



Analytical Thomism

Traditions in Dialogue

EDITED BY

Craig Paterson and Matthew S. Pugh

ANALYTICAL THOMISM

Dedication

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Analytical Thomism

Traditions in Dialogue

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Aquinas's Work
<i>De aetern.</i>	De aeternitate mundi
<i>De anim.</i>	Sententia super De anima
<i>De ente</i>	De ente et essentia
<i>De hebdom.</i>	Expositio in librum Boethii De hebdomadibus
<i>De Trin.</i>	Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate
<i>In De caelo</i>	In libros De caelo et mundo expositio
<i>In Eth.</i>	Sententia libri Ethicorum
<i>In Meta.</i>	In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio
<i>In Peri.</i>	In libros Peri Hermeneias expositio
<i>In Phys.</i>	Sententia super Physicam
<i>In Phys. expo.</i>	In octo libros Physicorum expositio
<i>In Post.</i>	In libros posteriorum Analyticorum expositio
<i>In Sent.</i>	Scriptum super libros Sententiarum
<i>QDA</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de anima
<i>QDM</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de malo
<i>QDP</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei
<i>QDV</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de veritate
<i>Quodl.</i>	Quaestiones de quodlibet, I–XII
<i>SCG</i>	Summa contra Gentiles
<i>ST</i>	Summa theologiae

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The idea to create such a volume gradually emerged over the course of several congenial, if at times spirited, discussions between the editors over lunch and dinner. Both of the editors were then new tenure track appointees in the Philosophy Department of Providence College. One of the editors' background was in the Anglo-American analytic tradition and the other was primarily in neo-Thomism, especially the philosophy of Jacques Maritain.

Via our discussions, both of the editors gradually realized that what we were really engaged in was a process of analytic-Thomistic dialogue, resulting in the fruitful exchange of ideas, to our mutual benefit. Time and again we found that we would end up reading passages from the *Summa Theologiae* and then heartily discuss them at some length. Aquinas became a key focus of our scholarly exchanges, whereby sometimes we found that analytic insights could cast new light on problems in Thomistic philosophy and that Aquinas's thought could also be a splendid resource for casting new light on some of the vexed metaphysical challenges currently facing, for example, contemporary philosophy of mind.

Our positive experiences in dialogue were also spurred on by our joint discussions of a series of articles written by John Haldane, Professor of Philosophy at St Andrews University in Scotland. In his series of articles, Haldane has called for a renewal of Thomism via positive engagement with analytic philosophy. Due to our own positive experiences with the nature of this dialogue, we decided to try and further respond to Haldane's call by seeking to add our own voices to the wider discourse.

Originally we had thought to write a joint article or two highlighting some of the positive exchanges we had encountered via our dialogue. The more deeply that we dug into the question of different avenues for scholarly discussion, however, our direction changed towards organizing a conference on the topic of Analytical Thomism. Logistic and funding difficulties, alas, conspired against us. Instead, taking advantage of the remarkable powers of e-mail and attachments, we decided to concentrate on gathering together scholars in Europe and the United States as contributors to an edited collection. We were hopeful that these contributions would further build on the positive contributions already made to the topic in a special issue of *The Monist* (vol. 80, no. 4 1997), prepared under the editorial direction of John Haldane and a special issue of *New Blackfriars* (vol. 80, April 1999), prepared under the editorial direction of Fergus Kerr.

Having got firm commitments of intent from a number of distinguished and newer scholars interested in engaging in dialogue (reflected in the sub-title of this volume), we then decided to approach possible publishers for the project. Fortunately we did not encounter a long or fruitless journey to find one. We wrote

to Ashgate and we were very pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by Sarah Lloyd, Publisher, to take the project on board and realize it in print. Ashgate's patience and understanding with our somewhat "amateur" approach to logistics greatly contributed to the project ever seeing the light of day.

Inevitably in the coordination of many contributions from different parts of the globe, the best laid plans for production schedules often go askew. Deadlines had to be revised. Nevertheless things finally came together as the contributions were submitted. We were very impressed with the standard of the submissions and felt that the content of the project more than amply justified our goal of further promoting the exchange of dialogue between Thomism and analytic philosophy.

Here we would like to extend our grateful thanks to our contributors, without whose considerable intellectual labors and understanding, this project would not have been possible. In addition to our directly commissioned contributions, we would also like to thank the editorial staff of *The Monist* and the *The Thomist* for permission to reprint three contributions in this collection, contributions whose presence we felt would enhance both the content and utility of this volume for the reader.

We would also like to extend our thanks to John Haldane, who notwithstanding a hectic publishing and lecturing schedule, kindly agreed to write an afterword.

Finally, we would like to thank our family and friends (they know who they are), in providing much needed emotional and financial support to the editors during the whole process of publishing this volume. Without their considerable help, offered always in the spirit of love and friendship, this project would most certainly have floundered.

Craig Paterson and Matthew Pugh, April 2005

Introduction to Analytical Thomism

The first question that might occur to someone picking up the present volume for the first time is, what is Analytical Thomism? This is a very good question but one that is not easy to answer. The second part of the phrase is perhaps somewhat easier to respond to than the first, for “Thomism” can more readily be identified as referring to a particular corpus of thought, namely, the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the subsequent interpretation of his ideas. Analytic philosophers, on the other hand, are still relatively unclear about what “analytical” as in “analytic philosophy” is or what its possible connections to Thomism might be. Does analytic philosophy, for example, embrace a particular set of doctrines or beliefs? Most analytic philosophers would answer no. They would insist that whatever analytic philosophy is, and whatever its historical origins, analytic philosophy is today used by philosophers to argue for positions running the length of the philosophical spectrum – from various kinds of realism and idealism in metaphysics, to empiricism and rationalism in epistemology, and to non-cognitivism and utilitarianism in ethics. Is analytic philosophy, then, primarily a philosophical method, a particular way of doing philosophy? Again, most analytic philosophers would say that there is no particular method of doing analytic philosophy apart from giving high priority to rigorous argumentation and clarity of expression. But many philosophers (indeed, one would hope most philosophers) who would not normally be called analytic philosophers have given priority to sound argumentation and clarity of expression.

What, then, could analytical philosophy’s appeal be to Thomists, who certainly, in Aquinas, have a first rate example of a rigorous and disciplined philosophical and theological thinker? Do Analytical Thomists turn to analytic philosophy simply in order to “pick up” helpful techniques for assisting them in the interpretative clarification of specific aspects of Aquinas’s thought or are they more deeply drawn to the wellsprings of analytical philosophy because they hold that an analytical approach to philosophy, can, more effectively than traditional neo-Thomism, illuminate our critical understanding of the deepest conceptual foundations of his thought?

The nature of the relationship between analytic philosophy and Thomism raises, in the minds of many, the following line of questioning: must Analytical Thomists be committed to any of the traditionally framed doctrines of Thomistic thought? Must Analytical Thomists, for example, hold a philosophic commitment to some way(s) of rationally demonstrating (*or at least* defending the possibility of) the existence of God, specifically the God of Christianity? Or, must an Analytic Thomist, at least, be committed to supporting some form of hylomorphism?

These are all legitimate questions that anyone calling himself or herself an Analytical Thomist must, in due course, address, for he or she will, most assuredly, be pressed into addressing such questions *viz.* debate in the various channels of scholarly communication. *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*, was conceived of by us as just such a channel by which to invite well established, as well as newer and emerging scholars, in both Europe and the United States, to reflect on this crisscross of influence between analytic philosophy and Thomism, whether positively or negatively. As the reader will soon find out, the contents of this volume run the gambit of those who view the dialogue as a rapprochement between analytical philosophy and Thomism to those who are lukewarm or decidedly skeptical about the very possibility of a genuinely fruitful exchange of ideas.

Conscious as we are of the need for an introduction, especially in an edited collection, to provide the reader with something of an overview of its terrain, we think that this goal can best be achieved by outlining, albeit very briefly, something of the historical growth of Thomism, turning then to a brief account of how analytic philosophy in the twentieth century can be viewed in relation to that history, before finally turning to a further consideration of what the phrase “Analytical Thomism,” can be taken to mean in light of this brief historical account.

The history of Thomism can usefully be divided into a number of phases. Almost immediately after the death of Aquinas in 1274, parts of Aquinas’s philosophy met with condemnation, first by Bishop Tempier of Paris in 1277, then by the Dominican Robert Kilwardby and later by William de la Mare. Some of Aquinas’s fellow Dominicans came to his defense, however, such as William of Macclesfield and John of Paris and this resulted, fifty years later, in Aquinas’s canonization in 1323. By the time of John Capreolus in the fifteenth century, Aquinas was the favored philosopher of the Dominicans and they began to produce commentaries on the *Summa Theologiae*. These commentaries were written not only to spread Aquinas’s teachings, but also to combat the “rival” philosophies of Scotus and Ockham. Thus began the first phase of Thomism.

One of the consequences of the Council of Trent (1545–63) was the creation of new religious orders like the Jesuits, who, under the influence of Ignatius of Loyola, championed the philosophy of Aquinas. This in turn gave rise, along with the work of the Post-Tridentine Dominicans, to a new phase of Thomist thought, dominated by the commentaries of Cajetan, John of St Thomas, and the Jesuit works of Domingo de Soto, Luis de Molina and Francesco Suarez. By the time Aquinas had been named a Doctor of the Church in the sixteenth century, the two main schools of Thomistic thought were the Dominican in Italy and the Jesuit in Spain. This promising second phase of Thomism would end, unfortunately, in a heated dispute between these two schools over the vexed issue of grace and free will.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Thomism can be said to have fallen on “hard times” and nothing of any real enduring value was really produced by the Thomists of these centuries. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, something of a renewal and revitalization of Thomism began

with the work of such thinkers as Tommaso Zigliara and Joseph Kleutgen, culminating in 1879 in Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. As John Haldane has noted in "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy," the rebirth of Thomistic philosophy which *Aeterni Patris* occasioned, looked in two directions: (i) the "problematic" which sought to use the philosophy of Aquinas to respond to the philosophical challenges of the day, such as the idealism stemming from Descartes and Kant or the empiricism of Hume, and (ii) the "historical" which sought to use the latest techniques of textual analysis and historical research to uncover the "true" Aquinas by stripping away the accretions of later interpreters such as Cajetan and John of St Thomas.¹

Neither approach, of course, was without difficulties, but the most daunting task fell to those who wished to use Aquinas's insights to meet the philosophical challenges of the day. For one thing, these Thomists could not help but be influenced by the very philosophies they wished to engage. Though they were convinced of the essential correctness of many of Aquinas's basic philosophical theses, they could also appreciate the many insights of the philosophers and philosophies that they ultimately came to reject. They could see, in other words, that some of these ideas could actually be used to support, clarify and further advance some of Aquinas's basic philosophical and theological positions. Thus in Poland, for instance, the phenomenology of Husserl and his interpreters like Roman Ingarden, along with the work of Max Scheler, were incorporated in various ways into the philosophy of Aquinas, often with fruitful results. The most famous and successful example of this particular marriage was, of course, Karol Wojtyła's *The Acting Person*.²

Trying to effect a rapprochement or even synthesis between different philosophies is something of a "tricky business" and always runs the risk (charge) of distorting the philosophies being synthesized, as happened, in the eyes of many, with the development in the twentieth century, of "Transcendental Thomism." Kant had had a major impact on the thinking of many Thomists, and though most were inclined to reject Kantian idealism, some, such as Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Marechal, embraced the Kantian turn toward the subject. Marechal, in particular, found the starting point for metaphysics in the subject. He claimed, however, that Kant had failed to see that only an Infinite Being can ground or guarantee the phenomenal object. Kant had failed, in other words, to see that the inner dynamism of the operative intellect in the very synthesizing formation of the object of consciousness, required an absolute terminus. In effect, Marechal believed that Aquinas's metaphysical critique of the object could be successfully transplanted into Kant's transcendental critique of the object. Although Marechal's transcendental version of Thomism certainly had some very notable followers, for example, Bernard Lonergan, most Thomists (and Kantians) rejected this amalgamation of Aquinas and Kant as being an unworkable distortion of both philosophies.³

Other Thomists, influenced by continental philosophy, were, perhaps, able to effect more successful engagements between Thomism and other traditions of thought. Names that immediately come to mind here are Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson. These two thinkers generated a school of Thomism indebted to late

nineteenth and early twentieth century secular French philosophy (particularly French existentialism) and it became known as “Existential Thomism.”

Working initially under the influence of Henri Bergson and Maurice Blondel, Maritain’s conversion to Catholicism, and his subsequent study of the texts of Aquinas under the guidance of his French Dominican mentor Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, led him to embrace a version of Thomism based to a large extent on the commentaries of Cajetan and John of St Thomas. Maritain’s many books reflected what he took to be the perennial themes of Aquinas’s philosophy, such as the primacy of a metaphysics of *esse* understood as the act of being (*actus essendi*); the necessity for an intuition of metaphysical being as the proper starting point for Thomistic metaphysics; and in epistemology, the importance of the notion of truth as adequation. Though Maritain, in his philosophy, was certainly committed to many of Aquinas’s basic philosophical and theological propositions, he did not hesitate to draw on and adapt the secular philosophies of the day if he felt that they could support, clarify or advance his understanding of Aquinas’s basic positions. This is evident, for example, in his *The Degrees of Knowledge*,⁴ where he repeatedly marshals the instrumentalist views of such philosophers of science as Emile Meyerson, Emile Picard, Pierre Duhem, Arthur Eddington and James Jeans, in support of his perinoetic/dianoetic distinction in the order of knowledge. Maritain did not hesitate to use his knowledge of French existentialism to bolster his interpretation of some of Aquinas’s key metaphysical positions.

Some critics (Gilson among them) insisted that Maritain’s interpretation of Aquinas’s metaphysics, indebted as it was to the Dominican commentators, was too essentialist in tone and therefore missed the existential thrust of Aquinas’s metaphysics of *esse*. For Gilson, faithful to the texts of Aquinas as he believed himself to be, it was not simply Maritain’s use of the commentators that was so troubling, it was Maritain’s reliance on what Gilson took to be a kind of inverted Bergsonian intuitionism. For Gilson, there is no such thing as an intuition of metaphysical being, nor can anything like it be found in the texts of Aquinas. As he strove to argue in *Being and Some Philosophers*,⁵ Aquinas’s metaphysics is built on the understanding that being primarily means *esse* or existence, a being’s act of existing, which is not to be confused with its essence. As such, *esse* cannot be grasped via simple apprehension and so cannot be known through a concept. *Esse* can only be captured or known in judgments of existence. In order to be thought conceptually and raised to the metaphysical level, *esse* must be rejoined to essence and then brought under the operations of (i) abstraction, and (ii) separation in the form of a special negative judgment. For Gilson, our ability to know *esse* is dependent on, and grounded in, pre-conceptual sensory experience. And yet, for all his adherence to Aquinian textual authority, there is no doubt that Gilson wrote *Being and Some Philosophers* with his eye on the growing popularity of French existentialism and was also significantly influenced by it.

Thus by the mid-twentieth century there were at least three well developed schools of Thomism that sought to address the philosophical challenges of the day by effecting a rapprochement or synthesis with Aquinas’s thought – (i) the Lublin school in Poland, (ii) Transcendental Thomism and (iii) Existential Thomism.

Of those who chose the overtly historicist path, in the twentieth century, we can but note here the work of Joseph Owens in Canada, John Wippel in the United States, and in Europe the expository scholarship of the well known “Participation Thomists” – Cornelio Fabro and Louis Geiger.

While renewed interest in Aquinas’s philosophy resulted in the creation of new schools of Thomism, along with the creation of considerable first rate historical scholarship, Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris* also had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing a manualistic style of presenting Aquinas’s thought that had first arisen in the decades following the Council of Trent. The Catholic Church at that time had a strong need to systematize doctrine in the face of the growing challenges of the Protestant faith. To that end, and because Aquinas’s philosophy played a major role in the Catholic Church’s response to Luther and Calvin, Catholic theologians devised manuals that sought to summarize Aquinas’s arguments and conclusions in ways that could be more readily absorbed by Catholic seminarians and deployed apologetically. Useful, perhaps, in their own limited way, these manuals became the standard method of presenting Aquinas’s thought in the post-Tridentine Church.

When Leo XIII made Aquinas the “official” philosopher of the Catholic Church in 1879 (to be utilized, at the time, as an intellectual force against the challenges of modernism), he inadvertently created a need for more manuals of Thomistic instruction. Whatever their value to seminarians, the continued use of manuals, as well as the manual style of instruction in Catholic seminaries and colleges in the twentieth century, did more than anything else to give Thomism and Aquinas a “bad name” among non-Catholic philosophers. These manuals were often decidedly dogmatic, uncritical and dismissive of competing views. Since their primary purpose was to indoctrinate, they, at best, contained little in the way of redeeming philosophical value.

Consequently, in spite of the creation of new schools of syncretic Thomism after *Aeterni Patris*, the manual style of privileged pleading, alas, became all too readily identified with Thomism in general. If that was the thought of Aquinas, non-Catholic philosophers argued, then it was not really worth the trouble of getting to know it any further.

Distrust of Thomism and Thomists was thus widespread among non-Catholic philosophers in the twentieth century. If distrust of Thomists was strong among the continental philosophers, it was even stronger among analytic philosophers. Analytic philosophy had, early on, acquired a reputation for being a tough minded, no-nonsense approach to philosophy, whose practitioners tended to come from backgrounds in logic, mathematics and the hard sciences. It had also acquired a reputation, early on, for being dismissive of metaphysics (at least certain “bad” kinds) as well as being hostile to religion and values.

Although today’s analytic philosophers are quick to point out that such a reputation was only, in part, deserved, both the early Wittgenstein and Russell developed philosophies whose main task was the reductive analysis of ordinary language into what they called its true logical content, which ordinary language obscured. Now the true logical content of ordinary language was comprised of complex propositions and elementary statements of fact. Since the latter were held

to represent the world as it truly is, ordinary language claims that could not be so reduced or re-written, were simply dismissed as being “metaphysical” (in the bad sense) or “value-laden” claims. Of course, Wittgenstein and Russell certainly had their own ontologies, but it was the reductive aspect of these philosophies that most appealed to their positivist successors, who would ultimately give expression to that reductionism in the form of the verification principle of meaning.

By the 1930s, then, analytic philosophy was not inclined to give any sympathetic ear to the voice of Aquinas, dependent as it was on “bad” metaphysics. Whatever their disagreements with Frege’s supposed Platonism, virtually all analytic philosophers of the period agreed with Frege’s assessment of existence, that “An affirmation of existence is in fact nothing other than a denial of the number zero.”⁶ Consequently, no self respecting analytic philosopher of the period could, in good conscience, embrace a philosophy such as Aquinas’s, a philosophy that repeatedly made the mistake of treating existence as a real property, rather than as a second order property of concepts. Nor, of course, were Thomists inclined to give any major thought to analytic philosophy, convinced as they were (wrongly, as it turned out) of analytic philosophy’s hopelessly anti-metaphysical bias.

Breaking out of its short lived love affair with logical positivism, analytic philosophy would, however, soon open up to other influences and these would eventually lead to its becoming the multifaceted philosophical community of discourse that it is today. Perhaps the most important change in this regard was effected by Wittgenstein himself, when he abandoned his earlier view of language as the mirror of reality and embraced instead a multi-functional theory of language where use determines meaning. For Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy was no longer to uncover the structures of the world through a reductive analysis of the logical structure of language, but to describe the history of language’s use. The work of the later Wittgenstein, along with the breakdown of the verificationist principle of meaning, led to the near fall of logical positivism. After the fall of logical positivism, many analytic philosophers, released from this particular philosophical straitjacket, turned to such thinkers as Aristotle, and even Aquinas, for fresh philosophical inspiration and insight. Emerging conditions thus started to arise that would set the scene for the first stage appearances of what would, belatedly, become known as “Analytic Thomism.”

Of course, as historians of analytic philosophy have pointed out,⁷ analytic philosophy, from its very inception, was informed by ideas that Aquinas would have agreed with. Frege, for example (in spite of his take on existence), defended the objectivity of knowledge, and Brentano (in some ways the father of analytic philosophy) championed the intentionality of mental states, a Scholastic idea traceable to Aquinas himself. Hence much of the support for one side of a central debate in analytic philosophy, namely, the realist/anti-realist debate, was indebted to a medieval philosopher with a Scholastic and Aristotelian background.

As analytic philosophy began to “morph” in the 1950s, it’s center of operations began to move from Cambridge to Oxford, with the work of Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin. Though typically not associated with Aquinas in any way, both practiced philosophy in the spirit of Aristotle, with Ryle attacking Cartesianism in his *The*

*Concept of Mind*⁸ and Austin undertaking anthropological investigations in his “Plea for Excuses”⁹ that are decidedly reminiscent of Aristotle’s method of approach. Hence these two thinkers, each in his own way, caused analytic philosophers to look more carefully at ancient sources.

One of the most pressing areas where renewal, via a reexamination of ancient sources, was felt to be sorely needed, was in ethics. Logical positivism had left ethics dependent on emotivism, non-cognitivism and utilitarianism. Their only opposition came from proponents of various tired versions of Kantian deontology. It took someone of the philosophical stature of Elizabeth Anscombe to break the impasse. She would do so by bringing virtue ethics back into the mainstream of ethical discussion. Anscombe’s 1958 article “Modern Moral Philosophy,”¹⁰ marked the beginning of a small but influential movement within analytic philosophy to make virtue ethics respectable once again. According to Anscombe, the only way to overcome the limitations of emotivism, behaviorism, utilitarianism and Kantianism, was to seek to rehabilitate the whole notion of virtue.

If Anscombe sought to challenge the general condition that ethical discourse had reached by the mid-twentieth century, instigating something of an analytic shift towards renewed interest in Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics, Peter Geach, Anscombe’s husband, also had a major impact on the analytic turn toward interest in Aquinas. Geach was, like many analytic philosophers, primarily a logician, whose *Mental Acts* (1958)¹¹ attacked both abstractionism and dispositionalism as credible positions governing the structure of mental acts. Geach in particular attacked Ryle’s *The Concept of the Mind*. Here Geach objected, on logical grounds, to Ryle’s seemingly behaviorist account of mental acts. Mental acts, said Geach, are logically distinct from mental events. Geach also rejected what he took to be the standard reading of Aquinas on abstractionism, which, for Geach, boiled down to a kind of psychologism – the mind possesses a “sense” that enables it to consult its own inner experience, from which the “sense” in question then abstracts mental concepts. According to Geach, the mind does not simply abstract concepts that are exact or identical copies of things; the mind in some sense generates concepts. In other words, the mind uses its concept-forming power to know intelligibles, but the intelligibles that it knows are in part due to the power of the mind to know them.¹² *Mental Acts*, then, along analytic lines, can be seen to make a significant contribution to a Thomistic understanding of an important foundational concept in the philosophy of mind.

This does not complete this sketch of Geach’s seminal contribution to the rise of “Analytical Thomism,” for his chapter on Aquinas in *Three Philosophers*,¹³ co-written with Elisabeth Anscombe, is of crucial significance. That chapter represented a selective examination of themes central to Aquinas’s philosophy and sought to clarify mistaken interpretations of Aquinas’s thought in much the same spirit as *Mental Acts*. One of these, which would become a key focus for other Analytical Thomists, following Geach, is the often overlooked distinction that Aquinas makes between *esse*, or being, and existence in the *an est* sense. Confusing the two, argued Geach, is said to lead to a big conceptual muddle about God’s essence being the same as his existence.

Another major figure in the analytic turn toward ancient and medieval philosophy, and Aquinas in particular, was Anthony Kenny. Kenny was a Catholic priest who studied at the Gregorian University in Rome in the 1950s. Among his professors were Peter Hoenen and Bernard Lonergan, whom he says, both aroused his interest in Aquinas's philosophy. His interest in Aquinas was further energized when he went to study with Peter Geach and Herbert McCabe at Oxford. Some of the first fruits of that study were *Action, Emotion, and Will* (1963),¹⁴ *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969)¹⁵ and *Will, Freedom and Power* (1975),¹⁶ all of which show, in various ways, Kenny's indebtedness to Aquinas's thought. Aquinas's influence is particularly evident in Kenny's *The Metaphysics of Mind* (1989).¹⁷ In this work, Kenny draws upon many elements whose intellectual roots are to be found in Aquinas's philosophy of mind. Kenny, for example, deftly shows how Aquinas's understanding of the relation between intellect and will, body and soul, has much to offer contemporary analysts grappling with the same problems.¹⁸

Kenny's later work, *Aquinas on Being*,¹⁹ examines Aquinas's theory of being in the light of Frege's philosophy and modern linguistic analysis. Here the contribution Kenny makes now works in the opposite direction, for contemporary analytical philosophy, as Kenny sees it, shows how Aquinas's theory of being is, at bottom, fundamentally incoherent in its basic metaphysical underpinnings.

Finally, the growing interest of a minority of analytic philosophers in the philosophy of Aquinas, following in the wake of Anscombe, Geach and Kenny, caused John Haldane, one of the leading lights of British analytic thought, and himself a Catholic philosopher very interested in Aquinas, to label this approach to philosophy "Analytical Thomism." Haldane, spurred on by the fruits of the labor of Anscombe, Geach and Kenny, has, in effect, called for a fourth renewal of Thomism, which would take its revitalization from a thoroughgoing dialogue with the method and concerns of analytic philosophy. For Haldane, such a renewal is the only way to save Thomism from, (i) useful but limited historical expositions of Aquinas's philosophy, and (ii) the not very rigorous neo-Thomist philosophy coming from the successors to Gilson, Maritain and the transcendentalists. Haldane believes that analytic philosophy has much to offer Thomism, and that were Aquinas alive today, he would in fact be something of an analytic philosopher. To this end, Haldane has published a number of influential papers, helping to generate interest among some philosophers (not all Catholics by any means) as to the importance of advancing this agenda. A significant contribution to this research was made in a 1997 issue of *The Monist*,²⁰ the whole of which was devoted to the subject of Analytical Thomism. It is there, in the Prefatory Note, that Haldane gives us a working definition of Analytical Thomism, one which enables us, at last, to supply the reader with at least a broad working definition of what the phrase "Analytical Thomism" stands for:

Analytical Thomism is not concerned to appropriate St. Thomas for the advancement of any particular set of doctrines. Equally, it is not a movement of pious exegesis. Instead, it seeks to deploy the methods and ideas of 20th century philosophy – of the sort dominant within the English speaking world – in connection with the broad framework of ideas introduced and developed by Aquinas.²¹

That issue of the *Monist* was followed by another of Haldane's articles that also helped promote the call for dialogue between Thomism and analytic philosophy, this time published in *New Blackfriars* (vol. 80, 1999), as "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy."²² The *New Blackfriars* article, further articulating Haldane's call for a cross fertilization between analytic philosophy and Thomism, is followed by twelve responses from philosophers and theologians who are, for the most part, sympathetic to the broad thrust of Haldane's call.

Our volume, *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*, seeks to further that trend in dialogue by adding to the small list of contributions published in this relatively new field of philosophy. The editors believe that Haldane's project has considerable merit, that analytic philosophy has much to offer Thomists and others interested in the thought of Aquinas, and that Thomists ignore the latest developments in analytic philosophy at their peril. We also maintain that Haldane is "on target" concerning the present state of Scholastic philosophy, for it is once again in need of renewal. That renewal, of course, need not necessarily come from analytic philosophy alone, but surely as one of the dominant approaches to philosophy in the world these past decades, analytic philosophy must surely play a major part in this renewal.

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, the ensuing dialogue over "future prospects" is lively and spirited. Many of the contributors take various concepts active in analytic philosophy and apply them to problems that are of deep concern to analytic philosophers and Thomists alike. Thus chapters appear on the metaphysics/theory of being; meta-ethics, free will and determinism, natural theology, philosophical anthropology/philosophical psychology, natural law theory, and so on.

There has never been a time when Thomism was not in dialogue with the philosophies of the day and Thomists have always (even the historicists) viewed Aquinas through the interpretative lenses of their own philosophical and cultural milieu. This was true in every historical phase of Thomism; during the time of the earliest commentators combating Scotus and Ockham; during the time of Cajetan and John Poinsett, and the Jesuit appropriators of Aquinas after Trent; during the time of the traditionalists and ontologists in the eighteenth century; during the time of Zigliara and Kluetgen in the nineteenth century, and certainly after *Aeterni Patris*. Far from destroying Thomism, however, we strongly believe that this kind of "mingling" has always eventually brought about a renewal of Thomistic thought updating its contextual relevance as well as furthering its conceptual advancement.

Dialogue, if genuine, ought to go out of its way to include the opinions of those who may dissent from a positive understanding of the need for a fourth Thomistic renewal via engagement with analytic philosophy. Other articles in this volume reflect the response of some neo-Thomists to the work of Analytic Thomists. Needless to say, not all neo-Thomists are convinced of the compatibility of these two philosophical approaches. Few traditional neo-Thomists, as yet, are sympathetic to Haldane's mission, as we see in the chapters by Brian Shanley, Stephen Theron and John Knasas. It has to be noted, here, that most of the interest in Analytic Thomism, so far, has come from the side of analysis, not Thomism. As

its relatively short history shows, most of the people working in this field have found their way into Analytical Thomism from analytical philosophy; few have yet to find their way into Analytical Thomism from neo-Thomism. Given that the dialogue is still in its early stages, perhaps this demographic, given time, will change.

Be that as it may, perhaps the real value of a volume like this lies in its having, at the very least, drawn the attention of neo-Thomists to the work of analysts who use analytic philosophy to argue for many of the positions that Aquinas defended, and who as a result may now decide to look more carefully at the many riches of analytic philosophy itself. Clearly the former have found much that is of value in Aquinas. At the same time, we hope, Analytical Thomists too will consider, more carefully, the objections to Analytical Thomism raised by neo-Thomists and seek, in future, to more fully address them.

Notes

- 1 John Haldane, "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy," *New Blackfriars* 80 (April 1999), 164.
- 2 Haldane, "Thomism," 164.
- 3 For an excellent overview of the history of the development of Transcendental Thomism, see Gerald McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1989).
- 4 Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Gerald B. Phelan, trans. (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).
- 5 Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1952).
- 6 Gottlob Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, J. L. Austin, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 51.
- 7 For an excellent recent overview of the historical background to Analytical Thomism, see Fergus Kerr's "Aquinas and Analytic Philosophy: Natural Allies?" in *Modern Theology* 20:1 (2004), 123–39.
- 8 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).
- 9 J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, J. O. Urmson & G. J. Warnock, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).
- 10 Elizabeth Anscombe, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, Vol. III (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981).
- 11 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).
- 12 Kerr, "Aquinas," 134–35.
- 13 Peter Geach, "Aquinas," in G. E. M. Anscombe & P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961).
- 14 Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London: Routledge, 1963).
- 15 Kenny, ed. *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).
- 16 Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (London: Routledge, 1975).
- 17 Kenny, *Metaphysics of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

- 18 See also Kenny's *Aquinas On Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993).
- 19 Kenny, *Aquinas On Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 20 John Haldane, ed. "Analytical Thomism," *The Monist* 80:4 (1997).
- 21 Haldane, Prefatory Note.
- 22 Haldane, "Thomism," 164.

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Chapter One

Aquinas, God and Being

David Braine

1. Introduction

Some critics, while praising Aquinas on many counts, have concluded that his view of God's eternity and immutability depends upon a misconceived Platonism, consequently, his explanations of God's so-called "simplicity" are based on sophistry and illusion.¹ Against this, I present Aquinas's views as the coherent whole I believe them to be, his later works showing some development as well as greater indulgence in metaphor.

The prologue of the *Summa theologiae* makes it plain that Aquinas is speaking as a theologian, giving an exposition of sacred doctrine, intending to speak of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In considering the names of God in *ST I*, q. 13, all the names considered are concrete and of the sort theologians use – he is strong, wise and good, that he is a lion or a stone of stumbling, that he is Lord, Savior and Creator, rightly called God and He Who Is.

It is of the essence of this God to be a living God and it is in keeping with this that Aquinas conceives God's existing and living in terms of the notion of an act or activity. God's act or activity of being, in Latin his *actus essendi*, is his activity of living, is his activity of knowing and understanding, is his activity of loving. It is a unitary or simple *actus*, act or activity, with many aspects, inasmuch as we speak of it as being, living, knowing, loving, and so on according to the respect in which the being, living, knowing, loving, and so on of creatures resemble it. The facts that God is, that he lives, that he knows, and so on, are all distinct facts stated in different propositions, but these propositions are all made true by one unitary actuality.

This *actus*, Aquinas understands to be the act of a subsistent thing, the word *actus* serving as a translation of Aristotle's word *energeia*. In the modern logical sense, this act or activity is a particular, not in the sense of being a member of a wider group of particulars, but in the sense of being logically a singular act, not a kind of act. This *energeia* of being is the furnace which gives and maintains being and vigor in all things. It is in no way an abstract entity. Therefore there is for him no resemblance at all between the kind of immutability possessed by God and the immutability which belongs to abstract objects such as general properties and numbers. General properties and numbers are incapable of exercising any causal action or of suffering any passion because they are merely abstract in character – objects only of the mind.

Aquinas considers eternity, not simply negatively as non-temporality, but as a form of life, in particular as complete and perfect possession all in one act of a life without beginning or end. God's immutability is not a *stasis* contrasting with movement within the world of moving things, but arises from his being pure activity.

Much modern consideration of eternity by believers has been very superficial. Many have come to argue that immutability is incompatible with thinking of God as living and personal, usually on the basis that life and personhood involve not only intellect but also emotion and responsiveness to other persons, in particular to changeable free human beings.² These arguments, however, seem to depend on supposing that we ought to be able to imagine what it is like for God to live his life, as if to be able to empathize with God, something which traditional theism has always excluded, insisting on God's unimagability and incomprehensibility.

True, in the Scriptures of those many religions which hold that God is unimaginable and incomprehensible, the same God often speaks of himself and is spoken of in very anthropomorphic ways. In Hebrew scripture he is spoken of as walking in the garden of paradise, of resolving on things and then relenting, and of exercising motherly care. Each of these three cases has been explained, each in a different way. In Christian tradition, Jesus in his humanity has been taken as the chosen image of whatever in God is expressed in the language of the emotions. But this does not make us able to feel what it feels like to live God's life.

These doctrines of God's simplicity and immutability are shared with Muslims. They reject any idea of Allāh having added qualifications, or of his attributes being separate from his being, or of his being subject to change or changeable. These doctrines are part of any orthodox Jewish, Christian or Muslim doctrine of God. Modern philosophers' difficulties spring from their trying to imagine things which according to this shared tradition are necessarily unimaginable. Their fight is not primarily with God's simplicity and eternity, but with his unimagability and incomprehensibility, data in this tradition. These data have the consequence that every positive statement about God has to be understood as subject to negative qualifications, so that in the words of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 "between Creator and creature no likeness can be expressed without implying a greater unlikeness."

Modern criticism of the idea of eternity is also superficial because it fails to take account of the underlying structure of the relationship between God and creation.

Firstly, in our understanding of the world of bodily or physical things, temporality has become increasingly inseparable from a causal order within which space and time are wrapped together. It is therefore not credible that time should have any existence separate from the whole physical created order; and therefore, if this order has been given existence by a creator, then the same creator must have in the same act concreated time (I say "concreated" since it is the things of nature that are created and time with them, and not time that is created as an independent thing within which the things of nature come to be). Therefore there can be no sense in describing God as present in time, except in the sense that the whole of him in his simple unity is immediate to that to which he gives being at any particular place and time, as the agent who is internal and immediate to this action of giving being.

One of the blind spots of those who try to temporalize God is that their view involves a Time which embraces both God and creation and this involves, contrary to relativity theory, that simultaneity is always absolute throughout space independently of observers. Relativity theory reinforces the awareness shared by Augustine and Aquinas of the inseparability of time from the natural created universe. Physically, being past, present or future are always in relation to a juncture in space and time; there is no absoluteness in temporal relations in nature except within the “time-cones” familiar in presentations of relativity theory, and as causal order requires, which excludes circles in causation.

Secondly, even in the most sophisticated of proposed physical theories, ones in which there are nine or ten dimensions of space, time still stands alone in a unique relation to them. And our whole understanding of physical causal order, including our understanding of what is involved in experimentation, depends upon a cause having effects which are later than its action. That is, it is our understanding of causal action, and not only what notions we may have about the contingency of the future, whether arising from free will or from any supposed existence of absolute chance, which requires the reality of time. The future relative to any juncture in space and time does not yet exist and is not already established in the sense that the past is established, for even though what is past to a juncture no longer exists at that juncture, this past is still then established in some way which sets it together with what is present in that juncture, in contrast with what is future to that juncture. If the future is open so that there is some real contingency or undeterminedness about it, this depends upon the fact that it does not yet exist. Accordingly, any God who gives existence to nature must also be a God who makes nature continue in existence. But nothing in time or in any way localized in time can do anything to make itself or anything else exist in the future. Only a non-temporal upholder can uphold the temporal order.

Logically, it is possible for someone to say that nature goes on of itself, by what Norman Kretzmann calls “existential inertia,”³ so that there is no need for it to be explained by there being a non-temporal upholder, but to say this is just to give no explanation, not to give an alternative explanation. And many philosophers make very queer remarks about existence needing no more explanation than non-existence, even when it is a matter of the existence of a universe whose nature is to reliably continue. The possibility of saying such things, however, does not effect the conclusion that here, if anything is to be able to uphold things in existence, to cause their continuance, it has to be non-temporal.⁴

2. The Being of God and the Being of Creatures as Acts or Activities

2(a) Being as an Act or Activity

When Aquinas speaks of the simplicity of God, he is denying that there is any distinction between the actuality of his existing and the actuality, for instance, of his knowing or loving.

By contrast, in considering creatures we have to make a distinction between their act of being as substances and their acts of accidental being. Thus in considering the *esse* of a creaturely self-standing bodily substance, such as a human being, as we shall see, Aquinas's view is that it consists primarily of what is involved in its being a human being, since for him "life is a particular form of *esse*, specified by the relevant living principle" (*Quodl.* 9). However, in addition to this, "through superadded acts," creaturely substances "have being (*esse*) *secundum quid* (according to something), as being white signifies being according to something" which he explains in terms of the actualization of being white presupposing the actual existence of the substance which is white (*ST I*, q. 5, a. 1). More particularly in *SCG I*, 28, he says "any excellence of anything attaches to it according with its *esse*. No excellence would attach to a human being from his wisdom unless because of it he were (*esset*) wise," and, in the *Summa theologiae*, "the good can be more or less according to some supervening *actus*, for example, according to knowledge or virtue" – that is, a human being is more or less in some accidental respect, for instance in being more or less knowledgeable or virtuous.⁵

Thus whereas in God the acts of knowing, understanding and loving are each identical with his act of being and living (and therefore also with each other), by contrast, in human beings (and in any other created intellectual beings, for example, angels) all acts of knowing, understanding and loving are acts by which the created substance concerned has accidental being superadded or supervening upon its being as a substance. They are ways in which the human being or other created substance is more fully (that is, is enriched in being or has fuller existence).

This resolves the people's puzzle as to how he can speak of degrees of being, for example, in his statement of the argument of his Fourth Way,⁶ which represents each perfection as existing in varying degrees in creatures. Aquinas argues that the supreme cause of these perfections as they exist in lesser degree in creatures must be something which exemplifies them in a maximal way, namely God, the first cause of being.

Quite evidently, if *esse* is conceived of as the most general common predicate shared by all things (*res*), it could not serve to characterize God. But Aquinas explicitly and repeatedly argues that God's act of being is not the common predicate, *ens*,⁷ predicated of every thing (*res*), that is of every *ens* from any of the ten categories.

If *esse* is conceived of as an act or activity in the way I have explained, however, there is no incoherence in holding that God's *esse* can have nothing added to it because his activity of being, which is the same activity as his activity of living, is also the same activity as his understanding and loving. In God his life consists in his understanding and loving, whereas in creatures these activities of understanding and loving are accidents, superadded activities supervening upon their being and living as substances.

If a substance's *esse* can indeed be conceived of as an activity, and if this expression does not always have to refer to a predicate of some kind, Kenny's problem⁸ as to how *esse* or "being" are the most empty of predicates that can characterize God or be such that nothing can be added to them, is quite unreal. For

it is a problem which only arises from rejecting the idea of *esse* as an act or activity as something absolutely distinct from *esse* signifying being as the subject of a proposition.

2(b) *Subsistences as Alone in Having Esse as an Act*

From the beginning Aquinas gives pride of place to the primary subject, that is a subject which is not itself either predicated of or present in any other subject, that which Aristotle says is primarily and chiefly called *ousia* – in modern writings commonly called first substance. When he particularly needs to avoid ambiguity, Aquinas uses the word *subsistentia* to indicate these first substances defined in this way (and therefore also as his translation of the Greek *hypostasis*). He also refers to them as “particular subsistences,” “substances which subsist through themselves” (*substantiae per se subsistenti*), or as Kenny puts it “self-standing substances.” Aquinas’s dissatisfaction with the word *substantia* arises from its being the standard translation of the Greek word *ousia*, which often denotes something abstract, a thing’s nature or its “what it is,” what he calls *essential* – an object to be comprehended and typically expressed in a definition, which he also refers to as *quidditas* and sometimes *forma*.⁹

He is never deflected from the insistence, already clear in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, that nothing has *esse* except particular subsistences, self-standing in the sense that they have *esse* in themselves and not in something else – unlike prime matter, forms or any universal.¹⁰ We can see this in his sensitivity to the distinction between *esse* and *ens*. Thus Lectio II of his *Commentary on Boethius’ De Hebdomadibus* is particularly instructive.¹¹ There he tells us that “just as we cannot say that *currere* itself runs, so we cannot say that *esse* itself is” while “just as we can say of that which runs or of the running thing (*currente*) that it runs inasmuch as it is the subject of running and itself participates in it, so we can say that a particular being (*ens* or *id quod est*) participates in an *actus essendi*.” He says further that *esse* “is participated in by other things, but does not itself participate in anything else,” and makes it clear that when we say that an *ens* participates in *esse*, the *ens* is spoken of concretely while *esse*, spoken of as something participated in, is spoken of abstractly.

He is constantly insistent that, as he says in *ST I*, q. 39, a. 5, “if we wish to speak with truth, we must take into account not only the things which are signified, but also the mode of their signification.” There he continues:

although, if we consider the thing (*res*) concerned, God (*Deus*) is the same as deity (*deitas*, often translated Godhead), nonetheless the mode of signification is not the same in each case. For, this word God (*Deus*) because it signifies this divine essence as in him that possesses it, from its mode of signification naturally has it that it can stand for a person ... but this word *essentia* [and he evidently means to generalize about all abstract words for God’s essence including the word *deitas*] from its mode of signification does not have it that it can stand for a person because it signifies the essence as an abstract form.¹²

This distinction between (i) the perfections signified by the non-metaphorical predicates we use of God and (ii) their *modus significandi*, introduced in *ST I*, q. 13, a. 3, where all the time he is thinking of the concrete names of God (concretely predicated of God as a subsistent being in composite propositions formed about God without implying that he is composite (q. 13, a. 12)), underlies all his discussion of the names of God and of the three divine Persons.

We see this refusal to be deflected from his insistence that nothing has *esse* except particular subsistences even in his treatment of the Trinity. For Aquinas, there are three distinct singular subjects [*supposita*] which are primary in the sense explained above. Each is a *subsistentia* or *hypostasis*, in God, the three Persons of the Trinity, so it might seem to us a problem as to what might be the foundation of their unity. To this his answer is that they are one because they have the same *esse* not because they have the same *essentia*.¹³ By contrast, when creatures are non-identical, this is because they do not have the same *esse*, so that even if they share the same *essentia*, this is only according to *ratio*, that is as something abstract like, attributes predicable of more than one thing. In the case of God, his *essentia* is not something abstract, general or possible but has the same logical particularity and concreteness as his *esse*.

2(c) *The Secondary Character of the Esse of Accidents and of Forms*

Aquinas's distinction between (i) being an *ens* in the sense of being a subject of affirmative predication, without necessarily positing anything in reality, and (ii) being an *ens* in the sense of being one of the things in the ten categories which posit something in reality, is quite standard in all his works, appearing first in *De ente et essentia*. From the *Commentary on the Sentences* onwards, however, he states the distinction as primarily a distinction between ways of using the word *esse* and only derivatively as between ways of using the word *ens*.¹⁴ It is thereafter understood as a distinction between *esse* as what is signified by the composition of a proposition and *esse* as an act of being (*actus essendi*).

In the expression *actus essendi*, *essendi* is the genitive of *essendum*, a gerund which correspond to *est* in the way that “destroying” corresponds to “destroy” in English, by contrast with other related nouns such as *essentia* which would be grammatically more analogous to such nouns as “destruction.” By *actus* he meant an individual act or *energeia* of a subsistent thing; one might say a concrete act or activity, not anything of a kind which could be ascribed to abstract forms or numbers. In *Quodl.* 9, 2, 2 (3), this kind of *esse* is described as the *actus* of an *essentia*, implying a way of thinking in which in the case of creatures, *essentia* and *esse* are conceived of as being related analogously as potency to act.¹⁵ This *esse*, however, is an *actus*, is an actualization, not an attribute of the *essentia* conceived as a potency; rather, it is an attribute of the thing which has this *esse*, that is, of the subsistent thing which is said to *be* in the way concerned.

The idea that things in categories other than substance, that is, accidents, posit something in reality may sound puzzling to us, and likewise the idea that they have a concrete act of being in the way I have spoken of. But when Aquinas speaks of

accidental being or the being of accidents, for example, the being of wisdom, he does not have in mind the being or existence of wisdom as an abstract or independently existing entity, but of something's being wise. It therefore remains only substances which exercise even accidental being. Thus the argument of *SCG I*, 28, which I cited earlier, is an anti-Platonic argument to the effect that if a person's wisdom were a separate entity in its own right it would be useless in contributing to his excellence (*nobilitas*), for no excellence would come to a person from his wisdom unless in virtue of it he was wise (speech about wisdom needing to be understood in terms of speech about things which are wise).¹⁶ In understanding Aquinas here we should remember that, for him as for Aristotle, being is signified whenever we have the assertion of a predicate about a subject, whether the copula is used or not. Thus Aristotle tells us that it makes no difference whether one says "walks" or "is walking" (in Greek the simple present has the sense of the English continuous present). So if the accident concerned was not wisdom, but walking, we could say that no action comes to a person from his walking (or posits anything in reality) unless in virtue of it he walks – and, since "walks" means the same as "is walking," for him to walk is for him to be walking, that is, to exercise *esse* in an accidental respect.

For Aquinas it is in principle only things with positive being or existence in some way that have essences – such that one can inquire of them – not just what the word for them means, but what they are in the sense of seeking a definition of their essence.¹⁷ The simple absence of something is not something with an essence requiring definition, and this is true in the case of accidents such as blindness or simple not knowing¹⁸ just as much where the case is one of the absence of a substance (as with a hole or empty space). Being sighted or knowledgeable are assets to Socrates, whereas being blind and lacking knowledge are not. The word "asset" nicely enshrines the association of positive being with being as a way of being good, upon which Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas agree.

It is only by reference to Aristotle that we can understand his way of thinking even as it appears in *De ente*, where he says "Because the word *ens* is said absolutely and with priority of substances, and only posteriorly and with qualification of accidents, essence is in substances truly and properly, in accidents only in some way with qualification" and that accidents "have an incomplete definition because they cannot be defined unless a subject is placed in their definition." For Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, the use of the word "being" in regard to accidents is related to its use in regard to substances in a parallel way to that in which the use of the word "healthy" in regard to what is productive of health is related to its use of healthy animals, and this excludes its being counted as used equivocally. Because of this, an accident, in Aquinas's later works, is called an *ens* only analogically.

Accidents, however, are not the only seemingly abstract things with positive existence and definitions so as to count as constituting essences whose *esse* is an *actus*, since Aquinas's way of thinking of the being of accidents is easily carried over, via the use of abstract terms, to other kinds of form spoken of. Thus when non-accidental forms are concerned, such as humanity, its existence does not in his

conception consist in the existence of an abstract or separate object – humanity or Man – but in something’s being human. In general “*esse* belongs both to the subject (*hypostasis*) and to the nature, to the subject as to that which has *esse*, and to the nature as to that by which something has *esse*, ... as by whiteness something is white, and by humanity someone is human” (*ST* III, q. 17, a. 2). And we have seen how in the case of God, it is to God and the persons of the Trinity, spoken of concretely that *esse* primarily belongs, and to *deitas* only in virtue of applying to *Deus* (God).

3. Being as Consisting in Being the Subject of a True Affirmative Predication

3(a) *Esse as Merely Signifying the Composition of Subject and Predicate*

When modern logicians concern themselves with existence, they mainly speak of it as a presupposition or alternatively say that to be “is to be the value of a bound variable” or, on more traditional lines, that it is to be the subject of a true affirmative predication. Frege speaks of it as a second-level property, the denial of the number nought, but as we shall see such denial arises as a consequence of existence as defined in the other ways.

Existence in this sense is represented in Aquinas as the use of the word *esse* merely to signify the composition of subject and predicate, that is, to signify the truth of a proposition. For, in Aquinas, always the main distinction is between *esse* as positing something in reality – that is *esse* as an *actus essendi* (whether substantial or accidental) of self-standing substances – and this *esse* as merely signifying the composition of subject and predicate. The substantial/accidental distinction is subsidiary by comparison.

What counts as an *ens* (the participle denoting something which is) entirely depends on what we say is (*est*). A thing is an *ens* only in as much as it is (*est*) or is (*est*) something or other, and in both cases Aquinas says that *esse* is predicated of it or that it has *esse*. In reading Aquinas we have to accept that he treats some differences in mode of speech which modern writers carefully distinguish as unimportant in many contexts. Aquinas lays no emphasis on the distinction between a thing’s being and its being something or other – or therefore between *esse* where we might think it expressed existence and *esse* when the copula is concerned (as when what we have is being a man, being human, being white (that is, of a certain quality) or being something where one of the other categories or kinds of predicate is concerned). Obviously if a thing *is something or other*, it is a subject of predication, and therefore *is (simpliciter)*, that is, exists in some way, whatever the *summum genus* or logical type to which it might be supposed to belong. So there is nothing objectionable in the fact that his ways of speaking are often ambiguous as between the two so long as this does not trip him into false conclusions.

When he speaks of the things which have this *esse* in the sense in which it merely signifies the composition of subject and predicate, again he should not be

interpreted as referring to a kind of *esse* which is signified only when the copula is present, since he is not speaking of the lexical meaning of the copula. For, as we saw, following Aristotle, he takes being to be signified whenever we have the assertion of a predicate about a subject, whether the copula is used or not. In his late commentary on the *Metaphysics* passage in which Aristotle says that it makes no difference whether one says “walks” or “is walking,” Aquinas takes Aristotle’s immediate concern to be with precisely this use of *esse* merely to signify the truth of a proposition, such as we express by saying “it is the case that . . .”¹⁹

In the *Summa theologiae*, he gives the proposition “God is” as his immediate example, although he has examples of many other types. He tells us elsewhere that, when demonstrative reasons lead our mind to form the kind of proposition about God which expresses that God is (in his account, reasoning from effects to their cause) so that God’s *esse* is a subject of proof, the *esse* here signified is of the kind which consists only in the truth of a proposition, not that *esse* of God by which he subsists, and so not that *esse* which he says is identical with God’s *essentia* (*SCG I*, 12).

The same explanation of being as consisting in the truth of a proposition is key to Aquinas’s conception of privations. Thus a privation such as blindness is said to exist only in the sense that we can form true propositions about it. It does not exist as a thing in virtue of which something has actual being. This is indeed one of the key elements in his treatment of the problem of evil. Privations are things which exist not by God’s operation but only by his permission: they are not objects of his causation in giving being or to which his primary causation is directed (for example, as it is directed to positive realizations of the natures of the things he creates and upholds, the realizations in terms of which the powers belonging to these natures are defined). Again, in a very different case, although we can say that Christ’s human nature exists, he says that this only means that we can form true propositions about it, not that it has an *actus essendi* of any kind, let alone the *actus essendi* or *esse* of a self-subsisting substance – this latter kind of *esse* belongs to the person of Christ who is indeed human, but it is the person which has this *esse* in the sense of *actus essendi*, not the human nature (*Quodl.* 9, 2; cf. *ST III*, q. 17, a. 2).

There might seem to be a quite general problem as to the status of such things as the human nature in which Plato and Socrates both share or have in common, alongside the problems of the status of rationality which is said to be logically prior to human nature as part of its definition, and in general of any topics of discourse described as in the mind, as having *esse intentionale*, or as *entia rationis* – three expressions each with a different meaning.

What Aquinas holds, however, seems quite clear. We can speak of any of these things as having *esse* in the sense of involving an act of being insofar as we mean some *esse* which a substance has through them, for example, of Plato’s existing or Socrates’ existing as human and rational things, or of a person’s act of conceiving or thinking of an abstract object or of a fictional entity. It is then just as with wisdom: wisdom has real existence inasmuch as there is accidental *actus essendi* in each of the persons who is wise. However, if in saying “Wisdom exists” we had in view only the kind of *esse* expressed in “Wisdom is a positive attribute” understood in a parallel way to “Blindness is a privation,” “A thousand thousands is a number”

or “Cerberus is a mythical beast,” then nothing more would be involved than being a subject of true predication.

To sum up, things with mental or intentional *esse* and *entia rationis* do not *as such* have any act of being but only the *esse* which expresses the composition of a proposition associated with any grammatical subject of predicates – they only have an act of being in so far as this is the act of being, substantial or accidental, of some substance.

3(b) How Aquinas’s Thought Stands in Relation to Frege’s Distinction Between First Order and Second Order Predicates: How Aquinas Understands the Unity of God

In considering Aquinas’s treatment of the being and unity of God, we should begin with Frege and his distinction between (1) properties of the things which fall under concepts such as the properties of particular horses and (2) properties of concepts such as that horses are a million in number or that horses exist.²⁰

Accordingly we must distinguish between unity as a property of an object, conceived in terms of unitedness, integration or absence of composition, and unity as when we say that there is just one thing of a certain kind. In the case of God, unity in the first sense is realized in God’s simplicity, whereas unity in the second sense (what Scotus calls *unicitas* or uniqueness) is realized in there being one God rather than no God or many Gods.

The problem in understanding Aquinas’s treatment of the unity of God in the second sense arises from his thinking it to be an implication of his simplicity, that is God’s unity in the first sense. But here as Frege says “it would be going too far to assert that we can never infer from the component characteristics of a concept to oneness of existence; what is true is that this can never be in as direct a manner as it is to assign some component of a concept as a property to an object falling under it” (*Grundlagen*, para. 53). And we shall find that Aquinas does not violate Frege’s requirement.

Aquinas’s treatment of the unity of God is obscured by his acceptance of a principle which he shares with Aristotle and Leibniz – if immaterial intellectual beings are to differ numerically, they must also differ qualitatively, differing in essence and not just by accidents. It is in this form that Aquinas applies what is known as the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles not only to God but also to the angels.

Yet this principle does not seem intrinsically necessary. We can conceive of God creating two angels identical in essence and the one of them accepting God’s friendship and the other like the devil rejecting it. They would differ in an accidental respect which enabled others apart from the creator to know which was which, but it would not be this that made them different but God’s having created them as distinct, knowing each of them as distinct in the way an agent, here, the giver of being, knows his own act. Moreover, he would still have known them as distinct even if they had not chosen differently and could not be discriminated between other creatures. However, it is a question of what we can think of or conceive, not of what we can imagine.²¹ Since *ex hypothesi* we are speaking of

immaterial beings we should no more expect to imagine angels as distinct than to imagine any angel at all. And it does not seem logically incoherent to suppose that God in his absolute power might have created specifically identical angels whose distinct identity was known to him alone.

This brings into doubt the applicability of the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to angels, that is, it brings into doubt the correctness of Aquinas's supposition that the essence of each angel is logically a particular individual actuality – that in angels as well as in God *ens* and *essentia* are identical. If this supposition is incorrect, then, when Aquinas argues that God is unique for the same reason that he gives for each angel being unique, this argument will be inadequate.

It would seem, however, that Aquinas has available to him a much deeper reason for thinking that there can be only one God, or a deeper reason for applying the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to God rather than to the angels. This deeper reason arises from the fact that for him, not only is the *esse* of the God whom we identify as creator logically a particular individual actuality, but, because there is no real distinction between the essence or nature of this God and his *esse*, this essence or nature of God must also be logically a particular individual actuality. Accordingly there is no way in which two or more distinct subjects could share the divine essence or nature without sharing the same act of being, that is, sharing the same *esse*. This is precisely what Aquinas supposes to be the case with the three Persons of the Trinity in which he and other Christians believe, and, as we noted earlier, it is precisely their sharing the same *esse* which for him prevents them from counting as distinct things. Nothing then could share the divine essence or nature without being one thing, sharing one *esse*, with the Trinity.

Thus it is principally or solely in virtue of the identity or absence of real distinction between God's *esse* and his *essentia* that this *essentia* of God must be logically a particular individual actuality and that there can be only one God. This reason is absent from Aquinas's consideration of the question as to whether there is only one angel of each species.

That God's essence, that is God under the aspect of an object of understanding, should be logically a particular individual actuality, is vital to the possibility of God's being the object of intellectual vision for the angels and saints. In being logically a particular individual actuality, God's essence differs from any essence that we ordinarily conceive. All the essences which we ordinarily conceive are at least in principle capable of being exemplified either in no substance at all or in more than one substance. We typically envisage them as being explained and capable of being made comprehensible through expression in terms of general predicates, although the ways of explaining *differentiae* may be very different from those typified in Aristotelian and medieval examples.

In sum, in Aquinas's position, the identity of God's *esse* with his essence of itself makes it impossible that there should be more than one God, since any subject sharing the divine essence would exist by the same act of being as the persons of the Trinity, so that the only pertinent question to be raised is whether there could have been more than three Persons in the Godhead, not whether there could be one or more other divine beings distinct and separate from the one God whom Christians