

# Theologia Negationis: Maimonides and St. Thomas on Religious Language

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## Abstract

Problems concerning religious language and knowledge have plagued philosophers and theologians perennially. If God is not a being but Being itself, not an object to be encountered empirically in the world in which we live—put crudely, one does not bump into God—and if all our knowledge arises in the context of our experience of finite empirical objects, what can one know or say about God? The radical distinction between God and creatures marked out within the Judaeo-Christian tradition by theologians like Thomas Aquinas can serve to raise more questions rather than to point toward any solutions of the problems of religious and theological language. The realization that we can know God only as the “beginning and end of all things” could perhaps lead to agnosticism, mysticism, or fideism, but (we might think) would hardly lead toward a rationally articulated discourse about God. It might well seem that all we can do when speaking of God is to deny of him the limitations pervasive in created reality. This paper will consider these issues in more detail.

## I. Introduction

As an approach, the conceptually ascetic Via Negativa has a rich heritage in religious tradition, and the Jewish rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135-1204) was one of its most articulate defenders. In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides stressed that the “God-world relation” can only be expressed in the vocabulary of a *theologia negativa*, or better, a *theologia negationis*. (Buijs 49:87-93) Maimonides was concerned primarily to safeguard the unity, and, therefore, simplicity of God. He followed Ibn Sina in building on the latter’s distinction between essence and existence.

According to Maimonides, existence is an “accident appertaining to all things.” In the case of everything whose existence is due to some

external cause, "existence is an element super-added to its essence." For God, however, whose existence is uncaused, "existence and essence are perfectly identical; He is not a substance to which existence is joined as an accident" (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 57)

According to Maimonides, God's unity demands simplicity. There can be no corporeality in God (50), nor any of the accompaniments of corporeality, e.g., psychical dispositions (53). The absence of corporeality in God also implies that he has no attributes. The logical consequence of admitting a plurality of attributes in God would be the existence of many eternal beings (51).

Maimonides further established this point through a grammatical discussion of the nature of attributes, in which he identified five ways in which an object can be described by an affirmative attribute, and showed that each way was inappropriate if applied to God (52). Thus, (1) God cannot be defined because there are no previous causes to his existence; (2) God cannot be described by part of a definition because to do so involves the necessary connection of two ideas (e.g., a human being is a rational animal) and, as God is not composite, this would be impossible in his case; (3) To describe an object by something not part of the definition, i.e., a quality or accident, implies corporeality. God, however, is not a substratum of accidents, not a magnitude, is not influenced by external influences (has no emotions or passions), is not subject to physical conditions, is not an animate being (does not acquire properties). God, therefore, has no accidents or qualities; (4) There can be no relation between God and time or space because temporality and location imply corporeality. Neither can there be a co-relation (real relation) between God and any creature, because relations imply that two beings are of the same kind. There can be no relations between beings of different kinds, e.g., quality and quantity. "How then," asked Maimonides, "could there be any relation between God and his creatures, considering the important difference between them in respect to their existence, the greatest of all differences?" (51). The only positive affirmations that Maimonides would allow to

refer to God are those that refer to his actions. The actions that a being performs are distinct from its substance. The action of God (which emanates from God as simple substance and is not super-added to his essence) can be referred to when describing God from the perspective of the creature, i.e., God can be called "Creator" and "Lord" (51).

Maimonides was willing to acknowledge that certain characteristics were considered to be essential to God: life, power, wisdom, and will. But safeguarding the divine simplicity led him to deny that these were distinct attributes of God. Wisdom and life are not distinct in reference to God, and indeed, are the same thing in any conscious being. In addition, wisdom, power, and will do not exist in God in reference to himself but only in reference to creatures (53). They are not attributes, properly speaking.

In the end, Maimonides could only speak of a negative knowledge of God. He said that we "comprehend only the fact that [God] exists, not his essence" (58). The austerity of Maimonides' *via negativa* manifests itself in denying to God everything that implies corporeality or passivity, non-existence or potentiality, or indeed, anything that implies any similarity between God and any created being (55). This negative knowledge paradoxically allows for an indirect knowledge of God's nature by denying of God everything unlike him. (Mascall 1967, 94) That contingent beings exist, Maimonides argued, forces us to acknowledge the existence of a necessary being—a being that can only be described by "negative attributes." That God exists means that his non-existence is impossible. That God is living means that he is not dead. That God is incorporeal means that he is not material. Power, wisdom, and will, when applied to God, mean that he emanates existence to creatures and does not abandon them to non-existence or disorder. Maimonides summarized his position as follows:

All we understand is the fact that [God] exists, that he is a Being to whom none of his creatures is similar, who has nothing in common with them, who does not include plurality, who is never too feeble to produce other beings,

and whose relation to the universe is that of a steersman to a boat . . . God rules the universe; that is, that he gives it duration and preserves its necessary arrangement. (55).

William Hill has noted that a basic univocity lies at the heart of Maimonides' negative theology:

If the concept has only a univocal manner of signifying, it obviously cannot designate the divine in any positive way, except as used metaphorically. (Hill, 32.)

## II. St. Thomas on Religious Language

It is well known that Aquinas is supposed to have solved the problems of religious language with his doctrine of the "analogy of being," and thus escaped from the dead ends of either univocal or equivocal descriptions of God. Put simply, we do talk about God and it is legitimate to do so as long as we remember that our language about God is neither univocal, nor equivocal, but analogical. Furthermore, insistence on the analogical nature of religious language is not intended as a justification for the possibility of God-talk, but as an explanation of a practice in which we already engage. As E. L. Mascall has noted, "the function of the doctrine of analogy is not to make it possible for us to talk about God in the future, but to explain how it is that we have been able to talk about him all along." (Mascall 1967, 94)

St. Thomas's treatment of language about God plays a significant role in his discussion of the relation between God and creation, and since his insistence on the radical distinction between God and the world leads to questions about the coherence of theological language, it is crucial to devote some space to the manner in which St. Thomas's account of the use of theological language introduces a new element into the articulation of the Christian understanding of creation. By his use of analogical language St. Thomas complemented the "No—This neither is Thou," introduced by the distinction between God and creatures, with a "Yes—This also is Thou." The negation of the *via negativa* is incomplete without the positive witness of the *via affirmativa*. Nonetheless, it is true that Thomas's approach to the problems

of theological language is very austere—much more so than sometimes has been recognized by the adherents of traditional “Thomism.” One of the characteristics of more contemporary studies of Aquinas’s thought is to emphasize his “agnosticism,” his adherence to a negative theology that is in many ways similar to and dependent on that of Maimonides. Josef Pieper has spoken of the “negative element” in Aquinas’s theology and philosophy as the “Silence of St. Thomas.” David Burrell has argued that Aquinas does not have a “doctrine of God.” On the contrary, “Aquinas shows . . . that our discourse fails to represent God.” And in the generation previous to ours, traditional Thomists were already commenting on the restraint of St. Thomas’s approach to God—that analogy of being does not allow us to conceive of God’s goodness, but only to affirm it. These more recent attempts to understand Aquinas’s approach to God emphasize Thomas’s own claim that he was not developing a positive treatment of God. (Pieper 45 ff; Mascall 1967, 120) At the beginning of his treatise on God in the *Summa*, Aquinas notified his readers (in a passage that echoes Maimonides),

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 (S.T. 1,3).

Aquinas went on to develop his (negative) “doctrine of God” in a manner that is quite reminiscent of Maimonides’ own treatment—in a “negative theology” that speaks of the essence of God only indirectly, by denying of God any likeness to creatures, and so, is not really a “doctrine of God.” Thomas said, “The ways in which God does not exist will become apparent if we rule out from him everything inappropriate, such as compositeness, change, and the like” (1,3). In St. Thomas’s consideration of how God is not (1,3-11), he proceeded to follow a path (like that of Maimonides) that emphasized God’s simplicity by denying of God composition, imperfection, finitude, change, and multiplicity. The positive element in questions 3-11 can be stated succinctly: God is self-subsisting existence; “To be God is to-be.” (Burrell, 42)

St. Thomas’s agnosticism—the austerity of his discussion about

God—has two foundations: (1) the limitations of human knowledge, and (2) the transcendent nature of God. Concerning the first, Thomas stressed the limitations of what human beings can know. He reminded his readers that a thing can be known only in the manner of the knower. As embodied creatures, humans naturally know natures embodied in matter (1,12,11). Our natural knowledge has its origin in the senses and extends only as far as it can be led by sensible things. Since God is not a material thing, it is impossible for human knowledge to reach the divine essence (1,12,12). Because human concepts arise from created things, it is impossible to have an adequate concept of God. In other words, God cannot be known properly, since he is not an object to be encountered empirically.

The more profound reason for agnosticism follows from the nature of God. According to Aquinas, everything is knowable to the extent that it is in act. Since God is the pure act of existing, he is supremely knowable—in himself. What is knowable in itself may not, however, be knowable to some other intellect whose intelligence it outstrips. The human ability to know God is limited by the inherently discursive nature of human thought, which cannot comprehend the divine simplicity (1.12,1, 4, 7).

Not only is the human intellect in its natural state incapable of knowing the divine nature, [1] but human language is inherently insufficient to talk about God. St. Thomas's discussion of this point parallels Maimonides' critique of affirmative attributes. The most positive thing that can be said about God is that he is pure existence. This, however, precludes placing God in a genus or species because (as Aristotle showed) "being" is not a genus. It follows that God has no genus, no difference, and cannot be defined. Nor can God be thought of in terms of substance and accidents (1.3,6). Since modifying predicates express accidents of a subject, any statement involving the conjunction of subject and predicate will misrepresent God. (Burrell, 25)

Aquinas also agreed with Maimonides that we cannot speak of a real relation (co-relation) between God and the world. God is completely outside the created world, and creatures are ordered

toward him, not the converse (1,13,7). This is implied in the Christian distinction between God and the world. God does not need the world; nor does it add to his perfection. It might not have existed, and God's glory would not have been diminished if the universe did not exist. Nonetheless, since God has willed the world into existence, the world is really related to God, and consequently Aquinas said (with Maimonides) that it is possible to apply relative names to God, i.e., names that indicate the actions of God temporally, and the changes produced in creatures as a consequence. Some of these names, e.g., "Lord," signify the relation itself (and God's nature only indirectly); others signify the nature of God directly as identical with his action, e.g., "Savior," "Creator" (1,13,7).

St. Thomas was not content, however, to advocate a position that was simply agnostic, allowing only for an indirect knowledge of God as the cause of creation, or the source of divine actions. In spite of the limitations of human knowledge and language, and the inadequacy of our attempts to speak of the perfectly simple God, Aquinas was compelled to assert that positive affirmations could be made about God—no matter how short they might fall of representing the actual reality. In doing so, he found it necessary to reject that aspect of the negative theology of Maimonides which said that the names applied to God express only the distance of the creature from God. Aquinas ascribed to "Rabbi Moses" the view that sentences such as "God is good," which sound like affirmations, are in fact used to deny something of God rather than to assert anything. Aquinas found this view—in which to say that God is living means that God is not like an animate thing—to be inadequate (1.13,2). Aquinas also rejected the notion that language about God signifies only the relation of God to creatures, for example, to say that God is good means that goodness is present in God virtually insofar as God is the cause of goodness in creatures.

So in addition to saying that we can name God in reference to his actions towards creatures, either relationally (God is Creator,

Lord, Redeemer) or metaphorically ("Our God is a consuming fire"), Aquinas insisted that the unique category of "perfection" terms can be properly predicated of God, although they fail to represent him adequately. The reason they fail fully to represent God is that the origin of human knowledge in sense experience allows us to know God not as he is in himself, but only as creatures represent him (1.13, 2).

While this places limitations on knowledge and language about God, it also provides the access by which we can speak truly of him. The mind cannot see the essence of God but it can be led to affirm his existence and that which must necessarily belong to him as the first cause of everything else that exists (1,12,12). We can know something positive about God from creatures because, although God is not like creatures, creatures are like God. Our ability to speak truly of God depends on this resemblance that creatures bear to him. Aquinas said that, "Any creature in so far as it possesses any perfection represents God and is like him, for he, being simply and universally perfect, has pre-existing in him the perfections of all his creatures . . ." To say that God is good, then, "means that what we call goodness in creatures pre-exists in God in a higher way. Thus God is not good because he causes goodness, but rather goodness flows from him because he is good." (1,13,2). God is good, then, not merely as the virtual cause of goodness, but as the source of goodness in creatures who is himself intrinsically good. Good creatures resemble God as effects that contain in themselves something of their cause.

The perfection terms used of both God and creatures are predicated analogously (1,13,5). According to Aquinas, analogy is a "mean" between univocity and sheer equivocation. Of course, expressions used analogously are not used univocally. How could they be? Thomas agreed with Maimonides in pointing out that there is more distance between God and creatures than there is between any two creatures. If it is impossible to predicate anything univocally of two creatures not in the same genus, how can we predicate anything univocally of God and creatures,



when God is not in a genus at all? On the other hand, neither are expressions used of God and creatures in a purely equivocal sense. If this were so, nothing whatsoever could be known of God from creatures—and revelation and theology tell us otherwise. Names predicated of God and creatures are, therefore, used analogously, i.e., according to the proportion that exists in the relation of the creature to God as the principle and first cause of all that is—the cause in whom the perfections of all created things exist in a preeminent manner (1.13.5).

Contemporary discussions indicate that Thomas Aquinas's use of analogy was not the philosopher's stone that provided access to all the secrets of being, but rather a kind of shorthand tool that he used to avoid the dangers of univocity and equivocation. Reams have been written in attempts to make Aquinas say more than he actually said on this topic. We note the warnings of more cautious interpreters. William Hill has said that St. Thomas "nowhere has developed a formal treatment of analogy as such," and, according to David Burrell, "Aquinas had no theory of analogy." (Hill 124)

We will, nevertheless, venture to follow William Hill (and others), who have argued that the key to understanding St. Thomas's notion of positive affirmations about divinity is to decipher his use of "participation" language. In his interpretation of St. Thomas, Hill distinguishes between analogy of names and analogy of being. Analogy of names is the naming of things as they are known analogously: "it is the designation of the relationships between things not as they are in real existence but as they are in knowledge." (Hill, 128)[2] It is a tool of logic. Analogy of being, on the other hand, Hill prefers to call "participation." The metaphysical structure that underlies and makes possible analogy of names is the creature's relation to God as Creator and exemplar. As St. Thomas said, we use words analogously of God and creatures,

for we cannot speak of God at all except in the language we use of creatures, and so whatever is said both of God and creatures, is said in virtue of the order that creatures have to God as their

source and cause in which all the perfections of things pre-exist transcendently. (1.13.5).

This is, of course, analogy of attribution (*plura ad unum*) and the danger (if analogy is perceived only as analogy of names, as operating only in the noetic order) is that of ignoring whether the perfections expressed are intrinsic or only extrinsic to the secondary analogate (secondary in the order of knowing, not of being), i.e., is God intrinsically good or merely virtually good as the cause of goodness in creatures? (As we saw above, St. Thomas denied that names are predicated of God only relationally.) According to Hill, this danger of equivocation is only possible if the discussion remains at the level of analogical predication—if one looks only at the form of what is said and not to its material content in the existential order. That is, analogy of names must be grounded in an underlying ontological structure—analogy of being. (Hill 131-132)

In the model of participation, the perfections are intrinsic to all the analogates, and yet it must be insisted that “there is still a prime analogate, and the unity of being is one of order or proportion ‘to’ it or ‘from’ it. The structure of the universe is hierarchical and its unity is established by the proportion of each being to the Primal Being. In a Christian setting (like that of St. Thomas, in contrast to emanationist schemes), this order is brought into existence on the level of a creative efficient causality whose intelligibility is reflected in exemplarism. The countless created beings “imitate” and contain within themselves “perfections” that exist in an eminent manner in the Source of Being who is the first cause. (Hill 132-136)

St. Thomas’s most complete discussion of the participation model is not found in his treatment of religious language (analogy of names), but in his inquiry into the divine goodness. Aquinas argued that God is supremely good and the exemplary cause of goodness in other things. Since “God is the primary operative cause of everything, goodness and desirability fittingly belong to him.” God alone is supremely good because only God is inherently good by nature. Something is good insofar as it is

perfect, and since God alone is self-existent and has no unactualized potential, he is most perfect. He has no added accidents that might impoverish or diminish him, and, as the first being, God can have no extrinsic goal, but is himself the goal of all other things (1.6.3).

In describing God as exemplary cause of all things, Aquinas did not hesitate to use language that sounds Platonic. Yet he was careful to modify his use of the participation model in the light of the Christian distinction between God and the world. God is called good as the “first source of every perfection things desire. And these perfections . . . flow out from God not as an agent in the same genus, but as from an agent agreeing neither in species nor in genus with its effects.” (1.6.2). Despite what sounds like emanation language, Aquinas was careful to maintain, first, that God creates freely (as an “agent”), and, secondly, that there is an infinite qualitative difference between God and creatures.

Once it has been maintained that God alone is supremely good, a dilemma arises that goes all the way back to the Aristotelian rejection of the Platonic ideas in favor of the hylomorphic composition of individuals. If God alone is truly good, then the goodness and existence of things could be called into question or seem at best to be a shadowy imitation of the divine goodness. On the other hand, if things are intrinsically good in themselves, there is no need to appeal to a transcendent exemplary cause of goodness, and God becomes only a final cause, a self-thinking thought, or even, perhaps, an unnecessary hypothesis.

Aquinas recognized this problem—a problem that in its own way illustrates the competitive manner in which the relation between the divine and the world must be conceived without the Christian distinction—and acknowledged the validity of Aristotle’s objections to Platonic exemplarism. Nevertheless, Thomas’s own position contained elements of both the Aristotelian and Platonic models. Thus he affirmed that created things are intrinsically good. Thomas said, “things are good inasmuch as they exist. Now things are said to exist, not by divine existence, but by their own. So things are good, not by God’s goodness, but by their own.” (1.6.4). On

the other hand, Thomas maintained a doctrine of participation that sounds very Platonic. According to Aquinas,

One may therefore call things good and existent by reference to this first thing, existent and good by nature, inasmuch as they somehow participate and resemble it, even if distantly and deficiently . . . And in this sense all things are said to be good by divine goodness, which is the pattern, source and goal of all goodness. Nevertheless the resemblance to divine goodness which leads us to call the thing good is inherent in the thing itself, belonging to it as a form and therefore naming it. And so there is one goodness in all things, and yet many. (1.6.4).

The key to St. Thomas's ability to maintain this tension between the Aristotelian and Platonic conceptions of reality was the insight into the priority of existence over essence that he was able to make because of the Christian understanding of creation. For Thomas, goodness and existence are convertible terms. Things are inherently good insofar as they exist. This goodness and existence are real, but in creatures, in whom essence and existence are distinct, it is a contingent and received existence, an existence that participates in the goodness and existence of the self-existing God who is alone supremely good because he alone supremely exists. His existence is not participated or received, but is identical with his nature. To be God is not only to be; to be God is to be good.

In a manner similar to Hill's, Norris W. Clarke has emphasized that Aquinas mutually modified both the Aristotelian potency/act distinction and Platonic participation notions in light of the difference made by the Christian understanding of creation. Through the use of Platonic participation language, Aquinas transformed the Aristotelian notion of potency ordered toward future act from its original function to describe only cosmic change to express an ontological notion of the limitation of act by potency: "Pure or unreceived act is infinite; act is limited only by reception in a really distinct potency." This is particularly significant in that, for pagan thought, "infinity" was characterized by imperfection. For Plato, finite and infinite are correlatives of perfect and imperfect.

For Aristotle, substantial infinity would have been a meaningless notion. Accordingly, Aristotle had no difficulty imagining fifty-five unmoved movers, each pure act and pure form, but each finite as well. The notion of infinity as perfection seems first to have been introduced by Plotinus, and then became a Christian commonplace in writers like Boethius. For Aquinas, pure unparticipated form is infinite. Every finite creature is a composition of form and a receiving (participated) limiting subject. But it is in the order of essence and existence that participation takes on "full ontological value." All transcendental analogous perfections are reducible to *esse*, "whose source is God, *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*." There is one single ontological source of the perfection of *esse*, the God who is the efficient cause of all finite being, and the exemplary cause of all forms through the divine Ideas. (Clarke 1994, 45-101).

This participation model is reflected in Aquinas's well-known distinction between the *res significata* ("thing signified") and the *modus significandi* ("mode of signifying"). In S.T. 1.13.3, St. Thomas said that two things must be considered in attributing perfections to God: first, the perfections themselves, and second, the manner in which the perfections are signified. As far as the mode of signification is concerned the words are used inappropriately because, in the noetic order, they apply primarily to creatures. We have no direct experience of God, no proper concepts of him, and, since all knowledge arises in the empirical realm, all human concepts must properly apply to created things. However, so far as the perfections themselves are concerned, Aquinas said that they were not only used literally of God, but are used more appropriately of God than of creatures, for in the existential realm they belong primarily to God, and only secondarily to creatures. Aquinas used participation language to illustrate this point: "God is known from the perfections that flow from him and are to be found in creatures, yet which exist in him in a transcendent way." (1.1.3). St. Thomas thus undergirded analogical predication with an ontological substructure by affirming that perfections known first from creatures exist primarily and intrinsically in a super-eminent manner in God, who is their exemplary cause.

### III. Conclusion

The comparison of Aquinas with Maimonides shows that Thomas's approach to questions of religious language is very similar to that of the Jewish philosopher, and that, on many points, Thomas expressed himself in terms of a negative theology. His adherence to the distinction between God and the world introduced by the Christian understanding of creation led Aquinas to deny of God anything that might imply that God is like creatures. The limitations of human knowledge and its discursive nature, on the one hand, and the simplicity of the divine ascity, on the other, lead to a cautious reserve in the use of language about God. God cannot be defined, or even described properly, since he is not composite, and not in a genus. We can, however, say something about God by saying what he is not, and this negative approach is the one that Aquinas developed in *Summa Theologiae* 1.2-11.

Positively, we can affirm that God is self-subsisting existence, although we can have no adequate understanding of what this means. We do not know what it "feels like" to be God. We can have no valid concept of God. Any attempt to talk about God which assumes that the difference between God's existence and creaturely existence is merely qualitative—which assumes that God is the most powerful "being" in the world or that God shares in the limitations of human existence, e.g., temporality, discursive knowledge, mutability—is bound to fail.

It is also possible to speak positively about God in the light of the creature's relation to God. God has acted in creating and redeeming the world, and this action allow us to say something about God in terms of the changes produced in the temporal realm, e.g., God is Creator, Lord, Redeemer. Such language is either relational or metaphorical.

Still, St. Thomas was not content to rest with negative, relational, or metaphorical language about divinity. Christian revelation leads us to affirm that something positive can be known of God from creatures. If God is in himself who and what he is in his

revelation, then something positive must be able to be said about God's nature in itself. In particular, St. Thomas wanted to affirm that perfection terms (words like "good, wise, just," etc.) can be truthfully predicated of God *in se*. To say that God is good, wise, just, etc., is not simply to say that God is the cause of goodness, wisdom, justice, etc., or that his actions towards creatures appear (from our perspective) to be just, wise, etc., but that these perfections are found in God intrinsically, that they belong most properly to God, and that they are found in creatures insofar as created realities are the effects of divine causality.

The perfection terms predicated analogously of God and creatures say something not only about the creature's relation to God, but also something about God's nature. Language reflects reality. Analogy of names is grounded in analogy of being or (as we have suggested) participation. The use of participation language could point to an emanationist schema (like that of Ibn Sina), but St. Thomas's own use is grounded in the Christian doctrine of creation and the distinction between God and creatures. Aquinas did not establish participation in the necessary overflowing of divine being. Rather, the foundation of participation (or analogy) is the likeness that creatures bear to God, the discovery of perfections in creatures that exist in a preeminent manner in God, who, as the first cause who creates freely all that is, must contain within himself as exemplar all the perfections found in creatures.

According to St. Thomas, these perfections are communicated to creatures who participate in existence, through the free creative efficient causality of the God who does not participate in existence, the God whose essence it is to exist. St. Thomas's use of perfection and participation language was not then a return to Ibn Sina's doctrine of emanation, nor even a simple continuation of Maimonides' negative theology, but rather a completion of negative theology. The distinction between God and the world that forbids us to say so many things about God is complemented by the Christian understanding of creation as a real communication to creatures of those perfections that exist first in God who, as self-subsisting

existence—the super-abundant fullness of being, and the infinite sum of all perfection, is the efficient and exemplary cause of everything else that is. The way of negation is completed by the way of affirmation.

### Endnotes

1. However, said Aquinas, through grace it is possible to see God through a created light (1,25).

2. For a statement of the position that Aquinas's understanding of analogy is primarily Aristotelian, and only a tool of logic, not an ontological "analogy of being," see Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996). Burrell agrees with McInerny's assertion that analogy in Aquinas is "linguistic," then adds, "but language functions in the ways it does because it allows us to come to grips with the world as it is. . . . [O]ne need not oppose language to the world so much as regard them together." "Aquinas and Scotus," 115.

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