

The Superanalogy of Faith

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Introduction

In his lengthy work on the transcendentals, Jan Aertsen, faced with the Baroque notion of “supertranscendentals” (e.g., *knowability*), which span the metaphysical domains denominated as *ens reale* and *ens rationis* in Scholastic metaphysics, laments: “The idea of a ‘Supertranscendental’ seems rather grotesque: Why and how should the most common concepts be transcended once again?”¹ It would seem that, perhaps, the same sort of indignation should be expressed when one speaks of “superanalogy.” If anything, it is quite certain that the topic has a foreign sound to most theologians and philosophers. At a recent conference, when I presented a version of the current paper, I asked a room of forty or fifty people whether they had ever heard the expression “the superanalogy of faith.” To my recollection two or three hands were raised, one of which was that of a friend whom I had informed about this topic which I had discovered some years back here and there in the writings of mid-twentieth-century Thomists.²

¹ Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 635. Regarding this quite interesting turn in Scholastic metaphysics, see Philip Neri Reese, “Supertranscendentality and Metaphysics: An Aporia in the Thought of John Duns Scotus,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2016): 539–61; John P. Doyle, “Between Transcendental and Transcendental,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 50, no. 4 (1997): 783–815; Boyle, *On the Borders of Being and Knowing: Late Scholastic Theory of Supertranscendental Being* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2012).

² I have gathered together online a lengthier accounting of these texts in documentary form with summaries (“Notes on the Super-Analogy of Faith in Garrigou-Lagrange,

What is this “superanalogy of faith”? The expression does not have to do with the inter-relationship among truths of faith within the overall nexus of the revealed message (the so-called “analogy of faith”). Rather, it pertains to the kind of analogical knowledge that we have concerning supernatural mysteries. So far as I can tell, the first explicit use of this phrase can be found in Jacques Maritain’s *Degrees of Knowledge*.³ Although he does not thematically return to it, the expression can be found in his late-life essays gathered in the volume *Untrammelled Approaches*.⁴ The expression was explicitly taken up by Charles Journet in his *The Dark Knowledge of God* and *The Wisdom of Faith*, as well as in an unedited essay.⁵ In *Dieu connu comme inconnu*, Jean-Hervé Nicolas presupposes it in his analysis of the relationship between faith and reason.⁶ And, at least so far in my reading, I have found it used readily, although in passing, by Michel Labourdette.⁷

Hugon, Journet, and Maritain,” *To Be a Thomist* (blog), athomist.com/articles/notes-on-the-super-analogy-of-faith.

³ Jacques Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald Phelan et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 256–59.

⁴ See Jacques Maritain, “Reflections on Theological Knowledge,” in *Untrammelled Approaches*, trans. Bernard Doering (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 250–52.

⁵ Charles Journet, *The Wisdom of Faith*, trans. R. F. Smith (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952), 16–20; Journet, *The Dark Knowledge of God*, trans. James F. Anderson (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2020), 62–65, 70n20, 78. The expression also is used on occasion in the various volumes of *L’Église du verbe incarné*, with references back to *The Dark Knowledge of God*. Also, a restatement can be found in the midst of comments on the nature of the meaning of the message of the Gospel, in Journet, *L’Église sainte mais non sans pécheurs: compléments inédits de L’Église du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 1999), 125–31. Several other brief references have been made to this theme in Maritain and (or) Journet by Emmanuel Durand, Alexandra Diriar, Félix Gonzalez-Mohino Bartolomé (citing Diriar), Michel Corbin, Gérard Rémy, Thomas Michelet, Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht, Michel Ferrandi, and Yves Congar. However, all of these mentions are most often in passing, or at most lasting only several pages. Also, from a somewhat different perspective, though concerned with the same broad issues in Thomism, see Thomas Riplinger, *The Psychology of Natural and Supernatural Knowledge According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Tübingen: University of Tübingen, 2013), https://www.academia.edu/394944/The_Psychology_of_Natural_and_Supernatural_Knowledge_according_to_St_Thomas_Aquinas. Dr. Riplinger privately has communicated with me, albeit briefly, so I wish to recognize a fellow laborer in similar fields, even if our views are not the same.

⁶ See Jean-Hervé Nicolas, *Dieu connu comme inconnu* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), 237–316; Nicolas, *Catholic Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Matthew K. Minerd (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 291, 330–31.

⁷ See his letter to Maritain in *Journet–Maritain Correspondance*, vol. 3 (Saint-Maurice,

Maritain developed this terminology in order to capture a very important aspect of the logic of analogy that is sometimes occluded by the structure of St. Thomas's own dicta regarding analogy (and, therefore, too, with various nuances, by the way that most Thomists speak about this topic). Generally speaking, Thomistic analyses of analogy tend to remain on the level of reason alone, even if one obviously adds a kind of caveat: "But supernatural truths are intrinsically supernatural in their objective content." However, what is needed is an explanation of the way that the *rationes analogatae* involved in the subjects and predicates of *de fide* statements are elevated to express supernatural truths.

The life of faith is filled with these kinds of superanalogies. The *unity* attributed to the triune God is that of the deity in whom consubstantiality and relativity coalesce.⁸ As many post-Tridentine ecclesiologies would emphasize, the Church is a *society*. But how different is a society that is also marked by the primordial sacramentality of Christ, a society that is his mystical body!⁹ Christ is the redeemer, and *redemption* is a human notion. And yet, quite uniquely, this redemption is efficacious not merely through an extrinsically attributed price of a purchase (*mere penal substitution*), but much more profoundly through the connection that exists between our own grace and the fullness of grace that belongs to Christ precisely as head of the Church, a fullness from which we all receive, grace upon grace (John 1:16) (*vicarious satisfaction* and *incorporation into Christ's mystical body*).¹⁰ In all these cases—(Tri-)Unity, (Sacramental) Society (united as a mystical body), *Redemption* (merited and effected by him into whom the redeemed are incorporated)—it is clear that the *rationes analogatae*, the shared notion that spans the orders of natural and supernatural truth, have been profoundly recast in order to function in service of faith knowledge.

Switzerland: Éditions Saint Augustine, 1998), 831.

⁸ See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Sense of Mystery: Clarity and Obscurity in the Intellectual Life*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2017), 171–98.

⁹ Jean-Hervé Nicolas, *Catholic Dogmatic Theology: A Synthesis*, vol. 3, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2024), chap. 1; Charles Journet and Aaron D. Henderson (trans.), "The Mystery of Sacramentality: Christ, the Church, and the Seven Sacraments," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 22, no. 2 (2024): 611–80.

¹⁰ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 48. For a lucid meditation on this topic, see Marie-Joseph Nicolas, "Pour une théologie intégrale de la Rédemption," *Revue thomiste* 81 (1981): 34–78 (esp. 53–55); the latter is presented in translation as "Notes For an Integral Theology of the Redemption," *To Be a Thomist*, athomist.com/articles/nicolas-notes-for-an-integral-theology-of-the-redemption.

Analogy must indeed be involved here, but in each case, the terms themselves are supernaturalized. Thus, we find ourselves faced with the insight once expressed by Fr. Ambroise Gardeil (cited by Journet *precisely* in the context of his own discussion of this very topic):

The Church is a society, the sacraments are signs, sanctifying grace is a reality that exists in man, charity is a virtue. . . . All this is true, but it is not at all true if the words are taken in their usual and ordinary meaning as might happen in a first consideration. Rather, to take one example, it is necessary to say what signs are in our natural lives. Have you, in fact, ever seen signs that by their own power efficaciously effect what they signify? And what is it that these sacramental signs effect? They produce something divine, a participation in our soul of the divine life itself. What a sacrament is in its innermost nature is inaccessible to our minds, just as is the Holy Trinity.¹¹

Describing this kind of analogical procedure is this article's goal. In so doing, I am drawing upon the indications found in the aforementioned Thomists, as well as several important premonitions that can be found in their immediate prehistory, especially in the writings of Édouard Hugon and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange.¹² However, the proposal is wholly mine, not a historical reconstruction. Because of the array of many technical presuppositions to what I am proposing, I will signal my engagement with the later Thomistic tradition, to which I owe all of the conclusions that I will propose, nonetheless, as my own articulation of a topic that I believe is centrally important to the noetic discussions of fundamental theology.

Preliminaries

Allow me to begin with two preliminary points concerning *analogy* and *the relationship between "common sense" and the data of faith*.

The philosophical theory of analogy that I presuppose for this article begins from the same presupposition as is found in all the authors mentioned above: proper proportionality is the primary and most essential form of analogy. According to this sort of analogy, the intrinsic commonality

¹¹ See Ambroise Gardeil, *Le donné révélé et la théologie*, 2nd ed. (Juvisy: Cerf, 1932), 145. This passage is cited in Journet, *Wisdom of Faith*, 16.

¹² See note 2 above.

among particular analogates is signified by one term that, nonetheless, expresses two or more meanings (or *rationes*) whose unity-in-distinction is expressed by way of a relationship of proportions.¹³ “Love” is said in one way of merely physical beings (*love-as-natural*), in another way of sensate animals (*love-as-sense-passion-love*), and in yet another way of human agents (*love-as-humanly-intellectual*). Thus, one would state this in the form of proportions: *love*₁ : natural agency :: *love*₂ : sensate agency qua sensate :: *love*₃ : rational-intellectual agency qua rational-intellectual. Sometimes the theory of proper proportionality is critiqued¹⁴ for its lack of appropriate implementation of the logic involved in expressing the relationship among analogates (above all *analogia per prius et posterius*, though also in the *analogia ad unum*, which to the eyes of Aristotle was, in fact, a kind of equivocation).¹⁵ However, as John of St. Thomas makes clear in his discussion of analogy in the context of material logic, something like the ordering of analogates that exists in the case of attributional analogy (e.g., the classic Aristotelian case of “health” as a form of *pros hen* equivocation) also exists in properly proportional analogy. However, this ordering exists in the latter in a way that is subservient to the very logic of expressing proportional similarities and even greater dissimilarities among analogates. In other words, in properly proportional analogies,

¹³ As will be noted below, one classically says that the “analogue” only “improperly abstracts” (in distinction from univocal, “perfect abstracting”) from these analogates.

¹⁴ From various angles of critique, see for example, Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski and Pol Vandeveld, ed. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008); George Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960); F. A. Blanche, “Note sur le sens de quelques locutions concernant l’analogie dans le langage de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 10 (1921): 52–59; Blanche, “La notion d’analogie dans la philosophie de saint Thomas,” 10 (1921): 169–93; Blanche, “L’analogie,” *Revue de philosophie* 30 (1923): 248–70; Blanche, “Une théorie de l’analogie: Éclaircissements et développements,” *Revue de philosophie*, n.s., 3 (1932): 37–78. Various other works could be considered, such as those of John Wippel, John Deely, Ralph McNerny, and others. For the relatively recent defenses of Cajetan, see Joshua P. Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan’s De Nominum Analogia* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); Steven A. Long, *Analogia Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). The most thorough, although slightly dated, study remains Iacobus Ramirez’s *De analogia*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Instituto de Filosofía “Luis Vives,” 1970–1972).

¹⁵ Concerning the use of the term “analogy” in Aristotle, see Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978), 118–25.

the attributional structure is altered and used for establishing an order among proportionally unified analogates. The former wholly serves the latter in such a way that attributional analogy's procedures are formally but eminently contained in the logic of proper proportionality.¹⁶ Thus, when considering the various senses of *love* above—and others that could be added, such as *love*₄ as Uncreated Love, as known by reason—properly proportional analogy utilizes the “ordering logical mechanisms” of attributional analogy, but in a way that makes clear that the primary analogate is *love*₄, with the other *rationes* more or less participating in the perfection that is found in the primary analogate.

In particular, this article presupposes important insights that can be found in Yves Simon's “On Order in Analogical Sets.” As Simon lucidly shows in this essay, what is essential for understanding analogy is the way that analogical reasoning must substitute a process of ordering in place of abstraction, the latter of which ultimately involves the formation of a relationship of generic univocity. This is clear in attributional “analogy to one,” where one focal meaning (e.g., “health”) is referred to by other usages (healthy as attributed to signs of such health, or causes thereof, and so forth). Such ordering between meanings is also clear in the case of metaphor, where one meaning (e.g., “nasty”) is referred to in a modified, non-formal manner in a different context (e.g., “a nasty cold”).

In the case of properly proportional analogy, according to the terminology of Thomas de Vio Cajetan, one will say that the analogue “imperfectly abstracts” from its analogates.¹⁷ That is, a properly proportional analogue (e.g., “being,” “life,” and so forth) cannot be understood without

¹⁶ See Yves R. Simon, “On Order in Analogical Sets,” in *Philosopher at Work*, ed. Anthony O. Simon (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 135–71 (original in *New Scholasticism* 34, no. 1 [1960]: 1–42), at 147: “It follows that the analogy of attribution, whenever it combines with proportionality, is reduced to a state of virtuality. It cannot retain its form when the denomination is intrinsic, for its form implies extrinsicity in all cases but one. We still may speak of mixed analogy, but, of the two types combined, only one, viz., the analogy of proportionality, exists in its own form; the other, viz., the analogy of attribution, has lost its own form, and the effect of attribution—the connection of meaning by causal relations—takes place within a system ruled by the form of proportionality.” In John of St. Thomas, see in particular, *The Material Logic of John of St. Thomas*, trans. Yves R. Simon, John J. Glanville, and G. Donald Hollenhorst (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955), 204–8 (q. 14, a. 3).

¹⁷ Normally, one might even say that the analogue “imperfectly abstracts from its *inferiors*.” I believe, however, that this language risks a kind of covert univocity by treating the analogue–analogates relationship in a way that is too close to the genus–species relationship of univocal abstraction, which is by essence a labor of the first act of the intellect.

considering the way that it is implicitly though actually¹⁸ expressed in different ways in its analogates (e.g., in the case of “life,” in *organic life*, *sense life*, *intellectual life*, *divine life*).¹⁹ Unlike generic abstraction, which primarily involves the activity of the intellect’s first operation,²⁰ establishing relations of univocal generality and specificity,²¹ analogical reasoning, presupposes all three acts of the intellect, given the way that it must draw various causal connections among the analogates unified by their analogue.²²

As Simon shows very well, the common analogue ground of such a set of analogates reveals itself as analogical precisely because it is affirmed and denied of its analogates. This differs from the case of “perfect,” univocal abstraction, in which case the common, generic ground is solely affirmed of all its inferiors. By contrast, to know analogically is to mutually order analogates by way of similarity and even greater dissimilarity. Thus, “being” when affirmed of *substance* and *relation* is at once affirmed and yet also

¹⁸ In contrast to how a genus only *potentially* contains its species. On this, see the discussion and various references to the Thomistic tradition in Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, vol. 2, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1949), 205–25.

¹⁹ For an exploration of this dynamism in the case of *life*, see Matthew Miner, “The Formation of the Analogical Concept of Life: An Exposition of Metaphysical Methodology,” *Maritain Studies* 34 (2018): 39–57.

²⁰ For the purposes of this paper, I will use the language of “intellectual operations” in the way most Thomists speak of them. However, the reader should always remember that the classic “three” operations of the intellect do not exhaust the intellect’s “operations,” as is obvious if one considers, for example, the role of command in practical cognition.

²¹ Concerning the distinction of different kinds of second-intentional relations formed by the three operations of the speculative intellect, see Matthew Miner, “Thomism and the Formal Object of Logic,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (2019): 411–44, esp. 431–34.

²² The most obvious such causal connections are those that are efficient causal, as when one reasons to the existence of God on the basis of creatures. However, even in such a case, extrinsic formal causality is also operative, given that in all such effects the metaphysics of similitude is operative (“omne agens agit sibi simile”), in such a way that the threefold *viae* (*causalitatis*, *negationis*, and *eminentiae*) is necessary. However, as Simon shows very well by way of examples, the clearest cases of purely proportional analogy can be found in cases that wholly involve relations of formal causality (e.g., *life*, which can be known analogically even without efficient causal relations to God as First Life and cause of all life); see Simon, “Order,” 147–49. If one considers the list of texts gathered by John Cahalan bearing witness to properly proportional analogies in the works of St. Thomas, one will find similar examples (“Thomism’s Conceptual Structure and Modern Science,” in *Facts are Stubborn Things*, ed. Matthew K. Miner [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020], 40–68, at 66–68).

denied: *relation-being* is essentially *ens ad aliud*, whereas *substance-being* is *ens in se*.

What I will propose is that the common analogue that is used by a superanalogy stands in obediential potency to such supernaturalization. That is, in its objective content, an analogue such as “filiation,” “relation,” “sign,” “redemption,” and so on is *not opposed* to being instrumentally used for expressing a higher order of knowledge.²³ Note, however, that such instrumentality is in the order of *objective* causality, not efficient causality.²⁴ The situation is similar to how the phantasm serves as the objective instrument of the agent intellect.²⁵ Therefore, the analogue serves as a kind of *objective* instrument for the act of faith. However—to anticipate something to be discussed more below: unlike the objective instrumentality of the phantasm in relation to the cognition expressed by the intellect (a relationship that still remains one of *potential* intelligibility and *actual* intelligibility), the case of faith involves a complete and profound obediential potency in the natural analogue-notion that can in no way objectively

²³ Such non-opposition is *negative* in relation to the higher order, which the lower order cannot *formally* anticipate. However, it has such a negative openness precisely because of its own particular *positive* riches. Thus, the human intellect is *not opposed* to elevation to the Beatific Vision. However, this non-opposition is not a kind of complete plasticity, decried recently (and rightly, even if in a broad-brush manner against Thomists) by David Bentley Hart: “A kind of indeterminate ontological plasticity, open to whatever is not repugnant to the creature’s nature, and yet also somehow open to actualities genuinely extrinsic to that nature” (*You are Gods: On Nature and Supernature* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022], 10). It is more than mere openness to the omnipotence of God. Rather, like air as a fit instrument for receiving the sound of a symphony (which thereby bears witness to a lofty perfection of air itself, even if in a spiritual order higher than physical air on its own), the human soul—as a kind of “microcosm of the transcendentals”—is precisely fit to be nonviolently superelevated beyond what the soul *formally and specifically* (in itself and in its powers) can naturally accomplish.

²⁴ Objective causality is a sub-division within extrinsic formal causality, distinct from exemplar causality (operative in fabricative ideas), denoting dependence *in the order* of specification (as, for example, a power depends upon its specifying object). Such objective causality is also what is operative in a “vicarious” fashion in semiosis. For a summary, see François-Xavier Maquart, *Elementa Philosophia*, vol. 3 (Paris: Andreas Blot, 1937), 214–17.

²⁵ Concerning objective instrumentality, see John of St. Thomas’s development of this interesting and important notion, as presented in Yves Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 113–27; John of St. Thomas, *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus*, ed. Beatus Reiser, vol. 3 (vol. 2 of *Naturalis philosophiae*) (Turin: Marietti, 1930), pt. IV of *Naturalis philosophiae*, q. 10, a. 2 (306B37–309B33, esp. 308B20–38).

anticipate its elevation but which, nonetheless, is non-opposed to such an elevation.²⁶

Allow a second preliminary technical observation as well, one that is, I believe, essential to thinking about the noetics of faith: no notion that is used in a given *de fide* dogmatic statement is formulated with all of its connections to the overall philosophical or theological context that may have originally given birth to that notion.²⁷ To put it another way: the intellectual “observation” involved in the factual basis of *de fide* knowledge is not that of the discursive sapiential-scientific warp and woof of theology or a philosophical discipline (or any other discipline, for that matter). Facts are not a kind of screen of data that we pick out to use in this or that kind of knowledge. They are not mere brute experiences of “sense data” gathered together. Rather, every fact must fit the level of observation involved in a given noetic process: moral observation, theological observation, natural philosophical observation, quantitative scientific observation, the observation of the truths of faith spoken by God, scientific-theological observation, and so forth.²⁸ For example: the principle of non-contradiction is known in one way by the “common sense” of unaided *intellectus*; it is known in a different way when it is understood *precisely as the first principle* in metaphysical discourse. So too: the relationship between the persons *in divinis* is known in one way by supernatural faith; it is known in a different, technically elaborated manner (*subsistent relation*, in connection with an overall sapiential-scientific synthesis) by the Thomistic theologian.

²⁶ Such “non-opposition” does not mean that this natural analogue will not benefit *naturally* from its supernatural use. The “non-opposition” in question is not *indifference*. It merely indicates that nothing within this analogue could be used by reason alone as a means for articulating supernatural truths, though it is susceptible to doing so by way of an illumination that shows even the natural riches of this notion. Sound by itself is not speech or an oratorio, but when it is elevated to these uses, only then does it most truly show what it is capable of expressing: auditory spirituality. So too, the natural notions used for supernatural faith are intrinsically-naturally aggrandized by their supernatural use.

²⁷ And arguably, this is also true for doctrinal declarations that are held with religious assent or, if one accepts its existence, ecclesiastical faith.

²⁸ This point is of capital importance in epistemology, and the reflections by Michel Labourdette, Yves Simon, and Maritain concerning this matter should be more widely appreciated by Thomists. See Labourdette, “Theology: Faith Seeking Understanding,” in *The Thomistic Response to the Nouvelle Théologie*, ed. John Kirwan, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2023), 89–125 (esp. 93–95 and 109–16); Michael D. Torre, “Yves R. Simon, Disciple of Maritain: The Idea of Fact and the Difference Between Science and Philosophy,” in Miner, *Facts*, 19–39.

Ultimately, however, the philosopher serves *intellectus*, and the theologian serves the light of faith. This means that, precisely in their offices as kinds of discursive wisdom, defending and setting forth the truths of their principles, in all of their radiant fittingness,²⁹ discursive theology can offer great resources to the preaching of faith, and philosophical disciplines can bear witness to the rich alluvium of common human experience:

As it is found in the Council of Florence applied to the Trinity, the notion of “relation” does indeed surpass the limits of what we have called common sense. To exposit this definition in common terms, without committing eight or ten heresies per sermon, one must elevate oneself above the simple data of common sense. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet obviously could never have written his *Élevations sur les mystères* if he had not, for years, deepened his knowledge of theology. It is even precisely because he deeply possessed it that he succeeded at making it understood without using Scholastic terminology and, without altering it, succeeded in plunging it deep into the living sources of faith and our primitive intellectual intuitions. Likewise, Aristotle came to compare his metaphysics with the spontaneous intuitions of the peasant, thus comparing reflection to nature. The same is the case for speculative thought as for art. Did not Molière read his plays to his servant?³⁰

In sum: especially in view of the historical process of their development in the Church’s life, dogmatic formulas are often more explicit than what *unaided* “common sense” can understand; nonetheless, the data of these formulas ultimately *and essentially* must be in continuity with “common sense,” not any particular theological or philosophical school.³¹

This means that the analogical process that is necessary for the data of faith to be grasped must always be understood as taking place in a pre-philosophical and pre-theological domain—that is, the domain of faith, of “Christian common sense” engaged in interpersonal relations with God who reveals—though in a way that can benefit from philosophical and

²⁹ This is the primary argument made, with numerous bases in later Thomists, in Matthew Miner, “Wisdom be Attentive: The Noetic Structure of Sapiential Knowledge,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 18, no. 4 (2020): 1103–46.

³⁰ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Thomistic Common Sense: The Philosophy of Being and the Development of Doctrine*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2021), 277–78.

³¹ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Thomistic Common Sense*, 217–99.

theological precision. The simplest believer, with no scientific-theological knowledge and whose faith might well be implicit on this or that point,³² can grasp the truths of faith with the same uncreated³³ loftiness as the most

³² See *ST* II-II, q. 2, aa. 6–8; q. 5, a. 4. See also Jacobus M. Ramirez, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 10, *De fide divina* (Salamanca: San Esteban, 1994), 232–54, 498–516. Interesting related reflections can be found in Jacques Maritain, “The Substitute for Theology among the Simple,” in *Untrammelled Approaches*, 272–309. For a historical study of the topic of implicit faith up to the time of Trent, see Reginald Schultes, *Fides implicita: Geschichte der Lehre von der Fides implicita und Explicita in der katholischen Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1920); from a different perspective, though testifying to important points in connection to the debates between Marín-Sola and Schultes, see Eduard Dhanis, “Révélation explicite et implicite,” *Gregorianum* 34, no. 2 (1953): 187–237. Also, in general, although intermingled with questions of ecclesiology and grace, related matters are dealt with at length in Journet’s treatment of salvation history in *L’Église du verbe incarné*, vol. 4 (Saint-Maurice, Switzerland: Éditions Saint Augustine, 2004). Many contemporary conversations regarding the oft-called “hierarchy” of Catholic truths would receive much illumination by revisiting these questions concerning the specific sort of *fides implicita* that can be had by *minores* in the Church. In addition, such conversations should revisit and deepen the important themes regarding theological notes and censures that properly belongs to the *Tractatus de locis theologicis*. There was a history of Protestant insults against the Catholic notion of implicit faith among the “simple faithful,” leading to the Latin epithet *fides carbonaria*, the coalminer’s faith, “on the assumption that a collier knows little or nothing of Christian doctrine.” See Richard A Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Primarily from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 116. As Muller notes in a brief entry, the notion of *fides implicita* was directly allied to the aforementioned epithet, to the point of denial of implicit faith (117). Note, also, that “implicit faith” has many various uses, variously referring to: the implicit containing of a revealed truth in an earlier regime of salvation history, as related to the development of revelation; after Christ, as regards dogmatic development in the Church; implication in *minores* and explicitation in *maiores in ecclesia*; implication in relation to Protestants and Orthodox Christians; implication in cases of salvation of those without preaching and desiring baptism *in voto* in this state.

³³ Acts of the supernatural order are *objectively* uncreated, even if they also require and presuppose supernatural qualities in the creature in question. However, *objectively uncreated* knowledge and love can themselves be distinguished (in terms of what Cajetan referred to as the *ratio formalis obiecti ut obiectum*, or as other later Scholastics would say, the *formal object quo*) variously, according to the various *habitus* involved (faith, hope, charity, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.). And, most fundamentally, by means of this theological language or some other, one must distinguish the creature from the triune God so as to note that no human *ratio formalis obiecti ut obiectum* in the supernatural order will ever be *comprehensive*, which is true only for the Divine Uncreated Knowledge and the love that is one therewith. (Another example of such theological language attempting to distinguish within the order of the supernatural would be the Palamite distinction between the *Uncreated Essence* of God and the *Uncreated Energies* by which he manifests himself to divinized creatures.)

articulate and pious theologian, even if not always with the same explicitness.³⁴ When the simple believer prays, “I believe in God” or “the Triune God exists,” he or she affirms a truth that carries the notion of “being” infinitely beyond the limited bounds of the proper object of the human intellect. The assent of faith implies the superanalological transposition of *being*: from the *being* of common experience of changing realities to the *Uncreated Being* of the triune God (known either implicitly or explicitly).³⁵

With these preliminaries in mind, this process is what I wish to now lay out.

The Superanalological Elevation of Our Notions Through the Assent of Faith

In contrast to certain post-Baroque theories of “discursive faith,” which would make the act of faith dependent upon some form of ratiocination as the conclusion of a syllogism, the Thomists would maintain the immediacy and thorough-going supernaturality of the judgment of faith.³⁶ Elevated by the activity of grace, the believer does not merely know some kind of new *notion* about the triune God and his providential designs, but rather assents to a *truth* that is revealed upon the supernatural authority of God, who reveals and who proposes this truth through the objective ministry of his Church.³⁷ Such truth and falsity are first and foremost attributed

³⁴ For recent discussions relevant to this matter, see Piotr Roszak, “Thomas Aquinas on Mystagogy and Growing in Faith,” in *Initiation and Mystagogy in Thomas Aquinas: Scriptural, Systematic, Sacramental and Moral, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Henk Schoot, Jacco Verburgt, and Jörgen Vijgen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2020), 41–59.

³⁵ Not everything can be handled in one paper, and the elaborations that I present here presuppose many other technical elaborations. On this point, we also find ourselves faced with the issue concerning the relationship between the assent of faith and the preambles of faith. Concerning what is presupposed regarding this matter, see Matthew K. Miner, “Philosophy Born of Supernatural Faith: The Case of the Preambles of Faith,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 97 (2023).

³⁶ This would differentiate them from those who held to some version of “discursive faith” regarding the relationship between rational credibility and the assent of the theological virtue of faith. On this, see Ambroise Gardeil, “Crédibilité,” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 3.2, ed. Alfred Vacant and Eugène Magenot (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907), cols. 2201–301. Here, the treatment from Scotus to Juan de Lugo on cols. 2278–94 is most relevant, most clearly in De Lugo “for [whom] the motives of credibility are an intrinsic element of the supernatural assent to revelation forming the second premise of a syllogism of faith” (col. 2291). For De Lugo, see cols. 2293–94. This theory’s influence would be exercised variously in the history that followed.

³⁷ For simplicity’s sake here, we will hold in suspense the way that truths are proposed

to the activity of the intellect's "second operation," its activity of forming statements and judgments.³⁸ Thus, the truths of faith are grasped *precisely as truths*, affirmations that rest upon the unshakeable uncreated truthfulness of the triune God. Thus, we have a capital first datum: any account of supernatural notions must bear witness to the primacy of *judgment* in the order of supernatural *truths*.

It is important to remember, moreover, that, when a human person knows any reality, this process does not involve merely the illumination and abstraction of the "intelligible *species*." Granted, this is an important stage of the process of cognition. By it, a given reality becomes *actually knowable*, placing it on the level of spiritual manifestation properly belonging to intellectual knowledge. However, it is also essential that the knower, now in first-act intentionally, pass to perfect second act, fully uniting himself or herself with the knowable reality, though as *actually known*. In short: cognition requires the expressing of an "internal word."³⁹ Each oper-

outside of communion with the Church. In addition to the work of Journet discussed above in note 32, see Marie-Michel Labourdette, *Grand course de théologie morale*, vol. 8, *La foi* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2015), 310–55. In the background to this question is the matter regarding Maritain's analysis of the "dialectics of the first act of freedom." It would be of interest for a researcher to consider the sources gathered in Paulo Angeli, "La possibilità di salute nel primo atto morale per il fanciullo infedele: appunti per un commento storico e dottrinale ad un articolo della S. Theol. (I II q. 89 a. 6)" (doctoral thesis, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1946). This text is cited very approvingly by Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *Grace: Commentary on the Summa theologia of St. Thomas I-II, q. 109–114*, trans. Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1952), 341–45. Emphasizing different points of history and figures, one might also consult the recent, related study by Anthony R. Lusvardi: *Baptism of Desire and Christian Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2025).

³⁸ On the extended, though important, sense of truth in the intellect's first operation, see Kurt Pritzl, "Being True in Aristotle's Thinking," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1998): 177–201.

³⁹ See Yves R. Simon, *Introduction to the Metaphysics*, 127–36; John Frederick Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), 132–79. This *verbum* is "required" for human and angelic knowers on account of their creaturely potency. As these commentators show, following John of St. Thomas, such uttering of a word is not completely due to the potency of finite knowers; it is also a pure perfection insofar as the *expression* of knowledge is a perfection. For this reason, the notion of *verbum mentis* can be applied to the triune God. As is known, angelic self-knowledge is a thornier issue, following upon the debates in the 1930s regarding this matter in relation to Ambroise Gardeil's *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*. I am a partisan of the position found in the interpretations offered by figures like Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange, but this matter is of only tertiary importance for the present essay.

ation of the intellect expresses such a word. However, there are only two sorts of words: simple insights of “indivisibles” (expressible in the form of definitions) and complex affirmations and denials (expressible in the form of statements and judgments). The discursive third operation of the intellect produces the second sort of *verbum*, though by modifying it insofar as discursive ratiocination involves knowledge of a conclusion-judgment through a middle term.⁴⁰

Now, when the supernaturalized intellect, moved by the supernaturalized will, assents to revealed truth, what must we say concerning the notions from which this judgment of faith is composed? Does this require the infusion of a new kind of (impressed) *species* from which the faith judgment’s own supernatural *verbum* will be composed? Here following, in particular, Fr. Hugon (in line with certain insights drawn from Frs. Garrigou-Lagrange and Nicolas), I believe that we must firmly answer “no.”⁴¹ This presupposition of naturally acquired *species* provides an important point of continuity between the domains of faith and reason.

Granted, we must say that faith irrupts into our mind as an immense élan of conversion. Its impulse is so potent that, so long as one does not prevent the movement of grace, it by its nature must flower in the theological virtues. It pushes on, in a dynamic unity, from the first affect of faith, through the hope that is founded upon this faith, to the charity that is nourished by the “intellectual mouth of faith.”⁴² Faith unsettles our

Bernard Lonergan’s *Verbum* represents an important text in such discussions regarding the “internal word,” but his methodologies are different from those of the present essay, which is written from within the general hermeneutic of the various Thomistic thinkers presented here. In this question, one will be aware that I differ from the interpretations of Thomas offered by John O’Callaghan and, I believe, Thérèse Cory regarding the *verbum mentis*.

⁴⁰ See John of St. Thomas’s own position, see *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus*, vol. 3, q. 11, a. 3 (esp. 372A7–373B17).

⁴¹ See Édouard Hugon, “Quels concepts avons-nous des vérités sur-naturelles?” *Revue Thomiste*, n.s., 6 (1906): 413–29; Hugon, “Foi et Révélation” and “Les Concepts Dogmatiques,” in *Réponses théologiques à quelques questions d’actualité* (Paris: Téqui, 1908), 91–182; and in sum in *Cursus philosophiae Thomisticae*, vol. 3, *Metaphysica* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1935), 136–37 (“De cognitione rerum supernaturalium, seu de natura specierum ad illam requisitarum” and “De verbo, seu conceptu, requisito ad cognitionem supernaturalem”). For the texts from Garrigou-Lagrange, see notes 51 and 52 below; for Nicolas, see 6 above.

⁴² See Ambroise Gardeil, *The True Christian Life*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 207; on the dynamic unity of the “theological life,” see Michel Labourdette, “La vie théologique selon S. Thomas,” *Revue thomiste* 60 (1960): 364–80.

entire sinful framework of existence and re-orientes us to the only true and ultimate end of human life.

Nonetheless, faith does not encounter a human nature that would be completely indifferent to its message. This is already true on the level of our substantial being, where our obediential potency is the very point of continuity between the natural and supernatural. Because of this obediential openness to superelevation, our *nature* is what is *divinized*. It is the “insertion point” for grace.⁴³ However, obediential openness can be found on the level of the *message* of faith as well. Faith is expressed to a “natural mind” that is open to reality, even to supernatural reality, albeit only in a negatively obediential manner.⁴⁴ Therefore, as a rule and setting aside exceptional cases, the judgment of faith, which is itself supernatural, presupposes natural knowledge of various truths: substance, person, cause, sign, relation, nature, society, merit, beatitude, virtue, and so on.

However, we must notice that this natural knowledge, prior to the supernatural judgment of faith, stands, as I already have indicated, in relation to this act somewhat like the phantasm in relation to the act of intellection.⁴⁵ We can say that the expressed knowledge had by the human cogitative power contains in potency that which is actualized by the agent intellect in knowing.⁴⁶ This actualization can take place only under the influence of the agent intellect. For this reason, it is quite proper to say that the phantasm functions as something like an instrument. More specifically, following John of St. Thomas’s very interesting terminology, it is the *objective instrument* of the agent intellect.⁴⁷

However, we must note here an important difference. In the knowledge that is accomplished in and through the phantasm, the quiddity is present,

⁴³ See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *On Divine Revelation: The Teaching of the Catholic Faith*, 2 vols. (Steubenville OH: Emmaus Academic, 2022), 1:612 and 634. Contrary to certain long-lived narratives regarding the supposed Thomistic “lamination” of grace upon nature, similar remarks can be found variously in works by Gardeil, Maritain, Nicolas, and others.

⁴⁴ See note 25 above.

⁴⁵ Here, however, I am developing something beyond what can be found in Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange.

⁴⁶ For a recent treatment of the importance of the cogitative power, see John Jalsevac, “Mitigating the Magic: The Role of Memory, the *Vis Cogitativa*, and Experience in Aquinas’s Abstractionist Epistemology,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (2023): 267–92. This essay is a good outline of this important topic; of particular merit on the topic, however, are the works of Mark Barker and, especially, Daniel De Haan cited at 277n35.

⁴⁷ See the text cited in note 25 above.

though still subject to individualizing conditions. The quiddity is the nucleus of formal causality that, although not actually known, nonetheless provides this particular experience with its *intelligible* wholeness in the midst of its individuating characteristics. Therefore, the illumination of the phantasm makes *actual* that which was *objectively potential* in the phantasm. The latter remains an instrument, nonetheless, precisely because this actualization could not take place at the level of the cogitative power. However, unlike, for example, the instrumentalization of a piece of chalk for expressing thoughts, the higher agent (i.e., the agent intellect) does not objectively-formally add anything to this activity (as thought does when it passes through chalk to express thoughts upon a board). Instead, in cognition, the agent intellect only actualizes the potential objectivity that was already present in the phantasm.

In the assent of faith, by contrast, the supernatural truth that is ultimately known is of *an entirely different order* than the natural knowledge presupposed for such faith knowledge. The super-intellectual knowledge of faith presupposes some notion at a lower level of cognition (i.e., natural cognition), but when that notion is used as a prior condition for such faith, it at best can express something that is *not opposed* to being used for objectively declaring a supernatural truth. In no way can it be said to objectively-potentially contain that truth for as long as it functions at the level of natural intellection. Therefore, in this case, natural knowledge is wholly obediential in its objectivity as the instrument of supernatural cognition, the latter of which wholly transforms the former, though in a way that ultimately does no “damage” to the meaning of that natural knowledge.⁴⁸

For the sake of clarity, let us summarize this somewhat difficult analogy between the phantasm and the natural knowledge presupposed for the assent of faith:⁴⁹ Just as phantasm-expressed knowledge can serve as the objective instrument for intellectual cognition, so too naturally acquired knowledge can serve as an objective instrument for the expressed knowledge of faith.⁵⁰ However, like every analogy, the shared sameness is marked by greater difference. Thus, phantasm-expressed knowledge is not merely

⁴⁸ In fact, not only will it “not damage” it, but this supernatural knowledge will represent the highest intrinsic office of what is deepest in that meaning—namely, its obediential openness to supernatural elevation.

⁴⁹ The latter of which is, in point of fact, already a kind of superanalogy, as the reader should understand by the end of this article.

⁵⁰ I note here, however, that it is possible that one could draw analogies even more strictly between the natural knowledge and the phantasm, noting even in supernatural cognition

objectively-obedientially in potency to the intellect's ultimate knowledge (as is the case for natural knowledge in relation to supernatural knowledge). What the phantasm stands in need of, rather, is the illuminating causality of the agent intellect to actualize the phantasm's intellectual content, which is objectively-potentially present in the phantasm, though the latter *is* in obediential potency as regards the agent intellect's actualizing of this content. By contrast, a naturally known *species* is even *objectively* in a relationship of obediential potency to the act of faith. Faith does not merely actualize what is potential; it superelevates it even as regards its objectivity. This is why I have spoken of it as being "objectively-obedientially" related to the supernatural.

Thus, the judgment of faith can be said to supernaturalize the notions from which that judgment is composed. This enables the mind to express to itself a kind of "inevident analogy" that is supernaturally certain only in view of the judgment-affirmation of faith.⁵¹ In and through the judgment of faith, the notions composing that judgment (i.e., its subject and predicate) are superelevated.⁵² Thus, the naturally knowable notions are supernaturally transfigured by the judgment of faith, thereby expressing something unknowable to the eyes of reason by itself.

Given the difficulty of this analysis, let us consider two specific examples. Consider, therefore, a notion like "good." At the level of even common sense, we can articulate to someone the general fact that this notion is supra-generic (i.e., analogical). Thus, for example, we could contrast the cases of a good person and a good artist: a good artist is able to show his student the way to make a mistake (like a logic teacher teaching the kinds of sophistry, or an organ instructor showing a student how to recover from a misstep on the pedal board); a good man, however, will never perform

a preliminary stage akin to that associated with the impressed species. However, for the purposes of this article, I will retain the general language of Hugon.

⁵¹ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Divine Revelation*, 1:311, 544n42.

⁵² See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Divine Revelation*, 1:318n67 ("The infused light of faith illuminates and elevates the notions and [intellectual] word by which the dogmatic formula is composed") and 1:286 ("This infused light illuminates and elevates the notions and verb [*verbum*] by which objective proposition is accomplished. Such notions can be naturally acquired ones, like the notions of person and nature. Nonetheless, such notions are supernaturally illuminated in such knowledge. Likewise, in judgment, the verb 'is' is affirmed not only naturally under the light of reason but also supernaturally under the divine light. Thus, the affirmation is infallible and proportioned to the supernatural object [in question]"). See also 313, 315n65. On 286, he cites the section in Hugon's *Cursus philosophiae Thomisticae* cited above. For similar observations, see the works of Nicolas cited in note 6 above.

an evil deed.⁵³ One might continue, as well, noting the difference between saying that someone has a “good” (i.e., developed) knowledge of some subject (qualitative good) and that a pet is in overall good organismic health (substantial good). Many other examples are possible, but to cut to the chase: one might also gesture toward the case of God, noting in a very general, pre-philosophical way that God, whose existence is here presupposed, is also good.⁵⁴

The philosopher will come along and point out in what way the community of *rationes* here involves greater difference than likeness among each of these cases of goodness. Therefore, what we have is a set of analogates, for each of which the common ground is at once denied and affirmed: both the artist and the morally upright person are good, but not in the same way—for art is perfected in judgment, whereas prudence is perfected in command, and the artist might be good *secundum quid*, but only the moral man can be said to be *bonum vir simpliciter*. Again: both a given quality of soul and God can be said to be good, but in the latter case this goodness is mysteriously and simply the same as God himself, who is so self-diffusive that He does not change, though He draws beings into existence from nothingness. By careful reasoning, articulating the *viae causalitatis*, *negationis*, and *eminentiae*, the philosopher will set forth the analogical scope of this term, “goodness,” and apply it to God.⁵⁵ However, all of this will be a kind of scientific development of notions that first started in our commonsense apprehension of the world.

Now, when the believer says that “God is good,” this affirmation is something infinitely more than what is said by reason alone, even in our loftiest philosophical articulations. This good God is so perfect that none other should be called good in comparison with him (see Mark 10:18). His creative handiwork, righteousness, and glory is declared by the whole of creation, which stands in utter dependence upon his causal activity (Ps 19:1 and 97:6). He pours out supernatural grace on the nothingness of

⁵³ The reader will here recognize the classic text of *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 4, ably commented on throughout the works of Simon, Maritain, Garrigou-Lagrange, and others.

⁵⁴ I am presupposing here various analyses and remarks by Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange regarding the nature of pre-philosophical knowledge of God in the order of natural cognition.

⁵⁵ See the texts and discussion in Fran O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005), 3–61. See also the discussion of, in particular, eminence, which is considered immediately after priority and posteriority in Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, 64–76. For a fuller history of the *triplex via*, see Fran O’Rourke, “The *Triplex Via* of Naming God,” *Review of Metaphysics* 69, no. 3 (2016): 519–54.

sinners (see Matt 5:43–48), healing their wounds like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), giving them not merely a finite gift, but rather a participation in his very life (2 Pet 1:4) and Spirit (Heb 6:4). The Supernatural Good One is so good that he draws Christ's sacred humanity to the Word.⁵⁶ And so fruitful is this goodness that he is eternally fruitful in himself, where three persons process in unity in the depths of the triune deity.⁵⁷

In this latter case, the notion of "good" is performing labors that are far more than what could be known by mere reason alone. Reason can articulate the idea of the communication of particular goods, even of the very nature of one creature to another through generation. It can articulate the spiritual goods of knowledge, art, and culture. It can even articulate (relatively, negatively, and eminently) a goodness that is infinitely more than all finite goodnesses, the source of every single finite good. But such reason cannot formally articulate any supernatural, triune Goodness, like what we find even in the simple words of Scripture.⁵⁸ We might say, playing on the words of St. Paul: Even when reason alone analogizes about God's goodness, a veil remains over one's eyes; but when faith turns this notion toward the Lord, the veil is lifted (see 2 Corinthians 3:14–16).

It is one thing to know of the goodness of the First Cause, who is Pure Act. It is another—not wholly unrelated, but other—to know the revealed Uncreated Love that redeems and divinizes. It is one thing to know the bounty of creation (something quite difficult to know by reason alone, but still *de iure* possible). It is quite another to know the merciful Love that not only calls beings into existence, but draws beings from the *regio dissimilitudinis* of sin back to the state of truly being fashioned in filial likeness to the Father through participative incorporation into the uncreated filiation of the Word of God. Indeed, it is one thing to know the bounty that gives created being. But it is infinitely more to know the Bounty that bestows, through redemptive mercy, the grace of union, from whose effulgence every other light radiates. It is one thing to know that God is one, the unified Source of all that is, he who is Subsistent Being, Intellection, and Love. It is quite another to know the triune God—a unity that is most spectacular, the three-in-one Keystone of the whole order of the supernatural mysteries:⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See ST III, q. 1, a. 1; Nicolas, *Catholic Dogmatic Theology*, 1:263–65.

⁵⁷ See Nicolas, *Catholic Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, 1:168–71.

⁵⁸ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Sense of Mystery*, pt. 2, chaps. 1–2.

⁵⁹ See Marie-Michel Philipon, "La trinité clé de voûte des mystères chrétiens," *Revue thomiste* 58 (1958): 5–19; a translation of this text is presented as "The Trinity, The

So it is when divine faith is born in a heart, when the Light which enlightens every man (John 1:9) penetrates to the innermost being of a person: the man is changed. He may be unconscious of the transformation, like some pauper who has become wealthy but is not yet aware of it, or like a sick person who does not yet know that he has already been cured; but for all that he is no longer what he once was. If now he says, "God is," [or] "God is good" he does not make such assertions on natural grounds, as a philosopher might if left to the unaided resources of his reason; but—presupposing that he speaks from the depths of his heart and not with his lips only—he makes such assertions in a supernatural way, urged on as it were by the power of affirmation of the Spirit. Such an affirmation, such an activity of the soul does not pertain to the sphere of purely human achievement, but is concerned with the kingdom of God. . . .

It is altogether necessary to insist on the mystery of the double use of the same concepts by reason, and by faith. When we say that God is one, that he is good, that he is wise, as well as when we say that God exists, and rewards those who seek him, the propositions we affirm can veil, two different profundities. They can signify a philosophical mystery, the mystery of perfect unity, of absolute goodness, of the fullness of being, and its providence, as these can be glimpsed by human reason through the mirror of creatures. In this case, God is known only by the fringe of his garments.

But, they can also signify a revealed mystery, a mystery of faith, incomparably more profound: the mystery of the unity, goodness, being, and the providence of the God, who is a Trinity, and of him who became flesh for the salvation of the world. And in this case, God is known as he is in himself, in his personal life, but in the darkness of faith. These truths show us the uttermost profundities of God. They reveal to us God as he is in himself, the God that is inaccessible to reason and whom we shall see in heaven, the God, however, who is attain here below, only in the darkness of faith.⁶⁰

Consider, just briefly one further example of this same superanalogical dynamic. We are well aware of the *organic unity* of all sorts of beings that surround us: ourselves, our parents, our children, all the plants we might

Keystone of the Christian Mysteries," *To Be a Thomist*, athomist.com/articles/trinity-the-keystone-of-the-christian-mysteries-by-marie-michel-philippon-op.

⁶⁰ Journet, *Wisdom of Faith*, 16–18.

have in our gardens, all of the deer that eat those plants, and so forth. We are also aware of the unity of moral affection that can be felt among those who share together in some labor. In a religious order, members of a novitiate class are forever bonded by the community of their shared love of the life that they are discerning. When truly functioning, a political community is bound together by the moral bonds of the political common good. In all of these latter cases, a *moral unity*, even if not an organic unity, is a true and real unity that binds together souls. Such union is realized when two people recognize one and the same love in each other. They are one by being turned toward this one, shared end.⁶¹

However, consider what takes place when we realize, by faith, that in the Church we share in a mystical unity. It is not merely a question of adding one more natural analogate to the pre-existing analogates (organic unity and moral unity). Scripture confronts us with something much loftier. Our unity is to be like that of the triune God himself: “That they may be one, even as we are one . . .” (John 17:11, 22; RSV-CE); “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; *for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:28; RSV-CE); “So we, though many, are one body in Christ, *and individually members one of another . . .*” (Rom 12:5; RSV-CE). Our life is actually that of Christ: “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21; RSV-CE); “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27, RSV-CE); “My little children, with whom I am again in travail *until Christ be formed in you!*” (Gal 4:19; RSV-CE). Such a “unified body” is mysteriously one in a way that ultimately surpasses organic and moral unity, though one can see how such naturally knowable unity can function as the basis for a

⁶¹ Such moral unity is arguably more important and, in critical ways, more profound than organismic unity, for we live our human life in a very important way in the domain of *ens morale*. The first act of our spiritual-organic unity exists for the sake of second act in deeds performed intellectually and volitionally. In a related point, *mutatis mutandis*, God’s presence through supernatural knowledge and love is a more profound unity than his causal presence of “immensity” alone (even in the supernatural order). I owe this insight to John Cahalan, who privately contacted me once upon a time about this matter. Though, the knitting together of graced causal immensity and intentionality—in mystical experience and beatifying vision—is something greater still. Here, despite the reticences of some (like Francis Cunningham), I believe that Gardeil (and others such as Nicolas) are correct to clearly include the role of supernatural presence of immensity in the Indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the righteous. For some discussion of this, see my forthcoming chapter, “The Ontology of the Divine Indwelling: A Hard-Headed Thomist Meets with Palamas,” in the 2020 American Maritain Association volume, distributed by The Catholic University of America Press (2025).

supernatural affirmation at the level of faith: the supernatural union of Christ's mystical body.⁶²

Thus, in our knowledge had supernaturally by faith, we find that the common *ratio analogata* that is knowable by reason alone—indeed, even by “common sense”—has an objective obediential openness to be used in the knowledge of a truth that infinitely surpasses the objective exigencies of natural knowledge, while nonetheless fulfilling the very passive openness of this knowledge in relation to the supernatural order.⁶³ Therefore, it is necessary that one take seriously the requirements of a kind of “supernatural logic” and “supernatural psychology” and articulate the nature of such superanalogy in greater detail than one is wont to find in Thomist literature. I believe that the sources cited above provide guideposts for such a project, and I hope to see future work done in this regard by my fellow laborers in the intellectual vineyards of the Church.

Conclusion: Three Forward Pointers

As I draw to a close, I should like to point out three further matters that need to be considered in relation to this topic: (1) the need to consider the role of metaphor in revelation; (2) the role of dogmatic development in knowledge through faith; (3) the implications of the purification of faith through mystical experience.

(1) In this article, I have focused primarily on the cases of properly proportional superanalogies. However, metaphors play an important role in revelation, indeed to the point of being supremely fitting, for the veils of “less noble” realities help to prevent the human mind from confusing the creaturely conditions of revelation with the ultimate divine reality signified thereby.⁶⁴ Thus:

⁶² Throughout this example, I have in mind what is said in Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, §§60–80. The theme was amply developed by various ecclesiologists and spiritual authors during the twentieth century.

⁶³ To the degree that such knowledge redounds back upon the natural *ratio analogata*, we have an example of an “objective” contribution of faith to the task of philosophizing. For my particular discussion of this point in relation to the notion of “Christian philosophy,” see my article cited in note 35 above.

⁶⁴ See *ST I*, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3. And what about theology too? For its arguments from fittingness—the loftiest of such arguments according to some (e.g., Journet and, especially, Garrigou-Lagrange)—aims at the very certitude of the Beatific Vision. I should think that the most profound of sapiential arguments in theology should set before the mind the blinding radiance of its principles every so often—as a properly discursive, sapiential-scientific task—doing so by way of metaphors, above all those sanctioned by the greatest testimonies among the *loci theologici*.

It should be added that in order to make us attain the intimacy of God, the superanalogy of faith makes use not only of notions, the ananoetic value of which revelation itself discloses, so to speak to our eyes; it also uses notions which as such cannot be transcendentalized and whose ananoetic value, assured by revelation, remains as a result wrapped up in metaphorical analogy.⁶⁵

Journet summarizes such metaphorical analogy so well:

Noteworthy also, are the absolute liberty, the freshness, and joy with which faith, when it is vital, knows how to make use of *metaphorical analogy*. To faith, all of creation, and the whole biblical story have become transparent. Faith lingers, it rejoices to read, to discover, to divine, at the heart of the lowliest things and the simplest facts, the signs, the invitations, the clear messages that come to it from the most hidden depths of Love.⁶⁶

Moreover, the case of parables presents an interesting case for consideration:

Taken in its maximum amplitude, according as it includes even sacred metaphors, the superanalogy of faith extends its limits to the point that might be called parabolic analogy. The parable, in fact, is a metaphorical analogy which contains, and this is its proper mystery, an analogy of proper proportionality assignable and expressible for itself, but so inexhaustible and so overflowing with meaning that it always means more than its expression conveys.⁶⁷

Therefore, especially if one also includes properly theological articulation of superanalogies as a distinct category, it is necessary that one take care to

⁶⁵ See Maritain, *Degrees*, 258.

⁶⁶ Journet, *Dark Knowledge*, 65.

⁶⁷ Journet, *Dark Knowledge*, 65. See also Nicolas, *Dieu connu comme inconnu*, 161–69; Yves Congar, *La foi et la théologie* (Paris: Desclée, 1962), 30–32, 36, 170–71. And, for an interesting application to a particular topic, see Emmanuel Durand, “Retracing the Plotlines of God’s Anger,” in *Divine Speech in Human Words: Thomistic Engagements with Scripture*, trans. Matthew Miner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 85–119. For interesting indications concerning the relationships between metaphor and analogy, see Robert Masson, “Analogy as Higher-Order Metaphor in Aquinas,” in *Divine Transcendence and Immanence in the Work of Thomas Aquinas: A Collection of Studies Presented at the Third Conference of the Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, December 15–17, 2005*, ed. Harm Goris, Herwi Rikhof, and Henk Schoot (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2009), 111–28.

consider: properly proportional supernatural analogies; parabolic supernatural metaphors; supernatural metaphors; and theological-scientific superanalogies.

(2) The examples that I used were already somewhat implicit in the immediate data of Scripture. However, as was obvious to the reader, I was presupposing later explicitation of revelation by the Church. According to the Thomists, the magisterium of the Church is not the formal motive of faith; nonetheless, she *is* the objective necessary condition for the articulated presentation of the object of faith.⁶⁸ Therefore, the topic of dogmatic development is very closely connected to the “historical logic” of the notion of superanalogy. A proper account of the psychology of faith requires a sufficient articulation of the way that the *de fide* message reaches us, not merely by way of immediate, primordial declaration, but also, and very often, under the conditions of greater explicitation, brought about through the passage of time, and encountered in the various *loci* from which theological (but also spiritual) reflection draws its data.⁶⁹ We live in the wake of active tradition’s pedagogical activity.

Related to this second point, as well, a full study of the conditions of faith at various levels of explicitation is necessary for a full account of the superanalogy of faith: prior to the coming of Christ; after Christ but different in *minores* versus in *maiores* in the Church (and also in dissidents who are “of good faith”); and through the course of the development of dogmas themselves. Moreover, one must consider the noetic basis for the assent of faith in cases of those who, through their first act of freedom, under the

⁶⁸ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Divine Revelation*, 1:682–83. This point regarding the role of the Church in the assent of faith is, in part (amid historical contingencies involving controversies with the Jansenists) what generated the distinction between divine faith and ecclesiastical faith in the theories of some later Scholastics. Also see Charles Journet, *Le message révélé: sa transmission, son développement, ses dépendances* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936), 21–154. I do not necessarily completely agree with his incorporation of elements from Marín-Sola’s theory of dogmatic development. It is not clear to my eyes that Marín-Sola evades the concerns that were raised by Schultes, Garrigou-Lagrange, Labourdette, and Wallace on all points. For notes gathered related to discussions of ecclesiastical faith, see Matthew K. Miner, “A Basic Introduction to ‘Ecclesiastical Faith,’” *To Be a Thomist*, <https://www.athomist.com/articles/a-basic-introduction-to-ecclesiastical-faith>.

⁶⁹ Such considerations require, in my opinion, the revisiting of the debate between Schultes and Marín-Sola concerning the nature and definability of “proper” theological conclusions (*conclusiones quoad se*). This is discussed briefly, with further references, in Matthew K. Miner, “Dogmatic Development,” *The Encyclopedia of Catholic Theology*, <http://www.encyclopediaofcatholictheology.com/article/dogmatic-development>.

motion of grace, orient themselves toward the supernatural good, even though the message of faith has not been openly preached to them.⁷⁰

(3) Since faith of itself makes a demand for mystical experience, a full account of the superanalogy of faith will explain how the “logic” of the supernaturalized *ratio analogata* posits an intrinsic demand for purification through charity, under the sway of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The very supernaturality of the objective meanings expressed in the truths of faith demand, by their very nature, that our knowledge of these truths be purified of all created conditions that might weigh down our knowledge (the gifts of knowledge and understanding), and also that this supernatural reality of God present in our soul be, as it were, “tasted” in his fruitive goodness (the gift of wisdom). Even if such knowledge is, in a sense, “beyond concepts,” it nonetheless remains “in the line of concepts,” in the words of Journet: “upon this route and none other.”⁷¹ Although the gifts will remain *in patria*, when wayfaring faith and superanalogy will no longer be necessary, they are here below the conditions for the perfecting of faith itself, either directly (in the case of understanding and knowledge) or radically (by wisdom, which purifies charity, by which faith is *fides formata*). Therefore, the very conditions of superanalogical knowledge itself demand the mystical life in all believers.⁷²

⁷⁰ For some indications regarding all the issues implied in this sentence, see notes 32 and 37 above.

⁷¹ See Journet, *Dark Knowledge*, 77. See also 78: “The revealed statements of Scripture, the Symbol of the Apostles, of infallible teaching—wherein are expressed the double original revealed Fact, necessary for all times that men may draw near to God, namely the fact ‘that He exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him’ [a point in St. Thomas emphasized over and over again by Garrigou-Lagrange]—these are the foundation upon which all the interior certitude of the mystics rests, and without which they know their whole spiritual adventure would founder in illusion. They cling to the teachings of faith with a fiery tenacity, like that of the apostle Paul, who, though he was able to disclose to the perfect a mysterious wisdom taught by the Holy Spirit alone (1 Cor. 2:13), trembled at the thought that the Corinthians might forget the dogmas of the only gospel capable of saving them, provided they held fast to its meaning. . . . In other words, without an unshakable affirmative and cataphatic theology, there is no negative and apophatic theology. . . . [Citing the words of Ruysbroeck:] ‘The ant does not make strange paths, but all follow the same path, and, awaiting the proper time, they become able to fly.’” Also, see the important article Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “La foi éclairée par les dons,” *Vie spirituelle* 74 (1946): 657–66. Admittedly, I am interpreting certain expressions of Journet (and Maritain) in a different sense from Fr. Bernhard Blankenhorn (“Aquinas on the Spirit’s Gift of Understanding and Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology*,” *Nova et Vetera* [English] 14, no. 4 [2016]: 1113–31) and Bishop Charles Morerod (“La mystique dans l’épistémologie de Jacques Maritain,” *Nova et Vetera* 83 [2008]: 121–50).

⁷² I am here, however, abstracting from the intra-Thomist debates concerning the

In light of these three final remarks, I would like to close with an act of homage to Maritain, without whom this critical aspect of “supernatural psychology” would perhaps not yet have seen the light of day. Writing nearly one hundred years ago, his words contain *in nuce* everything that I have said in this article:

It is written that God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve in their exile. In like manner, through His prophets, then His Incarnate Son, and His Church, he has made for us, garments woven of words and notions to close the nakedness of our minds till the day it sees Him. Thus, faith must necessarily proceed cataphatically, since it communicates to us, and in virtue of the testimony of the First Truth, or, in other words, in virtue of the infallible veracity of God revealing, and thanks to its being proposed by the Church, the knowledge of what is hidden in the depths of the deity. How shall they understand if they are not taught? And how will they be taught if not by means of enunciations and notions? And how will they be taught infallibly, if these enunciations and notions do not signify in an analogical (superanalogical) mode those very things which are in God? In this way, it is understandable that faith attains to the Deity itself, and in propositions that are rigorously true, but from afar, at a distance, i.e., thanks to the analogical process involved in the very use of notions and enunciations. To become wisdom and contemplation, knowledge by faith must, under a divine grace of inspiration and illumination—and yet always, in a trans-luminous obscurity, which will remain as long as God is not seen in Himself—progressively leave behind this *from afar* and *at a distance*. That is to say, it must become experiential and proceed apophatically, by freeing itself from the limited mode of its concepts, not by an intellectual knowledge that transcends yes and no, but by a passion of divine things that tastes and touches, by way of the no, the infinite depths of the *yes*.⁷³

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immediacy of mystical knowledge occasioned by the work of Fr. Gardeil mentioned in note 39 above.

⁷³ Maritain, *Degrees*, 258–59. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for comments that helped in clarifying the content of this essay. Thanks, also, are owed to the members of the Sacra Doctrina Project who were present at the verbal delivery of a briefer draft of this essay in summer 2023. Their questions and reflections were of much use in formulating the current version of this article.