Thus even if there is no midpoint, each point in a taxon and indeed any point in any taxon at a given distance from the tree’s root would have an “opposite” under \( \lnot \). That is, relative to a single taxon or, more broadly, relative to the set of all points in any taxon at the same “level” in the tree, maximum and minimum operations would be well defined for Proclus. The result would be a logic for predicate operators \( \land \), \( \lor \) and \( \lnot \) in addition to the negations \( \sim \) and \( \lnot \) that Proclus explicitly introduces. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{PT} IV:11, S&W 37, 21-27. See also \textit{PT} II:12; S&W 66, 7-24.
\item \textsuperscript{22} John N. Martin, “A Syntactic Characterization of Kleene’s Strong Connectives,” \textit{Zeitschrift für Mathematische Logik und Grundlagen der Mathematik} 21 (1975).
\item \textsuperscript{23} It may be remarked that the property of causal density combines with the fact that taxa are finite (that the tree of diaeresis is finitely branching) to explain how Proclus can simultaneously hold that the causal ordering \( \leq \) is infinite yet every taxon finite. Indeed Proclus seems to require density in order to harmonize these two views.
\end{itemize}
whole would be a perfectly coherent extension of Kleene’s logic. Proclus’ logic of ~ and ¬ accordingly fits nicely within a major school in modern many-valued logic.

His logic also harmonizes with Aristotle’s. Modern readers of the syllogistic are inclined to interpret it in terms of Boolean structures of sets. In this picture the common nouns and adjectives used as terms in A, E, I, and O propositions stand for non-empty sets (the genera and species of apodictic science) that form a tree or a structure of possibly empty sets (if accidental grouping are allowed) within an overarching Boolean algebra on the power set of all objects. It is true that the valid moods, the traditional immediate inferences, and the argument patterns used by Aristotle in his reduction of the moods to Barbara and Celarent can be shown to be sound and completely relative to the set of all interpretations over Boolean structures. It is also true that these structures are not linearly ordered by their ordering relation, which is the subset relation \( \subseteq \).

However, it is not true that syllogisms are valid only relative to such Boolean structures. In fact, a more accurate model theory for the traditional validities of the syllogistic employs a more abstract characterization. A syllogistic structure in this more abstract sense is any semi-lattice \( <U, \wedge, 0> \) such that 0 is the least element of the partial ordering \( \leq \) determined by the meet operation \( \wedge \) on the lattice. The formal restrictions defining a semi-lattice are quite minimal: \( \wedge \) must map any pair in \( U \) to an element in \( U \), and it must be associative, commutative, and idempotent \((x \wedge x = x)\). Then, \( x \leq y \) holds iff, \( x \wedge y = x \); and for all \( x \) in \( U \), \( 0 \leq x \). The standard completeness proofs for the syllogistic relative to Boolean structures has in fact been generalized to this broader set of semi-lattices. What is relevant to Proclus is that lattices of this sort can be totally ordered, and Proclus’ scalar structures clearly fit the more abstract notion of acceptable syllogistic semi-lattice. That is, all the traditional Aristotelian argument forms remain valid even if Proclus assumes that reality is linearly ordered. It is also possible to add to syllogistic natural deduction new inference rules and basic deductions governing the new operators \( \sim, \neg \), and \( \neg \), and to add appropriate extra conditions on the definition of acceptable syllogistic semi-lattice so that the resulting logical theory is sound and complete for a syllogistic language augmented to have scalar predicate operators \( \sim, \neg \), and \( \neg \).

Though syllogistic reasoning is valid in Proclus’ scalar universe, it exhibits an oddity: E and I statements are respectively trivial false and trivially true. If the structure is ordered by a total (“linear”) order \( \leq \) then an A statement all \( x \) are \( y \) may be written \( x \leq y \); and an O statement some \( x \) is not \( y \), written as \( x \notin y \), is by the properties of \( \leq \) equivalent to \( y \prec x \). Since for any two points \( x \) and \( y \), one is below the other, the E statement \( x \wedge y = 0 \) would be false. Likewise the I statement \( x \wedge y \neq 0 \) is true. As a matter of fact, Proclus does not use E and I statements in his logical analyses. He does not because he has an alternative vocabulary for negations ready at hand for what he needs to say, namely \( \sim \) and \( \neg \).

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25 For the soundness and completeness of the same natural deduction proof theory as that of Corcoran and Smiley but characterized in terms of the more general notion of acceptable semi-lattice see John N. Martin, “Aristotle’s Natural Deduction Reconsidered,” History and Philosophy of Logic 18 (1997). The extension to include the logic of scalar negations \( \sim, \neg \), and \( \neg \) consists of introducing appropriate new basic deductions and natural deduction inference rule in the proof theory, and of adding suitable restrictions in the definition of acceptable scalar structure. The soundness completeness proof is then an extension of that previously cited. See , from which the tree diagram below is taken.
5. Negation in Diairesis Determines a Line

Proclus’ technique for transforming the information contained in the tree of diairesis into a linear causal order appropriate for syllogistic and scalar reasoning turns on scalar negation. Previous texts illustrate how Proclus posited that the immediate descendants of a node in the tree of diairesis are linearly ranked. Proclus frequently explains this ranking in terms of negation. One node ranks higher than another because it is its hypernegation, or lower because it is its privative. Consider how he ranks the taxon headed by the One:

… among the entities engendered after him [the One], at every degree, the cause is totally different from its effects, and that is why nature [phusis] is completely incorporeal [asōmatos], while being the cause of bodies, the soul is totally eternal but cause of what is engendered, and the intellect immobile [nous, akinētos] because it is cause of all that is in movement. If thus for each procession of beings, one negates of the cause the effects which follow from it, it is necessary, I think, to negate them of the universal cause

…

of negations I say that they are not privative of what they bear, but rather make of a kind of contrary [antikeimenos], for since the first principle is not many, the many proceeds from him....

A negative predicate true of the One (if it were not inexpressible) would result from the hypernegation of Intellect, just as hyper-mobile is true of Intellect because mobile is of Soul, and eternal is true of Soul because sub-eternal is true of Nature, and hyper-corporeal is true of Nature because corporeal is true of Body. Saffrey and Westerink point out that the entire discussion of the Platonic Theology is organized around progressive negative predications true of the first hypothesis.

Another good example is Proclus’ breakdown of the Intelligible-Intellective order. The diverse texts may be summarized in a tree:

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Intelligible-Intellectuals Gods
    (Book IV,13-20)
       /\      /\      /\ 
    Being, Super Celestial Life, Celestial Intellect, Subcelestial
   /\       /\       /\ 
~Color  ~Figure  ~Contact
  [achrōmatos 41:3]  [aschēmatistos 40:5-10]  anaphēs 40:13-17
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Here hyper negation is used to order the nodes at the first level of division, and these nodes are named both by negative predicates and lexicalized simple predicates. It is plausible to generalize this

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26 PT II:10, S&W 62:5-63:17. Note that here and elsewhere (especially IP. Book VI) Proclus is careful to make clear that strictly speaking the One is beyond all predication. All references to predications of the One in this reconstruction, even to hypernegations, must be understood as subject to this important Neoplatonic provision.

practice to all divisions, especially in light of Proclus’ view that any node is in principle resolvable into a deeper triadic analysis, and to attribute the view to Proclus that the taxon beneath any node is ranked by its analysis into negative predicates of increasing grammatical complexity. A single linear order describing causation is the result. This line is then the structure appropriate for syllogistic reasoning and valid inferences that turn on the three scalar negations.

6. Conclusion

I hope I have been able to show how Proclus is of interest to logic. It is difficult to overcome the temptation to dismiss Neoplatonic thought as mystical and therefore irrelevant to analytic philosophy, especially logic. Plotinus and his followers, including Proclus, do at some level espouse mysticism. But there is much more as well. It is always disconcerting for the modern reader who knows Neoplatonism only through Plotinus to open Proclus’ Elements of Theology and find it written in the propositional form of a geometry text. I hope I have been able to explain away that surprise. Proclus uses logic systematically. He not only employs the logic already available, but advances logical theory by identifying and applying in his metaphysics the formal properties of scalar predicates and their negations. Though for mystical reasons the One is beyond language, on the plane of logical analysis the properties of the One are discoverable by inferences using hypernegations from facts already known about the lower orders of reality. Proclus believes that in this way logic contributes to theology.

References


Alan Perreiah:

Skepticism and Mysticism in Meister Eckhart’s and Augustine’s Apophatic Theolog[ies]

“God is infinite and incomprehensible, and all that is comprehensible about Him is His infinity and incomprehensibility. God does not belong to the class of existing things: not that He has no existence, but that He is above all existing things, nay even above existence itself.” John of Damascus: On the Orthodox Faith I, 4.

“You should love [God] as he is nonGod, a nonspirit, a nonperson, a nonimage, but as he is pure, unmixed, bright ‘One’, separated from all duality; and in that One we should eternally sink down, out of ‘something’ into ‘nothing’.” Meister Eckhart: Sermon 83, Renovamini spiritu

“You called, you cried out and you broke through my deafness, you shone out, cast your radiance and put my blindness to flight, you shed your fragrance and I drew breath and pine for you, I tasted you and so I hunger and thirst for you, you touched me and I burn with love of your peace.” Saint Augustine: Confessions 10. 27

Introduction

I have proposed to discuss mysticism and skepticism in St. Augustine’s and Meister Eckhart’s apophatic theologies. As my thoughts developed it became clear that my proposal was overambitious, and that I could not do justice to all of these topics in one short paper. At best, my treatment would have to be limited to only a few aspects of them. My ideas on the relations of skepticism and mysticism seemed less important as I became engaged in the theologies of Augustine and Eckhart; so I decided to confine them to some remarks at the end. I want to clarify some terms in my title. Apophatic theology is that species of theological discourse that recognizes the unknowability of the Divine Nature. For that reason the apophatic theologian favors a via negativa whereby what is denied of the Divine nature is thought to reveal more to us than what can be affirmed. By contrast the cataphatic theologian pursues a via affirmativa that is replete with images, figures, metaphors, analogies and all manner of linguistic and ritualistic devices that attempt to disclose what the Divine Nature is. Cataphatic theology is properly constructive: by accretion it grows and may become a systematic body of knowledge that claims for itself the title of “science”. Indeed theology was understood this way in the 13th century, and Aquinas held a version of it. ‘apophasis’ from the Greek means literally “a breakdown of speech”, and this root meaning suggests that apophatic theology is deconstructive. Recognizing that human reason left to itself begets dichotomies, it rises above those oppositions and negates them in order to seek a higher level of awareness. This procedure entails a reduction in the means of expression and as these resources are systematically diminished the person enters a state of “unknowing” accompanied by silence. Human language reaches its limits and yields to the ineffable.

There are two species of apophaticism that are relevant to the thinkers that I want to examine today: “theological apophaticism” and “anthropological apophaticism”.¹ Both pursue a via negativa or deconstructive discourse; but the former directs it toward the Divine nature while the latter is trained on human nature. In an ascetical exercise anthropological apophaticism questions human capacities of cognition, volition, sensation and emotion to the point of denying their power to bring the human

individual into union with the divine. Instead of humans making an apophatic ascent to God, through disciplined denial of the self and its resources God is drawn into the presence of humans. The outcome of these two approaches is the same: union of the human with the Divine.


“There is an apparent paradox at the heart of Augustine’s spatial imagery (chiefly In *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*) whether of inwardness or of ascent. The language of interiority both describes and demands an *ascesis* of mind and spirit away from its captivity by the imagination, towards those recesses of interiority where it encounters the bare, imageless light of eternal truth which is above. There is in the description of this *ascesis* an implied apophaticism, powerfully developed in some later writers.”\(^2\) Turner goes on to name the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Jan Van Ruusbroec, and he could have added Meister Eckhart. Turner allows only an “implied” apophaticism in Augustine, and we may infer from the context that this would be of the anthropological kind. In this paper I want to consider some evidence for an anthropological apophaticism in the *Confessions*. The paper has three sections. First, to provide an example of anthropological apophaticism, I review some themes from Meister Eckhart’s sermon on “Poverty of Spirit” (Sermon 52) and his treatise “On Detachment”. Next, I examine a key passage toward the end of *Confessions* and offer an interpretation of one form of argumentation in that work. Hopefully, this will help to clarify the nature of Augustine’s apophaticism. Finally, I conclude with some comments on skepticism and mysticism as they may bear on Eckhart and Augustine.

A.

Meister Eckhart’s mysticism offers a useful perspective from which we may read, or re-read, Augustine’s *Confessions*.\(^3\) The candor of his rhetorical style, the acuity of his metaphysical analyses, the persuasiveness of his scriptural interpretations—all seem to rival Augustine in ways that we might have thought Augustine was the master. On points of theory, he accepts the idea that God is truth and that knowledge is made possible by means of divine light. Where Augustine stresses the immutability, eternity and infinity of the Divine, Eckhart emphasizes its “purity” and “oneness”. Both are deeply influenced by the Plotinian principle of origination: the idea that, under pain of circularity, the source of existence can be in no way like the things that come from it. Both use a language of existence and being (“ess”, “ens” etc.) to express their metaphysical views; but their vocabularies are idiosyncratic and apart from superficial similarities, e.g. both speak of God as “nothing” and agree that Creatures are “nothing apart from God,” their usages defy helpful comparison. Finally, Eckhart develops his anthropological apophaticism around the same themes that are central to Augustine’s *Confessions*.

According to Eckhart human beings function on three levels—the animal, the intellectual and the Divine. The animal includes the powers of sensation, imagination and memory. These faculties are essential to humans because human knowledge depends on phantasms that arise from sensory experience. Since higher forms of knowledge require moving beyond the imagination, Eckhart

\(^2\) Idem.

\(^3\) On Eckhart I rely on the careful scholarship of Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, pp.126-146.
concentrates on the rational faculty that is divided into higher and lower levels, the higher and lower reason. (*ratio superior et inferiorius*). The higher reason is that power in virtue of which a human being is an image of God. Eckhart characterizes higher reason with a dazzling array of metaphors—it is “a noble power”, “a castle”, “a temple”, “a light of the spirit”, “a divine light”, “a beam of light”, “a spark”. These figures embellish his claim that the human intellect is what separates humans from the rest of creation. As an intellectual power it is not determined to any of the things that it is capable of knowing. Unlike inferior reason that includes the sensory powers it is not distinguishable into “this and “that”. It shares with the Divine Intellect the characteristic of being an *esse indistinctum* and to the extent that a human is an intellect, it is equal to God. Again, just as the Divine Intellect is an infinite act of knowing (*intelligere*) prior to and above existence (*esse*) so too the human intellect may become one with this act. Humans exercise this capacity insofar as they engage in a disciplined asceticism that rids them of every trace of creaturely existence—their *esse formale*—and returns them to their original *esse virtuale* in the Divine Intellect. They must become “the way they were before they were created”.

Within this framework I want to review Eckhart’s teachings on the poverty of the human spirit. Poverty of spirit that is essential to attaining union with the divine calls for a threefold poverty of will, of intellect and of being. Let us take each in turn.

Poverty of will is open to several interpretations. Some may think that it calls for the human will to be in conformity with the divine will. Eckhart assures us that while well intended people who have this view of poverty know nothing more about it than a donkey. To want to unify my will with God’s will is not sufficient, for it implies a duality of wills that is inconsistent with the oneness of the Divine. I must surrender my capacity of willing altogether. I must become—as I was before I was created—devoid of will.

Poverty of intellect entails a radical severance from our customary ways of knowing. The indigent “should be so free of all knowing that he does not know or experience or grasp that God lives in him.” To live for any purpose, for example, for self-fulfillment, for truth, for God implies a duality between God and the poor person is unacceptable and is not true poverty. The creature’s claims to knowledge must be stilled so that God alone knows. In short, the knower must become as unknowing as he was in the Divine Intellect before he was created.

The third kind of poverty pertains to everything that affects the very being of the person. Union with the Divine requires infinitely more than simply “making a place for God to work within the self”. Such a view is inconsistent with union because it implies a duality of God and creature. The person as a creature, as existing in such a way that differs as a “this” from a “that” must be extinguished so that God may work wherever God wants to work. The point of these acts of self-deprivation is to enable the creature to “breakthrough” into the realm of divine intellect above creation and above being. In this way he returns to his primordial condition in the Divine Intellect.

This return of the creature to its place of origin has also been described as an exercise in ascetic discipline where the creature practices detachment (*abegescheidenheit*) with respect to every power within the soul. Eckhart argues that pure detachment from all things is a higher virtue than love, humility or mercy. It is so because each of these requires a person to go out of himself into the realm of external objects where things are differentiated into a “this” or a “that”. Detachment remains within the person and affects his innermost life. “Perfect detachment has no looking up to, no abasement, not beneath any created thing or above it; it wishes to be neither beneath nor above, it wants to exist by itself, not giving joy or sorrow to anyone, not wanting equality or inequality with
any created thing, not wishing for this or that, this it does not want....[d]etachment wants to be nothing at all.”  

4 It would seem that detachment is the means to a perfect asceticism that goes beyond self-deprivation and self-denial to a kind of self-annihilation. In this scheme of things God is compelled to come to the detached soul. “[L]ove compels me to love God, yet detachment compels God to love me. Now it is far greater for me to compel God to come to me than to compel myself to come to God; and that is because God is able to conform himself far better and with more suppleness, and to unite himself with me than I could unite myself with God.”  

5 With the example of Eckhart’s anthropological apophaticism in mind, let us now turn to the Confessions to see whether they contain anything like it.

B.

Although they range over many topics Augustine’s Confessions revolve around the central issue of how the human individual is able to know, love and come into the presence of God. 6 Augustine introduces us to many details of his past—his pre-natal existence, his infancy, childhood and adolescence, his profligate life as a young adult, his conversion to Christianity and the consequences of that momentous event on his subsequent life. We soon see that Augustine’s pursuit of self-knowledge is one with his discovery of a triune God that is immutable, eternal and infinite. He knows Augustine infinitely better than he knows himself. He loves him unconditionally and promises to save him from ultimate annihilation.

One figure of speech that is associated with the pursuit of self-knowledge throughout the Confessions is that of the face as in “Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.” 7 “You [God] took me from behind my own back.... [a]nd stood me face to face so that I might see how foul I was....” 8 The theme of self reflection returns in late in the Confessions in a passage that draws together the major philosophical themes of the entire work. It is remarkable that scholars who have puzzled for half a century to explain the unity of the Confessions have for the most part ignored this text. Only Robert O’Connell (1969) and James O’Donnell (1985 and 1992) suggested its importance for explaining the unity of the Confessions. The passage focuses on three acts—to be, to know, to will—that constitute human nature as made in the image of God. These are similar to the triple powers of “to be, to live, to understand” of De libero arbitrio or “memory, intellect and will” of De Trinitate.

“[I] would that men would reflect upon these three certain things within themselves. Far different are these three from that Trinity, but I indicate where it is men may consider them, weigh them, and perceive how far different they are.

I speak of these three: to be (esse), to know (nosse) and to will (velle). For I am, and I know, and I will: I am a knowing and a willing being, and I know that I am and that I will, and I will to be and to know. Therefore, these three let him who can do so perceive how inseparable a life there is, one life and one mind and one essence, and finally how inseparable a distinction there is, and yet there is a distinction. Surely, a man stands face to face with himself. Let him take heed of himself, and look


5 Ibid. p. 286.

6 Aurelius Augustine, The Confessions of Saint Augustine. All references are to this translation.

7 Ibid., p. 233.

8 Ibid. 8.7, p. 193.

Augustine goes on to question whether there is a Trinity in God because of these three acts and how the three acts would be related to the persons of the Trinity. He ends with the questions: “[Who] could conceive such things with any ease? Who could state them in any manner? Who could rashly pronounce thereon in any way?” We may be tempted here to answer these questions with the reply: Who else but “Aurelius Augustine”? But if this answer fits the De Trinitate, other mature works and even other chapters in Confessions, it does not fit this chapter that appropriately ends in silence.

I have said that the passage is a culmination of the main lines of philosophical investigation pursued in the Confessions. Here are my reasons. In that work Augustine’s search for self-knowledge leads him to develop some general ideas about human knowledge. This is not a “theory” or an “epistemology” in the formal sense, but it includes views on the nature and functions of the powers that contribute to human understanding. These epistemological studies are plainly intended to clarify finite knowing acts of human beings. Similarly, Augustine’s probing discussions of moral experience and the power of free choice are directed at making intelligible finite acts of the human will. Lastly, his discussions of creation and especially of the fundamental properties of bodies in space and time are essential to his account of the nature of finite material things. These topics are the principal content of the twelve books of the Confessions that precede the above quotation. Stated in the language of self-knowledge, it draws them together and relates them to the infinite acts of esse, nosse and velle that those finite acts seem to imply. That three discrete kinds of act constitute the life, mind and essence of a person is a significant claim to make about human nature. The implication that they are aspects or manifestations of infinite acts of knowing, willing and being is also a powerful metaphysical claim. The questions of whether or how the three acts understood in their infinitive forms relate to one another are posed but not answered. The greater question of how they may relate to a triune God is posed for silent reflection. Now, I want to review some lines of thought that lead to the above passage. I will be interested in examples that illustrate the form of Augustine’s argumentation because I believe that this may help to clarify his apophatic methods.

Augustine pictures his life as a struggle, and he often represents it as having a pattern of conflict and resolution. This fact of his life is replicated in his rhetorical style where he finds his way into a question by posing available alternatives and arguing for each of them to the point of paradox or dilemma. Then he asserts a proposition (often from Scripture) that negates and in some way surpasses the two alternatives that he has argued for. Recall his conversion story.
“As for me, when I deliberated upon serving the Lord my God, as I had long planned to do, it was I myself who willed it and I myself who did not will it. It was I myself. I neither willed it completely, nor did I refrain completely from willing it. Therefore, I was at war with myself, and I was laid waste by myself. This devastation was made against my will indeed, and yet it revealed not the nature of a different mind within me, but rather the punishment of my own nature.”

This text goes on to tell about original sin, repentance and Augustine’s conversion upon reading Romans 13. 13, 14: “[Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.” He sums up his final state of mind: “instantly, in truth, at the end of this sentence, as if before a peaceful light streaming into my heart, all the dark shadows of doubt fled away.” This text illustrates that Augustine affirms his communion with God in the utterance of a true sentence only after a vigorous contest with reasons both for and against a decision that lies before him. This is a process in which opposing alternatives are both supported and then rejected in favor of a higher proposition that supercedes them. Often the “higher proposition” is expressed in a quotation from Scripture.

Augustine develops the concept of volition in order to answer some fundamental questions about the nature of evil. I do not have time here to go into the many reasons why he came to all of his conclusions on that topic. For example, that evil is not a material body, that each thing to the extent that it is - - is good, that nothing absolutely evil exists, that evil is not an entity, that evil consists in a thing’s acting against its nature, and that evil is caused by free choice of the will. In each case where Augustine assents to one of these propositions he does so only after considerable debate that offers reasons both for and against them. This argumentation results in a dilemma that he negates by affirming the propositions in question. This pattern of argumentation is used on other moral matters, e.g. virtues and vices, the seven capital sins, the status of good and evil, the nature of volition and human choice.

Aware of his shortcomings Augustine composed the Confessions as an antidote to his own ignorance. “Let me confess, then, what I know about myself. Let me confess also what I do not know about myself, since that too which I know about myself I know because you enlighten me. As to that which I am ignorant of concerning myself, I remain ignorant of it until my “darkness shall be made as the noonday in you sight.” Admission of ignorance is a recurrent theme of the Confessions, and it is often expressed, as here, with a juxtaposition of contraries: “I confess what I know about myself; I confess what I do not know about myself.” Not surprisingly, he rises above these oppositions by affirming a passage from Revelation.

A similar pattern is apparent in Augustine’s explorations of human knowledge. Although self-knowledge is the primary goal of the Confessions, Augustine is compelled to examine the entire range of factors that play a part in human cognition. He assays the functions of sensation, imagination, memory, mind, concept and language formation, judgment, reason, intellect and truth which, as we know, he identifies with God. Augustine follows a pattern of argumentation here similar to what we have seen. For example, how can one remember forgetfulness? If the image of forgetfulness is in the memory the reality of it was once there. But the reality of forgetfulness wipes

10 Ibid. 8.10, pp. 197-198.
11 Ibid. 8.29.
12 Ibid. 10.5, p. 233.
out the memory of what it finds there. How, then, is the memory of forgetfulness possible? Faced with this dilemma Augustine simply affirms that the matter is incomprehensible and inexplicable and that “[he] is certain that [he] has remembered forgetfulness itself, whereby what we remember is destroyed.” 13 He goes on to declare the greatness of the power of memory and to call it an awesome thing “deep and boundless and manifold in being.” 14

Here, the absurdity is rejected in favor of experience, and the incomprehensibility of memory only enhances its magnificence.

Finally, we come to those themes in the Confessions that bear upon existence and being. Augustine often alludes to these when he affirms the creative power of God and the dependency of creation upon it. His most careful and sustained study of the subject comes up in the Eleventh and Twelfth books which are devoted respectively to time and the creation of bodies in space. The paradoxes of time have been well examined by several scholars. 15 In this paper I want to remark on the dichotomies posed in the analysis of time, e.g. that time both is and is not real. Briefly, it is real because we divide time into past, present and future. It is not real because the past no longer is, the future is not yet and the present is simply the point where the future becomes the past. Once Augustine has established oppositions of this sort, he moves to another level of discourse. In the case of “time” he claims that there are partial presences, that parts presuppose a whole and, therefore, that what is wholly present exists. This rhetorical form of argument, i.e. from parts to wholes, is persuasive; its persuasive power is enhanced, I submit, by the fact that it enables him to resolve and go beyond the dilemma previously argued.

Book 12 offers an interpretation of Genesis I concerning the creation of spatial objects. Augustine claims that the first of created things is “formless matter”. It is made out of nothing; it is called a “near-nothing”, a “next-to-nothing”, an “almost nothing”, a “nothing-something”, an “is-is-not”. It is prior to formed things in origin since formed things are made from formless matter. Ordinary formed things are related to formless matter as something is to nothing just as formless matter itself is related to its origin, the eternity of the creator; “so that that from which something would be made would itself be made from nothing.” 16 Here the term “the eternity of the creator” is coordinate with the term “nothing”. Having argued that formless matter both is and is not, Augustine moves on to resolve this dilemma by asserting that God is related to formless matter by a priority of origin. More familiarly, God originates or creates formless matter. Once again, Augustine’s argument proves both of opposing propositions and then proceeds to affirm some “higher” proposition that supercedes the contradiction in question.

The Confessions embody many forms of argumentation from ancient rhetoric and dialectic. The rhetorical devices of example and enthymeme—in the classical sense of an argument by signs—are the most prevalent forms. Nonetheless, in some passages, such as the ones that I have cited, Augustine uses a particular form of dialectical argumentation called aporeme. It argues from plausible premises in support of two mutually contradictory or contrary propositions. This process creates an impasse or aporia in which the rational mind is suspended between opposing alternatives.

13 Ibid. 10.16, p. 246.
14 Idem.
15 For example, Roland Teske, S.J., Paradoxes of Time in St. Augustine, The Aquinas Lecture.
16 Confessions, 12.12 ff.
In ancient practice this experience prepared the mind for the discovery of new knowledge or in the case of skepticism for suspension of judgment (ataraxia). This mode of reasoning is familiar from the Platonic dialogues and from the works of the Dialecticians, Sophists and Sceptics. Aristotle formulates rules for it in the Topics, and it informs his pedagogical practice. Augustine no doubt learned it from his rhetorical training and used it to compose his early dialogues. I submit that aporetic argumentation and apophatic argumentation in the Confessions are similar in form. This suggests that where we find the one we will find the other. But this is not the case. Where we find the dichotomies required by apophatics, the subsequent proposition is frequently affirmative and not negative. Where we find the requisite negations there is often no previous opposition of theses. The aporeme may give rise to either kind of assertion; whereas Apophatic discourse must yield the negation of some properties sayable of God (theological apophaticism) or of humans (anthropological apophaticism). We can spare ourselves these difficulties by recognizing that apophatic argumentation is a species of aporetic argumentation in which the concluding thesis may need to be logically transformed: e.g. From “God is immutable” to “God is not mutable.” With these minor adjustments the text from Book Thirteen, Chapter Eleven becomes a set-piece to show how apophatic discourse works in Confessions. For that passage brings together a diversity of finite acts and unifies them in the infinite acts of existence, knowledge and volition. The text affirms the unity of these in the life, mind and essence of the human person and relates the creature so understood to the Creator. Augustine describes this as a “vision” that may have the power to reduce one to silence.17 I began with Denys Turner’s claim that Augustine was so immersed in figurative and metaphorical language that at best he has only an “implied” anthropological apophaticism. I have argued that there is a method in Augustine’s madness that goes beyond figurative language. He practices a kind of dialectical argumentation that has as its purpose the generation of opposed propositions. These constitute an aporia or impasse at which point Augustine goes beyond them to assert some “higher” proposition that is relevant to his purpose. When proper attention is paid to Augustine’s philosophical arguments in the areas of knowledge, morality and existence his works may support a claim of theological apophaticism. When we pay due attention to his expressions of the failures and frailty of human capacities—whether in the field of volition where he admits his powerlessness, in that of cognition where he admits his ignorance, or in the study of existence where he invokes an eternal God to account for time or for space—in all of these cases, Augustine declares the weakness of his unaided human intellect apart from Divine Revelation and Grace. Again, his account of how he turned from a life of sin to one of Grace is marked by successive acts of self-discipline and self-denial. For those reasons, we can say that Augustine practices a kind of anthropological apophasis. But his admissions of human frailty are part of his pursuit of self-recovery and self-making. His itinerarium mentis may, in the end, lead him to become what he once was in the mind of

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17 This conclusion raises the paradox that Augustine himself acknowledged and that most writers have assumed he did not solve. That is the problem of how one can speak the ineffable. “Have we spoken or announced anything worthy of God? Rather I have done nothing but wish to speak: if I have spoken, I have not said what I wished to say. Whence do I know this, except because God is ineffable? If what I said were ineffable, it would not be said. And for this reason God should not be said to be ineffable, for when this is said something is said. And a contradiction in terms is created, since if that is ineffable which cannot be spoken, then that is not ineffable which can be called ineffable. [viz. God] This contradiction is to be passed over in silence rather than resolved verbally. For God, although nothing worthy may be spoken of him, has accepted the tribute of human voice and wished us to take joy in praising him with our words.” De Doctrina Christiana I.6 in On Christian Doctrine, D.W. Robertson (tr.) (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 10-11. I do not agree with those who say that Augustine did not resolve this paradox although he does not resolve it here. The paradox may be solved, I submit, by allowing that God whose nature is ineffable has nonetheless spoken through Revelation words that can be spoken of him.
God. These concessions aside, it would be impossible, I submit, to construe Augustine’s asceticism in the *Confessions* as a process of self-annihilation after the manner of Meister Eckhart.

**CONCLUDING NOTE**

In one respect, the apophatic methods of Eckhart and Augustine may be compared favorably, for both resemble the practices of Pyrrhonian skepticism. It is understatement to call Eckhart a sceptic, but long tradition (and a certain piety) forbids calling Augustine a sceptic. Officially, he became a sceptic for a short time, recognized that skepticism leads to despair about the attainability of knowledge, rejected it, and refuted it in *Contra Academicos*. Most scholars have taken Augustine’s refutation of skepticism to have been decisive not only for himself but for the entire Middle Ages. Richard Popkin and Charles Schmitt, two leading scholars on the history of Skepticism, conclude that “the continuity of these [sceptical schools] with the Middle Ages was practically nil...Augustine’s *Contra Academicos* seems to be the last Western effort before the revival of skepticism in the Renaissance to deal with that philosophy as a living force.”\(^{18}\) Setting aside the historical question, I submit that Augustine’s philosophical method includes a residual skepticism that fuels his polemics and acts as a creative force in some of his most dogmatic works. This skepticism manifests itself in the use of *aporetic* argumentation that I have described. It is not a general or total skepticism but one trained on the limits of human knowledge and volition. Admitting its weakness and shortcomings the mind is prepared to assent to the truths of faith.

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Jason Lawrence Reed:

The Temporal’s “Presentness” to Divine Eternity in Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

In two articles, William Lane Craig applied McTaggart’s two categories of time to explain the relation between the eternal and the temporal as espoused in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. McTaggart contrasted two basic views on the nature of time. He termed them as the ‘A’ and ‘B’ theories of time. Briefly, the A-theory states that the relation between temporal facts is one of ontological difference. Only the present exists in the A-theory. The past was present but is not anymore, the present is actually real, and the future is not real in any sense. Temporal becoming is a real phenomenon. Hence, the ontological status of the present is different from the past and future. In contrast, the B-theory holds that the events in the temporal series have the same ontological status. That is past, present, and future events exist. Present events exist now; past events also exist, but are ‘earlier than’ in time, and the future exists but is ‘later than’ in time. In view of these theories of time, the question Craig is interested in is: Does the relation between eternity and the temporal in Aquinas entail an A-theory of time or a B-theory of time? Craig argues that Aquinas is committed to a B-theory of time. My main contention is that Craig is guilty of being ahistorical in his treatment of Aquinas. That is, Aquinas is being forced into ex post facto categories unknown to him. So, this paper is divided into the following parts: (1) an exposition of Craig’s view and (2) a proposal on how to properly understand Aquinas’s position.

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3 These two views have implications for the transition of time. In the A-theory, the transition is a real extra-mental feature of the universe. The passage of time, then, involves the real coming to-be of non-actual states of affairs. In the B-theory, when the future becomes present does not entail a real coming “to-be” of non-actual states of affairs. For the B-theory, all of the temporal events are equally actual. The passage of time, then, is a subjective feature of human perception. In summary, “In A-theory, that ‘future events do not now exist’ entails that future events do not exist. In B-theory, ‘future events do not now exist’ does not entail that future events do not exist” (Brian Leftow, “Aquinas on Time and Eternity,” *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* LXIV, no.3 (1990): 388).

4 I do not treat in this paper certain problems that have historically been associated with God’s knowledge of future contingents, such as how is God’s knowledge being the cause of things compatible with human freedom. Other works have treated this concern, [e.g., Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990); Brian J. Shanley’s two articles, “Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* LXXII, no.1 (1998): 99-122, and “Aquinas on God’s Causal Knowledge: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* LXXII, no. 3 (1998): 447-57; Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “God’s Knowledge and Its Causal Efficacy,” *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*, ed. Thomas Senor, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) 94-124]. To address this concern and others goes beyond the scope of this paper. The more pressing question I am dealing with is the notion of ‘presentness’ or ‘being actually present’ in eternity and the real becoming of time as understood in an A-theory interpretation of real becoming.
Craig on Aquinas and God’s Foreknowledge

According to Craig, the problem of whether Aquinas held to an A or a B theory of time is engendered by Aquinas’ position on God’s knowledge of future contingents. Craig says, “Now Thomas Aquinas in his discussion of divine foreknowledge and human freedom proposes a solution to the problem of theological fatalism which appears to carry with it a commitment to one of these views of time.”

In order to answer the question, “Does God’s knowledge contain future contingents?” Aquinas makes the distinction between two ways that a contingent can be known: “first, in itself, in so far as it is now in act; and in this sense it is not considered as future, but as present. . . . In another way a contingent thing can be considered as it is in its cause; and in this way it is considered as future.” That is, there is a distinction between two modes of the existence of a contingent: (1) its existence in itself, as actual, or (2) as it exists in its cause, as future. For Aquinas, when a contingent is considered in its own existence as actual, it is present and therefore “can be infallibly the object of certain knowledge, as when I see Socrates is sitting down.” So, even though the act of Socrates sitting is contingent, it is also necessary in the sense that it is necessary that when Socrates sits, he sits and does not not-sit. Craig says that “[Aquinas] explains elsewhere, after a contingent event has been brought into being, it can no longer be prevented.” As will be seen later, this phraseology by Aquinas [i.e., contingents being in ‘being’] is what drives Craig’s interpretation of Aquinas’s view of time.

The distinction between the two modes of a contingent’s existence is the beginning of Aquinas’s answer to God’s knowledge of future contingents. In order to have infallible knowledge of future contingents, the first way a contingent can be understood is how God knows them. That is, contingents can be known by God, and remain contingent, if and only if, they are somehow present to God. Otherwise, if contingents are known only as future, then because “a contingent thing is not yet determined . . . [it] is not subject to any certain knowledge.” Hence, in some way future contingents must be present to God.

In what way, then, are these future contingents present to God? Aquinas explains:

The contingent is opposed to the certitude of knowledge only so far as it is future, not so far as it is present. For when the contingent is future, it can not-be . . . . But in is so far as the contingent is present [actual], in that time it cannot not-be. . . . Thus nothing is lost to the certitude of sense when someone sees a man running, even though this judgment is contingent. All knowledge, therefore, that bears on something contingent as present can be certain. But the vision of the divine intellect from all eternity is directed to each of the things that take place in the course of time, in so far as it is present. . . It remains, therefore, that nothing prevents God from having from all eternity an infallible knowledge of contingents.”

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5Craig, “Was Thomas a B-Theorist,” 475.


7Ibid.

8Craig, “Was Thomas a B-Theorist,” 476, (emphasis added).


Craig states, “In His timeless eternity, all events—past, present, and future—are present to God, and laid bare to His gaze.”\(^{11}\) The ‘gaze’ that Craig is referring to is what Aquinas calls God’s timeless knowledge of vision. The certainty of divine foreknowledge in Aquinas is solved by the presentness of contingents. Craig comments that it is the presentness of contingents that makes them objects of certain knowledge “because at the moment of its existence, the contingent cannot not-be.”\(^{12}\) How is this to be understood? Craig says, “Having regarded that the contingent when present may be the object of certain knowledge, he [Aquinas] makes the ingenious move of contending that in God’s eternity all events are present and so infallibly known.”\(^{13}\)

Aquinas uses the relation between a circle’s center to its circumference to illustrate God’s relation to the temporal. Although each point on the circumference is not simultaneous with any other point on the circle, the center of the circle is directly related with each of the points on the circumference. Craig says, “Letting the center represent eternity and the circumference the temporal series, we may see that while no event in the series is simultaneous with any other, nevertheless, eternity is simultaneously present to all the events in the series.”\(^{14}\) For Aquinas, this is the way things are present to God.

> Whatever is found in any part of time coexists with what is eternal as being present to it, although with respect to some other time it be past or future. Something can be present to what is eternal only by being present to the whole of it, since the eternal does not have duration of succession. The divine intellect, therefore, sees in the whole of its eternity, as being present to it, whatever takes place through the whole course of time.\(^{15}\)

Craig interprets this notion of the ‘temporal being present to eternity’ to imply that the series of time to God is an external presence. That is, the fact that God knows contingents in their actual existence makes it seem certain that what he is knowing are things that actually exist. To be simultaneous with each existing thing in the temporal series, eternity must be present to a somehow already existing thing. Remember, for Aquinas, the only way for God to know future contingents was that God had to know them as present; as actual. Otherwise, God cannot be said to know future contingents. Hence, “God’s eternity is in present contact with the whole course of time.”\(^{16}\) The whole course of time is stretched out before God.

Craig sees this as entailing that all states along the temporal series [whether past, present, or future] are “ontologically on par” with each other. He gives the following quote from Aquinas in support:

> The contingent is in its cause in such a way that it can both not-be and be from it; but the necessary can only be from its cause. But according to the way both of them are in themselves, they do not differ as to being, upon which the true is founded. For, according as it is in itself, the contingent cannot be and not-be, it can only be, even though in the future it can not-be . . . we cannot say that this is known by God as non-existent, so as to leave room for the question whether it can not-be; rather it will be said to be known by God in such a way that it is seen by Him already in its own existence. On this

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\(^{11}\)Craig, “Was Thomas a B-theorist,” 476.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 477.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., (emphasis added).

\(^{14}\)Ibid., 477 (emphasis added).

\(^{15}\)Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 66, 7.

\(^{16}\)Craig, “Aquinas on God’s Knowledge,” 66.
Craig takes Aquinas’s point to be that future contingents in some sense have being. That is, they in some sense exist. Given that Aquinas says that future contingents have actual existence and are present to God’s eternity, it then follows for Craig that this presence of contingents is a “real external presence.”¹⁸ Thus, actually existing things that are equally present to God entails that “the past, present, and future are all ontologically on a par with each other.”¹⁹ This is exactly what the B-theory of time states. “Accordingly, Thomas held to a B-theory of time.”²⁰

To summarize Craig’s argument, future contingents can be either known in themselves or in their proximate cause. Contingent things (when present) can be objects of infallible and certain knowledge. God being omniscient, must know future contingents as present. They are present to God in his eternity the way the center of a wheel is simultaneously present with each point on the circumference of the circle. Aquinas calls this God’s timeless knowledge of vision. Contingents are present to the knowledge of vision in their actual existence. All contingents being equally present to God in their actual being entails that each member is ontologically the same as each other member. This, by definition, is the B-theory of time. Therefore, because Aquinas believed that the temporal is actually present in eternity, he held to a B-theory of time.

Proposal for an answer to Craig and the A vs. B theory controversy

Craig challenges the defender of Aquinas²¹ to solve the tension between: (1) real becoming and of non-actual events and (2) the temporal (especially future contingents) being present to divine eternity. How is the defender of divine eternity, as understood by Aquinas, to respond?

Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann when confronted with the problem of religious language concerning their idea of ‘eternity’ say, “philosophers who developed the concept of eternity were led to use familiar terms in unfamiliar ways in trying to express the novel notion of a life possessed completely all at once.”²² Stump and Kretzmann are responding to univocal predication. In another reply they state, “Predicating the same characteristics of God and creatures, however, does not entail predicating them univocally.”²³ The method of predication they are referring to is historically known as analogy. Again, Stump and Kretzmann state:

Aquinas, for example, attributes to God not only knowledge and freedom, . . . duration and presentness (as we do), but also goodness, justice, and love, without supposing that he is thereby in conflict with his own argued position that no characteristic can be predicated univocally of God and creatures. Instead, he maintains that although God’s knowledge, duration, or goodness are not
I want to propose that analogy has been largely ignored as a solution to the problem at hand. Craig sees the B-theory of time as the best explanation for the following propositions:

‘Future’ contingents are known in themselves as actual to God’s knowledge of vision.

‘Future’ contingents are present to God’s eternity

I contend that Craig is predicating the terms ‘present,’ ‘actual,’ and ‘existence’ univocally. That is, for Craig, these terms have the same application when talking about things being present in a temporal series or when speaking of eternity. Craig’s argument that Aquinas’s doctrine of temporal events being present to God entailing a B-theory, however, can be vitiated by Aquinas’s analogical predication. So, first I want to sketch how Aquinas thinks a creature arrives at knowledge of the creator. Second, I will explicate the principles of analogy. The difficulty in this section will be in deducing grammatical rules for speaking about God in light of the fact that all knowledge comes from the temporal realm. Finally, the grammatical rules deduced will be applied to what is meant by predicating ‘present temporal beings’ in eternity.

**Analogical Predication**

The doctrine of analogy emerges from the proofs of God’s existence. The conclusion from the Five Ways is the Efficient, Self-existing, and Necessary Cause of finite being. Since effects must be like their proper [i.e., efficient] cause, knowledge of God can be derived from his effects. God gives

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24Ibid., 467-69.

25Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a, 2, 1-3. I am not going to go over the arguments here, because for the purposes of this paper it is the conclusions arrived at by Aquinas that is of importance here. The validity or soundness of the arguments goes beyond the scope of this paper.

26There has been much debate over what is meant by the concept of a Necessary Being. For the rationalists, God is a logically necessary being. To deny existence of God is a contradiction. Necessary beings must exist necessarily. So, if God does not exist, then he is not necessary. But God is necessary. Hence, he must exist or he is not God. Aquinas rejects this notion of necessity. For Aquinas, there is no contradiction in denying the non-existence of something. As he says, “No one can mentally admit the opposite of what is self-evident . . . But the opposite of the proposition “God is” can be mentally admitted. . . Therefore, that God exists is not self-evident” (ST, 1a, 2, 1). If God where a logically necessary being, then the denial of God’s existence would be logically impossible. However, it is not logically impossible to deny the existence of God. So, God is not a logically necessary being. The kind of necessity Aquinas is talking about in reference to God is ontological necessity. The proposition “God is” is not necessary. It is the being of God that is necessary. God is the kind of being that, if he exists he must exist. If a necessary being exists, then it must exist necessarily. There is no logical way of removing the ‘if’ from the conditional. For Aquinas, to remove the ‘if’ requires a demonstration from the world of being.

27The warrant for believing that there is some likeness between an efficient cause [sometimes called the proper cause] is based on the validity of Aquinas’s principle, viz., the principle being that act communicates act, or being communicates being. The principle of likeness between cause and effect comes from one of Aquinas’s first principles—the principle of
finite beings their actuality—as act communicates act or being communicates being—they must be like God. Also, God is Pure Act and creates beings composed of actuality and potentiality. Hence, there must be a difference between God and creatures. The difference lies in that creatures are limited in their existence whereas God is not. This similarity of Creator/creature is the basis for analogical God-talk. There needs to be some caution about predicating words from creatures to the Creator. The perfections of creatures are only likenesses of the divine essence. They do not represent God as he is in his own being. Hence, man must impose qualifications to the concepts predicated of God. As Aquinas says, “these names [i.e., names used of creatures] signify the divine substance, and are predicated substantially of God, although they fall short of a full representation of Him [they are true but imperfect]. . . . Therefore, the aforesaid names signify the divine substance, but in an imperfect manner.”

God-talk, then, has this caveat: God is not like creatures in their potency, so all talk about God is imperfect.

Second, finite human beings know God according to their mode of being. The mode of being of humans, for Aquinas, necessarily results in temporal, tensed, enunciations. So, our statements about God will be imperfect because the One who is eternal cannot be expressed univocally in temporal terms. But, that does not mean we cannot make true statements about God using temporal terms. We must remind ourselves that this is an imperfect way of talking about God.

However, this imperfect knowledge of God is still true knowledge about God. We make true propositions about God according to our mode of being. The truth expressed in our statements about God cannot be conceived. Rather, they are affirmed or negated. That is, we know that the statements we make are true, without knowing how they are true. To make this more explicit, there is a distinction between how as it relates to God’s being and how as it relates to our knowing. In other words, we can give reasons as to how we know true statements about God, but we may not know how God exists in the manner that he does.

The knowledge of God, then, terminates in finite beings making affirmative or negative propositions. This analogy of predication is not to be confused with analogical concepts. As Armand Maurer said, “St. Thomas’ doctrine of analogy is above all a doctrine of judgment of analogy and not of the analogy of concept.” Human knowledge of God does not terminate in a formal concept of the divine essence, rather, the human mind affirms a perfection found in creatures.

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28Ibid., 1a. 13, 2.
29“Knowledge is regulated according as the thing is known is in the mind of the knower. But the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Hence the knowledge of every knower is ruled according to its own nature” (Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1a. 12, 4; see also 1a. 12, 12).
31For example, we know that all of the divine perfections are united in one essence. We do not know how they are united.
32This is only true for a rational nature joined to matter. The angelic beings, being subsisting forms, know intuitively without propositions. See Goris’s Free Creatures of an Eternal God, chapter 6.1.
of God and then denies the limitation. God is ‘good’ and man is ‘good.’ God is good in an unlimited, infinite way; man is good in a limited and finite way. That is, there is a distinction between res significata and modus significandi. The concept is univocal, and therefore, retains the same meaning. The analogical element in God-talk is in the way in which the terms are applied. The terms, when applied to God, are emancipated from the limiting mode of predication. In other words, what is signified of creatures and God is the same, but the mode of signification is different—i.e., analogous. All truth, then, about God is predicable, but not conceivable. This is the essence of analogy.

God’s Knowledge of Future Contingents

Analogous predication of concepts found in finite being will show that Craig does not understand what Aquinas means when he says temporal things are present to eternity.

Aquinas is quite clear about how God knows things other than himself. Craig claims that God’s knowledge of future contingents is a knowledge of inspecting things external to him. But, as David Burrell says, “All one needs to is ask whether Aquinas is actually contending that God looks out to inspect objects, and the question answers itself.” Burrell might be referring to the passage in which Aquinas says, “we say that God sees Himself in Himself, because He sees Himself through His essence; and He sees other things not in themselves, but in Himself.” It is manifest that Aquinas did not think God knows others [whether future contingents or not] in an external presence. God knows according to his mode of being. His mode of being is a non-temporal [i.e., eternal] kind of existence. Moreover, for Aquinas the object known exists in the knower according to the mode of the knower’s being. Hence, when a man knows a stone, the stone exists in the mind immaterially and intentionally. Nevertheless, the man still knows the material stone as material. In other words, the human person knows the material stone in an immaterial and intentional way. As Aquinas states, “if any knower has a knowledge of the object known according to the (mode of) existence it has in the knower, the knower nevertheless knows it according to its (mode of) existence outside the knower.” To wit, what man knows is different than how he knows.

In the case of God, objects known must be in the knower according to his mode of being. Now, God is the creating and sustaining cause of his effects. Things are present to him as “the knowledge of the artificer is to things made by his art.” Artists’s knowledge of their power is how they know what

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34For example, the meaning of the terms, “knowledge,” “truth,” “good,” “wise,” etc. do not change their definition in propositions about God and man. So, in the propositions, “God is wise” and “man is wise” the term ‘wise’ means the same thing.

35The terms, “knowledge,” “truth,” “good,” “wise,” etc. are predicated of God without limits. That is, the predicates are said essentially of God.

36For Aquinas, knowledge of God is found in the second act of the intellect. Following Aristotle, Aquinas says the intellect has three acts: (1) apprehension—understanding of a thing, object, etc., (2) predication—declaration or assertion about a thing, object, etc., (3) syllogism—deduction about a thing, object, etc.


41Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1a. 14, 5.

42Ibid., 1a.14, 6.

43Ibid., 1a. 14, 8.
they can produce. That is, artists know what they can create by knowing *themselves*. This model of self-knowledge is how God’s knowledge of future contingents needs to be understood. The way in which art pre-exists in the mind of the artisan is *similar* and *analogous* to the way in which “all things pre-exist in God.”

Eternity denotes God’s being. As stated above, the object known must exist in the knower according to the knower’s mode of being. So, God knows temporal things in a non-temporal [i.e., eternal] way. God having eternal knowledge of things does not entail that they currently exist in their own act of subsistent being. David Burrell sums up this point well. He states, God is related to his effects “intentionally and by analogy with artists to their products.”

God has knowledge of his effects because of his bringing about their existence. As Aquinas says, “His knowledge must be the cause of things, in so far as His will is joined to it.” God knows other things because he knows what he is doing. And what God is doing is bringing about the existence of things. This includes future contingents. Future contingents are ‘present’ to God in a way that we do not comprehend. However, we can make true statements about how they are ‘present.’ They are present in God’s power as bringing them about. Future contingents are present to God according to his mode of being. Aquinas states, “whatever effects pre-exist in God, as in the first cause, must be in His act of understanding, and all things must be in Him according to an intelligible mode: for everything which is in another, is in it according to the mode of that in which it is.” Contingents are actually in God’s eternity in a way similar to how the actual existence of a stone is present in the intellect of a human person. As David Burrell articulates,

> By definition, an eternal God does not know contingent events *before* they happen; although God certainly knows all that may or might happen, God does not know what will happen. God knows all and only what is happening (and as a consequence what has happened). That is, God does not already know what will happen, since what “will happen” has not yet happened and so does not yet exist. God knows what God is bringing about. Yet since our discourse is temporal, we must remind ourselves not to read such a statement as saying that God is now bringing about what will happen, even though what will have happened is the result of God’s action.

The difficulty that Craig has with Aquinas saying eternity is present with the whole of time in its actual existence is that, when things are ‘present’ to eternity, the term ‘present’ is predicking according to a different kind of being. Therefore, the term ‘present’ must be understood according to its analogical predication. Being present to eternity is the kind of presentness that we as finite creatures are totally unfamiliar with. God’s knowledge of things is the complete reverse of ours. God knows us as the non-temporal creator of his effects. The whole of time is present to God because it pre-exists in him as the art pre-exists in the artist. The mode of being of temporal events in God is intentional, immaterial, immutable, etc. When temporal things exist in themselves, they exist actually, materially, successively, and mutably. That things are present to God in his eternity does not entail

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44 Ibid., 1a. 14, 6.
45 “Eternity is nothing else but God Himself” (Ibid., 1a. 10, 2, ad 3).
48 Ibid., 1a. 14, 5.
49 Burrell, Ibid. (emphases his).
that they exist in themselves. Craig’s arguments do not follow because of his failure to treat the analogous predication of concepts in Aquinas.

Finally, I submit, Craig misunderstands Aquinas because he introduces a problem in categories unfamiliar to Aquinas; namely, the A versus B theories of time. So, it is no wonder that Craig reads into Aquinas a B theory of time when he discusses Aquinas’s view of God’s infallible foreknowledge of future contingents. However, this reading ‘into’ is a result of failing to take into account the methodology and metaphysics of Aquinas. For Aquinas, things are not present to God in the way that the B theory states. This ahistorical approach to Aquinas may be a reason why analogy is not broached. When terms like ‘present,’ ‘simultaneous,’ and ‘actual’ are predicated according to the mode of finite-temporal being, this results in the denoting of an external presence. However, when speaking about God, one needs to consider his mode of being. Therefore, in order for Craig to make his case, he needs to treat Aquinas’s analogical predication according to God’s mode of being.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Peter Weigel:

Simplicity and Explanation in Aquinas’ God

Introduction

The tremendous power of the divine simplicity in shaping our understanding of the other major divine attributes is an insight Aquinas makes the most use of at the end of his career, particularly in *Summa theologia*. Modern philosophical literature abounds in the systematic problems raised by the doctrine of divine simplicity in regard to other divine attributes. Far less appreciated nowadays is the magnificent power of this doctrine to help generate and therefore determine the basic working character of other divine attributes. I want to begin by sketching how the tremendous influence of simplicity plays itself out in Aquinas’ natural theology of the major attributes. Later on I suggest how the determinative power of this attribute over others can be traced to a very particular model of sufficient explanation Aquinas holds. Some concluding remarks briefly anticipate how, in connection with the ontology of simplicity, Aquinas’ model of explanation has extensive implications for both the natural and revealed theology of the second *Summa*.

I should caution that the paper is intended to be a preliminary reconnaissance of several major themes surrounding simplicity and explanation in Aquinas. Individual analysis of these themes and their precise connections with each other are the substance of a much longer work in progress. With this in mind, I ask the reader to indulge me in the way Socrates asks in the *Republic*… go along with me in trying to present a broad picture, even if the details are less than clear.

I. Simplicity

It might be worth recalling the specific claims the doctrine of divine simplicity comprises. Aquinas hold God lacks the forms of composition creatures have:

(1) In God, there is no composition of essence and existence.

God’s essence *is* a subsisting act of existence.

(2) God has no composition of essence and accidents.

The whole of God is the divine essence.

(3) God is not composed of matter and form.

In fact, the divine nature is completely independent of matter.

The whole of God is the divine essence and Aquinas identifies this essence as being a simple, subsistent act of existence that is pure actuality (*actus purus*). Since Aquinas believes all composition is a composition of potency and act, being simple is tantamount to being complete, unlimited actuality. This, he concludes, is what it is for God to be in every way simple (*omnino simplex*).

The centrality of the claim that God is pure act bears emphasizing. Citing a composition of potency and act is more than just a convenient place-marker for the other, irreducible forms of composition. The particular components (substance, accident, form, matter, essence, and existence) do not in
themselves account for their complementary unity with another component. An advantage of talking about the particular components in terms of potency and act is that this describes or accounts for the unity existing between any two components. The actualization of potency describes the complementary roles essence and existence play for each other, and the same goes for substance and accident, as well as matter and form. Put differently, the description of metaphysical composition in terms of act and potency accounts for why there is indeed such an integral unity of two separate things - this as opposed to the unity of, say, an aggregate, or no unity present at all. The characterization of metaphysical composition as the actualization of potency thus expresses the precise nature of the relation a component has with its paired counterpart. What does this have to do with talking about simplicity as a whole?

Because the concepts of act and potency help explain the unity within the particular forms of composition, they can function as an explanatory condition of all composition, and in the same vein I’m inclined to think the absence of a composition of act and potency captures something of the radical unity within God, which speaking only of the absence of the other forms of composition does not capture. This might also account for why pure act turns up more often than subsistent existence in both 1) arguments for the absence of the other kinds of composition in ST Ia Q.3, and 2) arguments establishing the other major divine attributes in ST Ia QQ. 2-11 (namely, God’s absolute perfection, goodness, infinity, immutability, eternity and unicity).1 Enough said, for now, on act and potency as an under-appreciated aspect of Aquinas’s metaphysics of composition in creatures.

II. Positioning Simplicity

Thomas argues for the divine simplicity throughout his career: as the youthful scholar in De ente; as a novice teacher commenting on Lombard’s Sentences (Scriptum super libros Sententiarum); nearing the height of his powers in the Summa contra Gentiles, the De potencia, and the Compendium theologiae; and finally, of course, as the mature theologian and student mentor of the Summa theologiae.2

By the end of his career Aquinas makes divine simplicity the preeminent divine attribute among those attributes forming the core of his discussion of the divine nature. A quick survey of the three systematic theological works, the Contra Gentiles, the Compendium, and Summa theologiae show us that simplicity goes from roughly third place to first place in the order in which Thomas 1) presents the attributes to the reader and 2) derives one attribute from another in the order of argumentation.

Simplicity comes first in the second Summa, and then is a basis for proving the immutability and eternity of God. Formerly, in other works, simplicity comes after immutability and eternity. While I’ll not belabor the details here, the basic outlines bear mentioning. (Those otherwise familiar with

1 Here, of course, the importance of act and potency for simplicity is well documented in Aquinas literature. What is often not carefully investigated, however, are the reasons for this.

2 Aquinas presents divine metaphysical simplicity in Summa theologiae Ia q.3 a.1-4, 6-7; Summa contra Gentiles I c.16-18, 20-24; Quaestiones disputationae De potentia q.7 a.1-2, 4; Compendium theologiae ad fratem Reginaldum c.9-11, 16, 23; Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi I d.2 q.1 a.1; and in De ente et essentia c.4. My interest is in the issue of metaphysical simplicity in Aquinas. I omit logical simplicity, which states God cannot be defined in the Aristotelian fashion of naming the genus and difference, Summa theologiae Ia q.3 a.5; Summa contra Gentiles I c.25; Quaestiones disputationae De potentia q.7 a.3; Compendium theologiae c.12; Scriptum super libros Sententiarum I d.2 q.1 a.1; and De ente et essentia c.6.
the different orderings of the divine attributes in the three works might want to skip to the next section.)

*Summa contra Gentiles* offers us the first comprehensive purview of the maturing theologian’s own natural theology. Since Thomas is not commenting on another work or transcribing the results of an academic disputation, he is free to order and discuss the divine attributes as he sees fit. Torrell, using recent dating from the Leonine Commission, places the writing and revision of the opening chapters of *Contra Gentiles* around 1259-1260. Aquinas presents divine simplicity in Chapter 17 and argues for absolute simplicity in God from the absence of potency already established in Chapter 16. He derives the absence of potency, however, using arguments appealing to divine eternity in Chapter 15 and the immutability of the unmoved mover in Chapter 13. (The other proofs for the absence of potency in God appeal to various features of the first cause discussed in Chapter 13.) Divine immutability, among other ways of arguing, also proves God has no matter (Ch. 17 & 20) and no accidents (Ch. 23). Hence we see in *Contra Gentiles* immutability and eternity precede simplicity in terms of both 1) the order of presentation of the various attributes and also 2) the order of argumentation, that is, the order in which some divine attributes are used as a basis for deriving others.

The *Compendium of Theology* (*Compendium theologiae seu brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum*) reconfirms both patterns in the orders of presentation and argumentation. Torrell puts its opening chapters shortly after the completion of *Contra Gentiles* (Book IV dated circa 1264-1265). Dating these two works in close proximity is key. It was once common to date the *Compendium* from a time near the end of Thomas’ life. If this were the case it would mean explaining how Aquinas changes the ordering in *Summa theologiae* and then it mysteriously reverts to the old order of the *Contra Gentiles*. But, it now seems the *Contra Gentiles* and the *Compendium* were written around the same time period.

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3 The first 53 chapters of Book I of *Contra Gentiles* were composed and revised during this period (1259-1260). Jean-Pierre Torrell summarizes the latest findings of the Leonine Commission on the dating and authenticity of Thomas’ works in *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume I, The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 330-361. (Originally published as *L’ Initiation a` Saint Thomas d’ Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre* (Paris: Cerf Editions, 1993)) A long received tradition in the study of Aquinas, traceable to the testimony of a 14th century historiographer, Peter Marsilio, has the *Contra Gentiles* composed at the request of a Raymond of Penafort as a countermeasure to be used by missionary priests against strong Muslim influences in what is present day Spain. However, published speculation on Thomas’ intents in writing *Contra Gentiles* shows few signs of ceasing. A fine survey of both the history and present state of this scholarship on the purpose of *Summa contra Gentiles* appears in the text and notes of Chapter 6 of Torrell, 104-107.

4 *Compendium theologiae* is a systematic theological work Aquinas wrote with an eye for brevity, having in mind an audience that did not have the leisure to wade through theological *Summae*. Its chapters are usually only a few paragraphs long. Aquinas upon his death had finished only the first of three projected parts, the first part probably having been written in the years 1265-1267. Consequently, Aquinas would have begun the work and completed the natural theology of the early chapters just after completing the fourth and last Book of the *Contra Gentiles* around 1264-1265. The *Summa contra Gentiles* and the *Compendium* often parallel each other in both the topical content and ordering of their chapters. Chenu baldly states, “Note, in particular, that Saint Thomas had the *Summa contra Gentiles* under his eyes when he wrote out his *Compendium*.” M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 332 note #8. (Originally published as *Introduction a` l’ etude de Saint Thomas d’Aquin*, (Montreal: J. Vrin, 1950).)
The Compendium more or less repeats the ordering of the Contra Gentiles. In the Compendium, God’s immutability appears in Chapter 4, and immutability is used to establish the eternity of God in Chapter 5. As in the Contra Gentiles, divine immutability is a basis for proving the absence of potency in God, which becomes the basis for establishing God’s absolute simplicity in Chapter 9. Aquinas does not use eternity to prove simplicity; however, eternity, like immutability, precedes simplicity in the order of presentation. Otherwise, the approach to presenting and deriving simplicity, eternity, and immutability is the same as in the Contra Gentiles. It is worth noting these two systematic works were aimed at different audiences. Since Aquinas retains roughly the same ordering of the attributes for different audiences, this suggests he is not inclined to have the ordering of the attributes be determined by considerations involving the audience or pedagogy. He can allow free reign to an order suggested by the attributes themselves and the arguments for them.

Aquinas’s last comprehensive and systematic presentation of his natural theology (1265-1268) in Summa theologiae presents divine simplicity first among the key divine attributes discussed in Questions 3-11. Following the proofs for God’s existence in the final article of Q.2, the doctrine of divine simplicity in Q.3 introduces the entire discussion of God’s nature. Simplicity is then followed by the questions on divine perfection (Q.4), divine goodness (Q.6), divine infinity (Q.7), divine immutability (Q.9), divine eternity (Q.10), and finally God’s oneness or unicity (Q.11). Simplicity has not only gone from third place to first place in the order of presentation. Simplicity is also made first in what I have been calling the order of argumentation. That is, divine simplicity becomes a basis for deriving the other attributes. The absence of potency in God gives us an argument for God’s absolute perfection in Q.4 (a.1). The identity of the divine essence and existence renders an argument for the divine infinity in Q.7 (a.1). God’s pure actuality and absolute simplicity furnish the first two arguments for divine immutability in Q.9 a.1. Divine eternity in Q.10 a.2 comes from immutability. Notice this reverses the orders of presentation and argumentation from the earlier works. Finally, absolute simplicity grounds the first argument in Q.11 a.3 for there being only one God. What are we to make of the preeminent place of divine simplicity emerging in Summa theologiae? Aquinas of course saw ample precedent and example in previous thinkers for making the doctrine of simplicity the centerpiece of a divine metaphysic. But our concern here is with how simplicity affects the internal logic among the major divine attributes of the second Summa. What philosophical work gets done in putting simplicity first?

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5 A statement by Peter Burns about the role of simplicity among these major divine attributes is very apt here, “The denial of compositeness in God is, then, a crucial feature running through Aquinas’ reasoning in questions 4 through 11. Of course, Aquinas does employ other arguments from time to time to back up his conclusions in these questions,... Nonetheless, simpleness [sic] is the ontological condition and primary reason for asserting that the reality whose existence is affirmed in question 2 is perfect, good, limitless, immutable, timeless, and one.” Peter Burns, “The Status and Function of Divine Simplicity in Summa theologiae 1a, qq.2-13,” The Thomist 57, no.1 (January 1993): 1-26, 19. Burns’ statement, however, requires the qualification that simplicity and all these attributes at bottom derive from the conclusions about God drawn in the five ways of proving the existence of God in q.2 a.3 resp.

6 The choice in Summa theologiae to begin with God as simple has two principle models in the Neoplatonism of Proclus and Dionysius. Dionysius, in particular, holds great authority with Aquinas. Contrary to the tradition of Augustine’s De Trinitate, the theology of Dionysius’ On the Divine Names (De divinis nominibus) begins with the simplicity of God. Aquinas composed a commentary on the Divine Names sometime between 1261-1267 (the dating is still uncertain), probably after composing Book I of Contra Gentiles and before starting the Summa theologiae. Long before writing Super Librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus, Aquinas copied by hand a course given by Albert the Great on Dionysius’ Divine Names. (See Jean-Pierre Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume I, The Person and His Work (Washington D.C.: The Catholic university of America Press, 1996), 21-25, 127.) The theological priority of divine simplicity over other
III. A Change in Method

I want to suggest this repositioning simplicity to come first among the divine attributes does at least two things: 1) first, it goes so far as to change the very method of explicating the divine attributes, and in doing so 2) profoundly affects our understanding of the attributes themselves. I believe Thomas sees the results as for the better.

Aquinas’s choice in the second *Summa* to argue for the other major attributes from the simplicity of God reflects a belief in simplicity as the ontological precondition of the other attributes. And as the condition of the other attributes being true of God simplicity to some extent becomes the measure of what the other attributes are and mean, in a way that simplicity formerly was not in the other works we’ve seen.7 Let us first look at how the second *Summa* sees a definite shift in the dynamic extant among the major attributes. It is best to begin with how this new dynamic is anticipated in the five ways of arguing for God’s existence in Q.2.

The five ways are arguments *propter quia*, proceeding from certain effects (better known to us) to an extant cause. The doctrine of divine simplicity, which features the first cause as a subsistent act of existence, I want to suggest is itself an insight into the nature of this cause in se.

That is, after the *propter quia* approach of the five ways the method of articulating things about the divine nature switches over to something analogous to a *propter quid* approach, one moving from the nature as a cause in order to better explain a set of effects. Simplicity is not literally an efficient cause of the other attributes, in the way that an agent produces something entirely distinct from it as its effect. Here we are operating with the Scholastic notion of a “metaphysical cause.”8 Two terms in the relation of metaphysical cause and effect involve two different descriptions of the same ontological situation; however, in this case the truth of one description accounts for why the descriptive content of the other term is also applicable to the same situation. Cause and effect are conceptually distinct, but the effect depends on its cause in order to be understood. The effect, moreover, serves to augment our understanding of the same ontological situation. Just to offer a brief example, describing the attribution made of God is also upheld in *Liber De causis*, a work of Arabic origin that draws upon the Roman Neoplatonist Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* (*Elementio theologica*) as well as on Dionysius’ thought. (Dionysius, too, is probably indebted to Proclus.) Aquinas composed *Super Librum de causis* in the first half of 1272, and this text was the last one Aquinas commented upon that was not a work of Aristotle’s. *Liber de causis* circulated among the medievals with the corpus of Aristotle’s work, and Aquinas for most of his life attributed the Book of Causes to Aristotle. William of Moerbeke’s contemporary translation of Proclus’ *Elementatio theologica* from the Greek helped Aquinas realize the Arabic origin and Proclan basis of the work, both of which Aquinas makes known in the proemium and opening pages of his commentary. See *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H.D. Saffrey (Fribourg: Societe philosophique de Fribourg, 1954), 3, 5-8. On Aquinas’ discovery of the Arabic origins of the *Book of Causes*, see Chenu’s *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 224-225 and Wayne Hankey’s “The Place of the Proof of God’s Existence in the *Summa Theologiae*,” *The Thomist* 46, no.3 (July 1982): 370-393, 382-383. For extensive discussion on the Dionysian and Proclan influences on the role of divine simplicity in *Summae theologiae* see the introduction and third chapter of Hankey’s *God in Himself: Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1-17, 57-60.

7 See the statement by Peter Burns in note 5 above.

human soul as both \textit{subsistent} and \textit{immaterial} accounts for its also being \textit{immortal}; the ontology of the soul explains why it does not pass away in time. The soul can be immortal because of the soul’s being an immaterial substance.

In a similar way, Aquinas intends to show other major attributes as dependent upon God’s simplicity for their account, and arguably the core of this accounting for the other divine attributes originates in the identification of God with pure act. One sees in the \textit{Summae theologicae}, from looking over the whole sweep of attributes in QQ. 3-11, how the other attributes augment what it means to be pure act (\textit{actus purus}) and subsistent being (\textit{esse subsistens}). The definitions of the subsequent attributes depend upon the claims of divine simplicity for the core of their meaning and intelligibility. (Again, here I only offer a sketch of a phenomenon the reader can easily read and think through for him or herself in QQ.3-11.) God’s absolute perfection in Q.4 follows from God’s being subsistent actuality. A thing’s perfection is proportioned to its actualization. Perfection adds to the being of a thing the notion of its being complete. The supreme goodness of God in Q.6 rests on the idea that goodness augments the notion of being with the concept of existence as desirable, and God is subsistent existence itself (\textit{ipsum esse subsistens}). Aquinas views any limitations on the divine nature as coming from a composition of an act of existence with a distinct essence, whereby the essence “contracts” the actuality to being the actuality of this or that species kind. Thus, the identification of the first being with subsistent existence implies the absence of limitation constituting divine infinity (Q.7). Divine simplicity is not just a basis for \textit{proving} omnipresence (Q.8), divine immutability (Q.9), and divine eternity (Q.10); rather, one sees is that these attributes describe the consequences of considering a simple, self-sufficient ontology in relation to the limitations of space, time, and change had by creatures.

We sense, then, how the ontological privileging of simplicity not only affects how the other attributes are to be understood, but also that this privileging is justified by an increase in the perspicuity of the attributes and their systematic connections. And one might say there just is something fitting about this ordering here, namely, the order of our learning and understanding these attributes (\textit{ordo disciplinae}) speaks to the ordering of their objective intelligibility.

\textbf{IV. Simplicity and Explanation}

So much, anyway, for the contributions of simplicity to other divine attributes. What of simplicity itself? What justifies predicating simplicity of the divinity?

A basic reason comes from an idea of what it is to be a first cause, an idea we saw anticipated earlier in this discussion. Aquinas frequently argues that anything which could count as ‘metaphysical components’ also count as causes or conditions of the existence of the first cause.\footnote{\textit{Summa theologiae} Ia q.3 a.7 resp.; \textit{Summa contra Gentiles} I c.17; \textit{De potentia} q.7 a.1 resp.; \textit{Compendium theologiae} c.9.} Again, here we are of course using ‘cause’ in its classic, broad sense of being that which accounts for why something is the way it is. The arguments for God as pure actuality and subsistent being presume an understanding of the first cause as uncaused, not only in the sense of not having a prior agent, but also insofar as being without any factors that might be construed as conditions of its ontological character and its existence, including components. The first cause is self-sufficient \textit{because} it is simple, simplicity implies that there can be nothing that explains it. It has to be by definition the unconditioned condition of all other items in existence.
Let me try to articulate this implicit model of explanation, albeit rather sketchily. In Aquinas’s world, every entity, or every substance and any components of it, requires a sufficient account for 1) why the entity exists, rather than not, and 2) why it has whatever features or capacities it has, as opposed to its having others. Moreover, what counts as a sufficient explanation is one that in analytic parlance “goes all the way down.” For starters, one must make sense of a thing’s existence and its features by looking at both its intrinsic constituents as well as its extrinsic causes determining the thing to be such as it is. The demand for sufficient explanation of a thing equally applies to the extrinsic causes and intrinsic components of it, and then to the prior causes and metaphysical constituents of these causes, and so on… until one reaches a self-explanatory cause accounting for all else in the chain.

Aquinas’s doctrine of continuous creation gives us more insight into his idea of what it is to render sufficient account of something. God preserves every creature in existence at every moment of its existence. (ST Ia Q.104). This implies Aquinas demands a sufficient explanation for the existence of a substance over time, and not just in terms of the coming into being of a substance (this is an important clause going over and above, say, the model of explanation at work in Aristotle’s writings). The fundamental explanatory question thus goes beyond its standard expression in 20th Century Thomism, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The import is rather, “Why is there something - that endures?” The self-sufficiency which gives us the simplicity and impassivity of the first cause is the outcome of this relentlessly applied demand for a complete account of things. If I am right, his standards of what suffices for an account are more strict than those often seen in the modern arena of cosmological thinking.

For another key application of this model of complete explanation we need look no further from Q.3 on simplicity than to the immediately preceding five ways, or at least to the first three where Aquinas seeks a first cause of all motion and existence. The “proofs” taken at face value as they stand in the text are not valid, and Aquinas probably sees as much (his contemporary commentators often do not). The arguments implicitly depend upon a variety of unstated premises and explanations, many of which Aquinas leaves for a detailed rendering in other places in his corpus. Some of what is left unstated Aquinas could also presume to already be in the minds of student novices who would bring to the second Summa a considerable body of conceptual machinery from their arts courses.

Key to the first three ways is that the per se ordered series of causes of existence presumes a ban on a causal series that is reciprocal, circular, or constitutes an infinite regression. These are ways a causal chain would be unable, by Aquinas’s way of seeing things, to offer a sufficient account of the effect(s) produced. There must always be one cause in a per se ordered series sufficiently explaining its own agency as well the actuality distributed to all other members. For Aquinas, per se ordered

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10 a view he summarizes in Summae theologiae Ia q.104 a.1, “Whether creatures need to be conserved by God” (Utrum creaturae indigent ut a Deo conserventur). “In another way some thing is said to conserve another per se and directly, namely, when that which is conserved depends on the one conserving as without which it could not exist. And in this way every creature needs divine conservation. For the esse of every creature depends on God, so that it would not be able to subsist for a moment, but would be reduced to nothing unless it is conserved in being by the operation of the divine power, as Gregory says.” Alio modo dicitur aliquid rem aliquid conservare per se directe, quando scilicet illud quod conservatur, dependet a conserante, ut sine eo ess non possit. Et hoc modo omnes creaturae indigent divina conservatone. Dependet enim esse cuiuslibet creaturae a Deo, ita quod nec ad momentum subsistere possent, sed in nihilium ridigerentur, nisi operatione divinae virtutis conservarentur in esse, sicut Gregorius dicit [Gregorius Magnus, Moralium Libri, XVI c.37]. See also Contra Gentiles III c.65; De potentia q.5 a.1.
agency that is reciprocal, circular, or infinite not only offers no proper explanation of the activity in question, but, lacking a prime and sufficient agent, he says the series would never even exist.  

It is worth briefly noting that Aquinas sees accounting for the ability of an agent to cause a change in something else as requiring a complete explanation the very existence of the agent or agents in question. *Summa theologiae* Q.105 is “Concerning the Mutation of Creatures by God” (*De mutatio creaturarum a Deo*), and in the fifth article, “Whether God is active in every agent” (*Utrum Deus operetur in omni operante*), Aquinas notes that God is the cause of the every created agent’s agency by preserving every agent in existence. Each agent must exist in order to act as a cause of motion. This identifies a first mover with a first efficient cause of existence, which means that for Aquinas the proof of a first mover and first being collapse into a single line of argument. We see, then, our look at the proofs of God is no idle digression (however windy, in the reader’s opinion). Understanding the flow of argument in the *Summa theologiae* from as early as Q.2 depends upon realizing the precise model of explanation Aquinas sets at work.  

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11 Aquinas never says that, if an infinite series were to exist, it would still require an extrinsic cause supporting the entire infinite series, as some commentators such as Peter Geach erroneously believe. (See *Three Philosophers*, by G.E.M. Anscombe and P.T. Geach (Cornell University Press, 1961), 113.) In *Summa contra Gentiles* I c.13 we find: “However, if there are movers and things moved in order to infinity, there will not be a first mover, but all would be as intermediate movers. Therefore, none of the others could move, and so nothing in the world would be moved.” Sed si sunt moventia et mota per ordinem infinitum, non erit aliquod primum movens, sed omnia erunt quasi media moventia. Ergo nullum aliorum poterit moveri, et sic nihil movebitur in mundo. Aquinas says a hypothetically infinite series would not exist. This is different from saying an extant series of this nature would require an outside cause.  

12 In addition to collapsing the first mover and first uncaused cause of existence into the same line of argument, Aquinas notably argues in *De potentia* q.7 that it is a singular first cause we are dealing with at the close of the proofs for God’s existence. The quote in a larger context is as follows: “It must be said that in God existence is not other than His substance. In order to show this it must be considered that when several causes producing different effects produce one effect in common, in addition to those different effects, it must be that they commonly produce that [effect] by the power of some superior cause of which it is the proper effect. And the reason for this is because, since the proper effect is produced by some cause according to its proper nature or form, different causes having different natures must have different proper effects. ... Now all created causes have in common one effect which is being (esse), although they each have their proper effect by which they are distinguished. For heat makes a thing to be hot, and a builder makes a house exist. ... Therefore, there must be some superior cause of all by virtue of which they all cause esse, and the proper effect of which is esse. And this cause is God. Moreover, the proper effect of any cause proceeds from it according to a similitude of its nature. Therefore, it must be that esse is the substance or nature of God.” *Dicendum quod in Deo non est aliud esse et sua substantia. Ad cuius evidentiam considerandum est quod, cum aliquae causae effectus diversos producentes communicant in uno effectu, praeter diversos effectus, oporet quod illud commune producunt ex virtute alicuius superioris causae cuius illud est proprius effectus. Et hoc ideo quia, cum proprius effectus producatur ab aliqua causa secundum suam propriam naturam vel formam, diversae causae habentes diversas naturas et formas oporet quod habeant proprios effectus diversos. .... Omnes autem causae creatae communicant in uno effectu qui est esse, licet singulae proprios effectus habeant, in quibus distinguuntur. Calor enim facit calidum esse, et aedificator facit domum esse. .... Oportet ergo esse aliquam causam superiorem omnibus cius virtute omnia causent esse, et eius esse sit proprius effectus. Et haec causa est Deus. Proprius autem effectus cuiuslibet causae procedit ab ipsa secundum similitudem suae naturae. Oportet ergo quod hoc quod est esse, sit substantia vel natura Dei. De potentia* q.7 a.2 resp. However, my conclusions need not contradict that the five ways leave open “what we call God” to something non-specific (and maybe non-singular) enough for a good pagan Greek or Roman to call the unmoved mover God. Perhaps, what Aquinas thinks most men (historically) are willing to assent to and what he really has it in mind to have established in the proofs could well be two different notions of God. For instance, in *Contra gentiles* III, c.38 Thomas notes that men in general can perceive the nature has a providential lawgiver, but are unclear what it is or even if it is one. In any case, by the end of Q.3 in ST Ia we are clearly already dealing with a God that is both one and transcendent. Simplicity, in the sense he lays out in Q.3, *is* the hallmark of transcendence.
We need not believe Aquinas has an entirely ready-made model of sufficient explanation by Q.2. I am only suggesting its tacit presence haunts discussions of the divine essence from the beginning, and it helps us see the intelligibility of the five ways, and subsequently the major attributes of QQ. 2-11 in a clearer light. Divine simplicity finds its ultimate justification in the intuition of a universe where something cannot come from nothing and there simply are no “brute facts.”

V. Simplicity and The End of Theology

In this last section, I want to suggest how divine simplicity is more than just an aid for thinking about the various other attributes of the divine nature. Aquinas sees the simplicity of God as part and parcel to the ultimate aims of the whole theological enterprise. In the Summa theologiae, we find the simplicity of the divine essence at that crucial juncture where the ultimate aims of sacred teaching incorporate the tools and insights of philosophy. Were we to stop with seeing the doctrine of simplicity, and demand for sufficient explanation at the heart of it, as the wind in the metaphysical sails of the “divine arithmetic” (as a friend calls the philosophical theology of the divine attributes), we would miss its significance for the theological enterprise Aquinas so brilliantly maps out in QQ. 1, 12, & 13 of the Prima Pars. Simplicity is a foundation for the intelligibility of the divine attributes in the philosophical order. However, for Aquinas, simplicity also guarantees the intelligibility of God in se in the beatific vision.

Theology uses divine revelation as its first principles (Q.1 a.1), while philosophy is used to clarify what is revealed and show how revelation is not contrary to reason. The understanding sought by theology goes beyond abstract cognition. For Aquinas, theology facilitates the possibility of the human being becoming deiform, as destined to see God as he is in the next life. Revelation that is the basis of sacred teaching (sacra doctrina) involves more than just a transfer of information. Revelation is God’s very ongoing and dynamic self-communication to us in this world. It speaks to the whole person as well as the intellect, and demands an ongoing response in faith. What we find is that it is here in the theological enterprise discussed in ST Ia Q.1 where we find divine simplicity already connected with the divine essence being made more intelligible to the human subject.

It is first helpful to remember that the characterization of God as complete, subsistent actuality guarantees the pure and supreme intelligibility of God in himself. In Q.12 a.1 we find, “Since everything is knowable insofar as it is actual, God, who is pure act without any admixture of potentiality, is in himself supremely knowable [though not by the created intellect].” Unlike certain threads of Oriental Platonism, what is supremely One for Aquinas is not beyond being (or Being for that matter). The One is supreme being, and Aquinas links the unity of God with God’s supreme intelligibility in se.

This pure, objective intelligibility in se is not merely a consideration for those interested in doing natural theology; rather, it is an intelligibility of deep consequence for every person. As an “infinite ocean of substance” (to quote the famous metaphor Thomas gets from John Damascene),

13 This is not to say there are not more characteristically theological justifications at work for divine self-sufficiency and impassivity. For instance, as I will later discuss, God’s self-sufficiency seems to fulfill a conviction of Aquinas’ that anything worthy of the name ‘God’ would have to be maximally good and perfect, which a composite being is not.


85
comprehension of the divine essence lies even beyond the vision of the blessed in heaven. It is, however, because this infinite essence is nevertheless simple and unitary, it can be (by an act of divine grace) directly united to the created intellect (Q.12 a.5 resp.), “When, however, a created intellect sees the essence of God, the essence becomes the form through which it understands.”¹⁵ This takes place in a single act of apprehension, involving no sequence of multiple thoughts in the mind of the blessed receiving the act of the essence. Paradoxically, the simplicity of the divine essence allows what is infinite perfection to be experienced all apiece.

VI. Conclusion

The preeminence of divine simplicity among the attributes of God is already implicit in the enterprise of theology as discussed in Q.1 of the Prima Pars. Its ontological priority is established in QQ. 3-11 as the attribute making the other attributes intelligible to us as readers. The preeminent role of simplicity is, however, raised to another level in Q.12 as central to the aims of sacred teaching. Aquinas sees it as guaranteeing the supreme objective intelligibility of God in himself. Yet, this intelligibility of God in se is what makes possible the vision of the blessed that is both the end of sacred teaching and the ultimate aim the second Summa seeks, namely, that man might know God and the way to salvation. The aftershocks of Thomas’ insights about simplicity in Q.3 thus echo throughout the rest of the work. Thomas’ genius in putting simplicity first among the attributes does more than help drive some of the finer points of his natural theology of the divine attributes. Putting simplicity first in at the discussion of God is tantamount to, at the very beginning of the second Summa, showing us a glimpse of our final end.

¹⁵ Cum autem aliquis intellectus cretus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibus intellectus. ST Ia q.12 a.5 resp.