

Analogy Is Not Aquinas's Solution for the Names of God

January 26, 82

The distinction between thing and object, not the doctrine of analogy, governs Aquinas's discussion of divine names. It should also govern ours.

May 31, 2005

Not only is analogy not the solution to the problem of how our predicates can be truthfully asserted of infinite being but analogy is one of those characteristics of our mode of signifying that follows from the finitude of our mode of signifying. Aquinas distinguishes the mode of signifying, which does not apply to God, from that which is signified, which can apply to God. Analogy belongs to our limited mode of signifying.

Just as the point of Aquinas asking whether the names of God are synonymous depends on it already having been established that it is legitimate to attribute human names to God, so the question of whether the names of God are univocal or analogous arises only because the propriety of using names of God has already been established. It is already established that names can be said of God "properly."

In article five of question 13, Aquinas is saying the causal relation between creatures in God is the *basis* for analogical predication, not the nature of it. That is, GOD causing his likeness in creatures is the ontological basis; our knowing him from his effects is the epistemological basis. But what we know from his effects is that he *is* good, wise, etc. and why are these terms not univocal? Because they are not comprehensive and circumscriptive. That is, neither our terms "Is good" or "is goodness" comprehend him so they are not univocal but

analogical. He does not say that "wise" no longer means wise but that it no longer signifies something distinct in God from other things. That is, what does not apply to God is the mode in which wise signifies, not that which is signified.

xxx Aquinas on analogy, August 10, 87

How to understand what Aquinas says about analogy in the summa, part one, question 13, article five. In the second paragraph (in the *Basic Works of St. Thomas Aquinas* edition) of the body he *seems* to mean analogy of attribution that is, analogy based on causality. For he uses the example of "healthy" said of medicine, the body, and the complexion. But in the first paragraph he speaks of univocal and analogical causes producing forms similar to their own form's. The attribution examples in the second paragraph (are meant to) bring out causality but do not (and are not meant to) bring out the similarity of the forms which he explicitly has in mind. He would have no reason for mentioning analogical and univocal causes, and their corresponding types of similarity, in the first paragraph otherwise.

So attribution in the case of causal similarity attributes a similar form to the cause and the effect; it says cause and effect are similar with respect to the form. And attribution in the case of analogical causes attributes to the cause what exists in the effect but exists in a higher mode. The plurality in the many-to-one or the 1-2-many relation has to be either a plurality of the ways of existing of a similar form or a plurality of forms but of similar form's, where citing "attribution" just expresses the epistemological fact that we are enabled to name an otherwise unknown case of the similar form because of the causal relation (many-to-one or 1-2-many) it has with the

known form.

But that which enables us to know and name it is not the same as that which we know and name.

In the case of God, that which we know and name is the form which is in fact analogically similar and is *known* to be so similar.

The *many* are the diverse created forms that are *one* in God, hence the non-univocity. To be univocal, the names would have to name many forms in God. Still they do name a form in God, not just as cause of that form but as similar, analogically similar, to its effect.

But this non-univocity has nothing to do with a syllogism like "what exists is good. God exists.

Therefore God is good. This syllogism does not take "good" or "exists" either as it exists in creatures or in God. It takes them univocally. There is no lack of univocity in such a syllogism.

But its terms are capable of being used elsewhere in non-univocal way. They are so capable because they are always parageneric (analogical) that is, capable of objectifying both similarity and difference by being used in both affirmation and denial of the paralogates.

August 20, 87

Aquinas says we do not apply predicates to God according to the same "ratio." What does this mean? To find out what he means, look at his reason for saying so. The perfections that are distinct in creatures are one in God. We say that what we call "justice" is able to exist in an infinite state. But when it exists in an infinite state, it ceases to be a distinct perfection from Mercy, power, intelligence, etc. Do we use the same concept for justice in the two cases?

The answer may be a parageneric yes and no. We can affirm justice in both cases, but we can also deny it in one and reduplicatively affirm it in the other. Maybe "not according to the same ratio" simply means that there is a ratio that is affirmed of one and denied of the other, as well as a ratio that is affirmed of both. In other words, unlike univocal predication, where there is a word function simply affirmed of the two cases, the word function that applies to God in creatures has two ratios associated with, or is a word function embodied in two distinct ratios.

So the word function which is affirmed of both and the word function which is affirmed of one and denied of the other are not exactly the same. But the relation between them, what makes one *different* from the other, is not the addition of a specific difference. What differentiates one from another (prior to the affirmation or negation but for the sake of ultimately affirming or denying, for all concepts have that goal) is that the concept itself includes a negating of what would otherwise be the generic word function, a diminishment of it.

The original concept, unlike a generic concept, must include the possibility of realization in two states (must be an orderable concept) of perfection regarding the content of the concept itself. It must be a diminishable, attenuable, slidable concept. So we can only predicate of God kind of concept that can be used, not according to the same ratio, to both affirm and denied, or a concept that can be subsequently used in a denial of one of the cases. For example, God is not merely just as having justice, and creatures are not just as being their own justice.

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"Rock" expresses a similarity between God in creatures in a way that is *proper* to only one term of the relation of similarity.

Metaphor expresses the similarity between two things by using a word whose meaning properly applies to only one of the things.

May 16, 80

The predicates truthfully, substantially, and properly said of God have certain logical properties that it is interesting and important to talk about. But those logical properties, for example, analogy, do not establish that these predicates can be said of God. These presume, they presuppose, that these predicates can be said of God.

December 21, 81

The discussion of analogy in the first question of De Veritate is a perfect illustration of my point. At the end, Aquinas feels obliged to bring in immateriality to explain why proportional terms can be applied to God. Proportionality alone is not sufficient. My thesis, on the other hand, is that once it is established that nothing prevents an objective concept from existing in an infinite state, it necessarily follows that the concept has whatever logical properties are needed for predication of a perfect being, whatever those logical properties might happen to be, whether proportionality something else.

Then why is it necessary to say that words set of God are not univocal but analogical? Because it is crucial to make room for the fact that when we go on to say what is distinctive of God, then,

unlike in univocal terms, we will be using the same term to *deny* something of God or of creatures. It is crucial to say that we will *necessarily* also be using the same word used commonly of God in creatures in a way that is not common to them.

Does my solution to the problem of religious language put the burden on the theist to prove that a particular mode of being can exist in an infinite state. No, the burden is on the non-theists to produce an argument against infinite being that does not commit the epistemological fallacy. All the theist has to do against the arguments commonly presented is to show that they are non-sequiturs. What is true of meanings as objects of human knowledge does not determine how they are capable of existing as modes of being.

The argument that triangles cannot be infinite does not make reference to the way triangles are made objects of human knowledge, does not depend on the properties of the manner in which they are made objects of human knowledge. The non-theist must produce similar arguments. So the standard arguments against religious language are non-sequiturs. The non-theist must produce entirely new arguments; for all standard arguments commit a fallacy of arguing from the human mode of knowing and concluding to an assertion about that which is known.

xxx analogy, religious language, May 21, 2005

Analogy is not sufficient for showing that that which is signified can exist infinitely since it, the

signified, does not have an essential causal relation to potency. Analogy is not sufficient for showing that what is signified does not include imperfection.