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Are Aquinas and Whitehead Metaphorical and Analogical All the Way Down?

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In Search of a Contemporary World View: Contrasting Thomistic and Whiteheadian Approaches

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Research Article

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Abstract: The paper argues from the perspective of a significant strand of interpretation of Aquinas and from insights in cognitive linguistics that a fruitful dialogue between Whitehead and Thomism needs to take into account that metaphysics and talk about God are metaphorical and analogical all the way down. Cognitive linguistics provides an explanatory scheme for explaining how Aquinas's tectonic use of analogy shifts the ground of our conventional fields of meanings to create space to conceptualize what otherwise would be beyond grasp and to make inferences possible that otherwise would be unthinkable. The essay concludes with a question, admittedly from a particular trajectory of Thomism and cognitive linguistics, about whether Whitehead's conception of God adequately accounts for the radically metaphorical "imaginative leap" entailed in the Christian conception of God.

Keywords: Analogy, Cognitive Linguistics, metaphor, religious language, Thomism

Framing the Question

Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles. ... Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage; and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap.¹

... whereas Thomas Aquinas was fully aware that any given concept of God was necessarily analogical, he apparently did not realize that his entire scheme for the God-world relationship as expressed in the *Summa theologiae* was analogical...²

Whitehead emphasized the metaphorical character of metaphysical first principles in *Process and Reality*. Aquinas likewise emphasized the analogical character of language about God. But recent studies in cognitive linguistics suggest that any significant conceptions and inferences about "ultimate reality" are metaphorical and analogical all the way down to an extent unforeseen, at least consciously, by either Whitehead or Aquinas. I use the qualification, "at least consciously," because there is a way of reading Aquinas that suggests his analogical conceptions and inferences are in fact apt instantiations of the cognitive linguists' understanding of conceptual mapping, even if this is not explicit in Aquinas's appeals

¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 4.

² Bracken, "Images of God," 363.

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to analogy, or consistent with the elaborate theories of analogy in later Thomism.³ I have made this case elsewhere and have argued, moreover, that Aquinas's God-talk is likely to be misunderstood if one fails to take into account its radically and tectonically analogical character.⁴ I say radically and tectonically analogical because for attentive readers Aquinas's use of language shifts the ground of our conventional fields of meanings to create space to conceptualize what otherwise would be beyond grasp and to make inferences possible that otherwise would be unthinkable.

If God-talk is metaphorical all the way down in the sense that I have in mind, the comparison of Whitehead's and Aquinas's conceptions of God is more complicated and subtle than conventional understandings of metaphor and analogy would suggest. A fruitful dialogue between Whitehead and Thomism needs to take into account the tectonically metaphorical and analogical character of metaphysics and talk about God. The task is more like translating an idiom between languages where there are no parallel structures, than like comparing models or systems with structures that are analogous in some way or other. In the case of such idioms, translation is not absolutely impossible, but there is a degree of incommensurability which cannot be modeled directly, or even indirectly. A new linguistic idiom without isomorphism must be found because the original is linguistically quite distinct, if not unique. We could say that this is because the idiom to be translated is linguistic all the way down. Such cases resist analysis in terms of commensurable principles.

I will make this case by drawing on my previous work from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and a significant trajectory within Thomism. Whether a similar case can be made from Whitehead's perspective, I leave to those with that expertise. But simply noting Whitehead's affirmation of the metaphorical character of metaphysical first principles does not answer the question. Neither would simply noting Aquinas's affirmations of the analogous character of God-talk. Analysis of Whitehead, comparable to mine of Thomism, would be necessary to determine whether his broader understanding of metaphor and his applications of his first principles are in fact consistent with cognitive linguistics' specific understanding of human conceptualization and inference as metaphorical all the way down. In any case, my thesis is that the outcome will be problematic for any comparative assessment that does not take into account the tectonic conceptual mapping of Aquinas's God-talk and metaphysics. Whether or not that can be said also for Whitehead, again, I leave to those better acquainted with his thought. While I have no doubt that Whitehead's metaphysics also entails a tectonic conceptual mapping, I will conclude with a question, admittedly from a particular trajectory of Thomism and cognitive linguistics, about whether Whitehead's conception of God adequately accounts for the radically metaphorical "imaginative leap" entailed in the Christian conception of God.

Tectonic Character of Conceptual Mapping in Cognitive Linguistics

Contemporary cognitive research focuses on determining how linguistic structures are mapped to meanings, and ultimately how meanings are mapped to the neural processes of the brain. The hypothesis, for which significant evidence has been discovered, is that the brain uses the structures it has, such as the networks for sensory-motor concepts. It adapts these neural structures to do other things, such as map progressively more abstract domains of experience. "Everything the mind does has to be done physically by the brain."⁵ In many ways this hypothesis parallels Aquinas's thesis in the 13th century, adopted from Aristotle, that the intellect cannot know anything without a constant conversion back and forth with sense experience. The challenge for Aquinas in his day, and for cognitive scientists today, is to explain how knowledge of abstract and theoretical concepts is possible given this entrenchment in sensory-motor experience. The solution, from the perspective of contemporary cognitive science, is that the neural mapping in the brain undergirds the emergence of ever new and more complex abstract mappings that transcend those sensory-motor moorings.

³ In this reading, Aquinas's thought is more thoroughly analogical, at least unconsciously, than Bracken presumes in the quote above.

⁴ Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God*.

⁵ Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor*, 210.

In the early phases of cognitive linguistics 35 years ago, theorists investigated how meanings are mapped from “source domains,” which are more familiar and concrete, to less familiar and more abstract “target domains.” Cross-domain mappings of this sort were shown to be the basis for the way we conceptualize reality and reason about it. Significant evidence during that period was advanced to demonstrate that visual and sensory memory provide the neural foundation for cross-domain mappings that structure our concepts and reasoning. The findings suggested that the basis for conceptual mapping ultimately is neural correlation rather than similarity. This bears emphasis because it indicated that neural mapping is the mechanism and basis for our recognizing similarities. Conceptual mapping is not initially the result of such recognition, as we might expect. Rather, quite to the contrary, it is neurons firing together that provides the mechanism that enables our recognition of conceptual similarities. The neural correlations at the visual and sensory level thus provide the basis and framework for the emergence of conceptual networks at progressively more abstract levels.⁶

This research led to the conclusion that when we conceptualize our world, we are not mapping concepts to literally-out-there essences. Rather our conceptualizations of reality emerge from the mapping of more primary source domains to less familiar and more abstract target domains. Hence the frequent correlation between up and an increase in quantity leads to the mapping “More is up” which is at the root of meanings such as “The temperature is rising.” “Housing prices are rising.” “Inflation is rising.” “His temper is rising.” Cognitive linguists provide overwhelming evidence that conceptual mapping of this sort is pervasive in our thinking and reasoning. They call this sort of mapping “metaphorical” in contrast to literal, but it is important to appreciate that they are using the terms “literal” and “metaphorical” in the context of conceptual mapping and not directly referring to what we ordinarily have in mind when we use the terms “literal” or “metaphorical.” In the cognitive linguists’ sense all meaning entails some degree of conceptual mapping. In this technical sense all meaning is to some degree metaphorical.

Recent research indicates, not surprisingly, that the mapping entailed in conceptualization and inference is much more complex than the earlier cross-domain models presumed. Conceptualization and inference are hardly ever the result of a single mapping between a source and a target domain. Rather conceptualization and reasoning typically involve the integration of many mental spaces and mappings within much more elaborate conceptual networks.⁷

Recent work in cognitive linguistics has focused on mapping these more complicated interrelations. Conceptual integration theory (also called blending theory) proposes an explanation of the processes and principles involved in these complex blends of different mental domains or spaces.⁸ The most basic linguistic constructions involve blends of this sort. Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner use the adjective “safe” to illustrate this. They ask us to consider the “unremarkable” uses of the term in three sentences where the context is a child at the beach playing with a shovel: “The child is safe,” “The beach is safe,” “The shovel is safe.” Although we are inclined to think that there is some fixed property or meaning that the term “safe” applies to “child,” “beach,” and “shovel,” analysis shows that not to be true. All three sentences mean that the child will not be harmed. The second does not mean that no harm will come to the beach. The third does not mean no harm will come to the shovel. Rather than apply a common meaning to “child,” “beach,” and “shovel,” the term “safe” prompts us to imagine scenarios of danger to the child appropriate to the context and the nouns “beach” and “shovel.” A “safe” beach is one where the child will not be harmed, and a safe shovel is one with which she cannot hurt herself. To say that the beach or shovel is safe requires that we imagine counterfactual frames in which the child is in danger from waves, too much sun, sharp edges or some other hazard typical of beaches or toys.⁹

Cognitive linguists, such as Fauconnier and Turner, contend that the adjective “safe” is not an

⁶ See, for example, Grady, Oakley, and Coulson, “Blending and Metaphor.”

⁷ Fauconnier and Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor.”

⁸ Technically, a mental space is a set of “activated neuronal assemblies.” They can be conceived more easily as “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk.” Conceptual integration refers to the process by which inputs from different mental spaces are combined and compressed so that they are manageable. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25-27.

exceptional instance but an illustration of a pervasive linguistic and conceptual phenomenon. Our language has many more complex blends like “dolphin-safe tuna.” Another memorable example they offer of this sort of compositional conceptual blend is “red pencil.” “It can be taken to mean a pencil whose wood has been painted red on the outside, a pencil that leaves a red mark (the lead is red...), a pencil used to record the activities of a team dressed in red, a pencil smeared with lipstick, or a pencil used only for recording deficits.” The compound “red pencil” prompts for one or another of these meanings.¹⁰ These examples illustrate an important insight of conceptual integration theory. “Language does not represent meaning directly; instead it systematically prompts for the construction of meaning.”¹¹

Blending theory distinguishes four broad ways in which conceptual blending prompts for the construction of meaning. This research employs a standard kind of diagramming to describe these networks.

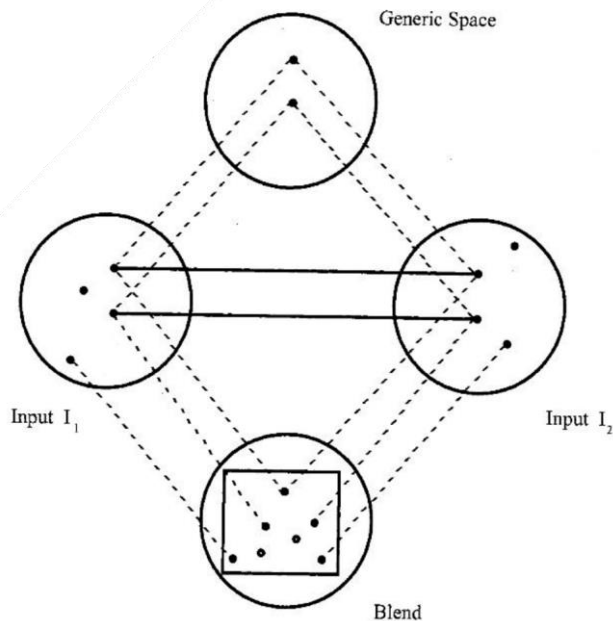


Figure 1: Basic Blending Diagram

The basic diagram includes four spaces represented by circles. The two circles on either side designate the input spaces. The generic space at the top of the diagram indicates what the two inputs have in common. The circle on the bottom indicates the blend. The solid lines indicate cross-space mappings between the inputs. The dotted lines indicate connections between the inputs and either the generic or blended spaces. While static and in no way literally picturing the dynamic neural co-activations and bindings of actual conceptual integration in our brains, the diagrams are nevertheless helpful as visualizations.

Simplex networks are the simplest kind of conceptual blend. One input, for example, could be family roles: such as father, mother, daughter, brother, sister. The other input could include individuals, for example, Mary, Bob, and Beth, etc. This sort of blend enables us to refer to Beth as Mary’s daughter. Much of the language that we think of as “literal” involves this sort of blending of different conceptual spaces. This is so automatic and unconscious that we do not even notice it. We divide the world up into human sized entities so that we can conceptualize them and make manageable inferences. We decompress these human sized compressions when more fine-tuned explanation and reasoning is required. Such blends enable the compression of very complex networks of meaning. A relatively simple example: in my family, “Uncle Patrick’s granddaughter,” condenses a complex relationship between my brother-in-law and one of his wife’s granddaughters, Justine.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

¹¹ Ibid., 142.

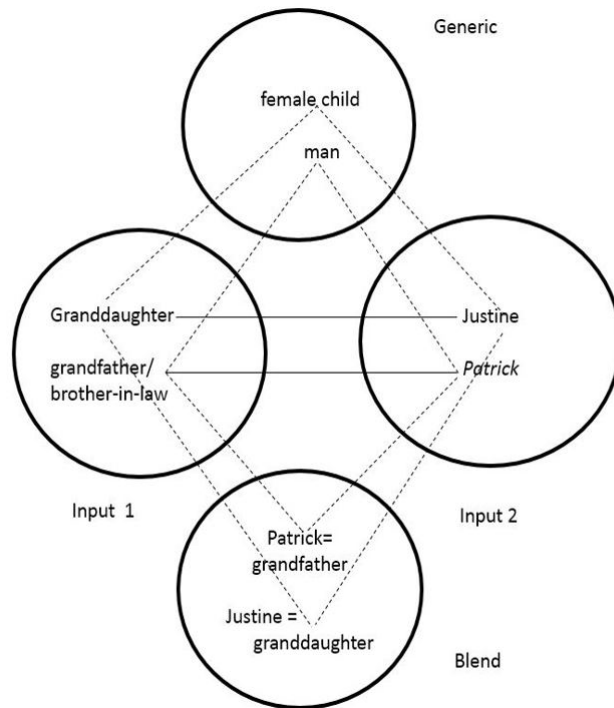


Figure 2: Uncle Patrick's granddaughter

Patrick is his wife's second husband, but Justine was born, as Patrick puts it, during his watch and they have a very close relationship. When our family uses the phrase "Patrick's granddaughter," it compresses and signifies this unique relationship.

Mirror networks are more complex and provide many of the most memorable blends discussed in the cognitive linguistics' literature. Consider Fauconnier and Turner's example of "The Debate with Kant" reproduced in figure 3. They ask us to imagine a contemporary philosopher who tells us:

I claim that reason is a self-developing capacity. Kant disagrees with me on this point. He says it's innate, but I answer that's begging the question, to which he counters in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, that only innate ideas have power. But I say to that, what about neuronal group selection?¹²

In most cases we would take this as a straightforward logical argument on the philosopher's part.

We would not even notice the complicated cross-space mapping that is entailed. Kant and the professor lived centuries apart, in different countries, and speak different languages. Kant could not have been aware of the professor's existence, let alone engage in debate with him, especially about a concept like neuronal group selection about which Kant would have known nothing. The professor's argument blends two inputs that mirror each other. On the one hand, we have the record of Kant's philosophical reflections, and on the other, the professor musing to himself about philosophical issues that in some aspects correspond to Kant's considerations and in some aspects envision a different modern context.

This is called a mirror network because the organizing frame of the two input spaces is the same. In this case the organizing frame is a philosopher musing on a problem. The clashes in this mirror network, for example between German and English, are at more specific levels below the organizing frame. At the organizing level the two input spaces are equivalent. The generic space which they share is also equivalent. In the blend, however, new possibilities emerge. The blend enables us to introduce the elaborate frame of two philosophers debating about a common problem. Such a debate literally never took place and

¹² Ibid., 59-60.

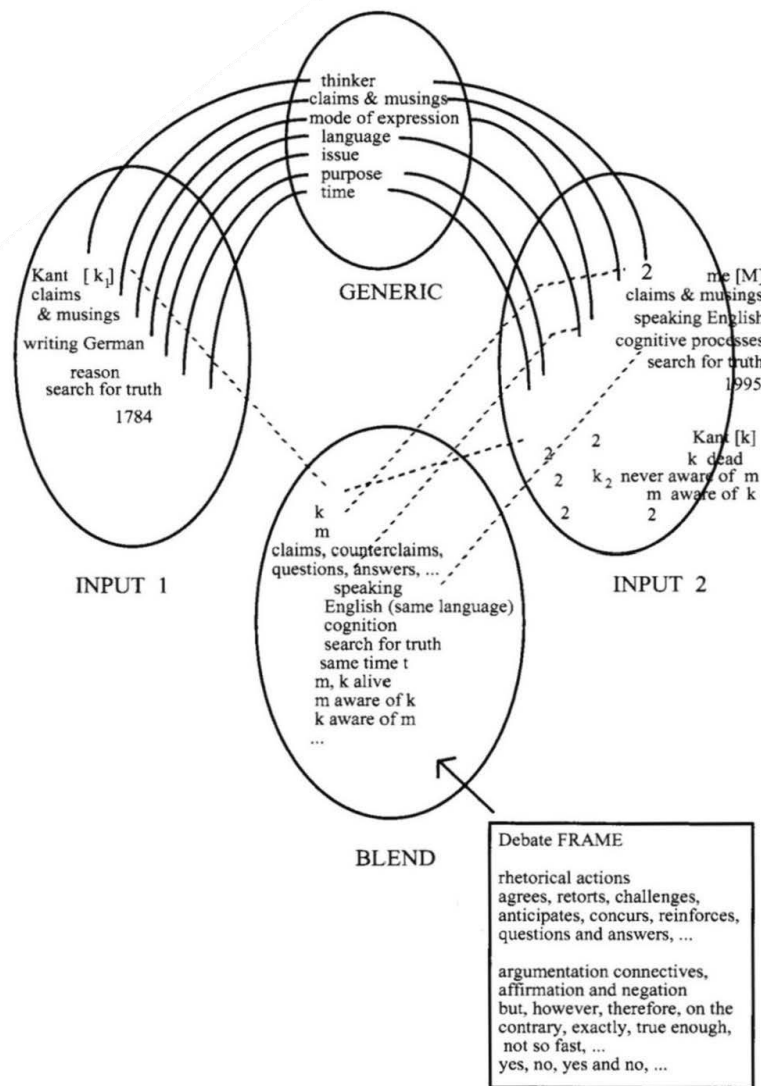


Figure 3: Debate with Kant

never could. But we have no problem imagining such a possibility or entertaining it in the course of a rigorous philosophical argument. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is largely framed by such debates with authorities from the past. "Running the blend," compresses time, space, cause-affect, change, and intentionality. In the blend, Kant and the philosopher are in the same space, at the same time, addressing one another, and adjusting their arguments to respond to each other's questions. In the blend, the philosopher can pose a question which stumps Kant. Likewise, in the *Summa*, Aristotle and Augustine are put into dialogue with each other and with Aquinas's "contemporary" resolution.

Single-scope networks differ from mirror networks because the structure of the blend derives from one of the input spaces. One of the inputs gives the overall organizational structure of the network and is the primary source of inferences. These are strongly asymmetrical. The framing input is a source of inferences and compressions. A scenario in which competition between two CEOs in business is conceptualized as a boxing match in which one delivers blows to the other and ultimately knocks him out. One input space is the business frame. The other input space is the boxing frame. The generic frame shared by both is a competition between opponents. The blend involves a boxing match with blows, counterpunches, and knockouts that have no literal equivalents in the real world.¹³

Much of what we commonly call metaphors, analogies, and models are variations of single-scope blends.

¹³ Ibid., 126-131.

Single-scope blends highlight certain properties common to the two input spaces, such as, similarities, parallels, or proportions, even though the two input spaces are themselves literally quite different. There is no question that blends of this sort can lead to new insights, inferences, and increase understanding of the target domain. This is often the kind of blend entailed in the physical sciences' use of analogies and models. But the way single-scope blends open up new knowledge is quite distinct from the way double-scope blends do.

Double-scope networks are bidirectional and, most importantly, sources of new emergent meanings. In double-scope networks both inputs contribute to the blend. Commonly there are sharp clashes between the two input spaces that prompt for new, often unanticipated, meanings. Double-scope networks frequently result in highly creative blends. For example, although we don't usually think of it this way, the mathematics we use today has evolved through the centuries and enables achievements not possible with the number systems available in earlier ages. Complex numbers are in effect a double-scope network with inputs from two-dimensional space and from real/imaginary numbers. Structure is projected from both inputs. From two-dimensional space, angles, rotations and coordinates are projected. From numbers, multiplication, addition, and square roots are projected. The blend that emerges is something new and unique: numbers with angles and multiplication involving rotation. With this new and emergent dimension in mathematics, new ways of calculation and new knowledge becomes available. What we are able to conceptualize and infer in mathematics was dramatically reconfigured. Fauconnier and Turner note that it took roughly three centuries for mathematicians to accept these developments.¹⁴

Zoltán Kövecses picks up on a lighter, but nevertheless illuminating, example that Fauconnier and Turner mention, which builds on the metaphor "Anger is a hot fluid in a Container."¹⁵ Most speakers of English would immediately understand if they heard the sentence "He was so mad that I could see smoke coming out of his ears." The first input for the blend is hot fluid in a container which emits steam. The second input is an angry person. Containers do not have ears and humans do not emit smoke. In the blend something new emerges that is not possible in either input: ears that emit smoke. New possibilities emerge from this blend that otherwise would be inconceivable. For example, one could say of a person that "He was so mad, I could see smoke coming out of his ears—I thought his hat would catch fire."

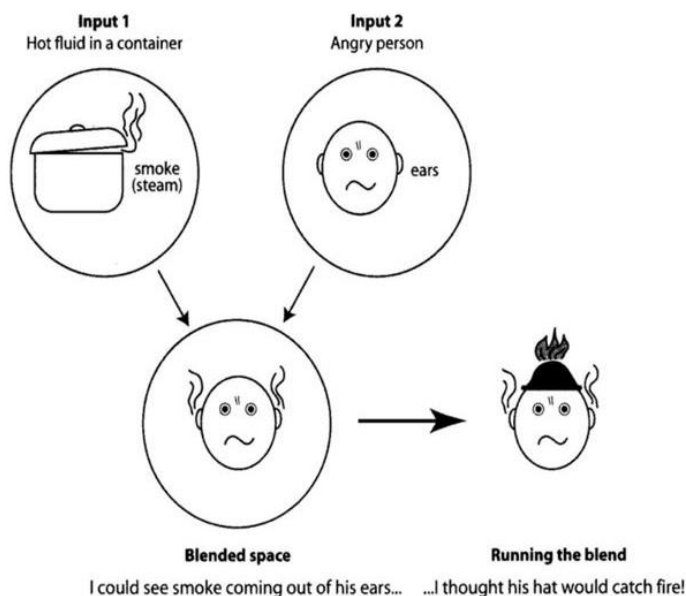


Figure 4: Smoke from Ears & Hat on Fire

¹⁴ Ibid., 25, 134, 270-74.

¹⁵ Kövecses, *Language, Mind, and Culture*, 283-84.

Kövecses offers a diagram of this blend, figure 4, not only to illustrate the blend but also to call attention to another important theme of conceptual integration theory, namely, that conceptual blends can take a material form. In this case, it is a cartoon, but blends can also take form in art, culture, and religion in things such as tombs, graves, cathedrals, rituals, writing, and other symbols.

The conceptual networks of theology and metaphysics are immensely complex and nuanced compared to a simple and humorous example such as this one. Theology's conceptual networks are the product of complex blends that have evolved and developed over hundreds of generations in countless historical, philosophical, and spiritual contexts. Any attempt to provide maps of the sort we have been looking at are necessarily broad generalizations that risk caricaturization. But with that caveat in mind, indicating the sort of mapping involved in the Christian kerygma itself and several examples from Thomistic theology, nevertheless, can helpfully illustrate the extent to which one could say that theology and metaphysics are metaphorical and analogical all the way down.

Jesus is the Messiah

Despite its appearances, the proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah by his earliest disciples could not have been a simplex blend that identified the historical figure Jesus with the category “Messiah.” For one thing, “Messiah” at the time did not name a single category. It was associated with a multiplicity of expectations, some of which were mutually exclusive, ranging from an otherworldly figure, who descends from the heavens, to a royal and “this worldly” descendent of David. Given the conventional meanings of Messiah, applying the term to Jesus would not have made sense to the first disciples’ addressees. Jesus was from Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, deserted by his followers, and crucified by the Romans. But it is also clear that when his disciples regrouped and proclaimed him the Messiah, this was not a mirror or single-scope blend. His followers were not saying that Jesus is “like” a Messiah or proposing that people should think of him “as if” he were a Messiah. It is evident that they intended their claim to be taken quite literally: Jesus *is* the Messiah. But the only way this claim can be taken literally is if the affirmation is understood as a double-scope blend which prompts for a tectonic alteration of the conventional meanings of Messiah, of Jesus’ identity, and of God’s relation to Israel. In the blend, as opposed to the conventional understanding

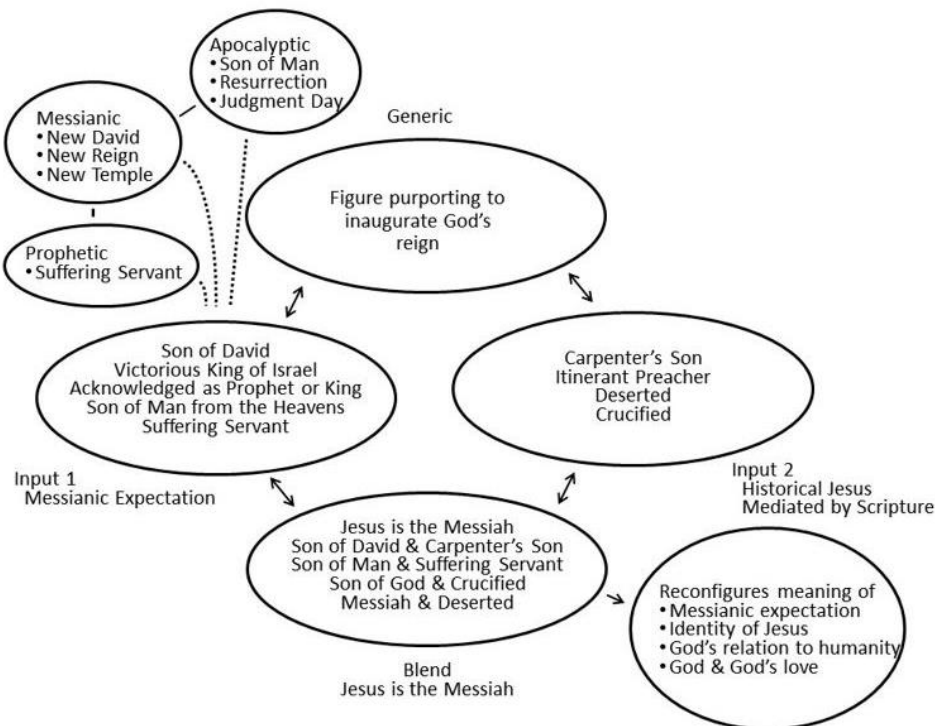


Figure 5: Jesus is Messiah Blend

of the time, a new field of meanings emerges in which it is proper, and so in that sense literal, to say that Jesus is Messiah. The blend prompts for a new conceptual space, a new world of meanings. What makes one a Christian, at least in the usual orthodox interpretation, is the adoption of this new world of meanings. This is what makes an orthodox Christian distinct from a Muslim, Jew, or secular historian, all of whom might see legitimate analogies or metaphorical similarities between Jesus and the Messiah, but who would be unwilling to accept the world of meanings in which it is “proper” to say that Jesus is the Messiah.

This new conceptual space enables one to conceptualize what otherwise could not be grasped and to recognize and make new and unexpected inferences. The adjective “tectonic” is intended to draw attention to the way double-scope blends can sometimes create new fields of meanings. To the extent that many fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity and even unnuanced orthodox explanations overlook this tectonic shift in fields of meanings, they collapse a most crucial conceptual and logical distinction. The mapping becomes literal only in the new world of meanings for which the blend prompts. Collapsing the distinction leads to all sorts of theological confusions and interpretive difficulties. The blend is metaphorical all the way down. That is to say, the meaning and truth of the claim that Jesus is Messiah are entailments of the blend for which the affirmation prompts. To grasp the meaning and assess the truth of the claim that Jesus is Messiah, one has to understand the new logic and novel way of grasping things inherent in the conceptual space that the blend creates.

This way of opening up new conceptual space is distinct from the way mirror and single-scope blends increase knowledge and lead to insights. Recall that mirror and single-scope blends highlight certain properties common to the two input spaces, such as, similarities, parallels, or proportions, even though the two input spaces are themselves literally quite different. Blends of this sort can lead to new insights, inferences, and increase understanding of the target domain but do not create brand new conceptual and logical spaces the way double-scope blends sometimes do.

God Is Simple

Let us look now at two illustrations of tectonic blends in St. Thomas’s thought. My interpretation is based on David Burrell’s analysis, particularly in *Aquinas: God and Action*, of Aquinas’s use of analogy. Burrell, however, describes his examples as illustrations of what he calls grammatical distinctions and does not make the connection with the cognitive linguists’ blending theory. Burrell observes that Aquinas asks whether God can be located semantically the way other realities can? Is God a body? Is God composed of matter and form? of substance and accidents? Is there any way in which God is composite or enters into compositeness with other things? Burrell traces how “in one article after another, Aquinas monitors each possible way to get hold of something: locating an object in space and time or saying anything about it.” The upshot, Burrell claims, is that “God escapes our grasp on every count.”¹⁶ In the case of every other reality (whether physical, mental, real, or imaginary), one can locate the thing and speak about it as a composite of matter and form, accidents and substance, potency and act, genus and species, or form and *esse*. God transcends this sort of description. If God is the sort of reality Christians believe God to be, that is to say, if God is the beginning and end of all things, then logically and grammatically God does not fit into any of these categories. But since such categories are the only tools available in our language and grammar for talking about anything at all, God included, asserting God’s reality requires purposefully breaking the rules in a way that indirectly displays what cannot be directly described.

Burrell urges us to watch Aquinas’s linguistic “performance,” that is to say, how Aquinas uses language and how language works, when he affirms “God is simple.” This blend (figure 6) does not describe a feature or characteristic of God that we can directly grasp or comprehend.

¹⁶ Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action*, 18-19.

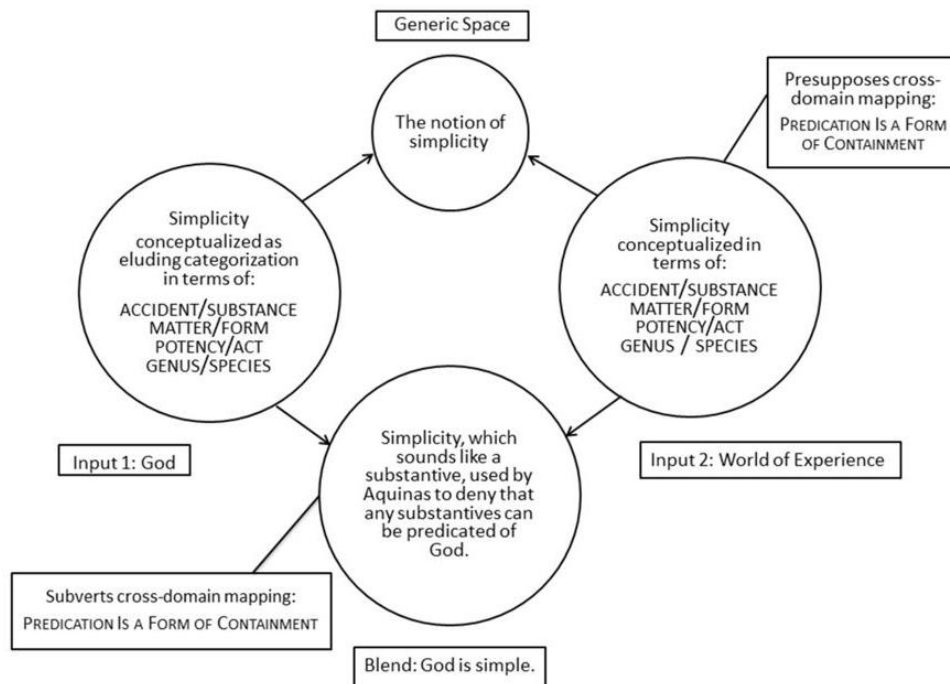


Figure 6: Cognitive mapping of Aquinas's blend: God is simple

It does not enable us to fit God into the categories used to speak of every other reality. “Simplicity” attributed to God does not designate a description, like hardness, height or color. “Simplicity” designates what Burrell calls a “logical” or “grammatical” distinction. Even though the term “simplicity” is a substantive and thus sounds like a quality or description of God, Aquinas uses the term as shorthand for denying that any substantives, at least as we know them, can apply to God except in this very indirect way. To use a substantive in a way that denies substantives can apply to God is a sophisticated example of double-scope mapping. To grasp the meaning and assess the truth of the claim that God is simple, one has to understand the new logic and way of conceptualizing things inherent in the new meanings for which “simplicity” prompts in this case. In this sense we could say that Aquinas’s meaning is analogical all the way down because the truth of his argument cannot be assessed apart from the blend’s alteration of a conventional metaphysics’ fields of meaning.

God’s Essence Is “To Be”

As Burrell interprets it, the same sort of grammatical move is entailed in Aquinas’s affirmation that in God’s essence and *esse* are identical. The logical act of assertion (affirming that something exists) is different from predication (affirming that something has this or that quality). When we say that something is, that it exists, we are not describing any particular feature of the reality. In affirming that God’s essence is “to be,” Aquinas is not giving us a description of God in the ordinary sense of things, because “to be” is not a thing or predicate in the ordinary sense. Saying that God’s nature is “to be” does not give us a definition or grasp of God’s nature. What “to be” signifies cannot be grasped directly in a concept. Nevertheless, the grammatical analogy between asserting things “to be” and affirming predicates of things, enables Aquinas to stretch predication and to *generate* a “substantive” for God.¹⁷ But the blend does not conceptualize God as some “thing” or substance that we can reach through normal modes of predication. In employing this structural analogy, however, Aquinas does not reduce an existential assertion to a predicative one. Rather, he extends language—he forces an equivalence between the logic of asserting and the logic of predicating—

¹⁷ Ibid., 34–50.

to display and speak of what is beyond language's grasp. So, this affirmation is properly predicated of God because of the way it effects a change in our fields of meanings. In this conceptual blend (figure 7) between the language of assertion and predication, a new way of conceptualizing God and making inferences about God emerges.

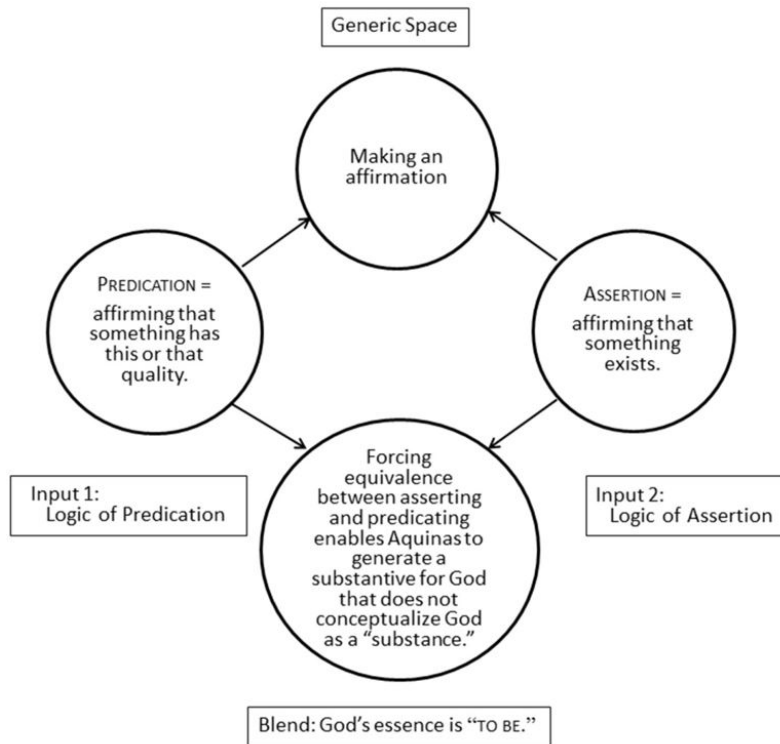


Figure 7: Cognitive mapping of Aquinas's blend: God's essence is "to be"

As is the case often with conceptual blends, the tectonic force of the mapping is not necessarily conscious. It is likely that Aquinas was not himself conscious of the complex cognitive processes motivating his conceptions and inferences.

Burrell is not unique among Thomists in demonstrating, at least indirectly, that Aquinas's use of analogy prompts for new logical and conceptual space. Robert Sokolowski makes a similar point when he argues that the development of Christianity's Christological and Trinitarian doctrines were prompted in large measure by the logical consequences of the assumption that the distinction between God and creatures is not like any distinction between creatures.¹⁸ His extended analysis displays how this unique distinction generates a new logical and conceptual space for thinking and reasoning about God and about humanity's relationship to God. Herbert McCabe comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of Aquinas and the doctrine of creation from nothing.¹⁹ Rahner's transcendental Thomist appropriation of Heidegger can also be interpreted as an effort to retrieve Aquinas's double-scope blend in a new historical and philosophical idiom. Rahner effects a double-scope blend of Aquinas's conception of God as *esse* with Heidegger's conception of a more primordial "recessiveness" that eludes the grasp of any metaphysics. Rahner transforms both the Thomist and Heideggerian fields of meanings to create new conceptual and logical space to retrieve the kind of opening that Aquinas achieved in the 13th century.²⁰ Likewise, Elizabeth Johnson seeks to open up space for talking about God by recasting Aquinas's notion of God as "He Who Is" with the provocative affirmation that God is "She Who Is." Although cognitive linguistics does not play an

¹⁸ Sokolowski, *The God of Faith & Reason*.

¹⁹ McCabe, "Creation."

²⁰ Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God*, 257-88.

explicit role in Johnson's analysis either, she uses "She Who Is" as a double-scope blend to move beyond the limitations of the mirror and single-scope blends implicit in the way we so often unconsciously use male images to conceptualize God. Johnson does not advocate that female imagery replace male imagery. Nor does she argue that female metaphors for God are more appropriate than male metaphors. In her account, no mirror or single-scope images, metaphors, analogies, or models are adequate for God. Her aim is not to replace one kind of single-scope metaphor with another, but to "play" with our gendered language in a way that recovers Aquinas's use of a "substantive" for God that does not conceptualize God as a "substance." She stretches gendered language, which is the only kind we have available, to lay out how it is possible to prompt for a conception of one who is not only beyond gender but also beyond the grasp of any mirror or single-scope blend.²¹

The common thread in all these Thomist interpretations is the use of double-scope mappings to chart ways of conceptualizing and reasoning about God that one could say are analogical or metaphorical all the way down.

Conclusion

So to conclude, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, tectonic double-scope blends are at the heart of the strategy for conceptualizing God and making inferences about God in an important strand of Thomism. Obviously, the network of conceptual blends articulated in Aquinas's metaphysics and theology is immensely more complicated than the caricatures which I have just mapped. But even this very superficial mapping indicates that Aquinas's theology and metaphysics was not simply extending knowledge but rather tectonically opening up new conceptual space to faithfully conceptualize the God revealed in Scripture, and experienced by Aquinas in worship and life in his community. Likewise, with the contemporary strands of interpretation inspired by St. Thomas which I have just mentioned. They use their metaphysical maps to chart that which is off the maps.

If Thomism's God-talk is tectonic in the sense I have just outlined, this has implications for how we frame any engagement between Thomism and Whitehead. The logic of conceptualization and inference in a double-scope blend is linked to the blend. If you will, double-scope blends are radically tectonic—metaphorical all the way down. This does not mean that Thomism can say nothing proper about God. It is not pure apophaticism. But it is analogical through and through; tectonic all way down. Nor does this mean that double-scope blends cannot be compared or that they are necessarily incommensurable. They can be compared with other blends and they are not necessarily incommensurable with other blends. But there can be no direct comparisons. And there might be a great deal of incommensurability. Consequently, there can be no straightforward comparison of the relative strengths and weaknesses of Thomism and theologies or metaphysics inspired by Whitehead, under the assumption that these traditions provide instances of two complex but comparable single-scope models of God.

There can be no doubt that there is something profoundly tectonic about the way Whitehead opens up new conceptual space for thinking about finite reality. The very notion that becoming is more fundamental than being is a double-scope blend. It seems evident that Whitehead's analysis prompts for new conceptual space through a very subtle, complex, and comprehensive double-scope network. The question from a Thomist and cognitive linguistic perspective is whether the space Whitehead opens up in this way for conceptualizing finite reality is also tectonic enough to conceptualize the God and logic of Christian faith. The Thomist double-scope blends prompt for new conceptual space to think about God by presuming a qualitative difference between the divine and anything finite. God, so to speak, is not on the map and cannot be plotted on the map. Hence the inadequacy and necessarily secondary character of any mirror or single-scope blends (namely, metaphors, analogies, and models in the conventional sense) for properly conceptualizing and reasoning about God or about God's relationship to the world. Whitehead, on the

²¹ Johnson, Elizabeth A., *She Who Is*. For a more complete analysis of this interpretation of her blend see Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God*, 191-219.

other hand, presumes “God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.” To tin ears that could sound like an attempt to put God on the map — to fit God within finite conceptual space, rather than an effort to stretch language in order to speak of one who is beyond our direct grasp. A tendentious interpretation might also wonder if Whitehead’s statement could be taken to imply that Aquinas’s tectonic logic is wrongheaded because it affirms a qualitative distinction between God and finite realities and hence refuses to conceptualize God on the same map. Are Whitehead’s metaphysical first principles double-scope and metaphorical all the way down? Does his metaphysical conception of God adequately account for the radically metaphorical imaginative leap for which the God of Jesus and Christian revelation prompt?

In light of these consideration I have three questions for theologies and metaphysics inspired by Whitehead.

1. Can they recognize the tectonic way Thomism’s double-scope blend goes about opening up conceptual space for conceiving God?
2. Do theologies and metaphysics inspired by Whitehead likewise see any need for opening up tectonically novel conceptual space to speak and think of God?
3. Do theologies and metaphysics inspired by Whitehead have resources of their own for opening up tectonically novel conceptual space for this purpose?

If a metaphysics and theology inspired by Whitehead, can say yes to those three questions, there is possibility for a fruitful conversation. If no, then the conclusion that Thomism and Whitehead are opposed may be unavoidable. A negative outcome seems inevitable if the question is framed as hinging on the relative strengths and weaknesses of a Thomist versus a Whiteheadian metaphysics, where each is conceived, in effect, as an extended single-scope mapping. From the Thomist side it can be said that all sorts of conceptual problems arise from readings that are inattentive to the double-scope, tectonic character of Aquinas’s thought. So the initial question that needs to be addressed is not what metaphors, analogies, or models provide the best governing concept for conceptualizing the God world relationship.²² More fundamental questions need to be addressed about how best to conceptualize God in the first place and about how and whether metaphors, analogies, and models function tectonically in such conceptualizations from Whitehead’s perspective.

My final observation has to do with the relation between metaphysics and theology as a disciplined and philosophically rigorous response to Revelation and retrieval of Revelation. Revelation as I understand it, is intrinsically tied up with a living history of tectonic conceptual integrations. There is no recognizing or articulating what is meant by God in the Christian tradition apart from the tectonic conceptual blends of Scripture or apart from something analogous to these tectonic blends in other religious and humanistic traditions. In this sense, theology is tectonic all the way down and it is retrieval all the way up. Metaphysical speculation has a role in theology to the degree that it can aid in the retrieval of such originating conceptual integrations or is part and parcel with them. Otherwise, not so much. Another way of putting it, God is not a metaphysical inference, even though metaphysics can play a very significant role in our recognition that “God is.”

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²² Cf., Bracken, “Images of God.”

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