Atheism and Analogy: Aquinas Against the Atheists

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ABSTRACT

In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas developed two models for how humans may speak of God – either by the analogy of proportion or by the analogy of proportionality. Aquinas's doctrines initiated a theological debate concerning analogy that spanned several centuries. In the 18th century, there appeared two closely related arguments for atheism which both utilized analogy for their own purposes. In this thesis, I show that one argument, articulated by the French materialist Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, is successful in showing that God-talk, as conceived of using the analogy of proportion, is unintelligible non-sense. In addition, I show that another argument, articulated by Anthony Collins (*Vindication of Divine Attributes)*, George Berkeley (chapter IV of *Alciphron*), and David Hume (chapter XII of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*) can be restructured into an argument for the position that the analogy of proportionality makes the distinction between atheism and theism merely verbal. Since both of these are undesirable consequences for the theist, I conclude that Aquinas's doctrine of analogy does not withstand the assault of 18th century atheists.

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Introduction

According to medieval theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)[6]

human language is inadequate for talking directly about God because human languages

were developed from concepts originating in the creaturely realm,. Instead, one can

meaningfully refer to God only by analogy: the Doctrine of Analogy.[7]

In this thesis, I show that two "atheological"[8] arguments developed in the 18th

century pose significant challenges to Aquinas's Doctrine.[9] The first of the two arguments

demonstrates that one kind of analogy either renders God-talk into mere non-sense or is

question begging. The second argument shows that an alternative version of Aquinas's

Doctrine renders God so mysterious that there is no longer a substantive distinction

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6   "St. Thomas Aquinas." *Encyclopedia of World Biography.* Detroit: Gale, 1998.
7   Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, (Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Roger White, *Talking About God*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), pg 1; Gavin Hyman, "Atheism in Modern History" in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pgs 37-43.
8   In the philosophy of religion literature, 'atheology' is defined as "the intellectual effort to explain why a world-view should not include any god" (John Shook, *The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists and Believers*, (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), pg 13). 'Atheological arguments' are defined as "arguments for the nonexistence of God" (Theodore Drange, "Incompatible-Properties Arguments: A Survey," *Philo*, 1, no. 2 (1998), pg 49). 'Atheology' was also a term in actor's categories, having been introduced by Ralph Cudworth. See David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pg 89. In his *Mysteries of Atheism Revealed*, Cudworth states that Epicurean materialism was "really nothing else but a philosophical form of Atheology". He goes on to provide a description: "a gigantical and Titanical attempt to dethrone the Deity, not only by solving all of the phenomena of the world without a God, but also, by laying down such principles, from whence it must needs follow, that there could be neither an incoporeal nor corporeal Deity" (Ralph Cudworth, "Mysteries of Atheism Revealed" in *The Works of Ralph Cudworth Containing the True Intellectual System of the Universe, Sermons, &c,* (Oxford, 1829), pg 182. This book was originally published as *The true intellectual system of the universe, wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted, and its impossibility demonstrated* in 1678 (David A. Pailin, 'Cudworth, Ralph (1617–1688)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6864, accessed 5 Dec 2013]).
9   Gavin Hyman has claimed that the reason atheism appeared in the early modern period was due to a neglect of Thomas Aquinas's Doctrine of Analogy, which resulted in the re-definition of God as a being whose existence could be more readily rejected ("Atheism in Modern History" in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pgs 37-43). I disagree with Hyman's account for two reasons: (1) As I show in this paper, early modern atheists had good reason to reject the existence of Aquinas's God; (2) There were arguments offered by early modern atheists which were independent of one's conception of God-talk.

between theism and atheism. Because both of these consequences are undesirable for the theist, I conclude that Aquinas's doctrine of analogy does not withstand the assault of 18th century atheism.

Chapter I: The Problem of Religious Language and the Doctrine of Analogy

In this chapter, I will explicate the Problem of Religious Language (or PRL) and introduce the Doctrine of Analogy as Aquinas's solution to PRL. The Problem of Religious Language[10] is motivated by the doubt that God-talk is intelligible or meaningful. Historically, the issue has arisen for a variety of different reasons from both secular and theological sources.

Believers and non-believers often agree that God-talk is meaningful. Although the atheist does not believe that God exists, many atheists affirm the proposition that there is an idea which they are discounting. Strictly speaking, for the claim "God does not exist" to make sense, there needs to be some semantic content to the term 'God'. If the term 'God' did not have semantic content, then the claim "God does not exist" would make as much sense as the utterance "Snoggledorf does not exist".

There are several problems in philosophy of language concerning sentences which name non-existent or fictional entities. So-called *empty names* are those which appear in sentences but which do not have referents. Sentences which (1) seem meaningful and (2) contain empty names are problematic because on semantic theories, such as Millianism, such sentences appear to be meaningless. If it turned out that empty names really were meaningless, such problems would evaporate.[11]

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10 Roger White, *Talking About God*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), pgs 1-6, 118-119; Jennifer Hart Weed, "Religious Language" in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://www.iep.utm.edu/rel-lang/, Retrieved Feb 14, 2014.

11 William Lycan identifies three problems: the problem of empty names for Saul Kripke's causal-historical view of reference fixing (William Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: a Contemporary Introduction Second Edition*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pg 56), the "Problem of Apparent Reference to Nonexistents" and the "Problem of Negative Existentials" for Russellianism/Millianism (ibid, pgs 3-4, 9-11). All three of these problems result from considering a sentence in which a non-

If atheism is true then 'God' is an empty name. Although 'God' would pose problems similar to those already posed by other empty names, it would be highly surprising if 'God' lacked meaning altogether. After all, if we were to discover that 'Zeus' and 'Poseidon' were *meaningless* we would be rightfully shocked. It certainly seems that Greek mythology has meaningful content, even if it is fictional.

Theists understand God-talk as meaningful for obvious reasons. If the various utterances that they make in prayer, in devotion, in Church, or in other aspects of their religious lives were ultimately nothing more than noise, it seems difficult to understand what the point of all this noise would be.

Thus, if God-talk were put into question, then both believers and non-believers would face a philosophical problem. Of course, denying that the term 'God' has semantic content is one way to be a non-believer. Indeed, for much of the history of atheism, such a person would have been called an atheist. For this reason, one may suspect that the semantics of religious language is a bigger problem for believers than for non-believers.

In this chapter, I will do three things. First, I will consider an analogy between the project in this thesis and a hypothetical situation in metaethics. Second, I will briefly discuss the problems related to religious language as they appear in the history of theology. Fourth, I will proceed to a discussion of Aquinas's Doctrine of Analogy as a solution to PRL.

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existent entity is named but the sentence appears to be meaningful. Also see Kripke's discussion of unicorns in his *Addenda* to *Naming and Necessity,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd), pgs 156-164.

Analogy with Metaethics

There is reason to think that PRL is more of a problem for theists than it is for atheists. Consider an analogous situation in metaethics.[12] *Error theory* is the view that moral statements are truth-apt but there are no true moral facts.[13] *Consequentialism* is the view that there are moral facts and that these moral facts concern the particular consequences of actions.[14] Error theorists would not typically deny that the moral claims of the consequentialist had semantic content. Instead, error theorists would only deny the truth of consequentialism.

Nonetheless, suppose that there were good arguments for the view that the moral claims of the consequentialist were void of semantic content. In that case, the error theorist may still maintain that there are truth-apt statements about morality while denying that these are uttered by the consequentialist. Similarly, provided there are good arguments that some particular conception of God was incoherent, the atheist may deny that there are any meaningful statements about that particular conception. But the atheist may still retain the view that statements about God have semantic content, so long as a different concept of God is utilized. The arguments in this thesis address the purported semantic content of sentences about a specifically Thomistic God and thus do not impugn atheism (even narrowly construed as the denial of the existence of God).

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12 David Faraci helped in developing this example.
13 Richard Joyce, "Moral Anti-Realism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/moral-anti-realism/>.
14 Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "Consequentialism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/consequentialism/>.

The arguments contained herein should still be of interest to the atheist for two reasons: (1) it would be rather surprising if large portions of everyday language were found to be semantically problematic and (2) as the arguments target a popular brand of theism, the atheist may find them to be rhetorically useful.

I now proceed to a discussion of language with regards to the history of theology.

Theological Language 1: Biblical Language

There is a long standing tradition in Christian theology that there are severe limitations on one's ability to speak of God. From at least the time of the Nicene theologians in the 4th century, the Triune God was declared to be incomprehensible[15] and beyond human understanding.[16] This meant that any statement about God would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to understand.

Worse, the Bible seems to be full of statements that contradict the notion of God as a transcendent, otherworldly being. Philosopher Roger White states:

> If we just consider the Bible, whether the Old Testament or the New Testament, there are frequent passages in which: human organs – mouth, eye, hand, arm and so on – are ascribed to God; in which God is given human cognitive capacities – knowing, seeing, hearing, even smelling; in which God speaks; in which human offices such as king, father or judge are assigned to God; in which God has the same kind of moral characteristics, such as justice, patience and compassion, that we ascribe to human beings, and perhaps most striking of all, in which God is described as an emotional, even passionate, being, who can be loving, jealous, angry and compassionate.

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15 The idea that the Trinity is incomprehensible and is a theological mystery continues as a part of Catholicism to the present. See, for example, George Joyce's article "The Blessed Trinity" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 25 Nov. 2013 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm>).

16 Cary, Philip. "The Incomprehensible and the Supernatural." *History of Christian Theology*. The Teaching Company 2008. Video Lecture. Tuggy, Dale, "Trinity: History of Trinitarian Doctrines", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall *2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/trinity-history.html>.

There is a clear incongruity here: no one believes God to be a human being, or even a being that could have the kind of attributes of a human being that the Bible ascribes to Him.[17]

White explicates how the Bible seems to attribute human properties to God. If Christians are to maintain both the view of God from classical theism and that the Bible is not in error when attributing these properties to God, then Christian theologians face a problem. They must develop a theory of language which allows for these words to mean something different about God than they do about humans but which preserves the notion that these words can be meaningfully used.

Theological Language 2: Scholastic Empricism

Another difficulty for theological language originates in the adoption by Aristotlean empiricism by medieval Christian thinkers. Under this view, knowledge is acquired via sense-experience. Thomas Moody writes (emphasis his):

> Thomas Aquinas [and his followers]... rejected all a priori and supra-sensory sources of human knowledge, holding with Aristotle that all human knowledge arises from sense experience. What man [sic] can know in this life, according to Thomas, are the forms of material things – *quidditates rerum materialium*; he cannot have any direct knowledge of immaterial substances, nor can he even know himself except as form of his body. Aquinas did of course hold that we can *infer*, from the existence of sensible things and their movements, that there exists an immaterial and eternal cause of motion which, as he said, 'is what all men mean by God.' But even this argument is presented as an empirical argument belonging to physics; it is not offered as a 'metaphysical' demonstration.[18]

In this quote, Moody explains how Aquinas initiated a theological school which was explicitly empirical. Only the objects of sense experience can be trusted. What we

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17 Roger White, *Talking About God*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), pg 1.
18 Ernest Moody, "Empiricism and Metaphysics in Medieval Philosophy," *The Philosophical Review*, 67, no. 2 (1958), pgs 155-156.

can know about God is limited to the various ways in which God either affects the world or affects ourselves in empirically discernible ways.

This epistemic view placed restrictions on language as well. If a word exists in a human language then that word expresses an idea known by humans. If an idea is known by humans then, since all knowledge can be traced to experience, that idea should be traceable to experience as well. Thus, if a word exists in a human language then that word expresses an idea that can be traced to experience. Given that God is beyond this world, and thus beyond experience, God seems to be beyond language. Ralph McInerny describes Aquinas's empiricism thusly:

> 'All our intellectual knowledge takes its rise from the senses.' This fundamental Aristotelean assumption pervades Thomas's intellectual work... what anyone can be taken to know are the things around us that we see and touch and smell and hear. Our ideas are in the first instance ideas of them. Since we name things as we know them, our language will reveal this priority of the sensible, the palpable, the visible.[19]

Aquinas's conception of God includes specific ways in which God possesses properties distinct from how anything in the creaturely realm possesses properties[20] – and therefore why God cannot have any of the properties possessed by creatures – but the general point is that reality is strictly divided into two: the creaturely and divine realms. Our language developed to express statements about the creaturely realm and thus cannot speak directly about the divine.

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19 Ralph McInerny, "Introduction" in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. Ralph McInerny. (London: Penguin Books, 1998), pg xviii.
20 For Aquinas, God possesses properties in a manner different from humans for two reasons: (1) divine simplicity and (2) participation. God is said to be simple: God has His properties essentially and, unlike humans, is not divisible into His properties. Humans are said to have their properties in vritue of participation: God possesses His properties in a primary sense and humans possess their properties only in a secondary sense. See Peter, Weigel. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Divine Simplicity." Accessed December 11, 2013. http://www.iep.utm.edu/div-simp/; Kerr, Gavin. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Aquinas: Metaphysics." Accessed December 11, 2013. http://www.iep.utm.edu/aq-meta/.

The Doctrine of Analogy as a Solution to PRL

For the reasons stated, it seems difficult to explain how one might meaningfully talk about God. Yet Christians believe themselves to be capable of speaking of God.

Aquinas proposed a solution to PRL.[21] His proposal was the aforementioned Doctrine of Analogy, according to which one may speak of God via analogy only.[22] According to this doctrine, God does not have any of the properties humans have. Instead, God has properties which are only analogous to those of humans.

For Aquinas, there are three ways in which a term *t* may be predicated of two distinct things *x* and *y*. These are univocity, equivocity, and analogy, which I will define below.

Univocal predication: *t* can by univocally predicated of *x* and *y* when *t* carries the same meaning when predicated of either *x* or *y*. Example: "The cat is brown." "The carpet is brown." In each of these sentences, 'brown' is used to predicate the same property (brownness) of the two subjects ("cat" and "carpet" respectively).[23] Aquinas states, "Univocal terms mean absolutely the same thing [when applied to two different things]".[24]

Equivocal predication: *t* can be equivocally predicated of *x* and *y* when *t* means two different things, t_x and t_y, when predicated of *x* and *y* respectively. Example: "The sky

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21 It is important to note that, for Aquinas, PRL has to do with the fact that human languages developed to express matters germane to the creaturely realm. Since God possesses properties distinct from those present in the creaturely realm, we are forced to talk about God only indirectly. The other problems for PRL – such as the peculiar nature of Biblical language – is not a matter which Aquinas addresses directly in those passages related to analogical predication.

22 For example, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I, Q3, A5, co. The 1920 translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province; Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate,* Q2, A11. The Robert Mulligan translation from the definitive Leonine text.

23 McInerny (1999), pg 70.

24 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, I, Q13, A10, co.

is blue." "I was feeling blue." In this case, 'blue' is not used to predicate the same property of the sky and of myself. Instead, 'blue' denotes a color for the former case and a mood in the latter case. To mistakenly think *t* carries the same meaning with respect to *x* and *y* is to commit the fallacy of equivocation.[25] Aquinas states: "whatever is predicated of various things under the same name but not in the same sense, is predicated equivocally."[26]

Analogical predication: A term *t* may be analogically predicated of *x* and *y* when *t* carries a different, though non-accidental, meaning with regards to *x* and *y*. Aquinas calls analogy "a mean between pure equivocation and simple univocation. For in analogies the idea is not, as it is in univocals, one and the same, yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals..."[27]

Analogy is understood as existing on the middle of a spectrum between equivocity and univocity. This is because, for equivocity, a term carries two completely different meanings and, for the two uses of the term, is only accidentally the same term. For univocity, a term carries the same meaning and is non-accidentally the same when applied in different situations. An analogous term carries a different, though non-accidental, meaning in each of its applications.

Thus, the Doctrine of Analogy is the thesis that although we predicate the same terms of God as we do of creatures (good, wise, etc) we are describing something different, though non-accidental, about God.

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25 McInerny (1999), pg 67.
26 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, I, Q13, A5.
27 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, 1.13.5.

If the relation between God-terms and creature-terms were instead only accidental, then the use of those terms would have been equivocal. One may wonder how this non-accidental use of otherwise equivocal terms comes about. In his *Summa Theologicae*, Aquinas explains that the reason analogical predication is possible is because God had *engineered* the world so that creaturely and Divine properties would bear an analogous relationship to each other. This is why, in Aquinas' view, Genesis 1:27 states that God had made humans in His image. Aquinas states: "...whatever is said of God and creatures, is said according to the relation of a creature to God as its principle and cause, wherein all perfections of things pre-exist excellently".[28]

To understand why Aquinas rejected the univocal and equivocal predication of God's properties, consider the violence that the use of either would do to God-talk.

Aquinas's defense of the claim that properties could not be directly predicated of God was based upon God's transcendence. Since our language derived from the creaturely realm, we lack the predicates that would be necessary to speak directly about God. Lacking the predicates to speak directly about God rules out univocal predication. If one mistakenly believed that creaturely predicates apply to God, then one is anthropomorphizing God.

God's transcendence similarly rules out equivocal predication. If the predicates that properly apply to God mean something entirely different when applied to God than when applied to creatures, and we lack direct experience of God, then we lack the terms

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28   Thomas Aquinas, (1274). *Summa Theologica,* I, Q13, A5.

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to describe God. In that case, one cannot speak meaningfully about God at all. Any attempt at God-talk would instead result in idolatry.

Both idolatry and anthropomorphizing God would have been heretical.[29] Therefore, Aquinas argues that we should apply predicates to God analogically.

Two Kinds of Analogy

Aquinas introduces two different kinds of analogy which might express the relation between God and creature: the analogy of proportion and the analogy of proportionality.

I will first discuss the analogy of proportion. Aquinas provides two definitions for proportion. The first definition of 'proportion' concerns a relation between two magnitudes. Aquinas provides the following description:

> There is a certain agreement between things having a proportion to each other from the fact that they have a determinate distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two has to unity in as far as it is the double of unity.[30]

Aquinas is describing how two things may be in a proportion when there is a determinate distance between them. For example, we may say that there is a proportion between two images of Socrates when one image is twice as large as the other.

The relative magnitude of a property possessed by a human is to be compared to that possessed by God. For example, God's goodness differs from creaturely goodness in

29 This interpretation of Aquinas's argument against univocal and equivocal predication of God's properties is from Michael J Danby-Smith, *The Scholastic Doctrine of Analogy*, Master's Thesis at McMaster University, pg 2.

30 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* (1256-1259), Translated from the Definitive Leonine text by Robert W. Mulligan as *Truth*, Chicago, H. Regnery Co., 1952, pg 113.

that God's goodness is infinite while creaturely goodness is finite. I will call this first definition *proportion in the narrow sense*. The second definition of 'proportion' concerns a more general relation between two things, though Aquinas does not specify what sort of relation that would be. As I will show, the fact that Aquinas does not explain further what kind of relation he has in mind posses problems for the consideration of his view. I will call this second definition *proportion in the broad sense.*

The second kind of analogy is called the analogy of proportionality. The analogy of proportionality is a relation between sentences. For example, consider the following analogy that could be found in an SAT exam:

shard:glass::splinter:wood

We say that "shard is to glass as splinter is to wood". There is some correspondence between sentences such as "glass breaks into shards" to sentences such as "wood breaks into splinters".

Similarly, although Aquinas would not say that God has the property of goodness (that would be a creaturely property), Aquinas would say that God has the property of Goodness. For Aquinas, to say that the properties of Goodness and goodness are related is just to assert that the formula 'human:good::God:Good' is true. However, we cannot state explicitly what Goodness is because we do not have access to that information in this life.[31]

Aquinas's proposed solutions resulted in a debate over the proper use of analogy in predicating properties of God. This debate was still live in the 18th century, where it

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31 For Aquinas, Christians don't have epistemic access to God, in his essence, in this life but will have access to God, in his essence, in the afterlife when they are exposed to the beatific vision. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Question 92.

intersected with the development of two closely related atheological arguments.[32] In the

next chapter, I will briefly explain some aspects of the 18th century debate over analogy.

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32 James Buchanan, *Analogy, Considered as a Guide to Truth, and Applied as an Aid to Faith* (Edinburgh, 1864), pgs 1-34. David Berman discusses the 18th century debate over analogy, and its connection to atheism, as a debate over "negative theology" (*A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pgs 86-89, 101-105).

Chapter II: A Brief History of The Two Atheological Arguments

In this chapter, I will explicate the genesis of the two atheological arguments at the turn of the 18th century. I will also explain some of the background assumptions of that debate. In that period, the theological debate over the Doctrine of Analogy centered on two Irish theologians: Peter Browne (166?-1735)[33] and William King (1650-1729).[34] From the century between 1750 and 1864, the theological programs initiated by Browne and King formed two competing theological schools on how analogy was to be conceived.[35]

King's School

Representative of King's school was his 1709 sermon *Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge, Consistent with the Freedom of Man's will.* In that sermon, King uses the Doctrine of Analogy to argue against a variety of atheological arguments.[36] King argues that God's properties only bear an analogous similarity to those of humans and that atheistic arguments have mistakenly assumed God's properties to be univocal with those of humans.

For King, when the Bible describes God as having various limbs – arms, hands, etc – it should not be understood as saying the same as is meant when it is said that

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33 Toby Barnard, 'Browne, Peter (*d.* 1735)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
34 S. J. Connolly, 'King, William (1650–1729)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
35 James Buchanan, *Analogy, Considered as a Guide to Truth, and Applied as an Aid to Faith* (Edinburgh, 1864), pg 10.
36 William King, *Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge, Consistent with the Freedom of Man's will* (Dublin, 1709).

humans have limbs. Biblical limb-talk should be understood analogically. The same is true for other properties of God; just as God does not have limbs, so too does God not have foreknowledge, goodness, and so on. Instead, God possesses properties merely analogous to knowledge, goodness, and so on.

On this account, any apparent inconsistencies between the appearance of the world and the existence of God would be illusory.[37] If one thought that God would not allow suffering in the world because God was infinitely good, one would be mistaken. God does not literally possess goodness and whatever property God has, analogous to goodness, may or may not allow for suffering in the world. Philosopher and freethinker Anthony Collins (1676-1729)[38] summarized King's position thusly: "...no Man [sic] can object to he knows not what, all Objections supposing a meaning to the Proposition objected against."[39]

Collins responded directly to King, and in defense of atheism,[40] in his *Vindication of Divine Attributes* in 1710. In that work, Collins argues that King's version of analogy renders natural theology impossible. A consequence of the impossibility of natural theology is the impossibility of proving the existence of God through evidence of design

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37 King (1709), pgs 4-10.
38 J. Dybikowski, 'Collins, Anthony (1676–1729)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
39 Collins (1710), pg 11.
40 It is unclear whether Collins himself was an atheist. But see chapter 3 in David Berman's *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

in nature.[41] Collins argues that King's account of analogy leaves us with no conception at all of God's properties, making "religion" impossible.[42]

For Collins, King's sermon was nothing more than a tacit acceptance of defeat. Pierre Bayle, to whom King had been responding, had argued that if any god existed then either such a being did not have foreknowledge or humans did not have free will. King's response that God possessed a property merely analogous to foreknowledge, which would not contradict free well, was nothing more than an admission that God lacks foreknowledge. Whatever property God possesses resembles foreknowledge only to the degree that God possesses arms, which is just to say that God does not have foreknowledge. From Collins's perspective, it is difficult to see why such a thing should be called 'God' at all. Collins proceeds to argue that this conception of God destroys both the project of natural theology and of religion.

King's conception of God destroys natural theology because God's existence can no longer be proven from evidence of design in nature. Although Collins provides two reasons to that think that the existence of King's God cannot be proven, only one of the reasons is relevant for my purposes.

According to Collins, King is unable to prove the existence of God due to the radical semantic underdetermination of 'God'. According to Collins, all King could possibly mean by 'God' is a "General Cause of Effects".[43] He states: "But if that be all

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41 However, Collins's argument is more general – and damning for King's theism – than simply showing that natural theology is impossible. The implication of Collins's pamphlet seems to be that it is impossible to prove anything about King's God (including through the use of a priori reasoning) due to the kind of radical underdetermination in King's view.

42 In this context, the term 'religion' is being used in actor's categories. Anthony Collins, *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes in Some Remarks on his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin's Sermon Entitled Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will* (London, 1710).

43 Collins (1710), pg 13.

that is meant by the term ['God'], I see not why Atheists should not come into the Belief of such a Deity; for they, equally with Theists, allow some general Cause of all Effects to have eternally existed; but, as far as I take it, differ from them in the Attributes of that general Cause".[44] No further "Attributes" of God can be given by the theist, according to Collins, because the attempt to state such "Attributes" would fail to the same degree as the attempt to refer to God's foreknowledge.

Collins argues that King's conception of God destroys the project of religion more generally. This is because it cannot be proven, from such a weak and vague conception of God, that one should worship such a being, that there is an afterlife, or that there was once a human who was fully God and died for our sins. Nor is it at all clear what it would mean to make such statements about such an ill defined being.

Browne's School

Meanwhile, Browne advocated for a view of analogy in which humans and God had much more in common than King would allow. Nineteenth century theologian and minister James Buchanan (1804-1870)[45] described the difference between the Browne and King schools as follows:

> Bishop Browne is quite clear in affirming that, while our ideas of God are necessarily analogical, they are, on that account, not the less, but rather the more, clear, distinct, and true.[46]

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44 Collins (1710), pgs 13-14.
45 Michael Jinkins, 'Buchanan, James (1804–1870)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press.
46 James Buchanan, *Analogy, Considered as a Guide to Truth, and Applied as an Aid to Faith* (Edinburgh, 1864), pg 18.

Browne owed his fame to a response he wrote to deist John Toland entitled *A Letter in Answer to a Book Entitled Christianity not Mysterious* (published in 1692). Later, he would write various works against other heretical views, each time utilizing the Doctrine of Analogy in defense of Christian orthodoxy.[47]

Browne's student, philosopher and Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753),[48] responded to the debate between King and Collins in chapter IV of his *Alciphron*[49] (published in 1732), in which the title character represented Collins.[50] For Berkeley, analogy had come to be seen as a weapon of the atheists. Berkeley goes on to argue that this is based on a misunderstanding of analogy and that the use of Aquinas's analogy of proportionality would disarm the atheists.

Berkeley considers a religious skeptic who puts forward Collins's argument to show that admitting to the existence of a God is not admitting to much at all. His character states:

> We will, therefore, acknowledge that all those natural effects which are vulgarly ascribed to knowledge and wisdom, proceed from a being in which there is, properly speaking, no knowledge or wisdom at all, but only something else, which in reality is the cause of those things which men, for want of knowing better, ascribe to what they call knowledge and wisdom and understanding... And, now we have granted to you that there is a God in this indefinite sense, I would fain see what use you can make of this concession. You cannot argue from unknown attributes, or, which is the same thing, from attributes in an unknown sense. You cannot prove that God is to be loved for His goodness, or feared for His justice, or respected for His knowledge: all which consequences, we own, would follow from those attributes admitted in

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47 *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* in 1728 and *Divine Analogy, or Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* in 1733.

48 M. A. Stewart, 'Berkeley, George (1685–1753)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

49 George Berkeley, "Alciphron" (1732) in *Alciphron in Focus*, ed. David Berman (London: Routledge, 1993), pgs 17-161.

50 The claim that Berekeley's character Alciphron should be identified with Collins is from David Berman, "Introduction" in *Alciphron in Focus*, ed. David Berman (London: Routledge, 1993), pg 10.

an intelligible sense. But we deny that those or any other consequences can be drawn from attributes admitted in no particular sense, or in a sense which none of us understand. Since, therefore, nothing can be inferred from such an account of God, about conscience, or worship, or religion, you may even make the best of it. And, not to be singular, we will use the name too, and so at once there is an end of atheism.[51]

But Berkeley's theist has a response. According to the theistic respondent, religious skeptics have misunderstood the Doctrine of Analogy. If the Doctrine of Analogy is instead understood as Aquinas *originally* described – that is, by the use of proportionality – then this kind of underdetermination evaporates.

Or so Berkeley asserts. Nonetheless, Berkeley does not demonstrate that the underdetermination disappears when one makes use of proportionality and, as I will show in chapter IV, proportionality is radically semantically underdetermined in its own way.

Several commentators have noticed a strong similarity between Scottish philosopher David Hume's (1711-1776)[52] argument in chapter XII of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and chapter IV of Berkeley's *Alciphron*.[53] In that chapter, Hume argues that there is only a verbal distinction between atheism and theism. He states:

> I ask the theist if he does not allow that there is a great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible, difference between the *human* and the *divine* mind: The more pious he is, the more readily will he assent to the affirmative, and the more will he be disposed to magnify the difference: He will even assert that, that the difference is of a nature which cannot be too much magnified. I next turn to the Atheist... and ask him whether, from the coherence and apparent sympathy in all parts of the world, there cannot be a

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51 Berkeley (1732), pgs 106-107.
52 John Robertson, 'Hume, David (1711–1776)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
53 The claim that Hume was likely motivated for his argument in chapter XII of *Dialogues* is from Berman (1993), pgs 5-6. For Hume's Dialogues, I will be referencing David Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," (1781) *David Hume: Writings on Religion (Paul Carus Student Editions)*, ed. Antony Flew (Open Court Publishing Company, 1992), pgs 185-292.

certain degree of analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every situation and in every age; whether the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the structure of human thought, be not energies that probably bear some remote analogy to each other: It is impossible he can deny it: He will readily acknowledge it. Having obtained this concession, I push him still further in his retreat; and I ask him, if it be not probable, that the principle which first arranged, and still maintains order in this universe, bears not also some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of nature, and, among the rest, to the economy of human mind and thought. However reluctant, he must give his assent. Where then, cry I to both these antagonists, is the subject of your dispute?[54]

Hume argues that if God is made sufficiently vague, then there there is no distinction between God (as believed by a pious theist) and some naturalistic explanation for the origins of the universe (as believed by an atheist). The distinction between the two positions has come to subsist only in the terms which each party chooses to use.

He goes on to consider those who believe that the "whole of Natural Theology" has been reduced to "one simple, though somewhat ambiguous" or "at least undefined proposition" (emphasis his): "*That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence*". Of course, even admitting that conclusion, one has not admitted a tremendous amount – as Collins had previously shown.

Each of the arguments provided by Collins, Berkeley, and Hume shows that King's species of analogy has undesirable consequences for the theist. Although this argument was originally constructed in response to the Browne/King debate, with a definition of 'analogy' distinct from that of Aquinas, it can be resurrected as an argument against proportionality. Resurrecting this argument will be the topic of chapter IV.

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54 Hume (1781), pgs 281-282.

D'Holbach and Analogy

Although it is unclear how it related to the Browne/King debate, the French materialist philosophe Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789)[55] engaged with analogy in his *System of Nature*[56] (1770) and in his *Good Sense without God*[57] (1772). D'Holbach argued against the idea that God could be meaningfully spoken of at all, even through analogy. Attempts to speak about God through analogy merely result in gibberish.

Although d'Holbach neglects proportionality, his argument convincingly demonstrates that proportion cannot do the work Aquinas employs it for. In chapter III, I defend the view that d'Holbach's argument shows that proportion, in the narrow sense, renders God-talk into unintelligible non-sense and that proportion, in the broad sense, is question begging. I will leave the historical details to that chapter since they are integral to explaining his arguments and the atheological consequences he draws from them.

In the next chapter, I proceed to a discussion of d'Holbach's attack on the analogy of proportion.

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55 "Holbach, Baron d'." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998.

56 Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, *Système de la Nature ou Des Loix du Monde Physique et du Monde Moral* (1770). All English-language quotes are from the H.D. Robinson translation (New York: G.W. & A.J. Matsell, 1825).

57 Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, *Le Bon sens ou Idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* (1772). All English-language quotes are from the H.D. Robinson translation (Boston: J.P. Mendum, 1876).

Chapter III: D'Holbach and The Analogy of Proportion

In this chapter, I will explicate d'Holbach's response to the the analogy of proportion. I will show that if (a) proportion is understood in the narrow sense and (b) the analogy of proportionality is not considered then (c) God-talk is mere gibberish. Although Aquinas foresees this problem and attempts to introduce a broader reading of 'proportion', I will show that the broader reading merely begs the question.

D'Holbach and Proportion

To argue for (c), d'Holbach first rules out the possibility that humans could derive predicates to directly describe God's properties from sense experience. Second, d'Holbach argues that analogical predication of God's properties is impossible,[58] with the

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58 D'Holbach does not reference Aquinas by name when discussing the Doctrine of Analogy so it is unclear whether or not d'Holbach had Aquinas in mind. Aquinas's *Summa Theologicae* does not appear in a record of the books contained in d'Holbach's library upon his death so it is unclear whether d'Holbach ever owned a copy (*Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu m. le baron d'holbach* (1789). A digitized copy can be obtained online from Gallica Bibliotheque Numerique at http://goo.gl/XZWLYd. The original copy is stored at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Littérature et art.).

Nonetheless, d'Holbach had ample opportunity to both learn of and engage with the doctrine.

It is possible that d'Holbach learned of the Doctrine from reading French theologian Jacques Abbadie (who references analogy in his defense of the Trinity against Socinian and Arian heresies in *Traité de la divinité de nôtre seigneur Jésus-Christ*, which was both in d'Holbach's library and was referenced in d'Holbah's *System of Nature*).

In addition, d'Holbach owned a copy of George Berkeley's *Alciphron* which makes explicit use of Aquinas's doctrine in chapter IV.

In letters written by both d'Holbach and Denis Diderot, it is clear that d'Holbach and Hume were friends during the years that Hume composed *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (James Fieser, "Hume's Concealed Attack on Religion and His Early Critics," *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 20 (1995): pgs 83-101; also see Diderot's letter to his mistress Sophie Volland dated October 6, 1765). From the letters, we can put together a timeline to compare with the publication of Hume's *Dialogues*. D'Holbach's coterie began meeting sometime in the 1750s (Michael LeBuffe, "Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d'Holbach", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/holbach/>). Hume began writing the *Dialogues* by 1752 (William Edward Morris, "David Hume", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/hume/>). Then, d'Holbach and Hume began

consequence that one cannot directly talk about God via analogy. Having ruled out any

way to talk about God, d'Holbach concludes that God-talk is gibberish.[59]

D'Holbach's Epistemology as a Limit on his Semantics

D'Holbach was an empiricist whose epistemology, and its relation to language,

largely derived from Locke and Hobbes. In what follows, I will explicate the relation

between d'Holbach's epistemology and Locke/Hobbes, paying special attention to the

resultant constraints on language.

Both Aquinas and d'Holbach were empiricists and both thought that our

predicates must ultimately be traceable to experience in some way. Although it is worth

bearing in mind that the Lockean empiricism of 18th century materialists like d'Holbach

had substantial differences from the Aristotlean empiricism of a 13th century scholastic

like Aquinas, both views have as the result that language is systematically limited.[60] In

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corresponding in 1763 (see letters reprinted in the Appendix to Max Pearson Cushing, *Baron d'Holbach: A Study of Eighteenth Century Radicalism* (New York: New Era Printing Co., 1914). According to Diderot, Hume visited the coterie and sat next to Hume sometime before October 6, 1765. At that meeting, Diderot records that Hume and d'Holbach discussed atheism. Hume finished writing the *Dialogues* in about 1776 (Morris, "David Hume", 2013). Finally, the coterie stopped meeting in the 1780s (LeBuffe, "Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d'Holbach", 2010).

Although analogy is not discussed in the correspondence between d'Holbach and Hume (the d'Holbach/Hume correspondence deals primarily on the disagreement between their social circle and Rousseau), it is possible that they spoke about analogy at some point. Furthermore, d'Holbach was a translator of English deistic works (Cushing (1914), *Baron d'Holbach: A Study of Eighteenth Century Radicalism*, pgs 31-36) and likely either knew about or had read Anthony Collins's *Vindication of Divine Attributes*.

59 Although Alan Kors attributes d'Holbach's epistemic view to the influence of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* on d'Holbach (Alan Kors, "The Atheism of d'Holbach and Naigeon" in *Athesim From the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pgs 279-280), Kors misses a key feature of d'Holbach's view. Kors misses that d'Holbach considers the possibility of analogical predication and rejects it, thereby ruling out any possibility for meaningfully predicating any terms of God.

60 Kathleen Anne Wellman, *La Mettrie: Medicine, Philosophy, and Enlightenment*, (Duke University Press, 1992), pg 149; Kors (1992), pg 283.

the view of French materialists, our concepts arise from our sense data and our language codifies our concepts.[61] On the basis of his empiricism, d'Holbach ruled out univocal and equivocal predication.

Human languages are constructed from sense experience and would therefore lack predicates which could directly refer to the otherworldly, of which humans had no sense experience. Although Locke attempted to argue that revelation could be considered a way to receive sense data from the supernatural, both deists and atheists argued against these attempts. Having argued to his satisfaction that such experiences did not occur, d'Holbach concluded that human languages could only directly predicate statements about the natural realm.[62]

Alan Kors identifies an additional source for the epistemic view held by French materialists in Hobbes' *De Homine*. He writes:

> [For d'Holbach] words only signified when they specifically indicated units of sense-experience, all of which occurred to us as corporeal entities and the behavior of corporeal entities. Words such as 'spirituality', 'immateriality', 'incorporality', and 'divinity', however, had no objects of sense (or memory of sense) to which one could apply them... In *De homine* Hobbes had insisted that all conceptions proceeded from the senses, and that all significant knowledge arose from such conceptions and was ultimately 'remembrance' of sense-experience. Given the nature of the senses, experience could be conceived of only in corporeal fashion. Words that referred to 'beings' unperceived by the senses were mere sounds without signification. From such principles, Hobbes concluded, a consistent natural philosophy could understand the object of its enquiry solely and wholly as corporeal, for 'substance without dimension', that is, spirit, would be a contradiction in

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61 Kors (1992), pg 283.
62 Allen Kors (editors: Michael Hunter and David Wootton), *Chapter 10: The Atheism of d'Holbach and Naigeon* in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pg 279.

terms, and 'incorporeal' could have no meaning at all. This was the school at which d'Holbach and Naigeon studied.[63]

Echoing Hobbes, in *System of Nature*, d'Holbach states that words like 'spirituality', 'immateriality', and 'immortality' are "vague unmeaning words".

The reason that the terms 'spirituality', 'immateriality', and 'immortality' are "unmeaning" is because they do not arise out of experience of nature.[64] Humans do not want to conclude the death of the mind from the death of the body and so wish to remain willfully ignorant.[65] Remaining ignorant, they invented a false duality – the "physical man [sic]" (the body) and the "moral man [sic]" (the soul). Since the duality did not arise from experience with nature, it was conceived of using "vague unmeaning words".

Next, I will show that d'Holbach does not allow indirect predication of God's properties by way of analogy either.

D'Holbach and Analogy

D'Holbach explicitly denies that there can be an analogy between humans and God in section 47 of his *Good Sense*, where he asserts that God's properties render God "void of analogy" with humans. Although d'Holbach does not explicitly mention the analogy of proportion in section 47, it is clear that d'Holbach is discussing proportion

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63 Kors (1992), pgs 280-282.
64 Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, *System of Nature* (1770). H.D. Robinson translation; pg 43.
65 The invention of a false duality with non-sensical properties is part of d'Holbach's larger anti-religious project. D'Holbach explains that our ancestors no more wished to understand the entirety of nature than they wished to understand themselves. Therefore, they projected themselves onto the entirety of nature. Since they already understood themselves as having a dual nature, the entirety of nature came to be seen as dual. Just as humans were attributed an immaterial soul, so too was there postulated an immaterial God.

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because he states that, "the divines imagine they extricate themselves from this difficulty [with analogy] by exaggerating the human qualities attributed to the Divinity; they enlarge them to infinity, where they cease to understand themselves".[66] In order words, the attempt to construct an analogy between humans and God by creating an infinite proportion between the two results in incomprehensible nonsense.

D'Holbach explicitly discusses proportion in other sections. For instance, in section 8 of *Good* Sense, he states:

> If God be an infinite being, there cannot be, either in the present or future world, any relative proportion between man [sic] and his God. Thus, the idea of God can never enter the human mind. In supposition of a life, in which man [sic] would be much more enlightened, than in this, the idea of the infinity of God would ever remain the same distance from his finite mind. Thus the idea of God will be no more clear in the future, than in the present life. Thus, intelligences, superior to man [sic], can have no more complete ideas of God, than man [sic], who has not the least conception of him in his present life.[67]

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66 D'Holbach, *Le Bon sens ou Idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* (1772), H. D. Robinson translation; pg 31.
67 D'Holbach, *Le Bon sens ou Idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* (1772), H. D. Robinson translation; pgs. 7-8.

In this quote, d'Holbach argues that there cannot be a "relative proportion[68] between man [sic] and his God" and thus "the idea of God can never enter the human mind" even in the afterlife.[69]

Why can't there be a "relative proportion" between humans and God? Since the infinite is defined as that which is beyond all measure, an infinite "magnitude"[70] cannot have a determinate relation to a finite magnitude. Proportions require a determinate

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68 One might worry whether the use of 'proportion' is the same in both Aquinas's Latin and in d'Holbach's French, since I have only considered their English translations. If this is a concern of the reader, compare the following passage from the Latin version of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiæ* to the French version of d'Holbach's *Le bon-sens, ou, Idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* which follows it (emphasis mine):

    Aquinas: "Dicendum est igitur quod huiusmodi nomina dicuntur de Deo et creaturis secundum analogiam, idest *proportionem*" (ST, I, Q13, A5).

    D'Holbach: "Si Dieu un etre infini, il ne peut y avoir, ni dans le monde actuel ni daus un autre, aucune *proportion* entre l'homme & fon Dieu; ainsi jamais la notion de Dieu n'entrera dans l'esprit humain" (Paul Henri Thiry baron d'Holbach, *Le bon-sens ou idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* (London, 1772).

The Latin word 'proportionem' is the same word as d'Holbach's 'proportion'.

69 D'Holbach states in a variety of places that God cannot be thought of by humans and that this has implications for how we should think about whether the mandate that people be Christians. Christianity asks people to think that which, by the admission of Christian authorities, is impossible to think and punishes people when they are (quite naturally) unable to do so.

For d'Holbach, an unthinkable God cannot be the basis for belief – and it is profoundly immoral to punish people for lacking beliefs that they cannot hold. In the Apologue to *Good Sense*, he states: "We are told, that divine qualities are not of a nature to be comprehended by finite minds. The natural consequence must be that divine qualities are not made to occupy finite minds". He goes on to say that religion (unfairly) tells people never to "lose sight" of this inconceivable being, despite those people having a "poor, finite mind" (pg 7 of the H.D. Robinson translation).

In section 29 of *Good Sense*, d'Holbach presents a two-fold argument for the conclusion that God would not punish atheists. First, if theists are willing to concede that "divine attributes are beyond the reach of human conception" then they should also be willing to grant that God did not intend to be known by humans. If God did not intend to be known by humans, then God did not intend for us to believe in him either – so would not punish us if we failed to believe in Him. Second, if God is infinite, then there can "be nothing common to him and his creatures". The fact that there there is no analogy between God and humans renders God "useless" to humans since God cannot be conceived of or believed in. This may be a human fault, but only "the most unjust and capricious of tyrants" would punish humans for failing to grasp that which they are incapable of grasping. D'Holbach concludes that since God is not a tyrant, either Christians are wrong about God's nature or God does not exist. See pgs 16-17 in the H.D. Robinson translation. Although annihilationism and universalism would have been highly heretical in the 18th century, contemporary Christians may respond that they are not committed to the sort of eschatology which d'Holbach has in mind. Nonetheless, annihilationism would still be vulnerable to d'Holbach's attack and universalism is relatively rare amongst Christians even today.

70 I placed 'magnitude' in scare quotes because if the infinite is *beyond* all measure, then, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an infinite magnitude.

relation of magnitude between two things. Thus, there cannot be a proportion between a finite thing (such as a human) and an infinite thing (like God). Therefore, there cannot be an analogy of proportion between God and humans.

Contrary to Aquinas, even in the afterlife, where Christians would traditionally expect to see the beatific vision and know the essence of God, there would still be an infinite distance between God and humans ("God will be no more clear in the future, than in the present life"). Thus, for d'Holbach, since a finite thing elevated by *any* finite amount is still a finite thing, no matter how elevated humans may be in the afterlife, they cannot know God in His essence.

Since there is no analogous relationship, and human languages lack the right predicates for God-talk, God-talk is rendered into incomprehensible non-sense. For d'Holbach, the incomprehensibility of God's properties implies that when people think they are ascribing properties to God or talking about God, they are actually failing to talk about anything meaningful.[71]

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71 That is, under d'Holbach's account, the term 'God' lacks semantic content. Compare Alfred Jules Ayer's position, given more than a century later in his *Language, Truth and Logic*: "What is not so generally recognized is that there can be no way of proving that the existence of a god, such as the God of Christianity, is even probable. Yet this also is easily shown... It is sometimes claimed, indeed, that the existence of a certain sort of regularity in nature constitutes sufficient evidence for the existence of a god. But if the sentence 'God exists' entails to more than that certain types of phenomena occur in certain sequences, then to assert the existence of a god will be simply equivalent to asserting that there is the requisite regularity in nature; and no religious man would admit that this was all he intended to assert in asserting the existence of a god. He would say that in talking about God, he was talking about a transcendent being who might be known through certain empirical manifestations, but certainly could not be defined in terms of those manifestations. But in that case the term 'god' is a metaphysical term. And if 'god' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot be even probable that a god exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance." ((Dover Publications, Inc: New York, 1952), pg 115). It is important to note that Ayer denies theism, atheism, or agnosticism on semantic grounds. This is because he defines atheism as the position that "it is at least probable that no god exists" (pg 115) and agnosticism as the position that "the existence of a god is a possibility in which there is no good reason either to believe or disbelieve" (pg 115). Both of these positions are ruled out since 'God' has no semantic content.

Because d'Holbach argues that the term 'God' lacks semantic content, he concludes that God cannot be believed in. Since God apparently created us without the ability to believe in Him, the traditional Christian demand that humans believe in God or else be condemned to hellfire in the afterlife is entirely unfair and unreasonable.

Aquinas Strikes Back

Aquinas foresaw d'Holbach's worry. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas considers the following objection to the assertion that there is a proportion between humans and God:

> ...since the intelligible is the perfection of intellect, it is necessary that there be some proportion between intellect and intelligible, [as there is between] what is able to see and what is seen. But one does not take there to be some proportion between our intellect and the divine essence since they are infinitely distant [from one another]. Therefore, our intellect cannot attain to the vision of God in His essence. [72]

In this objection, Aquinas worries that we cannot understand God (God would not be "intelligible") even when we are in the presence of God ("the vision in His essence", which one attains in the afterlife) since they are "infinitely distant" and so there cannot be a proportion between them.[73] As previously explained, d'Holbach considers a similar

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72 Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d49, q49, q2, a1. Quote is from Richard Taylor's translation.

73 Aquinas states that there cannot be a "proportion" between humans and God (due to one being finite and the other infinite) in a variety of places – for example, in *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, d49, q2, a1, ad6, *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* Q2, A3, ad 4 and Q2, A11, and in *Summa Theologica* I, A2, Obj 3 and its reply. See also the Supplement to the Third Part in *Summa Theologica*. Note: the authorship of the Supplement has questioned and it is unclear whether this work is actually by Aquinas or by Dominican theologian Reginald of Piperno (John McHugh, "Reginald of Piperno," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Applet Company, 1911).

issue in section 8 of *Good Sense* ("If God be an infinite being, there cannot be, either in the present or future world, any relative proportion between man [sic] and his God").

In Aquinas's answer to this objection, he first concedes that there cannot be a proportion between the finite and the infinite ("...there can be no proportion of the finite to the infinite because the excess of the infinite beyond the finite is indeterminate...") and second he introduces two possibilities for relating creature to God. One possibility is that 'proportion' needs to be used in the broad sense:

> …it should be said that the proposition according to the first imposition of the name signifies the disposition of quantity to quantity according to some determined excess or equality. But it is further applied / transferred to signifying every disposition of one thing to another.[74]

In this quote, Aquinas is arguing that the usage of 'proportion' should be broadened beyond its "first imposition" (its original use). In the "first imposition", for two things to stand in proportion there must be a determinate relation between their magnitudes ("the disposition of quantity to quantity according to some determined excess or equality"). In this sense of proportion, creature and God cannot be related. Nonetheless, 'proportion' should be extended to a broadened usage, wherein it merely signifies any way that two things may be related ("signifying every disposition of one thing to another").

But Aquinas has not shown what other sort of relation there might be between creature and God. He merely asserts that there could be some other way that creature and God could be related without explicating what that way is. Thus, if the Aquinas-proponent merely suggests to the d'Holbach-proponent that one needs to arbitrarily

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74   Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1. Richard Taylor translation.

expand the definition of 'proportion' to one which allows for analogical predication of God's properties, then the Aquinas-proponent has begged the question.

Aquinas suggests a second possibility. One could instead opt to use proportionality:

> …although there can be no proportion of the finite to the infinite because the excess of the infinite beyond the finite is indeterminate, nevertheless between these there can be be a proportionality which is a likeness of proportions, for just as a finite thing can be equated with some finite thing, so too an infinite to an infinite.[75]

Aquinas explains that proportionality is a relation between relations. There can obviously be various relations between two finite things since we have already have an example – proportion.

Aquinas maintains that there may also be some sort of relation that stands between two infinite things ("so too an infinite to an infinite"). Although Aquinas does not state in this passage what sort of relation there might exist between two infinite things, such a relation can be easily conceived. As an example, consider the limit of the expression $y=(2x+1)/x$ as x goes to infinity. In that limit, $y=2$ but the numerator and the denominator of that expression are both infinite.[76]

Although d'Holbach does not respond directly to the analogy of proportionality, a closely related argument offered elsewhere in 18th century discussions of atheism can be slightly modified to provide a response to the analogy of proportionality. In the next chapter, I will discuss this second argument as a response to proportionality.

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75 Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, Richard Taylor translation.
76 Thanks to Benjamin Jantzen for this example.

Chapter IV: Collins, Berkeley, Hume and Proportionality

In this chapter, I show that the second 18th century atheological argument, considered by Anthony Collins, George Berkeley, and David Hume, may be resurrected as an argument against the analogy of proportionality.

Recall the argument given by Collins, Berkeley, and Hume. For them, the notion that God can be only spoken of only through analogy had a number of undesirable consequences for the theist. First, construing God-talk as restricted to the analogy of proportionality so radically underdetermines the meaning of the term 'God' that there is no longer more than a verbal distinction between theism and atheism. With this radical semantic underdetermination, the distinction between theism and atheism is merely verbal. Furthermore, this radical semantic underdetermination renders natural theology and "religion" impossible. As I will show, all of these results obtain for the analogy of proportionality.

Collins's, Berkeley's, and Hume's Argument Reborn

Although the atheological argument considered by Collins, Berkeley, and Hume was constructed as a response to King's version of analogy, which is of a different kind than Aquinas's, the argument can be recast to show that the analogy of proportionality is radically underdetermined in its semantic content. As previously noted, one may consider this recasting to be a rejoinder to Berkeley's appeal to the analogy of proportionality. Contra Berkeley, the analogy of proportionality is similarly underdetermined.

For King, to say that God's properties resembled those of creatures by analogy meant that God's properties resembled those of creatures in some way or other. As creatures, we are incapable of knowing what way that is. And when Collins responded to King, he pointed out that the atheist has no problem in believing that some vague thing – which resembles humans in *some* unknown way or other – created the world. Even a physical process could be taken to resemble humans in *some* way or other.

One can construct a similar argument for the analogy of proportionality. As I will show, the analogy of proportionality suffers from a similar problem of radical underdetermination. My argument for the radical semantic underdetermination of proportionality will parallel Newman's Ojection to Epistemic Structural Realism (ESR).[77] Therefore, I will first summarize Newman's Objection. Afterwards, I will explicate two interpretations of proportionality and show that each of them suffers the underdetermination problem.

First, I need to define several model theoretic terms. We start with two syntactic entities: language and sentences. A *language* is a collection of symbols (constants, predicate-symbols, function-symbols, logical-symbols, etc). A *sentence* is the smallest unit of a language which, under an interpretation, can be assigned a truth-value. A *theory* is the deductive closure of a set of sentences.

A *structure* is an ordered tuple of entities – a domain of objects, a set of relations, a set of functions, and a set of constants. An *interpretation* is a mapping from a language to a structure: the interpretation maps terms to objects in the domain, sentences to true or

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77 Peter Ainsworth, "Newman's Objection," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 60, no. 1 (2009): pgs 135-171,

false, predicate-symbols to relations, etc. A *satisfaction* relation obtains between a set of sentences and a structure relative to an interpretation. A sentence Sent is said to be satisfied by a structure S for a given interpretation I just if Sent comes out true in S for I.

A set of sentences is said to be satisfied by a structure for a given interpretation just if all the sentences in that set are made true by that structure for that interpretation. Languages are said to have a *signature*, a list of the number of objects in the domain and the arities of all the relations and functions that a structure must have to satisfy all the sentences in that language.

In a paper published in 1928,[78] mathematician Maxwell Herman Alexander Newman (1897-1984)[79] considered a view held by philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)[80] concerning whether or not we can know various things about the external world. Russell maintained that there is very little we can know about the external world, but we can collect the phenomenal experiences (the "percepts") of various individuals and from those deduce "structural" details – that is, logical or mathematical details – of the external world.[81]

Although Russell's comments concerning "structure" are vague, it is clear that he does *not* mean the term in the model theoretic sense that I outlined above. Instead, he means that we can know that there is some collection of objects – whose identities we don't know – between which there obtain various relations of arities that we can specify.

78 Maxwell Newman, "Causal Theory of Perception" in *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol. 37, No. 146 (Apr., 1928), pp. 137-148 .
79 Shaun Wylie, "Newman , Maxwell Herman Alexander (1897–1984)", rev. I. J. Good, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
80 Ray Monk, 'Russell, Bertrand Arthur William, third Earl Russell (1872–1970)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
81 Maxwell Newman (1928), pgs 140-142, 144.

In other words, we can know the signature but not the particular structure of the unobservable portion of the world.

The underdetermination Newman had in mind is now apparent. Any two structures which are *isomorphic* are guaranteed to have the same signature. Suppose that we are given two sets of objects A and B. Then, according to Newman, "[t]he two systems are said to have the *same* structure [that is, to be isomorphic] if a (1,1) correlation can be set up between the members of A and those of B such that if two members have A have the relation R their correlates have the relation S, and *vice versa*".[82]

For example, suppose that we examine a map of the roads in Blacksburg, Virginia, and compare it to the actual network of roads in Blacksburg. If the map is sufficiently up to date, then for any intersection in Blacksburg there will be a corresponding set of lines crossing on the map and vice versa. The map can be said to be isomorphic to the town. So long as that isomorphism exists, there will exist suitable interpretations such that any theory satisfied by A will also be satisfied by B.

As Newman shows, the notion that all we can know about the external world is its "structure" amounts to very little. If all we can know about the external world is that there is that it has some signature then we know nearly nothing about the external world. As Newman states, "given any aggregate A, a system of relations between its members can be found having any assigned structure compatible with the [cardinality] of A".[83] Russell's view amounts to knowing no more than the cardinality of a set, implying that

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82 Maxwell Newman (1928), pg 139.
83 Ibid, pg 140.

are an indefinite number of interpretations and structures that could satisfy the sentences we would have liked to produce about the unobservable world:

> Hence the doctrine that *only* structure is known involves the doctrine that *nothing* can be known that is not logically deducible from the mere fact of existence, except ("theoretically") the number of constituting objects.[84]

Having explained Newman's objection, I now proceed to a similar problem for the analogy of proportionality. Here, unlike Newman and Russell, I am not concerned with the existence of the external world or what we can say about unobservables in scientific theories. In fact, for the purposes of this thesis, I remain neutral on whether or not the various responses to Newman's Objection are effective in defending structural realism.

What I will argue for is that Newman's Objection undermines the analogy of proportionality. Future work would involve showing whether or not the various defences for structural realism are effective for defending the analogy of proportionality. It should likewise be noted that there may be defenses available for the analogy of proportionality which would interest the defender of structural realism.

The Doctrine of Analogy has a similar motivation to Russell's structural realism. In Russell's case, we should be cautious when we talk about those things which we do not directly observe. In Aquinas's case, we should similarly be cautious when we talk about God, whose properties we do not have direct access to (at least in this life). Perhaps it should not be surprising that the analogy of proportionality ultimately provides us only with a signature and not a specific structure.

For the Aquinas-proponent's view to succeed, they must first write down a definition and then a theory of God. Note that design arguments require us to make

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84 Ibid, pg 144.

predictions concerning what sort of objects God would or would not make. Since, by construction, a theory of God would be the deductive closure of some set of sentences concerning God, those predictions would necessarily appear in the theory. Alternatively, if other sorts of arguments for God's existence are to be used (such as ontological arguments), those arguments would likewise be in the the God-theory due to deductive closure.

Writing down a definition of God would inevitably involve using proportionalities to express God's properties. What I propose is that such a definition is underdetermined. That underdetermination undermines the Aquinas-proponent's ability to formulate arguments for God's existence. Worse, it is difficult to see how the Aquinas-proponent could say that they believe on the basis of faith. To have faith, presumably one must be able to articulate what it is that one has faith in. Being unable to articulate what they have faith in, fideism would not be an available option to the Aquinas-proponent.

In order to cast the analogy of proportionality into the language of model theory, it is necessary that I begin by formalizing proportionality. Nonetheless, it is unclear how the notion of proportionality should be formalized. At issue is whether or not we should understand the properties as predicates, and formalize them as relations, or if we should understand properties as objects, and formalize them as members of the domain. The latter is certainly not the standard way of understanding properties in a first order language, but it may be justified by noting that in some examples (i.e., shard:glass::splinter:wood) there are only objects (and not predicates) in the four slots in the proportionality.

Understanding properties as objects in the domain results in what I call *A-proportionality*. Understanding properties in the more typical sense – as relations – results in what I call *B-proportionality.*

A-proportionaly is an attempt to make sense of the notion that proportionalities represent a relation between relations. Consider the following proportionality:

Socrates:good::God:Good

We say that "Socrates is to thinking as God is to Thinking". If this proportionality is a relation between relations, we would say that Socrates is related to the property good in some way corresponding to how God is related to the property Good. In this case, the properties of goodness and Goodness are understood as objects in the domain. Strangely, in order for the notion of a relation between relations to make sense, we have to include relations in the domain as well. Note that this not the typical way of understanding properties in a first order language and assumes that the properties are objects instead of predicates.

We can a long series of A-proportionality formulas:

creature:good::God:Good

creature:wise::God:Wise

creature:thinking::God:Thinking

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Call this collection of formulas and its deductive closure F_A. F_A is satisfied by a number of structures. One such structure is the following:

$\Sigma_A = <\{$creatures, good, wise, thinking, …, God, Good, Wise, Thinking, …, r_{good}, r_{wise}, $r_{thinking}$, R_{Good}, R_{Wise}, $R_{thinking}$, ...$\}$, $\{$M, r_{good}, r_{wise}, $r_{thinking}$, …, R_{Good}, R_{Wise}, $R_{thinking}$, ...$\}$ >

Here, the lower case r's are the relations between the creatures and their properties. the upper case R's are the relations between God and His properties, and M is the relation between lower case r's represented by '::' in F_A.

However, F_A is also satisfied by:

$B_A = <\{$creatures, good, wise, thinking, …, beer can, cold, wet, appetizing, …, r_{good}, r_{wise}, $r_{thinking}$, R_{cold}, R_{wet}, $R_{appetizing}$, ...$\}$, $\{$M, r_{good}, r_{wise}, $r_{thinking}$, …, R_{cold}, R_{wet}, $R_{appetizing}$, ...$\}$ >

Or, indeed, by any structure both containing $\{$creatures, good, wise, thinking, …, r_{good}, r_{wise}, $r_{thinking}$, …$\}$ as a subset of its domain and having a sufficiently large domain (there are many such structures). Note that Newman's objection, as originally conceived, does not work in this case. Nonetheless, we can easily develop a modified version of Newman's Objection which still obtains the same sort of result. This is due to the fact that a number of terms in the language whose deductive closure is F_A have been left uninterpreted.

I now turn to explicating B-proportionality, where properties are treated as relations. In that case, it might be strange to say that, e.g., Socrates is related to the predicate 'good'. Instead, it seems more natural to interpret the proportionality as a relation between two sets of sentences, one set about Socrates and the other about some object which we might label 'God'.

In the case of B-proportionality, proportionalities express some sort of relation between the predicates of two distinct languages. We can form the deductive closures of

the sentences of these two languages. One set of sentences, which will be denoted S_C, can be used to describe matters in the creaturely realm. Another set of sentences, which will be denoted S_G, can be used to express various statements about an object that has been labeled 'God'.

There exist interpretations under which S_C and S_G can be satisfied by a variety of structures so long as those structures have a sufficiently large number of objects in their domains. Two structures which satisfy S_C and S_G under the interpretation *intended* by the Aquinas-proponent are:

$$X = < \text{creatures}, a, b, c >$$

$$\Gamma = < \text{God}, A, B, C >$$

Here, X is the structure of the creaturely realm (with the domain "creatures"), *a* is the set of all of the *n*-ary relations that pertain to the creaturely realm, *b* is the set of all the *m*-ary functions pertaining to the creaturely realm, and *c* is the set of all of the constants relevant to the creaturely realm.

Similarly, Γ defines another structure. Unlike X, Γ only has one object in its domain, namely God. However, like X, Γ has a variety of relations and functions which correspond to those found in X. For example, for any relation in *A*, there exists a corresponding relation of identical arity in *a*.

However, Γ is not the only structures for which S_G would be satisfied. For instance, there exists an interpretation under which the following structure would also satisfy S_G:

$$\beta = < \text{beer can}, d, e, f >$$

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So long as β has the correct signature, we are guaranteed that there will exist some interpretation under which β will satisfy S_G.

Further Examples

Having shown that both A- and B-proportionality are underdetermined, I now turn to a number of examples in order to further explicate that underdetermination. Let us first consider a situation where only a single proportionality is asserted. Showing underdetermination for that case will allow me to explicate how the underdetermination comes about in general. Let us consider the proportionality:

$$(T) \text{ Socrates:thinking::God:Thinking}$$

In the case of A-proportionality, (T) expresses a relation between relations. Socrates is related to the property of thinking in a way that corresponds to how something we denote 'God' is related to some property we denote 'Thinking'. The Aquinas-proponent intends to use the following structure:

$$\Sigma_A = <\{\text{Socrates, thinking, God, Thinking, } r_{thinking}, R_{thinking}\}, \{M, r_{thinking}, R_{thinking}\} >$$

The two relations – $r_{thinking}$ and $R_{thinking}$ – are the relations between Socrates and thinking and God and Thinking respectively. However, since (T) is not uniquely satisfied by Σ_A (under some interpretation), there is clearly very little we can say about (T). For any set of two objects, we can set up a relation between them which will be isomorphic to Σ_A. For example, consider the following structure isomorphic to Σ_A:

$$\Sigma_A = <\{\text{Socrates, thinking, beer can, resting, } r_{thinking}, R_{resting}\}, \{P, r_{thinking}, R_{resting}\} >$$

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The Aquinas-proponent would like to say that God is not a beer can, but they would not have the linguistic resources to make that assertion.

For B-proportionality, the Aquinas-proponent intends to use the following structures:

$$X = < \text{Socrates, thinking} >$$

$$\Gamma = < \text{God, Thinking} >$$

However, there are a variety of structures isomorphic to X and Γ for which there are interpretations that satisfy (T). Therefore, there is again, very little which we can say about (T). Note that the predicate 'thinking' is unary and thus 'Thinking' must also be a unary predicate, but there is nothing else which can be deduced. Any structure with a unary predicate will satisfy (T).

To make the underdetermination in this first example more explicit, consider the following proportionality:

$$\text{(T') Socrates:thinking::beer can:resting}$$

We can again write down corresponding structures that one might have *intended* when offering (T'). For A-proportionality:

$$X_A = < \text{Socrates, } r_{thinking}, \text{ thinking, } r_{thinking} >$$

$$B_A = < \text{beer can, } R_{resting}, \text{ resting, } R_{resting} >$$

For B-proportionality:

$$X_B = < \text{Socrates, thinking} >$$

$$B_B = < \text{beer can, resting} >$$

But, of course, X_A, B_A, X_B, and B_B are not the only structures which would satisfy (T'). Indeed, in what follows, I will show that there exists interpretations for which (T) and (T') are satisfied by the same structures.

Interpreting the analogies in English, we can say that Socrates is a thinking thing just as a beer can is a resting thing; that is to say, beer cans do not alter their motion without the influence of an external force (Newton's 1st Law). We can define a new word – 'Thinking' – which actually means "resting" (note that this is an interpretation because it is a specific mapping from the language to the structure). Now, we can say that the term 'thinking' may be attributed to both Socrates and a beer can according to the analogy of proportionality:

(T") Socrates:thinking::beer can:Thinking

The term 'Thinking' does not mean the same thing as the term 'thinking'. But in the theological examples, to say that God is Good is not to attribute to God the same property as 'good' would attribute to creatures; it is only to say that one can attribute to God some property which satisfies the appropriate proportionality. Since Thinking satisfies the proportionality T", we can similarly say that beer cans Think.

Suppose now that I re-label the name 'beer can' with the name 'God'. Then the term 'thinking' can be attributed to both Socrates and God according to the analogy of proportionality:

(T"') Socrates:thinking::God:Thinking

It can be objected that there are no theists who believe God to be a beer can. This should not matter. For A-proportionality, we have simply re-labeled two objects that

stand in some relation to each other. For B-proportionality, all we have actually done is to re-label an object with a new term in a language that we have artificially devised. Nonetheless, if we can show that this holds in general, the implications are clearly disastrous for the Aquinas-proponent: we do not possess the linguistic resources to distinguish between God and a beer can.

Typically, however, God is attributed more than a single property. One may wonder if God-talk is still radically underdetermined if one considers the full collection of properties, including the way in which those properties hang together, which we might attribute to God. In what follows, I will explicate how it is that if all of God's properties (including, and importantly, those in the definition of 'God') are to be predicated by the analogy of proportionality, then 'God' is still left radically underdetermined.

Proportionalities are not typically satisfied in isolation. There are a cluster of terms related to 'thinking' – 'computing', 'knowing', etc – which must be satisfied in a corresponding way to make sense of the various sentences in which 'thinking' might appear. Nonetheless, a similar procedure would be able to identify replacement terms for 'computing', 'knowing', etc, and all of the relevant proportionalities. I will demonstrate this shortly.

Consider the following formalization of the problem. On the one hand, there is a set of creatures c – who possess a number of properties, which I will label $\{x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots, x_n, \ldots\}$. On the other hand, there exists something, we know not what but which we label 'God', which has properties $\{X_1, X_2, X_3, \ldots, X_n, \ldots\}$. Now, whatever these properties are, the Doctrine of Analogy demands that they satisfy a set of formulas:

$$(Q)\ c{:}x_i{::}God{:}X_i\ \text{for all}\ i.$$

To determine whether a beer can can satisfy the full set of proportionalities, one may simply ask whether there is an interpretation mapping the term 'God' in (Q) to a beer can in a structure. For A-proportionality, the answer is obviously *yes*. According to Newman's objection, whatever set of objects one might assemble, so long as the set has a sufficiently high cardinality, relations can be constructed between the members of that set which will have any structure one could propose. A similar result obtains for B-proportionality. Thus, the beer can could certainly satisfy (Q). This proves that a beer can *would* satisfy the full constellation of proportionalities.

An obvious objection can be made at this point. The sentences formed in God-talk are often more complex than the structure we have considered. We may have to broaden the set of terms in the language to include 'universe', 'humans', 'natural laws', or the names of any number of other objects. Nonetheless, expanding the language does not obviously help the Aquinas-proponent.

We can distinguish two cases: those in which the extra objects appear in the definition of God and those in which they do not. It is worth noting that we can concoct several definitions of God which belong to the latter category. For instance, if we define God as the uniquely Good, Wise, etc, Being (as opposed to good, wise, etc, beings like Socrates) then we only make use of proportionalities in this definition. In this case, it is difficult to see how the relationship between God and any other object could follow from the definition. Given that the *definition* would be radically underdetermined in the manner we have already considered, nothing of substance could follow from it. This

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conclusion parallels Collins's remarks concerning the doctrine of analogy's destruction of natural theology. Defining God in this way would disable us from deducing that God created the universe or producing predictions for natural theology.

However, if we define God as an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent being, then we have included the names of some additional objects in the definition of 'God'. For instance, omniscience involves the statement that, for any fact, God knows that fact. The term 'facts' would have to be included.

Consider the following definition of 'omniscience' (as an example) and its formalization:

Omniscience: x is *omniscient* if and only if for any fact y, x Knows that y. Formally, $O(x) := \forall y\, (Fy \leftrightarrow Kxy)$.

Here, O is the omniscience predicate (Ox means 'x is omniscient'), F is the fact predicate (Fy means 'y is a fact'), and K is the knowledge predicate (Kxy means 'x Knows y'). In offering this definition, the Aquinas-proponent *intends* to be using the following structures:

$$\Gamma_A = <\{\text{creatures, God, } y,\ F, K, O, \ldots\}, \{M, R\}> \quad \text{(A-proportionality)}$$

$$\Gamma_B = <\{\text{God, } y\}, \{F, K, O, ...\}> \quad \text{(B-proportionality)}$$

However, as in all the other cases, the sentences uttered by the Aquinas-proponent are not uniquely satisfied by Γ_A and Γ_B. We can ask whether, in this case, there is an interpretation in which 'God' labels a beer can. First, note that, by construction, K does not label the 'knows' predicate that we would ordinarily attribute to people. Instead, K denotes an analogous, though different, predicate which we understand through the

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proportionality Socrates:knows::God:K(nows). Thus, the fact that beer cans do not know anything should not bother us; the question is whether or not we can concoct a predicate 'Knows' which would make it true that "beer cans Know y" (that is, whether there is an interpretation and a structure which makes this sentence true). As it turns out, any two-place predicate which maps an arbitrary object-fact pair to *True* and to an arbitrary truth-value otherwise would work.

It shouldn't matter that it isn't obvious what predicate K would be in a natural language; if the theist is to maintain that properties of God may only be predicated via the analogy of proportionality, then the theist has no reason to think that the term 'Knows' appearing in the definition of 'omniscience' is anything other than the K predicate. Similar constructions may be produced in parallel for the properties classically attributed to God and not to creatures (omnipotence, omnibenevolence, etc). Therefore, the radical semantic underdetermination remains.

Defining God as the creator of the universe similarly involves invoking an additional object in the domain (namely, the universe). However, once more, we run into a result parallel to that of Collins, Hume, and Berkeley. If we ask *what* it is was that created the universe, and we simply answer that it was God, we beg the question. This would amount to answering that the thing which created the universe created the universe. If we instead answer that it was an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being, then we run into the radical semantic underdetermination that I have already shown.

And thus our conclusion: a very large collection of objects satisfy formula (S'''), including beer cans. Thus, God-talk is radically semantically underdetermined. If one construes the Doctrine of Analogy via proportionality, though theists and atheists may intend to differ on ontology, they do not have the linguistic resources to do so.

Consequences of the Underdetermination

I now turn to whether this radical semantic underdetermination renders natural theology impossible. In the original formulation, since God's properties are so vastly underdetermined, all one could hope to infer would be that there was some general thing which brought the universe into existence and that one could label that thing 'God'. But such an inference would not provide the theist with an argument against the atheist. The difference between atheism and theism would solely consist in whether or not one wished to label that mysterious First Cause as 'God'.

In the reformulation, it is unclear why we should grant the theist that the thing they label 'God' had anything to do with the origins of the universe. But supposing that we did grant them this concession, it is unclear how it would help the theist. They would have no grounds – at least from theology – on which to conclude that the thing they label 'God' was distinct from a great cosmic beer can which, when spilled by a dancing celestial wombat, brought about the universe. We may find such an explanation of the universe's origins absurd, but so much the worse for the theist.

"Religion"[85] would be impossible as well. Just as in Collins's response to King, it cannot be proven that one should worship such a being, that there is an afterlife, or that there was once a human who was fully God and died for our sins. Furthermore, since it is not at all clear what such statements would actually mean, they could not be accepted on the basis of faith either.

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85 As before, 'religion' is meant in actor's categories. Religions which either have a radically different conception of God or gods – such as totemism – do not suffer from this objection.

Chapter V: Conclusion

As I have shown, arguments appearing in early modern discussions of atheism (from figures such as d'Holbach, Collins, Berkeley, and Hume) are decisive against a view of God-talk provided by Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas's writings leave us with two possibilities for predicating terms of both God and creature – either this occurs by the analogy of proportion or by the analogy of proportionality.

In an argument presented by d'Holbach, the analogy of proportion was shown to either lead to the conclusion that God-talk is incomprehensible non-sense or is question begging. Next, I showed that an argument which appears in the works of Collins, Berkeley, and Hume can be reconstituted into an argument against the analogy of proportionality. Such a conception of God-talk leaves the term 'God' so radically underdetermined that there was no longer a non-verbal distinction between theism and atheism. Thus, Aquinas failed to provide an adequate response to PRL. God-talk is left either unintelligible or underdetermined and natural theology is left doubtful.

An Aquinas-proponent might object that our idea of God could have arisen from some place other than our empirical knowledge of the creaturely world. For instance, the idea of God could have arisen through revelation. Nonetheless, such a solution is inconsistent with the positions of any of the figures we have considered. Aquinas, d'Holbach, Collins, Berkeley, and Hume all agreed that one must prove God's existence both prior to and independent of accepting revelation (that is, to having faith – where faith is defined as trust in revelation).

Thus, it seems that the Aquinas-proponent must either give up their conception of faith, their conception of God-talk, or their commitment to God. I would suggest to the Aquinas-proponent that they give up their conception of faith and pursue the argument that our knowledge of God arrives via revelation, though it would seem that in pursuing such an argument the Aquinas-proponent has a dialectical disadvantage in the debate with non-believers.

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