

Talking about God: Analogy Revisited

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Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to keep alive Thomas Aquinas's use of Aristotelian equivocation and analogy in finding a way of talking about God that is philosophically and theologically viable. The first section of the essay will be given to the examination of analogy itself. I will begin with Aristotle rather than Thomas, because in Aristotle one finds a broader perspective and a greater openness to different forms of equivocation and analogy. Although Aquinas would have been well schooled in the Aristotelian treatments, his own discussions focus two instances of analogy – being and God. For this, I will draw on the work of Joseph Owens.¹ I will conclude this section with a discussion of examples of analogy found in contemporary computer language. The second section of the essay will examine Thomas' work, firstly, with a discussion of what we can know of God, and secondly, with the application of analogy to talking about God. In this section, I will read Thomas through the recent work of John F. Wippel and W. Norris Clarke.² The third section of the essay will briefly suggest what underlies Thomas's claims for analogical language and note a significant correction in the tradition of interpretation of his position. [30]

¹ See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought*, third edition (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), pp. 107 – 135.

² See John F. Wippel, 'Thomas Aquinas on What Philosophers Can Know About God', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 66 (1992): 279 – 297; *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), pp. 65 – 93, 501 – 575; W. Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 123 – 149; *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 42 - 59.

Analogy in General

Aristotelian Roots

Aristotle begins his *Categories*, traditionally placed at the beginning of his logical works and therefore at the beginning of all his works, with definitions of what it means for words to be used equivocally and univocally.³ 'Things are said to be named "equivocally",' he says 'when, though they have a common name, the definition corresponding to the name differs for each.' 'On the other hand,' he continues, 'things are said to be named "univocally" which have both the name and the definition answering to the name in common.'⁴ An example of equivocal speech in English is 'bark', which can be said of the sound a dog makes and of the outer layer of a tree. This example can be called simply equivocal, although Aristotle will prove to be much more interested in things that are only partially equivocal, that is in 'things that can be said in many ways'.⁵ On the other hand, when a dog and an ox are each called an 'animal', the word is meant in precisely the same way, since both belong to the genus of animal. The definition of 'animal' is the same in both instances, so that the name or word is used univocally.

We are here immediately confronted with a significant difference between much twentieth century philosophy and Aristotelian philosophy. For Aristotle, it is things that are named univocally or equivocally. His analysis is of how things are,

³ More recent English translations and commentaries speak of words being homonymous and synonymous, but I will retain the older English usage, equivocal and univocal for its compatibility with medieval and wider usage.

⁴ *Categories* 1, 1a1 – 11, translated by E. M. Edghill, in *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol 1, edited by W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

⁵ See *Topics* I, 15. There is room for confusion here, as Aristotle at times uses the term 'equivocal' to refer both to equivocals simply speaking and to 'things said in many ways' (*pollaxos legomena*) but at other times he distinguishes equivocals (simply speaking) and 'things said in many ways'. See Owens, *The Doctrine of Being*, p. 108.

conducted as often as not by means of careful attention to how they are spoken about. The alternative and more contemporary form of analysis is of the meaning of words and concepts, and it focuses on how language is used. It gives rise to a world of words used univocally, which is readily amenable to the tools of formal logic. Aristotle, on the other hand, is more interested in ‘things said or meant in many ways’, that is, in things said equivocally in the broad sense of the term.⁶ In trying to make sense of the complexities of nature, he looks for identities – modes of sameness that show up despite difference. Aristotle has many ways of describing this sameness in difference⁷ and develops quite sophisticated ways analysing it,⁸ but his method can be seen even among univocals in the distinction of generic, specific and numeric identity. Dogs and cats are generically identical, that is, they belong to the same genus; two dogs, Spot and Bluey, are specifically identical; Spot and ‘this dog here’ are numerically identical. To these will be added analogical identities of different kinds.⁹ [31]

Something of the flexibility that this gives Aristotle can be seen in Book V of the *Metaphysics*. There, in what is often thought to be a lexicon or dictionary, he gives multiple definitions to some thirty terms. In Chapter 1, he examines the term ‘principle’ and offers seven definitions, which are likely to seem to a modern reader to be rather too widely spread to make much sense. He goes on to conclude:

It is common to all principles, then, to be the first from which a thing either exists or is generated or is known; and of these, some are constituents of the thing and others are outside. Therefore, [he continues] nature is a principle, and so is an element and also thought and choice, and a substance and a final cause; for the good or the noble is a principle of the knowledge and of the motion of many things.¹⁰

What remains the same, namely, ‘to be the first from which a thing either exists or is generated or is known’, is sharply put, but the range of its instances is rather startling, at least for us today. Nevertheless, appreciation of this highly flexible

use of language is an important key to reading and understanding Aristotle.

Although Aristotle identifies many kinds of equivocity, his treatment is not completely systematic, nor does he claim to have delineated all the kinds. In fact, that may not be something that he would think worth doing.¹¹ Three kinds, however, are important for our purposes and appear in a discussion of the good in the *Ethics*.

But then in what way are things called good? They do not seem to be like the things that only chance to have the same name. Are goods one, then, by being derived from one good or by all contributing to one good, or are they rather one by analogy?¹²

We see here three kinds of equivocation.

Equivocation by chance occurs when two things have the same name but without any similarity in their definitions. It is equivocation simply speaking but is not particularly interesting to Aristotle or useful in his analysis. Later Thomas will reserve the term ‘equivocal’ for this instance alone. In the other two kinds of equivocation, while the definitions are not strictly the same, they have some degrees of [32] similarity. Aristotle calls one of these, *pros hen* equivocation, and the other, analogy. Thomas will call both of them analogy, the first, analogy of reference to one; the second, analogy of proportionality.¹³ I will do the same, though admittedly the terminological shift between Aristotle and Thomas can be confusing.

¹¹ See Owens, *The Doctrine of Being*, p. 126.

¹² *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 6 (1096b26-28), translated by W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson in Jonathan Barnes (editor), *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol 2, p. 1733.

¹³ There are terminological shifts in Thomas’s writing and quite complex developments in the tradition of commentary I will avoid particularly the latter in this paper, since they can be misleading. I will use the term ‘proportionality’ consistently for this kind of analogy. I suspect that Thomas’s own training gave him something of the flexibility of Aristotle’s practice. Apart from a short passage in a small very early, *De principiis naturae* c. 6, Thomas does not attempt any detailed analysis of analogy apart from texts where he reflects on how he is using it in a particular instance. Commentators, especially Cajetan, have erred in trying to give his teaching a restricted and rigid structure. See George P. Klubertanz, *St Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systemic Synthesis* (Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1960), for an early study in the process of correcting the commentary tradition.

⁶ See Owens, *Doctrine of Being*, pp. 112 – 113, 127 – 135.

⁷ See *Topics* I, 15.

⁸ See *Topics* II, 3.

⁹ See *Metaphysics* V, 6 (1016b31-1017a3).

¹⁰ *Metaphysics* V, 1 (1013a18-24), translated by Hippocrates G. Apostle, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 73 – 74.

Aristotle uses analogy of reference to one in *Metaphysics* IV, 2, where he discusses how ‘being’ can be said in many ways – primarily of substance but also with reference to attributes of substances, of things becoming substances and of negations of any of these. His famous example of this kind of analogy is the word ‘healthy’, which, while primarily a physical condition of an animal, is said also of things that preserve health or produce health or are signs of health.¹⁴ Analogy of proportionality, on the other hand, takes its lead from mathematics and requires four terms: as A is to B, so is C to D. For example, material cause can be said analogously of ‘the letters in the case of the syllables, the matter in the case of manufactured articles, fire and earth [i.e. elements] and all such in the case of bodies, the parts in the case of the whole, the hypotheses in the case of the conclusion.’ He continues, ‘All of these are causes in the sense of that of which the latter consist’.¹⁵

Examples from the Age of Computers

I will move forward now to the age of computers and look at the way language has been used around these strange artefacts that have been with us for only a few decades. While the language of technicians may be impenetrable to the uninitiated, the language of users is not. We readily get used to files, folders, programs, wizards, buttons, toolbars and recycle bins, and in no time we are navigating, creating, networking and sharing. We expect to see things in a window, though it does not worry us that we would not be able to jump through that window, if there were a fire.

The word ‘menu’ is a fair example of analogy of proportionality. As pointing to an item on a drop-down list (or menu) is to executing a computer command, so is pointing to a table list (or menu) to ordering something to eat. Not only has a word been reused for a new kind of thing in the world, but the choice of word has also carried with it ready knowledge of how to deal with this new thing. From being familiar with ordering food in restaurants, we are [33] able to move easily towards being actors in a strange new world. It is an important feature of this example that we do not have to be at all aware of what actually happens in the computer at the levels of code and switching or software and electronics in order to be a proficient user of the machine.

A mouse is somewhat different. Although it will not take a new user long to recognize which item of machinery is the mouse, the linkage with a live

mouse is a matter only of look – an oval body and a long tail and the tendency to scurry around a mat. The difference is important for our purposes, because it is the difference between analogy and metaphor. With metaphor there is only an image involved, but with analogy something of the structure of the objects considered is also captured. It is of the nature of menus that, when one points at an item on the list, action ensues.

Our use of the word ‘memory’ for the way in which computers can store information is, I believe, also analogous and worth working out in detail for the differences to be found between animal memory and computer memory. (Do computers remember past events?) I want, however, to raise a more difficult issue, which is that of ‘artificial intelligence’. The discussion around this word can be clarified, if we recognize that analogy of reference to one (Aristotle’s *pros hen* equivocation) is at work here. We can speak of human intelligence, of canine intelligence and of artificial intelligence. They are not the same, but they do carry significant similarities. My claim is that human intelligence is the prime analogate and that other intelligences are so named with reference to it.¹⁶ A dog is called intelligent when it does rather clever things and better than most dogs might, particularly if they appear to be more than an immediate response to an external stimulus. A machine is called intelligent when it mirrors certain kinds of activity that intellectual beings do. Might a machine surpass human intelligence? One would have to clarify what was meant, but there is no difficulty in admitting that a machine can perform certain functions, such as arithmetical calculations much more quickly and accurately than a human being. Might a machine become humanly intelligent? Not unless it began to live.

We again see how the use of analogy allows us to name common structures in the nature of things. This allows us to make sense of things that might for the most part remain significantly unknown to us. At the same time, it pushes us to clarify differences. How are human, canine and artificial intelligence different? The current example has another important aspect, and that is that human intelligence is, in fact, embedded in artificial intelligence. It is not only that the code that runs the machines has been conceived and written through human intelligence, but also that the very purpose of the code is a matter of human intent. Even if machines were to become, for instance, self-replicating in some sense, they would still carry with them something of the human intelligence that first conceived them. [34]

¹⁴ *Metaphysics* IV, 2 (1003a33-1003b12). See also IX, 3.

¹⁵ *Metaphysics* V, 2 (1013b16-22), Aristotle, pp. 74 – 75.

¹⁶ Note that I am leaving aside the discussion of divine intelligence at this stage of the argument.

Talking about God: Aquinas and Analogy

I now want to turn to Thomas Aquinas and to the question of the ways in which we are able to talk about God. I will draw on the Questions 2 – 13 of the *First Part* of the *Summa Theologiae*, which offer his final and most orderly treatment of the topic, even if it is not always as detailed as some of the earlier works.¹⁷ My interest is in analogical language, but it is necessary also to recognize other ways in which language can be applied to God, specifically, metaphorical language and negative language. Scriptural language, which fits across these categories, holds special place because of its relationship to revelation. First, however, we need to ask what we can know of God, because in Thomas's view, we can name God only insofar as and to the degree that we do know God.

Human Knowledge of God

Thomas begins in Question 2 with a discussion of the existence of God. While the existence of God might be self-evident in itself, that is, to anyone knowing fully what the word 'God' means, it is not self-evident to us because we do not know the essence of God, that is, what God is. (a. 1) On the other hand, he claims that it is possible to demonstrate that God exists, not from anything prior to God but from God's effects, which we can take to be the results of God's creative action in the world. Thomas argues that 'since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist'. (a. 2) He then presents his five ways or five arguments for the existence of God, which each begin with something observable in the world such as motion or order and reason back to a first and necessary cause. His conclusion in each case is, 'and this we call God'. (a. 3)

It is not our purpose here to take up the manner or even the effectiveness of these arguments but rather to see the place that such a starting point plays in Thomas's views about how we can talk about God. He makes this clear at the beginning of Question 3.

When the existence of a thing has been ascertained there remains the further question of the manner of its existence, in

¹⁷ For other texts and close commentary on the texts in chronological order, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, pp. 502 – 575. The principal texts on the use of analogical language about God are *Commentary on 1 Sentences* d. 35, q. 1, a. 4; also d. 19, q. 5, a. 2; *Disputed Questions De Veritate* q. 2, a. 11; *Summa contra Gentiles* I c. 31 – 34; *Summa Theologiae* I q. 13. For treatment of *Summa Theologiae* qq. 3 – 12, see Wippel pp. 529 – 540; for q. 13, see pp. 566 – 572.

order that we may know its essence. Now, because we cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not, we have no means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not.¹⁸

Two things are at stake here. Firstly, Thomas follows the Aristotelian [35] procedure that stipulates that in investigating anything one has to ask both what the thing is and whether it is. The five ways have established that God is; it is now necessary to work out what God is. Secondly, Thomas subscribes to the view that we cannot know what God is but only what God is not. In other words, he follows the tradition that we can have only negative knowledge of God, the key exponent of which was the Pseudo-Dionysius. As a consequence, Questions 3 – 11 investigate the nature of God in terms of what God is not. For instance, to say that God is simple means that God is not complex; to say that God is eternal means that God is without beginning or end. There is a mystical element to this kind of negative knowledge, and elsewhere Thomas makes it clear that the peak of our knowledge of God is reached when we realize that the divine essence is above anything we can know in this life.¹⁹

There is, however, something unsatisfying in this for the philosopher or, in Thomas's case, for the theologian of scientific or philosophical bent. Indeed, both a teacher and a missionary are also going to find it necessary to speak about God in ways that move beyond the metaphorical but that are not yet in the province of mystical contemplation. Thomas takes up this concern in Questions 12 and 13 by exploring in the first what we can know of God and by asking in the second whether we can apply terms or names to God in any serious sense.

In the first instance, he simply makes more explicit what we have already seen. (12, 11) In this life human beings cannot see the essence of God because the kind of knowledge that we have is determined by our nature, which is material. Our knowledge consists in receiving forms that exist in matter. We receive sensible forms from material things and although we can abstract intelligible forms so as to know essences, those essences are the essences of material things. The divine essence, which is simple and not in composition with either matter or accidents, is beyond our reach. Thomas, however, then turns the question around and asks what we can know by natural reason. (12,

¹⁸ Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* I q. 3, proem, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), p. 14.

¹⁹ *In Boethii De Trinitate* q. 1, a. 2.

12) Again, it is the effects of divine action that we know, and, because they are dependent on their cause, we can know that God exists, and we can know whatever belongs necessarily to God as the first cause of everything. He concludes:

Hence we know God's relationship with creatures so far as to be cause of them all; also that creatures differ from God, inasmuch as God is not in any way part of what is caused by God; and that creatures are not removed from God by reason of any defect on God's part, but because God superexceeds them all.²⁰

This is little more than a reaffirmation of the classic three-step process [35] pioneered by the Pseudo-Dionysius: first, affirm some similarity between creatures and God; second, negate all that is imperfect or creaturely; third, attribute an excellence beyond all excellence to the purified notion.²¹

In the second instance, however, Thomas takes us further. Firstly, he affirms that we can use names of God because 'words relate to the meaning of things signified through the medium of intellectual conception'.²² In other words, whatever we can know about God, limited as it might be, can be expressed in words. Secondly, he asks whether any name can be applied to God substantially. Although it is difficult to know quite what the question means, Thomas's answer is crucial for our purposes. He distinguishes the negative names we have seen, from 'absolute and affirmative names, such as good, wise and the like'.²³ Negative names do not say anything substantial about God, but Thomas argues at length against two positions in respect of what we might call positive perfections. The first is that they are simply negative, so that saying that God is living really means that God is not inanimate. The second, attributed to Maimonides, is that the words simply mean that God is the cause of whatever is affirmed, so that saying that God is good really means that God is the cause of goodness.

Thomas presents three arguments. Firstly, these positions do not show why we use some names rather than others, for instance, that God is good rather than that God is a body. Secondly, it would mean that the names would be applied to God only in a secondary sense. Thirdly, it is not the intention of those who use these words to speak in this way. Thomas concludes that these names do apply to

God though in a very imperfect way. They apply because they are known from the perfections found in creatures, which represent, though imperfectly, the perfection of the creator. We say, therefore, that God is good not to mean that God is not evil or that God is the cause of goodness but because whatever can be called good in creatures pre-exists in God in a much higher way.

It is at this point that Thomas turns to Aristotelian analogy.

Analogy in Language about God

We have examined Aristotelian analogy in some detail. What remains is to see how Thomas applied it in the strict instance of the names of positive perfections that are applied both to creatures and to God.²⁴ The first question that we might ask is what kind of analogy does Thomas see working here. He is very clear that it falls into the class of what we have called 'reference to one' rather than proportionality, but he further distinguishes two kinds of reference on one, which he calls 'many to one' and 'one to another'. In analogy of many to one, things are named for a diverse range of relationships such being a cause or a sign. He excludes this kind of analogy because at least some of the relationships giving rise to analogy are extrinsic. He adopts analogy of one to [37] another because the relationship is intrinsic, namely, because God is the cause of creatures.

This gives us some insight into the basis of analogical predication of the 'positive perfections' in respect of God and creatures. As Thomas says, 'whatever is said of God and creatures is said according to the relation of creature to God as its principle and cause, wherein all perfections of things pre-exist excellently'.²⁵ It is immediately clear that the five arguments for the existence of God based on the observation of things in the world and the need for a necessary first cause play a pivotal role in enabling analogical language. Created things maintain a profound intrinsic relationship to God. Thomas invokes the axiom, 'every agent acts according as it is in act', to claim that something of how God is remains in creatures and that this is what we rely on when we speak analogically of God. It is something like the way in which an artist can be known through his or her works. The works are identifiably those of the artist, though not as identifiable as would be the artist's own children, who share the same kind of being, nor as identifiable as a photograph of the artist, which conveys the artist's own look.

²⁰ ST I 12, 12, Benziger, p 58. Translation amended.

²¹ See Clarke, *The One and the Many*, pp. 232 – 234.

²² ST I 13, 1, Benziger, p. 60.

²³ ST I 13, 2, Benziger, p. 61.

²⁴ ST I question 13, especially articles 2 – 6.

²⁵ ST I 13, 5, Benziger, p. 67.

One might ask what kinds of words can be used in this way. Thomas is short on detail, saying simply, ‘good, wise and the like’, but we might add words like knowledge, love, activity, living, unity, being. Clarke suggests that they will in some sense be activity words rather than ‘thingy’ words, and this makes sense because the basis of this kind of analogy lies in actuality and in the creative action of God.²⁶ Other words will, of course, surface throughout Thomas’s works.

Thomas insists that these words are more properly said of God than of creatures, because the perfections that they name are more perfectly found in God than in creatures, which receive these perfections in a reduced manner when they come into existence. He forestalls the obvious objection by distinguishing between what is signified by the words and the manner of their signification. In terms of the manner of signification, words are certainly learnt by us through our experience of finding our way around the world, and in this sense they are applied primarily to things in the world. But he maintains that the perfections themselves pre-exist in God in a pre-eminent way. (a. 3)

Finally, we can acknowledge some imprecision in analogical speech. That the words are used with meaning that is somewhat the same and somewhat different does not mean that there is an identifiable univocal component and an identifiable equivocal component, especially when they are extended beyond our range of experience. In a sense, the words name activities that can show up quite differently in different instances. We can say that God knows in much the way we say human beings know, but when we consider how each of these takes place, we are faced with enormous difference. The benefit, however, arising from the use of analogy is language, which by relying on common structures in [38]creation, allows us to talk meaningfully about God, who for the most part remains significantly unknown to us.

Concluding Remarks

In this final section, I will first give an example of Thomas’ use of analogy beyond the more limited examples found in his formal treatment of analogy. The particular example will highlight the distinction between analogical and metaphorical language. Then, I will suggest what lies behind analogical predication of terms of God and creatures in Thomas’s thinking and note a correction that has taken place in the tradition of Thomistic scholarship.

An Example: God as ‘Father’

A little bit later in the *Summa* (qq. 27 – 43), Thomas discusses the Trinity. It is a strictly theological discussion and the many of the terms Thomas uses are drawn from Scripture and from Church teaching. Although the terms or names are, therefore, a given, Thomas is, nevertheless, very alert to how they are used. Question 33 deals with the person of the Father. Article 3 discusses whether the word ‘Father’ is used appropriately as a name for the First Person of the Trinity.²⁷ He chooses to deal with it in terms of a difference between ‘Father’ said of the First Person of the Trinity in relation to the Second Person and ‘Father’ said of God in relation to creatures.

Thomas first draws a distinction between proper or literal use of terms and their metaphoric use. In the former, all that is signified by the term is found in the object to which it is applied. In the latter, only part of what is signified is found in the object, so that the only grounds for the application of the term are some form of likeness. In his own example, when ‘lion’ is said of the animal whose nature it is to be a lion the term is used properly, but when it is applied to a human being as an indicator of strength or courage it is used ‘by way of similitude’, that is, metaphorically.

He then states that when ‘Father’ is said of the First Person in relation to the Second, ‘the perfect idea of paternity and filiation’ is to be found in the Father and the Son because they share precisely the same nature. On the other hand, when creatures call God ‘Father’, the signification is not complete but rather metaphorical, because creature and God do not have the same nature. The difference is significant. When Christians say ‘the Father’ in the doxology, the term is being used properly of the internal relations of the Trinity. When, however, they say ‘Our Father’ in the Lord’s Prayer, they are speaking metaphorically of their own relationship to God. This is not to deny the term’s appropriateness or usefulness as long as the image on which it relies works for the hearers. As Thomas says elsewhere, ‘sacred doctrine makes use of metaphors as both necessary and useful’,²⁸ but its application here is weaker than when it is used to name the internal relations of the Trinity.

The proper use of the term ‘Father’ to name the First Person of the Trinity [39] is clearly analogical, as Thomas makes clear in the preceding article.²⁹ There he draws the distinction we have seen between the thing signified and the mode of signification. Terms like ‘generation’ and ‘paternity’, he says, are applied to God before

²⁶ Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics*, p. 131.

²⁷ *ST I* 33, 3, Benziger, p. 174 – 175.

²⁸ *ST I* 1, 9, Benziger, p. 6.

²⁹ *ST I* 33, 2, ad 4, Benziger, p. 174.

creatures in terms of what is signified, but to creatures first in terms of the mode of signification, in other words, in terms of the human origin of the language. His argument for this priority is important. If generation is the making of something and if its species is determined by what is generated, the closer the form of the generated is to the form of the generator, the more perfect will be the generation. To take another example, when an artist generates a child, it is a more perfect act of generation than when that same artist generates a painting, because parent and child share the same nature. Thomas argues that the paternity of God is more perfect, because the difference between the Father and the Son is one only of relation, whereas in human generation, the difference between parent and child is that of numerically different individuals of the same species.

Thomas does not explore the kind of analogy that is at work here. Analogy of proportionality would obviously work, but might he claim something stronger, namely, analogy of one to another? The scripturally based term, 'Father', is hard to push too far, but if generation or generating in the Trinity is fundamental to the structure of the act of creation and to the life-giving activity of created beings themselves, it may well be that analogy of one to another could be at work. I am not claiming, however, that this is Thomas's view.

A Correction in the Tradition

It needs to be asked, what allows analogy of reference to one, that is, Aristotle's *pros hen* equivocation, and more particularly in language about God, analogy of one to another, to function in Thomas's metaphysics? Fundamentally, it is the claim that God exists and that God has created the universe out of nothing. As we have seen, Thomas relies on the axiom, 'every agent acts in so far as it is in act'. Where, therefore, some actuality that is not its own cause is found, that actuality must be found in a higher cause, even if it is a more perfect form. In other words, as efficient cause of the universe, although God creates beings that are not God and is, therefore, an equivocal cause, the beings that are created carry a relation to God in so far as all that is actual in them has its actuality from the actuality of God. The basis of this kind of analogy is, therefore, the real relation of creatures to Creator.

This conclusion is at odds with what many students of Thomas have been taught up until even recent decades, namely, that similarities between God and creatures are spoken of in terms of proportionality. The source of the difference lies in Thomas himself, who in *De Veritate* 2, 12 rejected reference of one to another (there called proportion) as the basis of analogy and proposed proportionality. It is

this text that formed the basis of the school of [40] interpretation initiated by Cajetan. More recent scholarship has overturned this view. George P. Klubertanz, writing in 1960, showed that this was a view that Thomas held only for a brief period early in his career and gave reasons both for his adoption of this view and for his abandonment of it.³⁰ John F. Wippel, writing in 2000, accepted Klubertanz' interpretation in concurring that the discussion of the *De Veritate* did not reflect Thomas's definitive position.³¹

Conclusion

The examples from the world of computing show that analogy is well and truly alive in our language not only as a way of finding terms for new objects but also as a way of tying meanings together and even of venturing to speak about things that remain for the most part unknown to us. Thomas Aquinas developed Aristotle's *pros hen* equivocation as analogy of reference to one and applied the particular form, one to another, to words naming to what he called the positive perfections in God. This kind of analogy is opposed to the merely metaphorical use of language and is significantly stronger than an analogy of proportionality, which exploits the comparative relationships between two sets of things. The stronger claim, which applies to only a small number of terms, is founded on the real relation of creature to Creator.

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³⁰ Klubertanz, *Analogy*, pp. 86 – 100. For a more recent summary, particularly on Cajetan's interpretation of the text, see Ralph McInerney, *Aquinas on Analogy* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 5 – 14.

³¹ Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, p. 553.