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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analogy and Image in E. L. Mascall

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Abstract

E. L. Mascall devoted much of his early scholarly career to developing accounts of analogy and natural theology grounded in the study both of Thomas Aquinas and in his Thomist successors. This essay examines Mascall's account of analogy in relation to other views on analogy in his day, finding that in the 1950s, 'image' becomes at least as important a category for Mascall as 'analogy'. Even while beginning from Thomist metaphysical standpoints and motivated by Thomist considerations, Mascall develops an account of thinking and speaking about God that diverges from his Thomist contemporaries, resembling more the thought of his 'para-Thomist' friend and colleague, Austin Farrer.

Keywords: Analogy; Austin Marsden Farrer; Eric Lionel Mascall; image; natural theology; scholasticism; Thomism

Introduction

Eric Lionel Mascall (1905–1993), since his earliest publications, has been associated with Thomism. Two of Mascall's most prominent early works discuss natural theology and analogy: *He Who Is*, published in 1943 while Mascall was tutor at Lincoln Theological College; and *Existence and Analogy*, published in 1949 after Mascall had become University Lecturer in Philosophy of Religion and Tutor at Christ Church, Oxford. What remains most striking about these works was Mascall's close engagement not only with Thomas' own writings but also those of his interpreters. For this reason, John Macquarrie classes him as a premier 'Anglican Thomist'.[1]

In this article, I examine Mascall's account of analogy, towards which he gestures in *He Who Is*, which he sets out in *Existence and Analogy*, and which he develops in *Words and Images* (1957). Mascall subverts a typically 'scholastic' formulation and discussion of analogy, culminating in a turn to 'images' which does not find itself at home in standard scholastic discussion. Although he continues to use scholastic

[1]John Macquarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology, 1900–1970* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 289; John Macquarrie, 'Mascall and Transcendental Thomism', in John Macquarrie, *Stubborn Theological Questions* (London: SCM Press, 2003): p. 49–63.

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language, and although he sees himself as holding a single position between 1943 and 1970,[2] Mascall shows increasing awareness of lacunae in the Thomist tradition as it stands.

Mascall's Influences on Analogy

Mascall is deeply familiar with the Thomist tradition, both with Thomas himself and with the Thomist tradition. For example, Mascall praises his French Thomist contemporaries Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain as 'philosophers of the first rank'.[3] Mascall's grounding in the Thomist tradition is especially clear on the subject of analogy.

Thomas Aquinas introduced 'analogy' as a middle way between univocity (sameness of meaning, when we call both Fido and Spot dogs) and equivocity (difference of meaning, when 'bank' applies to a sandy shore or a financial institution) to explain how creatures with finite understanding can speak about an infinite God. Since God (unlike creatures) is metaphysically simple, Thomas denies that any predicate – goodness, for example – can be used of God and creatures univocally, since God's goodness is identical with the divine essence. Equivocity, however, would mean that the goodness of God and creatures bear no resemblance. Thus, Thomas uses analogy to categorize the predication of goodness to both God and creatures.

Mascall is also familiar with models for analogy from the broader Thomist tradition.[4] One paradigm is known as analogy of attribution: a single term is used to describe objects with altogether different properties when these properties are related by cause-and-effect. To use an Aristotelian example,[5] the word 'healthy' picks out different properties in the healthy human, healthy food and healthy urine: 'health' refers to humans when their body is flourishing, food is called 'healthy' when the food contributes to such flourishing, and urine is called 'healthy' when it signifies such flourishing. Other Thomists turned to a second scheme, analogy of proportionality, which models analogy on mathematics. The formula

$$\frac{2}{6} = \frac{3}{9}$$

manifests a common relation between the first two and second two terms (1:3). So too can proportionalities such as

[2]E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), p. 6: 'I should still wish, apart from comparatively minor points of emphasis, to defend the position which I set forth in my books *He Who Is* (1943), *Existence and Analogy* (1949), and *Words and Images* (1957)'.

[3]E. L. Mascall, *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism* [*HWI*] (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), p. ix.

[4]See Domenic D'Ettore, *Analogy after Aquinas: Logical Problems, Thomistic Answers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020).

[5]See *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003a33–35.

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$$\frac{wavelessness}{sea} = \frac{windlessness}{air}$$

exemplify a shared relation (which the scholastics called tranquilitas – 'calm') that sheds light on the two proportions, while manifesting them differently. Even given an incomplete formula

$$\frac{2}{8} = \frac{3}{x}$$

we can fill in the fourth term ($x = 12$) by knowing the first three, deriving the relation between the first two (1:4) and applying this relation to the third term (3). Thus, more complex proportionalities such as

$$\frac{goodness\ of\ creature}{creature} = \frac{goodness\ of\ God}{God}$$

can lend understanding, even when we do not know what the goodness of God is like, so long as we know the other three terms. Finally, other thinkers – principally Francisco Suárez – developed a third account of analogy: while on the 'healthy' model health was present only in the human person – and food and urine were called 'healthy' derivatively – for Suárez, analogically predicated terms indicate a confused concept (rather than a simple concept, as univocists would have it) common to God and creatures, where the term means something different in each case, since they exist in God of themselves and derivatively in creatures. Suárez and his followers called this not extrinsic attribution, as on the healthy model, but *intrinsic* attribution. Mascall is very well read in scholasticism, discussing various schemata of analogy and explicitly aiming to resolve the disagreement on whether analogy is fundamentally attribution or proportionality.

One notable omission from Mascall's discussion of the scholastic tradition, however, is any discussion of the main alternative to Thomism and Suárezianism: Scotist univocity. John Duns Scotus argued – not against Thomas, but against Henry of Ghent – that all analogy must be founded upon a certain kind of univocity, such that though God's goodness and creaturely goodness are diverse in themselves, the word 'good' still captures something unqualifiedly the same between them – otherwise, God's goodness and creaturely goodness are equivocally related. Importantly, Scotus maintains metaphysical analogy.[6] He argues only that such diversity requires a shared semantic 'part' in the definition of goodness on each side of the God–creature gap, since we would not be otherwise justified in using the same word. Indeed, the Thomist paradigms of analogy were designed – in part – explicitly to circumvent Scotist arguments for univocity. And while the Thomists developed their paradigms of analogy, Scotists theorized accounts of analogy built on semantic univocity.[7] Thus, it is strange that while Mascall discusses Scotus on the ontological argument, on infinity as the

[6]See Richard Cross, *Great Medieval Thinkers: Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 34; Richard Cross, 'Duns Scotus and Analogy: A Brief Note', *The Modern Schoolman* 89 (2012), p. 147–154; Richard Cross, 'Are Names Said of God and Creatures Univocally?' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 92, no. 2 (2018), p. 319; Garrett Smith, "The Analogy of Being in the Scotist Tradition', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 93, no. 4 (2019), p. 644–651.

[7]For more on the Scotist tradition, see Stephen Dumont, 'Transcendental Being: Scotus and Scotists' *Topoi* 11 (1992), p. 133–148; Smith, 'The Analogy of Being in the Scotist Tradition'.

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distinctive constituent of the divine nature, on the unity of the divine attributes and on the distinction between Scotist voluntarism and Thomist intellectualism – disagreeing with Scotus on every point – he does not discuss Scotus or Scotists on univocity. He occasionally refers to the 'conceptualist bias' of Suárez and his followers, their insistence on explicating divine attributes by conceptual analysis.[8] On a certain reading, Mascall's formulation of Suarezianism could come close to describing the Scotist univocal view,[9] but he says nothing on the matter.

The other significant influence on Mascall's work on analogy, outside scholastic Thomism, is his colleague and friend Austin Farrer (1904–1968): chaplain at St Edmund's Hall and Trinity College, later Warden of Keble College, Oxford. Farrer was a core member of 'the Metaphysicals', a group which Mascall convened in 1946 to combat the logical positivism then prevalent in Oxford.[10] Farrer places particular emphasis on the 'cosmological idea': 'the scheme of God and creatures in relation'[11] and the 'direct content of rational theology'.[12] For Farrer, natural theology is not simply about proving the existence of God, but about describing the contours of God's relation to the creature. This is partially because Farrer insists that God's existence 'cannot be demonstrated in the ordinary sense; for no principle can be found for a proof'.[13] Farrer gives two main reasons. First, he agrees with critics of 'the Causal Argument' that 'to argue from effects is to begin by positing the divine activity and the divine Agent, and begs the question'.[14] Second, God can only be conceived under analogy, since 'creation is an unique relation'[15] irreducible to any relation of finite to finite, and 'all analogical syllogisms have *quaternio terminorum* [four-ness of terms] and are invalid'.[16] For Farrer, analogical uses of a term in a syllogism always lead to invalidity, since if the instances of the analogical term avoided equivocation entirely, the relation between them would be univocal. This Scotist conclusion,[17] which the scholastic Thomists resist, the 'para-Thomist'[18]

[8]*EA*, 100. More recent readers of Suárez agree with Mascall's conceptualist characterization: see Victor Salas, 'Between Thomism and Scotism: Francisco Suárez on the Analogy of Being', in Victor M Salas and Robert L Fastiggi, eds. *A Companion to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 340.

[9]Indeed, some scholars argue that Suárez's view nearly resembles Scotus'; see Lukáš Novák, 'Suarez's Notion of Analogy: Scotus's Essential Order in Disguise?' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 95, no. 2 (2021), p. 195–233. Étienne Gilson draws the line between Thomism and Scotism on analogy precisely between the 'judgmentalism' of the former and the 'conceptualism' of the latter: see Étienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot: introduction a ses positions fondamentales* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1952), p. 101.

[10]Basil Mitchell, 'Staking a Claim for Metaphysics', in Harriet A. Harris and Christopher J. Insole, eds. *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 21–32; see also David Brown, 'Basil George Mitchell: 1917–2011', *Biographical Memoirs of the Fellows of the British Academy*, XII, 308.

[11]*FI*, 16.

[12]*FI*, 62.

[13]Austin Farrer, *Finite and Infinite: A Philosophical Essay* [*FI*] (Westminster: Dacre, 1943), p. 7.

[14]*FI*, 7.

[15]*FI*, 22.

[16]*FI*, 263.

[17]Farrer, for his part, attributes this argument to William of Ockham at Austin Farrer, 'Analogy', in Lefferts A. Loetscher, et al, eds. *Twentieth-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: An Extension of the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Baker Book House, 1955), p. 39.

[18]E. L. Mascall, 'Austin Marsden Farrer: 1904–1968', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, LIV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968–1970), p. 436, citing a phrase from Gregory Dix.

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Farrer embraces. However, unlike the Scotists, he accepts that natural theology is not about 'proof' or 'demonstration', committing to a *modus ponens* where the Scotist applies a *modus tollens*.

1940's: He Who Is and Existence and Analogy

It must be noted that Mascall never judged himself by fidelity to Thomas or Thomism. Mascall says of his theological approach: 'I do not consider *Thomas locutus, causa finita* [Thomas has spoken, the case is closed] as the last judgement to be passed on any theological problem; though my approach might be summed up in the words, *Thomas locutus, causa incepta* [Thomas has spoken, the case is begun]'.[19] Likewise, he admits that '[t]here is . . . nothing un-Thomist in venturing to criticize St. Thomas, for he himself tells us that of all arguments that from authority based on human reason is the weakest'.[20] Mascall wears his commitment to analogical schemata lightly because, as Mascall continually reminds his readers,

> the doctrine of analogy is not concerned to discover whether discourse about God is antecedently possible, or to endow it with a possibility that was originally absent, but to account for the fact that discourse about God has, as a matter of experience, been taking place in spite of various considerations that might seem at first sight to rule its possibility out of court'.[21]

He begins from the fact of our ability to speak about God and is willing to let go of any theory if it cannot explain speech about God as it already occurs.

Mascall's metaphysic, which he calls 'existentialist' in a very specific meaning, is an instance of what the French Thomist Étienne Gilson calls a 'metaphysic of exodus': 'the revelation of the name of God as "I am that I am"'.[22] For Gilson, whereas 'essentialists' 'exhibit a marked tendency to reduce the existence of a thing to its essence, and to answer the question: What is it for a thing to be? by saying: It is to be that which it is',[23] for existentialists, 'form is further actuated by existence',[24] an *actus essendi* (act of being) given by God, on which basis all things rely on God for their existence. Importantly, for any Thomist metaphysic, God's existence and essence are one. Thus, for Mascall's existentialist Thomism, 'the fact that God exists in the way in which he does (namely self-existently) is the fact from which every truth about the nature of God can be derived'.[25] For this reason, Mascall rejects ontological arguments for God's existence because, while 'the concept of God, as

[19]*HWI*, viii.

[20]E. L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy: A Sequel to "He Who Is"* [*EA*] (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), p. xviii.

[21]*EA*, 95; see also p. 124: '[i]f the doctrine of analogy can explain how this is possible, so much the better; if it cannot, it is the doctrine of analogy that is discredited, not our knowledge of God'.

[22]*HWI*, 13; see Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediæval Philosophy: Gifford Lectures 1931–1932*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), cc. 3–4, especially p. 51.

[23]Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 61.

[24]Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 33.

[25]*EA*, 19.

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St. Anselm defines him, does indeed include existence *ut signata*, … the existence that we want to attribute to him, existence *ut exercitia*, cannot be reached in the concept at all'.[26]

Mascall's discussion of analogy arises only in the context of his account of natural theology.[27] *He Who Is* and *Existence and Analogy* each discusses natural theology at length before analogy comes onto the scene. Mascall takes as his entry point into natural theology Thomas' Five Ways, which he summarizes as: 'If there exists a contingent being, there must exist a Necessary Being. But there do exist contingent beings. Therefore, there exists a Necessary Being'.[28] Regarding this reformulation, Mascall argues that

> our postulation of both the major and minor premiss has been derived from the same basis in our experience, namely, our acquaintance with contingent beings … in practice, the argument is either accepted or rejected as a whole according as we have or have not come to know the things of this world as being what they really are.[29]

For Mascall, natural theology is not about 'the laws and procedures of formal logic' but rather 'acquaint[ing] ourselves with finite beings and learn[ing] to know them as they really are'.[30] For this reason, Mascall admits that 'proof of God's existence is not a syllogistic demonstration in the ordinary sense of the term'.[31] He draws a comparison to mathematical proofs:[32] after considering a proof one knows to be true but does not know why, 'the form suddenly becomes evident in a flash; the theorem has been "got hold of" at last, as it were, seen "in the solid", and the student feels that he is now not just assenting to an external fact but that he has penetrated to the nature of the object and made it a part of himself'.[33] Likewise, the real value in theistic arguments is 'in stimulating the mind to examine finite beings with such attention and understanding that it grasps them in their true ontological nature as dependent upon God, and so grasps God's existence as their Creator'.[34] Natural theology finds its fruition not in a proof or argument, but in an apprehension of things in their metaphysical depth, in their reliance on God for their very being. Mascall characterizes natural theology this way because of his existentialism: any reliance on the 'concept' as ultimate in natural theology betrays an essentialism that must be purged.

It is only now that Mascall turns to analogy. For Mascall, analogy provides an 'alternative to a transcendence which makes God altogether unknowable other than

[26]*EA*, 51.

[27]For discussion of Mascall on natural theology, see William Haggerty, 'On Not Taking the World for Granted: E. L. Mascall on The Five Ways', *Studia Gilsoniana* 8, no. 2 (2019): p. 277–303.

[28]*EA*, 67.

[29]*HWI*, 72–73.

[30]*HWI*, 73.

[31]*EA*, 171.

[32]Mascall's undergraduate degree at Pembroke College, Cambridge, was in Mathematics, and immediately after university, he was Senior Maths Master at Bablake School.

[33]*HWI*, 79.

[34]*HWI*, 80.

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an immanence which makes him and the world necessary to each other'[35] – precisely what he has been advocating for in both *He Who Is* and the first half of *Existence and Analogy*. Analogy emerges only after natural theology, as a result of the natural theologian's conclusion that 'the God whose existence we were now asserting was a being of so radically different an order from everything else in our experience that it became a real question whether the word "God" in that context meant anything at all'.[36] Since, as discussed above, Mascall believes that this radical openness of the meaning of the word 'God' arises only in the context of an existential metaphysic, he notes that the 'full investigation [of the doctrine of analogy] only began among Christian philosophers who gave primacy of place to the existential approach to God'.[37]

Whereas Mascall sees analogy as a problem that arises only after natural theological proofs have been discussed, Farrer sees analogy as the method of metaphysical inquiry in general.[38] For Farrer, metaphysics is fundamentally about contemplating things as they are, and metaphysics is related not to problems which can be solved, but mysteries which invite ever further examination.[39] Thus, analogies to things we understand are required to reach knowledge about things we cannot understand, though these analogies must be worn lightly and discarded or qualified as we see necessary. As Farrer would later put it in his Bampton Lectures of 1948, *The Glass of Vision*, 'analogy is the proper form of metaphysical thought, in the realm of *thought* there is no getting behind it'.[40] For Mascall, on the other hand, the questions of *an [Deus] sit* (whether God is) and *quomodo sit* (how He is) are distinct: natural theology pertains to the former, and analogy to the latter.[41]

In this respect, Mascall breaks not only with Farrer but also with the 'sacred monster' of 20th-century French Thomism, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, who sees analogy as involved in natural theology. This difference presents itself most clearly when considering the proportionalities they employ.[42] Garrigou-Lagrange proposes the following as exemplary proportionalities:[43]

$$\frac{\textit{contingent being [ens]}}{\textit{its being [esse]}} = \frac{\textit{First Cause}}{\textit{His being [esse]}}$$

[35]*EA*, 93–94.

[36]*EA*, 96.

[37]*EA*, 96.

[38]See A M Farrer, 'The Extension of St. Thomas's Doctrine of Knowledge by Analogy to Modern Philosophical Problems', *Downside Review* 65, no. 1 (1947), p. 23–24: 'Now I am about to suggest that for a modern the balance of this contrast has considerably altered, and that what we take to be our apprehension of finite substances approximates far more towards the traditional account of our apprehension of God than strict traditionalism would have said'.

[39]See Robert MacSwain, ed. *Scripture, Metaphysics, and Poetry: Austin Farrer's The Glass of Vision with Critical Commentary* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 59–63. Farrer acknowledges his debt to Gabriel Marcel on 'problems' and 'mysteries', though he does not exactly follow Marcel's usage.

[40]MacSwain, *Scripture, Metaphysics, and Poetry*, 66.

[41]*EA*, 111n3.

[42]Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange *God, His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, vol. 2, trans. Dom B. Rose, OSB (St Louis & London: B. Herder, 1934), p. 218.

[43]Garrigou-Lagrange *God* v. 2, p. 219–220.

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$$\frac{\textit{immaterial creature}}{\textit{its intelligence}} = \frac{\textit{First immaterial Cause}}{\textit{His intelligence}}$$

$$\frac{\textit{intelligent creature}}{\textit{its will}} = \frac{\textit{First intelligent Cause}}{\textit{His will}}$$

Here, he argues that the fourth term is unknown, since we know the first two terms from knowledge of creatures, and the third term 'is indirectly known by appealing to the principle of causality'[44] through natural theological proofs – this term is known by analogy, owing to the real distinction between existence and essence in creatures which is not present in God. The fourth term is also understood analogically, 'indirectly known in a *positive* way from what it has analogically in common with creatures in a *negative* and *relative* way as regards its proper divine mode',[45] the aforementioned third term.

Mascall's favoured Thomist on analogy, Maurílio Teixeira-Leite Penido, differs in two significant respects from Garrigou-Lagrange. First, Penido constructs the proportionality not between the *ens* [the complete entity: cats or cabbages] and its existential act, but between the *essentia* ['catness' or 'cabbageness'] and the existential act:

$$\frac{\textit{essence of the creature}}{\textit{existential act of the creature}} = \frac{\textit{essence of God}}{\textit{existential act of God}}$$

Whereas for Garrigou-Lagrange the first and third terms are God and creatures themselves, for Penido, the first and third terms are their natures. The second significant difference is that when considering Penido's reformulated analogy, it is the *fourth* term, the existential act of God, that is given in natural theology, not the third term. Penido explains that 'analogy ... does not appear *explicitly* at the start of our journey towards God; it does not occupy itself with the question '*an sit*' [whether God is]; it enters into play only when it comes to '*quomodo sit*' [how God is]'[46] – we discover that analogy applies to the existential act only when we consider what God's essence is like. Mascall remarks that 'at this point Penido is nearer the truth'[47] than Garrigou-Lagrange, though he finds this judgment inconsequential enough that he expresses it only in a footnote.

Mascall's own account begins by observing that analogy is not simply about metaphysics, simply about concepts or simply about language; it concerns all three,[48] but he takes as his starting point the question about language, 'the problem of analogical predication'.[49] For this reason, Mascall's proportionalities are rooted not in the relation of God or creatures to their being, nor in the relation of the divine

[44]Garrigou-Lagrange, *God* v. 2, 220.

[45]Garrigou-Lagrange, *God* v. 2, 220.

[46]M. T-L. Penido, *Le Rôle de L'Analogie en Théologie Dogmatique* (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1931), p. 138.

[47]*EA*, 111n3.

[48]See *EA*, 96: 'The doctrine, as we find it in the Thomist tradition, appears in at least three distinct departments of philosophy, namely the metaphysical or ontological, the epistemological or psychological, and the logical or linguistic'.

[49]*EA*, 97.

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or creaturely essence to their respective acts of existence, but in the relation of a divine and creaturely predicate to God and creaturely being:[50]

$$\frac{\textit{goodness of finite being}}{\textit{finite being [esse]}} = \frac{\textit{goodness of God}}{\textit{God}}$$

He constructs this particular proportionality because of his primary interest in the semantic question of why a perfection term (goodness, in this case) can apply to God in the first place. Of course, one cannot disconnect the semantic question of analogy from epistemology, psychology or metaphysics. However, one must have a point of entry, and Mascall chooses the linguistic one. Here too, Mascall and Farrer diverge, even more fundamentally: whereas Farrer speaks of finding 'analogies' for God by comparing one term (God) to another (the free creaturely will, for example), Mascall maintains a traditionally scholastic focus on discovering the analogical structure of single perfection term.

To return to the question: how does Mascall model analogy? First, he argues (in a way that Garrigou-Lagrange and Penido do not) that the goal of analogy is not 'by a process of logical or metaphysical gymnastics, to establish a truth previously unknown',[51] nor to 'furnish us with knowledge of God'.[52] What analogy does is 'give a rational confirmation and elucidation of a fact already familiar',[53] based in the apprehension of God's existence, and thus (owing to His simplicity) a recognition of his nature as well, even if we do not apprehend God's nature as such. Mascall explains that 'what begins as an attempt to conceive God's goodness – an attempt which is doomed to failure – issues in an affirmation that self-existent goodness exists', without implying a concept of 'self-existent goodness' but only a recognition that goodness exists self-existingly.[54] Thus, although Mascall's entry point to analogy is linguistic-semantic, the logical question clearly relies on the metaphysical one. Mascall sees what it means to have a 'term' differently than Garrigou-Lagrange or Penido. For these French Thomists, who are looking to elucidate (even if not exhaustively) what it means for God to be good or intelligent, each of the terms must have some conceptual content in order for the analogy to shed light on the question they seek to answer. But for Mascall, for whom analogical statements (like natural theological ones) are *judgements* rather than conceptual elucidations, all Mascall needs for a term to be present is an affirmation of its act of existence. Natural theology furnishes Mascall with God, and we know both finite being and finite predicates from our normal goings about the world.

Mascall's clarification is important because it leads him to explain analogy, like natural theology, through apprehension rather than through argument. Mascall adopts his account of apprehension and his characterization of analogy as judgement because he believes that all natural theological proofs or analogical statements consist in vicious 'verbal cobweb-spinning'. [55] This conclusion arises

[50] *EA*, 120.
[51] *EA*, 123.
[52] *EA*, 124.
[53] *EA*, 123.
[54] *EA*, 119–120.
[55] *EA*, 123.

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directly from Mascall's embrace of existentialism and rejection of any kind of concept-centred essentialism. Here, Mascall sees further than some more contemporary 'existential Thomist' interpretations of analogy. Victor Salas, for example, agrees with Mascall that analogical knowledge arises 'through our intellectual encounter of [things'] very existence'.[56] They diverge where Salas denies that 'concepts and conceptualisation ... have no role in Aquinas' judgmental analogy',[57] even if analogy is fundamentally judgment. On Salas's interpretation, we judge that God is good because we judge that finite *esse* is good (since 'good' is a transcendental), we apply the axiom that all effects resemble their causes, and we then conclude by metaphysical reasoning that God, being uncreated *esse*, must be good in a manner suited to His *actus essendi*.[58]

Salas' explanation cannot escape an infinite regress: finite goodness must also be analogical, since goodness (being a transcendental) is not a genus and thus cannot be univocal, even at the level of creatures. Accordingly, we must run the aforementioned process back again in any argument for the unity of the transcendentals. If Salas's description covers all analogical reasoning, there can be no end to this process. Thus, for analogical judgements to involve concepts at all, this process must bottom out in a non-analogical concept, giving up the Thomist analogical game to the Scotists. Mascall's recognition of this problem is why he subordinates argument and concept to an act of apprehension – analogy is neither argumentative nor conceptual in the standard meanings of those words.

Second, Mascall offers a mixed account of analogy of attribution *with* analogy of proportionality. If the analogy of goodness does not bring us to a concept of 'self-existing goodness' but only an affirmation that goodness exists self-existingly, we must interpret the analogical proportionality

$$\frac{\textit{goodness of finite being}}{\textit{finite being [esse]}} = \frac{\textit{goodness of God}}{\textit{God}}$$

'as holding not as merely in the order of essence but in that of existence, as expressing not a comparison of concepts but an existential judgement'.[59] Whereas in finite being essence and existence are distinct, in God they are identical. The two sides of the proportionality are held together by the analogy of attribution 'which asserts, not merely in the conceptual but in the existential order, that finite being can exist only in dependence upon God'.[60] Proportionality affirms the relation of the predicate to being (whether finite or uncreated), and attribution expresses the reliance of creaturely being and predicates on the act by which God exists. However, neither proportionality nor attribution illumine what it means for God to be good or offers an argument for God's goodness: '[a]nalogy does not enable us to *conceive* God's goodness as identical with his essence but to *affirm* it as identical with his existence'.[61]

[56]Victor Salas, 'The Judgmental Character of Thomas Aquinas's Analogy of Being', *The Modern Schoolman* 85 (2008), p. 129.
[57]Salas, 'The Judgmental Character', 130.
[58]Salas, 'The Judgmental Character', 134.
[59]*EA*, 120.
[60]*EA*, 120.
[61]*EA*, 120.

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So, where do we find Mascall at the end of the 1940s? Mascall has developed an unorthodox account of analogy, on which analogy is not a proof that God is named by a particular predicate. Rather, analogy is a scheme by which we can prepare ourselves to receive, and subsequently justify as rational, an apprehension of God-seen-as-cause-through-creaturely-effects *as* perfect in some respect. His persistent existentialism causes him to resist any 'conceptualist' interpretations of analogy on Suarezian (or Scotist) terms. His insistence that analogy emerges only after the first 'arguments' of natural theology have run their course, combined with his resistance to conceptualism, makes it difficult for him to engage in a semantic analysis of analogy without appeal to apprehension; given his insistence that natural theology begs the question without the possibility of such a apprehension, his analogical schema makes sense of his prior commitments, themselves interpretations of Thomas. But it does not slot neatly into the broader Thomistic tradition on analogy.

Words and Images and Beyond

Words and Images was partially prompted by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre's *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.[62] In this volume, Flew, MacIntyre, R. M. Hare, Basil Mitchell and others engage similar questions as Mascall treats in his natural theology, in the shadow of A. J. Ayer's logical positivism. Mascall had engaged with non-Thomists in his previous work, but little with this ascendant school of (mostly) English philosophy of religion. Another fresh influence in *Words and Images* is Farrer's 1948 Bampton Lectures, *The Glass of Vision*. Both works even take the same text as their epigraph: 'Now we see through a glass darkly' (1 Cor. 13:12). Farrer's concern is to explore 'the form of divine truth in the human mind',[63] a subject he approaches by examining images in both metaphysics and scripture. Here, he explicitly raises the old Thomist-Scotist question of whether the rational theologian can 'point away from the analogical statements he uses to a non-analogical truth which they state'.[64] Farrer offers this disambiguation:

> If by 'truth' you mean a piece of true *thinking*, the answer is No: the metaphysician cannot point away from his analogically-expressed thoughts about the natural mysteries to some non-analogical thoughts about them, which mean all that the analogical thoughts mean . . . If, on the other hand, by 'truth' you mean the existent reality which the metaphysician is talking about, then indeed he can in a sense point to a truth outside his analogical statements, which they are designed to state.[65]

Farrer's anti-conceptualism about analogy and his use of 'image' as an epistemological category fit with the traditional Thomist aim to avoid univocity,

[62]Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, eds. *New Directions in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

[63]MacSwain, *Scripture, Metaphysics, and Poetry*, 15.

[64]MacSwain, *Scripture, Metaphysics, and Poetry*, 55.

[65]MacSwain, *Scripture, Metaphysics, and Poetry*, 65–66.

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while rejecting Thomist attempts at maintaining demonstration with analogical concepts, as Mascall's account of the same period did.

Words and Images seldom cites the Thomist sources which Mascall favoured earlier. Most notable is its general silence on analogy. In a book 'providing a rational justification for the activities of thinking and talking about God',[66] such neglect is striking. And while Mascall does offer explanation with the curt comment that '[t]he medieval theologians ... lived in the Middle Ages',[67] this concern does not stop him from offering a Thomist-Aristotelian doctrine of perception, arguing that its provenance should not count against it, since 'although it is commonly supposed that Thomist epistemology, like Thomist metaphysics, has been demolished by the modern empiricists, I do not think that is the case'.[68] Perhaps for this reason, Mascall seems to have shifted from his earlier linguistic entry point to an epistemological one.

The Thomist that Mascall cites most centrally is Josef Pieper, who distinguishes between the namesake 'two ideals of knowledge' of Chapter 4: *ratio*, the 'power of discursive thought'; and *intellectus*, 'the ability of "simply looking" (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye'.[69] Mascall agrees with the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition, transmitted by Pieper, that 'the intellect does not only reason, but also *apprehends*; it has, as its object, not only truths but *things*'.[70] Here, Mascall argues that 'the trans-sensory object ... is fundamentally intelligible ... [b]ut the sense-object ... is ... *not* intelligible, except in so far as it may subsequently be made the object of a reflective act'.[71] In other words, 'the sensible particular ... is not the terminus of perception, not the *objectum quod* [object which] ... but the *objectum quo* [object through which], through which the intellect grasps, in a direct but mediate activity, the intelligible extramental reality, which is the *real thing*'.[72] By defending the twofold nature of understanding and the twofold nature of perception, Mascall aims to counter the twofold assumption that underlies all modern accounts of perception: that 'perception ... is simply identified with sensation' and that 'the intellect in no way *apprehends*, it merely *infers*'.[73]

Along these lines, Mascall contrasts Christian Aristotelianism's 'fully worked out doctrine of the epistemological function of the *concept*' with its comparative neglect of '[t]he sensory image ... [which] has too often been seen as a mere impression or copy of the sensible object, with no instrumental function whatsoever in the cognitive act other than that of being the totally passive material from which the active intellect abstracts an intelligible species'.[74] He does not think there is an easy

[66]E. L. Mascall, *Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse* [*WI*] (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 121.
[67]*WI*, viii.
[68]*WI*, 39.
[69]Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend: St Augustine's Press, 1998), 32.
[70]*WI*, 63.
[71]*WI*, 38.
[72]*WI*, 34.
[73]*WI*, 33.
[74]*WI*, 114.

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carryover from scholastic thought on perception to a hypothetical scholastic theory of images. For if the scholastics were to 'elaborat[e] ... a doctrine of the image and its cognitive role in the sensible order which would be at all points parallel to the accepted doctrine of the concept and its cognitive role in the intellectual order', they would 'launch [themselves] down the slippery slope at the bottom of which lies Locke with his identification of perception with sensation'.[75] He ultimately suggests 'that we ought to take more seriously the active part which is played by the sensible image in the cognition of reality, and in particular in our cognition of the divine reality from which all other reality draws its being'.[76] Mascall offers both a diagnosis of modern accounts of perception and a Thomistic rejoinder in a 1963 paper he gave to the Aristotelian Society, which he concludes with the claim that 'I do not think I have been expounding a theory about perception so much as giving a description of it'.[77] As with natural theology and analogy, so with perception: Mascall's fundamental objection is that his opponents are not seeing clearly.

Mascall's use of Pieper buttresses his earlier claim that argument and proof serve the end of 'put[ting] the hearer in the frame of mind in which he will be able to apprehend finite beings as they really are'.[78] Returning to his insistence that analogy and natural theology serve apprehensions rather than arguments, Mascall argues that we have a *contuition* of God: not an apprehension of God in Himself, but of God-and-the-creature-in-the-cosmological-relation. Mascall stops short of giving a comprehensive account of the role of images in theology, nor does he mean images to replace concepts as the privileged means of divine communication; as before, concepts offer rational (if not *ratio*nal) explanations for the contuition of God in the creature, though they are concepts in no ordinary manner of speaking.

Here, it must be observed that Farrer and Mascall place emphasis differently in their talk of 'image', as for 'analogy'. Both Farrer and Mascall afford a central role to perception,[79] and they both see the basic purpose of intellect as a certain kind of apprehension.[80] But Farrer applies his language of 'image' mostly to the literary, hermeneutic task of interpreting the Scriptures, whereas Mascall uses 'image' primarily to refer to the act of perception. There are points of contact: we might say that Farrer is asking us to perceive God's activity in creatures through certain hermeneutic guides (fatherhood, kingship, etc.), and he is in general

[75] *WI*, 114.

[76] *WI*, 114–115.

[77] E. L. Mascall, 'Sensation and Perception', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 64 (1964), p. 272.

[78] *WI*, 85.

[79] For Farrer, see Austin Farrer, 'Poetic Truth', in Charles C. Conti, ed. *Reflective Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SPCK, 1972), 37–38: 'the chief impediment to religion in this age, I often think, is that no one ever looks at anything at all: not so as to contemplate it, to apprehend what it is to be that thing, and plumb, if he can, the deep fact of its individual existence'.

[80] Farrer discusses this in many places; for an exemplary statement, see Austin Farrer, 'Faith and Reason', in *Reflective Faith*, 51: 'apprehension is both the beginning and the end of our subjective coming-to-know, and also its sole objective control throughout. Reasoning is not a source of knowledge but an instrument to clarify apprehension: and what we apprehend we accept in the last resort in the evidence of its self-presentation'.

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agreement with Mascall about the importance of perception and intellectual apprehension. And Mascall does not deny a place to interpretation in contuition. But this difference remains: whereas Farrer sees 'images' primarily as objects of interpretation, Mascall uses 'image' to discuss fundamentally perceptive acts.

While Mascall does discuss analogy in *Words and Images*,[81] he does not refer to the scholastic paradigms at all, setting them aside for a broader discussion of images and intellectual apprehension. Thus, Mascall's account of images further complicates his relationship to scholasticism: he consistently employs Thomistic starting points but follows them through to quite un-Thomist conclusions. Where Mascall once criticized Farrer for insufficient attention to the scholastic tradition on proportionality,[82] he now employs Farrer's insights into 'image', finding harmonies with Pieper's scholastic epistemology of *intellectus*, to circumvent the scholastic paradigms of analogy almost altogether.

Conclusion

Mascall's account of analogy, like his account of natural theology,[83] is not a straightforwardly scholastic one. Though his method appears strictly in the line of Thomist thinkers on the continent, his conclusions cast doubt on any reading of Mascall as a straightforward Thomist, even in his earliest days. Mascall's insistence on the absolutely existential nature of God and being, paired with a stark refusal of any 'conceptualism' in analogical schemata, motivates him to push scholastic paradigms of analogy past their standard limits.

Mascall's account of analogy is relevant to any Thomist who seeks an understanding of analogy that avoids Scotist univocity. This is because, as the Scotists object, a term which is not semantically univocal cannot serve as a middle term in a syllogism and thus cannot produce validity in demonstration[84] – a claim with which Farrer[85] and Mascall[86] both agree. On the contrary, Thomists like Thomas de Vio Cajetan developed their notion of analogy precisely to preserve validity in demonstration without univocity.[87] Here, the partisan of univocity may

[81]See *WI*, 101–108.

[82]See his claim at *EA*, 174 that 'Farrer's discussion would be even more impressive than it is if he had given rather greater weight to the doctrine of analogy in its classical form; his discussion of proportionality, for example, seems to me somewhat cavalier'.

[83]See, for example, Peter Geach's statement regarding intellectual apprehension and the Five Ways that 'I cannot make any sense of this metaphysical vision; neither, I suspect, could Aquinas' (Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 77). While Geach does not mention Mascall by name here, he would have been a (if not *the*) premier proponent of the view Geach criticizes.

[84]For a Scotist to insist on this is not to beg the question, since Scotus defines univocal uses of a term, in part, as preserving validity in demonstration; see *Ord.* I.3.1.1–2, n. 26. The Scotist will be very happy for what the Thomist calls analogy to be what the Scotist calls univocity; it is the Thomist who insists on avoiding univocity.

[85]*FI*, 263, on analogical arguments being guilty of *quaternio terminorum*.

[86]*EA*, 171, though Mascall would 'not [himself] have used just those words'.

[87]See Joshua Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan's De Nominum Analogia* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

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object that without semantic univocity, terms used of God and creatures must slide into pure equivocation: either $\text{goodness}_{\text{God}}$ and $\text{goodness}_{\text{creature}}$ share a common semantic part – a definition which applies equally to both, even if this common semantic part is modified in each case – or they do not. If they do, then analogy is reducible to univocity, since we can articulate in univocal terms the relation between the two, at least in principle. If they do not, then we cannot articulate the relation between the two, at least one concept is literally non-sensical, and there is no validity in demonstration.[88] The problem here is not only about syllogisms but also about whether God's 'goodness' has any sense whatsoever. For when we are deprived of the inferential power we typically afford to 'good', it becomes unclear why we call God 'good', or how we could know that God is good. If, for example, God's perfect goodness does not entail him perfectly willing the best, in what sense is God good? This problem is one which plagues not only more conservatively 'scholastic' theorists of analogy but also thinkers like John Milbank[89] and Catherine Pickstock,[90] who explicitly reject any Scotist interpretations of analogy for fear of flattening the difference between God and creatures.

Mascall's solution is to formulate analogy as a reasonable defence of an aspect under which the world is seen: a contuition of God-in-the-creature-as-cause, our 'apprehension of finite being in the cosmological relation'.[91] Mascall's turn to the image lets him avoid positing a semantically univocal concept, giving some understanding of theological predicates as analogous in non-definitional terms. At the same time, he does not bite the bullet of refusing all demonstration the way Scotists claim that Thomists must; concepts and arguments serve to prepare us for and justify our apprehension of finite being in the cosmological relation. Of course, much more work must be done, as Mascall himself admits. We cannot simply see 'image' as a category that works in a similar way as 'concept' or 'definition', lest we become empiricists. Nor can the content of images or intuitions be convertible without remainder into conceptual content, since images must give knowledge of a non-conceptual but still reasonable (if not *ratio*nal) sort. Contemporary Christian thought – such as the work of Thomas Pfau[92] and contributions to a recent volume on *Image as Theology*[93] – has found 'image' a suitable theological category in ways that may run parallel to Mascall's own thinking.

[88]For a strong defence of this argument, see Thomas Williams, 'The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary', *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): p. 575–585.

[89]See John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 29–37, 50–66. Paul DeHart sees Milbank as standing within Mascall's tradition on analogy and intuition: see Paul DeHart, 'On Being Heard but Not Seen: Milbank and Lash on Aquinas, Analogy, and Agnosticism', *Modern Theology* 26, no. 2 (2010): p. 272–273.

[90]See Catherine Pickstock, 'Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance', *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): p. 543–574.

[91]*EA*, 124. See also Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 111.

[92]See Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty: Metaphysics and Hermeneutics of the Image* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022).

[93]See Stirne Casey, Mark McInroy, and Alexis Torrance (eds.), *Image as Theology: The Power of Art in Shaping Christian Thought, Devotion, and Imagination* (Brepols, 2022).

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Objectors continue to criticize elements of Mascall's thought which his sympathizers must see not as bugs, but features.[94] On Mascall's account of analogy and natural theology, the problem with dissenters has less to do with argument and more to do with an inability – a refusal, even – to see what is already before them. Mascall claims that 'under modern conditions of life, people very rarely give themselves the leisure and the quiet necessary for the straightforward consideration of finite being', and correlatively, that 'it is well-known that country-folk and sailors have a sense of God as immanent in nature which town-dwellers rarely possess'.[95] Of course, he might be right in arguing that most people do not contemplate finite beings adequately; this does not entail his further claim that natural theology and analogy do not consist in 'syllogistic demonstration[s] in the ordinary sense of the term'.[96] There is an empirical question: we must survey country-folk and sailors (or some other relevant category of persons), and Mascall's account may stand or fall accordingly.

There also remains a theological objection pushed by less existentialist and more grammatical readers of Thomas: David Burrell,[97] Nicholas Lash[98] and others. Mascall concludes from the argumentative incompleteness of analogy that the remainder must be supplied in contuition. Burrell and Lash, observing the same gap, conclude that the remainder cannot be supplied at all: knowledge of God in this life is 'dark knowledge'[99] at sea in the present world.[100] Paul DeHart suggests that it is this problem which prompts Donald MacKinnon to characterize Mascall's thought as 'ultimately trivial and sterile'.[101] But for Mascall's advocates, these elements of his thought must be accepted, even embraced.

However (un)favourably one is disposed to his ultimate conclusions, we find in Mascall a thoughtful reckoning with the scholastic tradition of analogy, as well as a careful engagement with his contemporaries, both those with whom he agrees (e.g., Farrer) and those from whom he dissents (e.g., the logical positivists and anti-metaphysical Anglican theologians). Mascall attends to issues not only within traditions but also across them, as evidenced by his twofold relation to Farrer: criticism for insufficient familiarity with the scholastics on analogy, and appropriating him to push scholasticism in new directions, even on that

[94]For criticism of Mascall's account of contuition, see W. E. Kennick, 'A New Way with The Five Ways', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (1960): 225–233; Haggarty, 'On Not Taking the World for Granted', 299ff.

[95]*HWI*, 80. See also *WI*, 108: 'in the *ordo cognoscendi* of unsecularized man, of man who sees finite beings as they really are in their dependence on their Creator and in their participation of his perfection, both the finite and the infinite analogue are given together in the concept or image in their mutual relation'.

[96]*EA*, 171.

[97]David B. Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); David B. Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

[98]Nicholas Lash, 'Ideology, Metaphor, and Theology' in *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM Press, 1986): p. 95–119; Nicholas Lash, 'Where Does Holy Teaching Leave Philosophy? Questions on Milbank's Aquinas', *Modern Theology* 15, no. 4 (1999): p. 433–444.

[99]Lash, 'Ideology, Metaphor, and Theology', 114.

[100]See DeHart, 'On Being Heard but Not Seen'.

[101]Donald MacKinnon, 'Some Notes on Kierkegaard', in G. W. Roberts and D. E. Smucker, eds. *Borderlands of Theology: And Other Essays* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 126; DeHart, 'On Being Heard but Not Seen', p. 273.

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tradition's own terms, by developing 'image' in a way that speaks to the philosophical and theological epistemologies of his day. Ultimately, though his early work on analogy and natural theology does not fit easily with the broader Thomist tradition, Mascall ably examines, and spurs us on to consider with greater care, both God and all things as they are ordered to God as their origin and end[102] through the categories of analogy and image.

[102]See *ST* I.1.7.c.

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