

Univocity, Analogy and the Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy

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Introduction: The Analytic-Continental Divide

For most of the twentieth and now also the twenty-first century, the world of academic philosophy has been plagued by the so-called “analytic-continental divide.” In recent years, numerous attempts have been made to understand and bridge the ‘divide’ because leading philosophers have realized that the sharp division between the two styles or traditions of philosophy has produced some harmful results for the discipline as a whole. Brian Leiter, who occupies an important position in the academic profession of philosophy due to his leading role in “The Philosophical Gourmet Report,” a semi-official ranking of philosophy departments in the English-speaking world, has been vocal about these negative developments in contemporary philosophy: “There are rather unadmirable reasons for identifying on one side of the divide or the other... it entitles you not to know certain things.... It encourages a destructive kind of parochialism.”¹ There is an “acceptable sphere of ignorance” that comes with a direct identification with either side of the divide that tends to result in a sort of intellectual incest amongst the different camps. At their worst, philosophers on both sides learn only the conceptual frameworks that are specific to their own “traditions”, which makes any meaningful debate between the two sides extremely difficult. Perennial issues such as the nature and criteria of knowledge, for example, are often bludgeoned with arguments stemming from uncritically adopted paradigms. Given this situation, it is difficult to see how progress in philosophy would be even possible—much less encouraged. Dialogue between the two sides is cut off before it begins.

If this is the case, then, what is Leiter’s diagnosis of the situation? For him, the answer is simple. The divide is really nothing more than a superficial distinction based

¹ See Brian Leiter and Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy Bites*, <http://philosophybites.com/>.

predominantly on stylistic differences in philosophical writing.² Whereas analytic philosophy pursues its various tasks using a research methodology that is similar to the natural sciences—valuing argumentative clarity and precision—continental philosophy is prone to adopt a more “literary” style that aims to illuminate core questions of the so-called “human situation” in ways that formal logic or conceptual analysis could never achieve by themselves.³

Leiter is not the only philosopher who takes this view of the analytic-continental divide, of course, but for the sake of this study he represents the “superficial” thesis (i.e. the thesis that the divide is basically composed of differences that are not philosophically substantive). This approach is slightly different from that of Iain Thomson, who proposes a Hegelian reading of the divide. For Thomson, there are genuine philosophical differences between the two camps, including most notably Bertrand Russell’s extended critique of German Idealism in the name of his “logical atomism.”⁴ However, most of the actual conflict that characterizes the divide is political.⁵ Citing reasons similar to Leiter’s notion of the acceptable sphere of ignorance that comes with the divide, Thomson says that the most determinative element is a certain brand of identity politics. Those on

² “Analytic” philosophy today names a *style* of doing philosophy, not a philosophical program or a set of substantive views.” See Brian Leiter, “Philosophical Gourmet Report,” <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/>.

³ Bertrand Russell’s (in)famous quip about Friedrich Nietzsche takes this line of argumentation. He writes polemically in his *History of Western Philosophy* that “Nietzsche, though a professor, was a literary rather than an academic philosopher. He invented no new theories in ontology or epistemology.” Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1972),.

⁴ Russell describes his philosophy as a way of preserving “the common-sense belief that there are many separate things . . . that are not just as consisting merely in phases and unreal divisions of a single indivisible Reality.” Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* in: *Readings in Twentieth Century Philosophy* edited by William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 298.

⁵ “Analytic resistance to continental philosophy continues to take the form of opposition to any style that seems to be deliberately “obscure” (that is, any style in which it seems that the philosopher is not even trying to write clearly), even if only extremists still advance the old charge that the function of such obscure styles is to conceal the “fascism” or “Nazism” hidden at their core.” Iain Thomson, “In the Future Philosophy will be Neither Continental Nor Analytic but Synthetic,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 50.2 (June 2012): 197.

opposite sides tend to view one another as a threat to their own style of philosophizing. For Thomson, what is needed is a Hegelian synthesis of opposites, in which the best attributes of each as a historical phenomenon are preserved. Instead of perpetuating such an identity politics within the discipline of philosophy, a genuine engagement between sides should yield a fuller and more robust philosophical academy. Even for Thomson, though, it is difficult to identify a clearly marked “opposite” from which such a synthesis could emerge. To his credit, Thomson does identify some concrete personalities who seem to embody this synthesis (Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, for example), valuing analytic clarity without sacrificing the sincerity and depth of the continental mode of questioning.⁶ So, although he is more explicit about the political element of the divide, Thomson also seems to adopt another version of the superficial thesis.

Against the superficial thesis of Leiter and Thomson, continental specialist Babette Babich argues that “[t]emperament and style . . . do not exhaust the distinction to be made between analytic and [c]ontinental approaches to philosophy, for the distinction constitutes a [real] divide.”⁷ While she does agree with others who say that the analytic style is unique because it resembles the scientific method by valuing argumentative rigor and clear conclusions, she insists upon a unique, identifiable philosophical distinction that is not simply stylistic. According to her, the distinctive trait of analytic philosophy as a scholarly enterprise is its “deflationary” character. Drawing on the movement of logical positivism as a paradigm case, Babich remarks that the goal of analytic philosophy is not

⁶ Ibid., 200.

⁷ Babette Babich, “The Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy: Nietzsche’s Lying Truth, Heidegger’s Speaking Language and Philosophy,” in *A House Divided: Analytic and Continental Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), 64.

to *solve* philosophical problems but rather to *dissolve* them.⁸ This means that the discipline is more about revealing the phony or imprecise nature of ancient questions than actually engaging with them seriously. Thus, by a radical parting of ways with the tradition prior to the twentieth century, analytic philosophy does its best to show why the core issues of philosophy are usually just grammatical mistakes.⁹

Babich argues that continental philosophy, by contrast, does most of its work in “intensifying” philosophical problems in new and creative ways. This continental attitude is not merely evident from the careful by continental thinkers’ attention to the contingent circumstances (i.e. position in history, culture, etc.) in which philosophy is always already caught up, but also from their ready acknowledgment of philosophy’s perennial nature.

Needless to say, Babich’s characterization of the divide is not popular amongst those who identify themselves as analytic philosophers.¹⁰ Indeed, there may be good reason to believe that Babich’s approach is too caught up in polemics, which makes it difficult to sketch an accurate portrayal of the twentieth century’s analytic turn. Moreover, her distinction between “solving” and “dissolving” a question is rather dubious. It is difficult to ascertain how “solve” could mean something different than “dissolve” in this context. On the surface, at least, to solve a problem is to do away with a problem (what else could it mean?—unless it is somehow the task of philosophy to continue pondering on about solved problems). Without denying her observations regarding the different

⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁹ One might recall Ludwig Wittgenstein’s bold assertion in the *Philosophical Investigations*: “philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 38.

¹⁰ “[Babich’s article] consists largely of assertions about analytic philosophy and citations of other people’s assertions. A reader somewhat familiar with both traditions will be puzzled as to why some of these assertions are taken to be true.” Samuel Wheeler, “Review of *A House Divided: Analytic and Continental Philosophy*,” *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (June 12, 2004).

tendencies of each side of the divide, it is still difficult to pinpoint a clearly defined, substantive philosophical disagreement in Babich's assessment.

Another contemporary philosopher who is interested in assessing the analytic-continental divide is Lee Braver, who succeeds in actually articulating a clear philosophical disagreement that characterizes the divide, namely the realism/anti-realism debate. In his book, *A Thing of this World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism*, he points out with remarkable precision the complex manifestations of anti-realism as a phenomenon that seems to underlie many continental approaches to philosophy.¹¹ Of course, there are exceptions to a simple contrast whereby continental philosophers tend to identify with different variations of anti-realism while analytics favor realism. Some of these exceptions are simply too prominent to ignore.¹²

Nevertheless, Braver's history examines the divide in a substantial and fruitful way. This is especially true when comparing his deeply historical assessment with some aforementioned, shallower mainstream alternatives. Even so, Braver's rigorously argued and commendable attempt at diagnosis is of little help when it comes to showing a coherent way toward overcoming the divide. As a continental philosopher himself, Braver seems to engage the supposed realism of analytic philosophy as if it were a "reactionary chunk of petrified wood that has nothing to teach us."¹³ In any case, the

¹¹ According to Braver, there are at least six meaningful ways in which the anti-realism/realism debate manifests itself in philosophy after the divide, including: (1) "The world is not/is dependent on the mind; (2) Truth is/is not correspondence; (3) There is/is not one true and complete description of how the world is (4); Any statement is/is not necessarily either true or untrue; (5) Knowledge is/is not passive with respect to what it knows; (6) The human subject does/does not have a fixed character. Graham Harman, "A Festival of Anti-Realism: Braver's History of Continental Thought," *Philosophy Today* 52.2 (Summer 2008), 198.

¹² The recent developments within the emerging philosophical school of "Speculative Realism" is a very obvious example of realism that chooses to engage in dialogue with exclusively continental philosophers. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Realism and Materialism* (Melbourne: RePress, 2011).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 198.

mysterious yet pernicious divide remains.

Compared with Leiter's, and even Thomson's superficial theses, then, Braver's view represents perhaps the most robust case for a "substantive", non-superficial understanding of the divide.¹⁴ This essay is an attempt to take up and deepen Braver's thesis about substantive philosophical differences at the heart of the divide between analytic and continental philosophy by pursuing the following questions:

1. Is there an identifiable philosophical disagreement that explains the fundamental failure of analytic and continental philosophy to engage each other in a fruitful dialogue? If so, what is it?
2. Once we have isolated this disagreement, what larger framework could be conducive for reaching a meaningful disagreement or agreement between analytic and continental philosophers?

I will attempt to answer the first question in the affirmative by showing that the nature of the divide can be understood with reference to a controversy in Medieval Scholasticism between two mutually exclusive metaphysical frameworks, namely, Thomas Aquinas' analogy of being (*analogia entis*) and John Duns Scotus' univocity of being (*univocatio entis*). I argue that the differences between these two philosophies serve as a helpful hermeneutic lens through which the differing outlooks of continental and analytic philosophy may be perceived as a philosophically substantial disagreement about being *qua* being, rather than a mere stylistic difference. Although I do not claim that this reading provides a clear and present way to enable a *comprehensive* understanding of the divide, I do propose that it represents one clear and substantive

¹⁴ Although it should go without saying that there are many more important views on the nature and trajectory of the divide, I have chosen the previous ones as preliminary examples in order to set the framework of this particular study.

difference between major continental and analytic philosophers. To make this first point, I will begin by sketching a brief history of the Thomist analogy as it relates to the Scotist doctrine of univocity. This historical outline allows for a clear definition of terms I will then apply to the contemporary philosophical divide in the three “case studies” which will form the main body of this study.

The first case study at issue is the exchange between Martin Heidegger and Gilbert Ryle, who, despite sharing mutual objects of critique, disagree fundamentally on the nature and possibility of the “things themselves” or objects in the world. The second case study to be explored is the [in]famous debate between Jacques Derrida and John Searle, which deals primarily with the philosophy of written language and, more specifically, the role of subjective intentionality and “iterability” in meaningful communication. The third and final case study concerns a debate in Christian philosophy between the contemporary movement of hermeneutic ontology (represented here in the polemic of James K.A. Smith) and the “Biola School” of Christian philosophy (William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland). This debate has for its content the nature of knowledge and its relationship to being. In each of these three case studies, I will demonstrate that the Medieval positions of analogy and univocity govern the debates at their most fundamental levels.

In a subsequent, slightly shorter section, I will then attempt to address my second concern: having identified arguably the most substantive difference between the two traditions, how can we move into a fruitful dialogue between them? It is my contention that Christian philosophical *theology* offers a unique and compelling framework in which a more robust debate can occur beyond simply the “analytic or continental” deadlock.

There may be, of course, suitable resources internal to “pure” philosophy that could also engender meaningful debate. After all, ideas such as explanatory power—the ability to explain various phenomena of common sense and empirical investigation—and logical coherence seem to apply in all good philosophy. Perhaps these more or less “purely philosophical” standards would be able to support either analogy or univocity as the more robust metaphysical paradigm.¹⁵

However, to my mind, Christian philosophical theology is even better situated for the task of framing a fruitful debate between continental and analytic philosophers for at least three reasons:

1. The historical context for univocity and analogy and thus for the terms that help define the substantial difference between the traditions is clearly theological. Theology is crucial for understanding the historical context and development of both analogy and univocity. This allows for a clearer definition of terms—one that includes without reservation or embarrassment the concept of God.
2. In order for debate to be intelligibly Christian, charitable hermeneutics—a hermeneutics that does not hold one’s opposing position to be suspicious *a priori*—would have to be employed by both sides. Although this point might sound trivial, (or worse, sentimental), its importance is apparent in the train wreck that is the Derrida-Searle debate. While of course charitable hermeneutics is not limited to a Christian philosophical approach, it does (or should) encourage an intentional environment of such charitableness.

¹⁵ By “purely philosophical” I simply mean something that is more or less universally recognized by serious figures across various traditions of philosophy.

3. A shared theological context of revelation offers even more common ground for debate. For example, instead of continental philosophers flatly denying the existence of a neutral, “objective” starting point for philosophy, they could appeal to specific interpretations of theological doctrines of God’s transcendence, human fallenness, or a related concept in a more articulate, positive manner.¹⁶

While I do not want to assume a romantic disposition of “building bridges” in this study, I do recognize the possibility and importance of productive philosophical debate between analytic and continental traditions of philosophy. Even if it is extremely difficult to make a coherent, *positive* case for even one specific end towards which philosophy should absolutely strive as a discipline, what *is* clear is that the fragmentation that results from such a divide cannot be one of them. This point is evident in the three case studies in the latter part of this essay—especially in the exchange between Derrida and Searle. For these reasons and others, I take it to be an important task to demonstrate ways of thinking about the possibility of meaningful dialogue between analytic and continental philosophy.

Before moving on, it is worth noting a final advantage of identifying the divide by means of this rather specific topic of *analogia* and *univocatio* rather than through another more “contemporary” theme such as Braver’s aforementioned realism and anti-realism distinction. I believe that the following diagnosis is superior insofar as it lends itself quite naturally to a philosophical ethos that encompasses both twentieth century analytic and continental philosophy. This ethos is the “linguistic turn” in philosophy.

¹⁶ To take just one example of such a way of thinking, we can consider Heidegger’s answer to a question about the apparent identity between God and being at the 1951 Zurich seminar: “I believe that Being can never be thought as the ground or essence of God, but that nevertheless the experience of God and of his manifestedness, . . . flashes in the dimension of Being.” See Martin Heidegger, “The Reply to the Third Question at the Seminar in Zurich, 1951,” accessed in: Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 61-62.

The linguistic turn is usually applied in reference to the development in analytic philosophy that includes Gottlob Frege's "On Sense and Reference", Bertrand Russell's "On Denoting" and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. However, there is equally good reason to apply such a label to the development of continental philosophy characterized by the movements of structuralism and post-structuralism, highlighted by Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* and Derrida's *Writing and Difference*.

What unites these otherwise disparate texts is a consensus regarding the importance of language in philosophy. After this dual linguistic turn—in analytic and continental philosophy alike—it becomes necessary to draw out the complicated relationship between "sense" and "reference" (analytic) and "signifier" and "signified" (continental). This linguistic turn problematizes what was once perhaps the commonsense understanding of language and reality operating in neat, hermetically-sealed realms, leaving both sides of the divide with a new task: to sketch a philosophy of language that can accommodate the rigors of conceptual analysis (analytic) and match the descriptive power of phenomenological scrutiny (continental).

The positions of analogy and univocity are metaphysical in nature; however, they also represent the building blocks of a philosophy of language. After all, they are competing claims about the nature of being *qua* being, or being itself. Insofar as the analytic-continental divide is linguistic in nature, there is good reason to note its fundamental structure accordingly.¹⁷

¹⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer makes a similar point in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*: "It is no accident, it seems to me, that in recent decades the phenomenon of language has come to the center of philosophical inquiry. Perhaps one can even say that under this banner even the greatest kind of philosophical gulf that exists between peoples—the one between Anglo-Saxon nominalism on the one and the metaphysical

Aristotle and Being qua Being

We now turn to the meaning of the two positions of analogy and univocity. Because the latter grows from the former, it is important to provide at least a rough historical sketch of the context out of which the positions arise. Although Aquinas and Scotus represent the fullest development of each respective concept (for the purposes of this study, at least), Aristotle is the first to raise explicitly the problem of being *qua* being and analogy in his metaphysics.

In Book Gamma of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle clarifies the fundamental task of philosophy in its purest form: “There is a kind of science whose remit is being *qua* being . . . [it] is not the same as any of the departmental disciplines. For none of these latter engages in this *general* speculation about that which is *qua* that which is.”¹⁸ This science, which aims to clarify what it means to say that something has *being*—especially as this curious word *being* is applied to all that exists—is philosophy in its purest form. Unlike the so-called “departmental disciplines,” Aristotle conceives of philosophy as that which seeks after the most fundamental cause or principle of reality.¹⁹ Being *qua* being is this most fundamental cause or principle.

In order to arrive at this ultimate goal of understanding being *qua* being, Aristotle takes an important cue from his teacher, Plato. While acknowledging that particular beings are in a state of flux—in a state of *becoming* rather than *being*—it is important to

tradition on the Continent on the other—has begun to be bridged.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (London: University of California Press, 1976), 75.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1999), 1003a.

¹⁹ “[T]he things that are most known are the primary things and the causes. For it is through them and from them that the other things are known and not the latter through the underlying things.” *Ibid.*, 982b.

take heed of what stays resilient and changeless because, presumably, being *qua* being does not change from one specific instantiation to another.

It is in order to determine a particular being's unchanging qualities that Aristotle develops his controversial notion of "substance."²⁰ Although he does attempt to give a properly metaphysical account of substance in his *Metaphysics*, it is important to understand its basic logical status first so that it is intelligible as a concept.²¹ Aristotle does this in his short work, *Categories*, in which he remarks, "A substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse."²² At its most basic logical level, substance is that which cannot serve as a predicate modifying a prior subject.

To illustrate this point, consider a couple of examples that Aristotle himself uses. It might seem like the word "man" is more basic than "individual man" because the former serves as a "species" under which the latter falls. However unlike Plato, Aristotle is not so much interested in seeing otherworldly wholes beyond this-worldly particulars

²⁰ Many have disputed the English rendering of this Greek term, οὐσία, as "substance". The latter is derived from the Latin, *substantia* (literally, standing-under), which is, in turn, derived from an earlier Latin term, *essentia*. The problem here, according to scholars like Joseph Owens, is that the medieval translation comes too close to committing itself to a position that Aristotle himself rejects in Book M of *The Metaphysics*. Far from just "standing-under" particular qualities or accidental properties, οὐσία has direct ties with the ontological difference between being *qua* being and particular beings. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 138. While recognizing and appreciating this corrective's function in the following argument, I will continue to use the English "substance" in this study for familiarity's sake.

²¹ By this distinction between "properly metaphysical" and "logical", I mean something along the lines of what Howard Robinson means in his entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entitled "Substance": namely, the difference between a systematic engagement with other important metaphysical concepts like Form and matter and, more narrowly, simply a linguistic analysis whose primary constituents are the notions of subject and predicate. Howard Robinson, "Substance," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2009, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/substance/>.

²² Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 2a11.

as he is in understanding what being a particular actually means. His goal is to identify primary substance. That is why Aristotle acknowledges species (i.e. man) as a “secondary” substance—closer to primary substance than the even more general category of genus (i.e. animal), but not quite the primary substance itself.²³

Aristotle’s notion of primary substance seeks to determine the “thisness” of a particular being. As we have seen, the logical status of primary substance is that it cannot serve as a predicate for an existing subject (i.e. it is not sensible to say that “man is this individual man”). The primary substance possesses a logical integrity in itself, and is thus immune to any further conceptual analysis.

The task of understanding primary substance proves to be more difficult, however, once these parameters are extended from a strictly logical analysis to his metaphysical system as a whole. More specifically, it is still unclear how or to what extent primary substance can be accounted in the context of a reality of flux. Indeed, such an inability is at the heart of the Stagirite’s critique of Platonic Form:

Again, it would seem impossible that the substance and that of which it is the substance should exist apart; how, therefore, could the Ideas, being the substances of things, exist apart? In the *Phaedo* the case is stated in this way—that the Forms are causes both of being and of becoming; yet when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement.²⁴

Aristotle presents two basic metaphysical problems here, both of which are important for understanding his account of substance.

The first of these issues is the question-begging nature of the supposed dualism between the Form of a particular, material being (i.e. an individual man) and the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 991b.

particular being itself. If the Form is supposed to be the ideal of some material being—yet exist in some incorporeal state—it is difficult to ascertain how or to what extent it is possible to ascribe the same substance to both Form and material being. For example, how does one know whether the ideal form “man” and its material representation are both versions of the same individual human being? It seems as though there is at least one non-accidental difference in the properties of both, namely, that one exists in an incorporeal state, and the other does not. This is a problem because Form and matter are supposed to be different manifestations of the same thing.

The second metaphysical problem has to do with causation. Again, Aristotle is concerned with fundamental principles, which means he is interested in how being *qua* being can be causative. Because the Platonic Forms are immaterial, it is difficult to understand the relationship they have with their corresponding material beings as anything but an obscure sophism. This, in turn, makes it difficult to ascertain how the former could be the cause for the latter,²⁵ which compels Aristotle to make a rather snide remark about his teacher’s greatest theory: “[T]hings do not come to be from the Forms in any of the usual senses of ‘from.’ And to say that the Forms are patterns and that the other things participate in them is to use empty words and poetic metaphors.”²⁶ It is clear that Aristotle does not think that Plato’s image of “participation” helps bridge the gap

²⁵ It is important to note here that “one thing *causing* another” [why is it important to note this? May it be important to say clearly why and integrate that reason into your main text?] has a larger meaning for Aristotle than it does in modernity. He notes four causes: material (referring to material elements out of which the particular being is composed), efficient (that which sets the particular being into motion in the strictest sense), formal (the distinctive shape into which the particular being is fashioned), and final (the aim or purpose served by the particular being). Modern physics has usually admitted the first two and denied the latter two. This represents, incidentally, a key shift in thought from Ancient/Medieval to Modern thought. See *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

between Form and matter. It is instead a “poetic metaphor” used as an attempt to try in vain to escape what is an insurmountable impasse in his system.²⁷

So, if it is not by positing an a-temporal realm in which the substance of particular beings exist apart from the flux that characterize their material counterparts, then how does Aristotle ground substance? His attempt to answer this question comes as a defense of what is now called his “hylomorphic” synthesis. This “bringing together” of form and matter consolidates what is perhaps Aristotle’s most original contribution to philosophy, but is also vital for understanding how he conceives of primary substance.

In order to understand the reasons behind Aristotle’s hylomorphic synthesis, it is important to understand that there are two extreme positions Aristotle wishes to evade. The first is the position that matter is formless, or that it lacks any intelligibility. This position of rabid skepticism is an unacceptable “counsel of despair for any Greek philosopher.”²⁸ However, as we just explored, for Aristotle the “opposite” position—the Platonic insistence upon ideal, incorporeal Forms as explanatory measures for changeable, material reality—is also unacceptable. The reason for this is that there is no robust account for flux, aside from its accidental and even unfortunate role in muddying the waters of philosophical investigation. Indeed, on a standard Platonic view, flux is something that is there despite the philosopher’s best wishes. As an alternative to this

²⁷ The philosopher R.E. Allen has disputed this critique of participation by examining the Greek term μέθεξις more closely. Far from the standard notion of the Form and matter maintaining a relationship that simply runs from “the more abstract to the more concrete,” Plato employs the word μέθεξις to denote a relationship that is analogous to that between “exemplars and exemplifications.” The key difference between the two analogies is that only the former overemphasizes the importance of common characters as the “activity” of μέθεξις, thereby losing the language of deficiency that is implicit in matter as it relates to Form. While this point is well-taken, it is not clear how an unmoving Form can cause a material being that is *in flux*. See R.E. Allen, “Participation and Predication in Plato’s Middle Dialogues,” *The Philosophical Review* 69.2 (Apr 1960): 158-160.

²⁸ Hugh Lawson-Tancred, “Substance,” in: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xxviii.

view, Aristotle seeks to draw a more robust picture of a world that embraces flux as a constitutive element of nature.

In order to accomplish these dual purposes—accommodating both rational intelligibility and flux—Aristotle rearticulates matter and form using the concepts of potentiality and actuality. Potentiality, which is active in brute matter, is defined as a “principle of change in another thing.”²⁹ This means that potentiality as such is defined only insofar as it is dependent upon something outside of itself for motion. Again, “dependence” refers to an asymmetrical causal relation—not only in the modern sense of the material and efficient causes, but final and especially formal causes as well. By contrast, actuality is manifested in form, and is precisely that which serves as the principle or cause of its corresponding potentiality. It has no other principle or cause beside itself.

A helpful illustration of this distinction between potentiality and actuality is in Book Theta of *The Metaphysics*:

The fact is that the actuality of an object is its *obtaining*.³⁰ And by this I do not have in mind its obtaining in that manner which we have accounted for in terms of potentiality. We say that something exists in potentiality if it is like a statue of Hermes existing in a block of wood.³¹

The “block of wood” at issue here speaks to a piece of brute matter that can nevertheless be fashioned into a statue of Hermes. So, even before the block of wood has been fashioned, Aristotle might say that it *is* a statue of Hermes—that is, if we understand “is” in its limited sense, in terms of potentiality. He also says that actuality is a kind of

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1020a.

³⁰ The use of the gerund “*obtaining*” may seem needlessly difficult, but it is helpful nevertheless in that it denotes the close proximity that actuality maintains in relation to flux.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1048a.

obtaining. But in what sense is the obtaining of actuality differ from the obtaining of potentiality? Aristotle's answers, which lead us finally to the distinctive characteristics of primary substance, are two that have already been mentioned—namely, the causal power of actuality and its resistance to change.

In order to grasp Aristotle's understanding of causal power, we focus on the latter two of the four causes: namely, final and formal. As we explored before, final cause expresses the teleological nature of material beings as ontologically constitutive. To return to the Aristotelian example of the block of wood that is fashioned to be a statue of Hermes: the block's final cause or purpose (i.e. reverence of the god) is a necessary part of statue's ontological constitution. Once again, it is the *dynamic* process of being that is at issue here. With such a scope—one that encompasses the entirety of the process (from wood to statue)—it becomes possible to achieve the explanatory power that Aristotle seeks. Only by understanding the object in the entirety of this process is it possible to grasp the four causes with meaningful distinction. This causal power “from both sides,” (efficient and final) so to speak, reflects the necessity of change from potentiality to actuality.

Once the block of wood is becomes a final product, its actuality is most clearly seen by way of its newfound resistance to change as a statue. Although it might seem simple enough, it is important to understand, once again, the difference between this form and the Platonic Form. Indeed, it might seem that Aristotle's notion of formal cause has no choice but to resort back to some kind of Platonic Form, given that the defining characteristic of each philosopher's concept is its resistance to change. While there is no doubt that the impetus for the search of such a thing is difficult to imagine without Plato's

influence, there is nevertheless a key difference that sets their respective ontologies apart. Although it is true that both Platonic Form and Aristotelian formal cause are born from the same concern for stability in the midst of temporal flux, the two concepts differ as to *how* they suggest such a resistance to change. Platonic Form is changeless because it is non-material and transcendent. Its corresponding materiality derives stability from participating in the Form, but it can only do so as an eternally deficient and lacking copy of the original. Aristotelian formal cause, by contrast, does not possess immaterial transcendence; rather, it is itself immanent in its own instantiation in the material world. Its permanence is not derived from an extra-material source, but from active resistance to change. In this way, then, Aristotelian formal cause paves the way for primary substance's immanent reality as both causative of its object and resilient in the face of change.

So what is the best way of talking about being *qua* being, ultimately? While we have already said that Aristotle's tentative first answer lies with primary substance, we now have a much clearer picture of the concepts he uses to justify and make sense of such a claim. First, primary substance is particularity; it is the "thisness" of a particular being. Primary substance's logical structure is such that it cannot serve as a predicate for any prior subject. As we remarked before, this is why propositions such as "man (species) is this individual man (primary substance)" do not make sense. Second, our understanding of being as being is further refined by the recognition that primary substance stands as the formal cause of its material accidents. The illustration we looked at in this case was the wooden statue of Hermes. Although Aristotle would not deny that

a careful analysis would yield many material constituents (even ones of which he is not aware), his ontology is distinct from atomism because the shape or model into which those material constituents are fashioned is just as fundamentally real as the material constituents themselves. Because cause can be said in four ways, it is possible to speak of primary substance as causative.³²

With this understanding of primary substance in place, it is possible to explore the ramifications for the overarching purpose of the present chapter: namely, to understand the competing positions of analogy and univocity.

According to Aristotle, there are at least two ways in which it is possible to speak in terms of analogy: as either a “four-term” and “two-term” analogy.³³ A four-term analogy means “the second [term] is related to the first as the fourth is to the third.”³⁴ An example of this four-term analogy is the following relation of infatuation: “As the cake is to the plump child, so is the young maiden to the lovestruck prince.” The four-term structure of this infatuation analogy makes explicit what are hidden premises in the two-term analogy. So, while it is possible to say that the cake (first term) is lovely (second term), this is only possible with the help of the implicit structure of the aforementioned four-term analogy.

Instead of relying only on the relation of genus to species—and species to primary substance—it is possible to describe relations that occur across separate genus and

³² As an addendum to this point, it is relevant that Aristotle is even prepared to say that one and the same thing can serve as more than one cause. This is indeed the case for the soul, which according to Aristotle accounts for three of the four causes (efficient, formal and final). See Aristotle, *De Anima* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 415b.

³³ These categories (four-term and two-term, respectively) are slight variations in the exegetical work in Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 124-125.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Aristotle Xxiii: Poetics. Longinus, on the Sublime. Demetrius, on Style*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 23 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1457b.

species. In this way, then, “there is analogy in every category of what is.”³⁵ This is the sense in which Aristotle’s understanding of analogy is all-encompassing.

At this point, it might be tempting to ask the question of whether or not Aquinas’ version of *analogia* is merely an elaboration on Aristotle’s metaphysical framework. This might be true in a sense, as we will see shortly. However, just as there is reason to believe that Aristotle’s version of analogy blazes a trail for Aquinas, there is perhaps even more reason to believe that the former philosopher’s metaphysics does the same for Scotus’ *univocatio*. Two key points—one in the *Posterior Analytics* and the other in *Categories*—provide evidence for this latter claim.

The first point is Aristotle’s “elevation of substance over being.”³⁶ In Book II, he makes a claim that is also made throughout *Metaphysics*, namely, that “[b]eing does not act as essence to any existing thing, for what it is is not a genus.”³⁷ As we remarked before, it is clear that Aristotle is not after some kind of all-encompassing genus; for this would mean that his doctrine of primary substance is not the most foundational concept in his metaphysics. No, for Aristotle, being *qua* being is not a genus. Instead, being *qua* being pertains to the *thisness*—the primary substance—of any particular being. Therefore a single analogy—one that would serve as the principle of individuation of all particular things—is not a possibility. The fact is that there is an innumerable amount of separate

³⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1093b.

³⁶ I am indebted to Adrian Pabst’s recent book, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy*, for the reading of the first of these two “key points.” Although he does not make the same claim regarding the relevance of the passage for the Scotist doctrine of univocity, his analysis of the text as “elevating substance over being” is important for the argument here. See Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 12-16.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics; Topica*, trans. Hugh Tredennick and E. S. Forster, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 92b.

thisness-es for which there is no one common principle. It is the particular being that is ultimate in Aristotle's metaphysics.

This point leads us to our second: namely, the equality of primary substances amongst one another: "[O]f the primary substances one is no more a substance than another: the individual man is no more a substance than the individual ox."³⁸ In other words, there is no *logical* hierarchy among primary substances. Because primary substance is itself the most fundamental concept of being, on this level it is not possible to raise the question of individuation—a way to logically distinguish the “substance-hood” of primary substances. Ultimately, then, Aristotle's metaphysics posits an equal plane upon which all separate primary substances *are* in the same way and in the same respect. While the individual man and the individual ox might serve as focal points for their respective analogies across different categories of being, there is no one analogy that is capable of providing an explicit explanation for primary substance *qua* substance.

Extending Aristotle: Aquinas and Scotus on Analogy

Although the *analogia entis* is an instantly recognizable doctrine for those familiar with Thomism, the term itself is not used explicitly in the *Summa Theologica*.³⁹ Nevertheless, the concept of analogy plays an important role in Aquinas' work. In order to understand what this role is, it is important to note what is perhaps the most obvious

³⁸ Aristotle, *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, 2b22.

³⁹ This simple fact has led some to doubt the impetus behind vigorous recent appropriations of Aquinas' “analogical worldview”—espoused by philosophers and theologians associated with *nouvelle theologie* (Étienne Gilson, Jean Daniélou, and Benedict XVI, among others), and the still more recent movement of “Radical Orthodoxy” (John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and others). See Robert Sweetman, “Univocity, Analogy and the Mystery of Being According to John Duns Scotus,” *Radical Orthodoxy Round Table*, September 15, 2003, <http://disseminary.org/seminar/radox/archives/000756.html>.

difference between the respective metaphysical projects of Aristotle and Aquinas, namely, the Christian God.

Although it is true that both thinkers engage the problem of the ontological difference between being *qua* being and particular beings, they pursue this difference in contrasting ways. For Aristotle, God and/or the gods work within the eternal parameters of being; indeed, the gods are generally particular beings who have the power to fashion other particular beings in accordance with their (often unpredictable) wills. This is the sense in which the Greek God is creator.⁴⁰ When Aristotle makes theological claims, then, he is not making claims about the ontological difference. This is because being *qua* being is the object of metaphysics, not theology.

This is not so for Aquinas. Against the Greek notion that “the world and its gods were given together,” Aquinas’ Christian monotheism posits God as the source of all Being.⁴¹ Indeed, on his reading of Genesis 1, the Christian is bound to the idea that God creates the world *ex nihilo*.⁴² What this means in the context of our inquiry regarding the ontological difference is simply this: that the question of being *qua* being is a question with implications for the way in which the Christian God relates himself to his creation.⁴³

⁴⁰ Although it is not the only example, perhaps the most paradigmatic account of this idea is in Plato’s creation story, *Timaeus*. In this account, the “Demiurge” is creates the world in the sense that he combines pre-existing material and form in order to fashion reality in an orderly manner. See Plato. *Timaeus*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2000).

⁴¹ Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 84.

⁴² “On the text of Genesis 1, “In the beginning God created,” etc., the gloss has, “To create is to make something from nothing.” I answer that, As said above (Question 44, Article 2), we must consider not only the emanation of a particular being from a particular agent, but also the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God; and this emanation we designate by the name of creation.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981), Part I, Question 45, Article 1.

⁴³ As “pure act”, God has no potency within himself, which is the grounds for his immutability. “And so in the same way, inasmuch as the similitude of the divine wisdom proceeds in degrees from the highest things, which participate more fully of its likeness, to the lowest things which participate of it in a lesser degree,

This union between ontology and theology reflects a fundamental concern for the relationship between Creator and creation that is at the heart of the Christian formation of the question of ontological difference. The clearest and most explicit rendering of this question in Aquinas' work can be found in Part I, Question 13 of the *Summa Theologica*, which deals with the problem of the predication of God and his creation.

It is intuitive that Christians know what they mean when they say, for example, "God is good." Indeed, if he were not good, then he would not be God—at least not the God with whom they are familiar by way of the incarnation of Christ. At the same time, though, Aquinas also seeks to uphold God's transcendence. In other words, the reality of God cannot be *contained* by human concepts such as goodness or justice; rather, he overflows or transcends any such finite attributes. The question is, then: How is it possible to talk intelligently about God if he is nothing like human beings have ever thought or experienced in full?

Aquinas wrestles with this question in Part I, Question 13, where he navigates the issue using three terms. The first is "univocal" predication, which means something like the first perspective described above, namely, that predicates such as "is good" or "is wise" can apply to both creatures and God in the same way and in the same respect. On this univocal perspective, it is possible to name the attributes of God by looking to our finite, created surroundings. Aquinas deems this view problematic for the following reasons:

there is said to be a kind of procession and movement of the divine wisdom to things; as when we say that the sun proceeds to the earth, inasmuch as the ray of light touches the earth. In this way Dionysius (Coel. Hier. i) expounds the matter, that every procession of the divine manifestation comes to us from the movement of the Father of light." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.9.1.

I answer that, Univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures. The reason of this is that every effect which is not an adequate result of the power of the efficient cause, receives the similitude of the agent not in its full degree, but in a measure that falls short, so that what is divided and multiplied in the effects resides in the agent simply, and in the same manner; as for example the sun by exercise of its one power produces manifold and various forms in all inferior things.⁴⁴

In making his argument against univocity, Aquinas adopts Aristotle's language of causation. When he contends that "caused" things are never quite the same as their cause, Aquinas assumes in some sense that the cause or principle of a particular being *communicates its being* to that which is caused. This process of causation is analogous to a genetic imprint that the cause lays upon what is caused. While not somehow "recreating" itself in its effect, the cause does constitute *in part* that which is caused. Thus, what we have here is a subtle but noticeable emphasis on the primacy of *relation* as a metaphysical principle (as opposed to self-subsistent substance). Instead of one hermetically sealed object setting another into motion, thereby enacting the process of causation, Aquinas believes that the relation that the caused being maintains with its cause is constitutive of that caused being.

Since such a relation is implicit in being *qua* being (because God is responsible for being *qua* being), it cannot be the case that particular beings *are* in the same way and in the same respect as their cause, God. From Aquinas' Christian perspective, the position of univocity makes the mistake of attributing the being of the cause to that which is caused *to a full degree*.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.13.5.

⁴⁵ Some have disputed whether Aquinas' understanding of analogy has ontological implications—saying instead that analogy is a linguistic strategy that is only relevant for epistemological questions. If this were true, then attributing a significant shift in metaphysical thinking to the differences between Aquinas and

So, if univocal predication is problematic, what about equivocal predication, which assumes the opposite position—denying any similarity between predicates of God and of creatures? Again, Aquinas is critical of such an extreme perspective: “Neither, on the other hand, are names applied to God and creatures in a purely equivocal sense, as some have said.”⁴⁶ If equivocal predication is assumed outright, then meaningful speech about God is impossible. But this is a direct assault on the integrity of the words of the Apostle Paul (among many others), who clearly does not accept such a terrible consequence.⁴⁷

The solution to this dilemma for Aquinas, then, is his version of analogical predication: “Therefore it must be said that these names are said of God and creatures in an analogous sense, i.e. according to proportion.”⁴⁸ Unlike univocity and equivocity, which bear upon themselves difficult and extreme consequences, analogy represents a *via media*:

[W]hatever 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. Now this mode of community of idea is 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; but a term which is thus used in a multiple sense signifies various proportions to some one thing.⁴⁹

Scotus would be a mistake. See John Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 329-30. While I do recognize that there are grounds for this reading elsewhere in Aquinas’ *oeuvre*, nonetheless I think a more aggressively ontological rendering of analogy is able to accommodate better this discussion of causation in Question 13 of the *Summa*. For more on why an ontological rendering of analogy is preferable to a purely logical or epistemological rendering, see Victor Salas, “The Ontology of Analogy in Aquinas: A Response to Laurence Hemming,” *The Heythrop Journal* 50.4 (July 2009), 639.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Aquinas goes on to cite Romans 1:20: The invisible things of [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Predication of creatures is similar to predication of God, but in a limited sense. Simply by being themselves, created things participate in God in different ways and to different extents. Instead of understanding the composition of all creation in terms of isolated, self-sufficient entities, this analogical vision understands things only in their participatory relationship to God. Indeed, *the very meaning of being itself* is described as a relationship to God, who is himself not a being among others.

To illustrate this point, Aquinas uses a metaphor that is important for his understanding of the relationship between the Creator and creation. Like the sun's distribution of heat throughout the earth, God's attributes are distributed throughout his creation in a *limited* way. After all, the heat of the sun's surface is different from the heat of the sun in an Arizona summer—not only in terms of degree, but also in kind. Although the poor souls in Arizona can apply the predicate “is hot” quite intelligibly in their own earthly context, that same “is hot” is different for the sun because the sun *is* the Arizona hotness to begin with. Thus, only insofar as this important qualification holds can the predicate “is hot” apply to both Arizona and the sun. This is the sense in which it is possible to predicate God and particular beings, Creator and creation.

So what is being *qua* being, for Aquinas? The short answer is God himself, insofar as he is the cause of all particular beings—not a being among others.⁵⁰ Yet, as we have seen, it is important to realize that we can talk about God only in terms of analogy. This means that particular beings are individuated by a personal, intentional, creative power. Ultimately, though, as the language of analogy indicates, the being of particular

⁵⁰ “[T]here is simply nothing more universal than *ipsum esse*. As such, as the most universal, it is shared in or participated in by everything else, but does not itself participate in something more universal.” Rudi A. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 79.

beings is apophatic in character, meaning that it cannot be “arrived upon” in terms of a positive affirmation.⁵¹

While Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that analogy is a metaphysical concept that can be used to denote relations across different genus and species, his concept of analogy differs from the Stagirite’s in the sense that his entire metaphysics is informed by this analogy of participation in the transcendent Creator. By emphasizing the transcendence of the Christian God—who is beyond the realm of particular beings—Aquinas has an answer for the aforementioned Aristotelian impasse: namely, the problem of the common individuation of primary substances. By placing Platonic Forms in the mind of God, Aquinas is able to explain more adequately how particular beings can be constituted by their respective primary substances.⁵² This is not to say that Aristotle himself would have been somehow certainly “convinced” of Aquinas’ version of the analogy of being. Indeed, he might accuse Aquinas of reverting back to the problematic language of participation in the Platonic sense.⁵³ Regardless, for these purposes it is most important to

⁵¹ As is the case for all philosophical systems or claims, there is a certain advantage in learning from critics as opposed to admirers. For example, in response to this reading of Thomas (being *qua* being as fundamentally apophatic), Thomas Williams has argued that “the current apophatic rage” risks denying any positive affirmations about God. Regardless of whether or not such an apophaticism is good or bad, it is interesting for our purposes that even opponents recognize this reading of Aquinas. See Thomas Williams, “Radical Orthodoxy, Univocity, and the New Apophaticism,” (paper presented at the International Congress for Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 2006), 3.

⁵² “It is necessary to suppose ideas in the divine mind. For the Greek word {Idea} is in Latin “forma.” Hence by ideas are understood the forms of things, existing apart from the things themselves. Now the form of anything existing apart from the thing itself can be for one of two ends: either to be the type of that of which it is called the form, or to be the principle of the knowledge of that thing, inasmuch as the forms of things knowable are said to be in him who knows them. In either case we must suppose ideas.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 15.

⁵³ It should be noted that, although the concept is certainly traceable to the Greek (μέθεξις), Aquinas’ Latin appropriation (participare) is rather different. Whereas the former has the aforementioned connotations of deficiency in the material being, Christianity’s emphasis on God’s free *gift* of being is a much more positive affirmation of the material being. For more on this topic, see David C. Schindler, “On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context,” *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3.1 (2005): 1, 26.

note Aquinas' transformation of Aristotelian substance—from primary substance(s) as an end in itself to the hierarchical, participatory relation of creation in its creator, God.

Perhaps, then, Aquinas' discussion of analogy can be summed up in the following passage from his *De Potentia*:

All created causes communicate in one common effect which is being, although each one has its peculiar effect whereby they are all differentiated. . . . Accordingly, [created causes] have this in common that they cause being, but they differ in that fire causes fire, and a builder causes a house. There must therefore be some cause higher than all others by virtue of which they all cause being and whose proper cause is being and this cause is God.⁵⁴

This is the *analogia entis* “in a nutshell”—a metaphysics that appropriates Aristotelian categories of causation while maintaining the “vertical” participation of particular beings in unified transcendence. As we move forward to the next few chapters of our argument about univocity and analogy and the analytic-continental divide, it will become evident how this shift of emphasis from primary substance to participatory relation functions as a distinctive characteristic of continental as opposed to analytic philosophy.

This is, of course, an incomplete picture of Aquinas' intricate metaphysics, but it suffices for defining Aquinas' analogy of being as a metaphysical claim about the meaning of being *qua* being. Now we may attempt to solidify the distinction between analogy and univocity by turning to Aquinas' most notorious counterpart on the subject, John Duns Scotus. Of course, by “counterpart,” I do not mean that the two philosophers consciously wrote against one another's respective positions. This was historically impossible, since Scotus was only a boy when Aquinas died, and Scotus' clearly identifies as his opponent Henry of Ghent, not Aquinas. Still, Aquinas and Scotus are

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas, “Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei,” in Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 210.

nevertheless counterparts in a more strictly philosophical sense insofar as they espouse most articulately two distinct positions on the nature and status of analogy with respect to the question of being *qua* being.

Regarding the problem of predication of God and creatures, Henry draws attention to the fact that any given predicate (i.e. “is good” or “is wise”) can be understood in multiple senses. To illustrate this point, consider the following sentences: (1) “The chess player is good,” and (2) “The food is good.” In the first case, the predicate seems to be modifying the subject in terms of her ability to win a game called chess. In the second case, the predicate modifies the subject in terms of the extent of its deliciousness. While the Aristotelian four-term analogy might represent a way to make sense of this predicate as it is applied in such different senses, Henry instead wants to emphasize the different senses as ultimately uncommon in accordance with the different subjects they modify. Thus, because Henry affirms that God’s being is expressed in a different sense than his creature’s being, it would seem to follow that univocity in predication between God and creatures is impossible.⁵⁵

It is in response to this theory that Scotus begins to discuss the univocity of being. In his *Ordinatio*, he makes a case for univocal predication of God and creatures “in some concept.”⁵⁶ This latter qualification is important, as it is not his intention to do away with analogy altogether. With characteristic clarity, Scotus defines what he takes to be

⁵⁵ “[T]hat being simply is conceived before the concept of the being that is god or a creature, it must be said that this is not true. For a concept of being simply can only be conceived by conceiving some concept of God or of a creature. But it can never be conceived by conceiving a single concept common to God and to a creature, and distinct from the concepts of God and of the creature. For there can be no such concept. But if one conceives something, it is either what pertains to the being of God alone or what pertains to the being of a creature alone.” Henry of Ghent, *Quaestiones Ordinariae (Summa)*, art. XXI q. 2 arg. 3, ed. Badius, I, fol. 124, accessed in: Gordon A Wilson (ed.) *A Companion to Henry of Ghent* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 345.

⁵⁶ Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 19.

univocity: “I designate that concept univocal which possesses sufficient unity in itself, so that to affirm and deny it of one and the same thing would be a contradiction.”⁵⁷ This definition is relatively straightforward. A single predicate can be applied univocally to different subjects if it is a contradiction to both affirm and negate it as it pertains to the same subject.

For example, if we say that (1) Socrates is a man; and (2) Socrates is not a man, we seem to have contradicted ourselves. But this may not be the case at all. If the predicate “is a man” is employed in different senses, then there may not be a contradiction. Perhaps Socrates belongs to the species of “man”, but nevertheless “is not a man” in some other colloquial sense (he is cowardly, does not like baseball, etc.). However, if in fact we apply the predicate “is a man” in the same sense to both (1) and (2), then there is no choice but to admit of a contradiction. If this is so, then we have an example of univocal predication. Thus, applied to God’s being, the crux of Scotus’ question might go something like this: Is it a contradiction to say that (1) God is; and (2) God is not? If the answer is yes, then on this definition some theory of univocity must be true. Aside from this point, Scotus has four arguments for his position of univocity. For sake of space I shall limit the current scope of analysis to the first argument, which is the clearest and most accessible case for the univocity of being.

The first argument is an attempt to “dig out” a concept of being that is not entirely constituted by the hierarchical relation between God and creatures. In order for being to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20.

be univocal in some sense, it needs to have a structural integrity in and of itself. The argument proceeds in the following manner:⁵⁸

- (1) Every intellect that is certain about one concept, but dubious about others has, in addition to the concepts about which it is in doubt, another concept of which it is certain. . . .
- (2) [A] man can be certain in his mind that God is a being and still be in doubt whether He is a finite or an infinite being, a created or uncreated being.
- (3) Consequently, the concept of “being” as affirmed of God is different from the other two concepts but is included in both of them and therefore is univocal.⁵⁹

The first (and less controversial) premise here is a claim about the way in which human minds ought to conceive of concepts. In this case, because there is a definite difference between “certain” and “dubious” concepts in the mind, the two cannot be identical in terms of their respective properties—even if the only non-mutual property is its “certainty” (or lack thereof).

The second premise is not so easy to accept—and indeed some might accuse Scotus of assuming what he is trying to prove: namely, that God’s being can, in some sense, be meaningfully abstracted from the particular analogy between transcendent Creator and immanent creation. When Scotus says that it is possible to be “certain” that God is a being but not that He is infinite, he implies that God’s being is *foundational* to his other properties (i.e. His infinite being).

In other words, as his conclusion states, God’s being is “included” in all of his other properties but not identical to them. This is the way in which God’s being can be applied univocally—as a logically meaningful concept serving as a foundation for all

⁵⁸ The following premises are numbered for clarity’s sake—not in accordance with the actual text.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

other properties. This point is important because it allows us to understand Scotus' position on analogy.

There is no question that Scotus' *univocatio*, by allowing for univocal predication between God and creatures, differs greatly from Aquinas' *analogia*. Again, however, this is not to say that Scotus wants to do away with analogy altogether. On the contrary, his theory of univocity is meant to *salvage* the intelligibility of analogy. For Scotus believes that unless there exists a middle term that is univocally predicated of two different subjects, then any analogy is doomed to equivocity.⁶⁰ Indeed, it seems that Scotus' univocity is supposed to serve as a prior consideration (even a "certain" one) for the sake of any theory of analogy.

Based on our brief historical sketch of, we have reasonable definitions for our terms analogy and univocity. If being *qua* being is fundamentally analogous, then to say particular beings *are* is to say that they are in relationship to that which transcends the order of particular beings. It is this order that is metaphysically primary—not the individual substance or *thisness* of particular beings. By contrast, if being is fundamentally univocal, then being *qua* being is a concept that can be thought in some way without reference to its contingency upon such a participatory relation. On this view,

⁶⁰ Once again, we should be reminded that this critique is not directly aimed at Aquinas' work but rather the work of Henry of Ghent. Nevertheless, it does appear that it could also apply to Aquinas' *analogia entis*. "[Advocates of analogous predication] say that God is known by us in a common notion, for instance in the notion of good and true, but not in a concept that is univocally common to God and to the creature, but only analogically common. For God's nature is of itself singular, having no concept that is common to his nature and to us, but only an analogical common concept. And such a concept, which is one only by the unity of analogy, consists of two concepts. Yet the concept is quasi-one, because the two concepts are close to each other by attribution, and thus they are conceived as quasi-one concept." Duns Scotus *Lectura I*, d. 3 pars 1 q. 1-2 n.11 ed. Charles Balic et al (Rome, 1960), accessed in: Wilson (ed.) *A Companion to Henry of Ghent*, 344.

any such relation is dependent upon the metaphysical “bottom line” of being *qua* being as a “certain” concept.

In the next few chapters, we will examine the divide between continental and analytic philosophy in light of the positions of *analogia* and *univocatio*, respectively. In order to do so, I have selected three different case studies that can and ought to be read in this way.

Case Study 1: Gilbert Ryle and Martin Heidegger

The work of British philosopher Gilbert Ryle maintains an important relationship with fellow giant of twentieth century thought, Martin Heidegger. This relationship, while tenuous at times, marks a significant situation in philosophy—especially regarding the philosophical “orthodoxy” of the twentieth century, the analytic-continental divide.⁶¹ While it is true that neither thinker aligns himself explicitly with either of the two schools, there are both rhetorical and substantive differences between the two that may offer concrete insight into a fundamental disagreement between the two traditions. Indeed, the two philosophers are emblematic of these respective traditions in the twentieth century.

It is important to understand that Ryle and Heidegger are united in their antipathy towards Cartesian mind-body dualism.⁶² In fact, both Ryle’s and Heidegger’s respective philosophical projects revolve around their criticism of Cartesian dualism. For this reason, Ryle has been read as a proponent of phenomenology along with Heidegger.⁶³ My

⁶¹ Nevia Dolcini, “Soochow Journal of Philosophical Studies,” *The Analytic/Continental Divide: Entities and Being* 16 (2007): 283.

⁶² Philosophers such as Richard Swinburne, for example, openly accept this label, perhaps due to its simple explanatory power. See Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁶³ William Lyons, *Gilbert Ryle: An Introduction to His Philosophy* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), 3.

primary purpose in this case study, however, is to say that the two thinkers are diametrically opposed in terms of their view of being

qua being. Drawing from his review of Heidegger's *Being and Time*,⁶⁴ I attempt here to show that Ryle's concern for the "things themselves" reveals his affirmation of the Scotist doctrine of the univocity of being. For Ryle, being is not ultimately analogous to an order that is beyond the realm of particular beings, but instead it is a unified concept under which things *are* in common. It is on the basis of this univocal *ontology* that Ryle erects his famous distinction between knowledge-how and knowledge-that.⁶⁵ With this distinction, he differs fundamentally from Heidegger's project of phenomenological ontology precisely because he affirms univocity while Heidegger does not.

The structure of the present case study takes the form of a defense of the following line of reasoning: First, I attempt to show that, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger assumes a fundamentally analogical concept of being. In doing so, he establishes phenomenology as not only a distinct philosophical *method* but also as an *ontology*. Second, I will maintain that Ryle's project (less controversially) assumes a univocal ontology. It is therefore the conclusion of this study that this fundamental dissimilarity—the difference between analogy and univocity—represents the most substantive disagreement between the respective projects of Heidegger and Ryle.

⁶⁴ Gilbert Ryle, Review of *Sein und Zeit*, by Martin Heidegger, *Mind* 38.151 (1929): 355-370.

⁶⁵ It is well-known that Ryle claims in *The Concept of Mind* that being can be said in more than one "logical tone of voice," but it is important to understand that this is an *epistemological* point, not an ontological one. In the same passage, he also says, "these expressions do not indicate two different species of existence." Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1949), 80.

As some philosophers have noted, there is “a substantial affinity between [Ryle’s and Heidegger’s] works.”⁶⁶ While the work of the two thinkers certainly overlaps to some degree, it would be misleading to gloss over their more substantial disagreements. In order to begin understanding this complicated relationship, it is important to examine the most evident *agreement* between the two philosophers in detail, namely, that the Cartesian separation of mind and body is mistaken.

When Descartes embarks upon his mission of locating a “certain” foundation for philosophy, he arrives upon his famous dictum, *cogito ergo sum*. Establishing the thinking self as philosophical bedrock privileges the realm of the “mind”, which deals essentially with thought as opposed to an “external world” that exists independently of thought. For Descartes, it is possible to doubt that there is an external world with which we are in contact as “thinking things”, but it is not possible to doubt that there must be an existing ‘I’ that does the thinking in the first place.⁶⁷ After all, even thoughts of doubt must come from an existing thinker. In this way, the realm of thought has at least one property that the external world does not: certain existence. This separation between thought and the external world is important for Descartes, who is concerned with doing philosophy on the unshakable foundation of certainty. The price paid for this achievement is the mind-body dualism traditionally associated with Descartes.

⁶⁶ Michael Murray, “Heidegger and Ryle: Two Versions of Phenomenology,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 27.1 (1973): 88.

⁶⁷ “So that it most, in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition (*pronunciatum*) I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind.” René Descartes, *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes, translated from the Original Texts, with a new introductory Essay, Historical and Critical by John Veitch and a Special Introduction by Frank Sewall* (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901). Chapter: *MEDITATION II.: Of the Nature of the Human Mind ; and that It is More Easily Known than the Body* .

In what has become a famous section of *Being and Time*, Heidegger responds to Descartes by accusing him of neglecting the most important question that a philosopher can ask: “What is the meaning of being in general?”⁶⁸ For Heidegger, the Cartesian methodology of doubt is helpful, but only if it is applied to every aspect of Descartes’ epistemological project. Whereas Descartes offers a great amount of clarity and precision regarding his understanding of the *cogito*, he does not say anything at all about the nature or meaning of the *sum*.⁶⁹ He seems to assume that meaning of existence or being is either already settled or unworthy of philosophical reflection due to its resistance to meaningful predication. In either case, Heidegger understands the division between *cogito* and *sum* to be unhelpfully asymmetrical because it overemphasizes the “I think” of the formula. Such a focus leads inevitably to a privileging of thought over all else that *exists* independently of thought. Worse, it “covers up” the more fundamental question of being in general. The question of the meaning of *sum* is more fundamental than the question of rationalist certainty because—whether it is explicit or not—it pertains to both sides of the issue, *cogito* and *sum*.

Heidegger's own project begins (and remains) with the meaning of *sum*. His attempt to give primacy to this question “clears the way”⁷⁰ for his *holistic* project of phenomenological ontology. It is Heidegger's contention that a robust understanding of the meaning of being in general makes a dualism between mind and body untenable.

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 8.

⁶⁹ “Descartes claims to prepare a new and secure foundation for philosophy. But what he leaves undetermined in this ‘radical’ beginning is the manner of being of the *res cogitans*, more precisely *the meaning of being of the ‘sum’*.” Ibid., 23.

⁷⁰ Iain Thomson, “Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger’s Destruction of Metaphysics,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8.3 (2000), 317.

By contrast, Ryle's critique of Cartesian dualism is a "linguistic portrayal or sentence-frame analysis; his goal is not a science or a clarification of the meaning of Being, but rather a 'theory of mind' or philosophical psychology."⁷¹ Instead of challenging the entire paradigm of metaphysical language in general, as does Heidegger, Ryle aims to show that the Cartesian position makes a category mistake in the understanding of mental states. For Ryle, a substance dualism between mind and body commits itself to a theory of action in which "mind states" are little more than "occult episodes of which their overt acts and utterances are effects."⁷² Ryle thus charges Descartes with positing a sort of mystical parallel world of "thought" that somehow interacts with the categorically separate realm of action in the external world. Ryle's alternative is to view this realm of thought as just another manifestation of action, and therefore not different in any substantive way from acts in the external world. As we will see later, Ryle justifies this charge with his famous distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that.

In sum, Heidegger and Ryle share the conviction that the Cartesian position of substance dualism is symptomatic of a more fundamental philosophical mistake. But this is where their commonalities end. For Heidegger, addressing this problem requires an explicit reexamination of metaphysics and the meaning of being in general. Ryle, by contrast, only seeks to expose a category mistake within an already accepted language of metaphysics. In order to understand this point, it is necessary to come to what I think is the most fundamental disagreement between Heidegger and Ryle: the univocity of being.

⁷¹ Murray, "Heidegger and Ryle," 88.

⁷² Ryle, *Sein und Zeit*, 25.

As our analysis of Scotus' position of univocity has shown, the idea of univocity implies the self-sufficiency of particular beings. We saw that univocity obtains on the sole condition that simultaneously to affirm and deny some predicate results in a contradiction. The position of analogy would complicate this situation in the sense that objects only have objecthood insofar as they maintain relations with that to which they are analogous. Univocity resists this relational understanding of particular beings, positing them as self-sufficient instead.

This univocal self-sufficiency of particular beings is exactly what Heidegger's phenomenological ontology aims to abolish in *Being and Time*. Although it is true that Heidegger's governing question about the meaning of being in general may seem as though it implies this univocity as the goal, it is important to note that only analogy can even come close to the language necessary for such a project. Heidegger's Thomas Sheehan remarks cogently:

[T]alk of Being 'itself' can easily lose sight of the analogical character of Being. Heidegger was not after a univocal something that subsists on its own. Over and above the Being of man, the Being implements, nature, artworks and ideal objects, there is no second level of 'Being itself.' Rather, the 'itself' refers to the analogically unified meaning of Being which is instantiated in all cases of Being this or that.⁷³

Read in this way, Heidegger's project does share the importance of analogous being with Aquinas. It would be a dreadful mistake, however, to say that he is a Thomist.

Whereas Aquinas unifies his analogous understanding of being by appealing to the absolute contingency of the created order upon its Creator for theological reasons, Heidegger cannot accept this metaphysical structure. In Heidegger's phenomenology,

⁷³ Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010), viii.

being names the majestic, dynamic process that is always-already both revealing and concealing itself actively as temporality.⁷⁴ It encompasses the entirety of not only “objective reality”⁷⁵ but also the equally important interpretative activity by which that reality is itself also constituted—not in a subjectivist, ego-centered way, but rather via the grander movement of history. Heidegger names the being who performs this interpretation *Dasein* (literally, there-being) in an attempt to understand the conscious self as inextricable from the question of being. Again, this integrative understanding is in direct opposition to any dualism between a subjective mind and the objective world. Instead, being is always manifesting itself and re-manifesting itself on its own terms of unceasing, holistic flux. The ontological significance of *Dasein*’s engagement with the world—“seeing as”—is not supposed to entail some solipsism; rather, *Dasein* should be understood simply as the vehicle through which being reveals itself. In Heidegger, *contra* Descartes, the self is subservient to being.⁷⁶

When he analyzes things like “mood” and “anxiety”, then, Heidegger does not evoke the same sentiment typical of existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre.⁷⁷ Heidegger is not interested in parading his subjectivity about the academy like a heartbroken teenage girl in a high school creative writing class. Instead, he is sketching certain fundamental modes of being in general—or, perhaps more simply, the ways in

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 224.

⁷⁵ This term is a difficult one, but I mean what Heidegger means by “it’s traditional meaning, . . . being in the sense of the sheer objective presence of things.” *Ibid.*, 203.

⁷⁶ This idea of an all-encompassing concept of being is the object of perhaps Heidegger’s greatest critic, Emmanuel Levinas: “In subordinating every relation with existents to the relation with Being the Heideggerian ontology affirms the primacy of freedom over ethics. . . . Freedom comes from an obedience to Being: it is not man who possesses freedom; it is freedom that possesses man.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 45.

⁷⁷ Heidegger is famously opposed to Sartre’s existentialist paradigm of “existence precedes essence” because it falls prey to the same Cartesian dualism he wishes to bury. See: Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism, in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 232-233.

which being discloses itself via the interpretive particularity of temporal *Dasein*. For Heidegger, it is misleading to say, “I feel anxiety”; for this simply names an emotive state that characterizes a feeling subject over against its external world. It is more correct to say “being reveals itself as anxious *Dasein*.”⁷⁸ This is significant for the context of our overall discussion about Thomistic analogy. Unlike Aquinas, Heidegger lacks the traditional metaphysical semantics of necessity and contingency. Still, his language is still profoundly indebted to analogy as both a fundamental methodology and even at the substantive level of ontology itself.

Because phenomenology in a thoroughgoing sense is attuned to the idea that “the access of meaning is part of the meaning itself,”⁷⁹ Any final, univocal account of being is hard to come by. In such a paradigm, relationality is an inescapable part of what it means for objects to be accessed by someone at sometime. This point about Heidegger’s resistance to univocity, however, has come under attack in Philip Tonner’s recent book, *Heidegger, Metaphysics and the Univocity of Being*.⁸⁰ In it, Tonner makes the opposite claim: that Heidegger’s understanding of being is not analogous at all but ultimately

⁷⁸ Heidegger refers to the characteristic of finding oneself in a world through a mood as — *Befindlichkeit*, a notoriously difficult term to translate. Macquarrie and Robinson, in their 1962 translation of *Being and Time*, opt for —state of mind, but this is inappropriate. Heidegger stresses that moods are not experienced as states of mind possessed by psychological subjects, and that we do not experience moods as ‘out there’ in the world either. Moods constitute a sense of being part of a world that is pre-subjective and pre-objective. All ‘states of mind’ and all perceptions and cognitions of ‘external’ things presuppose this background sense of belonging to a world. See Matthew Ratcliffe, “Why Mood Matters,” 2.

⁷⁹ This quotation is extremely helpful for understanding the primary functioning principle of phenomenology. Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Cahoon, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 527.

⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that, although Tonner disputes the notion that Heidegger’s concept of being is ultimately analogical, he concedes the fact that Husserl’s is. Following Gilles Deleuze, Tonner argues that Husserl’s transcendental ego functions in much the same way as Aquinas’ God—as a focal point to which all “things” *are* in relation. I am in agreement with Tonner on this latter point, and this also serves as a preliminary justification for the idea that—for the current argument, at least—phenomenology is fundamentally analogical in orientation. See: Philip Tonner, *Heidegger, Metaphysics, and the Univocity of Being* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 80.

univocal. Tonner's central claim is that Heidegger's conception of temporality functions similarly to Scotus' concept of univocity. Although it is couched in a non-metaphysical language of "thinking" as opposed to a traditional metaphysics of causation this notion of temporality ultimately serves as a "bottom line" all existing things without an appeal to analogy: "*Dasein's* temporality is revealed as the transcendental horizon for the understanding of being. As such, *all* being is understood in terms of time. To that extent, being is *univocally* understood in terms of time and being itself is temporal."⁸¹

It is certainly true that Heidegger's understanding of temporality provides an overarching horizon for all existing beings, but Tonner is too hasty to associate Heidegger's emphasis on temporality with univocity. Sheehan's interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy as fundamentally analogical is more convincing for one simple reason: Heidegger's phenomenological account of temporality is unique in the sense that it is composed of *possibility*. Possibility in Heidegger is a complex and easily misunderstood concept, but it is extremely important to his phenomenology. Roughly stated, Heidegger holds that things are in the world only insofar as they are there *for something else* and ultimately for *Dasein*. Keeping in mind the earlier phenomenological dictum that the access of meaning is part of the meaning itself, any understanding of existing beings must include a certain possibility for the "accessor", *Dasein*.

Heidegger's famous example of the hammer in *Being and Time* is an excellent illustration of this point.⁸² It would be very odd, he argues, for the craftsman to assess his

⁸¹ Ibid., 8.

⁸² "[H]ammering with the hammer neither *grasps* these beings thematically as occurring things, nor does such using even know the structure of useful things as such. . . . 'Practical' behavior is not 'a-theoretical' in the sense of lack of seeing. The difference between it and theoretical behavior lies not only in the fact that

hammer as an objectively present thing that stands in opposition to his subjectivity. A craftsman never “stops” to think about what the hammer is in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. This would be a difficult and unnecessary task. Rather, the craftsman “knows” his hammer only insofar as his hammer maintains a certain possibility—namely, the possibility of fulfilling the craftsman's activity of the craft. Moreover, *what the hammer is* becomes known only by using it. The more the hammer is used, the more primordial our relation to it becomes, and the more unconcealed becomes its nature, i.e. its usefulness for a project. Sure, if the hammer malfunctions or performs a function that is somehow out of the ordinary, the craftsman may stop and examine it—perhaps even for certain properties it may or may not possess. But this new reflective attitude that the craftsman adopts in relation to his hammer is likewise constituted by a new possibility of “fixing” or perhaps “admiring”. The phenomenological perspective is still maintained—just in terms of new possibilities.

For Heidegger, this account of beings as *for the possibility of x* extends to not only tools but literally to everything that *Dasein* encounters. Even something as apparently arid or benign as mathematics can never be a simply “objective” (as opposed to the subjective enterprise of which the interpretive mode of possibility is not a part). So, while temporality provides a certain clearing in which possibilities are to be made intelligible, it seems difficult to escape the idea that such a temporality cannot be “arrived upon” in any meaningful way without both the revelatory activity of being through *Dasein* and the specific instantiations of the possibilities themselves. The linguistic discipline of analogy

in one case we observe and in the other instance we act, . . . Rather, observation is a kind of taking care just as primordially as action has its *own* kind of seeing.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

is essential to this phenomenological enterprise because relation is more primordial than the particular beings in themselves.⁸³

For these reasons, then, it should be clear that Heidegger's phenomenological account of human knowing, of our relation to the world, does not entail a univocal ontology of being *qua* being. Thus, because Ryle has a univocal account of being, Ryle is not a proponent of Heideggerian phenomenology. Heidegger's phenomenology emphasizes the primordially of relation over the self-sufficiency of particular beings, and is analogical in this sense. I will now attempt to show how Ryle maintains a univocal ontology.

Ryle begins his most well-known book, *The Concept of Mind*, with an analysis of the aforementioned "myth" of Cartesian dualism. Calling it "the official doctrine" of most philosophy in his era and before, he polemically engages it:

With the doubtful exceptions of idiots and infants in arms every human being has both a body and a mind. Some would prefer to say that every human being is both a body and a mind. His body and mind are harnessed together, but after the death of the body his mind may continue to exist and function.⁸⁴

There are more than a few details to unpack from this seemingly simple quotation, but perhaps the most important one for these purposes is the dubious origin of the dualism in question. As Ryle goes on to say, the mind-body distinction is relevant not only in terms

⁸³ Before moving on, it seems appropriate to engage one possible objection that appears in Tonner's book, namely, that Heidegger's early work on Scotus explicitly affirms the doctrine of univocity. See Martin Heidegger, *Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning* (Chicago: Depaul University, 1973), 15. If this were true, it would still not affect my case in light of the mature Heidegger of *Being and Time* (and later). If 1.) Tonner admits that Heidegger's notion of temporality remains essentially Husserlian, and 2.) Husserl's project is thoroughly analogical, then it seems to be a mistake to locate a univocal concept of being in temporality. This is a difficulty that renders the point about the early Heidegger's affinity for Scotus somewhat irrelevant (for the sake of this point, at least). See Tonner, *Heidegger*, 66.

⁸⁴ Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 11.

of an isolated issue of theoretical metaphysics, but in a whole host of other classic distinctions (i.e. subjective-objective, private-public, etc.).

According to Ryle, the best way to understand the reasons for holding such a view of human identity and consciousness is as a myth that accomplishes “a lot of theoretical good, while [it is] still new.”⁸⁵ To illustrate this curious point, he draws on the classical metaphor of the mind as a ruling body or political superior. This picture of the mind as naturally distinct from the body is employed in certain schools of ancient philosophy in order to legitimate a certain kind of regime in which a few leaders could efficiently rule their *polis*. The wise leaders represent the mind, of course, and the body politic represents the body. In this way, the theory accomplishes a certain good (for the aristocrats) even if it does not necessarily correspond with reality. For Ryle, such an accidentally progressive result of philosophical theories can also occur towards the end of more desirable answers to difficult questions.

For Ryle, then, philosophy operates like the natural sciences—with a progressive account of knowledge that builds upon its predecessors. This “scientific” philosophy is interesting not only because of its explicit affinity for the empirically focused Anglo-American tradition of analytic philosophy, but also because it informs Ryle's critical attitude towards phenomenology proper. Again in *The Concept of Mind*, he dedicates a section to what he calls “phenomenalism”.⁸⁶ In it, he makes two remarks about this burgeoning philosophical movement—one of admiration, and one critical.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 234. Here, Ryle refers to “phenomenalism” as merely another name for phenomenology—more specifically, as the philosophical methodology which relies on the aforementioned point made by Levinas: “the access of meaning is part of the meaning itself.”

“One of the commendable motives of this theory was the desire to dispense with occult agencies and principles. . . . Its holders found that current theories of perception postulated unobservable entities or factors to endow things with properties which sensations were debarred from revealing.”⁸⁷ Here, Ryle simply means the Aristotelian notion of primary substance. Because he understands phenomenalism to be concerned with the manner in which things appear rather than the unchanging thisness of the thing appearing, on this paradigm there is no room for these kinds of “occult principles”—concepts that are not amenable to empirical investigation. Perhaps it is not difficult, then, to see why Ryle maintains some overlap with this philosophical approach. Like the mysterious “other realm” of the mind that is opposed to the body, ideas such as substance and essence assume a mythical status in relation to the rest of reality. Because Ryle critiques this dualism as an empty illusion, it follows that he is also critical of these classical ideas as well. In this limited sense, then, Ryle again shares common ground with philosophical phenomenalism.

Yet while this agreement ought not to be dismissed altogether, the appearances are far more interesting than the substance. It is true that the phenomenological method does away with finalized substance and essence by understanding the “thing” as something like a differentiated appearance. But if this is supposed to be a distinctive feature of phenomenalism, then it is difficult to see how such a philosophy gets beyond the more traditional British empiricist projects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Empiricists such as David Hume, among many others, famously criticize the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 235.

ancient ideas of substance in a strikingly similar manner.⁸⁸ It seems that Ryle's supposed affinity with what he calls phenomenalism is better understood as a rather ordinary overlap with his basic empiricism.

However, while this agreement regarding the untenable idea of substance or essence is surely relevant to the respective projects at issue, it is Ryle's *disagreement* with phenomenalism that has far more impact on his philosophy as a whole. He writes in that same section that phenomenalism mistakenly “supposed that having a sensation is itself a finding of something, . . . since we can observe only sensible objects, propositions about gate-posts [Ryle's example] must be translatable to propositions about sensible objects.”⁸⁹ Instead of liberating itself from the Aristotelian myth of primary substance, Ryle's project remains steadfastly in its linguistic framework of subject-predicate. The only difference is that—instead of admitting the unobservable phenomena—it attempts to translate all propositions about gate-posts into propositions about sensible objects. Whereas Aristotle has said that the gate-post has a certain logical status as a unified, particular being, the phenomenologist says instead that the very notion of that “essential property” is itself an experiential phenomenon.

But what exactly is Ryle's problem here? The answer is, simply, that there *is no such thing* as a “sensible object” in the first place. This is a category mistake because it is

⁸⁸ Hume argues in his *Treatise on Human Nature*: “When we gradually follow an object in its successive changes, the smooth progress of the thought makes us ascribe an identity to the succession. . . . When we compare its situation after a considerable change the progress of the thought is broken; and consequently we are presented with the idea of diversity: In order to reconcile which contradictions, the imagination is apt to feign something unknown and invisible, which it supposes to continue the same under all these variations; and this unintelligible something it calls a *substance, or original and first matter*.” David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 220.

⁸⁹ Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 236.

non-sensical “to call a sensation 'veridical' [or] mistaken.”⁹⁰ A sensation simply is a self-sufficient given—without constitutive relation to the existing thing in question. It cannot be true or false because truth and falsehood gain their respective meanings from the world itself. This perspective already hints at a univocal account of being in that it refers to truth and falsehood of things *independently* of their phenomenological sensation or appearance. In order to explore this point further, however, it is necessary to examine Ryle's notable epistemological distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that.

“Knowing-How and Knowing-That” is Ryle's most explicit attempt to problematize the Cartesian dualism between the “purely intellectual” act of thought and “external” acts of considering propositions. Following Aristotle, Ryle argues that “philosophers have not done justice to the distinction that is part of our common sense: the difference between knowing that something is the case and knowing how to do things.”⁹¹ To illustrate this point, Ryle draws upon the image of a chess player. When we say that a chess player is “clever”, we do not simply mean that he knows more propositions than a “stupid” player—as though stupidity and cleverness were merely descriptive terms referencing the amount of things known by each possessing subject. If this were the case, then we would reach an awkward conclusion: namely, that the stupid player would become clever simply by virtue of memorizing a list of the best possible moves. Ryle argues that this is not cleverness at all, but simply a robotic adherence to a set of known propositions.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 237.

⁹¹ James Baillie, *Contemporary Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Pearson, 2002), 200.

On behalf of the “intellectualist” Cartesians, he anticipates an objection to this understanding: could it not be the case that the stupid player's memorization of certain moves is not knowledge at all but simply “habit”? To this, Ryle responds with two points. Even if the stupid player takes the time to learn—not just memorize—the moves available, he would still need to (1) tell himself the appropriate move at the moment when it was needed and (2) act accordingly when the move occurs to him. Because this is the case, he concludes that “the application of maxims, etc., is certainly not any mere contemplation of them. Equally certainly it can be intelligently or stupidly done.”⁹² This idea—that propositions are known in a certain way—is the fundamental idea of what Ryle means by “knowledge-how”.

Although some philosophers have accused Ryle of reducing all knowledge to knowledge-how,⁹³ this is not the intent of his project. Regardless of whether or not he is logically clear and consistent with his definition of knowing-that, it is safe to say that this kind of knowledge is best understood with the metaphor of possession or accumulation. The chess player's unique disposition of intelligence is knowing-how, to be sure, but he must also *have* a “database of moves” that falls under the category of knowing-that. Like tools in his arsenal, he wields them cleverly in order to win the game—but in order to do that, he must possess them in the first place.

⁹² Ibid., 202.

⁹³ Jane Roland, for example, argues that Ryle “never makes explicit the 'logical status' of 'knowing that'.” See: Roland, “On Knowing How and Knowing That,” *The Philosophical Review* 67.3 (1958): 379n. John Hartland-Swann makes a similar case, saying that Ryle's distinction (especially knowing-that) is “fundamentally unstable and cannot survive analysis.” See: Hartland-Swann, “The Logical Status of ‘Knowing That’,” *Analysis* 16.5 (1956): 111. While these critiques are interesting in their own right, I do not address them here because the consistency of his argument is not fundamental to my case about Ryle's univocal ontology.

Again, this seems to be further evidence of Ryle's adherence to a univocal account ontology. The language of possession demands an atomic, independent presence for both the possessor and the possessed. It would be incorrect to say, for example, that the chess player *is* his arsenal of moves. On the contrary, the chess player *is* the chess player on account of his being different enough from the moves to be able to possess them. The same could be said from the opposite perspective. The chess moves *are not* the chess player; they exist quite happily without him in many possible worlds. This is because they are different enough from the player to be possessed. Therefore knowledge-that is not an analogical disposition of the chess player's integrated reality—far from it. It is instead the self-sufficient, atomic content that is only contingently possessed by the knower. True to the “Logical Atomist mood,”⁹⁴ Ryle is interested in things-in-themselves. This latter focus is of interest to his analysis of Heidegger himself in his review of *Being and Time*.

Ryle begins his review without mincing words: “I suspect that this advance [of phenomenology] is an advance towards disaster.”⁹⁵ Although he also offers some praise to go along with his criticism, Ryle is not shy about distancing himself from Heidegger's grand project. There are numerous reasons for this, but the most interesting for my purposes is the presence—or lack thereof—of knowledge-that (or things themselves). Things *qua* things must be preserved in Ryle's system so that his knowledge-how/knowledge-that distinction can maintain its integrity. Without the conceptual resource of things-in-themselves, it is impossible for Ryle to justify the status of

⁹⁴ William Lyons, *Gilbert Ryle: An Introduction to his Philosophy* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980, 28.

⁹⁵ Ryle, *Sein und Zeit*, 355.

knowledge-that because there is simply no need for it. Knowledge-how would be quite sufficient for describing all knowledge. Indeed, this lapse into such a phenomenological or relational monism is the “disaster” of which Ryle speaks.

In his analysis of Heidegger's own account of knowledge, he offers the following critique:

But while it is a dangerous metaphor to speak of acts having "meanings" or of things as being the "meanings of acts", it is a fatal error to speak of a thing known as the correlate of a knowing-act as if that implied that we could get to the heart of the thing by analyzing our experience of knowing it. A twin is a correlate to a twin but operations upon the one are at most operations upon the other one's twin, not operations upon the other one himself.⁹⁶

For Ryle, Heidegger's reducing of all knowledge to the “primitive” adverbial language of being-in-the-world makes it extremely difficult to speak of knowing “things” at all— unless, of course, one is willing to admit that knowledge is simply reducible to the various interpretive dispositions of *Dasein*. This is simply not a philosophical move with which Ryle is comfortable. “Being-in-the-world surely implies that underlying our other reactions and attitudes there is knowledge. We are in-the-world only if we know that at least one 'something' exists.”⁹⁷

Even if he does depart from the Cartesian dualism that provides much of the objective ground for science, Ryle's affinities still lie firmly with the classic empiricist narrative of progress and accumulation of knowledge. As I have already argued, the Scotist doctrine of univocity is the most fundamental metaphysical presupposition for this epistemological imagination. Because being is a universally binding concept which all

⁹⁶ Ibid., 369.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 369.

existing things have in common, there is no need to refer to any such necessary being (i.e. the Thomist God or Heideggerian *Dasein*) as constitutive of things. This common understanding of the being of beings liberates individual things from the monist inclination of the analogous knowledge-how. In its place, Ryle's univocity postulates being as a self-sufficient concept that simply names something like the presence of a thing—indifferent to the knower's action in the world.

This is the sense in which the Kantian “thing-in-itself” depends on this understanding.⁹⁸ Following Kant and the narrative of modern science, then, Ryle maintains a univocal ontology. His concept of knowledge-that depends on it. Because a thoroughgoing phenomenology relies upon an analogical understanding of being *qua* being, Ryle is himself not a phenomenologist as Heidegger is.

It is true that Ryle's project is similar to Heidegger's in that each philosopher is a fierce critic of the Cartesian separation between mind and body. Upon further examination, however, this mutuality is barely more than superficial. Whereas Heidegger's project is an entire revamping of the orientation of metaphysics altogether, Ryle's is a more subdued critique that simply attempts to salvage both parts of his epistemic distinction between knowledge-how and knowledge-that.

The metaphysical claims of the univocity of being and phenomenology are mutually exclusive because the latter is only possible as a project only via the language of analogy. Instead of appointing one concept of being to all existing things as a *genus*, a phenomenological ontology follows Aristotle and Aquinas by understanding being *qua* being only insofar as it is revealed in particular beings—never as an abstract concept in

⁹⁸ Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 113.

itself. Although the phenomenologist does not share the Thomistic language of a single “necessary being”, it does relativize being according to its phenomenal appearance. For Heidegger, this means understanding things in terms of their manifold possibilities for *Dasein*.

I have also attempted to show that Ryle's break with Heidegger is most fundamentally his affirmation of the Scotist doctrine of the univocity of being. This is evidenced in his various critiques of phenomenology—especially in his review of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Ryle is wary of phenomenology's “reductionist” tendency to collapse the entire enterprise of knowledge into the realm of mere subjective disposition. As an alternative, he advocates an epistemological position of both knowledge-how and knowledge-that. It is the latter that marks his specific departure from phenomenology and analogy because it requires the existence of free-standing entities that can simply possess their being without reference to its phenomenal appearance.

However consistent or inconsistent his definition of knowledge-that stands, it does place him in the atomist tradition of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. This divergence sheds some light upon the fundamental disagreements of the two. Insofar as continental philosophy follows Heidegger's commitment to exploring the contingent conditions upon which the meanings of even the most perennial philosophical concepts rely,⁹⁹ it cannot accommodate a strictly univocal understanding of being. This seems to be true of not only the phenomenology and existentialism of the mid-twentieth century

⁹⁹ In a recent article for the *New York Times*, Gary Gutting characterizes at least part of the task of continental philosophy: “to probe *beneath* the concepts of everyday experience to discover the meanings that underlie them, to think the conditions for the possibility of our concepts.” See: Gutting, “Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide”, *New York Times*, February 2012.

but also to later developments in hermeneutics and post-structuralist discourse.

Conversely, although analytic philosophers are obviously not blind to such contingent conditions, their resistance to subsuming meaning itself to mere analogy assumes the opposite position of univocity.

By being articulate about this fundamental difference maintained between the philosophical projects of Gilbert Ryle and Martin Heidegger, it is possible to garner a fuller understanding of both—as individual philosophers and as representatives of two wide-ranging traditions of philosophy. Now we turn to our second of three case studies, the debate between two philosophers of language, Jacques Derrida and John Searle. As continental and analytic philosophers, respectively, this debate represents just how different the implications of such a divide are.

Case Study II: The Question of Iterability: Jacques Derrida and John Searle

The Derrida-Searle debate is not only one of the most paradigmatic clashes between continental and analytic philosophers, but it is also one of the most recognizable displays of the divide's fragmentary effect on philosophy. The debate hinges upon some recurring fundamental issues that characterize the divide as a whole, and is fragmented because the lack of respect with which each philosopher treats his counterpart affects the standard of discourse in non-discrete ways.

The debate begins with Derrida's essay, "Signature, Event, Context," which is a brief but pointed critique of J.L. Austin's speech-act theory. It is Derrida's contention that Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words*, correctly criticizes Western philosophy's tendency to over-emphasize the importance of sentences with identifiable truth values. Taking his cue from the earlier Ludwig Wittgenstein, Austin aims to interrogate the

nature of language not primarily in terms of “sense and reference,” but rather in terms of a specific mode of action—what Wittgenstein might call “meaning as use.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, “speech-act” theory understands language to be primarily about communicative activity as activity between an intentional subject and a receiver rather than claims that can be judged to be true or false according to logical consistency and empirical verification.

Derrida applauds this approach, but he does not feel that speech-act theory is aware enough of its own ontological presuppositions, which manifest themselves as an undue privileging of speech over writing. Indeed, Derrida begins developing this theme by quoting Austin: “[S]till confining ourselves for simplicity to spoken utterance.”¹⁰¹ By speech and writing, Derrida does not simply mean the difference between personal interaction involving voices or penciled marks on paper; rather, he uses the images of speech and writing to illustrate what he perceives to be far deeper ontological commitments that are more difficult to name in themselves. Because this is one of Derrida’s central themes—and one of the most important differences he maintains with Austin and Searle—we will explore it in more detail in the body of the case study.

As a disciple of Austin and an advocate of speech-act theory himself, Searle felt it worthwhile to respond to Derrida in his own essay entitled “Reiterating the Differences.” Taking issue with what he perceives as Derrida’s simplistic account of the difference between speech and writing (and the supposed privilege of the former over the latter), Searle holds that “*a meaningful sentence is just a standing possibility of the*

¹⁰⁰ “For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 43.

¹⁰¹ J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* in: Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1.

*corresponding (intentional) speech act.*¹⁰²

This response triggered the vitriolic exchange between the two philosophers—including most notably the lengthy *Limited, Inc.* by Derrida and the sarcastically titled “Literary Theory and Its Discontents” by Searle. In the following we examine the debate thematically as an analysis of three pivotal points at which it is possible to locate deep and fundamental differences between the two: namely (1) the speech vs. writing problem, (2) the relationship between intentionality and meaning, and (3) the concept of iterability. Finally, after this analysis, we will examine all three in terms of our developed concepts of analogy and univocity.

The first and most important disagreement between Derrida and Searle is the ontological significance of the distinction between speech and writing, if there is such a thing. In order to do so, Derrida follows Heidegger by addressing the way in which the Western metaphysical tradition has employed the word 'being'. In his landmark essay “Differance,” Derrida adopts a modified version of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Like Heidegger, Derrida acknowledges the aforementioned “ontological difference” between particular beings and being *qua* being. Unlike Heidegger, however, he applies this method to the discourse of structural linguistics, which had previously understood language as a system of signs whose meaning arises only via timeless “difference.”¹⁰³ This “temporalization” of Saussure's system paves the way for the enigma of “differance” that is so central to Derrida's thought.

¹⁰² John Searle, “Reiterating the Differences,” *Glyph 2* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 202.

¹⁰³ See Jacques Derrida, “Differance,” *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 230. French structuralism's main contention, as articulated most clearly in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, is that “there are only

He begins his essay with an analysis of the verb, “to differ”. There are two meanings to this word: “On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay . . . a *spacing* and *temporalizing*.”¹⁰⁴ The former sense of “to differ” is the foundation of Saussurean structural linguistics. Signs are meaningful insofar as they are distinct or discernable from one another. It is the second meaning—“the interposition of delay”—that is unique to Derrida’s project. According to Derrida, meaning arises out of a “play” between these two meanings of differ. “Differance” is an attempt to name that which “relates the two movements of differing to each other.”¹⁰⁵ Differ[a]nce is not differ[e]nce because the latter already is already implicated in the timeless framework of structural linguistics, the first meaning of “to differ”. Neither is differance strictly limited to the possibility-driven activity of *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world, as in Heideggerian phenomenology. It is, in a sense, a combination of both.

Differance does not even exist at all; for already this would be to describe it in terms of a particular being among others. Instead, differance is the *absence* which creates the possibility for all that is present in its particularity. Differ[a]nce is the mystery that functions together with differ[e]nce to effect meaning in language.

The development of “difference” is crucial to Derrida’s particular understanding of the preeminence of writing over speech—especially in the context of his debate with

differences”—meaning that signs are only intelligible if they can be differentiated from other signs (light means “different than” darkness, good is “different than” evil, etc.). This understanding is essentially *timeless* because the difference between signs is infinite. This point is most easily demonstrated by negation. For example, for the structuralist it is impossible to imagine a time at which ‘light’ does not maintain its difference from ‘darkness.’ This eternal relationship of difference is, after all, what it means to be ‘light’ in the first place.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 225.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 225.

Searle. In a passage that is about as close as Derrida ever gets to defining a single term succinctly and clearly, he says the following about writing:

In order for my ‘written communication’ to retain its function as writing, i.e., its readability, it must remain readable despite the absolute disappearance of any receiver, determined in general. . . . A writing that is not structurally readable—iterable—beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing.¹⁰⁶

The key point here is that the ontological significance of writing is constituted at least in part by its *lack* of a present author and receiver. If writing were dependent on an objectively present author and receiver, it would be difficult to ascertain any meaning from a written text if the author and receiver were unknown. But clearly it is possible to understand a written text without knowing its author and intended recipient. Perhaps an obvious example of this is sacred Scriptures such as the Bible. While there are not always scientifically satisfying ways of identifying the “real” author of a text like Genesis, there is still much to be gained from each text within the hermeneutical circles of the Abrahamic faith communities, among others.

If it is true that the *presence* of the author or receiver is not the foundation upon which writing is built, perhaps *absence* provides for the ontological possibility of writing in the first place. This latter position is the position of Derrida in *Limited, Inc.* Writing comes before speech—not in the “literal” sense that pre-historic beings marked in the dirt before they realized that they could use their voices to communicate—but in a strictly ontological sense. Speech, which assumes both an objectively present speaker and receiver, is still ultimately dependent upon the dual meaning of difference—that which

¹⁰⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in: *Limited, Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7.

differs in both an eternal and temporal sense. Differance is the absence that represents the primordial condition for presence.

According to Derrida, insofar as Austin's speech-act theory begins in terms of the presence of the speaker and receiver, it brackets the deeper, ontological question of how such an account of meaning is made possible in the first place. This is the function of differance in Derrida's critique—as an explanatory concept meant to expose the ways in which absence structures the nature of presence.

In Searle's reply, "Reiterating the Differences," it is precisely this preeminence of writing with which he must take issue. He disagrees with Derrida's aforementioned definition of writing as a linguistic form that exists only insofar as there is an absence of the receiver. Searle is certainly willing to grant that "[w]riting makes it possible to communicate with an absent receiver, *but* it is not necessary for the receiver to be absent." On the contrary, "Written communication can exist in the presence of the receiver, as for example, when I compose a shopping list for myself or pass notes to my companion during a concert or lecture."¹⁰⁷

If Derrida means that the absence of the receiver is either a necessary or sufficient condition for writing, then it appears as though he is committed to the idea that composing a shopping list for oneself is not writing. This is an awkward implication, to be sure, but even Searle does not think that this addresses the full brunt of Derrida's critique of speech-act theory.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the end product—meaningful marks on a page—

¹⁰⁷ John Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," *Glyph* 1 (1977).

¹⁰⁸ "[T]he claim that writing precedes speaking is obviously false, as any historical linguist can attest. However, of course, Derrida does not mean this. What he means in large part is that many of the features of written speech are also features of spoken language." John Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents," *New Literary History* 25.3 (Summer 1994), 665.

is what Derrida calls “vulgar” writing. This is writing as it is understood via common sense, but it is not the ontological point about the nature of meaning and its relationship to presence and/or absence.

So what does Searle have to say about this deeper, ontological point about differance and the primordial status of writing in Derrida’s work? The short answer is, “not much.” According to Searle, it is simply not among the goals of speech-act theory to speculate about the ontological primacy (or non-primacy) of presence/absence or vice versa.¹⁰⁹ From this point of view, this is a problem that extends beyond the limits of speech-act theory, and it is unfair of Derrida to read Austin in such a way.

Ultimately, then, Searle’s disagreement with Derrida on the difference between writing and speech is this: whereas Derrida understands the absence of the receiver to be a necessary condition of writing, Searle does not. Instead, for Searle, the absence of the receiver is a mere accidental characteristic of *some* writing. Writing does not serve as a metaphor for underlying ontological commitments. It is simply the “relative permanence” of writing that distinguishes itself from speech.¹¹⁰ There is nothing deep or mysterious about this point. It is simply the case that, historically, writing tends to outlast speech. To pontificate on about things like differance is to engage in self-indulgent sophistry: “From the exciting to the banal and back again.”¹¹¹ If it were to be summarized in one quip, this would be Searle’s opinion of Derrida’s thesis about the ontological primordality of writing.

¹⁰⁹ This point is raised by Mark Alfino: “It might be that Searle is right to believe that Derrida’s reading of Austin places his theory under a greater burden than it has to assume. On many of the issues Derrida raises, Austin is either silent or his position has to be inferred from the rhetoric of the text.” Mark Alfino, “Another Look at the Derrida-Searle Debate,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 24.2 (1991), 148.

¹¹⁰ Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 25.

¹¹¹ Searle, “Literary Theory,” 665.

The second major disagreement between Derrida and Searle is the nature and function of “intentionality” in the communicative process. If we recall Searle’s definition of writing, “*a meaningful sentence is just a standing possibility of the corresponding (intentional) speech act,*” it is immediately evident that intentionality is a necessary condition for the speech act. If there is no intentionality, then there is no speech act. Although Derrida’s complex position does differ greatly from Searle’s, there is no reason to think that he disagrees on this particular level. Indeed, there is little controversy on this point—insofar as the phenomenon of intentionality is obviously a part of communication (i.e. I talk because I have someone to talk *to*). The disagreement, as is the case with the speech-writing problem, is hermeneutical. Unlike Searle, who wants to preserve the commonsense notion of intentionality as the directedness of a mind to something in the world, Derrida wants to explore the structural conditions of intentionality. For the latter philosopher, these conditions are constitutive of the phenomenon of intentionality.

Searle defines intentionality as “that property of mind by which it is able to represent other things.”¹¹² This definition echoes the point made by the phenomenologists Brentano and Husserl—that the mind is never purely abstract in the sense that it thinks independently of particular things in the world.¹¹³ Rather, it is always already directed at something. This is unavoidable, because any thought is a thought *about* something. Thus, when Searle defines intentionality in terms of its status as a necessary condition of

¹¹² For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Revolutions That as Yet Have No Model: Derrida’s Limited Inc,” *Diacritics* 10.4 (Winter 1980), 31.

¹¹³ “Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object.” Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Translated by Antos C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell and Linda L. McAlister (London: Routledge, 1995), 88.

representation, he adheres to an understanding of intentionality shared by Brentano and Husserl. Because the speech-act theory of Searle and Austin aims to analyze the commonsense notion of the relationship between minds and the world, neither philosopher is really interested in exploring an extended hermeneutics of intentionality. If anything, such an undertaking would be counterproductive—especially if it results in a implosion of the commonsense principles whose salvaging was the theory’s original motivation.

Derrida, by contrast, is very much interested in intentionality’s ontological structure. While not disputing this conventional understanding of intentionality *per se*, he does want to problematize it in terms of its implicit underwriting of a specific ontological commitment. This commitment—which Derrida *does* want to critique—is to a metaphysics of what he calls “self-identity or self-presence.”¹¹⁴ But what does he mean by this? To illustrate his point, Derrida recalls Searle’s aforementioned objection in the context of the speech-writing problem, namely, the personal shopping list example. Again, it is Searle’s contention that the receiver’s presence or absence is merely accidental to writing because it is easy to imagine counterexamples to Derrida’s claim that writing is constituted by the receiver’s absence. The personal shopping list is such a counterexample.

Yet Derrida, without feigning politeness, offers the following points against Searle’s personal shopping list argument:

To affirm, as does [Searle], that the receiver is *present* at the moment when *I write a shopping list for myself*, and, moreover, to turn this into an argument . . . is to settle for the shortest, most facile analysis. If both sender and receiver were

¹¹⁴ Derrida, *Limited, Inc.*, 55.

entirely present to themselves . . . how could they even be distinguished from one another? How could the message of the shopping list circulate among them?¹¹⁵

Whereas Searle believes that both sender and receiver are present in the case of the personal shopping list on grounds of common sense (i.e. John writes a note to himself, John, so that he does not forget to buy *x* at the grocery store), Derrida is interested in how this is even possible to begin with. For the French philosopher, it is not at all clear that the John writing the note is or will be identical to the John who eventually reads the note. Further, even if this identity between the two Johns could somehow be demonstrated, then it is unclear how or to what extent that it is even possible to make an ontologically rigorous distinction between John, the writer and John, the [eventual] reader. According to Derrida, Searle is guilty of a blind faith in the self-presence of the writer/receiver, John, over time.

In fact, Derrida's critique of this commonsense notion of self-presence over time is even more radical in the sense that he believes writing literally could not exist if this were the correct formulation of the situation. For him, the very fact that eventual-reader-John, is not identical to writer-John creates the absence that makes writing what it is. In accordance with his all-important notion of differance as the structural absence of all that is present (including both Johns), Derrida wants to emphasize the ontological status of writing. Against Searle's idea that writing is simply one way among others for an author and a receiver to communicate, Derrida argues that writing "has a mind of its own." The written text, which by nature operates in the absence of a self-present receiver, offers the philosopher a glimpse into writing as a way to think about ontology.

¹¹⁵ Derrida, *Limited, Inc*, 49-50.

The third and final disagreement between Searle and Derrida concerns the concept of iterability. Indeed, it could be argued that iterability is the primary issue in the entire exchange between the two philosophers. Iterability, in general terms at least, “is the necessary possibility that any meaningful item of language will remain meaningful (though not necessarily possess the same meaning) through its repetition across contexts.”¹¹⁶

At the heart of Searle’s position on the difference between writing and speech is his distinction between iterability and permanence. When Derrida argues that iterability represents the possibility for, say, ancient texts to be read today, Searle believes he is conflating the two concepts. “This confusion,” Searle writes, “lies at the heart of [Derrida’s] argument for assimilating features of the written text with features of spoken words.”¹¹⁷

But what is this distinction between iterability and permanence, according to Searle? Although Searle does not deny that ancient texts retain some meaning throughout entirely different contexts (iterability), he also argues that the primary reason that we are able to read them today is the obvious fact that writing is more permanent—that is to say, in the most obvious way possible, writing tends to last longer than speech because it can physically survive throughout long periods of time. “This relative permanence [of writing],” Searle argues, “allows for both the absence of the receiver and, equally important, the accumulation of linguistic acts in an extended text.”¹¹⁸ This idea of permanence is different from iterability because, while the former deals only with the

¹¹⁶ Mark Alfino, “Another Look at the Derrida-Searle Debate,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 24.2 (Spring 1991), 146.

¹¹⁷ Searle, “Reiterating the Differences,” 200.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

diachronic, “lasting” quality of written text, the latter deals specifically with the more properly philosophical problem of “stable meaning” across vastly different contexts.¹¹⁹

Because Derrida refuses to acknowledge this important distinction between permanence and iterability, Searle believes that his argument lacks persuasiveness.

Once again, though, Derrida is operating on an ontological level that Searle plainly is not. Because difference involves both a-temporal and temporal structures of meaning, it is impossible for two utterances of the “same” word to be identical. Why? It is because these two utterances are constituted in part by their respective temporal contexts. Unlike Searle, who does not stray outside the purely diachronic understanding of time (as a sequence of more or less isolated events),¹²⁰ Derrida aims to describe the nature of this temporal activity that is contained in the broader concept of meaning. In order to do this, he resorts again to the conceptual resources of presence and absence.

In another difficult passage from *Limited, Inc.*, Derrida argues the following:

Iteration in its ‘purest’ form—and it is always impure—contains *in itself* the discrepancy of a difference that constitutes it as iteration. . . . [T]he remainder, although indispensable, is never that of a full or fulfilling presence: it is a differential structure escaping the logic of presence or the (simple or dialectical) opposition of presence and absence.”¹²¹

When he says that iteration is “impure”, Derrida means that there is a discrepancy of meaning between utterance *x* in temporal context *y* and utterance *x* in temporal context *z*, namely, the discrepancy between *y* and *z*. While this point is (presumably) non-

¹¹⁹ “[T]he principle according to which quotation (citation) allows us to consider an expression apart from its meaning is simply this: since any system of representation must have some representing devices whether marks, sounds, pictures, etc., it is always possible to consider those devices quite apart from their role in representation [this is permanence, not iterability].” *Ibid.*, 201.

¹²⁰ Heidegger’s “vulgar” concept of time.

¹²¹ Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 53.

controversial, the heart of this argument is that the “remainder” (i.e. that which is not mutual to y and z) is not just accidental to the process of iteration. Rather, it is precisely this remainder that makes iteration possible in the first place. To echo earlier points, this absence of identity constitutes iterability just as much as the presence of identity does.

But what does this have to do with Searle’s distinction between permanence and iterability? Derrida addresses the point only in a small paragraph in *Limited, Inc.* In fact, it is difficult to see how he understands the distinction—if he acknowledges it at all.¹²² For Derrida, Searle’s insistence that permanence is merely the survival of the written mark misses the deeper problem of iterability. There is no easy distinction between the “epistemological” problem (iterability) and the “metaphysical” problem (permanence). Rather, both concepts are implicated in the aforementioned play of differance, which encompasses epistemology and ontology alike.

To summarize, then, the three main disagreements around which the entire exchange revolves are: (1) the difference between speech and writing; (2) the nature of intentionality; and (3) the meaning and function of iterability. The question arises for our purposes, though: How do the positions of univocity and analogy function in light of the positions of Searle and Derrida, respectively?

Before we begin, I think it is safe to say that it is slightly more difficult to trace the assumed univocity of Searle than it is to do the same with analogy in Derrida. The primary reason for this is that speech-act theory is silent on properly ontological issues

¹²² This is not to say that Derrida does not claim to make this distinction. “*Sec* is in fact far removed from implying any kind of permanence to support its argumentation. It clearly distinguishes iterability from permanence.” This latter point is difficult to understand, as it seems like Derrida’s move is precisely to problematize such a cut-and-dry distinction. *Ibid.*, 54.

such as the meaning of being *qua* being. Because Derrida takes his philosophical cue from Heidegger, this is more familiar ground for him.

Nevertheless, especially in the context of this exchange, there is a strong sense of univocity in Searle's understanding of iterability. Although he is committed to saying that intentionality is a necessary condition for meaningful writing (and speech, for that matter), he is not committed to saying that this intentionality is constitutive of the *meaning* that is produced in a speech act—far from it, in fact.¹²³ Instead, the iterability of the same “token” (Searle's term for the physical sign, i.e. the actual piece of paper) exists independently from the speaker's intentionality despite the fact that the speaker's intentionality serves as a necessary condition for the token's employment in communication.

Searle's iterability is thus similar to Ryle's concept of “knowledge-that” in this way. The token—like knowledge-that—is more or less a free-standing entity that can be employed by multiple speakers' intentionalities for different purposes and in different contexts. This is univocity, as the respective physical tokens exist (or not) according to the law of identity. Token A is token A, and it cannot fail to be token A. If it did, then it would be A and ~A at the same time, which is absurd. On this paradigm, ultimately, iterability is not really a problem but an assumption. Once again, Searle's ontological commitment of univocity is implicitly aligned with the commonsense view of iteration—for better or for worse.¹²⁴

¹²³ “Derrida holds the bizarre view that speech act theory is somehow committed to the view that the intentionality of the particular token speech act must somehow control every subsequent occurrence of tokens of the same sentence types.” Searle, “Literary Theory,” 660.

¹²⁴ Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is an interesting question as to what extent Searle upholds the view of his teacher, J.L. Austin. As follower of Aristotle, Austin explicitly says that being does

Once this univocal conception of iterability is understood, it is easy to see how Searle's rejection of Derrida's speech-writing distinction and the nature of intentionality follow. Because communication names a process by which some content can be—either successfully or not—transferred from one speaker/author to at least one receiver, the actual method of doing so is accidental rather than essential. Simply put, as long as there is this univocal content that is transferred from author to receiver, it does not really matter “how it gets there,” so to speak. Further, because the subject who is intentional can also be spoken of as an object among others, it is not problematic for Searle to say that author and receiver can be present as the same person. If the name “John” picks out a single, unchanging referent univocally across different temporal contexts, then it is natural for Searle to dismiss Derrida's critique as an unnecessary confusion. It problematizes what does not need to be problematized.¹²⁵

If this is the (common) sense in which Searle's paradigm assumes univocity, how and to what extent is Derrida an advocate of analogy? Like Heidegger—indeed, perhaps more so than Heidegger—Derrida is a critic of what he perceives to be the Western theological enterprise of onto-theology, which means essentially reducing God to one being among others.¹²⁶ This is why it might seem absurd to say that he shares common ground with a philosopher-theologian such as Aquinas, who is supposedly implicated in

not have one single, specificable, always-the-same-meaning. Like Ryle, Austin is interested in what the different senses of being could mean. However, because the present purposes involve ontology—not just epistemology—Austin's openness to the Aristotelian idea of analogy is not as relevant as it might seem. J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 71.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 660.

¹²⁶ As Merold Westphal explains, onto-theology is that concept of God whose “raison d'être has become to make it possible for human reason to give ultimate explanations. This is what Heidegger means when he says that ‘the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it.’ God is at the beck and call of human understanding.” Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 11-12.

such a view. Nevertheless I argue that Derrida's signature concept of difference functions in a very similar manner to Aquinas' Creator God.

If we recall our earlier discussion of Aquinas' concept of analogy, we know that the theological motivation for such an understanding of divine predication is the preservation of God's act of creation *ex nihilo*. Because he causes all things to be, everything that has being has its being through its relation to God. Aquinas' emphasis on the ontological primacy of relation over individualized substances is an important move beyond Aristotelian primary substance. Following Aristotle's notion of causation, we know that that which is caused shares the being of its cause—not in full, but in part. Thus, God's transcendence is preserved in that we can predicate his being only in insufficient terms. God is “beyond being,” in this respect.¹²⁷

It is my contention that Derrida's difference serves in a similar role, in his philosophy. Although he would likely balk at the idea of attributing anything like a Thomist understanding of transcendence to himself, difference is transcendent, in a way. As Derrida never forgets to iterate throughout his vast *oeuvre*, difference is not a concept among others. It is not a particular being among others because this would mean incorrectly that its ontological significance lies with its presence as a particular being. Because it is supposed to represent the absence that makes such presences possible, difference—like Aquinas' God—is beyond the realm of particular beings.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991),

¹²⁸ “[T]he signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. *Such a play, différence, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general.* For the same reason, différence, which is not a concept, is not simply a word, that is, what is

Differance serves as an impersonal creative force for all that is present. If it is true that the dynamic activity of differance is the very condition or possibility for all speech, then it too does its creative work *ex nihilo*. If this were not true, then we would have to resort to the awkward idea that, in fact, some present thing serves as the absence that is differance.¹²⁹ But this cannot be; for the whole point of invoking differance in the first place is to show that the presence of that which is present owes itself to absence. Indeed, perhaps it is not too much to say that Derrida's differance inherits the Thomist impetus to seek relation as primordial—not [present] substance.

To push this reading to its most extreme, we might say that differance bears witness to a different god—one that is not known via the incarnation of Christ. Especially towards the end of his career, it is well-known that Derrida's project is deeply interested in negative theology.¹³⁰ While it is not our present purpose to explore Derrida's complicated and, frankly, confusing theology, it is enough to note that this apophatic impulse ironically makes for a profound alignment with Aquinas in this regard.

These are the ways in which Derrida is perhaps a curious advocate of analogy. Far from the popular caricatures of his work as a cheap, shortsighted despiser of reason, Derrida's project represents a sincere and engaged hermeneutical exercise in light of the ontological difference between being *qua* being and particular beings. On this reading of his exchange with Searle, perhaps his greatest fault is to assume that speech-act theory is

generally represented as the calm, present, and self-referential unity of concept and phonic material. Later we will look into the word in general." [my emphasis] Jacques Derrida, "Differance," 233.

¹²⁹ It is important to note that I do not mean to say that differance somehow "replaces" God or serves as an apt substitute for God. I mean only that, on this particular point, differance functions similarly to Aquinas' God.

¹³⁰ "Deconstruction saves apophatic theology from telling a bad story about itself, about how it speaks from the Heart of Truth, and how the rest of us had better get in line with it. Or else!" John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 6.

willing or able to plumb such depths. Univocity's greatest friend is the commonsense association with the logical law of identity, and thus it is no coincidence that Austin and Searle consider such common sense as a foundation for speech-act theory in general. Univocal iterability is a presupposition upon which his philosophy is founded—not a position for which he is positively arguing.

Case Study 3: The “Biola School” and “Continental Philosophy of Religion”

My argument for reading the analytic-continental divide within the framework of the Scholastic controversy between the positions of univocity and analogy has proceeded thus far with special attention to two case studies that represent the philosophical academy of the twentieth century at the highest possible levels. Ryle, Heidegger, Searle and Derrida are all recognized as leading philosophers of their respective fields and eras. As we explore our third and final case study, then, it may seem odd that a comparatively obscure exchange—that between the so-called “Biola School” and “continental philosophy of religion”—is chosen for these purposes. This exchange also differs from the other two in that entire movements are represented rather than just individuals. Nevertheless, I choose to include it here in order to expose the significance of the divide in *Christian* philosophy. It is part of my thesis, after all, that Christian philosophical theology occupies a unique position to make sense of the distinction between univocity and analogy in the contemporary context of the analytic-continental divide.

What I mean here by “continental philosophy of religion” means what is common to the work of philosophers like Jean-Luc Marion, John D. Caputo, and Merold Westphal (among others): namely, a basic commitment to the hermeneutic nature of ontology.

“Biola School” foundationalism, on the other hand, is a term borrowed from James K.A.

Smith, which signifies the epistemological turn of analytic philosophy of religion—most notably in the work of William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland.

The specific encounter at issue here occurs in the form of some essays that represent both sides of this debate in a collection edited by Myron B. Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*. The “Biola School”, represented by the philosophers Douglas Geivett and R. Scott Smith, argue that the “linguistic turn” that is characteristic of postmodernity is problematic because it reduces philosophy and theology to merely a discourse of competing narratives. What is needed, according to them, is an affirmation of epistemological foundationalism and an articulation of “properly basic” beliefs. These beliefs serve as objective foundations for truth claims, which allow theology to avoid the relativism of competing narratives. In response, Merold Westphal and James K.A. Smith argue that this linguistic turn does not have to be relativistic. In fact, it is even helpful in that it overcomes modern subjectivism and clears the way for a more robust *participatory* ontology in which knowledge and being belong together.

By framing the task of philosophy in terms of “properly basic beliefs,” Geivett and (R. Scott) Smith assume a univocal concept of being of objects to which these propositions can correspond. It is in this correspondence that beliefs can be said to be true. Westphal and (James K.A.) Smith argue that an idea of a univocal ontology is fundamentally flawed. This is because the world is constituted not only of objects but also of various horizons of interpretation, which ultimately find their being in the God who is unknowable to creatures in his essence. Thus, along Thomist lines, the continental philosophy of Westphal and Smith assumes analogy rather than univocity.

In Smith's essay, "Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: A Response to the 'Biola School,'" he says that this Biola School is "governed by the assumption that postmodernism and Christian faith are mutually exclusive."¹³¹ Of course, in order to understand the point being made here, everything depends on what is meant by "postmodernism" and "Christian faith." Thus, in this final case study, I will attempt to provide a sketch of this claim—first according to the view of the Biola School, then with continental philosophy of religion.

In 2003, J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig published the extraordinarily ambitious *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, in which both authors deal systematically with arguments for and against what they understand to be the most pertinent issues for Christian philosophy. The six-hundred and fifty-four page volume covers the question what of philosophy is in general all the way to a defense of the overall "coherence of Christian theism."¹³² This text represents the most comprehensive exposition of the "Christian faith" as the Biola School understands it—at least in terms of its necessary philosophical presuppositions.

Readers can already detect the spirit of *Philosophical Foundations* before even opening the book. Foundationalism is a way of knowing that begins with certain "self-evident" propositions as objectively true and independent of their historical contingencies. These truths are named "basic beliefs" because of their indivisible nature, and it is upon

¹³¹ Smith, James K.A., "Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: A Response to the 'Biola School'" in: *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 215.

¹³² J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 501.

these basic beliefs that any other knowledge propositions must be *founded*.¹³³ When Moreland and Craig draw from the work of likeminded philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga, then, it should come as no surprise that they are sympathetic to the philosophical task of situating belief in the Christian God as properly basic:

[Reformed epistemology] appeals to a cognitive faculty, the *sensus divinitatis* to explain how belief in God is properly basic with respect to both justification and warrant, the latter being analyzed in terms of the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties.¹³⁴

This is a reference to Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*, where this task is carried out. The *sensus divinitatis* is a concept directly attributable to the theologian John Calvin in the first book of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. According to Plantinga, the *sensus divinitatis* is a “natural, inborn sense of God, or of divinity, that is the origin and source of the world's religions.”¹³⁵ This idea lends itself quite well to the philosophical project of foundationalism because it is a theological presupposition that is “natural” and independent of its historicity.

When Plantinga speaks of the *sensus divinitatis* as a universal cognitive faculty of human beings, he is positing an avenue through which the human mind may access the true and basic belief in God as the foundation for all other true beliefs. The role of apologetics for philosophers like Plantinga (if it has a role at all) is akin to the Socratic conception of the teacher as a “midwife” who brings to light a knowledge that was *in the*

¹³³ It is important to note that foundationalism does not necessarily mean that the basic beliefs in question have to be “certain”. In fact, advocates of reformed epistemology are quite adamant about their distaste for this so-called “classical foundationalism”, which requires such strict criteria for properly basic beliefs. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93-99.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

student already.¹³⁶ For the purposes of this study, the vital presupposition of foundationalism is exactly that: far from *receiving* a knowledge that is subject to the vicissitudes of history, the subject *has already* a timeless, immovable idea of God simply by, well, existing as a human being.¹³⁷ This belief justifies other beliefs, and by reasoning “up,” as it were, objective truths become available to those who follow such a line of reasoning. This is the fundamental methodology that drives *Philosophical Foundations of a Christian Worldview* as a treatise.

Before moving on, it is important to locate quickly a relevant implication of this foundationalism. Although Moreland and Craig use most of *Philosophical Foundations* to posit a constructive model of the Christian worldview, they do critique competing views as well. Because a foundationalist epistemology depends on properly basic beliefs that are in some way self-evident, there is an “all or nothing” attitude that characterizes the enterprise. For one such example of this, we can consider their strong claims regarding the status of moral claims.

According to Moreland and Craig, there is no alternative to the dichotomy of moral absolutism and moral relativism. Rather, “since one must either be a relativist or an absolutist, then arguments against relativism count as arguments for absolutism.”¹³⁸ Although it may seem overly reductionist to argue that there are only two viable accounts of moral systems that actually maintain meaningful differences, this brand of foundationalism must regard this as an airtight claim. If God is, in fact, properly basic,

¹³⁶ See Plato, *Theaetetus* (Rockville, MD: Serenity, 2009), 150b-151d.

¹³⁷ Some might accuse me of ignoring Plantinga's insistence on the necessity of revelation via the Holy Spirit. However this critique is misguided because the point is that the Holy Spirit is still very much an “internal testimony” that is not historically or culturally contingent. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242.

¹³⁸ Craig and Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations*, 428.

then to deny his existence means denying an objective foundation for all reality—moral claims certainly included.¹³⁹

Moreland and Craig are obviously sympathetic to the absolutist side of this dichotomy. For them, any relativistic account of morality is problematic because it contradicts the commonsense notion that some actions are intrinsically better or worse than others. If moral claims are redefined to mean merely the constructed conventions of particular cultures or individuals, there is no way to offer a consistent judgment regarding the ethical integrity of those particular cultures or individuals. On this relativist paradigm, therefore, objective morality is either non-existent or unintelligible. This is why, for Moreland and Craig, “the various versions of relativism are extremely problematic. Relativism does not appear to be a defensible moral doctrine, and hence, some form of absolutism would seem to follow.”¹⁴⁰

Notice here the appeal to common sense. Much like the aforementioned *sensus divinitatis*, Moreland and Craig argue that human beings *innately* possess the ability to discern between good and evil—albeit perhaps in an unnuanced, raw manner. This common sense notion that murder is wrong, for example, is posited as an avenue towards discovering the metaphysical, objective good that the act of murder fails to realize. Disastrous consequences follow from the denial of this moral discernment that can be traced back to the lack of any foundational, properly basic belief, and there is really no way to justify such an irrational position.

¹³⁹ This either-or situation might not be true of every foundationalism. It is easy to imagine, for example, a version of foundationalism which rejects belief in God as properly basic while yet accepting certain objective moral values as such.

¹⁴⁰ Craig and Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations*, 416.

For Moreland and Craig, such an absolutism regarding the properly basic belief in God is at the heart of any Christian philosophy. This is because the Christian claim is universal—true in the same way and in the same respect across any and all historical, cultural and subjective contexts.¹⁴¹ Because “postmodernism” in this case names an epistemological disposition that takes such contexts to be at least partly constitutive of knowledge claims, the postmodernist cannot assume the same sort of absolutism that the Biola School champions. This is what the Biola School means when it says that “postmodernism and Christian faith are mutually exclusive.”

Although Smith’s critique of this position covers an array of issues associated with this outlook, there is one that is especially interesting for our purposes of understanding the role of univocity and analogy, namely, the relationship between language and the world. According to Smith, the Biola School understands this problem as follows:

[The Biola School] tends to think that language is something of an *obstacle* to the world—that language is something that gets in the way of just experiencing the world itself. Language is a lens through which we see the world, albeit with some distortion, simply because there is this lens *between* the world and us.¹⁴²

For the Biola School, Smith argues, language functions in epistemology as a necessary evil. It is necessary because it serves as the only mediator between the knowing subject and the “external world”. Without it, there would be no means through which a common understanding of the world could be arrived upon. Language is evil, though, because by its very nature as mediator it cannot allow “direct access” to the world. Once language

¹⁴¹ A popular “Biola School” defense of this claim to universalism as Christian orthodoxy often comes as a reading of John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

¹⁴² Smith, “Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?”, 222.

emerges (usually for the sake of communicating knowledge claims), there is “interpretation,” which names an activity where a knowing subject tries to “sift through” the work of the “middle man” (language) in order to arrive upon the world *as it really is*.¹⁴³

Smith argues that the Biola School misses something crucial in its reducing postmodernism to “an *epistemological* phenomenon [Smith’s emphasis].”¹⁴⁴ This means that, according to Smith, the Biola School understands postmodernism as way of doing philosophy that only has consequences for the way the world is known or perceived. If indeed postmodernism is merely an epistemological phenomenon, it would mean that the fundamental structure of the world—and being *qua* being—is left unaltered. It is only the view of language that differs.

It is this position—postmodernism as a strictly epistemological phenomenon—that Smith critiques. For him, the problem with the Biola School’s critique of postmodernism is that it does not properly account for postmodernism’s *ontological* implications. Following the hermeneutical tradition of Heidegger and Derrida, Smith argues that the so-called “external world” is always already subject to interpretation. Against the idea that we have to “sift through” language in order to get to the world as it is, Smith’s argues that even (and especially) that “world as it is” is not only mediated but also constituted in part by language.

But if this is true, and even the world is a “text to be interpreted,” as Smith says, then how is it possible to avoid the Biola School’s classic charge of relativism? Without

¹⁴³ Smith’s paradigm case of such a view of language and the world is that of the French political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 216.

an absolute referent—something “beyond the text”—how is it possible to derive normativity from one reading as opposed to another (i.e. that murder is wrong and not right)?

Of course, Smith views outright relativism as a disastrous position, as well. As a Christian philosopher, he too is committed to the idea that there is a special normative quality in truth (i.e. we should believe the truth, not lies)—and that the person of Christ is intimately connected with it. Indeed, cheap quips such as “nothing is true” are little more than “sophomoric” nonsense for Smith.¹⁴⁵ In fact, to read Smith’s version of postmodernism in such a way is to miss its most important claim, namely, that any so-called “epistemology” which assumes a sharp distinction between a knowing subject over against a world of objects does so illegitimately. With the help of fellow postmoderns such as Heidegger and Derrida, Smith draws a fundamentally different picture of knowledge. Far from being separated from the world as an ideal observer who stands behind the world in order to organize it in terms of its truths and lies, the knowing self is itself part of the world as yet another “kind of text requiring interpretation.”¹⁴⁶ It is for precisely this reason that a banal relativism cannot be imagined in such an ontology. Relativism requires that one *has* a certain item of “knowledge” that is “true for me” (not necessarily true for another). This language of possession is extremely important because, without it, the ‘for’ in “true for me” makes very little sense. According to Smith, though, it is impossible to ‘have’ knowledge if it means that a detached subject holds certain objects of knowledge in some kind of mental depository. Indeed, one of the primary

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 225.

motivations for adopting a postmodern, hermeneutic ontology is to accommodate the fact that knowledge is a complicated *activity* that is constituted by habits, traditions, and specific historical contexts (among other things). The finality that is implied in the language of possession is not a primary characteristic of knowledge, on this view.

Finally, for Smith, there is “no reason why such a claim is antithetical to Christian faith. Quite to the contrary, [he] think[s] it is a perceptive analysis of the conditions of finitude that constitute creaturehood.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, rather than understanding the *sensus divinitatus* as an essentially non-historical source of foundational belief, this perspective emphasizes the incarnation of Christ *the historical person* as an interpretive horizon for knowledge. This is what Smith’s postmodernism acknowledges—even if such a theological commitment is not explicit in more secular figures like Heidegger and Derrida. Understood this way, it is not a departure but an affirmation of Christian philosophy as properly Christian.

At the most basic level, then, the most obvious disagreement that the Biola School maintains with Smith’s postmodernism concerns the nature of language and its relationship to the world. For the Biola School, language is a means to an end of arriving upon justified knowledge claims about the world-in-itself. For Smith’s postmodernism, language permeates the entirety of not only the world but also the self who interprets it.

The question for our purposes, of course, is how the opposing positions of univocity and analogy function in such a disagreement. The answer to this question lies most fundamentally with the general goal or expected outcome of knowledge claims and with the question, “What is knowledge *for*?” If different truth claims are predicated

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 225.

univocally—bearing intrinsic value as truthful without reference to a transcendent order that is not itself predicable—then some version of the Biola School’s foundationalist paradigm seems to follow. If, however, knowledge claims are actually just different modes of being—always analogous to a transcendent order that is not predicable in the same way—then Smith’s postmodernism is the more plausible perspective. This is the way in which the frameworks of univocity and analogy can be employed as a clarification of the substantial differences here.

There is perhaps no better resource from which I could draw than Craig’s direct response to the issue at hand. On his website, *Reasonable Faith*, Dr. Craig was gracious enough to publish an answer to my question about his position on Scotus’ univocity: “Do you accept the view traditionally ascribed to Duns Scotus: namely, the univocity of being (pertaining to both God and creatures)?”¹⁴⁸ His response, which I will not reproduce in full here for sake of space, is telling:

I agree wholeheartedly with Scotus that there is a univocal concept of being which applies to both God and creatures. One of the aspects of Thomas Aquinas’ thought that I find most disturbing is his claim that we can speak of God only in analogical terms. Without univocity of meaning, we are left with agnosticism about the nature of God, able to say only what God is *not*, not what He *is*.¹⁴⁹

Craig’s rationale for adopting the Scotist position is rather simple. He finds Aquinas’ *analogia entis* “disturbing” because, at bottom, it is merely another name for negative theology. Of course, it is safe to say that this recourse to negative theology is not Aquinas’ intention. As we recall from his *Summa Theologica*, his position of analogy maintains

¹⁴⁸ William Lane Craig, “Is God a Being in the Same Sense that We Are?,” *Reasonable Faith Q&A*. <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-god-a-being-in-the-same-sense-that-we-are>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

that the “[predication of God and creatures] is not diverse as in equivocals.”¹⁵⁰ This is because, as creator and first cause, Aquinas’ God imparts his being to creation (and therefore created minds)—not fully, but partially. Thus, created minds bear only a trace of their creator—not his essence.

For advocates of univocity such as Craig, this is not “good enough” for meaningful speech about God. In order for our speech to be meaningful, it must describe its referents as they are in themselves. After all, unless it achieves this end, language proves to be an “obstacle” rather than a catalyst for truth.

If this is true, then there is a profound quality shared between Craig’s Biola School foundationalism and the univocity of Scotus—and even to Aristotelian primary substance. This quality is that of finality of the world as it is, being *qua* being. Following Scotus, Craig implies that the logical law of excluded middle must apply to the being of both creator and creation precisely because it provides the finality that is a necessary condition for knowledge. Thus, as Scotus reminds us, univocity is that which, if affirmed and denied, produces a contradiction. This univocity has the quality of finality because there is only one way to think about the affirmation and negation of a single, univocal term, namely, as a logical contradiction. Thus, univocal predication ends where it begins—within the framework of the law of excluded middle.

Analogy fails, for Craig, because it cannot accomplish this finality. Unlike the plain assertion that “God is”, which derives its plausibility from the finality of its unequivocal negation of “God is not”, analogy always implies an unfinished excess that

¹⁵⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 13.

is constitutive of even the surest of claims.¹⁵¹ Indeed, this is an important part of what transcendence means in the first place—at least in terms of the Thomist *analogia*.

If univocity is the (admitted) position of Craig of the Biola School, then, what about Smith's postmodernism? There are many places in which such an identification with Aquinas' *analogia* can be named in his work, but there is one particularly telling instance in his review of David Bentley Hart's *The Beauty of the Infinite* entitled "Questions About the Perception of 'Christian Truth': On the Affective Effects of Sin."¹⁵² The review focuses primarily on a hermeneutics for a properly theological understanding of truth—especially as such an understanding makes sense in light of Christian witness to those outside of the tradition.

Against the finality of the law of non-contradiction as a universal medium through which even God is intelligible, Smith uses Hart's book to emphasize the necessity of rhetoric as an *ongoing* witness to Christian truth. The persuasion that is inherent to the Christian claim is a particular hermeneutical disposition—one that cannot simply be mediated through a universally shared paradigm.¹⁵³ This is not relativism, to be sure, because indeed part of what it means to believe something as a Christian is the wish

¹⁵¹ While this basic point is not controversial among those working on the topic, what *is* controversial is whether or not Aquinas' analogy of being implies that the law of non-contradiction does not apply to God's being. Catherine Pickstock argues that this is indeed the case, meaning that the conjunction "God is, and God is not" is actually true with respect to God's being. The rationale here is that the law of non-contradiction applies only to particular beings—not being *qua* being, God himself. See Catherine Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, eds. John Milbank and Simon Oliver (London: Routledge, 2009), 130.

¹⁵² James K.A. Smith "Questions About the Perception of 'Christian Truth': On the Affective Effects of Sin," *New Blackfriars* 88.1017 (August 2007).

¹⁵³ Smith notes the shared sentiments in John Milbank's influential text, *Theology and Social Theory*: "If my Christian perspective is persuasive, then this should be a persuasion intrinsic to the Christian *logos* itself, not the apologetic mediation of a universal human reason." (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 1.

that others might join in belief. On this view, knowledge is for the sake of witnessing to a truth that cannot never be *arrived upon* in any final or settled manner.

Thus, analogy functions on the side of Smith's postmodernism insofar as it allows for the intelligibility of such a persuasion that is not mediated by a universal human rationality or "natural theology".¹⁵⁴ On this paradigm, there is no neutral reason between the Christian *Logos* and some other principle of individuation because—if the Christian *Logos* is that of the tradition—then "without him nothing was made that has been made."¹⁵⁵ This includes created minds, presumably, and such a philosophical anthropology is integral to Smith's hermeneutic ontology.

To summarize the case study, then, I have attempted to show how the controversy between the Biola School and continental philosophy of religion can be read as an extended exercise in the univocity-analogy debate. The Biola School maintains a loyal adherence to foundationalism as an epistemological methodology—appealing ultimately to "properly basic" beliefs as the groundwork for a given system of justified beliefs. Belief in God is among these properly basic beliefs, which, in turn, entails an epistemological gambit, of sorts: namely, that one is committed to a disjunction between some form of absolutism and some form of relativism. If belief in God is taken to be properly basic (or belief in the Christian God, at least), then absolutism must follow. If not, then relativism follows.

¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that, while Smith's critique of natural theology makes sense in light of his affinity for hermeneutic ontology and the analogy of being, it is difficult to understand his brief defense of reformed epistemology. While reformed epistemology is equally disdainful of natural theology (because belief in God is "properly basic"), it is not hermeneutical in the sense that the believer's *sensus divinitatus* is constituted in part by an ongoing historical narrative. When it comes to the mutuality between Smith's postmodernism and reformed epistemology, then, it seems like natural theology is in danger of functioning as a red herring. See *Ibid.*, 588n.

¹⁵⁵ John 1:3b.

On the side of continental philosophy of religion, Smith's defense of postmodernism is a defense of a *via media* between absolutism and relativism. If the relation of language to the world is constitutive rather than accidental, then the distance between the knowing subject and the world assumed by both is erased. This entails not just a hermeneutic epistemology but also a hermeneutic ontology—meaning that the world *is* a text to be interpreted. On this view, absolutism fails because it denies the creaturely, interpretive nature of knowledge; however, relativism also fails because it falsely assumes that the knowing subject is capable of withdrawing from its own horizons and judging others on some kind of equal plane with itself. In either case, some univocal “world” of beliefs is required.

As is evident from Craig's own words, the Biola School's foundationalism is difficult to imagine without univocal predication of God and creatures. This is because, in Craig's words, this “biblical realism” is necessary for meaningful theological speech and—by extension—knowledge claims about God. As I argued, there is another way in which it is possible to understand the impetus behind this position of univocity: namely, knowledge as constituted in part by finality. This finality is implied in the employment of the law of excluded middle, which makes for a simple either/or when it comes to univocity and equivocity.

By contrast, Smith's postmodernism offers a critique of this finality as an implicit criterion for knowledge. In fact, by assuming an analogical account of being, the implied transcendence of such a picture of knowledge disallows such finality. This is because belief in God's existence can never be “arrived upon” in any settled sense. God is not a

particular, existing being, after all—even if it is true that particular beings do point towards God.

This is the sense in which our final case study does, in fact, support a reading of the dispute in terms of univocity and analogy. Thus, the first of two main claims stated in the introduction—that there is indeed a substantial philosophical disagreement that marks the divide—is defended. In the next and final chapter, then, it is necessary to assess the preceding analysis in light of the second major claim of the study, namely, that Christian philosophical theology occupies a unique position in regards to the ability to adjudicate a more coherent debate between analytic and continental philosophers.

Conclusion: Christian Philosophical Theology and the Divide

I have attempted to show that the metaphysical ideas of the univocity being and the analogy of being, as developed in Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, serve as a helpful explanatory horizon for understanding the analytic-continental divide. In order to do so, in the first chapter I sketched a context in which univocity and analogy could be defined clearly—drawing heavily from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and *Categories*. For Aristotle, we saw that the problem of being is understood as “being *qua* being”, which eventually leads to his account of primary substance, which is defined more or less by its logical integrity “in itself.”

For Aquinas, by contrast, substance is only intelligible via the relational act of the transcendent Divine Being. Thus, because created minds receive God’s being only partially as part of God’s creation, it follows that God in his essence can be predicated only by analogy—never univocally. Being *qua* being is no longer primary substance “in itself”, but rather the *Logos* in whom the created order participates. There can be no

substance that exists “in itself” because there is no concept of being that can be meaningfully abstracted from the Divine Being.

Next, we saw that Scotus’ doctrine of the univocity of being attempts to address what he argues is a fundamental problem with this primacy of analogy as it is argued in the work of Henry of Ghent. In order to make sense of analogy, Scotus argues, it is necessary first to have a univocal middle term in the analogy. So, while he does not want to do away with analogy, Scotus does argue that analogy cannot avoid the problem of equivocity without assuming a concept of being that can be univocally predicated of God and creatures. On this view, being *qua* being is indeed a concept that can be grammatically meaningful apart from Divine Being.

Taking the position of univocity means that being *qua* being and its instantiations in particular beings can be predicated univocally without a loss of meaning. By contrast, the position of analogy means that being *qua* being is, in some sense, unsayable. Thus, being *qua* being can only be spoken analogously—never univocally. In order to explore the potential of the difference between univocity and analogy as the fundamental difference between the analytic and continental philosophy in the twentieth century, we then looked at three relevant case studies.

The first of these case studies was an exchange between Gilbert Ryle and Martin Heidegger. United by their mutual disdain for the Cartesian picture of philosophical anthropology, clear differences are drawn in Ryle’s review of Heidegger’s classic text, *Being and Time*. While Ryle admires the phenomenological method, he critiques Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology and its central question regarding the meaning of being in general. There is no room for “the things themselves” in this philosophy, Ryle

argues; therefore the risk of an outright equivocation of being is unavoidable. So, although Ryle himself is a cautious phenomenologist in the sense that he wants to make room for a so-called “knowledge-how”, he still maintains a strict univocity for “knowledge-that”—a way of talking about “the things themselves.” This is the sense in which Ryle and Heidegger are proponents of univocity and analogy, respectively.

Next, we explored a more notorious encounter—namely, the loveless exchange between Searle and Derrida. This argument begins with Derrida’s “Signature, Event, Context”, a critique of speech-act theory. For Derrida, Austin and Searle underwrite an uncritical metaphysics of presence by assuming a direct iterability without reference to the constitutive influence of temporality. The French iconoclast then proceeds to provide a corrective in the form of his notion of *differance*, which specifically includes temporal deferral as well as standard difference. Interestingly, then, Derrida’s *differance* functions in a similar way to Aquinas’ analogy of being because, while it is unsayable in itself, it permeates the entirety of particular beings. Nothing can be said without it. This critique is foreign to Searle, who denies that speech-act theory is operating on such a level. His commitment to univocity is based upon a commonsense acknowledgment of univocal iterability across time.

Finally, we looked at the third case study of the present essay, that between the “Biola School” of Christian philosophy and continental philosophy of religion. In this exchange, we saw that the analytic Biola School operates on the basis of an epistemological foundationalism built on “properly basic beliefs”. Univocity is important here because without it such a system is difficult to found. As we saw explicitly with Craig’s own view on univocity, it is clear that there is an “either-or” when it comes to

predication of God and creatures—either there is univocity or equivocity. He prefers, the former, of course. The main critic of this position in this context is Smith, who opts for a hermeneutic epistemology that is analogical by nature. Instead of “arriving upon” knowledge of God, such a view assumes that God names a mystery that cannot be exhausted by univocal predication. Epistemology is always an extended exercise in interpretation, a Thomistic, analogical concept of being follows quite naturally.

In the introduction of this essay, I sketched a threefold depiction of what I take to be good reasons for Christian philosophical theology’s unique position with regards to the potential adjudication of the analytic-continental divide in philosophy. Assuming that the univocity-analogy controversy does indeed represent a substantial difference between the opposing sides, the reasons for accepting such a position run as follows:

1. Theological context is key to understanding the historical development of both analogy and univocity. This allows for a clearer definition of terms—one that includes without reservation or embarrassment the concept of God.
2. In order for debate to be intelligibly Christian, charitable hermeneutics would have to be employed by both sides. Although this point might sound trivial, (or worse, sentimental), its importance is apparent in the train wreck that is the Derrida-Searle debate.
3. A shared theological context of revelation offers even more common ground for debate.

Thus, we will now conclude the argument by taking each of these points in order with reference to the previous analysis.

That theology plays an important historical role in twentieth-century philosophy divide is, in one sense, obvious—even if the only reason for believing it lies with the purely diachronic “order of events” that produced the academic enterprise of philosophy. Heidegger himself was well on his way to becoming a priest in the Roman Catholic Church before he had his own “Lutheran conversion,” so to speak.¹⁵⁶ Even Russell is implicated in the historical context of theology in the sense that he felt it necessary to write such a book as *Why I am not a Christian*. The raw fact of the matter is that philosophers tend to respond to what is around them, and theology does always seem to be around philosophers.

However, I argue that there is perhaps a deeper and more philosophically interesting sense in which the work of philosophers in the analytic-continental divide is always already permeated by certain amount of theology. To illustrate what I mean by this, I shall first turn to the continental side of this divide with Derrida.

It is not at all controversial to speak of a “theological turn” in various strands of continental philosophy after the Second World War. Indeed, there may be reason to think that continental philosophy rather intimately bound with philosophy even in discourses that do not make explicit use of categories given by any specific theological tradition.¹⁵⁷ Instead of understanding theology as a distraction from authentic philosophical issues, on such a view, otherwise secular philosophers such as Derrida seem to support the idea that

¹⁵⁶ For further development of this point, see: John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

¹⁵⁷ J. Aaron Simmons argues along with Hent de Vries that “[continental philosophy’s] turn to religion has not been a turn away from philosophy, but instead calls us to reexamine how we understand the relationship between philosophy and religion in the first place.” J. Aaron Simmons, “Is Continental Philosophy Just Catholicism for Atheists? On the Political Relevance of *Kenosis*,” *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 15.1 (Spring 2008), 95.

theology represents a “*deepening* of the specific philosophical impulses of phenomenology itself.”¹⁵⁸

But even if this is true, what does theology as a deepening of philosophical inquiry look like? An answer to this question, I believe, can be found not coincidentally in one of the hallmarks shared by the great continentals, Heidegger and Derrida. In a filmed interview, Derrida remarks the following in a characteristically playful manner:

As it’s often said, in the way that Heidegger thought—is *questioning* the privileged form of philosophy? Is thinking really questioning, as it’s often said? Couldn’t there be, before the question, a more ancient, profound, and radical movement that is *not* questioning, but is rather an affirmation? [my emphases]¹⁵⁹

Derrida’s final question in this threefold series hits on something that looks curiously like theology—albeit perhaps not in the sense of “faith seeking understanding” that is characteristic of the Christian tradition of Augustine and Anselm.¹⁶⁰ If he is correct to say that philosophy has been understood primarily as a discipline of questioning, then Derrida, following Heidegger, seems to have arrived upon something that is not philosophy proper, yet integral to it nonetheless: namely, those “initial” conditions without which questioning is impossible.

The simple idea here is follows something like the following line of reasoning. The way in which the question is formed contributes to the answer of the question. As we explored briefly in the body of the first case study (Heidegger vs. Ryle), this is a key tenet of phenomenology. If this is true, then in a similar way it seems that the nature of what is not a question (i.e. the “affirmation”) out of which the question arises also plays a

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 95.

¹⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Derrida*, Film directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman (2002, Jane Doe Films).

¹⁶⁰ Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Cambridge, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 151.

constitutive role in the way the question is asked and, by transitive relation, to the answer of the question.¹⁶¹ This latter point is extremely important for understanding the second case study (Derrida vs. Searle), because it is these implicit relations that Derrida aims to uncover—the same relations that Searle wishes to dismiss as utter nonsense.

A difficult problem arises upon the raising of a further question: how is it possible to apply meaningful descriptions to such an “affirmation” that is not, by definition, amenable to the philosophical mode of questioning? The answer to this question, of course, would require a full-length study of its own (at least), so it is far beyond the scope of our present purposes here. There is one sense in which the beginning of a possible answer is in order, however. This subtle distinction between the modes of questioning and affirmation, I would argue, serves as a helpful designation for the roles of philosophical and theological discourse, respectively.

Most agree that Derrida understands himself in the tradition of negative theology—even if he does critique such advocates of apophasis in the Christian tradition as “implicitly affirmative.”¹⁶² What is often less clear is how such a point of agreement between the Christian theological tradition and Derrida’s philosophy can be meaningfully maintained. This idea of the affirmation as a condition for the subsequent mode of questioning is helpful precisely because it provides a clear way to think about the role of theology as a deepening of philosophical inquiry. Far from evading philosophical inquiry, this theological mode of affirmation proves to be a deep and integral part of philosophy.

¹⁶¹ Represented slightly more formally, let us say that x , y , and z represent, respectively, the affirmation (x), the question (y), and the answer (z). By “transitive relation”, I simply mean that, if y maintains a constitutive relation to z , and x maintains the same constitutive relation to y , it must follow that x also maintains a constitutive relation to z .

¹⁶² Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, *Derrida and Negative Theology* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 188.

Thus, it seems to be the case that continental philosophers such as Heidegger and Derrida are indeed better understood in light of the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. This is much more than a “historical accident” (i.e. simply cases in which the philosophers happen to come from situations in which theology is practiced). It is, on the contrary, inseparable from their respective projects.

Now, regarding the analytic side, it may seem more difficult to ascribe such deep continuity with the Christian theological tradition. This is not to say that analytic philosophers do not engage in philosophical theology or philosophy of religion, as has already been demonstrated plainly in the third and final case study of the present argument.¹⁶³ It is rather to say that the same blurring of boundaries between philosophy and theology that is characteristic of continental philosophy does not seem to occur in analytic philosophy. If univocity is true, then this makes sense; for it is perfectly sensible to understand the being of objects—even objects considered “theological” (i.e. angels, spirits, etc.)—apart from any *necessary* relation to transcendence.

This difficulty of ascribing historical significance to analytic philosophy has not stopped scholars of intellectual history from ascribing such a development of analytic philosophy out of theological traditions, though.¹⁶⁴ While the historical context of theology is usually more associated with continental philosophy—especially if

¹⁶³ Indeed, the platform of “Analytic Theology” has become an essentially mainstream view for significant divisions of the American Philosophical Association, such as the Society of Christian Philosophers.

¹⁶⁴ In a recent CBC podcast series, Mark Taylor has argued that analytic philosophy has developed out of the spirit of late Scholastic nominalism. On this view, Medieval philosophers such as William of Ockham are the main progenitors. The thought is that if indeed nominalism holds that universals do not maintain any real ontological status, then such an emphasis on the ontological primacy of particular beings opens the door for the domination of the natural sciences and [logical] atomistic accounts of reality. Mark Taylor, “The Myth of the Secular: Part 7,” *Ideas with Paul Kennedy on CBC Radio*, October 30, 2012. <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2012/10/30/the-myth-of-the-secular-part-7/>.

knowledge claims are taken to be in some way contingent upon such a historical context—there is a sense in which analytic philosophy can be understood in the tradition of great theologians such as Anselm and even Aquinas.¹⁶⁵ Therefore it is certainly a mistake to equate mid-twentieth century logical positivism’s view that theology is “meaningless” with the contemporary scene of analytic philosophy. However, the inherent nominalistic tendency of univocity (and analytic philosophy) can lend itself to the idea of its purely accidental relationship to the theological tradition. Put simply, from such a perspective, the tradition is “right when it is right, and wrong when it is wrong.” Perhaps it goes without saying that the analytic program of, say, reformed epistemology could only be imagined in a late-Protestant paradigm in which tradition is not heralded with the same normative power as in the Catholic or Orthodox faiths.¹⁶⁶

So, although the way in which analytic philosophy stems from certain theological developments through antiquity and the Middle Ages is difficult to trace, suffice it to say that, for the sake of this study, Christian philosophical theology remains in a more privileged position to better understand the intricacies of each side of the divide.

Next, briefly it is important to note the relevance of charitable hermeneutics in such a debate. This point is not philosophical, strictly speaking, so I mention it here only as a small addendum to the larger points being offered in favor of philosophical theology’s arable ground. While it is difficult to mount a rigorous *positive* case for a

¹⁶⁵ “Many theologians took their task to include the articulation of Christian doctrines in terms of the philosophical concepts and categories available in their day and age, or at least competitors of or successors to those concepts and categories. When they found existing concepts inadequate to the task, they attempted to modify them, sometimes reviving older philosophical traditions to supplement or challenge philosophical orthodoxy. In any case, theologians once did a good deal of what most authors in this book are doing.”

Dean Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions: Is Analytic Philosophical Theology an Oxymoron? Is Substance Dualism Incoherent? What’s in this Book, Anyway?” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, eds. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁶⁶ See Kelly James Clark, Review of *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, ed. Linda Zagzebski, *Philosophical Books* 35.4 (October 1994), 284.

hermeneutics of charity (one that does not surrender itself to an anti-philosophical naiveté), it seems clear that the so-called “hermeneutics of suspicion” is not a viable way forward—at least not if the goal is a synthesis between analytic and continental philosophers.

This point is obvious in light of the Derrida-Searle debate. The “first shot,” so to speak, Derrida’s essay entitled “Signature, Event Context,” seems to have tipped the first domino in this unfortunate direction. By subjecting Austin’s speech-act theory to a deeply phenomenological critique, Derrida accused the great philosopher of language of violating rules that he was not interested in following (or not following, for that matter). While this hermeneutics of suspicion on the part of Derrida does have its uses—perhaps in uncovering presuppositions that were previously implicit—it is difficult to justify such an ambush.

It may be the case that philosophy naturally begets the skeptical disposition that is characteristic of such a hermeneutics of suspicion. Indeed, long before Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, the Socratic mode of questioning already embodied a similar kind of attitude toward philosophical positions—especially if they occupied a place of privilege in the realm of public opinion.

A properly Christian philosophical account of a hermeneutics of charity is beyond the scope of the present study, but before concluding it is worth mentioning the raw framework in which it could be imagined.¹⁶⁷ Christian advocates of both univocity and analogy usually agree on the basic fact of God’s aseity—meaning that creatures are

¹⁶⁷ The classic articulation of such an idea of charitable hermeneutics is in Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*: “Whoever, therefore, thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures . . . finds a lesson there useful to the building of charity, even though he has not said what the author may be shown to have intended in that place, has not been deceived, nor is he lying in any way. Lying involves the will to speak falsely; thus we find many who wish to lie, but no one who wishes to be deceived.” Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*. 1.36.40.

contingent upon God, who is necessary. We have already explored how this idea is manifested in Aquinas' participatory ontology of God's creative, "pure actuality", but aseity is also grounded in Scotus' work despite his parting of ways with Aquinas on the univocity question. For Scotus, God's aseity is grounded in the "infinite mode" of being. Since creatures are in a "finite mode", they are, by definition, contingent (i.e. it is possible for them not to exist).¹⁶⁸ So, even though God and creatures share *a* univocal concept of being, certainly his transcendence is maintained via this distinction between infinite and finite modes of being.¹⁶⁹

This point about divine aseity is important for any thoroughly Christian hermeneutics of charity because—regardless of whether one is an advocate of univocity or analogy—it speaks to a sense in which the lasting impact of our rational discourse is fundamentally about a single, common subject. This source is he who is alone necessary, God himself.¹⁷⁰

That such an admonition is available to both sides speaks to the final point, namely, shared theological context. Even academic philosophy is a profoundly political activity in the basic sense that it understands some ends to be better than others. As Derrida himself says that the philosophical mode of questioning is always constituted by

¹⁶⁸ Scotus *Duns Scotus, Metaphysician* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Research Foundation, 1995), 154.

¹⁶⁹ Of course, whether or not God's transcendence is maintained *to an adequate extent* is a matter of controversy.

¹⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that, for Scotus (against the analogical metaphysics of Aquinas), even though the "primary object of metaphysics is *being*," it is still the case that God is the *goal* of metaphysics. I say this is interesting because it represents a clear sense of (attempted) theological continuity despite the clear philosophical differences. Mary Beth Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of Duns Scotus* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 73.

at least one such affirmation of a desired end: namely “it is better that we speak than we do not.”¹⁷¹

If it is true that a prior affirmations necessarily precede philosophy as a mode of questioning, then it seems to follow intuitively that shared prior affirmations would encourage a more coherent and meaningful philosophical debate. As Alasdair MacIntyre has persuasively argued in his classic text *After Virtue*, “There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a *telos*.”¹⁷² Going further than Derrida’s point about the affirmation preceding the question, this fundamentally Aristotelian claim is about the teleological or purpose-oriented nature of human activity on a larger scale. Only by sharing such a *telos* can that same activity acquire intelligibility.

But what could this look like in the context of the analytic-continental divide? This answer is impossible to give in any definite manner, of course, but possible ways forward exist already—as evidenced by the third case study of the present essay. Unlike the cases of Ryle vs. Heidegger or Derrida vs. Searle, which seem to have failed to debate well on account of either “two ships passing in the night” or one side’s outright disdain for the other. The shared concepts of divine aseity, the *sensus divinitatus*, among others make for some arable ground for what is otherwise an encounter between philosophical foreigners. Instead of two impermeable systems that come into contact on grounds entirely of their own construal, this debate is essentially a hermeneutical exercise of the theological context both sides inherit in their respective attempts to do Christian philosophy.

¹⁷¹ Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering, *Derrida*.

¹⁷² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Second Edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1984), 215.

Now, of course, there is an obvious objection that is impossible to ignore here: namely, the problem of “orthodoxy” and philosophy. If the philosophical theologian must already affirm a certain *telos* before beginning her philosophical inquiry, it seems as though such an affirmation undermines the philosophical inquiry before the latter even begins. After all, the circularity of setting out to prove what is already assumed is clearly against the desire to *discover*.¹⁷³

This critique represents an authentic response to a temptation associated with such appeals to theological commonality. If indeed the discussion contains assumptions that limit the sphere of allowable inquiry, then indeed it seems that the paradigm of philosophy as a mode of questioning is limited by definition. However if the critique is simply that philosophy is not skeptical enough, then it is difficult to see what the problem is with the analytic-continental divide in the first place. Perhaps such a divide is not a problem but merely a natural consequence of the boundless inquiry of the discipline—two streams of thought that happen to have diverged in the twentieth century.

Without disparaging this potential line of reasoning, it lies beyond the scope of the present essay because the impetus behind the latter is the idea that the divide ought to be addressed in some kind of conciliatory manner.

These three points about the potential of theology as a source of commonality between analytic and continental philosophers represent a commonsense framework within which meaningful debate can occur (and is occurring already, as we have seen). So, while it is impossible to know how the analytic-continental divide will play out into

¹⁷³ I do not think it is accidental that such a critique is extremely important for Heidegger’s understanding of theology as an “ontic” rather than a purely “ontological” science. Because, for Heidegger, “theology itself is founded primarily by faith,” it is impossible for theology in itself to ask the question of meaning of being with perfect integrity.

the twenty-first century and beyond, this essay has attempted to show via specific examples that careful attention to theological developments in philosophy (and vice versa) can encourage a much deeper, more fruitful mode of philosophical inquiry.

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