

## THE FORMULATION OF THOMISTIC SIMPLICITY: MAPPING AQUINAS'S METHOD FOR CONFIGURING GOD'S ESSENCE

PAUL MAXWELL\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The traditional method used to conceive the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity (DDS) is propelled by “the necessity of denying that any of the distinctions that help us discern created realities can possibly help us when our subject is the One who is the cause of all being.”<sup>1</sup> The task of this article is to map the method of Thomas Aquinas in formulating the DDS, since it is commonly held that “the doctrine of God’s simplicity reaches the zenith of expression and sophistication in the thought of Thomas Aquinas.”<sup>2</sup> Thomas explains, “In every simple thing, its being and *that which it is* are the same. For if the one were not the other, simplicity would be removed....However, God is absolutely simple. Hence, in God, being good is not anything distinct from him; he *is* his goodness.”<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that Thomas places a high philosophical and theological premium on the DDS. Yet scholars remain divided as to whether the DDS is a good and necessary consequence of God’s absoluteness, or a methodological commitment to the disciplinary autonomy of philosophy.

The task of this article, then, more specifically stated, is to trace the philosophical tools and methodological contours of Thomas’s construction of the DDS, including his use of Aristotle, his use of Scripture, and his doctrine of analogy.<sup>4</sup> We

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\* Paul Maxwell is a Ph.D. student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2065 Half Day Road, Deerfield, IL 60015.

<sup>1</sup> Christopher A. Franks, “The Simplicity of the Living God: Aquinas, Barth, and Some Philosophers,” *Modern Theology* 21 (2005) 279.

<sup>2</sup> James Dolezal, *God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God’s Absoluteness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I.3.8. Translation in Jeffrey E. Brower, “Making Sense of Divine Simplicity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008) 5. Thomas elsewhere elaborates in more detail: “If the existence of a thing differs from its essence, this existence must be caused either by some exterior agent or by its essential principles. Now it is impossible for a thing’s existence to be caused by its essential constituent principles....Therefore that thing, whose existence differs from its essence, must have its existence caused by another. But this cannot be true of God; because we call God the first efficient cause. Therefore it is impossible that in God His existence should differ from His essence....Therefore His essence is His existence.” *Summa Theologiae*, I.3.4. Translation found in *A Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologiae Edited and Explained for Beginners* (ed. Peter Kreeft; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) 79.

<sup>4</sup> There is not room in this paper to discuss how all the various schools of Thomism relate, whether “old” or “new.” The point is that, today, various Thomisms (e.g. the Existential Thomisms of Gilson, Maritain, Owens, and Wipfel) strut “newness” in their rejecting that Thomas was truly a nature/grace dualist, while other Thomisms (e.g. the Analytical and Neo-Scholastic Thomisms of Davies, Kretzmann,

will have to stipulate a few categories to help us classify ways that Thomas could have used his sources, and they are as follows: (1) Constructionism: The use of reason alone to formulate one's doctrine of God and/or one of his attributes; (2) Receptionism: The use of Scripture alone to formulate one's doctrine of God and/or one of his attributes; (3) Compositional Constructionism: The use of Scripture and reason to formulate one's doctrine of God and/or one of his attributes, giving a methodological priority to reason; (4) Compositional Receptionism: The use of Scripture and reason to formulate one's doctrine of God and/or one of his attributes, giving a methodological priority to Scripture.

We will find, despite much debate over how to classify Thomas's theological method, that (1) with special focus on the DDS, Thomas falls largely within the bounds of Compositional Constructionism; (2) when Thomas *does* introduce Scripture into his method, it causes a schism in his doctrine of God; and (3) Thomas's doctrine of analogy is a metaphysical composite of univocism and equivocism. The primary implication of these three observations is that, in Thomas, we find no positive content to describe God's essence, or his relationship to creation. We will see how this is the case, and its implications for Thomas's construction of his doctrine of God more generally, in our examination of Thomas and his interpreters.<sup>5</sup>

and Stump) still continue to do fresh work in the tradition of reading a strong nature/grace theme in Thomas. This article conscripts positive insights from many of these different camps, demonstrating, I think, the unavoidable thesis that Thomas was in fact very unclear about the structure and semantics of his doctrine of analogy, and also a rigid nature/grace dualist when it came to his doctrine of God. Nevertheless, John I. Jenkins provides a helpful perspective, saying, "Regardless of how we judge the philosophical adequacy of these various Thomisms, it is clear that they approach the texts with contemporary philosophical problems in mind, they employ the vocabulary of the modern philosophers and they seek in Aquinas answers to these contemporary questions. This is most apparent in the Maréchal and Cartesian versions of Thomism. But it is true even for Gilson and Maritain, though perhaps to a lesser extent. The 'critical problem,' they believe, cannot be found in Aquinas nor should it be taken seriously as a philosophical problem. But once this point is recognized, they contend, we find in Aquinas the correct account of *knowledge*, just as their philosophical contemporaries offered different accounts of this concept." John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 3. Fergus Kerr comments, "Current readings of Thomas's work are so conflicting, and even incommensurable, that integrating them into a single interpretation seems impossible." Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002) 15–16.

<sup>5</sup> Although an examination of the DDS as a concept in itself might be the ideal topic of this article, the reasons we must deal with the Thomistic DDS specifically are (1) the DDS has had too many definitions and configurations historically in order to be treated as a monolithic concept in a single article, and (2) the Thomistic DDS is arguably the version of simplicity which has been accepted by most Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians who affirm the doctrine. For a defense of point (1), see George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: William Heinemann, 1936) 9–13. For a defense of point (2), see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 3.231–37 (henceforth PRRD). Paul DeHart insists on making the same restriction, commenting, "'Ontological unity' or 'divine simplicity' refers to the unity of essence and existence which characterizes God's being. 'Simplicity' is being used in this narrowly defined sense for the sake of convenience; in reality, the monotheistic tradition has had quite varied reasons for asserting the simplicity of divine being." Paul J. DeHart, *Beyond the Necessary God: Trinitarian Faith and Philosophy in the Thought of Eberhard Jüngel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999) 12.

## II. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE DDS

1. *Aristotelian foundations.* Thomas builds his DDS with the blocks of Aristotle's metaphysics.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle posits ten metaphysical categories that characterize all of existence.<sup>7</sup> The first category, "Substance," is the category that governs how all other nine metaphysical categories work.<sup>8</sup> For Aristotle, then, all other categories

<sup>6</sup> While some claim that Thomas was as much a Neo-Platonist as he was Aristotelian (even though Thomas was very critical of Platonic and Neo-Platonic works), Neo-Platonic elements in Thomas's philosophy are best understood as subservient tools used to perfect the more basic, controlling Aristotelian elements of his thought. Thus, in dealing with the shortcomings of Aristotle for Thomas, Platonic categories necessarily emerge in Thomas's attempt to coordinate the rational and the transcendental in the task of theological predication. Platonism functions as an adapter plug for fitting together Aristotle and historic Christian orthodoxy, understood as it was at the time of Thomas. Thomas maintains a clear commitment to Aristotle's basic metaphysical categories, which serve as the superstructure of created reality for Thomas, and as the apophatic materials with which he engineers his version of the DDS. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 55–64; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation & Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte 46; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 3–20, 254–79.

<sup>7</sup> It will be helpful to articulate here the basic taxis of Aristotle's metaphysics. In *Metaphysics* (Δ.7), Aristotle posits that "Being' [ὄντος] is said in many ways," and those ways are "(1) conjunctions of different sorts of beings count as beings, but they are usually beings accidentally; (2) truths, (3) the categories, and (4) actuality/potentiality are beings essentially. Aristotle explores these four 'ways of being' in, respectively: (1) E.2–3, (2) E.4 and Θ.10, (3) Z–H, (4) Θ.1–9." Edward C. Halper, *Aristotle's 'Metaphysics': A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2012) 17. These four sections can be found in Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* (Penguin Classics; New York: Penguin, 1999) 236–42 (1); 243–50, 280–82 (2); 165–250 (3); 253–79 (4). The DDS traverses the plane of these four categories, needing each of them as negative descriptors of a being without *these particular* metaphysical distinctions. Aristotle himself proves the priority of substance this way: "The word 'substance' gets applied to at least four things; for the essence and the universal and the genus are all thought to be the substance of each thing, and so, fourthly, is the substratum [i.e. what underlies predicates and change]. Now the substratum is that of which everything else is predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else. So we must first determine the nature of this; for what underlies a thing has a strong claim to be its substance...[However,] the ultimate substratum is of itself neither a particular thing nor of a particular quantity nor otherwise characterized. If we follow this line, then, matter proves to be substance. But this is impossible; for both separability and 'thisness' are thought to belong chiefly to substance [characterless substrate lacks the independent individual existence of real substances]. And so form and the compound of form and matter would seem to be substance, rather than matter." *Metaphysics* Z.3.1028b33, in J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (New York: Oxford, 1981) 125–26.

<sup>8</sup> All ten metaphysical categories are: (1) Substance, (2) Quantity, (3) Quality, (4) Relation, (5) Location, (6) Sometime, (7) Being-in-a-position, (8) Having, (9) Doing, and (10) Affect. Regarding these categories, Thomas M. Ward says, "As Aquinas understood Aristotle, the ten categories exhaustively divide the modes of extramental being. Of these, the category substance was held to be ontologically prior to the other nine categories of accidents, inasmuch as the existence of accidents is dependent on the substances that they modify." Thomas M. Ward, "Relations Without Forms: Some Consequences of Aquinas's *Metaphysics* of Relations," *Vivarium* 48 (2010) 280. On the relationship of "substance" to all other metaphysical categories, Aryeh Kosman comments, "The enterprise of ontology is not concerned with understanding specific instances of being (being this or being that), or even concerned with specific types of being. It is concerned rather with understanding being as such, with understanding what Aristotle calls *ὄν ἢ ὄν: being qua being*. Such an understanding, nevertheless, is best achieved, for reasons that Aristotle proposes, by particular attention to one mode of being: the mode of being that everyone calls substance—*ousia*—and which is said by Aristotle to be the explanatory principle of being in general...For Aristotle ontology is only secondarily concerned with the question of what exists, or of what sorts of things there are. Its primary concern is with the nature of the being of things, and in particular,

besides substance are derivative functions, or aspects, of substance. Thomas reconfigures this slightly, rendering the discipline of metaphysics not primarily in terms of the substance/accident distinction, but in terms of the essence/existence (*ens/esse*) distinction.<sup>9</sup> Avicenna (970–1037), a Muslim who was trying to fit the Qur’anic teaching that Allah created the universe into Aristotle’s metaphysical framework, first accomplished this reformulation of Aristotle into an essence/existence scheme. It was by Avicenna that Thomas was inspired to do the same with the Christian God. And yet, Thomas felt that Avicenna’s appropriation of the essence/existence distinction, which posits that God subsists *without* an essence opened the door for unqualified equivocism.<sup>10</sup> Thomas classified this as a form of mysticism that could not account for how God created (or related to) the world. Instead, Thomas catalyzed the essence/existence distinction with the act/potency distinction over against the substance/accident distinction, the priority of which undergirded Avicenna’s formulation. David Burrell explains,

In a characteristically creative move, [Thomas] radically modified the way Avicenna had expressed the essence/existing distinction. Instead of portraying *existing* as something that ‘comes to’ the *essence*, as an *accident* comes to a *substance*, Aquinas reached for the most profound level of composition that Aristotle had proposed: that of *potency/act*. So as *form* is said to bring *matter* into *act*, so *existing* could be said to bring *essence* into *act*. This would mean that *form*, which had been one of Aristotle’s key candidates for *substance*—the very touchstone of *being-as-being* for Aristotle—would now be ‘reduced’ to something in potency. Put oth-

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as I have just said, with the nature of that fundamental mode of being called *substance*.” Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) 2.

<sup>9</sup> “What I am calling *esse* [being in being] is of all things the most perfect. Clearly this is so, since actualizing potentiality perfects it, and no form whatever can be understood actualized except by thinking of it as in being. Human-being or fire-iness can be thought of as existing potentially in some material, or virtually in some cause, or even in mind, but only by being in being is it made actually existent. So clearly what I am calling *esse* is the actualization of all actuality, and consequently the perfection of all perfections.” Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Philosophical Writings* (trans. Timothy McDermott; Oxford World’s Classics; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 208. The work cited here is Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei* 7.2 ad.9. I originally found this citation from *De Potentia* in Lawrence Dewan, “Being Per Se, Being Per Accidens and St. Thomas’ Metaphysics,” *ScEs* 30.2 (1978) 181.

<sup>10</sup> Another figure, Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), a Jewish philosopher who lived in the Islamicate in Cairo, was a very important interlocutor in the ancient metaphysical dialogue about the essence/existence distinction. Yet, our point in this section is not primarily historical, but conceptual, and Avicenna serves the purpose of representing adherents to the distinction since he was the figure that introduced the distinction to Western thought. See Amos Bertolacci, “On the Arabic Translations of Aristotle’s Metaphysics,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2005) 241–75; idem, “A New Phase of the Reception of Aristotle in the Latin West: Albertus Magnus and His Use of Arabic Sources in the Commentaries of Aristotle,” in *Albertus Magnus und der Ursprung der Universitätsidee* (ed. L. Honnefelder; Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2011) 259–76, 491–500; idem, “Albert’s Use of Avicenna and Islamic Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (ed. I. M. Resnick; Boston: Brill, 2013) 601–11. On Maimonides, see Niel A. Stubbens, “Naming God: Moses Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas,” *Thomist* 54.1 (1990) 229–67; David Burrell, “Maimonides, Aquinas, and Ghazali on Naming God,” in *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation* (ed. Peter Ochs; New York: Paulist, 1993) 238–46; Alexander Broadie, “Maimonides on the Great Tautology: Exodus 3,14,” *SJT* 47.4 (1994) 473–88; Mercedes Rubio, *Aquinas and Maimonides on the Possibility of the Knowledge of God: An Examination of the Quaestio de Attributis* (Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Thought; Dordrecht: Springer, 2006) 123–26, 210–44.

erwise, Aristotle's prime example of *act* had to be said to be in potency to *existing*. This re-iteration of the *potency/act* principle would never have occurred to Aristotle, who simply presumed that things—indeed the universe itself—exist.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, with a God who necessarily *exists*, and who is therefore *pure act*, with reference to a universe that does not necessarily exist (contra Aristotle), Thomas is able to explain that “the creator is present to each created thing ‘according to the manner in which it has its existence’”<sup>12</sup> because “*esse* (existence) is the proper effect of the first and most universal cause.”<sup>13</sup> Some claim that this is a Christianization of Aristotle. Yet we must recognize Thomas's method in recasting Avicenna's proposal to prioritize the essence/existence distinction.

Thomas attempts to go one level deeper than Avicenna's use of Aristotle in speaking about precisely how the essence/existence distinction governs human conceptions of reality (and ultimately their understanding of God's essence). Thus, he uses one Aristotelian tool—the act/potency distinction—to replace a different Aristotelian tool—the substance/accident distinction—in order to properly configure the nature of the essence/existence distinction. Therefore, while we may categorically differentiate between Aristotle, who prioritizes substance, and Aquinas, who prioritizes *esse*, we must qualify that differentiation by making explicit that, even in his modification of Aristotle, Thomas restricts himself to using Aristotelian tools for such modification. Initially, then, the Thomistic modification of Aristotle does not appear to be anything more than a rearrangement of Aristotle's categories in order to establish compatibility between Aristotle and Christian doctrine.

The root of Thomas's DDS “is found in his teaching that every created thing, even relatively simple things such as human souls and angelic spirits, are at the very least composed of existence and essence. No created essence is identical with its act of existence and is therefore relative and dependent in some sense. But God's essence is identical with his existence and therefore God is absolutely necessary and self-sufficient.”<sup>14</sup> For Thomas, the DDS could be comprehensively summarized in a single sentence: “God's essence *is* his existence.” Nothing more, strictly speaking, needs to be said.

Consider, then, Thomas's statement, “We cannot know the ‘to be’ of God (*esse Dei*), [any] more than we know His essence....For, indeed, we know that the proposition we are forming about God, when we say: God is, is a true proposition, and we know this from His effects.”<sup>15</sup> Here, we have a foretaste of the relationship that we will explore between Aristotle's categories and Thomas's doctrine of God. Étienne Gilson comments on this passage, “True metaphysics does not...culminate in an essence, be it [even] that of Being itself. Its last word is not *ens*, but *esse*; not

<sup>11</sup> David B. Burrell, “Aquinas and Jewish and Islamic Authors,” *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* 67–68 (italics his).

<sup>12</sup> ST I.8.1. Translation in Burrell, “Aquinas and Jewish and Islamic Authors” 70.

<sup>13</sup> ST I.45.5. Translation in Burrell, “Aquinas and Jewish and Islamic Authors” 70.

<sup>14</sup> Dolezal, *God without Parts* 7.

<sup>15</sup> ST I.3.4 ad.2. Translation in Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941) 142–43.

being, but *is*.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, for Thomas, God cannot be “Being itself,” but he most certainly needs to be “Existence itself” (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*).<sup>17</sup>

2. *Thomistic nature/grace dualism.*

a. *The relationship between nature and grace.* What role, then, does Aristotle’s substance metaphysics play in the theological methodology of Thomas? Our reading of Thomas is that, by virtue of his commitment to beginning with Aristotelian philosophy, his theological methodology is characterized by a sharp distinction between nature and grace, and moreover, a movement from nature to grace in theological formulation: “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.”<sup>18</sup> Our concern is not merely Thomas’s theological method in general, but how the Thomistic DDS *needs*, above all other metaphysical categories, the Aristotelian essence/existence distinction as a descriptor of a being which contains no metaphysical distinctions that are characteristic of creation (conceived exclusively in Aristotelian categories).<sup>19</sup> Thomas says,

The proposition “God exists” is self-evident in itself (*per se nota secundum se*), for...its subject and predicate are identical, since God is his own existence. But because what it is to be God is not evident to us, the proposition is not self-

<sup>16</sup> Gilson, *God and Philosophy* 143.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Étienne Gilson, *Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (trans. Laurence K. Shook and Armand Maurer; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2002) 94. Cited in John Cheng Wai-Leung, “The Meaning and Challenge of St. Thomas’s Metaphysical Concept of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* Today,” *Fu Jen International Religious Studies* 1.1 (2007) 149.

<sup>18</sup> *ST* I.1.8 ad.2. Cited in Jan A. Aersten, “Aquinas’s Philosophy in Its Historical Setting,” *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump; New York: Cambridge, 1993) 23. Thomas also says, “The existence of God, and other things that can be known of God by natural reason (see Romans 1), are not articles of faith, but approaches to the articles of faith. Faith presupposes nature, and any perfection presupposes something that is made perfect.” *ST* I.2.2 obj.1, ad.1. Cited in Christopher F. J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) 101.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas says, “God is the only being in which the union of potential and realization, the composition of essence and existence, disappears. This composition is not needed here because God is existence itself.” *De Potentia* 7.2 ad.1. Cited in Dewan, “Being Per Se, Being Per Accidens and St. Thomas’ Metaphysics” 181. Thomas writes in the same section, “So there must be some cause higher than all [things] in virtue of which they all cause existence, a cause of which existence is the proper effect. And this cause is God. Now the proper effect of any cause issues from it by reproducing its nature. So existing must be God’s substance of nature. And that is why the book of Causes says that *intelligence gives existence only of it is divine*, and that *the first of all effects is existence, and nothing created precedes that*” (206). Thomas only later recognized that “The book of Causes” was not a work of Aristotle, but a work of the fifth-century philosopher Proclus. Aquinas, *Selected Philosophical Writings* 206. Horst Seidl firmly connects the Aristotelian and Thomistic notions of essence and existence in Thomas’s doctrine of God (in light of their admitted differences): “In Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*, book XII, which is his natural theology, the first transcendent cause of being of all things is determined is immaterial, pure act (without any potency). This means that its essence is identical with its actual being. Thomas has assumed this doctrine in the first part of *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3, a. 3, teaching that in God his essence is identically his being: *in Deo idem est essentia et esse*, God is essentially *ipsum esse subsistens*. Modern criticism puts this in question, ignoring that this statement is made of the first cause, the divine substance, which presupposes the whole foregoing metaphysics. Whereas in all beings the being differs from their essence, in God—in a unique exception—both fall into one.” “From Existence to Essence: Re-gaining the Aristotelian-Thomistic Doctrine in Front of Modern Problems,” *Espritu* 59 (2010) 396–397.

evident to us, and needs to be made evident [it is *per se nota secundum se* but not *per se nota quoad nos*].<sup>20</sup>

On this passage, Brian Davies comments,

How, then, can it be made evident? On what basis can we claim knowledge of God's existence? Aquinas's reply is that we can know of God only on the basis of what is evident to us. And that, he thinks, is what we perceive by means of our senses. According to him we must proceed from world to God, from effect to cause. This, he observes, is the sense of the passage from St Paul noted above [Rom 1]. We do not start with a knowledge of God. We begin as knowing the world in which we live. So we will have to be content with reasoning to God's existence from that.<sup>21</sup>

C. F. J. Martin agrees, making a braver claim that "St Thomas undoubtedly thought of the existence of God as what we would call a philosophical question—briefly, a question that can be answered correctly by the natural light of human reason alone, without recourse to the content of God's self-revelation."<sup>22</sup> Thomas authenticates both Davies's and Martin's reading of him when he says, "The existence of God, and other things that can be known of God by natural reason (see Romans 1), are not articles of faith, but approaches to the articles of faith. Faith presupposes nature, and any perfection presupposes something that is made perfect."<sup>23</sup>

b. *The movement from nature to grace.* In Thomas, the metaphysical movement between nature and grace (or, natural truth and revealed truth) is not as simple as a movement from created being to the Creator. The disciplinary lines are a bit staggered. For Thomas, what is accessible to natural reason breaches, and even extends beyond, the Creator-creature distinction. In other words, in terms of man's ability to make metaphysical-theological formulations, man reaches God through reason before God reaches man through revelation. Derek Simon articulates this truth well, saying,

In receiving on faith the revelation of the triune mystery in all its incomprehensibility, Thomas, never abandoning the search for intelligibility amidst this revealed communication, realigned the very orientation of metaphysics. There is a reverse, analogical transposition of meaning from the revealed theological hori-

<sup>20</sup> *ST I.2.1*. Translation in Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 25.

<sup>21</sup> Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* 25.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, *Thomas Aquinas 2*. To corroborate this claim, Martin later quotes Thomas in *ST I.13.8c*: "So because God is not known to us in His own nature, but is glimpsed by us in virtue of His operations or effects, we can name Him from these, as has been said above. Hence this name 'God' is the name of an operation, in so far as that in virtue of which the name is imposed is concerned, since this name is imposed in virtue of His universal providential care for the world. For everyone who speaks of God understands that 'God' names that which has universal providential care for the world." *Ibid.* 47.

<sup>23</sup> *ST I.1.1 ad.1*. Cited in Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 101. Thomas also says later, "But since we do not know what God is, the proposition 'God exists' is not known to us in its own right. Rather it needs to be demonstrated through things which are better known as far as we are concerned, and less known in their own nature: i.e. through God's effects....Hence God's existence, which is not known in its own right so far as we are concerned, can be demonstrated by effects which are known to us." *ST I.1.1c* and *ST I.1.2c*. Cited in Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 104.

zon to the philosophically theological horizon. Metaphysics as a divine science no longer concerns forms or essences. *It is itself an apophatic science of transcendental being. The affirmations and analyses of being never attain any essential or quidditative principles* that allow it a masterful control over existence. The affirmations of metaphysics remain fundamentally nescient even when affirming divine reality as the causal principle of being. Indeed, *transcendental being is as incomprehensible as the divine reality which effectively constitutes it. Yet, suffused by the divine reality, being grounds the condition, possibility, and limits of the human understanding of God by enabling transcendental, excessive, and negative affirmations.*<sup>24</sup>

Simon gives us the appropriate tools to understand the two categories that classify everything within the epistemological scope of man's natural reason in Thomas's thought: (1) a positive metaphysic (let us call it affirmative reason [AFR]) that is constituted by metaphysical distinction (i.e. essence/existence, substance/accident, act/potency), and (2) apophatic philosophy (let us call it apophatic reason [APR]), which is the negation of those metaphysical distinctions that characterize created reality). The categories of Thomas's epistemology, as presented by Simon, might be charted like this:

Figure 1: Thomistic Method of Philosophical Theology

<i>Scientific Tool</i>	Nature A (AFR) (Affirmative Reason)	Nature B (APR) (Apophatic Reason)	Grace (REV) (Revelation)
<i>Scientific Object</i>	Creation	Creator A	Creator B
<i>Scientific Method</i>	Affirmation of Metaphysical Distinctions	Denial of Metaphysical Distinctions ( <i>Divine</i> )	Affirmation of Non-Metaphysical Personal Distinctions ( <i>Divine</i> )

The question still remains, however: How precisely does Thomas relate grace to nature, or, in Thomas's terms, How *exactly* does grace perfect nature? One of the points that we will make in our argument below is that, in moving from nature to grace, Thomas functionally moves from one god to another (Creator A and Creator B).<sup>25</sup> It will be helpful to quote Simon at length once more at this point:

Incomprehensibility, moreover, does not diminish intelligibility. Suffused by the divine reality which is sublimely intelligible, the metaphysical quest for the intel-

<sup>24</sup> Derek Simon, "Divine Science in Aquinas' *Expositio Super Librum Boetii De Trinitate*: Trinitarian Apophatic Theology and the Transformation of Metaphysics," *SeEs* 50 (1998) 151 (italics mine).

<sup>25</sup> On this distinction between "Creator A" and "Creator B," divided by the *way* that Thomas knows each version of God (one by nature, and one by grace), David Burrell gives us some support: "Aquinas distinguishes between the philosophical science ('metaphysics' or 'first philosophy' or 'divine science'), which studies God only indirectly as the cause of that which falls under its subject (being as being), and another kind of theology that has God as its subject and depends on belief in divine revelation for its principles. Even so, Aquinas is convinced that there can be no real conflict." "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* 86. Burrell's statement should be taken in conjunction with the observation of W. Norris Clarke, that "The *philosophical* meaning of God should be exclusively a function of the *way by which He is discovered*." "Analogy and the Meaningfulness of Language about God," in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being—God—Person* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1995) 129

ligibility of being is taken to the threshold of the divine. The apophatic encounter with being only encourages divesting an all too human logic of existence of its encumbering pretences to control and illusory mastery over life. Thomas' mutual and critical correlation between the fundamental christian [*sic*] experience of the Trinity and his historical experience, interpreted by the possibility of divine science, brings metaphysics to the threshold of spirituality. Knowing *that* the divine reality *is*, metaphysics remains impoverished with respect to *who* that divine reality is.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, Thomas (1) builds a philosophical construct for created reality out of the principles of Nature A (AFR), (2) builds a philosophical construct for *divine* reality through the principles of Natural Reason B (APR), and (3) fills the second construct with theological data from Scripture (REV).<sup>27</sup> Aristotelian sub-

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<sup>26</sup> Derek Simon, "Divine Science" 151. Thomas himself says this: "So the human mind advances in three ways in knowing God, though it does not reach a knowledge of what he is, but only that he is...we know God as the cause of all things, by transcendence and by negation." *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, 2.1. (D 65.20–66.17). Translation in *Faith, Reason, and Theology* (trans. A. Maurer; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987) 21–22. Simon earlier demonstrates that, even if one begins with Aristotle, and not with Thomas's supposed creator-creature distinction, this particular way of relating created and uncreated metaphysics under the rubric of finiteness and infiniteness is still possible. In other words, such an observation demonstrates that Thomas's very way of formulating the DDS, as we will see more specifically below, is rather pagan: "Aristotle suggests that substance separate from matter and motion is the primary instance of substance (*Meta.*, IV, 1004a3–4; IV, 1005l34–b1; XII, 1072a31–33). The science claiming being qua being as its subject (*Meta.*, IV, 1003a22–25. b16; VI, 1026a32; VI, 1028a3–4; XI, 1064b6–14) is moreover equated with the science of the primary instance of substance (*Meta.*, IV, 1003b15–17; IV, 1005a27–b1) and so treats universally of all beings (*Meta.*, VI, 1026a29–32; XI, 1064b6–14). The study of being qua being, it is suggested, is intrinsically constituted by the investigation of separate substance as the primary instance of being. Separate substance, moreover, is recognized as divine (*Meta.*, IV, 1026a19–20, 1064a35–37). Hence the study of being qua being is a philosophical science of the divine, a theology." Simon, "Divine Science" 135.

<sup>27</sup> This will become clearer throughout this article, but it will be helpful to give a brief demonstration of this *in Thomas* here. Thomas argues that the lack of distinction between essence and existence means that God is the only rationale for himself, since there is not a more broad, or generic, metaphysical category under which we may catalogue him. In other words, God's essence *is* his existence—he does not actuate or embody a passive essence, but rather, his active existence simply *is* the essence of deity. That can be said of no creature. The Latin words that separate these concepts for Thomas are *ens* (being/essence) and *esse* (the act of existence, or, embodying an essence). For Aristotle, they were οὐσία and ὄν, respectively. We are not taking issue with the idea that God is unique *per se*, but with how Thomas gets there, and it is rather clear that Thomas's method for discerning God's absoluteness is thoroughly Aristotelian. It will be helpful to quote Thomas at length to demonstrate this point: "According to Aristotle we use the verb 'to be' in two ways: sometimes to signify the essence of a thing, its act of existing, sometimes to signify the truth of a proposition, even where there is lack of existence, as when we say that blindness exists since it is true that some men are blind. When Damascene says it is clear that God exists he uses 'exist' in the second way and not the first. Used in the first way God's existing is his substance and as unknown to us as his substance is. But used in the second way we know that God exists, since that is a proposition we can conceive in our mind through his effects....*God's existing—his substance—is not the existing common to other things, but an existing distinct from all other existing. So by his very own existing God differs from all other beings. As we read in the book of Causes [citing Aristotle again], God's existing is individually distinguished from all other existing by the very fact that it is an existing subsistent in itself, and not one supervening on a nature other than existing itself....So God's existing is not the existing everything has in common.*" *De Potentia* 7.2 ad.1–6. Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Philosophical Writings* 206–7 (italics mine). Thomas makes it absolutely clear in this passage that he derives his DDS from purely Aristotelian logic ("As we read in the book of Causes"). In his own exposition of the Thomistic DDS, Dolezal goes so far as to say that it

stance metaphysics forges the conceptual tank that is *only later* filled with the content of divine revelation.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Thomas's *scientific method* in Figure 1 may be exemplified more specifically like this:

Figure 2: Thomistic Divine Science Exemplified

<i>Scientific Tool</i>	Nature A (AFR) (Affirmative Reason)	Nature B (APR) (Apophatic Reason)	Grace (REV) (Revelation)
<i>Scientific Object</i>	Creation	Creator A	Creator B
<i>Scientific Method</i>	<i>Separate essence</i> (Humanity [passive potential]) <i>from existence</i> (Aristotle's existence as a human [active embodiment of human substance])	<i>Conflate essence</i> (divinity) <i>with existence</i> (God [pure actuality]) to form DDS.	<i>Add</i> revealed truth (grace [e.g. the personal distinctions, freedom, love, covenantal qualities, etc.]) <i>onto</i> reasoned truth (nature [e.g. simplicity, efficient causality, etc.])

is this Aristotelian metaphysic that is necessary for us to maintain the aseity of God: "To maintain that God exists *a se*, then, is merely to say that God himself is the sufficient ontological condition and explanation for his existence and essence.... It is God's identity with his existence and essence that ensures that he is *wholly* non-derived." Dolezal, *God Without Parts* 71.

<sup>28</sup> Summarizing Thomas's general methodological attitude toward Aristotle's metaphysics in his commentaries on Aristotle, Leo Elders says, "St. Thomas had an additional reason to delve deeper into what he felt was implicitly contained in Aristotle's text: Aristotle's philosophy, when further developed in this way, was to serve as the basis for a new approach to reality, so that Augustinian exemplarism could be replaced by a philosophy which would fully admit the rationality and wealth of created reality. *To do so also implied to show that Aristotle's thought in its principles is compatible with the tenets of the Christian faith....* Obviously Thomas himself does not consider these positions as definitely true. Nevertheless, he treats Aristotle's doctrine as a consistent complex of truth, but makes some corrections and additions which leave the body of his philosophy intact. Conflicts with the Christian faith are pointed out, and throughout he stresses that the act of being of things depends on the First Cause, asserting a few times that Aristotle himself says so. In reality, however, it is a conclusion from a Platonic principle, mentioned by Aristotle." Leo Elders, "The Aristotelian Commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics* 63 (2009) 52–53. Phillip Wicksteed, though a bit outdated, I think accurately notes, "To take our account of man's goal from the Neoplatonist, therefore, and our account of his constitution from Aristotle, leaves us with a huge gap in our theory. But this gap is exactly what Aquinas wants. For there was something else that he could not do without, in addition to the Platonic and Aristotelian elements we have examined. He had been nurtured in the bosom of the Christian church, he had been spiritually fed by the Christian scriptures, his deepest devotions had been taught to cling around mysteries of which Aristotle knew nothing, and of which the Neoplatonists, if they seemed to know anything, knew it wrong. *In a word, he wanted the Christian revelation and its promise; and they fitted exactly into the gap he had made for them by his Platonic mysticism united with his Aristotelian ejection of the mystic sense.*" Phillip Henry Wicksteed, *The Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy: Illustrated from the Works of S. Thomas Aquinas: Lectures Delivered in London and Oxford, 1916* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920) 159. Cited in Robert Leet Patterson, *The Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas* (1933; repr. Merrick, NY: Richwood, 1976).

## III. CONSTRUCTING THE DDS

Having looked at Thomas's understanding of the relationship between nature and grace (grace perfects nature), and his method for moving from nature to grace (nature builds construct, grace fills construct with content), it is not a reach to see that Thomas builds the construct of his DDS with the tools of Aristotelian nature alone (knowledge of sensible objects and intuition [*ratio*]). Applying everything we have observed to the DDS, Joseph Owens comments:

[God's] was the nature to which all other beings had focal reference as beings... So conceived, this is very different from the notion of being that had been developed by Aristotle. Yet it is readily brought under the general Aristotelian concept of actuality, which was adaptable enough to undergo the further extension... Being is present as a nature only in God. Everything else has to receive it as an actuality that comes from outside, from an efficient cause. In that framework, *Aquinas can follow the structure of the Aristotelian reasoning from sensible things in their mixture of actuality with potentiality to an actuality that has no potentiality whatever.*<sup>29</sup>

The value in making note of this in Thomas is that the legitimacy of his DDS stands or falls with the competency of Aristotle's substance metaphysics to reach the divine.<sup>30</sup> To summarize Owens, Thomas's ability to grasp and appropriate the

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Owens, "Aristotle and Aquinas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* 46–48. Owens further describes the organic connection between Aristotle's metaphysics and Thomas's DDS: "Aristotle regards the sensible and the supersensible as coming under the notion of *being*, because of the focal reference that all have to separate substance, the primary instance of being. Aquinas, on the other hand, looks upon a thing as a being because of its having the actuality of existence. As he sees it, then, the reference is to the existence that is originally known through judgment. In regard to the extension of the notion *being* to the supersensible, he speaks of it not as taking place through abstraction, but rather through 'separation.' It involves a separation of the notion of *form* from the notion of *informing matter*. That separation is not made by abstraction, which requires that the intellect have before its gaze instances of the relevant types, as it does in the case of humans and animals and living bodies. But the intellect does have before its gaze instances of both corporeal and incorporeal things, and so it cannot just abstract from them a notion that is common to both the sensible and the supersensible." Therefore, "through the operation by which [the intellect] compounds and divides, it distinguishes one thing from another by understanding that the one does not exist in the other." Apophatic theological method, then, which is Thomas's method for constructing the DDS, is a higher function of this tool of "separation." *Ibid.* 50. One might argue that Owens is only speaking of a distinction between corporeal beings and created, noncorporeal beings, but the context of the "nonsensible" here is clearly "that [which] has no potentiality whatever."

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Owens says that Aquinas's reorganization of the Aristotelian system from a form/matter schema to an essence/existence schema christianizes Aristotle, a claim we have already mentioned. Owens says, "But whereas for Aristotle the actuality reached was finite form, for Aquinas it was infinite existence. The radical difference arose from the way actuality in sensible things was conceived. For Aristotle the things were actual through their form. For Aquinas the composite of form and matter was made actual by existence." Owens, "Aristotle and Aquinas" 48. That is, although Aristotle finds the ultimate cause of actuality a limited actuality, Aquinas says such a cause exists in an infinite actuality that *is existence*. However, taking brackets of limitedness off of Aristotle does not make it characteristically Christian—even theology that is not distinctively Christian (i.e. Muslim or Jewish theology in the form of Avicenna and Maimonides) makes the same move from Aristotle that Thomas does. This is in line with what we discussed above regarding Thomas's modification of Aristotle being no more than a rearrangement of the pieces in Aristotle's own system, thus implicitly demonstrating a commitment to the sufficiency of the Aristotelian categories themselves. We must insist that Thomas's use of Exod 3:14 to

theological data of special revelation depends on the Aristotelian momentum he builds in moving from AFR to APR—from reason to supra-reason.

1. *Revelation and simplicity.*

a. *Thomas's use of Exod 3:14.* We are now left with the question: what is the relationship between Thomas's DDS and revelation? Étienne Gilson, commenting on Thomas's use of Exod 3:14 as a proof-text for the DDS, says, "From this moment it is understood once and for all that the proper name of God is being and that...this name denotes His very essence."<sup>31</sup> Joseph Owens makes a similar observation:

Consider how this conception of being took on a drastically new significance when it was approached by Thomas Aquinas. He was conditioned by the reading of the sacred Scriptures, whose opening words declare that in the beginning God created heaven and earth. In philosophical language this meant that God was the first efficient cause of all other things. In this way, God was the primary instance of being. His was the nature to which all other beings had focal reference as beings. Further on, in Exodus (3:14) God reveals his own name in terms of being. "Ego sum qui sum" (I am who am) was the way the text read in the Vulgate translation. That was for Aquinas the "sublime truth" that the Christian knew about being. It was the very name and nature of God. *In Aristotelian language* this meant that the primary instance of being was God, the God who was now revealed as a fond and loving parent deeply interested in and concerned with the children he had begotten in his own image and likeness. His efficient causality extended to everything that took place, insofar as he concurred as primary cause in everything done by his creatures, and conserved them all in existence. The focal reference through efficient causality was thereby all-pervasive. *Although this viewpoint was not Aristotelian, the Aristotelian notions were flexible enough to carry the enriched content of revelation.*<sup>32</sup>

Owens's reading of Thomas is substantiated by Thomas himself, who says,

The name *He Who Is* is most properly applied to God for three reasons: First, because of its signification. For it does not signify form, but simply existence itself. Hence since the existence of God is His essence itself, which can be said of no other, it is clear that among other names this one specially denominates God, for everything is denominated by its form. Secondly, on account of its universality. For all other names are either less universal, or, if convertible with it, add something above it at least in idea; hence in a certain way they inform and determine it...Thirdly, from its consignification, for it signifies present existence;

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justify his metaphysics does not make his DDS a product of revelation, because the text is not appropriately used. This will be discussed below.

<sup>31</sup> Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936) 51. Cited in Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 42. Gilson later adds, "Exodus lays down the principle from which henceforth the whole of Christian philosophy will be suspended." Gilson, *Medieval Philosophy* 51. For a summary of the use of Exod 3:14 in the history of Roman Catholic thought, see Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (4th ed.; Charlotte, NC: TAN Books & Publishers, 2009) 25–27.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Owens, "Aristotle and Aquinas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* 33–34 (italics mine).

and this above all properly applies to God, whose existence knows no past or future.<sup>33</sup>

And elsewhere, Thomas reasons, “As we read in the book of Causes, God’s existing is individually distinguished from all other existing by the very fact that it is an existing subsistent in itself, and not one supervening on a nature other than existing itself.”<sup>34</sup> Gilson comments, “Note well that for Thomas Aquinas the revelation of the identity of essence and existence in God was equivalent to a revelation of the distinction between essence and existence in creatures.”<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately for Thomas, we must make the methodological observation that this is not exegesis. This is philosophical eisegesis.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, Thomas’s use of Scripture in this instance is as an adjunct to his philosophy, not an authority.<sup>37</sup> Wippel supports this claim, commenting,

As for Aquinas’s view that *esse* or the act of being is the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections, I am aware of no explicit prior philosophical (or theological) source for this. It has been suggested by Gilson (and others) that Thomas took this notion from Scripture at Exodus 3:14 where, according to the Latin Vulgate, God refers to himself as *Ego sum qui sum*. I would rather argue that

<sup>33</sup> ST I.13.11. Barry D. Smith, *The Oneness and Simplicity of God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014) 44 n. 94.

<sup>34</sup> *Quaestiones Disputate de Potentia* 7.2. Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Philosophical Writings* 207.

<sup>35</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Thomism* 95. Cited in John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (rev. ed.; Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 47; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007) 281.

<sup>36</sup> The point here is not to say that it is inappropriate to draw philosophical conclusions from texts, but that Thomas imports his agenda to synchronize his modified Aristotelianism and the teaching of Scripture. For a defense of the legitimacy of making metaphysical statements from texts of Scripture, see Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Challenges in Contemporary Theology; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004) 57–74; C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002) 295–312.

<sup>37</sup> Regardless of his interpretative misstep with Exod 3:14, Thomas nevertheless saw his primary task as the exposition of Scripture, and was required to be an expert in its interpretation. Nicholas M. Healy says, “In 1256 Thomas became a university master in the faculty of theology, acquiring the title *magister in sacra pagina* (master of the sacred page), or what was become the more common title, *doctor sacrae scripturae*. As the titles indicate, his primary task was to teach Scripture, which he did throughout the remainder of his life, often as he wrote his more doctrinally-oriented works.” Nicholas M. Healy, “Introduction,” *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries* (ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum; New York: T&T Clark, 2005) 11. However, Healy also comments on the Aristotelian influence on Thomas’s method in the earliest days of his training in the interpretation of Scripture: “It is probably that upon his arrival at the University of Paris, Thomas had completed this part of his training and had begun the second stage, moving on to become *baccalarium sententiarum*, a bachelor of the ‘Sentences.’ The study of the Sentences was ratified as an essential part of the theological training by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. By Thomas’s time, commenting on them was something like writing an extended form of a modern Ph.D. dissertation. The bachelor was expected to do more than simply discuss the meaning of the excerpts and their coherence with Scripture. He was required to discuss and resolve the questions arising from his analysis, as well as introduce and resolve new questions of his own. Thereby the bachelor had the opportunity to develop a well-rounded understanding of the theology of the Fathers and its bearing upon contemporary issues. Thomas took full advantage of the opportunity, recasting Lombard’s work to some extent, and including many citations from Aristotle” (ibid.; italics mine). Even when Thomas looked to Scripture, when it came to his doctrine of God, he still took his cue from Aristotle.

it is precisely because Aquinas had already worked out philosophically his understanding of *esse* or the *actus essendi* as intrinsic causality that he could then claim to recognize it in the text of Exodus. For instance, in SCG I, c. 22, which Gilson cites, Thomas first offers a series of philosophical arguments to prove that in God essence and *esse* are identical. Only at the end of the chapter does he refer to the text from Exodus for additional confirmation. And this is in accord with his usual practice in the first three books of SCG in which, as he writes at Bk I, c. 9, he intends to pursue by following the way of reason those things that faith professes and human reason can investigate about God.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, it seems that Aquinas, having already worked out from Aristotle his understanding of what God's essence must be before arriving at the text, conscripted Exod 3:14 for his purposes in a way that is driven solely by his own metaphysical agenda.<sup>39</sup>

b. *Exodus 3:14, reason, and revelation.* While we may grant that Exod 3:14 is making *some* metaphysical claim about God's essence, we must answer the question: Precisely what about God is Exod 3:14 revealing?

K. Scott Oliphint provides exegesis of Exod 3:14 that is helpful in this regard: "This name...tells us something of who God is essentially. Though it is God's covenant name, it nevertheless tells us things about who God is quite apart from his relationship with his people...[it] indicates that we are to think of the Lord as essentially *a se*." Furthermore,

Yahweh is *a se*. He is the 'I AM,' He depends on nothing to be who he is. Not only so, but his name attaches to his character in such a way that there is no possible way that he could be anyone else, or that he could give up who and what he is. To do that would be to give up his very name; it would be to move from being the 'I AM' to being dependent on something else...That is, while certainly all of Scripture is given by God himself, what we have given to Moses on that mountain is God himself speaking to Moses in order to reveal exactly *who* is calling Moses and promising to deliver Israel.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes* 281.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew Levering insists that biblical scholars who relegate Exod 3:14 to a mere covenantal promise without an organic basis in ontology cut the legs out from under any significance or assurance a covenantal promise might carry, and thus concludes that Thomas's metaphysical interpretation is not only valid, but necessary and true. Yet, the problem with Thomas's interpretation of Exod 3:14 is not that he interprets it metaphysically, but that the metaphysics which he uses are distinctly and unjustifiably Aristotelian. See Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics* 61–63; Aidan Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas: An Introduction to His Life, Work, and Influence* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002) 43; Thomas Aquinas, *ST I.13.11* s.c.

<sup>40</sup> K. Scott Oliphint, *God With Us: Divine Condescension and the Attributes of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) 53, 61–62. Herman Bavinck comments on the divine name in Exod 3:14, "The church fathers thought it referred to God's aseity. God is the One who *is*, an eternal immutable being, over against the factual nonbeing (οὐκ ὄν) of idols and the nonabsolute being (μη ὄν) of creatures. Other scholars, such as W. R. Smith and Smend, appealing to Exodus 3:12, take the name to be 'he who will be with you.' Both of these interpretations are unacceptable, the latter because if it were correct the addition 'with you' (ךָ־עִמִּי) could not be absent, and the former because *it has too philosophical a ring to it and lacks support in Exodus 3.*" *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2: *God and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 143 (italics mine). It would seem, on a surface reading of Bavinck, that he is rejecting Oliphint's way of interpreting the passage, but it will be helpful to see where Bavinck takes Exod 3:14 after rejecting the two interpre-

The primary difference between the interpretations of Thomas and Oliphint is that Thomas reads the text as revealing simplicity, and Oliphint reads the text as revealing aseity. One might wonder what the difference is between the two, and, while some find them to be so close that they are nearly interchangeable, there is actually a very important distinction: the DDS is pure APR, conceived on the basis of Aristotelian metaphysics (AFR), but the doctrine of aseity is a *positive* statement about God's being *that he gives about himself* (REV). Whereas the DDS is a list of metaphysical redactions (APR), the doctrine of aseity is God's metaphysical self-attestation (REV).<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, while the formal definitions of simplicity and aseity might be identical (i.e. God is "of himself," in terms of aseity, and "utterly unique in the genus of his *ens*" in terms of simplicity), the content that fills them, by virtue

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tations he gives as examples (pure philosophical construction and pure historical relegation): "He [God] will be what he was for the patriarchs, what he is now and will remain: he will be everything to and for his people. It is not a new and strange God who comes to them by Moses, but the God of the fathers, the Unchangeable One, the Faithful One, the eternally Self-consistent One, who never leaves or forsakes his people but always again seeks out and saves his own. He is unchangeable in his grace, in his love, in his assistance, who will be what he is because he is always himself. So in Isaiah he calls himself: 'I am he, the first and the last (אני הוּא), 41:4; 43:10, 13, 25; 44:6; 48:12). And indeed, his aseity underlies this view of God, but it is not in the foreground nor directly expressed in the name" (ibid.). Bavinck sees aseity *in the text*, and even *in the name*, but aseity is related to the text by implication, not directly (or what we might term "good and necessary consequence" [Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6]). What Bavinck seems to be doing by rejecting a direct link between the divine name and aseity is to defend the text against precisely the kind of philosophical eisegesis that Thomas performs with the doctrine of simplicity and Exod 3:14. Yet on the other hand, Bavinck rejects a reading of the divine name that is a mere promise of God's reliability in a particular historical circumstance (redeeming Israel from Egypt). Bavinck is not rejecting that God is revealing his aseity in his name any more than he is rejecting that God is covenanting to be faithful to redeem Israel ("I am [with you]")—he is rather highlighting the fact that if the reader of Exod 3:14 reduces the divine name either to (1) abstractly conceived aseity (which is, at least functionally, the DDS); or (2) mere historical activity, one will miss the dynamic exchange of the ontologically independent God promising everlasting covenant faithfulness to his adopted people. Therefore, Oliphint and Bavinck essentially have the same interpretation of Exod 3:14, but with different emphases. Other commentators and scholars that corroborate the Oliphint/Bavinck interpretation of Exod 3:14 are: John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Waco, TX: Word, 1987) 39 (Durham says, "He [God] now answers Moses' question about the authority for the command of exodus with the declaration אֲשֶׁר אֱהִיָּה אֱהִיָּה אֲנִי 'I AM always I AM.'"). See also Dennis J. McCarthy, "Exod 3:14: History, Philology and Theology," *CBQ* 40 (1978) 317: "To [Moses] is given not merely revelation and office but the very divine name and its special explanation. Thus the form emphasizes the style: Yahweh *really* is, 'I am who am,' or better... 'he who is.'... Of course, the text is not 'Greek'; it is pre-metaphysical. It seems safe to leave it at this: Yahweh *is* above all others and this means active and helping, for being and acting effectively were not separated.... Thus the church did *not* substitute a static 'Greek' for an active 'Hebrew' notion of God in theology or spirituality. It developed the biblical datum in the light of useful philosophical principles.... Whether this is a result of the stimulus given by the text to independent development or of painstaking exegesis is a matter which need not concern us now. Whatever its mode of knowing, the tradition displays an understanding of the text."

<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that the doctrine of aseity does not include negative concepts—surely by speaking of God as *a se*, we intend to communicate that he is *uncreated*; yet, we affirm God's uncreatedness as a correlative reality of his independence *as the personal independence of Yahweh*. Bavinck says that the purpose of the doctrine of aseity is 'to designate God as God, and to distinguish him from all that is not God,' and that 'all other attributes were derived from this one.'" *The Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1951) 125, 144. Cited in James Beilby, "Divine Aseity, Divine Freedom: A Conceptual Problem for Edwardsian-Calvinism," *JETS* 47 (2008) 648.

of the *method* by which they are formulated, results in the two terms describing completely different realities (we will explore this more below).

It might be helpful to continue using Exod 3:14 as an example. For Thomas, the Vulgate's translation of *ego sum qui sum* ("I AM WHO I AM") evoked Aristotelian thoughts that enabled him to more assuredly deny the distinction between essence and existence for God—that is, God's equating I AM with I AM is God's revelation to Moses that his essence is identical with his existence. Thus, for Thomas, Exod 3:14 is God's revelation to Moses of a truth which merely presents the "that" (i.e. quantity) of God, and not the "who" or "what" (quality/quiddity). And yet, in the context which the divine name YHWH was given, God gave the name as a reply to Moses, who was seeking *quidditative knowledge* (knowledge of a thing's "this-ness") when he asks "What is his name?" Charles R. Gianotti observes, "Moses anticipated that the question pertained to God's character not the recitation of His name. The Hebrew term *מה* introducing the question indicates a concern for quality."<sup>42</sup> Raymond Abba also notes, "when the interrogative pronoun *מה* which occurs in the question refers to substantives, it frequently expresses an inquiry concerning quality...and may be rendered, 'What kind of?' And in Biblical Hebrew it is never used in asking a person's name; for this *מי* is employed."<sup>43</sup>

Two closing points on Thomas, Exod 3:14, and the DDS should be made here: (1) In order for Exod 3:14 to be communicating that God's existence is identical with his essence, we would first need to be able to say with confidence that the author of Exodus was able to presuppose Aristotelian substance metaphysics (AFR); and (2) Thomas classifies the DDS as an apophatic, natural-theological concept (this claim is defended below), communicating the "that" of God, but *definitively not* the "who" (APR). Yet God's very purpose in Exod 3:14 seems to be the exact opposite: to communicate his very personal name (REV).

Thomas Prügl grieves the fact that "on account of his Aristotelian terminology, Thomas has been accused of neglecting the biblical foundation and biblical spirit of theology. Nevertheless, it is a matter of fact that Scripture was both the source and the measure of Aquinas' theology."<sup>44</sup> While Prügl's concerns are understandable, and even true of Thomas in principle, it is not true of his method for formulating his DDS. Our contention is not that Thomas does not interpret Exod 3:14 or use it in his theology, but that while Exod 3:14 is his proof-text for divine simplicity, Wipple's observation rings true: Thomas's interpretation forces the text to teach his DDS by virtue of his broader Aristotelian agenda. Thomas's interpretation assumes

<sup>42</sup> Charles R. Gianotti, "The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH," *BSac* 142 (1985) 39.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond Abba "The Divine Name Yahweh," *JBL* 80 (1961) 323. This exegetical observation highlights the qualitative difference between the data that Thomas's natural theological methodology produces, and the data that a self-consciously revelational theological methodology produces. Oliphant comments, "Aquinas thought Ex. 3:14 wherein God reveals himself as 'I am who I am,' is best understood in [an] Aristotelian context." *Reasons for Faith* 50. We must insist that Thomas's reading of Exodus was, at the very least, misled.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 405.

that the ontological claims made in the text are distinctively *Aristotelian* ontological claims. Thus, while Exod 3:14 may be a variable in the historical quest of understanding Aquinas's method for formulating his DDS, the text is no more than a misappropriated tool in Thomas's philosophical establishment of his DDS. Exodus 3:14 does not play a governing role in his method *per se*.

2. *Analogy and simplicity.*

a. *Analogy, univocism, and equivocism.* Now, the first Thomistic doctrine that would seem to atone for such a crass commitment to Aristotle's metaphysics is the doctrine of analogy, or, the relationship between the words we use to describe God and the reality of God *as he really is*. The three basic choices are: (1) the words are *univocal*, meaning that there is an exact correspondence between the words we speak about God and God as he is; (2) the words are *equivocal*, which means that, although we may use a single word to describe God and creation (e.g. just, good, wise), there is no real correspondence between the words we use to describe God, and God as he is;<sup>45</sup> and (3) the words are *analogical*. Now, while much weight rests on the Thomistic doctrine of analogy, it is not quite clear what it is, except that it is supposed to account for *some kind* of real correspondence between our words and God's nature. Thomas describes his doctrine of analogy in this way:

This way of using words [to describe God] lies somewhere between pure equivocation and simple univocity, for the word is neither used in the same sense, as with univocal usage, nor in totally different senses, as with equivocation.... For in analogies the idea is not, as it is in univocals, one and the same, yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals; but a term which is thus used in a multiple sense signifies various proportions to some one thing.<sup>46</sup>

We see something rather curious in Thomas's description of analogy here: he does not say what it is.<sup>47</sup> It seems in Thomas's writings that his definition of analo-

<sup>45</sup> W. Kent Wilson defines equivocation as "the use of an expression in two or more different senses in a single context." In our case, the contexts would be one accessible context (creation), and one unaccessible context, which results in one inaccessible semantic aspect to the word "God." *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (ed. Robert Audi; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 278.

<sup>46</sup> *ST* I.13.5. Thomas reasons further in the same passage: "Univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures. The reason of this is that every effect which is not an adequate result of the power of the efficient cause, receives the similitude of the agent not in its full degree, but in a measure that falls short, so that what is divided and multiplied in the effects resides in the agent simply, and in the same manner; as for example the sun by exercise of its one power produces manifold and various forms in all inferior things." *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* (ed. Anton C. Pegis; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 1:119.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, Thomas's doctrine of analogy has received voluminous attention from scholars. See Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas* (ed. Andrew Tallon; trans. Edward M. Macierowski and Pol Vandeveld; Marquette Studies in Philosophy 24; Marquette University Press, 2004); John R. Mortensen, *Understanding St. Thomas on Analogy* (Rome: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2010); Steven A. Long, *Analogie Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2011). Some contend that Thomas's doctrine of analogy was distorted and misrepresented after Cajetan's commentary on Thomas, which supposedly pigeonholed Thomas's doctrine of analogy into a framework of proportionality, and became the standard for reading Thomas Aquinas's God as the highest rung on the "ladder of being." Edward A. Bushinski comments, "Cajetan's well-known work *de Nominum Analogia* contains the first and still unsurpassed systematization of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of analogy. As such, it is the clas-

gy is: “It is not univocal, and it is not equivocal.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, Thomas’s rationale for his apophatic construction of the DDS (APR) is *itself justified apophatically* (even if only implicitly).

Thus, John F. Wippel comments,

In sum, the added contribution of this series of arguments against purely equivocal predication of the divine names [in SCG I, c. 34] is to show that *it fails to express the likeness that obtains between creatures and God*.... Having now eliminated to his own satisfaction both theories of univocal and purely equivocal predication of the divine names, Thomas concludes in c. 34 that such names can only be predicated analogically of creatures and of God. As he here explains, this means that they are applied to an ordering or relationship to some one thing. But analogical predication based on an ordering or relationship to some one thing may happen in two different ways. In the first way, this is based on the fact that many different things all bear a relationship to something that is one. For instance, it is in relationship to one and the same health that an animal is said to be healthy as its subject, medicine as its efficient cause, food as that which preserves it, and urine as its sign. In the second way, an analogical name is predicated of two things not because they are both related to some third thing, but because one of them is related to the other. Thus being (*ens*) is said of substance

sical treatise of analogy and forms the basis of practically all modern discussions of the arduous problem of analogy.” Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, *The Analogy of Names, and the Concept of Being* (trans. Edward A. Bushinski and Henry J. Koren; 2d ed.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1959). However, Joshua P. Hochschild argues that Cajetan was not writing a systematic commentary of Thomas, but creatively reconfiguring the entire “analogy” conversation in terms of *names*, in opposition to a doctrine of analogy in itself. It is therefore unfair to label Cajetan’s work as a misinterpretation of Thomas, since his primary task was not interpretation but appropriation. *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan’s De Nominum Analogia* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Rudi te Velde gives a similar description: “For Thomas, analogy is essentially a matter of using words beyond their proper domain (*genus*) to signify something belonging to another domain which is in a certain manner related to the former. *Two things belonging to different domains are named by a common name: they have the same name in common—but not according to the same meaning*, since this would imply the negation of the difference in category—and neither according to wholly different meanings, since then there would be no relevant connection (*proportion*) between them. Analogy is a way of signifying categorically different realities as somehow proportioned to each other. *The analogously common name is grounded in the proportion between two things, which implies sameness as well as difference*. Univocity means that two things, with respect of their common predicate, are posited to be the same under abstraction of their difference; *analogy means that two things are posited to be proportionally the same—thus including their difference*. In the case of divine predication, analogy appears to be not a matter of transcending one genus towards another genus according to a certain intergeneric connection, *but of transcending the categorical sphere of finite reality as such*. Of the two things which share a common name, one (the creature) is categorically determined and contracted in its being; the other (God) exceeds any categorical limitation as it is identical with being.... Analogy is meant to articulate the commonness of effect and cause: the effect is *differently the same* as its cause, precisely insofar as it is being.” Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The ‘Divine Science’ of the Summa Theologiae* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006) 115, 118 (italics mine). Notice the ambiguity of te Velde’s description of analogy: “they have the same name in common—but not according to the same meaning,” “Analogy is a way of signifying categorically different realities as *somehow* proportioned to each other,” and “Analogy is meant to articulate the commonness of effect and cause: the effect is *differently the same* as its cause.” Te Velde has given us the most technical positive description of Thomas’s doctrine of analogy so far—that is, “somehow proportioned.” Notice that the rest of his descriptions are purely negative (i.e. not univocal, not equivocal), yet in rejecting equivocality, it is on the basis of real correspondence by virtue of the “cause and effect” relationship between God and creatures, and in rejecting univocity, it is by virtue of God’s *genus* transcending created classifications (an apt summary of equivocation).

and accident because an accident bears a relationship to substance, not because substance and accident are both related to some third thing. *Thomas concludes that names are not said analogically of God and other things in the first way, because this would imply that something is prior to God. Only the second kind of analogical predication is admissible in the case of the divine names.*<sup>49</sup>

It is curious that Wippel spends the lion's share of his time explaining and exemplifying what Thomas *does not* mean by "analogy" ("the first way") and does not explain what this Thomistic "second kind of analogical predication" *actually is*. The only information we have about this "second kind of analogical predication" is that it is (1) "admissible in the case of divine names"; and (2) that it is "different" than the first kind. However, Wippel tries to clarify the issue for us, explaining,

Thomas distinguishes two kinds of analogy. One kind involves a sharing in some single factor which is prior to all the entities that share in it. This kind of analogy cannot apply to God and any creature, just as univocity cannot. But there is another kind of analogy according to which one thing imitates another insofar as it can, without ever perfectly attaining to it. This is the kind of analogy which obtains between a creature and God. In anticipation of Thomas's usage in later texts, I shall refer to the first kind as the analogy of "many to one" and to the second as the analogy of "one to another."<sup>50</sup>

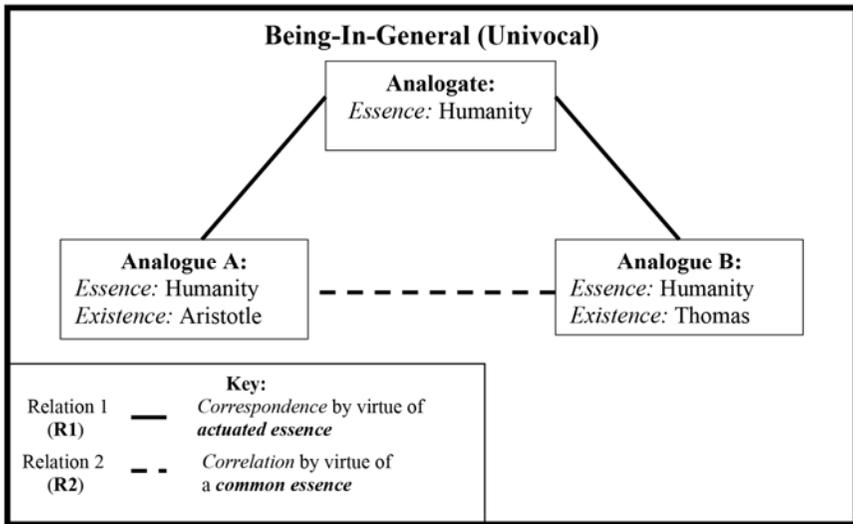
It might be helpful for us to visualize Wippel's description of Thomas's two versions of analogy. The "many to one" version of analogy posits that everything that exists is classified by its essence, which, relative to each existing thing that embodies a given essence, is an *a priori* category. A visual construal of the "many to one" analogous relationship might look something like this:

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<sup>49</sup> John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy 1; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000) 560–61 (italics mine).

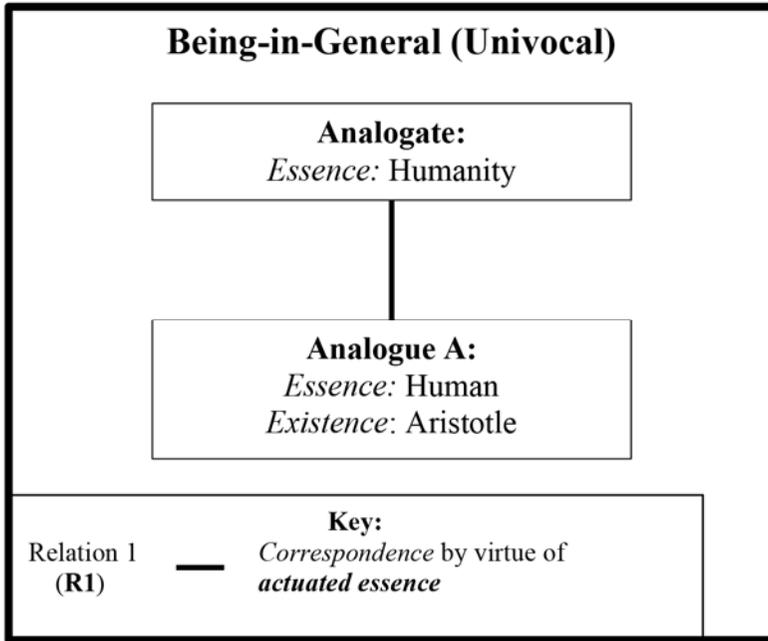
<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 547.

Figure 3: “Many to One” Analogy



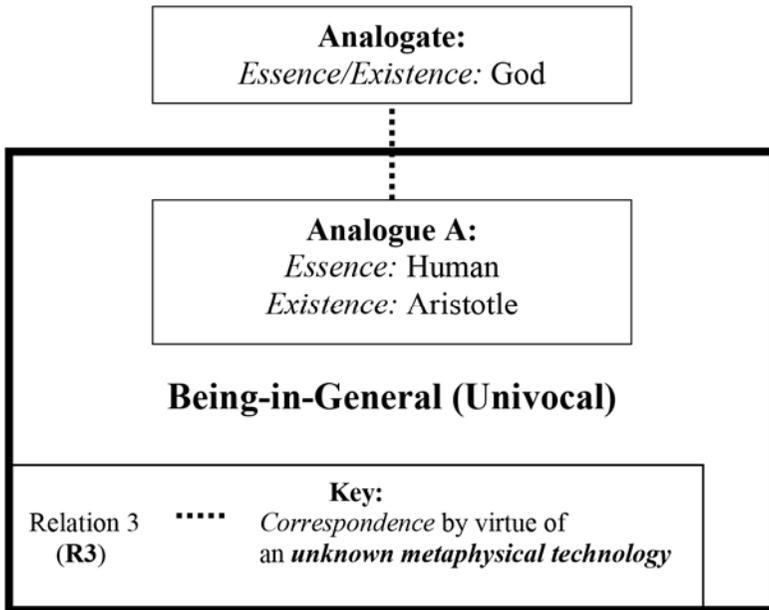
The “many to one” is the engine behind the famous *analogia entis*, or, the analogy by which metaphysical unity and diversity is negotiated in creation. It is the mechanism by which humans classify a thing (i.e. an entity’s quiddity) according to one essence (e.g. humanity) or another. Conversely, the “one to another” version of analogy is, according to Wippel, construed a bit differently. There is no *tertium quid* according to which two analogues are classified. Rather, in the analogy of “one to another,” the analogue is *directly* dependent on the analogate for its essence. Visually portrayed, it might look like this (simply a vertical rendering of R1):

Figure 4a: “One to Another” Analogy (In Creation)



The problem enters when Thomas tries to differentiate between the “many to one” analogy (Figure 3) and the “one to another” analogy (Figure 4a) *in order to insert God into the Analogate category*, take the Analogate *out of* Being-in-General, and claim to have thereby sidestepped the pitfall of univocism. In other words, by distancing himself from the “many to one” analogy with reference to predication about God, Thomas has, in his own mind, created a sacred space in the Aristotelian conception of analogy that God may enter, unsullied by the abstraction of a governing essence between God and man. Such a space, in terms of the “one to another” analogy, might be visually portrayed like this:

Figure 4b: “One to Another” Analogy  
(Between God and Creation)



Wippel explains:

Thomas’s texts indicate that the *rationes* involved, the intelligible contents, are partly the same and partly not the same. The perfection in question belongs to one Analogue in primary fashion and to the other or others in secondary fashion. *Our understanding of such a perfection as it is realized in a secondary analogue, e.g., an accident or a creature [Analogue A in our categories], also carries with it an awareness of it as ordered to, and as dependent upon the primary analogue, whether this be a substance or whether it be God himself.* Thus at the predicamental level, if being is said of an accident such as quantity and of substance by the analogy of one to another, this is because our understanding of the accident necessarily includes an understanding of it as ordered to and dependent upon substance. *And the same will hold if we predicate being of two different accidents, because both are related to and depend upon substance (analogy of many to one).*<sup>51</sup>

By visualizing the realities that Wippel describes, Thomas’s own logical missteps become clear. In terms of the relationships that constitute the “many to one” analogy (*correspondence* by virtue of *actuated essence* and *correlation* by virtue of a *common essence*), we are not provided with the tools to make the metaphysical jump that is required to place God in the Analogue position of the “one to many” analogy (which is only a less complex, and therefore more epistemologically elastic category of analogy). In other words, in terms of the charted relationships, R1 and R2 are

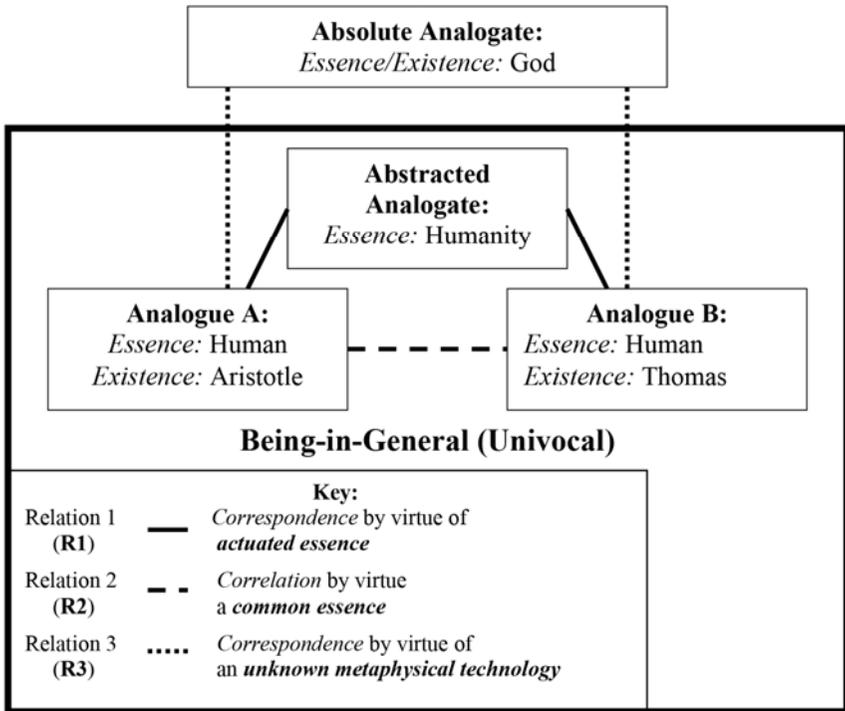
<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 571.

sufficiently explained metaphysical relationships, and R3 is said to be a version of R2 that traverses the Creator-creature distinction. Yet R3 contains two ambiguities which compromise the basic value of its uniqueness as a category: (1) How exactly R3 breaches the Creator-creature distinction is left unexplained; and (2) it is still unclear exactly how R3, being identical to R1 in *function* (correlating two predicates with reference to an essence), and also to R2 in *form* (corresponding an Analogate and Analogue), is able to accommodate *God* as its Analogate.<sup>52</sup> Wippel himself admits that the Analogate slot allows for interchange between God and generic substance (“whether this be a substance or whether this be God himself”). Our comprehensive visual, therefore, for Thomas’s doctrine of analogy, looks like this:

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<sup>52</sup> One might object that Thomas seems to make it rather clear: analogy is established through causality (See Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004] 184 n. 86). However, ironically, this explanation does not bear the weight of the impossibility of infinite regress. Saying that causality is the substrata of analogy (in our case, R3) only makes an unsubstantiated claim. Causality provides a vague structure for theological predication in Thomas’s thought, but it does not provide any positive content for R3, since while its univocal aspect is the grounds for theological predication, that very aspect is necessarily downplayed (and even denied) by his insistence against it in order to safeguard God’s transcendence. Causality only provides, as we will see later, the univocal half of Thomas’s univocal/equivocal combination which he labels “analogy.” Furthermore, the only function causality really seems to play for Thomas beyond that is that it legitimizes man’s inference of God’s nature through abstract thought—though positive, its only function is negative. Thomas says, “So because God is not known to us in His own nature, but is glimpsed by us in virtue of His operations or effects, we can name Him from these, as has been said above. Hence this name ‘God’ is the name of an operation, in so far as that in virtue of which the name is imposed is concerned, since this name is imposed in virtue of His universal providential care for the world. For everyone who speaks of God understands that ‘God’ names that which has universal providential care for the world.” *ST* I.13.8c (Martin, *Thomas Aquinas* 47). C. F. J. Martin comments, “It is also clear that the existence of God is to be proved from God’s effects, and that to the extent that *signification* of ‘God’ must in some way include the notion of being a cause.... *St Thomas holds that things have names imposed on them in virtue of what we know of them; and it is clear also that we have no direct knowledge of God, but only of God’s operations in creation.* Thus we name God in virtue of the relation that creatures bear to him” (Martin, *Thomas Aquinas* 47). He quotes Thomas for support, who says, “It is in so far as a thing can be known by our intellect, that we can put a name to it.... God cannot be the object of our vision in this life, in so far as his essence is concerned. Rather God is known to us from creatures, in so far as they have a disposition towards their originating principle.... In this way God can be given a name by us, drawing from creatures.” *ST* I.13.1 (Martin, *Thomas Aquinas* 106, italics mine). Orestes J. Gonzalez comments also, “It emerges from Aquinas that the likeness of the divine truth contained in the truth of the first *principles is not caused by God directly and immediately. Rather it is caused indirectly* by the likeness of God that is found in the creatures. And the primary perfection through which the likeness of God is infallibly present in all created things is no other than the act of being.” Orestes J. Gonzalez, “The Apprehension of the Act of Being in Aquinas” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 68.4 (1994) 481–82 (italics mine). The theme in all of these passages, again, is that there is no positive contribution to *what* Thomas’s doctrine of analogy is. It is a “likeness” that is “not caused by God directly. Rather, it is caused indirectly.” Unfortunately, it seems, causality does not help us attain “quidditative knowledge” (to use Wippel’s terminology) of Thomas’s doctrine of analogy.

Figure 5: Thomas’s Doctrine of Analogy



This visual brings to the surface two shortcomings in Thomas’s doctrine of analogy: (1) despite Thomas’s insistence to the contrary, there is no real correspondence between Absolute Analogate and Analogue A (R3); and (2) even if we ceded the claim that R3 facilitates real correspondence, Thomas nowhere expressly sets out criteria for locating or articulating this similarity.

b. *Thomistic analogy and God(s)*. We may further say that the reason that Thomas can give no real material description of how his doctrine of analogy applies to God is because, no matter how much he discusses Christian content, the doctrine of analogy is still the philosophical property of Aristotle. However, we may say that Thomas has done a fine job defending himself against a crass commitment to univocism (in terms of a pure analogy of proportionality between God and man), but what is left is a fusion of univocism and equivocism. In the “many to one” analogy, the Abstracted Analogate is the operative tool by which two entities are analogized. It makes sense that this version of analogy could not be applied to God’s relationship to man, otherwise both entities would be either Creator or created. However, God’s essence is not actuated by man (i.e. man is not a subsistence of God’s essence), nor is there correlation between God and man by virtue of a common essence. All we know about Thomas’s version of analogy, then, is that it is *not* these things. At this point it seems that, for Thomas, his doctrine of analogy requires

rejection of univocism and equivocism, accompanied by an affirmation and conjoining of the two.<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, for Thomas, this has serious theological consequences. Many scholars express confusion about the mystical way that Thomas seems to analogize Absolute Analogate and Analogue A. Commenting on this very phenomenon in Thomas, William C. Placher says, "Now we cannot know what God is, but only what He is not; we must therefore consider the ways in which God does not exist rather than the ways in which he does."<sup>54</sup> Placher cites Thomas saying, "God as an unknown is said to be the terminus of our knowledge in the following respect: that the mind is found to be most perfectly in possession of the knowledge of God when it is recognized that *His essence is above everything that the mind is capable of apprehending in this life.*"<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, "revelation does not tell us what God is, and thus joins us to him as to an unknown."<sup>56</sup> Reflecting on these passages, Placher comments,

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<sup>53</sup> Wippel helpfully summarizes the state of affairs, "God cannot be regarded as similar to creatures. But creatures may be said to be similar to God in some fashion. This notion that a creature may be similar to God without implying that God must therefore also be similar (or related, we may add) to the creature would seem to be enough for Thomas to overcome the objection he has raised against using an analogy of proportion in the case of the divine names. Nonetheless, here he does not pursue that path. Instead he concludes that because no determined relationship is implied by the other kind of analogy (proportionality), there is nothing to prevent us from using that type when we predicate something of God and a creature. This decided preference for what is sometimes called the analogy of proper proportionality has heavily influenced one Thomistic school of interpretation, that begun by Cardinal Cajetan. Most more recent scholars regard this particular discussion of Thomas as uncharacteristic of his earlier and later thinking on analogical predication of the divine names, and hence as not reflecting his definitive position. As will appear from what follows below, the weight of the texts strongly supports this view. But it must be acknowledged that at least for a short time in the year 1256 Thomas defended the analogy of proportionality in the case of predication of divine names, and rejected analogy of proportion... *His overriding concern throughout much of this discussion seems to be to protect divine transcendence. His theory of analogy of proportionality is not equally successful, however, in protecting him against the kind of agnosticism on our part which he associates with a theory of purely equivocal predication of the divine names.*" Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought* 553–54 (italics mine).

<sup>54</sup> William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 21, citing for support *ST* I.3 pref., corroborating this notion with parallels elsewhere in Aquinas: *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei* 7.5 ad 14; *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate* 1.2; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.14.2. Placher indicates that the two books that were most influential in helping him read Thomas this way were Michael Corbin, *La Chemin de la Théologie chez Thomas D'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972); and Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). Placher also references Aquinas's observation, "The better we know God the more we understand that he surpasses whatever the mind grasps" *ST* II-II.8.7 (*Domestication* 21 n. 1).

<sup>55</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on Boethius' "De Trinitate"* 1.2 ad 1. Cited in Placher, *Domestication* 26–27 (italics mine).

<sup>56</sup> Aquinas, *ST* I.12.13 ad 1. Wippel supplies support for this point, affirming that *even revelation* gives us analogical knowledge *in terms of* Thomas's Aristotelian version of analogy: "In sum, Thomas concludes that in this life we cannot know the 'what it is' of God or of other separate substances (angels). This applies not only to natural or philosophical knowledge based on reasoning from effect to cause. It also applies to any knowledge given to us through divine revelation. *Even revealed knowledge is given to us in accord with our way of knowing and uses concepts abstracted from sensible experience. Hence Thomas allows for no comfortable retreat into fideism when it comes to our knowledge of God. Since revealed knowledge depends upon likeness and*

We can use words of God that ‘simply mean certain perfections without any indication of how these perfections are possessed.’ But, ‘so far as the way of signifying these perfections is concerned, the words are used inappropriately [of God], for they have a way of signifying that is appropriate to creatures.’ ‘Analogy’ thus does not provide a neat alternative between univocity and equivocity that solves the problems. It is, Aquinas admitted, itself a type of equivocation.<sup>57</sup>

David Burrell finds Thomas similarly confusing, saying, “Aquinas is perhaps best known for his theory of analogy. On closer inspection it turns out that he never had one.”<sup>58</sup> John D. Caputo also finds equivocation in Thomas’s doctrine of analogy: “In St. Thomas, metaphysics is meant to wither away. The whole elaborate texture of *disputatio* that he weaves is an exercise in showing the deficiency and infirmity of *ratio*, in showing that metaphysics is something to be overcome.”<sup>59</sup> Yet Frederick Copleston finds not only equivocism, but univocism also, commenting on Thomas’s doctrine of analogy: “Obviously we have here a hierarchic conception of the universe, ranging, if one may so express it...up to God...at the top.”<sup>60</sup> Thomas’s analogy, then, even through contemporary Thomas scholarship, is shown to be amalgamated univocism and equivocism. In the midst of such a dialectic between rationality and irrationality, it is no surprise that Burrell comments, “Aquinas displays his religious discipline most clearly by the ease with which he is able to endure so unknown a God.”<sup>61</sup>

*concepts derived from our experience of sensible things, it can never lead us to quidditative knowledge of God.” Wippel, Metaphysical Thought 512 (italics mine).*

<sup>57</sup> Placher, *Domestication* 30–31. In this quote, Placher first cites Thomas; first *ST* I.13.3 ad.1, then I.13.3, and at the very end I.13.10 ad.4.

<sup>58</sup> David Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979) 55.

<sup>59</sup> John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay in Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982) 252.

<sup>60</sup> Fredrick C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Methuen & Co., 1972) 187. Cited in Placher, *Domestication* 22. Placher also cites Hampus Lyttkens, who comments, “According to Thomas Aquinas and his predecessors, the structure of the universe is hierarchical. At the top is God, at the bottom *material prima*, and between them the things, each on its own level.” *The Analogy between God and the World* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1952) 171. Cited in Placher, *Domestication* 22 n. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Burrell, *Aquinas* 67. Kerr comments on Balthasar’s frustration over the conflicting Thomism of his own day, “In particular, the logic [of Thomas] becomes ‘not seldom the special art of evasion and of explaining things away.’ This harsh comment on some of his own ‘Thomist’ contemporaries prompts Balthasar to consider the tension in Thomas’s thought: ‘despite his will to clarify, he is a master in the art of leaving questions open,’ indeed he displays ‘an astonishing breadth, flexibility, and mutability of perspectives which allow quite automatically the aporetic element in his thinking to emerge.’ Compared with the modern Thomist, who evidently endorses only the ‘will to clarify,’ often reducing it to an ‘art of evasion,’ Thomas himself knows how to leave questions open—his thinking even includes an ‘aporitic element.’ Henri de Lubac, Balthasar’s friend and teacher, argued, about the same time, that the ‘robust but a little static mass of his synthesis’ is nonetheless somewhat unstable. Thomas is ‘a transitional writer (*un auteur de transition*).’ In particular, thinking of the reception of his ideas, de Lubac goes on: the ambivalence of his thought in unstable equilibrium, ransom of its very richness, explains how it could afterwards be interpreted in such opposed senses (*l’ambivalence de sa pensée en équilibre instable, rançon de sa richesse même, explique qu’on ait pu dans la suite l’interpréter en des sens si opposés*).” Kerr, *After Aquinas* 15. Citing Hans Urs von Balthasar, “On the tasks of Catholic Philosophy in our time,” *Communio* 20 (1993) 173 but originally in *Annalen der Philosophischen Gesellschaft der Innerschweiz* 3 (1945) 1–39, and Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). Kerr, along with Balthasar and De Lubac, then, seem to

Brian Davies definitively connects Thomas's apophatic theology (APR; which we have seen fits well with his doctrine of analogy) with his DDS, saying,

The most perfect [state] to which we can attain in this life in our knowledge of God is that he transcends all that can be conceived by us, and that the naming of God through remotion (*per remotionem*) is most proper...The primary mode of naming God is through the negation of all things, since he is beyond all, and whatever is signified by any name whatsoever is less than that which God is. (DN I, iii,83–4).<sup>62</sup>

And conclusively, “Aquinas’s teaching that essence and existence are identical in God is nothing but what is sometimes called ‘negative theology.’ Its purpose is not to describe God but to indicate what *cannot* be true of him.”<sup>63</sup> Thomas’s doctrine of analogy, then, is the epistemological corollary of apophaticism stacked on top of modified Aristotelianism.<sup>64</sup> It is merely the duct taping together of univocism and equivocism, with an inexplicable leap betwixt.<sup>65</sup>

find that many of these conflicting readings of Thomas are in fact true to Thomas, due to ambiguity in his own writings.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Davies, *Aquinas* (New York: Continuum, 2002) 54.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

<sup>64</sup> David Burrell makes a similar point: “Once we are satisfied that ‘good,’ ‘just,’ and ‘merciful’ can be used of God—even though we recognize that they will be realized in him in a fashion quite beyond our conceiving—we may nonetheless be assured that these terms do refer to something in God, because we mean by God, principle of all. In other words, the justification for analogous usage and the line of argument distinguishing it from the ‘merely symbolic’ theories (of a Maimonides or a Tillich) itself depends on an analogous use of ‘cause.’ On the credit side, this shows Aquinas’ consistency in declaring analogous usage irreducible to a univocal foundation.” Moreover, “Defining God as what fulfills [the human demand of a certain type of intelligibility], we can also say of him that he would fulfill the cognate demands for justice, magnanimity, and the rest...Assent is free not because logical argument gives way to a willful leap but because the relevant movements of understanding cannot be displayed logically.” David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) 132, 134 (italics mine). Cited in Barbara Delp Alpern, “The Logic of Doxological Language: A Reinterpretation of Aquinas and Pannenberg on Analogy and Doxology,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1980) 82–84. In Burrell’s analysis, then, we see two things that support our reading of Thomas thus far: (1) Thomas’s doctrine of analogy is defined, not positively, but in contrast to pure univocism (as we have already seen in Thomas and Wippel); and (2) with the presence of equivocism (“the relevant movements of understanding cannot be displayed logically”). Despite his insistence to the contrary, there remains no positive description of what it means that God is analogically the “principle of all.”

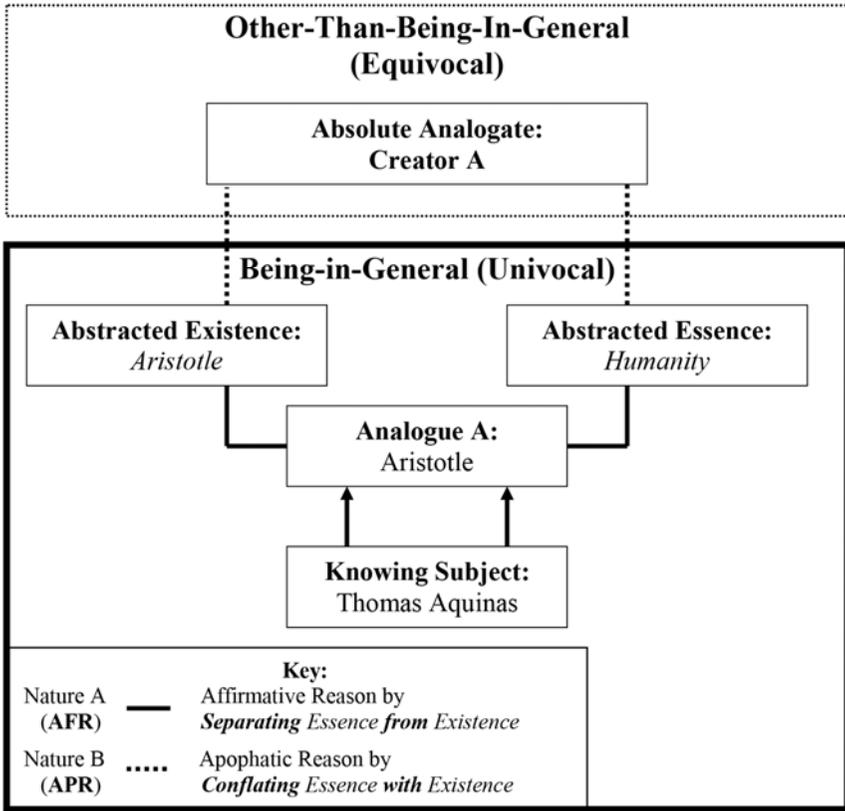
<sup>65</sup> Thomas himself would respond that he navigates his theological ship between the Scylla of univocism and the Charybdis of equivocism with the *res/modus* distinction. Briefly explained, “Aquinas refer[s] to the distinction between the reality signified (*res significata*) by a name and the name’s manner of signification (*modus significandi*), and assert[s] that while the absolute and analogical predicates of positive theology are affirmed of God as regards to the reality they signify, they must be denied as regards their manner of signification.” Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* 334. A classic Thomistic text on the *res/modus* distinction is *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.30.277, in which he says, “In every name predicated by us [of God], imperfection is found with respect to the name’s manner of signifying, which does not belong to God, though the reality signified is suitable to God *in some eminent manner*” (italics mine). Note the ambiguity in Thomas—at the very moment we seek clarity on the precise nature of analogical correspondence, all we get is “some eminent manner.” Burrell sees the *res/modus* distinction ultimately insufficient in explaining Thomas’s doctrine of analogy. He comments, “Taken at face value, the distinction of *res* and *modus* not only cannot accomplish what Aquinas wants it to but also leads us directly to a formulation like that of Scotus...Of what use then is the distinction, if it raises a host of semantic puzzles, if it leads to a ‘core-of-meaning’ doctrine for analogous usage, and if it cannot tell us *how* God is just? In

At this point, it will be helpful to bring the categories we introduced in Figure 1 and Figure 2 into our visual schematization of Thomas's system. First, we will import the categories of Figure 1 (AFR, APR, Creator A) into the framework of Figure 5:

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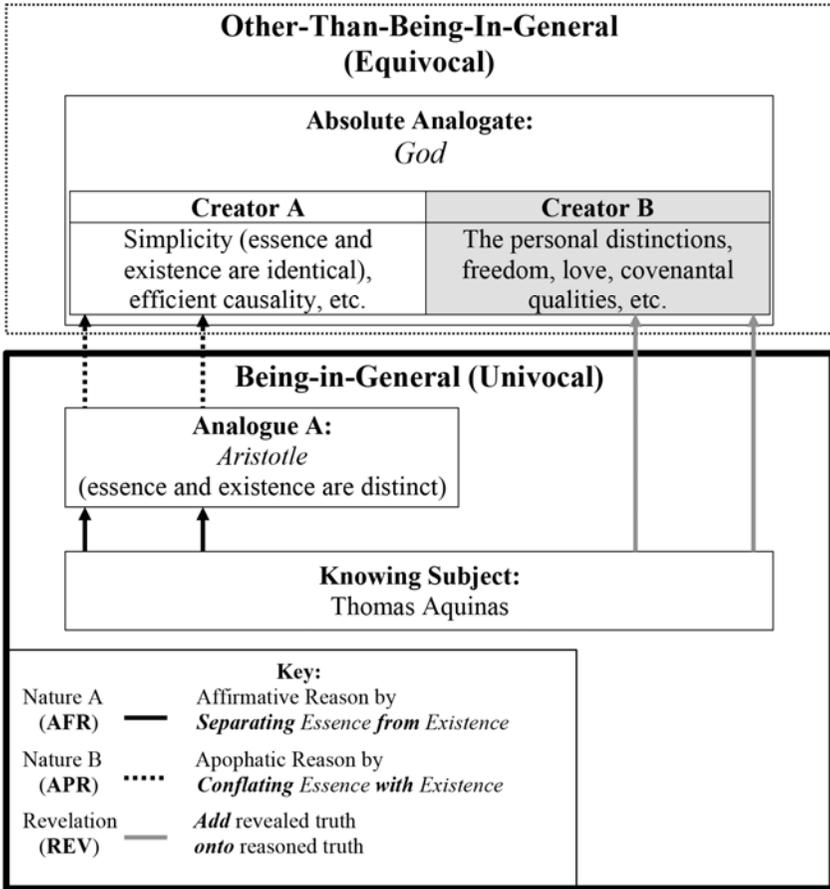
point of fact, if Aquinas invokes it, he does not rely upon the distinction, for his practice contradicts it. And the *res/modus* distinction does not lead him to deny his empirical theory of meaning, as it did the others." Richard Swinburne provides a similar analysis of the *res/modus* distinction in *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 78–80, cited in Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* 334. Yet Alpern finds Burrell's alternative to the *res/modus* distinction, the expression *intendit significare*, to be in actuality only a version of equivocism: "The expression *intendit significare* is from Aquinas, but it could well have been from [Wolffhart] Pannenberg, when he speaks of the worshipper surrendering the reasonable and too limited descriptions of God to aspire beyond towards God in communion. To be sure, Aquinas places the act of will at an earlier stage: in the naming of God. Pannenberg sees the striving of the person as a whole in the later state of contemplating and eventually seeing the inadequacy of these names. But the logical status of analogical and doxological names turns out to be similar in that both are to be justified ultimately with regard to the striving of persons in their deepest aspirations....The analogical statement is acceptable, not because there is an argument from knowledge of creatures to knowledge of God, however imperfect, but because the deepest aspirations of human beings raise the issue of order and fulfillment and demand God with his perfections as a proper *judgment* of how reality is set up, in a manner not unlike the Kantian postulates of God, freedom, and immortality....*For Aquinas, one judges that God possesses perfections, even though one is trying to say what reason cannot prove or even express.*" Alpern, *The Logic of Doxological Language* 86–87.

Figure 6: Reason and Analogy in Thomas



This visual explicates for us once more that Thomas lacks the philosophical tools to cross the Creator-creature distinction. However, even when he incorporates revelation (REV), because REV is forced to “perfect” (Thomas’s term; some Thomists would say “made to serve”) his particular form of Aristotelian philosophy, it does not bridge the metaphysical gap between Creator and creature. Rather, as we noted in Figure 2, introducing REV results in (at least functionally) two entities called “God,” correlative of his two methodological tools: nature (APR, producing Creator A) and grace (REV, incorporating Creator B):

Figure 7: Thomas’s Method and God



IV. CONCLUSION

1. *Simplifying Our Conclusion.* Having investigated the tools and methods that Thomas appropriates to construct the DDS, we now conclude with several observations. First, it seems that Thomas’s DDS is neither derived from revelation, nor is it an appropriate expression of revealed truths.<sup>66</sup> Rather, Thomas’s DDS is a modified Aristotelian construal of the divine, based on the movement from AFR to APR, resulting in the uniquely absolute Creator A. To put it in the terms of the introductory thesis, Thomas falls within the bounds of Compositional Constructionism in his formulation of the DDS. This manifests itself with special reference to the DDS by virtue of the fact that (1) the very distinctions that Thomas *does not*

<sup>66</sup> Brian Davies describes Thomas’s DDS as a doctrine that “gives us no comprehension of the divine essence.” Moreover, “it amounts to a true expression of what cannot be the case with God. And that is how Aquinas thinks of all that he says on the topic of God’s simplicity” (Davies, *Aquinas* 74).

allow to exist in God are controlled by the metaphysical distinctions he believes *do* exist in creation; and (2) while *essence* is the controlling metaphysical category in creation (for both Aristotle and Thomas), it nevertheless remains the controlling metaphysical category for Thomas's doctrine of God.<sup>67</sup>

Second, Thomas's use of use of REV creates a schism in his own doctrine of God, thereby creating the option to either (1) subsume the content of God's own self-revelation into the already extant, non-revelatory construct of divine essence (according to Aristotelian categories); or (2) simultaneously affirm irreconcilable doctrines of God (Creator A and Creator B), each defined according to their respective methods of construction (APR and REV).

Third, Thomas's doctrine of analogy, which Thomas (and Thomists) claim is the mechanism which allows him to move from Being-in-General to *God* (the Absolute Analogue)—from creature to Creator—is never actually defined. To repeat a point we made earlier, Thomas never provides us with quidditative knowledge of his doctrine of analogy—in fact, the method by which he describes his doctrine of analogy is itself apophatic (“not univocal, not equivocal”).

Fourth, Thomas's doctrine of analogy, while excluding univocism and equivocism in its *definition*, still relies on univocism and equivocism in its *function*, as we visually schematized in Figures 4a–7. In other words, Thomas's DDS is based in one sense on univocal reasoning (AFR),<sup>68</sup> and in another sense on equivocal rea-

<sup>67</sup> Jean-Luc Marion comments, “From the point of view of the understanding of apprehending an object, the *ens* becomes first... One must choose: if theology proceeds by the apprehension of concepts, as a ‘science,’ then, for it also, the *ens* will be first, and man’s point of view normative (at least according to the method; but method, in science, decides everything). If theology wills itself to be *theological*, it will submit all of its concepts, without excepting the *ens*, to a ‘destruction’ by the doctrine of divine names, at the risk of having to renounce any status as a conceptual ‘science,’ in order, decidedly nonobjectivating, to praise by infinite petitions. *Such a choice—by a formidable but exemplary ambiguity—Saint Thomas did not make, the Saint Thomas who pretended to maintain at once a doctrine of divine names and the primacy of the ens as the first conception of the human understanding.* For our purposes, the historically localizable heritage of this indecision matters little; all that counts is what provokes it: the claim that the *ens*, although defined starting from a human conception, should be valid as the first name of God... if the *ens* falls largely in the conception of imagination, can one not hazard that, according to what Saint Thomas freely insinuates, the *ens*, related to ‘God’ as his first name, indeed could determine him as the ultimate—*idol*? The provocation of such a question has nothing gratuitous about it. For it is only after the great confrontation surrounding the *ens* and goodness and opposing Denys to Saint Thomas that the question (despite Duns Scotus) concerning Being is tied definitively to the question concerning the God of Jesus Christ. Henceforth theology will have to place the inclusion of ‘God’ in *esse* at the center of its work, to the point of ‘comprehending’ ‘God’ in the object of metaphysics (Suarez).” *God Without Being* (trans. Thomas A. Carlson; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 81–82. Richard Muller comments that Aquinas is inconsistent on this matter—that he begins with simplicity in *ST*, and concludes with simplicity in *SCG*. See *PRRD* 3.58, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.15–18, 37–43 and *ST* I.3–10.

<sup>68</sup> We have already seen that causality is an aspect of Thomas's doctrine of analogy, and in case one would object that our conclusion about the ambiguity of R3 is due to a neglect of causality, then let us say that for the purposes of our visualization, causality falls under the category of R1, metaphysically speaking, and therefore of AFR, epistemologically speaking. Therefore, when we say here that Thomas's DDS is based on AFR, we refer to the process of inference based on causality that exists in Thomas's writings, which he at times identifies with his process of reasoning directly to the DDS, as we saw earlier. Rocca comments, “Lyttkens also claims that Thomas uses the causal analogy in his natural theology (*Analogy* 395–414), whereas it is truer to say that the ‘causal analogy’ is really the logical, second-order

soning (APR), and by virtue of such a methodological amalgamation protects his method from the domination of either form of reason. Thomas thereby attempts to guard his theological system from diminishing God's absoluteness (against total univocism) *and* from mysticism (against total equivocism).

However, as we have mentioned, it seems that after all the philosophical investigation, we are left with no knowledge of what analogy actually is for Thomas. The problem, then, is that Thomas's DDS appears to be upheld by a commitment to the categories of Aristotle (that is suppressed by many Thomists today), on the one hand, and through an undefined methodological maneuver, a mystical leap beyond created being to the Absolute Analogate (Creator A), on the other.<sup>69</sup> Jean-Luc Marion explains,

Saint Thomas attempted—consciously or not, it matters little—to abstract the *ens* from the doctrine of divine names. In concrete terms, he inverted the primacy of goodness over Being... The divine certainly did not await Saint Thomas to enter into metaphysics; but it is only with Saint Thomas that the God revealed in Jesus Christ under the name of charity finds himself summoned to enter the role of the divine of metaphysics, in assuming *esse/ens* as his proper name. Henceforth the necessary and sufficient conditions come together so that, with the destiny of the 'God of the philosophers and the learned,' the reception of the 'God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob' is also at stake.<sup>70</sup>

2. *Directions forward.* There are many directions one could take this analysis of Thomas's method of constructing simplicity. One could (1) accept Thomas's Compositional Constructionism and affirm the DDS due to its necessity by virtue of the essence/existence distinction; (2) reject Thomas's Compositional Constructionism, and therewith jettison the DDS from one's theology; (3) search for a different version of the DDS that is not laden with Compositional Constructionism; or (4) attempt to reformulate the DDS with a different method, perhaps with Compositional Receptionism.

Whatever direction is taken, it has hopefully been made clear that the method which Thomas Aquinas used to construct the DDS endowed Aristotle's categories with theological methodological autonomy, out of which he fashioned a doctrine of analogical predication that merely stuck together univocism and equivocism. The

reflection on what happens epistemologically when the causal *principle* is at work in theology." Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* 184 n. 86.

<sup>69</sup> It will be helpful to include a final key to categorize the symbols and terms that are used in the charts throughout this paper; this key is located at the end of the article. And, because I introduce the "quidditative"/"qualitative" distinction in Figure 8, it will also be helpful to give a brief definition of this distinction: "The essential difference between quidditative and qualitative predication is that in quidditative predication the essential nature of the subject of predication is indicated, whereas in qualitative predication some property of the subject of predication is indicated." Ramon M. Lemos, *Metaphysical Investigations* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1988) 230.

<sup>70</sup> Marion, *God Without Being* 82. Brennon Ellis similarly comments, "Divine simplicity [must be] rooted not in perfect being philosophy or similar monist ontologies—casting God as supremely undifferentiable—but in a consistent confession of the relentlessly concrete uniqueness and plenary self-sufficiency of the Trinity." Calvin, *Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 205.

resulting DDS functioned as a fulcrum that anchored Thomas’s oscillation between the rationalism of the univocal and mysticism of equivocal.<sup>71</sup> Thomas’s doctrine of analogy and DDS simultaneously fortify and frustrate one another, since they both maintain the most principal function in Thomas’s system, and yet neither retain any discernible content.

Perhaps there is hope for analogy and simplicity, if they can find an epistemological home that provides better systematic integrity and conceptual coherence. Yet such hope is best left for another article, and perhaps deferred to another discipline.<sup>72</sup>

Figure 8: Final Key to Charts

	Univocal		Equivocal	Revealed
Epistemology	AFR <i>Affirmative Reason by Separating Essence from Existence</i>		APR <i>Apophatic Reason by Conflating Essence with Existence</i>	REV <i>Add revealed truth onto reasoned truth</i>
Metaphysics	R1 <i>Correspondence by virtue of an actuated essence (subsistence)</i>	R2 <i>Correlation by virtue of a common essence</i>	R3 <i>Correspondence by virtue of an unknown metaphysical technology</i>	God’s revealed knowledge
Symbol in Chart	████████	██    ██	■■■■■■	
Philosophical Product	Quidditative Knowledge	Qualitative Knowledge	Creator A Simplicity, efficient causality, etc.	Creator B The personal distinctions, freedom, love, covenantal qualities, etc.

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<sup>71</sup> Richard Muller pushes back on this kind of rhetoric a bit, lamenting that “those modern writers who take the concept [of simplicity] as purely philosophical and therefore miss the point of the traditional treatment, which always assumed that the denial of composition was made for the sake of right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and of the divine attributes” (PRRD 3.297). And yet, however true this statement be of other formulations of the DDS, it appears to be rather untrue of Thomas and his own DDS. And, if Muller is elsewhere correct (PRRD 3.217–22), it is through Thomas that Aristotle gains a foothold in historic Reformed Protestant formulations and utilizations of the DDS.

<sup>72</sup> I would like to thank my former advisor Scott Oliphint, and colleagues Deryck Barson, Jonathan Brack, and Nate Shannon, for many selfless hours of discussion at Union Jack’s, which substantially increased this article’s value.