

ABSTRACT

Groundwork for a Thomistic Account of Contemporary Property Roles

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Chapter one serves as an introduction to the whole dissertation. In it I explain why I think philosophers should pursue a systematic, pluralist account of contemporary property roles and consider Thomistic explanations of such roles. I also summarize in more detail the chapters that make up this dissertation. In chapter two I explain the main metaphysical and semantic roles that properties are thought to play and briefly introduce the main contemporary accounts of properties in terms of which property roles they address and which they have trouble explaining.

In chapter three I consider one contemporary view of properties, namely robust Platonism regarding properties, which is explanatorily powerful but which has some objectionable features. I address one such feature that is of interest to theists. I show the failure of a recent attempt to reconcile robust Platonism regarding God's attributes with the classical theist views that God is ultimate in the explanation of all reality and that God does not depend on anything distinct from Himself for His existing or His intrinsic attributes. I argue further that there seems to be no other possible way to reconcile them. In chapter

four, which is a brief interlude, I clarify some important differences between the account of the divine ideas on one type of theistic Platonism that I critique in chapter three and the accounts given by Augustine and by Aquinas.

In chapter five I disambiguate some of the various uses of property terms in contemporary Aquinas scholarship and resolve one substantive disagreement regarding what for Aquinas should be regarded as ‘properties’. Then I critique and modify some features of Jeffrey Brower’s reconstruction of Aquinas’s account of the same-species relation and use the modifications in my own account, which yields a distinctive explanation of the metaphysical property role of accounting for the substantive similarities between things. In chapter six I lay some groundwork for a Thomistic account of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the characteristics and metaphysical constitution of individual things. I do so by critiquing and modifying Brower’s account of Aquinas’s hylomorphism as a unique type of substratum theory.

Groundwork for a Thomistic Account of Contemporary Property Roles

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Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Properties, understood in one way or another, have been posited since ancient times to explain various commonsense facts concerning the way the world is or concerning human language. As a result, there are multiple so-called ‘property roles’ including both metaphysical roles (i.e. roles that account for facts about the extra-linguistic world) and semantic roles (i.e. roles that account for facts about human language) that properties have been thought to play.

The metaphysical roles include explaining the characteristics of things (e.g., the redness of a rose, the wisdom of Socrates), the substantive similarities/attribute agreement between things (e.g., the similarity of multiple roses with respect to their being roses or their being red or of multiple humans with respect to their being humans or their being wise), the causal powers of things (e.g., the power of animals to eat or the power of humans to speak), the metaphysical constitution of things (e.g., what Socrates is composed of, metaphysically speaking), and the intuition that there are (in some sense) merely possible characteristics, i.e., characteristics that could exist but never have and never will (e.g., it seems that unicorns could exist even though they (presumably) never have and never will).

The semantic roles include explaining our linguistic practices of predicating characteristics of subjects (e.g., “Socrates is wise.”), referring to abstract characteristics like redness, humanity, and wisdom (e.g., “Wisdom is a virtue.”), and quantifying over characteristics (e.g., “Some virtues are naturally acquired.”). There are various

contemporary theories of properties, some of which differ regarding which property roles they take properties to play.

My interest and focus in this dissertation is on laying some groundwork for the construction of a Thomistic account of what are regarded in contemporary philosophy as property roles. I characterize the account towards which I aim as ‘Thomistic’ in the sense that it is inspired by and largely constructed from what I take to be the relevant metaphysical and semantic views of the medieval philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas, as well as from contemporary reconstructions of those views. There are good reasons, independent of Aquinas’s views, to focus our attention on the various property roles that give rise to theories of properties, rather than attending to only a subset of those roles and developing a theory of properties around them, as most contemporary views do. More specifically, there are good reasons to pursue a systematic account of all of the property roles – an account that is pluralist in the sense that more than one kind of thing accounts for the property roles. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give a complete Thomistic account of each contemporary property role, so I discuss in detail only four of the metaphysical property roles.

In this introduction, I first explain some reasons to focus on property roles and to pursue a systematic, pluralist account of the property roles, and then I explain some reasons to consider Thomistic explanations of such roles. Finally, I briefly summarize the chapters that make up this dissertation.

1. Why Focus on Property Roles?

The first and perhaps most obvious reason to focus on property roles is that they are the starting point for theories of properties. Philosophers posit properties because they take them to play certain roles, which are often explanatory. But, because there are a variety of alleged property roles and different theories of properties take different property roles as their starting points, it turns out that the various theories of properties do not all agree on the property role(s) with which they start. Nor do different theories of properties share even a rough definition of the term ‘property.’¹ Although contemporary theories of properties share neither a common definition of the term ‘property’ nor a common property role as their starting point, they do all assume that properties play some roles. While many differ regarding which roles they take properties to fulfill, they at least agree that there are property roles that warrant giving a theory of properties.

Because theories of properties differ with respect to their definitions of ‘properties’ and which roles they take properties to fulfill, focusing on their accounts of the alleged property roles illuminates the similarities and differences between them as well as their comparative strengths and weaknesses.² For example, those views that focus on the semantic property roles tend to have difficulty accounting for the metaphysical roles, and those that focus on the metaphysical roles tend to have difficulty accounting for the

¹ Bradley Rettler shows that there is no theory-neutral definition of a property in the relevant literature that can preserve the intuitive distinction between objects (taken broadly to include living things) and properties. See his unpublished paper, “Is There an Object/Property Distinction?”

² For an assessment of the main contemporary theories of properties in terms of how they address the various property roles, see Douglas Edwards, *Properties* (Polity, 2014).

semantic roles.³ Although I do not devote too much space to comparing and contrasting different theories of properties, I do, in chapter one, introduce the main contemporary theories of properties in terms of which property roles they address.

2. *Why Pursue a Systematic, Pluralist Account of the Property Roles?*

Not only is there good reason to focus on property roles, but, more specifically, there is good reason to pursue a systematic account of all of the alleged property roles. For each property role concerns a phenomenon that calls out for explanation and that is clearly relevant to the phenomena that the other roles concern. The alleged property roles concern the characteristics of individual things, including both the actual and merely possible characteristics of things, characteristics that are shared (in some sense) between multiple things, characteristics that are predicated of things, characteristics that are quantified over, and our language about characteristics as such. So, the alleged property roles all concern characteristics in some sense.⁴

Despite the relevance of the various property roles to one another, few contemporary views attempt to address, nor do they seem to have the resources to address, each of the property roles. This is likely due to the fact that there are tensions between some of the property roles in the sense that one and the same kind of thing cannot fulfill them all. Most notably, there is a tension between the semantic role of securing reference

³ This is in part due to the fact that there are tensions between some of these alleged property roles, which I introduce below and discuss in more detail in chapter two.

⁴ This point is inspired by Michael Loux's work showing that the so-called problem of universals has multiple expressions that are unified insofar as each concerns the character of things. Michael Loux, "Perspectives on the Problem of Universals," *Documenti E Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 18 (2007): 601–22.

for every predicate and the metaphysical role of accounting for the substantive resemblances between things.⁵ In light of such tensions between the property roles, I think there is good reason to pursue a pluralist account of the property roles, which is pluralist in the sense that more than one kind of thing accounts for the property roles that stand in tension with one another.

My view that we should pursue a pluralist account of the property roles is inspired by Douglas Edwards's view that philosophers ought to pursue pluralist accounts of properties that are pluralist in the sense that they posit more than one kind of property in order to account for all of the property roles, including those that stand in tension with one another. My claim is weaker than Edwards's in the sense that, whereas Edwards proposes that philosophers adopt pluralist theories of properties, I suggest that philosophers adopt pluralist theories of the property roles. I do not assume, like Edwards's view assumes, that properties constitute a fundamental ontological category. This is because I think there is good evidence that, given that properties are conceived of as fulfilling some functional role(s), it is very difficult to show that fulfilling such roles is incompatible with doing other things that properties are not typically thought to do, e.g., occupy space, eat, or think.⁶

⁵ For given that every predicate refers to a property and that there are complex predicates, such as negative (e.g., 'non-human'), disjunctive (e.g., 'human or metallic'), and conjunctive predicates (e.g., 'non-human and metallic'), it follows that there are properties had by multiple things that do not mark substantive resemblances between them. For example, merely being non-human is not sufficient to mark a substantive similarity between multiple things, nor is being human or metallic, which is true of both myself and the coins in my wallet. Nor is being non-human and metallic, which is true of the coins in my wallet, the pans in my kitchen, and the car I drive. One solution to this problem is to distinguish fundamental predicates from non-fundamental ones and to maintain that only the fundamental predicates refer to properties. But that solution on its own does not account for the referents of non-fundamental predicates.

⁶ I owe this point to Alexander Pruss, who argues for the view in his blog post, "What else might properties do?" <http://alexanderpruss.blogspot.com/2017/05/what-else-might-properties-do.html>, May 17, 2017. Pruss cites as evidence for this view a philosophical argument contest in which contestants offered arguments against the thesis that there exists a property which is (also) a person. Pruss's objections to the

Further, it turns out that all attempts to state precisely the distinction between objects and properties fail.⁷ Given all this, it is not clear that there is good reason to think, as Edwards's view and many theories of properties assume, that properties occupy a fundamental category of being. It may be that a variety of things from a multiplicity of fundamental categories of being fulfill one or more property roles. If so, then properties are not one kind of thing, but rather a variety of kinds of things that fulfill various functional roles. Hence, we have further reason to focus on accounting for the various property roles. I turn now to some reasons to consider Thomistic explanations of such property roles.

3. Why Consider Thomistic Explanations?

The first reason to consider Thomistic explanations of contemporary property roles is that there has been a revival of broadly Aristotelian views in contemporary metaphysics in the past twenty years and a burgeoning of philosophical work exploring the contemporary relevance of medieval Aristotelians, especially Aquinas. But Aquinas's views regarding contemporary property roles have not yet been systematically explained or critically engaged.

Second, there are, as I shall show, various uses of the term 'property' and its cognates by contemporary scholars of Aquinas, so it is unclear what in Aquinas's philosophy we should regard as 'properties' and in what sense. I show that focusing on

many arguments given reveal the difficulty of arguing against that particular thesis and, by extension, any thesis that claims that properties are/do things that they aren't typically thought to be/do. See <http://substantialmatters.blogspot.com/2010/01/contest-can-property-be-person.html>.

⁷ Again, see Bradley Rettler's unpublished paper, "Is There an Object/Property Distinction?" which shows that there is no theory-neutral definition of a property in the relevant literature that can preserve the intuitive distinction between objects (taken broadly to include living things) and properties.

property roles helps to disambiguate the various senses of property terms used by contemporary scholars of Aquinas. Then, by endorsing the view that properties are merely functional entities, i.e., they do not occupy a fundamental ontological category, I resolve the remaining disagreement regarding what are properties for Aquinas.

Third, there continues to be controversy among scholars of Aquinas regarding the correct interpretation of Aquinas's so-called solution to the problem of universals particularly with respect to his view of the same-species relation. I develop an account of Aquinas's view of the same-species relation that helps to explain some of the controversy and that posits a distinctive type of particular to fulfill the relevant property role that is not recognized in contemporary philosophy and that yields a distinctive solution to the problem of accounting for the substantive similarities between things.

Fourth, it turns out that Aquinas has, within his metaphysical and semantic framework, elements that yield systematic explanations of each of the alleged property roles. Furthermore, in the explanations I construct from Aquinas's relevant metaphysical and semantic views, there are multiple kinds of things that fulfill the various property roles. So, the Thomistic explanations I give (together with those that go beyond the scope of this dissertation) satisfy the desiderata I discussed above for an account of the various property roles that is systematic and includes a variety of kinds of things to fulfill the property roles that stand in tension with one another.

Finally, one benefit of considering Aquinas's relevant metaphysical and semantic views in terms of contemporary property roles is that doing so illuminates those views and their systematic relations to one another.

4. A Summary of the Chapters

In the second chapter of this dissertation I explain in more detail the metaphysical and semantic roles that properties are thought to play and briefly introduce the main contemporary accounts of properties in terms of which property roles they address and which they have trouble explaining. I also explain how one contemporary account of properties, namely robust Platonism, fares better with respect to accounting for the various property roles without having to posit a plurality of things to do so. Given this, the motivation to consider alternatives to the contemporary accounts of properties in order to account for all of the property roles is not present with respect to robust Platonism. But there are features of robust Platonism regarding properties that many find objectionable.

In chapter three, I discuss one such feature that is of interest to theists, and I do so with the purpose of providing theists with motivation to consider my Thomistic alternative to Platonism regarding properties. The feature I discuss is the incompatibility of Platonism regarding God's attributes with the classical theist views that God is ultimate in the explanation of all reality and that God does not depend on anything distinct from Himself for His existing or His intrinsic attributes. I defend the view that Platonism regarding God's attributes is in fact incompatible with these classical theist views by showing the failure of a recent attempt to reconcile them and by arguing that there seems to be no other possible way to reconcile them.

In an interlude I clarify some important differences between the appeal to divine ideas made by one type of the theistic Platonist views that I critique in chapter three and that made by Augustine and by Aquinas. I briefly explain that, whereas the relevant theistic Platonists take God's ideas or concepts to play most of the metaphysical and semantic

property roles, there is good reason to think that is not the case for Augustine or Aquinas. Building on Augustine's account, Aquinas argues that God's ideas (in conjunction with God's infinite power and perfection) account, most fundamentally, for the possibility of any possible characteristic, including those that are merely possible characteristics. Given that view, God's ideas fulfill the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized. Finally, I briefly explain how Augustine's and Aquinas's assumption that there are multiple divine ideas and divine attributes is compatible with divine simplicity.

In the last two chapters I develop Thomistic explanations of three other metaphysical property roles, including accounting for the shared characteristics of material things (particularly, the same-species relation) and for the characteristics and metaphysical constitution of individual material things. The set of things (loosely speaking) within Aquinas's metaphysical and semantic framework that I take to fulfill all of the given metaphysical and semantic property roles taken together includes God, substantial forms, accidental forms, portions of prime matter,⁸ essences/species-natures (i.e., substantial form-prime matter compounds),⁹ and mental concepts. On my view, no property role in general is fulfilled by just one of these kinds of things. Rather, each kind of thing in the set fulfills one or more general property roles in conjunction with some of the others in the set. For example, the property role of accounting for the particular characteristics of a given

⁸ As I explain in chapter five, I follow Jeffrey Brower in assuming that prime matter comes in portions that are primitively distinct. Jeffrey E. Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World: Change, Hylomorphism, and Material Objects* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁹ In chapter five, I argue that essences/species-natures are, in the case of material beings, composites of a substantial form and a portion of prime matter.

thing may, depending on the subject and depending on the characteristic, be explained simply by the subject himself (as in the case of God), or else by his constituent substantial form, portion of prime matter, essence/species-nature, or accidental forms (and sometimes in conjunction with each other).¹⁰ For instance, the humanity of an individual human being, say Socrates, is accounted for by his essence/species-nature, which I argue in chapter five is composed of a substantial form and a portion of prime matter, and is ultimately determined by the substantial form. Socrates's capacity to be some size or other is accounted for by his constituent portion of prime matter, while his actual size is accounted for by his constituent portion of prime matter in conjunction with an accidental form of quantitative dimensions. Socrates's capacity to be wise is accounted for by his constituent substantial form, while his actual wisdom is accounted for by his constituent substantial form in conjunction with an accidental form of wisdom.¹¹

It is important to note that Aquinas does not posit each of the things in the relevant set merely to account for the various property roles recognized by contemporary philosophers. He has independent reasons for positing these items. For example, Aquinas posits each of the items that I suggest account for some of the characteristics of a material thing (such as Socrates) in order to account for the various changes that can occur in the world of material beings.¹² While such a Thomistic account of the property roles may appear *prima facie* to posit too many distinct kinds of entities, I suspect that any view that

¹⁰ I explain what I mean by each of these terms in the relevant chapters.

¹¹ I do not discuss the property role of accounting for the causal powers of things beyond this example, which serves to illustrate how the plurality of items fulfill various roles.

¹² I explain the relevance of Aquinas's views of change to his account of the metaphysical constitution of material things in chapter six.

accounts for everything that those entities account for on Aquinas's view will be comparatively complex, though I cannot defend that view in this dissertation.

In chapter five I disambiguate some of the various uses of property terms in contemporary Aquinas scholarship and resolve one substantive disagreement between two scholars regarding what for Aquinas should be regarded as 'properties'. Most importantly, I identify, and then use property roles to explain, Jeffrey Brower's ambiguous use of property terms in his recent work on Aquinas's ontology and on Aquinas's so-called solution to the problem of universals – work that I modify and develop in my explanations of the metaphysical property roles that I address. I argue that Brower's distinction between merely functional and substantive properties in Aquinas's view is not well motivated and I reiterate and develop the reasons given in this introduction for thinking that properties do not occupy a fundamental category of being, i.e., that there are no substantive properties.

Then I address the ongoing controversy regarding the correct interpretation of Aquinas's view of the property role of accounting for the substantive similarities between things. I clarify what is a substantive disagreement between two recent interpreters of Aquinas, namely Brian Leftow and Jeffrey Brower, who both characterize Aquinas's view as involving tropes (i.e., particular properties) but no universal properties. Whereas Leftow denies that Aquinas has an explanation of the relevant similarities between such tropes, Brower reconstructs Aquinas's explanation in terms of a relation of 'mere internal sameness,' which is less than numerical sameness but more than mere resemblance. While I take Brower's side with respect to the disagreement, I show that there are some minor problems and a major problem with Brower's reconstruction of Aquinas's view. Then I modify Brower's reconstruction and use the modified view to construct my Thomistic

explanation of the property role of accounting for the substantive similarities between things—an explanation that is distinct from the contemporary solutions to the problem of universals on offer.

In chapter six I lay some groundwork for a Thomistic account of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the characteristics and the metaphysical constitution of individual things. I do so in the context of critiquing and modifying Jeffrey Brower’s account of Aquinas’s hylomorphism as a unique type of substratum theory. I argue that, by affirming a plausible alternative to Brower’s account of Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds, we can preserve a more plausible account of what Brower calls ‘property characterization’.

Finally, in an appendix, I briefly sketch my Thomistic explanations of all of the given metaphysical and semantic property roles.

CHAPTER TWO

Contemporary Theories of Properties and Property Roles

The contemporary literature on properties is complex. It is so not simply because there are a number of different views of properties, but because these different views take as their starting point a number of different, though related, issues. Some start with commonsense facts about the way the world is and posit the existence of properties to explain those facts. Others start with commonsense facts about human language and posit the existence of properties to explain those facts. Still others start with the common sense view that there are concrete things in the world, which philosophers often call ‘substances’, and they posit properties to explain the metaphysical constitution of such substances. The result is a multiplicity of so-called ‘property roles’ including both metaphysical roles (i.e., roles that account for facts about the extra-linguistic world, including substance constitution) and semantic roles (i.e., roles that account for facts about human language) that properties are thought to play. However, few contemporary views of properties are intended to account for all of these ‘property roles’. Given this, it is unsurprising that most contemporary views have trouble accounting for the facts that they are not primarily concerned to explain.

In this chapter, I explain the metaphysical and semantic roles that properties are variously thought to play and briefly introduce the main contemporary accounts of properties in terms of which property roles they prioritize and which they have trouble explaining. I then summarize Douglas Edwards’s account of the tensions between the given property roles and Edwards’s view that, given these tensions and the value of accounting

for all of the property roles, philosophers ought to pursue pluralist accounts of properties. I explain my alternative to Edwards's view, which I argue for in chapter five, that philosophers ought to pursue pluralist accounts of the property roles (rather than pluralist accounts of substantive properties).

1. Metaphysical vs. Semantic Property Roles

There are a number of commonsense facts that philosophers attempt to explain by positing the existence of properties.¹ As I mentioned above, these commonsense facts may be divided between those that are facts about the way the world is and those that are facts about human language. I begin with the facts about the way the world is. First, there is the fact that particular things in our everyday experience have a certain character, i.e., they have certain characteristics and belong to certain kinds. For example, as I write the words you are reading, I have the characteristics of sitting in a chair and typing at my computer, as well as the characteristics of being a woman, a philosopher, and a redhead. Further, I belong to the kind we call 'human beings'. Some philosophers think we must posit properties to account for such characteristics and for kind-membership. For it seems that things such as my humanity and my seatedness are not identical with or reducible to me but nevertheless are things that explain the characteristics I have. Whereas this first commonsense fact that gives rise to positing properties concerns just one particular thing, the second fact concerns multiple distinct particular things.²

¹ My summary of these facts in this section is drawn from the following: Edwards, *Properties*; Loux, "Perspectives on the Problem of Universals."

² Loux, "Perspectives on the Problem of Universals."

The second fact is that different particular things in our everyday experience are similar to one another in the sense that they agree in some characteristic or attribute. You are a human being just as I am and you are likely sitting in a chair in front of a computer as you read this just as I was when I wrote it. The apple I am eating is red and so are the leaves on the tree outside my window. The problem of explaining how multiple distinct things agree in attribute is typically called ‘the problem of universals’ or ‘the problem of the one over many’, since it is the problem of explaining how there is apparently one thing uniting many distinct things.

Note that my discussion of the first two facts assumes the common sense view that there is a distinction between the things that have characteristics and their characteristics themselves. Assuming such a distinction, some philosophers regard the characteristics of things as properties that, depending on the view, partially or wholly constitute such things, where the technical, philosophical term for the most basic, unified things that exist is ‘substances’. So, some philosophers posit properties to explain the metaphysical constitution of substances.

Fourth, there is the fact that particular things have certain powers to cause a range of effects and to be caused in certain ways – what are referred to as ‘active and passive causal potentialities’. You and I have the powers to think and express our thoughts in language. Like other animals we have the powers to move our bodies and be moved by certain other things. Some philosophers think that properties are what determine which causal powers a thing has. For example, one may think it is because we have the property of being rational that we can think and use language, or it is because we have the property of being embodied that we and other animals can move and be moved by certain things.

Fifth, it seems plausible to many people that there are (in some sense) merely possible characteristics, i.e., characteristics that never have been and never will be actual characteristics of anything. For example, it seems that there could be unicorns even though there (presumably) never have been and never will be. Some philosophers posit necessarily existing, abstract properties to account for such merely possible characteristics.

I turn now to the commonsense facts about our language that some philosophers try to account for in terms of properties. First, there is the phenomenon of predication: we predicate characteristics of subjects. For example, in the sentence ‘Socrates is wise,’ ‘wise’ is a characteristic that is predicated of the subject Socrates. On the assumption that predicate terms must refer to something, some philosophers think we must posit the existence of properties to serve as the referents of predicates.

Second, there is the phenomenon of abstract reference. In particular, we use abstract singular terms, i.e., terms to refer to a single object that is abstract. Singular terms, e.g., ‘redness’ and ‘wisdom,’ seem to play a referring role in sentences such as ‘Redness is a color’ and ‘Wisdom is a virtue’. But what ‘redness’ and ‘wisdom’ pick out in those sentences do not seem to be familiar concrete particulars, but abstract things. Thus, some philosophers think that the referents of such terms are properties, which are abstract.

Third is the phenomenon of quantification. We use sentences that include quantifiers that seem to some to range over things other than familiar particulars. For example, consider the following sentences, given by David Lewis:

- 1) “He has the same virtues as his father.
- 2) The dresses were of the same color.
- 3) There are undiscovered fundamental physical properties.

4) Some zoological species are cross-fertile.”³

Some philosophers think that, when making true statements, one is committed to the existence of the entities that one existentially quantifies over. Given that, if the above sentences are true (and they cannot be paraphrased in a way that removes the quantification over the relevant things), then they entail the existence of the things they quantify over. For example, 1) entails that there exist some virtues had by both the son and his father and 2) entails that there exists some color had by both dresses. Some philosophers think that the entities quantified over in sentences like these are properties.⁴

On the basis of these commonsense facts that give rise to theories of properties, we may distinguish eight alleged property roles:

1. Accounting for the characteristics of concrete particulars.
2. Accounting for attribute agreement between concrete particulars.
3. Accounting for the metaphysical constitution of substances.
4. Accounting for the causal powers of concrete particulars.
5. Accounting for merely possible characteristics.
6. Serving as the referents of predicate terms in ordinary language.
7. Serving as the referents of abstract singular terms in ordinary language.
8. Being some of the things quantified over in true statements of ordinary language.

Roles 1-5, which concern facts about the way the extra-linguistic world is, I call the ‘metaphysical roles’ of properties, while roles 6-8, which concern facts about human language, I call the ‘semantic roles’ of properties. Some theories of properties prioritize or address exclusively the metaphysical property roles, while others prioritize or address

³ Davis Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 4 (1983): 343–77; Davis Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals,” in *Properties*, ed. D.H. Mellor and Oliver and Alex Oliver, 1997, 188–227. Cited in Edwards, *Properties*.

⁴ Edwards, *Properties*.

exclusively the semantic property roles. Those that prioritize the metaphysical property roles tend to posit properties as a substantive, sui generis ontological category of things, which are either universals or particulars.⁵ Those that prioritize the semantic property roles tend to deny that properties constitute a substantive ontological category; they tend to either analyze properties in terms of or reduce properties to apparently less controversial entities, such as predicates, concepts, classes, or objects.⁶ In the following sections I discuss the major views of each type.

2. *Theories that Prioritize Metaphysical Property Roles*

The theories of properties that prioritize the metaphysical property roles and take properties to constitute a substantive ontological category of things may be divided between those that take properties to be universals and those that take properties to be particulars, where universal properties are repeatable or multiply instantiated entities that are numerically the same across their instances, while particular properties are non-repeatable or singular entities. The views that take properties to be universals may be divided between the view that universals transcend concrete particulars and the view that universals are only immanent in concrete particulars. On the former view, which is typically called *Platonism*, universals are thought to transcend concrete particulars in the sense that they exist abstractly, separate from and logically prior to the concrete particulars

⁵ Platonism is unique among these views in also addressing the semantic property roles, as I shall discuss below.

⁶ Edwards, *Properties*.

that instantiate them.⁷ On the latter view, universals do not exist separate from but only immanent in concrete particulars.⁸ Typically, immanent universals are thought to be constituents of the concrete particulars that instantiate them, while transcendent universals are thought to stand in a non-mereological relation to the concrete particulars that instantiate them. The views that take properties to be particulars are, in contemporary philosophy, typically regarded as ‘trope theories’ because particularized properties (or ‘property-instances’) are called ‘tropes’.⁹ Trope theories take tropes to be constituents of concrete particulars.

The views on which properties are universals, whether transcendent or immanent, typically prioritize the metaphysical role of explaining attribute agreement (i.e., role 2). Proponents of these views tend to think that for each substantive commonality between concrete particulars there is a single thing that each particular literally shares in, namely a universal property, which accounts for that commonality. Such an account of the commonalities between concrete particulars entails an account of the character of concrete particulars (i.e., role 1): just as the shared character of concrete particulars is explained by

⁷ The view that properties are transcendent universals has been attributed to Plato and was developed in the early twentieth century by Bertrand Russell. Edwards.

⁸ The view that properties are immanent universals has been attributed to Aristotle and was developed more recently by David Armstrong. Edwards.

⁹ Contemporary trope theorists include Keith Campbell and D.C. Williams. Keith Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, First Edition edition (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell Pub, 1991); Keith Campbell, “The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1981): 477–88; Donald Cary Williams, “The Elements of Being,” *Review of Metaphysics* 7, no. 2 (1953): 3–18. But the view that what satisfies some property role(s) are particulars is not unique to such contemporary views; it was prevalent among medieval philosophers, though they did not use the term ‘trope’. Indeed, the Thomistic explanations of property roles that I propose are ones on which what fulfills some of the property roles are forms, which are a unique kind of trope-like entity.

their exemplifying some of the numerically same universals, so each characteristic of a concrete particular is explained by its exemplifying a certain universal.

Trope theories also prioritize the metaphysical role of accounting for attribute agreement between concrete particulars (i.e., role 2), but they deny that the phenomenon of attribute agreement requires positing universal properties. Instead, trope theorists maintain that attribute agreement between concrete things is explained by each concrete thing having a particular ‘property-instance’ or ‘trope’ that exactly resembles that of the other relevant concrete things. Trope theorists use the term ‘property’ to refer to the set of exactly resembling property-instances/tropes. This account of the commonalities between concrete particulars also entails an account of the character of a concrete thing (i.e., role 1): the character of a concrete thing is explained by the particular tropes that compose it, whether partially or wholly, depending on the version of trope theory.

The theories that prioritize the metaphysical property roles tend not to account for the semantic property roles. For such theories take properties to mark and so explain the substantive resemblances between things. But given that properties mark the substantive resemblances between things, it follows that not every meaningful predicate¹⁰ or

¹⁰ Even excluding those, such as ‘non-self-exemplifying’, that lead to Russell-style paradoxes, and which are standardly excluded on views according to which “every” meaningful predicate refers to a property. Here is a summary of the problem with such predicates: “If every predicative expression corresponds to a property, then the expression ‘is a property that does not instantiate itself’ should do so. This raises the question: does this property instantiate itself? Suppose that it *does*. Then it is a property that does not instantiate itself; so if it does instantiate itself, it doesn’t instantiate itself. Now suppose that it does *not* instantiate itself. Then it is one of those properties that do not instantiate themselves; so it does instantiate itself. Such a property, which instantiates itself if and only if it does not instantiate itself, appears to defy the laws of logic, at least classical logic.” Orilia, Francesco and Swoyer, Chris, “Properties”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/properties/>>. ‘Russell’s paradox’ refers to the paradox that Bertrand Russell discovered, which arises within naïve set theory through considering the set of all sets that are not members of themselves. See Irvine, Andrew David and Deutsch, Harry, “Russell’s Paradox”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/russell-paradox/>>.

corresponding abstract term refers to a property since some predicates, namely negative and disjunctive predicates, and their abstract counterparts do not mark substantive resemblances between things. For example, the negative predicate ‘nonhuman’ may be truthfully predicated of both my car and my banana, but that predicate marks no substantive resemblance between my car and my banana. So too the disjunctive predicate ‘pink or round’ may be truthfully predicated of both my pink rose and my round baseball, but it does not mark a substantive resemblance between the two things. These examples may be run with the abstract terms that correspond with each predicate with the same result that their application does not mark a substantive resemblance.¹¹

Given that properties mark substantive resemblances between things, some meaningful predicates may correspond with a property, just not all of them. For example, simple predicates like ‘human’ may correspond with a property that marks a substantive resemblance between multiple things. But, since not all predicates correspond with properties (given that properties mark substantive resemblances between things), it follows that those theories that prioritize the metaphysical property role of accounting for the substantive similarities between things do not yield an account of predication and abstract reference. Given this, such views tend not to address the alleged semantic property roles.

3. Theories that Prioritize Semantic Property Roles

It is possible to combine the view that properties are transcendent or immanent universals or tropes with the view that properties are abundant in the sense that every

¹¹ This yields ‘my car and my banana instance nonhumanity’ and ‘my rose and my baseball instance pinkness or roundness’.

meaningful predicate (excluding those that lead to Russell-style paradoxes¹²) refers to a property. By affirming the abundance of properties in that sense, such theories prioritize the semantic property roles and, as I explain below, thereby have trouble accounting for the substantive similarities between things. Other theories of properties that prioritize the semantic property roles deny that properties constitute a substantive ontological category of things and they tend to either analyze properties in terms of or reduce properties to apparently less controversial entities, such as predicates, concepts, classes, or objects. Such views include ‘predicate nominalism’, ‘concept nominalism’, ‘class nominalism’, and ‘mereological nominalism’. Each is a version of ‘nominalism’ in the sense that each denies that properties constitute a distinct, sui generis ontological class.¹³ I now briefly explain each of these theories in more detail.

Predicate nominalism is the view that analyzes property possession in terms of falling under a predicate, such that an object has a property F if and only if that object falls under the predicate ‘F’.¹⁴ *Concept nominalism* is the view that analyzes property possession in terms of falling under a concept, such that an object has a property F if and only if that object falls under the concept <F>. Assuming that these analyses of properties apply to relations, then, in order to avoid a vicious regress where the ‘falling under’ relation itself

¹² See footnote 10 for an explanation of ‘Russell’s paradox’.

¹³ Edwards, *Properties*.

¹⁴ Edwards suggests that the most well-known version of pure predicate nominalism is that given, though not endorsed, by D.M. Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism: Volume 1: Universals and Scientific Realism*, 1 edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 11–24.

falls under the predicate or concept ‘falls under’ and so on, the ‘falling under’ relation on each view must be taken as primitive.¹⁵

Two important features of both predicate and concept nominalism are that 1) properties are abundant in the sense that there are as many properties as there are predicates or concepts and 2) properties are secondary in the sense that whether or not an object possesses a property depends on whether or not a predicate/concept is correctly applied to that object. Critics respond that these features mischaracterize the relationship between language and the world. Some critics think 1) allows for too many properties, including properties that do not fulfill what such critics take to be an essential role of properties, i.e., the role of marking genuine similarities and distinctions in nature and so carving nature at the joints. For, as I discussed above, there are predicates/concepts, such as negative and disjunctive predicates/concepts, that do not fulfill these roles. But neither predicate nor concept nominalism have a way of privileging properties that mark genuine similarities. For example, they have no explanation for why we should privilege the property of *being human* as more legitimate in terms of marking a genuine similarity between multiple things than say the property of *being human or round or red*. Critics also tend to respond that 2) gets things backwards: property possession determines the correct application of concepts/predicates, not vice versa. Other critics think 1) results in too few properties since it limits properties to the predicates or concepts specified by human language or thought and hence cannot account for merely possible characteristics.¹⁶

¹⁵ Edwards, *Properties*.

¹⁶ Edwards.

Whereas predicate and concept nominalism analyze properties in terms of predicates or concepts, *class nominalism* and *mereological nominalism* give reductive accounts of properties on which properties are reduced to classes or objects. *Class nominalism* reduces property possession to membership in a class, where classes are standardly taken to be mind-independent abstract objects. Like the ‘falling under’ relation of predicate and concept nominalism, class nominalism’s ‘being a member of’ relation must be primitive in order to avoid a vicious regress. Because classes are mind-independent, the number of classes is not dependent upon human language or thought as on predicate and concept nominalism. However, like predicate and concept nominalism, class nominalism has no way of substantively prioritizing properties that mark genuine similarities above those that do not.¹⁷

Mereological nominalism reduces properties to objects by maintaining that a property is a fusion of objects. For example, the property of being red is identical with the fusion of all red objects. So, a given object possesses a property *F*ness because that object is a part of the grand *F* thing. Like the other nominalist views, mereological nominalism must take its central relation, i.e. the ‘being a part of’ relation, as primitive. Although mereological nominalism is thought to have the benefits of reduction, insofar as it reduces properties to objects, the ‘objects’ the view posits are not the common sense singly located objects we usually refer to using the term ‘object’. Like the other types of nominalism, mereological nominalism is also charged with mischaracterizing the direction of explanation regarding an object’s possession of a property. For on mereological

¹⁷ Edwards.

nominalism, a rose is red, for example, because it is part of the red fusion, rather than vice versa.¹⁸

Van Inwagen's *ostrich Platonism* combines the view that the primary property role is that of accounting for what we assert/predicate of things with a Platonist account of the nature of properties, which are abstract, necessarily existing, universals and are abundant. Van Inwagen does not claim that properties play the metaphysical role of accounting for the characteristics of things nor does he think there is an explanation for the characteristics of things. Since van Inwagen offers no explanation of the characteristics of things and yet posits Platonic properties to account for assertions regarding characteristics, he characterizes his view as 'ostrich' or 'lightweight' Platonism in contrast with 'robust' Platonism, which takes properties to account for such characteristics.¹⁹

4. *Pluralism regarding the Property Roles*

As I explained above, properties can't both fulfill the alleged semantic property role of securing reference for every predicate and the alleged metaphysical property role of accounting for substantive similarities between things. Recognizing that, and assuming that both alleged property roles call out for explanation, Douglas Edwards has argued that philosophers ought to pursue accounts of properties that are pluralist in the sense that they posit more than one kind of property in order to account for all of the property roles, including those that stand in tension with one another. In particular, Edwards proposes that philosophers posit both abundant and natural properties, where natural properties are sparse

¹⁸ Edwards.

¹⁹ Peter van Inwagen, "A Theory of Properties," in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, 2004.

and play the metaphysical property roles and abundant properties play the semantic property roles. Edwards assumes that whatever satisfies the relevant property roles should be regarded as properties in a substantive ontological sense. So, he thinks there must be a plurality of fundamental kinds of properties.²⁰

But what the conflict between the relevant metaphysical and semantic property roles entails is only that what fulfills the relevant sets of property roles are at most partially overlapping sets of things. It does not entail that the things that satisfy the metaphysical property roles or those that satisfy the semantic ones are properties in a substantive sense. Given that, and given, as I argue in chapter five, that there is good reason to think that we should think of properties only in functional terms (i.e., as fulfilling certain roles, rather than as constituting one or more substantive ontological categories), I suggest that philosophers ought to pursue accounts of the property roles that are pluralist in the sense that distinct kinds of things fulfill the relevant sets of property roles but none are substantive properties. In chapters three and four, I give evidence that such a view fits well with the relevant metaphysical and semantic views of Thomas Aquinas as I give my own Thomistic accounts of some of the metaphysical property roles.

Before doing so, in the next chapter, I address one contemporary account of properties, namely robust Platonism, which purports to account for all of the various property roles without having to posit a plurality of things to do so. Given this, the motivation to consider alternatives to the contemporary accounts of properties in order to account for all of the property roles is not present with respect to robust Platonism. But

²⁰ Edwards, *Properties*.

there are features of robust Platonism regarding properties that many find objectionable. In chapter three, I address one such feature that is of interest to theists. In order to provide theists with motivation to consider my Thomistic alternative to Platonism regarding properties, I defend the view that Platonism regarding God's attributes is incompatible with the classical theist views that God is ultimate in the explanation of all reality and that God does not depend on anything distinct from Himself for His existing or His intrinsic attributes.

CHAPTER THREE

The Incompatibility of Robust Platonism regarding God's Attributes with Divine Ultimacy and Divine Aseity

1. Introduction

Many theists think there is good reason to hold that God is ultimate in the sense that God is the ultimate explanation of all reality and is the creator of all reality distinct from Himself, i.e. neither identical with nor a part of Himself.¹ Call this attribute 'divine ultimacy' (DU). Further, many theists think God is *a se* in the sense that God does not depend on anything distinct from himself for His existing or His intrinsic attributes. Call this attribute 'divine aseity' (DA). Platonism regarding properties in the robust sense, as it is typically conceived, is incompatible with DU and DA.² For Platonism regarding properties in the robust sense is the view that properties are uncreated, necessarily existing, abstract universals that exist independent of concrete reality and that concrete things have their character in virtue of exemplifying such properties.³ Given that Platonic properties

¹ Here I assume what I take to be the *prima facie* meaning of 'distinct from God', which is 'neither identical with nor a part of God.' I show below that Platonism regarding God's attributes is even incompatible with a weakened interpretation of 'distinct from God' as 'not identical with nor a part of God nor essentially possessed by God.'

² The recent literature concerning the problem of God and abstract objects largely concerns the supposed tension between Platonism and divine sovereignty. But it is a mistake to think that the main challenge that Platonism poses to the classical conception of God is that it threatens divine sovereignty. This point has been made by others, including Alfred J. Freddoso (1983, 78–82), Christopher Menzel (1990, p. 209), and William Lane Craig (2012, 46–47). I don't take the classical conception of divine sovereignty to include God's having the power to do the impossible or choose what is and is not possible, which is what the existence of Platonism's abstracta is thought to threaten in recent literature. So, I agree with those who argue that God's sovereignty is not threatened by the existence of abstracta, on the assumption that they exist (Shalkowski, 150–152).

³ Whereas Platonism regarding properties standardly includes the claim that properties play a characterizing role, i.e. they are that in virtue of which things have their character, Peter van Inwagen's so-called 'ostrich Platonism' does not include that claim. While van Inwagen is a theist, he himself has not

are uncreated and exist independently of God, it follows that God is not the creator or ultimate explainer of all reality distinct from himself. Further, given that God's attributes are exemplifications of Platonic properties that are uncreated and exist independently of God, it follows that God depends on things distinct from and not created by Himself for His intrinsic attributes, i.e., those attributes that concern who God is in Himself.⁴

Many contemporary theists are attracted to Platonism regarding properties because of its supposed superior explanatory power in comparison with other contemporary views. Some theists have tried to reconcile Platonism with DU by replacing the traditional Platonist view that Platonic entities are uncreated and independent of concrete reality with either the view that God is the creator of Platonic entities (whether such entities are identified with God's concepts or are thought to exist wholly separate from God) or the view that Platonic entities are identical to God's uncreated concepts.⁵ But, assuming that God's attributes are exemplifications of Platonic properties, these modifications to

sought to maintain divine ultimacy, for he thinks the notion that God creates necessarily existing Platonic entities is more problematic than the notion that God is not the ultimate explanation and creator of all reality wholly distinct from himself. For more on van Inwagen's ostrich Platonism see van Inwagen, "A Theory of Properties." For his criticisms of the view that God creates necessary beings see Peter van Inwagen, "God and Other Uncreated Things," in *Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump*, ed. Kevin Timpe (Routledge, 2009), 3–20.

⁴ I assume here a common sense distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, where extrinsic attributes concern God in relationship to other things.

⁵ The view that God is the creator of Platonic entities, which are identical with God's concepts, has been defended by Thomas V. Morris and Christopher Menzel, "Absolute Creation," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (October 1, 1986): 353–62. Paul Gould and Richard Brian Davis defend a view they call 'modified theistic activism' that includes the view that some Platonic entities, namely properties, are created by and exist wholly separate from God. The view that Platonic entities are identical to God's uncreated concepts is defended by Greg Welty, "An Examination of Theistic Conceptual Realism as an Alternative to Theistic Activism" (Oxford University, 2000). The latter is sometimes mistakenly attributed to Augustine or Aquinas. Augustine speaks of Plato's forms as ideas in the mind of God, but for Augustine and Aquinas God's ideas are not Platonic in the contemporary sense; they are not universal properties exemplified by created things but merely models or exemplars for God's creation.

traditional Platonism raise problems. The notion that God is the creator of Platonic properties, including those He exemplifies, is charged with incoherence given the so-called bootstrapping objection, which is that God would have to exemplify at least some Platonic properties, such as the property *being able to create a property*, before He could create any properties.⁶ Further, it is absurd to think God creates His own nature or essential properties. The notion that any Platonic property, whether one exemplified by God or not, is identical with a concept in God's mind is difficult to understand.

Paul Gould has proposed a solution for theistic Platonists, whether or not they identify properties with divine concepts, to escape bootstrapping objections, while maintaining Platonism regarding God's attributes and preserving DU and DA.⁷ Gould applies a general solution to two mutually exclusive and exhaustive kinds of theistic Platonism on which properties play a characterizing role (i.e., properties are that in virtue of which things have their character) and are abundant (i.e., roughly, every meaningful predicate corresponds to a property⁸), though my criticisms of Gould's solution do not depend on properties being abundant. I refer to the two kinds of theistic Platonism as 'theistic activism regarding Platonic properties' (TA), according to which Platonic properties are identified with divine concepts, and 'theistic non-activism regarding Platonic

⁶ Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey E. Brower, "A Theistic Argument Against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)," *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 2 (2006): 357–86; Matthew Davidson, "A Demonstration against Theistic Activism," *Religious Studies* 35, no. 3 (1999): 277–90. Scott A. Davison, "Could Abstract Objects Depend Upon God?," *Religious Studies* 27, no. 04 (1991): 485–97; Brian Leftow, "Is God an Abstract Object?," *Nous*, 1990, 581–98.

⁷ Paul Gould, "Theistic Activism: A New Problem and Solution," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 127–42; Richard Brian Davis and Paul M. Gould, "Modified Theistic Activism," in *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on The Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 51–64.

⁸ Except for those, such as 'non-self-exemplifying', that lead to Russell-style paradoxes.

properties' (TNA), according to which Platonic properties are *not* identified with divine concepts. Gould assumes that his solution is compatible with both kinds of theistic Platonism regardless of whether they are conjoined with a relational or a constituent approach to property possession. Gould's general proposal is that Platonists should endorse the following two claims: (a) God's essential Platonic properties exist *a se*; and (b) substances are Aristotelian.

I argue that Gould's solution fails for both theistic Platonists who are theistic activists and those who are non-activists, whether they adopt a constituent or a relational approach to property possession. Applied to theistic activism, Gould's solution is incoherent due to a new form of divine bootstrapping, though not due to the supposed bootstrapping problem Michelle Panchuk raises against Gould's view.⁹ Applied to non-activism, Gould's solution fails to secure DU or DA, given the *prima facie* meaning of 'distinct from God' in the definitions of DU and DA. And even when we weaken the definitions to allow that properties that are essentially possessed by God are not distinct from God, even if they exist external to God, Gould's solution applied to non-activism entails another new bootstrapping problem or that God is not concrete. Since Gould's proposal seems to be the only possible solution for Platonists to maintain Platonism regarding God's attributes and to preserve DU and DA, I conclude that Platonism regarding God's attributes is incompatible with DU and DA.

⁹ Michelle Panchuk, "Created and Uncreated Things: A Neo-Augustinian Solution to the Bootstrapping Problem," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, no. Online First (January 29, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq201612855>.

2. *The Problem of Reconciling Platonism with DU and DA and Gould's General Solution*

First I explain in more detail the problem of reconciling (robust) Platonism with DU and DA and then I explain Gould's solution. (Robust) Theistic Platonism regarding properties is, minimally, the view that God exists and that properties are Platonic in the sense that they are necessarily existing abstract objects in virtue of which concrete things have their character. Among theistic Platonist views of properties, we may distinguish between those that are versions of theistic activism and those that are not. Theistic activism is the view that Platonic properties just are divine concepts.¹⁰ Theistic Platonists who are not theistic activists maintain that Platonic properties admit their own ontological category, and so, are not identical to divine concepts.

Theistic Platonists, whether activist or not, who wish to maintain DU, must revise the traditional Platonist view that Platonic entities are uncaused and that they exist independently of God. Some have done so by proposing that Platonic entities are created by God, whether such Platonic entities are identified with divine concepts or not.¹¹ Others maintain that Platonic entities are identical with God's uncreated concepts. But both of

¹⁰ There are also divine conceptualist views that take God's concepts or ideas to play certain property roles (e.g., the exemplar role). Examples of such divine conceptualist views include that of Augustine and Aquinas and other medieval philosophers and theologians, as well as contemporary philosophers such as Greg Welty and Michelle Panchuk. Such views are distinct from theistic activism for they do not identify God's concepts with properties that may be exemplified, in the Platonist sense, by concrete beings. Nor are such divine conceptualist views versions of Platonism at all, since they do not posit abstract properties. Welty, "An Examination of Theistic Conceptual Realism as an Alternative to Theistic Activism"; Panchuk, "Created and Uncreated Things: A Neo-Augustinian Solution to the Bootstrapping Problem."

¹¹ Morris and Menzel, who coined the term 'theistic activism' in their defense of the view, have affirmed that properties, which they identify with divine concepts, are created by God. Morris and Menzel, "Absolute Creation." Alvin Plantinga has tentatively endorsed the identification of properties with divine concepts and suggested that on such a view, properties/divine concepts are produced by God. Alvin Plantinga, "Augustinian Christian Philosophy," *The Monist* 75, no. 3 (July 1, 1992): 291–320, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27903295>.

these attempts to reconcile Platonism with DU are problematic given that God's attributes are exemplifications of Platonic properties.

The view that God creates Platonic entities, some of which he exemplifies, raises the bootstrapping objection, which is, again, that God would have to exemplify at least some Platonic properties, such as the property *being able to create a property*, before He could create any properties. But that is incoherent. Further, it is absurd to think God creates His own nature. So, God cannot create His essential properties. Even though the bootstrapping problem has been directed toward theistic activism, it applies to any view that affirms that properties are created by God and that God has His character in virtue of exemplifying properties. So, the bootstrapping problem also applies to non-activist theistic Platonist views that affirm that properties are created by God and play a characterizing role even in God's case. The view that Platonic entities, and particularly Platonic properties, are identical with concepts in God's mind is difficult to understand, though Gould considers it a viable view and applies to it his general solution to the problem of reconciling Platonism with DU.¹²

Gould's initial and most developed presentation of his solution occurs in a context in which Gould applies it in detail only to theistic activism.¹³ Although Gould presents it as a solution to the bootstrapping problem, it is more broadly a solution to the problem of reconciling Platonism regarding God's attributes with DU and DA. In a later essay, Gould,

¹² It is worth noting, again, that such a view is not to be confused with those of Augustine or Aquinas, which do not include the assumption that concrete things have their character in virtue of standing in the Platonic exemplification relation with divine concepts or ideas.

¹³ Gould, "Theistic Activism."

together with Richard Brian Davis, applies his proposal to non-activist theistic Platonism.¹⁴

On the basis of those two discussions, I state Gould's general solution as follows:

Gould's general solution to reconcile Platonism regarding God's attributes with DU and DA

Theistic Platonists – whether activist or not – must endorse the following two claims:

- (A) God's essential Platonic properties exist *a se* (i.e., they are neither created nor sustained by God, yet they are exemplified by the divine substance)¹⁵
and
- (B) Substances are Aristotelian.

Claim (A), which I specify in more detail below when I apply it first to theistic activism regarding Platonic properties and then to theistic non-activism regarding Platonic properties, enables the Platonist to avoid the view that God causes the existence of his own nature or any of His properties and so, to escape the bootstrapping problem. For, if God's essential properties exist *a se*, then their existence is not dependent on God's causal activity. And on the Platonist assumption that God's nature is an essential property or a set of essential properties, it follows that God's nature is not dependent on God's causal activity. Claim (B), which I explain in more detail below, enables the Platonist to maintain that the divine substance is a fundamental unity that is the final cause of all of His parts and so is, in that sense, logically prior to and the fundamental ground for all of His parts.

¹⁴ Davis and Gould, "Modified Theistic Activism." Davis and Gould apply Gould's general solution to theistic non-activism in the context of defending what they call 'modified theistic activism'. Their view is activist only insofar as they identify propositions with divine thoughts. Because they deny that Platonic properties are divine concepts and instead maintain that Platonic properties admit their own ontological category, their view is theistic non-activism regarding properties, even though it is activist with respect to propositions.

¹⁵ This is the version of claim (A) that Gould, together with Richard Brian Davis, give in the response to their co-authored essay, "Modified Theistic Activism," and say that it is the version they should have initially given, since, unlike the original version they give, it is compatible with both constituent and relational approaches to property possession and does not assume theistic activism. Davis and Gould, 76.

This enables the Platonist to maintain that God is the ultimate explanation for His parts. Again, Gould's solution is directed towards versions of theistic Platonism, whether activist or not, that include the view that properties play a characterizing role.

In the context in which Gould develops his solution, Gould focuses only on defending theistic Platonists against the bootstrapping objection. He does not defend or specify how, but simply assumes, that theistic Platonists, regardless of whether they adopt a constituent or a relational approach to property possession, can preserve DU and DA.¹⁶ Gould concludes the essay, in which he introduces his solution to the bootstrapping objection and applies it to theistic activism, with the following remark:

The above suggests that a Theistic Activist who is a traditional theist can have it all: theological acceptability and philosophical respectability. God is the uncreated creator of all reality distinct from himself and depends on nothing whatsoever. All she needs to do is restrict God's creative/sustaining activity to entities distinct from God and be an Aristotelian regarding substance. And if a Platonic theist *should not* be a Theistic Activist, instead allowing that Platonic properties admit their own category, the above suggests that she can have that (*mutatis mutandis*), as long as she also is an Aristotelian regarding substance.¹⁷

In order to assess the coherence of Gould's solution and whether it is in fact compatible with DU and DA, we must consider it in more detail when it is applied to theistic activism and non-activism, including both constituent and relational approaches to property possession. I first explain the distinction between constituent and relational approaches to property possession and then show that Gould's solution fails due to new bootstrapping problems that arise when it is applied to theistic activism and non-activism, whether given a constituent or a relational approach to property possession.

¹⁶ Gould, "Theistic Activism."

¹⁷ Gould, 139.

3. *Assessing Gould's Solution*

3.1. *The Constituent vs. the Relational Approach to Property Possession*

Gould's solution for theistic Platonists to avoid the bootstrapping problem involves affirming that there are substances, in addition to Platonic properties, and that substances are Aristotelian. Ontologies that include at least two fundamental categories of things, such as properties and substances, may be divided into relational and constituent ontologies. Constituent ontologies include the view that an ordinary particular (taken to be, e.g., a substance, individual, or concrete thing) has an ontological structure that includes constituents that are parts of the whole or are part-like. In contrast, relational ontologies include the denial of the view that an ordinary particular has parts.¹⁸

Constituent and relational ontologies that affirm that for a particular to exemplify a property is for a particular to possess a property differ in their accounts of how a particular possesses properties. On the constituent approach to property possession, particulars possess properties by having properties as parts. For example, each and every human being may be taken to possess the property of humanity by having the property of humanity as a part. In contrast, on the relational approach to property possession, particulars possess properties in virtue of the particular standing in the exemplification relation with properties that exist wholly separate from the particular. For example, each and every human being may be taken to possess the property of humanity by standing in the exemplification relation with the separately existing property of humanity.

¹⁸ Peter van Inwagen, "RELATIONAL vs. CONSTITUENT ONTOLOGIES," *Philosophical Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (2011): 389–405, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1520-8583.2011.00221.x>.

Although the constituent approach to property possession is typically conjoined with an Aristotelian view of substance but not Platonism regarding properties and the relational approach to property possession is typically conjoined with Platonism regarding properties but not an Aristotelian view of substance, Gould assumes that in order for a Platonist regarding properties to preserve DU, she must combine her Platonism regarding properties with an Aristotelian view of substance on which every substance is the final cause of all of its parts. Gould assumes that the conjunction of Platonism regarding properties and an Aristotelian view of substance is compatible with the relational and the constituent approach to property possession.¹⁹ Given the conjunction of Platonism regarding properties and the constituent approach to property possession, properties are constituents of particulars, but they also exist independent of and external to all particulars. In contrast, on the relational approach, substances possess properties in virtue of standing in the exemplification relation to properties that exist wholly separate from the substance. With this distinction between the constituent and the relational approach to property possession, I turn now to assess Gould's solution when applied to each, first in conjunction with theistic activism and then with non-activist theistic Platonism.

3.2. Gould's Solution Applied to Theistic Activism (TA)

Since theistic activists identify properties with divine concepts, Gould further specifies claim (A) to apply to theistic activists by including the identification of properties

¹⁹ Gould defends the coherence of combining Platonism regarding properties and an Aristotelian view of substance and discusses two versions of such Platonic Aristotelianism: J.P. Moreland's, which includes the constituent approach to property possession, and Michael Loux's, which includes the relational approach to property possession. See Paul Gould, "How Does an Aristotelian Substance Have Its Platonic Properties? Issues and Options," *Axiomathes* 23, no. 2 (2013): 343–64.

with divine concepts. On the basis of his discussion, I state his specification of claim (A) as follows:

(A_{TA}) God's essential Platonic properties (i.e., divine concepts that necessarily apply to God) exist *a se* (i.e., they are neither created nor sustained by God, yet they are *constituents of the divine mind and so, constituents of the divine substance*).²⁰

Gould explains how, given theistic activism, he conceives of God's possession of properties on the relational and the constituent approach as follows:

On a relational account of property exemplification, God's possessing the property *being divine* means that God stands in a relationship of exemplification with the divine concept *being divine*. In the nondivine case, a substance exemplifies a property by standing in the exemplification relation to some separately existing property. In God's case, however, he will stand in the exemplification relationship to properties that are not separate from the being of God. Divine concepts are already a proper part of God's being, as constituents of divine thoughts, and while mysterious, it seems possible to endorse the claim that they are somehow also exemplified by the divine substance as traditionally understood (by the relational ontologist). As far as I can tell, there is nothing, apart from its unseemliness, to stop the Theistic Activist from employing a constituent approach to God's concepts as well: God has a concept *being divine* (as a constituent of his thought), and this concept is also exemplified by the divine substance (or some individuator such as a bare substratum within the divine substance).²¹

On both the relational and the constituent approach, Gould identifies God's properties with divine concepts that are constituents of God's thought and so, are constituents of God. Given this, on both approaches, God possesses properties by standing in the exemplification relation to concepts/properties that are constituents of the divine substance and that do not also have independent existence in a Platonic realm. Although Gould does

²⁰ This specification of (A) is based on Gould's discussion, rather than the modified version of (A) that Gould gives. Gould's modified version of (A) claims that God's essential Platonic properties "inhere in the divine substance, the divine mind even." But Gould intends for his version of (A) to be compatible with the relational approach to property possession, which does not include the inherence relation. From his discussion, what Gould seems to have in mind is, rather, that God's essential Platonic properties "*are constituents of the divine substance, the divine mind even,*" and that is what my specification of (A) reflects.

²¹ Gould, "Theistic Activism," 136.

not clarify this, presumably what differentiates the relational and the constituent approach in this case is that on the constituent approach, divine concepts/properties are constituents of God in virtue of inhering in God's mind in the way that properties are thought to inhere in a substance on the constituent approach.²² In contrast, on the relational approach, divine concepts/properties are constituents of God just in the ordinary sense in which Gould assumes that concepts are constituents of the mind that possesses them.

Gould acknowledges the mysteriousness of the notion that divine properties just are divine concepts. He says little more to explain the notion, but his following claims suggest a few more details of his view. Gould insists that,

On the standard account of property exemplification, the chain of explanation is in the right direction: God's properties partially explain God's character (given PCG). A concept cannot mediate between God's thought that he is divine and the fact that he is divine unless the exemplification of the property is in some sense *prior* to the divine thinking. God's *thinking* does not make reality Rather, it is God's *exemplifying* of a property that makes God have the character that he has.²³

Gould clarifies that God's exemplification of a property is logically prior to God's thinking that he has that property. Since God's properties just are God's concepts, on theistic activist views, it follows that God's concepts must be prior to God's thoughts (in order for God's exemplification of his properties/concepts to be prior to God's thinking about his exemplifying properties/concepts). We now have enough of the details of Gould's solution when applied to theistic activism to assess its coherence. Because on theistic activism, properties are identified with divine concepts, which are constituents of God, there is no

²² One may reasonably question whether divine concepts can play both the roles of concepts and the roles of properties. Gould himself has, together with Richard Brian Davis, criticized the view that properties just are divine concepts along these lines in Davis and Gould, "Modified Theistic Activism."

²³ Gould, "Theistic Activism," 136.

relevant difference between the relational and the constituent approach when we're considering only God's attributes.

3.3. The Incoherence of Gould's Solution Applied to Theistic Activism

I shall argue that Gould's solution applied to theistic activism is incoherent. But, first, I defend Gould's response to a new bootstrapping problem that is raised when properties are identified with divine concepts. Michelle Panchuk has argued that Gould's solution to this new bootstrapping problem is incoherent. I explain the new bootstrapping problem, Gould's solution to that problem, and Panchuk's critique of Gould's solution. I then argue that Gould's solution is not incoherent for the reason Panchuk gives, but is incoherent due to another bootstrapping problem that neither Gould nor Panchuk discuss.

3.3.1 The new bootstrapping problem for theistic activism and Gould's solution.

Gould notes that, given a unified theory of predication, a new bootstrapping problem surfaces for theistic activists (on either the relational or constituent approach), because they identify properties with divine concepts. For, assuming that a thought is a mental entity that depends for its existence on the thinker that thinks the given thought but not vice versa, then thinkers are logically prior to their thoughts. So, God is logically prior to the thought that he is divine.²⁴ And, assuming that thoughts have constituents (including concepts), if God is logically prior to his thoughts, then God must be logically prior to all the

²⁴ One might object that God is not logically prior to His thoughts if God is simple. I respond that even given God's simplicity, according to which God is identical with His concepts, still God qua God is logically prior to God qua God's concepts. Of course, the versions of theistic Platonism regarding God's attributes that I critique in this chapter assume that God is not simple.

constituents of his thoughts, including his concepts. So, God is logically prior to his concept *being divine*. But, for theistic activists, the concept *being divine* is identical to the property *being divine*. So, God is logically prior to the property *being divine*. But insofar as the property *being divine* is that in virtue of which God is divine (for robust Platonists), the property *being divine* is logically prior to God. So, God both is and is not logically prior to the property *being divine*, which is incoherent.

Gould thinks his view escapes this new bootstrapping problem because the truth of the claim that God both is and is not logically prior to the property *being divine* depends on two different senses of logical priority. Gould argues that by endorsing the view that God's essential properties/concepts exist *a se*, which entails that God is not the efficient cause of His concepts, and by endorsing claim (B), i.e. that substances are Aristotelian, the Platonist can maintain that there are two different senses of logical priority at work: one "causal" and one "metaphysical." Given an Aristotelian view of substance on which any substance is a fundamental unity that is the final cause of its constituents, God is logically prior to, in the sense of being the final (but not efficient) cause of, all of his constituents, including his concepts/properties. In contrast, the property *being divine* is logically prior to, in the sense of being a (partial) metaphysical explanation of the character of, God. Assuming that these two senses of logical priority are distinct, Gould concludes that it is coherent to affirm them both and that by doing so the Platonist can escape the old and the new bootstrapping problem.²⁵

²⁵ Given that final causality is a species of metaphysical explanation, Gould's distinction between what he calls a "causal" and a "metaphysical" sense of logical priority seems to me to be clearer when re-described as a "final causal" and a "formal causal" sense of logical priority. Although Gould doesn't use the term 'form,' Gould affirms an Aristotelian view of substance and what he calls 'properties' play the role that forms play on classical Aristotelian views of substance, which is, roughly, that of giving things the character

3.3.2. *The failure of Panchuk's incoherence charge against Gould's solution.*

Gould says very little about what he means when he says a substance is the final cause of all of its constituents. In order to assess Gould's view, Michelle Panchuk considers the nature of Aristotelian final causality in more detail and, on the basis of her understanding of Aristotelian final causality, concludes that Gould's solution fails to solve the bootstrapping problem.²⁶ Panchuk argues that God's being the final cause of the property being divine is not, as Gould assumes, logically prior to the property being divine, for God must already exemplify the property being divine to be the final cause of any of His parts. Here is my charitable re-statement of her argument:²⁷

Panchuk's Argument against Gould's solution to the new bootstrapping problem

1. God must already exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of any of His parts.²⁸
2. If God must already exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of any of His parts, then God must already exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of His property *being divine*.

they have, whether that character is essential or accidental. While final causality and formal causality are two species of metaphysical explanation on such Aristotelian views, they are nevertheless distinct, as Gould assumes.

²⁶ Michelle Panchuk, "Created and Uncreated Things: A Neo-Augustinian Solution to the Bootstrapping Problem," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Online First (January 29, 2016), doi: 10.5840/ipq201612855.

²⁷ I say "charitable" because Panchuk makes a few claims that are incompatible with this conclusion and are less plausibly claims she's actually trying to support. These claims include 1) that "it is incoherent to claim that God is the final cause of the property *being divine*," and 2) that "The substance cannot be the final cause of its essence in the same way that the essence may be the final cause of other properties." In 2, it seems very likely, given everything else Panchuk says in the given essay, that the second occurrence of the term 'essence' is a typo and should be 'substance.' In contrast, 1 seems to be a misleading shorthand for her conclusion that God's being the final cause of the property *being divine* is not logically prior to the property *being divine*. For her discussion implies that she is not claiming that God cannot be the final cause of the property *being divine* as such, but rather that God cannot be the final cause of the property *being divine* prior to God's exemplifying the property *being divine*.

²⁸ Panchuk says, "The divine substance must be a *divine* substance (i.e., God's substance) to be the final cause of any of its constituents."

3. If God must already exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of His property *being divine*, then God's being the final cause of the property *being divine* is not logically prior to the property *being divine*.
4. So, God's being the final cause of the property *being divine* is not logically prior to the property *being divine*.

Regarding premise 1, Panchuk assumes that the property *being divine* is or at least functions within the divine substance as does either the substantial form or the essence (depending on the view) of a substance on a broadly Aristotelian view of substance.²⁹ On such a view of substance, the substantial form or the essence of a substance is what determines the substance to be the kind of substance it is and is what directs the other parts of that substance towards their end or final cause. The final cause of anything is that for the sake of which that thing exists. In this case, the final cause of the parts of a substance is that for the sake of which the parts exist, which Panchuk identifies as the fully actualized substance.

To this point I think Panchuk's characterization of Aristotelian final causality is correct and uncontroversially so. What is controversial about premise 1 is the word 'any.' Panchuk assumes that because the substantial form or the essence (i.e. the property *being divine*, in this case) is what determines what is the final cause of the other parts of the substance, it follows that the substantial form or the essence, which is itself a part of the substance, only gains its directedness towards the final cause once the substantial form or essence is exemplified in the substance. Panchuk explains,

We must first have a substance *of a certain kind* for it to make sense for the parts to be directed toward the end of the full expression of that kind. ... This entails that the dog substance cannot serve as the final cause of a property like *being canine*

²⁹ Panchuk considers both 1) a more traditional Aristotelian view on which every substance is the substance it is and has the potential for certain properties it has in virtue of its substantial form, and 2) J.P. Moreland's contemporary Aristotelian view that Gould endorses elsewhere, on which the essence of a thing takes the place of a substantial form in explaining what a thing is and which properties that thing may possess.

because the dog substance must already be a *canine substance* if it is to be a dog substance at all. ... The same, it seems, must hold true for God. The divine substance must be a *divine* substance (i.e., God's substance) to be the final cause of any of its constituents.

Panchuk does not defend but simply assumes the truth of her inference that because the substantial form or the essence of a substance is what determines the final cause of the other parts of the substance, it follows that the substantial form or the essence itself only gains its directedness towards the final cause once it is exemplified in the substance.³⁰

Premises 2 and 3 are uncontroversial. The consequent in premise 2 clearly follows from the antecedent given the view that the property *being divine* is one of God's parts. Given that view, it is clear, as premise 2 states, that if God must exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of any of His parts, then God must exemplify the property *being divine* to be the final cause of His property *being divine*. Premise 3 is clear given that if x's being the final cause of y depends on y's being exemplified in x, then x's being the final cause of y is not logically prior to y. Assuming the truth of premises 1-3, the conclusion clearly follows.

The premise I think is false is the first and controversial one. The assumption on which it depends is neither affirmed by Gould nor is it a feature of any other Aristotelian view of substance that I know of. Even if it is affirmed by some Aristotelian views of

³⁰ Panchuk makes use of Robert Pasnau's account of the scholastic distinction between a thin and thick substance in her explanation of Aristotelian final causality. However, that discussion does not support but simply assumes the inference and, for several reasons, I find it obfuscating. Her explanation of Pasnau's distinction is relevant only for material substances that have accidental characteristics. But Gould's account only affirms that God has essential properties and does not give any indication that God is a material substance. Further, Panchuk claims both that the thick substance, which she characterizes as the thin substance (i.e. the composite of substantial form and prime matter) plus all the accidents the thin substance bears, is the final cause of all its parts and that the fully actualized substance is the final cause of all its parts. But the thick substance needn't be, and indeed it is implausible that it usually is already, the fully actualized substance towards which it aims.

substance that I'm not aware of, it certainly doesn't seem to be essential to Aristotelian views. Again, that assumption is that because the substantial form or the essence (i.e. the property *being divine*, in this case) is what determines the final cause of the other parts of the substance, it follows that the substantial form or the essence, which is itself a part of the substance, only gains its directedness towards the final cause once it, i.e. the substantial form or the essence, is exemplified in the substance.

In contrast to this assumption, a common feature of Aristotelian views of substance is the view that every substantial form is intrinsically directed toward a specific kind of fully actualized substance as its end. So, in this case, the property *being divine* is intrinsically directed toward a fully actualized divine being as its end; or, given that there can be only one God, the property *being divine* is intrinsically directed toward *the* fully actualized divine being, whom we call 'God.' Since properties like *being divine* determine the substance of which they are a part to be the kind of substance it is, it is very plausible that such properties are intrinsically directed towards a fully actualized substance of that kind. Further, the intrinsic direction of such properties towards a fully actualized substance of the given kind does not depend upon those properties being actually exemplified in the substance. For, in the relevant case, God's being the final cause of the property *being divine* just means that the purpose of the property *being divine* is for it to be exemplified in a (or the) divine substance and contribute to that substance's full actualization.

Now Gould himself does not characterize the property *being divine* as the substantial form or essence of the divine substance. He speaks of the property *being divine* as though it is just one of God's essential properties and he does not in the relevant context distinguish the property *being divine* from God's other essential properties. Only in a

different and later essay does Gould clarify his view that the nature of a substance is what unifies that substance, and that natures, which he also calls ‘substance-kind properties’ are distinct from and are not sets of essential properties. Gould takes essential properties to be a subset of what he calls ‘nonsubstance-kind properties.’³¹ In light of this distinction, we can charitably modify Gould’s view so that what he says about God’s essential properties, i.e. that they are divine concepts that exist *a se*, applies to God’s nature or substance-kind property (i.e. *being divine*), even as the property *being divine* plays the unique role of unifying the divine substance and determining what is the final cause of the substance’s essential properties. Gould explains that “the substance is fundamental and determines, in light of its nature, which properties (both essential and otherwise) it will possess.”³²

It is plausible in light of everything else we’ve seen of Gould’s view that what he means by this is that a substance is the final cause of all of its properties and that a nature/substance-kind property (e.g., *being divine*) is intrinsically directed toward that substance as its final cause, while the nature/substance-kind property determines the substance’s other properties to be directed toward that substance as their final cause. Gould can coherently claim that God is the final cause of the property *being divine* and that this final causality is logically prior to God’s exemplification of the property *being divine*, given the plausible assumption that the property *being divine* is intrinsically directed toward the divine substance as its final cause. Given this, I conclude that Panchuk’s criticism of Gould’s solution to the bootstrapping problem fails.

³¹ Gould follows Loux and Moreland – two distinct types of Aristotelian Platonists – in using the language of ‘substance-kind’ and ‘nonsubstance-kind’ properties.

³² Gould, “How Does an Aristotelian Substance Have Its Platonic Properties?,” 349.

3.3.3. *Where the incoherence of Gould's solution lies.* Although Gould's solution to the new bootstrapping problem for theistic activism survives Panchuk's criticism, I now argue that it is incoherent for a reason distinct from that Panchuk gives. It is incoherent due to another bootstrapping problem that renders incoherent any view on which properties play a characterizing role and at least God's properties are to be identified with divine concepts. The crucial premise of my argument is that there is another sense that Gould does not acknowledge in which a thinker is logically prior to her concepts and that is the sense in which a thinker's having a mind is metaphysically prior to a thinker's having any concepts. But given that, Gould's solution leads to a contradiction.

Recall that the bootstrapping problem Gould addresses is generated by the tension between two plausible claims: (i) that any thinker is logically prior to her concepts, and (ii) that the concept/property *being divine* is logically prior to God. Gould's solution distinguishes two senses of logical priority. While a substance's being the final cause of its parts is one way to explain a thinker's being logically prior to her concepts, there is at least one other sense in which a thinker may be logically prior to her concepts, which is compatible with a thinker's being the final cause of her concepts. That sense in which a thinker is logically prior to her concepts is the sense in which a thinker's having a mind is a partial metaphysical explanation of, and so is metaphysically prior to, a thinker's having any concepts. The view that God's having a mind is metaphysically prior to God's having any concepts follows from the view, which Gould assumes, that thoughts and their constituent concepts are mental entities that existentially depend upon the given thinker that possesses such thoughts and concepts.

But when we assume Gould's solution applied to theistic activism (i.e. that God's essential properties exist *a se* as divine concepts) conjoined with the view—plausible to Platonists—that God's having a mind is metaphysically prior to God's having any concepts, Gould's assumption that such logical/metaphysical priority is asymmetric,³³ and the Platonist assumption that properties play a characterizing role, then a contradiction follows. For, given that having a mind is a property and that God's having a mind is an essential property of God, it follows that the property of having a mind is a divine concept. And given that the property of having a mind plays a characterizing role, God's exemplifying the property of having a mind is metaphysically prior to God's having a mind. Now since the property of having a mind is a divine concept, at least one of God's concepts (i.e. the concept/property of having a mind) is metaphysically prior to God's having a mind. But God's having a mind is metaphysically prior to any concepts God has. So, we have a contradiction: at least one of God's concepts (i.e. the concept/property of having a mind) is both metaphysically prior and posterior to God's having a mind, but metaphysical priority is an asymmetrical relation. Here is the argument stated formally:³⁴

An Argument against Gould's solution applied to TA

5. God's essential properties exist *a se* as concepts in God's mind. (Assume for *reductio ad absurdum*)
6. God's having a mind is in virtue of his exemplification of the property of having a mind. (Platonist assumption)
7. So, the property of having a mind is an essential property of God. (from 5, 6)
8. So, the property of having a mind is one of God's concepts. (from 5, 7)
9. God's having a mind is metaphysically prior to God's having any concepts. (assumption)

³³ Gould, "Theistic Activism," 130.

³⁴ I am grateful to Kenneth Boyce for his formal reconstruction of my informally stated argument, on which this formal statement is based.

10. Metaphysical priority is asymmetric, i.e., if x is metaphysically prior to y, then y is not metaphysically prior to x. (assumption)
11. So, none of God's concepts are metaphysically prior to God's having a mind. (from 9 and 10)
12. The existence of a given property is metaphysically prior to anything's exemplification of that property. (Platonist assumption)
13. So, the property of having a mind is metaphysically prior to God's having a mind. (from 7, 12)
14. So, at least one of God's concepts (i.e. the concept/property of having a mind) is metaphysically prior to God's having a mind. (from 10, 13)
15. Contradiction! (from 11, 14)

Since a contradiction follows from Gould's solution when applied to theistic activism, whether given a constituent or a relational approach to property possession, and given some plausible assumptions and some standard Platonist assumptions, I conclude that Gould's solution applied to theistic activism fails.

3.4. Gould's Solution Applied to Theistic Non-Activism (TNA)

I now consider Gould's solution to the bootstrapping problem when applied to non-activist versions of theistic Platonism. As I mentioned above, Gould, together with Richard Brian Davis, applies his solution to non-activist theistic Platonism in the context of explaining his and Davis's own version of non-activist theistic Platonism.³⁵ Recall that non-activist theistic Platonism includes the view that properties admit their own ontological category and are not to be identified with divine concepts. Since properties are not identified with divine concepts, there is a relevant difference between the constituent and

³⁵ Davis and Gould, "Modified Theistic Activism." In that essay, Davis and Gould give their own objections to theistic activism regarding properties, i.e. the view that properties are divine concepts. They also defend what they call 'modified theistic activism' – the view that Platonic entities are created by God but that only concepts and propositions are constituents of God's mind, while properties and relations (not essentially possessed by God) exist in a Platonic realm wholly separate from God. Their view is non-activist regarding properties, and so counts as non-activist in the sense I have been using the term in this paper, i.e. as the view that properties are not divine concepts but admit their own ontological category.

the relational version of (A) when it is specified for TNA. The difference is relevant for understanding the view but not for my criticism of it so I won't spend too much space on the difference. Davis and Gould specify claim (A) of Gould's general solution to reflect its application to non-activist versions of theistic Platonism that adopt a constituent approach to property possession, as follows:

(A_{Constituent TNA}): God's essential Platonic properties exist *a se* (i.e., they are neither created nor sustained by God, yet they *inhere in* and are exemplified by the divine substance).³⁶

For constituent ontologists, the inherence relation is the relation that properties bear to a thing that makes those properties constituents of the given thing. Davis and Gould explain that, on the constituent approach, the property *being divine* inheres in God as a constituent and is exemplified by an individuator, which they say is "perhaps a bare or thin particular" that is also a constituent of God.³⁷

On the relational approach to property possession, Davis and Gould explain, God stands in the exemplification relation to the property *being divine* that exists wholly separate from God. Given this, I state their specification of (A) when applied to non-activist versions of theistic Platonism that adopt a relational approach to property possession, as follows:

(A_{Relational TNA}): God's essential Platonic properties exist *a se* (i.e., they are neither created nor sustained by God, yet they are exemplified by the divine substance *and exist wholly separate from it*).

³⁶ Davis and Gould, 76. They actually initially give the content of what I have called '(A_C)' as the solution for their non-activist theistic Platonism to avoid the bootstrapping objection. In the response to critics section of their essay, they acknowledge that the content of what I have called '(A)' is what they should have said in the essay, rather than the version that reflects a specifically constituent approach to property possession.

³⁷ Davis and Gould, 76.

Davis and Gould explain further, that, on both approaches to property possession, given (B), i.e. that substances are Aristotelian, the divine substance is the final (but not efficient) cause of its essential properties and so, “the divine substance explains *why* it possesses the essential properties that it does and *why* it possesses the essential properties it does as a deep *unity* (emphasis original).”³⁸ From this, Davis and Gould, conclude that “God is ultimate in explanation.”³⁹

3.5. *The Failure of Gould’s Solution when Applied to Theistic Non-Activism (TNA)*

I now assess Gould’s solution when applied to non-activist theistic Platonism. Because non-activist views do not identify properties with divine concepts, they are not subject to the bootstrapping objection I leveled against theistic activism, which depends on the identification of God’s essential properties with divine concepts. By endorsing the view that God’s essential properties exist *a se*, the non-activist theistic Platonist escapes the original bootstrapping objection that is generated by the view that God creates His own properties. But Gould’s solution for non-activist theistic Platonists fails to secure DU and DA, at least with respect to the relational approach to property possession, given the *prima facie* meaning of ‘distinct from God’, i.e., ‘neither identical with nor a part of God’, in the definitions of DU and DA I gave at the outset. For on A_{Relational} TNA the properties God possesses essentially exist wholly separate from God. It follows that they are neither identical with nor a part of God. Nor are they created by God since they exist *a se*. It follows then that God is not ultimate in the sense of being the creator of all reality distinct from

³⁸ Davis and Gould, 76.

³⁹ Davis and Gould, 76.

Himself, for God is not the creator of the properties He possess essentially, which are distinct from Himself. Further, because God depends upon the properties He possesses essentially for His intrinsic attributes, it follows that God depends upon something distinct from Himself for His intrinsic attributes and so, God is not *a se*. While Davis and Gould may be correct that affirming that substances are Aristotelian, such that God is the final cause of all of His parts, is sufficient to secure God's ultimacy in explanation regarding why He possesses the essential properties He does and why He possesses them as a deep unity, it is insufficient to secure God's ultimacy in explaining the independent existence of those properties or to secure God's aseity from anything distinct from Himself.

Now one might think that what I take to be the *prima facie* meaning of 'distinct from God' is too strong in this case. For even though, on non-activist views, God's essential properties exist external to God, since they are necessarily possessed by God, there is a relevant sense in which it is appropriate to affirm that they are not distinct from God. So, one may think what is needed to reconcile Platonism regarding God's attributes with DU and DA is a broader interpretation of 'distinct from God' in the definitions of DU and DA given at the outset. Rather than merely 'not identical with nor a part of God,' we should take 'distinct from God' to mean 'not identical with nor a part of God nor possessed by God.' So, 'divine ultimacy' should be taken to mean that God is the ultimate explanation of all reality and all reality not identical with nor a part of nor possessed by God is created by God. And 'divine aseity' should be taken to mean that God does not depend on anything not identical with nor a part of nor possessed by Himself for His existing or His intrinsic attributes. Given these weakened accounts of DU and DA, the existence of God's essential

properties external to God, which is entailed by Gould's solution applied to non-activism, does not undermine DU and DA.

However, theistic Platonists are not out of the woods. For, whether we assume the stronger or weaker accounts of DU and DA, Gould's solution applied to non-activism, whether given a constituent or a relational approach to property possession and some plausible assumptions, entails another new bootstrapping problem or that God is not concrete. I reveal this entailment by showing that when we assume that God is concrete together with Gould's solution applied to non-activism as well as with some assumptions that are plausible or standardly held by Platonists, then we get a contradiction. I state the argument formally as follows in the form of one long *reductio*, though I've added spaces between the sub-arguments to make it easier to follow. I state Gould's solution applied to TNA without distinguishing between the relational and constituent versions, since that distinction isn't relevant to the argument.

An Argument against Gould's solution applied to TNA

16. (a) God is concrete and (b) God's essential Platonic properties exist *a se* and Platonic properties are not divine concepts but admit their own ontological category. (Assume for *reductio ad absurdum*)
17. No property is concrete. (Platonist assumption)
18. So, God is not a property. (from 16a, 17)
19. So, the property of propertyhood (i.e., being a property) is not one of God's properties. (from 18)
20. So, any property that is not possessed by God is neither identical with nor a part of God. (from 16b)
21. The property of propertyhood is a simple, essential property of each and every property.⁴⁰ (Platonist assumption)
22. So, the property of propertyhood is a simple, essential property of each of the properties God possesses. (from 16b, 21)

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Alexander Pruss for suggesting this formulation of the premise, which is likely to be more widely accepted by Platonists than my original formulation.

23. The existence of a simple essential property of a thing is metaphysically prior to the existence of that thing, where simple properties are opposed to compound, i.e., conjunctive, disjunctive, and negative, properties.⁴¹
(Assumption)
24. So, the existence of the property of propertyhood is metaphysically prior to the existence of each of the properties God possesses. (from 22, 23)
25. God is the creator of all things neither identical with nor a part of nor possessed by Himself. (Given the weaker account of DU)
26. So, the property of propertyhood is created by God. (from 19, 21, 25)
27. God's exemplification of at least some of His essential properties is metaphysically prior to God's creating anything. (Assumption)
28. So, God's exemplification of at least some of His essential properties is metaphysically prior to God's creating the property of propertyhood. (from 26, 27)
29. So, God's exemplification of at least some of His essential properties is metaphysically prior to the existence of the property of propertyhood. (from 28)
30. The existence of a property is metaphysically prior to anything's exemplification of that property. (Assumption)
31. So, the existence of the properties God possesses is metaphysically prior to God's exemplification of those properties. (from 25)
32. So, the existence of at least some of the properties God possesses is metaphysically prior to the existence of the property of propertyhood. (from 29, 31)
33. Contradiction! (from 10, 24, 32)

In addition to the view assumed for reductio, the argument has seven assumptions, which are either standard Platonist assumptions, the view Gould seeks to reconcile with Platonism, or quite plausible irrespective of Platonism. Premise 17 (i.e., that no property is concrete) and premise 21 (i.e., that all properties have the essential property of propertyhood) are standard Platonist assumptions. Premise 25 (i.e., that God is ultimate), is the view that Gould seeks to reconcile with Platonism. Premise 27 (i.e., that God's

⁴¹ Here are examples of such properties: *being human* is a simple property, *being nonhuman* is a negative property, *being human or feline* is a disjunctive property, and *being human and wise* is a conjunctive property.

exemplification of at least some of His essential properties is metaphysically prior to God's creating anything) is quite plausible. For in order for God to be the one who creates, God must exemplify those properties in virtue of which God is God prior metaphysically to God's creating anything.

The remaining three assumptions are seemingly uncontroversial, namely premise 10 (i.e., that metaphysical priority is asymmetric⁴²), which Gould explicitly affirms,⁴³ premise 23 (i.e., that the existence of a simple essential property of a thing is metaphysically prior to the existence of that thing), and premise 30 (i.e., that the existence of a property is metaphysically prior to anything's exemplification of that property). Given all of these assumptions together with Gould's solution applied to non-activism (i.e., God's essential properties exist *a se* and properties are not identical with divine concepts) and the view that God is concrete, a contradiction follows. The contradiction amounts to a form of divine bootstrapping: the properties God must exemplify in order to create must already exemplify the property of propertyhood before God can create the property of propertyhood. Given all this, I conclude that Gould's solution applied to non-activism is incoherent due to divine bootstrapping or God is not concrete. And given the standard theistic assumption that God is concrete, I conclude further that Gould's solution applied to non-activism is incoherent due to divine bootstrapping.

⁴² Again, i.e., if x is metaphysically prior to y, then y is not metaphysically prior to x.

⁴³ Again, Gould affirms this in Gould, "Theistic Activism," 130.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that Gould's attempt to reconcile Platonism regarding properties with DU and DA, while avoiding bootstrapping objections, fails. For given some assumptions that are plausible or standardly assumed by Platonists together with Gould's view that God's essential properties exist *a se*, whether or not they are identified with divine concepts and regardless of whether the constituent or the relational approach to property possession is assumed, a bootstrapping problem follows that entails the incoherence of Gould's solution when applied to theistic activism and non-activism. Gould's proposal that God's essential properties exist *a se* seems to be the only possible solution for Platonists to maintain Platonism regarding God's attributes and to preserve DU and DA. For the alternatives to Gould's solution are that God creates His own properties or that God is identical with His properties. But the notion that God creates His own properties is incoherent as we saw with the original bootstrapping objection. And Platonism regarding God's attributes entails that God is not identical with His attributes. So, I conclude that Platonism regarding God's attributes is incompatible with divine ultimacy and divine aseity.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Kenneth Boyce, Donald Bungum, Scott Cleveland, Paul Gould, Alexander Pruss, Kevin Timpe, and participants at the 2016 Classical Theism Workshop at the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, MN), at a University of Mary Catholic Studies Parlour Discussion in November of 2016, and at the Evangelical Philosophical Society Annual Meeting on November 16, 2016 for comments helpful to the development of this chapter. I thank the Classical Theism Project, organized by Gloria Frost and Timothy Pawl and funded by the John Templeton Foundation, for a summer research stipend used for this paper. The views expressed in this paper do not represent the views of the Classical Theism Project or the John Templeton Foundation.

CHAPTER FOUR

An Interlude on the Role of Divine Ideas for Theistic Platonists vs. Augustine and Aquinas

In chapter three I showed that there are problems with the conjunction of the views that God exemplifies Platonic properties in the robust sense (i.e., God has His character in virtue of exemplifying necessarily existent, abstract universals) and that such properties are divine concepts/ideas. Those familiar with the views of medieval philosophers/theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas may wonder whether my criticisms in chapter three of theistic Platonism—specifically, of Gould’s modified theistic activism—apply to the views of Augustine or Aquinas, who seem to express something like the theistic activist view that concrete things “exemplify” ideas in the mind of God. In this interlude, I clarify some of the important differences between the appeal to divine ideas made by Augustine and by Aquinas and that made by the theistic activist views I have criticized.

I give some good reasons to think that Augustine’s and Aquinas’s views are not versions of the theistic Platonist views I critiqued in chapter three. I briefly explain that, whereas theistic activists take God’s ideas or concepts to play most of the metaphysical and semantic property roles, there is good reason to think that is not the case for Augustine or Aquinas. Rather, building on Augustine’s account, Aquinas takes God’s ideas (in conjunction with God’s infinite power and perfection) to account, most fundamentally, for the possibility of any possible characteristic of a creature, including those that are merely possible characteristics. Given that view, the divine ideas fulfill the property role of

accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized. Finally, I briefly explain how Augustine's and Aquinas's assumption that there are multiple divine ideas and divine attributes is compatible with divine simplicity.

1. Augustine on the Divine Ideas

Gould and other theistic Platonists, such as Thomas Morris and Christopher Menzel, Greg Welty, and Alvin Plantinga, who each endorse a version of the view that properties are divine concepts, see their view as, in Menzel's words, a sort of "updated and refined version of Augustine's doctrine of divine ideas."¹ But none of them to my knowledge give serious attention to the fact that Augustine Himself affirmed neither that God's attributes are Platonic properties in the relevant sense (i.e., necessarily existent, abstract universals in virtue of which things have the character they do) nor that entities other than God exemplify any properties that are numerically the same as God's. Augustine could not have coherently affirmed either of these claims, which assume there is a real multiplicity of Platonic properties, given his commitment to divine simplicity. Further, although Augustine may be interpreted as identifying the properties of creatures with divine ideas, there is good reason from the broader context of his discussion to favor another interpretation.

Augustine's suggestion that Platonic forms are ideas in the mind of God is admittedly brief and underdeveloped. But the motivation he presents for identifying Plato's

¹ Morris and Menzel, "Absolute Creation"; Welty, "An Examination of Theistic Conceptual Realism as an Alternative to Theistic Activism"; Plantinga, "AUGUSTINIAN CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY."

forms with divine ideas is different from what we find in contemporary theistic Platonist views like Gould's.² The motivation Augustine presents for identifying Platonic forms with divine ideas is to make sense of his assumption that God creates in accordance with a rational plan and that God's rational plan for one kind of entity, e.g., a human being, is distinct from that of his rational plan for another kind of entity, e.g., a horse. From these assumptions, Augustine concludes that "individual things are created in accord with reasons unique to them."³ He argues, further, that these reasons "must be thought to exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator."⁴

Augustine notes that the term 'reasons' (*rationes*) is, in this context, synonymous with 'forms' (*formae*), 'species' (*species*), and 'ideas' (*logoi*). The notion that these reasons are ideas of the things God can create and that God creates in accordance with these ideas as though they are a kind of blueprint for what God makes is obscured by a contemporary Platonist interpretation of another claim Augustine makes in this context. Augustine says, "it is by participation in these [ideas] that whatever is exists in whatever manner it does exist."⁵ Taken on its own this quote leaves open the interpretation of the participation relation that a contemporary Platonist like Gould might give: that is, that the participation relation to which Augustine refers here is the exemplification relation of a contemporary Platonist view of properties, according to which things have their character in virtue of

² Augustine, "Q. 46 On the Ideas," in *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. Mosher, David (CUA Press, 2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Augustine, "Q. 46 On the Ideas."

⁵ Augustine.

exemplifying Platonic universal properties, some of which, on Gould's view, are divine ideas. But it seems to me that that interpretation does not cohere well with the notion that the divine ideas are models or blueprints for God's creation. For the notion of a model in accord with which one makes suggests a lack of any ontological unity or overlap between the model and what is made.⁶ But the contemporary Platonist takes there to be numerical sameness between the property exemplified by a given thing and the transcendentally existing property, which is a divine idea/concept for theistic Platonists who locate properties within God's mind.

2. Aquinas on the Divine Ideas

Augustine's notion that the divine ideas are models in accord with which God creates is developed in more detail by Thomas Aquinas. Like Augustine, Aquinas affirmed neither that God's attributes are Platonic properties nor that entities other than God exemplify any properties that are numerically the same as God's nor that God's ideas are that in virtue of which created things have their characteristics. Rather, as I interpret Him, Aquinas takes God's ideas (in conjunction with God's infinite power and perfection) to account, most fundamentally, for the possibility of any possible characteristic, including those that are merely possible characteristics. Given that view, the divine ideas fulfill the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized.

⁶ Augustine.

In Aquinas's most detailed discussion of the various ways of considering a nature, Aquinas distinguishes four ways of considering any (created) nature: i) insofar as it exists in singulars (e.g., "the being of 'stone' in this stone and that stone"⁷), ii) insofar as it exists in the divine intellect that is the source of the nature, iii) insofar as it exists in a human intellect as a mental concept, which is an effect of the human's cognition of the nature existing in a singular, iv) insofar as it abstracts from either the existence it has in singulars or the existence it has in intellects and is considered absolutely or "with respect to only those things that belong to such a nature by itself," i.e., the content of the nature that, Aquinas explains elsewhere, is expressed by a definition.⁸ I discuss these distinctions in more detail in chapter five. Here I focus on the relations of each of these ways of considering a nature to one another.

Aquinas compares the divine intellect with the intellect of an artisan. He says,

... when the intellect of the artisan contrives some form of an artificial object, the nature or form of the artificial object, considered in itself, is posterior to the intellect of the artisan. And consequently the sensible box [made by the artisan], which has such a form or such a species, [is] also [posterior to the intellect of the artisan].⁹

Aquinas orders the four ways of considering a nature in terms of their explanatory relations to one another: first, is what seems best described as 'the basis' for the nature in the divine intellect, second, is the absolute content of the nature, third, is the nature insofar as exists in singulars, and fourth, is the nature insofar as it exists in a human intellect. With respect to this ordering, Aquinas explains that

⁷ St Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae et Quaestiones Duodecim Quodlibetales*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade, vol. 5 (Turin: Marietti, 1931), Q8, q1, a1.

⁸ I discuss these distinctions in more detail in chapter five.

⁹ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae et Quaestiones Duodecim Quodlibetales*, Q8, q1, a1.

... that which is prior is always the reason for the posterior. When the posterior is taken away, the prior remains, but not the other way around. Hence it is that that which belongs to a nature according to its absolute consideration is the reason why it belongs to some nature according to the being it has in singulars, and not conversely. For Socrates is rational because man is rational, and not the other ways around. Hence, given that Socrates and Plato did not exist, still rationality would belong to human nature. Likewise too, the divine intellect is the reason for the nature absolutely considered and in singulars. And the nature absolutely considered and in singulars is the reason for the human understanding [of it], and in a certain way the measure of it.¹⁰

Here Aquinas, like Augustine, speaks of God's intellect as providing the reason for the natures that could exist in singulars. This includes both those natures that actually do exist in singulars and those that merely could exist in singulars. For Aquinas says that if, counterfactually, neither Socrates nor Plato (nor any other human) existed, there would still be an absolute consideration of human nature that would include rationality.

Elsewhere Aquinas argues in more detail that God knows all things, including both those that are actual and those that are merely possible, and that God's ideas, in conjunction with God's infinite power and perfection, account most fundamentally for whatever is possible.¹¹ Aquinas argues that God is the first cause of all things and that He is such a cause through His knowledge, which is to say that God's causal power is rational in the sense that God acts in accordance with reasons. Further, assuming that "the likeness of every effect somehow preexists in its cause," that "whatever is in something is in it according to the mode of that in which it is," and that God is intellectual, Aquinas concludes that the likeness of what God can cause exists in Him in an intelligible way, i.e., as the

¹⁰Aquinas, Q8, q1, a1.

¹¹ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Pegis (New York: Hanover House, 1955), <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles.htm>, I, 49-50, 66-71.

object of a divine idea.¹² Further, assuming that all the things that God could cause to exist are limited imitations of God, in a sense I explain below, and that God's perfection and power are infinite, Aquinas concludes that there will always be more possible creatures, including possible kinds of creatures and of characteristics, than those that are actual.¹³ Given all this, we can conclude that for Aquinas the divine ideas fulfill the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized.

3. The Compatibility of Multiple Divine Ideas and Divine Attributes with Divine Simplicity

Since I appealed to Augustine's and Aquinas's assumption that God is simple in part to justify our rejecting the view that Augustine and Aquinas held a view akin to theistic activism, I shall briefly explain how this talk of there being a multiplicity of divine ideas and divine attributes is compatible with God's simplicity. First, I develop Aquinas's solution that the multiplicity of divine ideas are just God's knowledge of the ways His essence can be imitated, which is reducible to God's simple act of contemplating His essence. Like Augustine, Aquinas assumes that God's creation is rational and that God does not derive His ideas for creation from anything other than Himself. Given these assumptions, it is plausible that all things God could create are somehow known through God. Aquinas assumes that God has perfect knowledge of Himself and that perfect knowledge of something includes knowledge of every way of resembling that thing. Since

¹² SCG I, 49.

¹³ SCG I, 66.

Aquinas assumes that everything God can create resembles God, Aquinas concludes that God's knowledge of the possible things God could create is simply His knowledge of His essence as it can be imitated.¹⁴ While there is a multiplicity of things that can imitate God, God's knowledge of them is identical to His knowledge of His essence.¹⁵

In the context of explaining how the divine essence, which is one and simple, is the likeness of many intelligible objects, Aquinas employs an arithmetical analogy taken from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* VIII.¹⁶ Following Aristotle, Aquinas compares the forms of things and the definitions that signify them with numbers. Just as the subtraction of a unit changes the number, so the subtraction of one difference changes the form or species. Aquinas explains that what is one reality can be conceptually distinguished when at least one of the elements of one thing is not included in the notion of the other. Aquinas illustrates this as follows:

... in the number three the intellect can consider the number two only, and in the rational animal it can consider that which is sensible only. Hence, that which contains several elements the intellect can take as the proper notion of the several elements by apprehending one of them without the others. It can, for example, take the number ten as the proper notion of nine by subtracting unity, and similarly as the proper notion of each of the numbers included under it. So, too, it can take in man the proper exemplar of irrational animal as such, and of each of its species, except that they would add some positive differences.¹⁷

What Aquinas is saying here with respect to a man being an exemplar of an irrational animal is this: although there is no real distinction between any given human being's

¹⁴ Of course, Aquinas maintains that God also knows actual things through causing them to exist. See *ST I*, q. 14, a. 8.

¹⁵ *SCG I*, 48-50.

¹⁶ *SCG I*, 54.2

¹⁷ *SCG I*, 54.3.

rationality and his animality (since, for Aquinas, there is just one substantial form of rational animality), because we can conceptually distinguish rationality and animality (since neither entails the other), there is within a human being the content of what it is to be an irrational animal, which is animality without rationality.

Aquinas maintains that every form is a certain perfection, which includes imperfection only to the extent that it falls short of God, who possess within Himself all perfections. Thus, utilizing Aquinas's mathematical analogy, since God is so to speak the sum of all perfections and every created thing possesses only some perfection, it follows that God can consider all beings less perfect than Himself through considering His own essence. Aquinas explains,

The intellect of God, therefore, can comprehend in His essence that which is proper to each thing by understanding wherein the divine essence is being imitated and wherein each thing falls short of its perfection. Thus, by understanding His essence as imitable in the mode of life and not of knowledge, God has the proper form of a plant; and if He knows His essence as imitable in the mode of knowledge and not of intellect, God has the proper form of animal, and so forth.¹⁸

Aquinas here suggests that the subtraction or negation of perfections from God's idea of Himself results in the content of the concepts of creatures, which are limited imitations of God.

Aquinas does not think God literally subtracts perfections to compose concepts of creatures. For Aquinas maintains that God has knowledge in the most perfect way, which Aquinas takes to be immediate and without succession, composition, or division. Further, Aquinas take God's perfect knowledge of Himself to include knowledge of every way God may be resembled in a lesser being. In contemplating His own essence, with which God is

¹⁸ SCG I, 54.4.

identical, God simply knows every possible limited way He may be resembled. Since God has no distinct thoughts (nor anything else) as constituents, divine simplicity is preserved.

Aquinas explains this with reference to the passage from Augustine that I gave above:

the exemplars of things in the divine intellect are many or distinct only according as God knows that things can be made to resemble Him by many and diverse modes. In accord with this, Augustine says that God made man and a horse by distinct exemplars. He also says that the exemplars of things are a plurality in the divine mind. This conclusion likewise saves to some extent the opinion of Plato and his doctrine of Ideas, according to which would be formed everything that is found among material things.¹⁹

Aquinas notes how the notion that God contains with Himself the exemplars of all possible creatures is similar to some extent to Plato's view of the Ideas or Forms, which is the inspiration of the contemporary Platonist views that I have been distinguishing from those of Augustine and Aquinas.

Now I explain the sense in which there is a multiplicity of divine attributes by analogy with what I take to be Aquinas's understanding of a substantial form. For Aquinas, a substantial form is a simple entity that makes a thing to be the kind of thing it is and that accounts for the real unity but mere conceptual multiplicity of the so-called essential properties of that thing. Take, for example, the substantial form of a human being. It is in virtue of this form that a human being has what may be regarded as a multiplicity of so-called essential properties, e.g. rationality and animality. We may distinguish rationality and animality conceptually in the sense that what is included in the concept of one is distinct from what is included in the concept of the other, as I mentioned above, but there are not really two distinct properties – rationality and animality – that account for a

¹⁹ SCG I, 54.

human's being human. Rather, there is the simple substantial form of a human being that makes her to be a rational animal. Something similar holds in God's case. Although God is not properly speaking a substantial form, God is identical to God's essence, which is like a substantial form in being simple and accounting for the real unity but conceptual multiplicity of God's so-called essential properties, e.g. goodness, justice, wisdom, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence.²⁰ Whereas any justice or wisdom a creature may have is an accidental/contingent property and so is really distinct from the essence of the creature, in God's case, such perfections are essential and so are not really distinct from one another or God's essence, although they may be distinguished conceptually.

4. *Conclusion*

I have argued that there are good reasons to think that Augustine's and Aquinas's accounts of the divine ideas are not versions of the theistic Platonist views I critiqued in chapter three. Whereas theistic activists take God's ideas or concepts to play most of the metaphysical and semantic property roles, I argued that for Aquinas God's ideas fulfill the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized. In the remaining chapters I give evidence that for Aquinas the other property roles are fulfilled by something more proximate. In particular, I construct Thomistic explanations of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the characteristics and metaphysical constitution of individual material

²⁰ An advantage of my view is that it can account for the dependence relation expressed by statements like "God is good because God is divine," which Noel Saenz argues the truthmaker account of divine simplicity cannot explain. See Noël B. Saenz, "Against Divine Truthmaker Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* 31, no. 4 (2014): 460–74.

things as well as for the shared characteristics between material things where such property roles are fulfilled by some constituent(s) of the relevant things. It is worth noting that because I assume that the characteristics of created things are explained by created constituents of those created things, my view is compatible with divine ultimacy. Further, because I assume that God's characteristics are wholly explained by God Himself, my view is also compatible with divine aseity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Disambiguating and Resolving Disagreements in Contemporary Aquinas Scholarship on Properties and on the Problem of Universals

It is well known that there continues to be much disagreement between scholars regarding how best to characterize Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals. No attention, to my knowledge, has been given to a distinct (though related) disagreement between scholars regarding what, if anything, in Aquinas's ontology corresponds to 'properties.' In this chapter, I show that much of the latter disagreement between Aquinas scholars may be resolved or shown to be merely apparent by distinguishing between the various property roles that are at issue in the relevant contexts. Then, by endorsing a substantive thesis, I resolve the remaining disagreement regarding what are properties for Aquinas. Next I focus on one recent disagreement between Jeffrey Brower and Brian Leftow regarding Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals, which concerns Aquinas's account of the same-species relation. I critique and then develop Brower's view that the same-species relation is to be understood in terms of a less than numerical sameness relation that is stronger than mere resemblance.

I begin by explaining in detail the various uses of property terms in contemporary Aquinas scholarship, with an emphasis on the substantive use of property terms. I distinguish the merely apparent from the substantive disagreement and then show that by conceiving of properties as merely functional entities, which there is independent reason to do, we can resolve the substantive disagreements. Given that there are multiple property roles and, as I suggest, that fundamentally different categories of things in Aquinas's

ontology fulfill these various property roles, I conclude that there is good reason to characterize Aquinas's view of properties not only as functionalist, but also as pluralist in the sense that, for Aquinas, what fulfills the various property roles are items from different fundamental categories of being.

Next I focus on one of the central issues in the literature on the problem of universals, namely the problem of accounting for the substantive similarities between things, with particular focus on the similarities between things with respect to their species-nature. I explain the substantive disagreement between Leftow and Brower regarding the same-species relation. While I take Brower's side with respect to the disagreement, I show that there are some problems with Brower's reconstruction of Aquinas's view. Then I modify features of Brower's reconstruction and use those modifications together with Brower's recent interpretation of Aquinas's account of the individuation of substances to give an alternative account of the same-species relation.

1. "Properties" for Aquinas

1.1 Uses of Property Terms in Contemporary Aquinas Scholarship

The labels that are variously used to characterize Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals (e.g., as a form of realism, nominalism, conceptualism, or some combination thereof) are also used to classify contemporary theories of properties, which typically involve but go beyond resolving some form of the problem of universals. However, few scholars of Aquinas use property terms explicitly in their discussion of Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals. Rather, most speak only of Aquinas's 'species-natures' (without identifying them with 'properties') and they classify Aquinas's solution as realist,

moderate realist, nominalist, conceptualist, etc. depending on how they take the natures of things in the same species to be united. Some recent scholars of Aquinas use property terms explicitly and technically (as opposed to merely loosely¹) in their discussion of Aquinas's ontology. But such scholars disagree with respect to what item(s) in Aquinas's ontology they identify with 'properties' (e.g., accidents, species-natures, substantial and accidental forms).

I briefly illustrate the disagreement and then show that some of the disagreement is merely apparent, some of the disagreement within one scholar's work seems to be a substantive inconsistency, and still other of the disagreement between two different scholars depends on a particular background assumption about the nature of properties. I give reason to think that that background assumption, i.e., that properties constitute one or more substantive ontological categories, though common among contemporary philosophers, is not well-supported. Further, I show that by rejecting that background assumption and endorsing the view that properties are merely functional entities, we can resolve the substantive disagreement regarding Aquinas's view of properties.

Some contemporary scholars of Aquinas, such as Edward Feser, take the term 'property' to correspond to the medieval term 'propria' – i.e., proper/necessary accidents²

¹ By 'loosely,' I mean a use of the term that is not intended to entail any substantive philosophical view, such as the view that properties occupy a fundamental category of being. To speak, for example, of "the property of being rational" without addressing whether properties occupy a fundamental category of being or what the nature of properties consists in is an example of a loose use of property terms. It seems that loose uses of property terms typically involve an ascription of a given "property" to something, where such a property corresponds with a certain content, but it is left open whether such content is the content of a concept or the content of extramental realities or both in some sense.

² Proper/necessary accidents are characteristics of a substance that are not part of the essence/nature of the given substance, but which are necessary in the sense that they follow from the species-nature of a

– and they then distinguish that sense of ‘property’ from the contemporary broader sense of ‘property,’ which includes both necessary and contingent properties.³ Others, such as Jeffrey Brower (2015) and Brian Leftow each characterize Aquinas as holding a trope view of properties, where ‘tropes’ are particular (as opposed to universal) properties.⁴ While Brower and Leftow each identify Aquinas’s accidents (both necessary and contingent) and species-natures with tropes, Leftow alone also identifies Aquinas’s human souls with tropes.⁵ In his 2014 book, Brower gives an account of Aquinas’s view of properties that differs in different respects from the account he gives in his 2015 article and from Leftow’s account. I explain the differences between each of these accounts and then summarize those differences in a chart. But, first, I provide some brief explanations of the various kinds of things within Aquinas’s metaphysics that one or more of these scholars identify with ‘properties.’ Such discussions of Aquinas’s “properties” focus on the “properties” of material substances, so that will be my focus as well.

given substance and will fail to characterize the substances with a given species-nature only if there is some defect of nature.

³ Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm: Editions Scholasticae, 2014).

⁴ Brian Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11, no. 01 (2003): 1–41; Jeffrey E. Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90, no. 2 (2015). Timothy Pawl also characterizes Aquinas as holding a trope view of properties and he identifies Aquinas’s accidents (both necessary and contingent) with tropes. It is unclear whether Pawl would identify anything else in Aquinas’s ontology with tropes, since his discussion of Aquinas’s tropes is limited to a puzzle concerning only accidents. See Timothy J. Pawl, “Transubstantiation, Tropes, and Truthmakers,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2012): 71–96, https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq_2012_4.

⁵ Leftow explicitly identifies accidents, species-natures, and human souls with tropes. Brower explicitly identifies species-natures with tropes and implicitly identifies accidents with tropes. For Brower says that his reconstruction of Aquinas’s account of species-natures, which locate things in their natural kinds, generalizes to his account of those characteristics (i.e., accidental characteristics) that are not-kind specific, i.e., characteristics associated with the members of any kinds.

Aquinas holds a hylomorphic account of material substances, which is to say that for Aquinas material substances are composed of immaterial form and matter. On my view, which I explain in chapter six, Aquinas takes the ordinary material substances that we encounter in the world (including ourselves) to be composites of an essence/species-nature and some accidental forms. The essence/species-nature of a given material substance is a composite of a substantial form and matter. There is controversy regarding what type of matter (e.g., prime matter, designated matter, non-designated matter) is a constituent of the relevant species-natures for Aquinas, in part because of the apparent inconsistency on Aquinas's part. I argue below, in the context of giving my account of the same-species relation, that it is prime matter. For now it is sufficient to note that because the species-nature of a material substance is a composite of a substantial form and some matter, the species-nature is distinct from the substantial form.

The substantial form of a material substance is the constituent that determines the species-nature of the substance, i.e., what kind of thing the substance is. Since, on my interpretation of Aquinas's view, material substances always possess at least some accidents as parts in addition to their species-nature, it follows that the species-nature of a given material substance is distinct from the substance itself. For Aquinas, accidents/accidental forms (both necessary and contingent) are characteristics of substances that are not essential to the substance in the sense that they are not part of the essence/species-nature of the given substance, i.e., they are not part of what it is to be a substance of a given natural kind. Aquinas endorses the Aristotelian view that all of the various accidents a thing may have may be understood in terms of the nine Aristotelian categories of accident, including quantity (e.g., size), quality (e.g., habits, dispositions,

color, shape), relation, action, passion, place, time, and position. As I mentioned in a footnote above, proper/necessary accidents are characteristics of a substance that are necessary in the sense that they follow from the essence/species-nature of a given substance and will fail to characterize the substances within a given species-nature only if there is some defect of nature. For example, having two legs and the ability to laugh may be thought to be necessary accidents of humans. I turn now to which of these kinds of things contemporary scholars identify with ‘properties.’

Brower (2014) identifies Aquinas’s substantial and accidental forms with particular properties.⁶ Although tropes are particular properties, Brower (2014) doesn’t use the term ‘trope’ (presumably because of the comparison he makes in that context between Aquinas’s view and contemporary substratum theory which is conceived in terms of ‘properties’). Since ‘accidental forms’ is synonymous with ‘accidents’ for Aquinas (as Brower recognizes), Brower (2014), Brower (2015), and Leftow are in agreement that accidents/accidental forms (both necessary and contingent) are tropes/properties for Aquinas. However, ‘substantial forms’ and ‘species-natures’ are importantly distinct for Aquinas. As I mentioned above and as Brower recognizes, Aquinas’s species-natures are, with respect to material things, not substantial forms alone, but rather composites of a substantial form and matter. So, Brower (2014) clearly disagrees with Brower (2015) over whether or not, in addition to accidents/accidental forms, Aquinas’s substantial forms or species-natures are tropes/properties. Whereas Brower (2015) characterizes Aquinas’s species-natures (and not substantial forms) as tropes/properties, Brower (2014)

⁶ Brower does not use the term ‘trope’ in this context, because, as I explain below, he is here analyzing Aquinas’s hylomorphism as a form of substratum theory and so simply uses the term ‘property.’ Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*.

characterizes substantial forms (and not species-natures) as tropes/properties. It is unclear whether Leftow thinks all substantial forms are tropes/properties or just the human substantial form (i.e., the human soul). For Leftow only mentions in passing that the human soul is a trope for Aquinas. Regardless, the account of properties in Brower (2014) is clearly different from that of Leftow in two respects: (i) Brower (2014) does not regard species-natures as properties for Aquinas, while Leftow (like Brower (2015)) does, and (ii) Brower (2014) explicitly denies that the human substantial form is anything more than a property in merely a functional sense of the term, while Leftow seems to affirm that it is more.

Brower (2014) distinguishes between mere functional properties and substantive properties, where mere functional properties are functional in the sense that they function in some way as properties do but they possess a feature that Brower regards as incompatible with being a substantive property. Brower regards only human souls as mere functional properties and he does so because he takes the human soul's ability to subsist on its own to be incompatible with its being a substantive property.⁷ In contrast, he takes all other substantial and accidental forms of material things to be substantive properties. Neither Brower (2015) nor Leftow distinguish between merely functional and substantive properties. Since the distinction is not typically made in contemporary philosophy and it is standard to use the term 'trope' to refer to a substantive conception of properties, it is safe to assume that Brower (2015) and Leftow are both giving what they take to be a substantive rather than a mere functional account of tropes/properties. Given this, we may conclude

⁷ Brower doesn't explain why he thinks substantive properties cannot subsist on their own.

that whereas Brower (2014) denies that human souls are substantive properties/tropes, Leftow affirms that human souls are substantive properties/tropes. Table 1, which follows, summarizes these views and their differences.

TABLE 1. What Aquinas scholars identify with ‘properties’

Scholar	Accidents/ Accidental Forms (necessary and contingent)	Substantial Forms	Human Souls (as substantive properties)	Human Souls (as merely functional properties)	Species- natures
Brower (2014)	X	X		X	
Brower (2015)	X				X
Leftow	X	?	X		X

1.2 Merely Apparent vs. Real Disagreement

I now assess the extent to which the differences between these views are merely apparent or amount to real, substantive disagreements. First, I show that Brower’s use of the term ‘trope’ (in his 2015 article) differs from his use of the term ‘property’ (in his 2014 book). The differences in Brower’s usage of property terms in his two relevant works entails that some of the disagreement between the two works is merely apparent. However, given what seems to be Brower’s assumption in both contexts that properties/tropes occupy a substantive ontological category, there still seems to be a substantive disagreement between the two works. Second, I discuss the substantive disagreement between Brower

(2014) and Leftow regarding whether, on Aquinas's view, the human soul is a substantive trope/property or not.

The difference in Brower's usage of property terms is evident from the difference in the property role at issue in each context. Brower (2014) identifies Aquinas's forms with properties in the sense that Aquinas's forms fulfill the same structural role within Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds as do properties within substratum-property complexes on substratum theories. (Brower's comparison of Aquinas's hylomorphism with substratum theory explains why Brower does not use the language of 'tropes' in that context, despite the fact that he regards Aquinas's forms as particulars.) The structural role that Aquinas's forms and substratum theory's properties play is that of being possessed by a given substratum (namely, matter for Aquinas and a bare particular for substratum theory) and thereby composing, together with the substratum, a given complex (namely, a hylomorphic compound for Aquinas and a substratum-property complex for substratum theory). So, Brower (2014) is focused on the property role of (partially) accounting for the metaphysical structure of substances.

In contrast, Brower (2015), in the context of reconstructing Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals, identifies Aquinas's species-natures (and by extension, his accidents) with tropes and specifies the nature/trope role as that of accounting for a certain type of intrinsic character (namely, *what* a thing is in the case of species-natures and certain further characteristics of a thing in the case of accidents). So, Brower (2015) is focused on the property role of accounting for certain aspects of the intrinsic character of things, especially insofar as that character is "shared" between multiple things. Brower (2015)'s view that, for Aquinas, species-natures (and accidents/accidental forms) account for certain

aspects of the intrinsic character of things is also expressed in Brower (2014) just without the identification of species-natures with tropes. Since Brower addresses distinct property roles in the two contexts, the differences between what he identifies with tropes/properties in the two contexts does not amount to an inconsistency in his view of what, for Aquinas, fulfills those property roles.

However, given what seems to be Brower's assumption in both contexts that properties/tropes occupy a substantive ontological category, Brower's two works seem to be inconsistent. Brower seems to assume in both contexts that properties/tropes occupy a substantive ontological category. For Brower (2014) explicitly distinguishes between merely functional and substantive properties and he affirms that all of the items that he calls 'properties,' namely the substantial and accidental forms of material things, with the exception of human souls, are properties in a substantive sense. Brower (2015) does not distinguish between merely functional and substantive properties. But as I noted above, since it is standard to use the term 'trope' to refer to a substantive conception of properties, it is safe to assume that Brower (2015) is treating tropes substantively. Given that Brower regards properties/tropes as occupying a *single* substantive ontological category in both contexts, Brower's accounts of properties/tropes in the two contexts are inconsistent. For in the two contexts Brower identifies with properties/tropes what are, for Aquinas, two different ontological categories of things, namely substantial forms (in Brower (2014)) and species-natures (in Brower (2015)).

One way for Brower to avoid such inconsistency would be to endorse a pluralist view of properties, according to which there are multiple distinct kinds of properties. As I mentioned in the introduction, this is the move that Douglas Edwards advocates to

philosophers given the incompatibility of some property roles.⁸ It turns out that Brower (2014) already affirms a pluralist theory of properties (though without explicitly characterizing it as such) for he affirms that the substantial and accidental forms of material things are actually two fundamentally distinct kinds of properties. Brower would have to add that species-natures are a third kind of property, since the species-natures of material things are, for Aquinas, distinct from substantial forms and accidental forms. Alternatively, Brower could affirm that the substantial and accidental forms of material things on the one hand and the accidents and species-natures of material things on the other hand fulfill the relevant property roles, but deny either that such substantial and accidental forms or such species-natures are properties in a substantive sense. Or Brower could deny that there are substantive properties at all and instead, conceive of all properties merely in a functional sense, i.e., in the sense that whatever we call ‘properties’ are items that fulfill a certain functional role(s), but do not occupy one or more fundamental ontological categories. I explain why there is good reason to make the final move in the next section.

The disagreement between Brower (2014) and Leftow regarding whether, on Aquinas’s view, the human soul is a substantive trope/property or not, is clearly a substantive disagreement. Recall that Brower (2014) denies that human souls are substantive properties/tropes, while Leftow affirms that human souls are substantive properties/tropes. Brower (2014) assumes that, for Aquinas, substantive properties cannot subsist on their own and because human souls can, after they come into existence, subsist on their own independent from a body, Brower denies that human souls are substantive

⁸ Edwards, *Properties*.

properties for Aquinas. Brower does not explain why he thinks Aquinas assumes that substantive properties cannot subsist on their own nor does he explain why we should think that, for Aquinas (or at all), there are substantive properties in the first place. Brower is not alone in assuming without explanation that there are substantive properties; it is common among contemporary philosophers to do so. But, as I explain in the next section, there is good reason independent of Aquinas's views to reject that assumption and doing so yields resolution to the substantive disagreements regarding Aquinas's view of properties.

1.3 Properties as Mere Functional Entities

The substantive disagreement between Brower's two relevant works as well as that between Brower (2014) and Leftow depend on the assumption, prevalent in contemporary philosophy, that properties constitute a substantive ontological category. For, as I discussed above, Brower (2014) and Brower (2015) are incompatible given that properties constitute a single substantive ontological category. And the point of disagreement between Brower (2014) and Leftow is whether the human soul is a mere functional property or a substantive property. But there is good reason independent of (the disagreements regarding) Aquinas's views to reject the standard assumption that properties constitute one (or more) fundamental categories of things and instead, to regard properties as merely functional entities, i.e., as entities that fulfill a given functional role.

The main reason to reject the standard assumption that there are substantive properties is that there seems to be no good reason to affirm that standard assumption. Bradley Rettler has persuasively argued that all attempts to state precisely the distinction

between objects and properties fail.⁹ This suggests that the intuitive distinction between objects and properties may not correspond to a distinction between fundamental categories of things, but only with a distinction between functional roles that are fulfilled by certain things. Further, as Alexander Pruss has argued, there is good evidence that, given that properties are conceived of as fulfilling some or other of the functional roles that properties are typically defined by, it is very difficult to show that fulfilling such roles is incompatible with doing other things that properties are not typically thought to do, e.g., occupying space, eating, or thinking, or being things that properties are not typically thought to be, e.g., persons or objects.¹⁰ This is further evidence that it is best to conceive of properties merely as functional entities, i.e., as entities that fulfill given functional roles. Such a conception of properties is compatible with the view that a variety of things from a multiplicity of fundamental categories of being fulfill one or more property roles.

From the perspective of Aquinas scholarship, there are further reasons to regard properties as mere functional entities, rather than as occupying one or more substantive ontological categories. First, doing so resolves the substantive disagreements between the relevant works of Aquinas scholars discussed above. Recall that Brower (2014) denies that human souls are substantive properties/tropes, while Leftow affirms that human souls are

⁹ Again, see Bradley Rettler's unpublished paper, "Is There an Object/Property Distinction?" which shows that there is no theory-neutral definition of a property in the relevant literature that can preserve the intuitive distinction between objects (taken broadly to include living things) and properties.

¹⁰ I owe this point to Alexander Pruss, who argues for the view in his blog post, "What else might properties do?" <http://alexanderpruss.blogspot.com/2017/05/what-else-might-properties-do.html>, May 17, 2017. Pruss cites as evidence for this view a philosophical argument contest in which contestants offered arguments against the thesis that there exists a property which is (also) a person. Pruss's objections to the many arguments given reveal the difficulty of arguing against that particular thesis and, by extension, any thesis that claims that properties are/do things that they aren't typically thought to be/do. See <http://substantialmatters.blogspot.com/2010/01/contest-can-property-be-person.html>.

substantive properties. Clearly, if there are no substantive properties/tropes, then Brower (2014)'s view in this disagreement is the view to adopt, while Leftow's is the one to reject. It is worth noting though that Brower (2014)'s explanation that, for Aquinas, human souls cannot be substantive properties because they can subsist on their own is an example of the poorly supported view that there are certain features that are such that their possession by something is incompatible with that thing being a property.¹¹ Since such views are poorly supported, there doesn't seem to be any good reason to distinguish between mere functional and substantive properties, as Brower does. Rejecting the view that there are substantive properties also resolves any disagreement between Brower's two relevant works. For again, Brower addresses distinct property roles in the two contexts, so the differences between what he identifies with tropes/properties in the two contexts does not amount to an inconsistency in his view of what, for Aquinas, fulfills those property roles. Brower's two works are inconsistent only given that properties occupy a substantive ontological category.

Not only does regarding properties as mere functional entities resolve the substantive disagreements between Aquinas scholars discussed above, but it also coheres well with the explanations of the metaphysical and semantic property roles that Aquinas's view yields. While I disagree with Brower in some of the details (and I explain those below and in a subsequent chapter), I agree with him that, for Aquinas, there are multiple fundamentally distinct categories of things that fulfill the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the metaphysical structure of ordinary substances and for certain aspects of

¹¹ See the previous footnote for evidence that such a view is difficult to defend.

the intrinsic character of such substances. With respect to other property roles that Brower does not address, especially the semantic roles, I also think Aquinas's view is that fundamentally distinct categories of things fulfill those roles. Given this, there is good reason to regard Aquinas as assuming a pluralist account of property roles.

2. Towards a Thomistic Account of the Same-Species Relation

2.1 Disagreements Regarding Aquinas's Solution to the Problem of Universals

Brian Leftow aptly describes the controversy regarding how best to classify Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals as follows:

Aquinas' theory of attributes is one of the most obscure, controversial parts of his thought. There is no agreement even on so basic a matter as where he falls in the standard scheme of classifying such theories: to Copleston, he is a resemblance-nominalist; to Armstrong, a "concept nominalist"; to Edwards and Spade, "almost as strong a realist as Duns Scotus"; to Gracia, Pannier, and Sullivan, neither realist nor nominalist; to Hamlyn, the Middle Ages' "prime exponent of realism," although his theory adds elements of nominalism and "conceptualism"; to Wolterstorff, just inconsistent.¹²

In the literature that Leftow cites, the focus is Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals conceived primarily in terms of Aquinas's account of the commonness of the natures of members of the same species. As Leftow notes, some of the disagreement is merely terminological: assuming that Aquinas affirmed the existence of natures conceived of as tropes (i.e., particular properties), some scholars disagree regarding whether to regard trope theories as a form of nominalism or of moderate realism. Some of the disagreement is substantive: in contrast to those who think Aquinas's natures are tropes, some scholars think Aquinas affirmed, or is at least committed to, the existence of universal natures, i.e.,

¹² Leftow, "Aquinas on Attributes," 1.

natures that are numerically the same across distinct substances, and hence, that Aquinas's view should be regarded as a form of realism. Still others think Aquinas is committed to universal concepts, in addition to or instead of universal natures, and hence that Aquinas's view should be regarded as, or at least involving elements of, conceptualism (i.e., the view that properties or natures are, in at least some sense, concepts).

I focus on one more recent disagreement between two scholars, namely Leftow and Brower, who agree that for Aquinas the extramental natures of members of the same species are particulars rather than universals. Leftow and Brower disagree though regarding Aquinas's view of the same-species relation. Leftow thinks that multiple instances of what are regarded as the "same nature" (e.g., your human nature and my human nature) stand in a relation of mere resemblance to one another (as on contemporary trope theories) such that Leftow regards the same-species relation, for Aquinas, as primitive. In contrast, Brower thinks that there is more to the same-species relation for Aquinas, so that Brower's Aquinas offers a distinctive kind of trope theory according to which tropes that are regarded as being tropes of the same species stand in a unique sameness relation to one another that Brower calls 'internal sameness,' which is less than the numerical sameness of universal properties but more than the mere resemblance of tropes as standardly conceived.

While I think something like Brower's internal sameness relation is correct, I argue that Brower is mistaken to claim that such a relation obtains between distinct instances of the same nature for Aquinas; instead, I argue that, for Aquinas, a modified version of Brower's internal sameness relation obtains between distinct instances of the same substantial form, where a substantial form is a part of but is not identical to the nature.

In order to critique and modify Brower's account, I must explain some of the relevant distinctions Aquinas makes between various ways of considering the natures of things. I argue that Brower's misconception of Aquinas's common natures results from Brower's mistaken assumption that what Aquinas calls 'non-designated matter' really exists. I use some key texts from Aquinas in conjunction with Leftow's roughly-existential-quantification account of Aquinas's species-definitions to argue that there is good reason to think that, for Aquinas, non-designated matter is merely the content of a mental concept. I explain that, in effect, Brower's account conflates Aquinas's distinction between the absolute consideration of the nature, which is the content of the nature concept that is expressed by a definition, and the nature as it exists in singulars – a distinction that corresponds with a distinction between different property roles. Finally, I modify Brower's account and argue for the superiority of the modified view of Aquinas's same-species relation to that of Leftow.

2.2 Aquinas on Genera and Species: Real Attributes vs. Mere Concepts

Before delving into the details of the disagreement between Leftow and Brower, I introduce some of Aquinas's relevant terms and distinctions by summarizing Leftow's account of what he calls Aquinas's 'mixed view of attributes.' Leftow explains that Aquinas's view of attributes is mixed in the sense that, for Aquinas, some of the terms for attributes/properties (loosely speaking) that we predicate of things signify extramental attributes, while others signify merely concepts.¹³ Using the ordinary loose sense of the

¹³ Leftow suggests that this explains why some scholars characterize Aquinas's view as a form of or involving elements of conceptualism, where conceptualism is roughly the view that at least some properties are mere concepts.

term ‘attribute’ (which is interchangeable with the loose sense of the term ‘property’), Leftow explains that Aquinas, like other medievals, divided attributes according to the Porphyrian predicables, including genus, difference, species, and accident. Leftow explains,

Species are kinds. For medieval Aristotelians, any definable kind is defined in terms of genus and difference. A genus is a broader kind of which the species is a sub-kind. A difference is the distinguishing attribute that sets off a species from other species within a genus—thus (supposedly) within the kind animal, what distinguishes humans from all others is being rational. Species form trees. Atop each tree is a highest genus. Each such genus is “divided” by differences; in effect, the Gs sort into the Gs that are D₁ and D₂ and D₃ ... The result of each such division is a species “lower” in the tree, one less extensive than the highest genus. The “divisions” continue until a level of lowest species is reached. An *infima species* is the lowest species to which a particular belongs—the least extensive kind to which it belongs. Any kind that is not an *infima species* or an ultimate genus is both a genus and a species—it is a genus relative to kinds below it in the tree. Despite this, Thomas usually reserves the term “species” for lowest species An accident is any attribute that is not a genus, species, or difference.¹⁴

Aquinas thinks that some of these predicables, including lowest infima species of accidents (e.g., tan) and substances (e.g., human), determinately signify something extra-mental, while others, including genera (e.g., animal) and differences (e.g., rational), only indeterminately signify something extra-mental.

Leftow explains that a genus plus a difference is, for Aquinas “not a composition of two things in the real order. Genera “signify” (mean) in an indeterminate way the same reality species concepts signify determinately (“specifically”). ... There is a concept *animal*, but no single extramental attribute animal Instead, to predicate a genus is to say that an item has *some* form from among a range”¹⁵ – a form that is determinately

¹⁴ Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” 2.

¹⁵ Leftow, 4.

expressed by the relevant species concept. So, for example, to predicate *animal* of Socrates is to say that Socrates is some specific kind of animal in virtue of possessing a specific kind of animal form, namely a human form.¹⁶

Leftow helpfully explains that, for Aquinas,

genus-predications in effect involve existential quantification over a (presumably) finite range of differences: “s is a G” analyzes as $(\exists D) (x \text{ has } D)$. This can also be read as predication of a finitely disjunctive concept. To have some form from the relevant range is to have this one or that one or that: to be an animal is to be a dog or a cat or The disjunction applies to a particular animal in virtue of the disjunct the animal has. (Because something is a dog, it is a dog or a cat ... and so an animal.)¹⁷

Leftow is careful to note that, for Aquinas, there is no disjunctive attribute outside the mind that corresponds to what is in effect a disjunctive concept; nonetheless, every suitable use of a genus-concept does signify some real, specific attribute. Leftow clarifies further that Aquinas himself does not think of genus-concepts as disjunctive. Leftow speaks of genus-concepts as disjunctive in order to clarify the logic of Aquinas’s view. Since every species except the lowest is also a genus, Leftow’s analysis of genera as, in effect, disjunctive concepts applies to all species except *infima*, i.e. the lowest-level, species. Leftow recognizes that there is, however, a different sense in which lowest-level species concepts are disjunctive, which I explain below in the context of critiquing Brower’s account of Aquinas’s common natures. Leftow explains that Aquinas discusses *infima*-species-attributes via the concept of a nature.

¹⁶ As I explain below, ‘form’ here refers to what Aquinas calls the ‘form of the whole’ which is the substantial form-prime matter composite.

¹⁷ Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” 4.

I turn now to Brower's account of Aquinas's species-natures and then explain some relevant features of Leftow's account in the course of critiquing Brower's. Subsequently, I address the other relevant features of Leftow's account.

2.3 Brower's Reconstruction of Aquinas's Solution to the Problem of Universals

In Brower's recent reconstruction of Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals, Brower introduces two distinctions that he intends to help illuminate the difference between the medieval and the contemporary problem of universals as well as the uniqueness of Aquinas's view. These distinctions are between two kinds of sameness and two kinds of distinctness. Brower argues that the contemporary literature on the problem of universals assumes only one kind of sameness, namely numerical sameness. Brower's focus with respect to the problem of universals is the problem of accounting for distinct things being members of the same natural kind, since that is the focus in medieval discussions. That the contemporary debate assumes only one kind of sameness, i.e., numerical sameness, is evident from the fact that there are just two main contemporary solutions to the problem of how distinct things are members of the same natural kind: 1) *realism*, which is the view that things are members of the same natural kind in virtue of possessing a universal, i.e., a characteristic that is numerically the same across the distinct things that possess it (however such possession of a characteristic is understood), and 2) *nominalism*, which is the view that there are no universal characteristics and so distinct things are members of the same natural kind in virtue of standing in a relation of mere resemblance to one another.

In contrast, Brower argues that in the medieval literature there are two kinds of sameness, namely numerical sameness and what he calls ‘internal sameness.’ The internal sameness relation is part of an additional solution to the problem of accounting for the same-species relation that is recognized by the medievals (in addition to the two recognized in the contemporary debate). This third solution is referred to as ‘moderate realism’ and, according to Brower, it is the view that there are common characteristics in virtue of which distinct things are members of the same natural kind, but those common characteristics are individuals rather than universals. Such common characteristics are common in the sense that there is nothing internal to them that differs from each other, yet they are individuals that are distinguished from one another wholly in virtue of something external to them. Brower calls this form of distinctness, wherein two or more things are distinct from one another wholly in virtue of something external to them, ‘derivative distinctness,’ and their commonality he calls ‘internal sameness.’ Brower illustrates these medieval notions of derivative distinctness and internal sameness using the work of Thomas Aquinas as an example.

While Brower’s notions of internal sameness and derivative distinctness (to be defined below) are, I think, helpful for understanding Aquinas’s view and the contrast between medieval and contemporary solutions to the problem of universals, there are, as I see it, at least two problems with Brower’s view, one major and one minor. The minor problem is that Brower’s characterizations of ‘derivative distinctness’ and ‘primitive distinctness’ must be modified in order for their distinction to be exclusive and exhaustive as Brower intends for it to be. Further, because Brower characterizes ‘internal sameness’ in terms of ‘derivative distinctness,’ his characterization of ‘internal sameness’ must also

be modified. The major problem is that Brower mistakenly attributes the internal sameness relation to the natures/essences of members of the same natural kind for Aquinas, when it should be attributed instead to the substantial forms that are constituents of the natures/essences of members of the same natural kind. I explain these problems and my solutions to each in turn. First, I contextualize Brower's discussion of these issues.

Brower begins his discussion of Aquinas's solution to the problem of accounting for the same-species relation by showing that Aquinas clearly rejects the view that the natures existing in individuals who are members of the same natural kind are universal, i.e. numerically the same. Two important passages that Brower cites are as follows:¹⁸

Humanity is something that exists in reality, but there it is not universal. For no humanity that exists outside the mind (*extra animam*) is common to many. (*In Sent* 1.19.5.1)

Even if this individual [say, Socrates] is a human being and that individual [say, Plato] is a human being, it is not necessary that both have numerically the same humanity — any more than it is necessary for two white things to have numerically the same whiteness. On the contrary, it is necessary [only] that the one resemble the other in having [an individual] humanity just as the other does. It is for this reason that the mind — when it considers [an individual] humanity, not as belonging to this [or that] individual, but as such — forms a concept that is common to them all. (*In Sent* 2.17.1.1)

Brower explains that these passages highlight two theses that characterize Aquinas's views about universals throughout all of his relevant works:

“(T1) Natures are individual in reality (i.e., outside the mind).
(T2) Natures are universal in the mind.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Both of these passages are Brower's own translations of Aquinas's *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, i.e., his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

¹⁹ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals.” As I explain below, this thesis requires further clarification for Aquinas explains that nature concepts themselves are particular insofar as they have concrete existence in the mind, while their content is universal in the sense that one and the same nature concept applies to or is satisfied by all members of the given species.

By “universal in the mind,” Brower seems to mean that one and the same nature concept applies to or is satisfied by all members of the given species.

Brower acknowledges that in the passages given above, Aquinas seems to develop these theses in a way that requires the rejection of common natures, where a common nature is a nature that is the same in a sense that is stronger than mere resemblance but weaker than numerical identity for all members of the same natural kind. However, Brower claims that more frequently, Aquinas develops them in a way that seems to require the acceptance of common natures such that Brower attributes to Aquinas a further thesis:

“(T3) Natures are common both in reality and in the mind” (in a sense to be specified below that is stronger than mere resemblance but weaker than numerical identity).

Brower explains that

it is a familiar theme of Aquinas’s work that individuals such as Socrates and Plato cannot be identified with their natures precisely because their natures include all and only what is common to the members of the relevant natural kind. For the same reason, Aquinas insists that Socrates and Plato must themselves be conceived of as complexes consisting of a common nature, humanity, plus distinct principles of individuation. Indeed, it is only because their nature is common, and hence in need of individuation, that Aquinas thinks we can form a perfectly general concept of humanity by selectively attending to the nature of any single human being.²⁰

Brower supports his explanation of Aquinas’s view with the following passage from Aquinas:

The individuation of the common nature in corporeal and material things comes from their corporeal matter, which is matter contained under determinate dimensions. The universal, by contrast, is arrived at through abstraction from this sort of matter and from the individuating material conditions. (*In DA* 2.12.5)²¹

²⁰ Brower.

²¹ This is Brower’s translation of Aquinas’s *Sententia super De anima*.

Bracketing the controversy that surrounds Aquinas's views of individuation, Brower notes that the important point is that Aquinas's appeal to something that individuates a common nature makes no sense apart from something like T3. He says, "unless natures were common in reality (i.e., outside the mind), there would be no need to appeal to individuator to explain the distinction between Socrates and Plato. Indeed, Aquinas assumes that it is the commonness of natures outside the mind that explains their commonness or universality in the mind."²²

Brower explains Aquinas's views by distinguishing between two types of functional roles:

"The role of natures vs. individuator:

o *Nature role*: x plays the nature role iff x accounts for a certain type of intrinsic character (namely, *what* a thing is).

o *Individuator role*: x plays the individuator role iff x accounts for individuality or numerical distinctness."²³

Brower explains that, since Aquinas denies the existence of universals, he assumes that the nature role and the individuator role are always played by particular or non-universal entities. Further, Aquinas thinks that the entities that play the nature role are not suited to play the individuator role, because Aquinas conceives of individual natures as owing their numerical distinctness to something else, rather than being numerically distinct in and of themselves. In particular, Brower notes that Aquinas takes some sort of corporeal matter to be the individuator of the natures of material things and that such matter is suited to play

²² Brower, "Aquinas on the Problem of Universals," 11.

²³ Brower, 13.

the individuator role because the relevant portions of such matter are primitively distinct, i.e., distinct in and of themselves.²⁴

Brower explains that Aquinas assumes that there are two different types of numerical distinctness:

“Two types of distinctness:

- o Primitive distinctness: x is primitively distinct from y iff x is numerically distinct from y in and of itself (i.e., the source of x’s numerical distinctness from y is internal to x).
- o Derivative distinctness: x is derivatively distinct from y iff x is numerically distinct from y but not in and of itself (i.e., the source of x’s numerical distinction from y is not internal to x).”²⁵

Because Aquinas takes distinct instances of the same nature to be merely derivatively distinct from one another, there is, on Aquinas’s view, a distinctive type of sameness relation—what Brower calls *internal sameness*—that holds between multiple instances of the same nature. Brower distinguishes *internal sameness* from *numerical sameness* (and, in a footnote, from *intrinsic sameness*) and he defines Aquinas’s understanding of *common natures* as distinct from *universal natures* in terms of the different types of sameness associated with each. Brower distinguishes each of these as follows:

“Two types of sameness:

- o *Numerical sameness*: x is numerically the same as y iff $x = y$.

²⁴ Brower notes that Aquinas expresses his views about individuation differently in different contexts, sometimes describing the principle of individuation in terms of matter under determinate dimensions and sometimes in terms of matter under indeterminate dimensions. For the relevant details, Brower refers the reader to John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Created to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 351–375. In a subsequent article, Brower defends the view that, for Aquinas, prime matter accounts for the non-identity of substances of the same nature, while prime matter and dimensions together account for the spatial distinctness of numerically distinct substances. I address the relevance of some of those details below. Jeffrey E. Brower, “Aquinas on the Individuation of Substances,” in *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁵ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 15.

o *Internal sameness*: x is internally the same as y iff either (a) $x = y$, or (b) x and y are merely derivatively numerically distinct.”²⁶

“Two types of nature:

o *Universal nature* =_{def} a nature that is *identical* for all members of the same natural kind.

o *Common nature* =_{def} a nature that is *internally the same* (but not necessarily *identical*) for all members of the same natural kind.”²⁷

Brower explains that, for Aquinas, two members of the same nature, for example, Socrates and Plato, are to be understood as each possessing an individual humanity that is merely derivatively distinct from the other and so internally the same as that of the other.

Brower notes that the notion of internal sameness is stronger than that of intrinsic sameness; for things that are intrinsically the same can be internally different. For example, on standard trope theory, distinct tropes of the same nature exactly resemble one another and so are intrinsically the same and yet they are primitively distinct. Thus, such tropes are not internally the same as one another and they stand in a relation of mere (exact) resemblance to one another. Brower takes Aquinas to offer a distinctive type of trope theory on which tropes are unique kinds of individuals, namely derivatively (rather than primitively) distinct individuals. Brower explains that Aquinas’s view is intended to be a middle way between realism, on which natures are universals that are numerically the same, and nominalism, on which natures are individuals that exactly resemble one another, but do not bear any sameness relation to one another stronger than mere resemblance. In contrast, Aquinas’s common natures are individuals that are internally, but not numerically, the same as one another.

²⁶ Brower, 16.

²⁷ Brower, 16.

2.4 Problems with and Solutions for Brower's Account of Aquinas's View

2.4.1 *Revisions to Brower's characterizations of two kinds of distinctness and of 'internal sameness.'* I now explain what I take to be problems with Brower's account of Aquinas's view. First, I explain the minor problem, which is that Brower's characterizations of 'derivative distinctness' and 'primitive distinctness' must be modified in order for their distinction to be exclusive and exhaustive as Brower intends for it to be. The language Brower uses to explain his distinction between primitive distinctness and derivative distinctness conflates two ways in which the source of the distinctness of a thing could be internal to that thing. Recall Brower's characterization of the distinction:

- o Primitive distinctness: x is primitively distinct from y iff x is numerically distinct from y in and of itself (i.e., the source of x's numerical distinctness from y is internal to x).
- o Derivative distinctness: x is derivatively distinct from y iff x is numerically distinct from y but not in and of itself (i.e., the source of x's numerical distinction from y is not internal to x)."²⁸

Brower's parenthetical claims that the source of x's numerical distinctness from y is internal to x in the case of primitive distinctness and that the source of x's numerical distinctness from y is not internal to x in the case of derivative distinctness obfuscate what Brower intends by the distinction between the two types of distinctness. For there are two ways in which the source of x's numerical distinctness from y could be internal to x and one of those ways is not primitive but rather derivative (in Brower's senses) – namely, if the source of x's numerical distinctness from y is a proper part of x, i.e. a part of x that is not identical to x. In such a case, x is not simply distinct in and of itself from y, but rather

²⁸ Brower, 15.

x is distinct from y in virtue of the distinct-making part of x. And so, the distinctness of x is not primitive in the sense Brower assumes, which is primitive in the sense of not being further analyzable; rather, the distinctness of x is analyzable in terms of its distinct-making part. Since the relevant distinct-making part of x is not identical to x, it follows in such a case that x's numerical distinctness from y is derivative in Brower's sense, i.e., x's numerical distinctness from y derives from something distinct from (i.e., non-identical to) x. Given this, I revise Brower's parenthetical qualifications of his notions of primitive distinctness and derivative distinctness and add the distinction between two kinds of derivative distinctness as follows:

*Primitive distinctness**: x is primitively distinct* from y iff x is numerically distinct from y in and of itself (i.e., the source of x's numerical distinctness from y is *x itself* (and no proper part of x nor anything external to x)).

*Derivative distinctness**: x is derivatively distinct* from y iff x is numerically distinct from y but not in and of itself (i.e., the source of x's numerical distinction from y is *either a proper part of x or is external to x*).

Internal derivative distinctness: the source of x's numerical distinction from y is a proper part of x.

External derivative distinctness: the source of x's numerical distinction from y is external to x.

Now because Brower characterizes 'internal sameness' in terms of 'derivative distinctness,' his characterization of 'internal sameness' must also be modified. Recall Brower's characterization of internal sameness:

o *Internal sameness*: x is internally the same as y iff either (a) $x = y$, or (b) x and y are merely derivatively numerically distinct.²⁹

²⁹ Brower, 16.

Because there are, as I have explained, two kinds of derivative distinctness, Brower's characterization of internal sameness in terms of derivative distinctness, without distinction between the two kinds, is ambiguous. It is clear in the context of his discussion that what Brower means by 'derivative distinctness' in his characterization of internal sameness is what I have called 'external derivative distinctness.' In order to reflect this, I modify Brower's characterization of internal sameness as follows:

o *Internal sameness**: x is internally the same* as y iff either (a) $x = y$, or (b) x and y are merely *externally* derivatively numerically distinct.

I utilize these modified versions of Brower's characterizations of primitive distinctness, derivative distinctness, and internal sameness below when I offer an alternative to Brower's account of Aquinas's same-species relation.

2.4.2 A critique of Brower's account of the same-species relation. In addition to the minor problems with Brower's characterizations of primitive distinctness, derivative distinctness, and internal sameness, there is a major problem with Brower's account of Aquinas's common natures. For Brower's attribution of the internal sameness relation to the species-natures of members of the same natural kind entails that the distinction Aquinas makes between designated and non-designated matter is a real rather than merely a conceptual distinction. But there are good textual and philosophical reasons to think that Aquinas's distinction between designated and non-designated matter is merely conceptual and hence, that his notion of a common nature that is partly composed of non-designated matter is merely the content of a mental concept and not something that exists in reality.

Because the audience of Brower's article is contemporary philosophers, Brower abstracts in that context from certain details of Aquinas's view. In particular, Brower

doesn't include the details of Aquinas's view of the natures of material things as being composites of matter and form. But these details are significant for understanding Aquinas's view and Brower's interpretation of it. Recall that Brower takes Aquinas's common natures to exist in reality and to be individuated by some type of corporeal matter.³⁰ Given Aquinas's view that the natures of material things are composed of form and matter and Brower's views that, for Aquinas, common natures exist in reality and are individuated by matter that is external to the nature, it follows that there are at least two types of matter that are constituents of substances. First, there is the matter that is a proper part of the nature prior (logically) to the nature's individuation, and second, the matter that individuates the nature and is logically posterior to the nature.

The distinction between these two kinds of matter that Brower assumes seems to correspond, at least partly, with the distinction Aquinas makes between designated and non-designated matter. For Aquinas introduces the distinction between designated and non-designated matter in response to the imagined objection that "since the principle of individuation is matter, from this it may appear to follow that the essence, which comprises both matter and form, is only particular" Aquinas replies that

matter considered in just any way is not the principle of individuation, but only designated matter is. And by *designated matter* I mean matter considered under determinate dimensions. This matter is not included in the definition of man as such, but it would be included in Socrates' definition, if Socrates had a definition. The definition of man, on the other hand, includes non-designated matter for the definition of man does not include this bone or this flesh, but bones and flesh absolutely, which are the non-designated matter of man (*DEE* 2).³¹

³⁰ Brower doesn't take a stand on the controversial question of whether it is matter under determinate or indeterminate dimensions.

³¹ Gyula Klima, "Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence," in *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary* (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 231.

Aquinas here explains that designated matter, which is “matter considered under determinate dimensions,” is the principle of individuation, whereas non-designated matter, which is matter considered “absolutely,” i.e., in abstraction from particular matter (to be discussed in more detail below), is not the principle of individuation. Brower implies in his 2015 article (and confirmed in email correspondence) that Aquinas’s notion of non-designated matter is what, in that context, he takes to be the matter that partly constitutes the common natures that he thinks exist in reality for Aquinas.³² But when we consider more carefully Aquinas’s distinction between designated and non-designated matter, it is apparent that Brower is mistaken to assume that his notion of a common nature that exists in reality accurately reflects Aquinas’s notion of a nature partly composed of non-designated matter.

In the text above in which Aquinas distinguishes designated and non-designated matter, Aquinas implies that only designated matter has concrete existence (insofar as it is the principle of individuation). In contrast, he speaks of non-designated matter not as a real constituent of substances, but as a constituent of the definition of a species. In other contexts we also find Aquinas speaking of non-designated matter only in terms of its being a part of a definition, while also speaking of designated matter as a real constituent of what he calls the ‘singular essence’ of a substance. For example, Aquinas says,

the singular essence is composed of designated matter and individuated form. Thus, the essence of Socrates is composed of this body and this soul, just as the universal essence of man is composed of soul and body, as may be seen in *Metaphysics* VII [10]. Hence, just as the latter principles fall within the definition of universal man,

³² Brower implies this in footnote 20 in which he implicitly identifies what he calls ‘common natures’ with what Aquinas refers to as ‘natures considered in themselves (or absolutely)’ and characterizes as having non-designated matter as a constituent. Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 11.

so the former principles would fall in the definition of Socrates if he could be defined (*SCG* I, 65).³³

Assuming, which there is good reason to do,³⁴ that by ‘individuated form’ Aquinas means individuated substantial form, this passage conflicts with Brower’s claim that not only does Aquinas appeal to common natures and individuators, but that he “conceives of individuals such as Socrates and Plato as complexes of both,” where common natures include non-designated matter as a constituent.³⁵ For this passage implies that Aquinas conceives of Socrates as a complex of designated matter and individuated (substantial) form, but not of non-designated matter in addition. Aquinas here speaks of non-designated matter not as a constituent of an individual man, but only of “the universal essence of man,” which may be expressed in a definition. In the first passage I gave above to illustrate Aquinas’s distinction between designated and non-designated matter, I elided the portion, which is now relevant, in which Aquinas also speaks in terms of universals and says that (the concept of) non-designated matter is a constituent of the definition of the universal. Here is the full quote with the portions I elided above italicized:

since the principle of individuation is matter, from this it may appear to follow that the essence, which comprises both matter and form, is only particular *and not universal, from which it would further follow that universals would not have definitions, if an essence is something that the definition signifies.* And for this reason we should know that matter considered in just any way is not the principle

³³ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

³⁴ Aquinas clarifies in other contexts that the form that is a constituent of the essence of a material thing is a substantial form. For example, he says, “... there is an important difference between substantial and accidental forms. For just as a substantial form does not have its existence separately from that which it informs, neither does that which it informs, namely, matter. Therefore, their union results in that act of existence in which the thing itself subsists, and they yield something that is one *per se*. Therefore, their union yields a certain essence; and so the form, although considered in itself not a complete essence, is nevertheless a part of a complete essence (DEE 7).”

³⁵ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 11.

of individuation, but only designated matter is. And by designated matter I mean matter considered under determinate dimensions. This matter is not included in the definition of man as such, but it would be included in Socrates' definition, if Socrates had a definition. The definition of man, on the other hand, includes non-designated matter; for the definition of man does not include this bone or this flesh, but bones and flesh absolutely, which are the non-designated matter of man. *In this way it is clear that the essence of man and the essence of Socrates differ only as designated and non-designated...* (DEE 2).³⁶

Aquinas implies in this context that there is a sense in which there are universal essences (or natures), which are signified by definitions, and that non-designated matter is a constituent of such definitions. His example is the nature of man, i.e., human beings in general, and he explains that whereas particular bones and flesh are the designated matter, which are constituents of particular humans, bones and flesh considered absolutely (i.e. in abstraction from particular humans) are the non-designated matter included in the definition of man.

Aquinas clarifies in other contexts that the universal essences/natures signified by definitions do not really exist but are merely the content of mental concepts of given species that represent the various members of the species. Aquinas distinguishes between the concepts by which the natures of members of the same species are conceived—what we may call ‘nature concepts,’ the content of such concepts, and the natures (represented by nature concepts) that are constituents of the members of the same species. Aquinas speaks of these as the various ways to consider a nature – more precisely, a nature of which we have sense-mediated concepts, i.e., a nature of a being that is partly material.³⁷ First, he

³⁶ Klima, “Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence.”

³⁷ Aquinas says that there are two ways to consider a nature and one way divides in two, so he distinguishes three ways. He explains, “a nature ... can be considered in two ways. One is according to ... its proper content. This is an “absolute consideration” of the nature. The nature is considered in a second way

says, there are two ways in which a nature has existence: 1) in individual beings, which are instances of a given nature and 2) in the minds of (created) beings that have minds in the form of a concept, which is an accident of the mind and is that by which the mental being has cognition of the nature that exists in singulars. Then Aquinas explains that the content of the concept of a nature, which is distinct from the concept itself, is another way in which a nature may be considered. The content of the concept of the nature is what Aquinas calls the “absolute consideration” of the nature, or the nature “according to its proper content”. This content abstracts from the existence of the nature in singulars and in minds and is expressed by a definition that may be articulated in genus-difference form (e.g., a human is a rational animal) or in compositional terms (e.g., a human is a composite of a living sentient body and a rational soul).

Aquinas explains that while the existence of a nature in singulars and in the mind is particular, not universal, the content of a nature concept (i.e., a concept of a given species-nature) is universal in the sense that it can represent many individuals and so may be predicated of many individuals.³⁸ Aquinas compares the particularity of nature concepts

according as it has existence in this or that. ... This nature has two kinds of existence: one in the singulars, the other in the mind... in singulars, it has multiple existence according to the diversity of singulars” (*DEE* 4, translated by Leftow in Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” 4–5). Leftow notes that “More precisely, this is an account of how those natures exist of which we have concepts via the sense. There are also natures (e.g., those of angels or God) that exist in another way, as identical with certain individuals. But we have no sense-mediated concepts of them” (Leftow, 5n19).

³⁸ For Aquinas, predication takes place in the mind prior to its linguistic expression. Aquinas distinguishes between the universal content of a nature concept and the concept itself as follows: “This understood nature has the nature of a universal according as it is compared to things outside the soul, because it is one likeness of them all. Still, according as it has being in this intellect or that, it is a particular understood species (*DEE* 4, translated by Leftow in Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” 9).

with respect to their existence in minds and their universality with respect to their representative capacity to a statue representing several people. He says a nature concept

is not universal in its existence that it has in the intellect, but insofar as it is a similitude of things, just as if there were a corporeal statue representing several people, it is obvious that the image or shape of the statue would have its own singular act of existence, insofar as it would exist in this matter, but it would be common, insofar as it would be a common representation of several things (*DEE* 4).³⁹

Leftow helpfully explains Aquinas's view of the species-definitions that express the content of such nature concepts in terms of what Leftow calls a 'roughly-existential-quantification account.' Leftow's account entails that the non-designated matter that is a constituent of a species-definition does not really exist, but merely represents the discrete portion of designated matter that is a constituent of each individual member of the species.

Leftow explains this account with reference to the following statement of Aquinas's:

Just as it is of the nature [*ratio*] of this human that it is composed of this soul, this flesh and these bones, so it is of the nature of human beings generally to be of soul and flesh and bones. For whatever is commonly of the substance of all the individuals contained under a species must be of the substance of the species (*ST* Ia 75).⁴⁰

Leftow explains that Aquinas

treats the singular essence as logically prior to the general essence: because each individual human has by nature his/her soul and his/her body, the general human nature is to have soul and body- or *a* soul and *a* body. ... This suggests the following picture: to be this human is to have this soul and this body. To be some human is to have *some* individual soul and body. ... The existential quantifier "some" can be glossed disjunctively: if being an animal consists in having some animal species-nature, and FGH are all the animal species, being an animal consists in being F or being G or being H.⁴¹

³⁹ Klima, "Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence."

⁴⁰ Translated by Leftow in Leftow, "Aquinas on Attributes," 24.

⁴¹ Leftow, 24–25.

Leftow notes that Aquinas compares the indeterminacy of genus-concepts with the indeterminacy of the species with respect to the individual.⁴² Since, as Leftow has argued, genus-concepts are in effect disjunctive for Aquinas, Leftow notes that Aquinas's comparison of the genus/species and species/individual relationships suggests that species-concepts too are in effect disjunctive. Just as to be an animal is, for Aquinas, to be a cat or a dog or a human or ..., so to be human is to have Peter's human nature (i.e., Peter's body and soul) or Mary's human nature (i.e., Mary's body and soul) or Leftow clarifies that "while Peter's human nature is not identical with human nature *simpliciter*, by having Peter's [human nature], Peter has human nature *simpliciter*."⁴³ Leftow continues,

If having common human nature is just having some individual human nature, this makes sense of Aquinas's claim that we can abstract one and the same nature, human nature *simpliciter*, from Socrates or Plato. ...to abstract common human nature is to do something a bit like quantifying existentially. Thomas writes that, 'whatever is commonly of the substance of all the individuals contained under a species must be of the substance of the species.' We can take this as a recipe for inferring ("abstracting") species-definitions, that is, common natures: if for all Fs, to be x = to consist of this A and this B, then to be an F is to consist of some A and some B.⁴⁴

Although in this context Leftow seems to, mistakenly I think, reduce Aquinas's view of the intellect's abstraction of forms from the data delivered by the senses to mere existential

⁴² Aquinas says, "just as that which is a genus, just as predicated of the species, implies in its signification, though indistinctly, all that which is determinately in the species; so that which is a species, according as it is predicated of an individual should signify all that is essentially in the individual (granted, indistinctly) (*DEE* 3, 148, 151 translated by Leftow in Leftow, 25). Leftow notes that, while genus and lowest-species concepts are analogous in this way, they remain importantly different with respect to their content: genus-concepts are indeterminate with respect to their specific content and so signify a disjunction of various species. But lowest-species concepts are determinate with respect to their specific content and only indeterminate with respect to the individuals to which they apply, such that there are no kind-differences between the individuals to which they apply.

⁴³ Leftow, 25.

⁴⁴ Leftow, 26–27. Leftow adds that "Where a nature cannot be given in compositional terms, other, similar recipes are available."

quantification, still I think Leftow's existential quantification account of species-definitions is a helpful way to make sense of Aquinas's view that nature concepts that are universal in their representative content may be truthfully predicated of individuals who have individual natures as constituents. Given that account, there is no need to posit the real existence of common natures, conceived of as having non-designated matter as a constituent.

Given all this, there is good reason to regard Aquinas's distinction between designated and non-designated matter as merely a conceptual distinction between different ways of considering the same matter, either in its particular existence or in abstraction from its particular existence. Since non-designated matter is a constituent of the definitions of universal essences, which are merely the content of nature concepts that represent singular essences, there is good reason to think that the non-designated matter of a given species, e.g., bones and flesh in the abstract, is also merely the content of a concept that represents the designated matter of any and all members of the same species, e.g., Socrates's bones and flesh and Plato's bones and flesh and so on. Just as it is plausible that there is no "abstract human being" in reality, so is it plausible that there are no "abstract bones and flesh" in reality. Further, other interpreters of Aquinas also agree that Aquinas's distinction between designated and non-designated matter is merely a conceptual distinction.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ In commenting on the same passage from Aquinas's *De Ente et Essentia* that I quoted above, Gyula Klima explains, "It is important to note here that the difference between designated and non-designated matter is, again, not a difference between two different kinds of entities, but rather a difference between two different ways of considering the same kind of entity; that is to say, the distinction between designated and non-designated matter is not a real distinction, but a distinction of reason. All matter in reality is designated, i.e., concrete chunks of matter existing under the determinate dimensions of the individual bodies they constitute. But just as the individuals can be considered in a universal manner, disregarding their individuating features, so their matter can be considered generally, not as this or that particular chunk of matter. And it is obvious that it is only matter considered in this way that can be signified by the definition of the species (the definition that signifies the specific essence of each individual), for it is clear that the

Given that there is no non-designated matter in reality, it follows that there are in reality no common natures, as Brower construes them, i.e., as composites with non-designated matter as a constituent. But Brower's account of Aquinas's same-species relation depends upon the real existence of such common natures. For Brower explains the commonness of members of the same-species in terms of their possessing common natures so construed. So, Brower's account of Aquinas's same-species relation in terms of such common natures fails. Nonetheless, Brower provides some tools in various contexts that I use in the next section to construct an alternative to Brower's as well as to Leftow's account of Aquinas's same-species relation.

It is worth noting that, in effect, Brower's mistake (of regarding common natures composed of non-designated matter as really existing entities) conflates Aquinas's views of what fulfills two distinct property roles, namely accounting for predication and for the shared character of things. For Aquinas, a nature concept expressed by a definition that includes non-designated matter is what is predicated of a substance, while it is the particular extra-mental nature that does not include non-designated matter that accounts for the substantial character of the substance of which it is a part. I clarify my positive view of species-natures in the next section.

definition of man, for example, cannot signify the flesh and bones of Socrates as *this* particular matter belonging to Socrates, for otherwise all men (i.e., all individuals having the essence signified by this definition) ought to have Socrates' flesh and bones, which is clearly absurd." Klima, "Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence, 231n18."

2.5 My Alternative to Brower's and Leftow's Accounts of Aquinas's Same-species Relation

I shall now argue that, for Aquinas, my modified version of Brower's internal sameness relation obtains between the substantial forms that are real constituents of the individual natures of members of the same species. Recall that whereas Leftow characterizes Aquinas as holding a trope view according to which tropes of a given species-nature stand in a relation of exact resemblance (as on contemporary trope theories), Brower argues that Aquinas offers a distinctive kind of trope theory on which tropes of the same kind bear to one another a relation of internal sameness, which is stronger than the exact resemblance relation of standard trope theories but weaker than the numerical sameness relation thought to obtain between instances of universal properties.⁴⁶ While I depart from Brower in several of the details, the account I develop here builds upon Brower's view that members of the same species each have a constituent that is internally the same as that of the other members. Whereas Brower thinks that constituent is a common nature, which Brower takes to be partially composed of non-designated matter, I take the constituent to be the substantial form (which is a part of the individual nature). Further, I take prime matter to be what accounts for the numerical distinctness of members of the same-species.

Since I used Leftow's roughly-existential-quantification account of Aquinas's species-definitions above, it is important, first, to note that that account is distinct from and independent of Leftow's account of Aquinas's same-species relation. Leftow himself

⁴⁶ Given this, Brower characterizes Aquinas's view as a form of *moderate realism*.

acknowledges that “the roughly-existential-quantification account is not enough to explain the real commonness of human nature on its own.”⁴⁷ For, Leftow explains,

Socrates is part of the set of all and only those who instance human nature. He is also part of the set of all and only humans and cats. ... to be a member of this set is to consist of some (cat or human) body and some (cat or human) soul. However, we do not think there is a really common nature of cat-humanity. Beyond anything the roughly-existential-quantification account provides, we need some reason to treat the set of humans and others relevantly like it as specifying a common nature’s extension, and treat others like the set of cats and humans as arbitrary and unnatural. That is, we need this if we, like Thomas, are committed to the claim that not every such set gives the extension of a genuine objective kind. The real commonness of human nature is what *makes* the relevant set the extension of a natural kind.⁴⁸

Leftow considers and evaluates various options for interpreting Aquinas’s view of the real commonness of species-natures of a given kind – what is also regarded as the same-species relation. Given Leftow’s assumption that Aquinas affirmed that the individual natures of members of the same species are tropes as standardly conceived (i.e., as particular properties “present in their bearers, whose presence *makes* their bearers what they are”⁴⁹), Leftow suggests that, for Aquinas, the same-species relation supervenes on such tropes. That is to say that the members of a given species stand in the same-species relation because each member of the given species possesses a trope of the given nature that exactly resembles those of the other members. The relation is primitive in the sense that there is nothing further, e.g., no common constituent, in terms of which the same-species relation

⁴⁷ Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” 27.

⁴⁸ Leftow, 27.

⁴⁹ Leftow, 2.

may be conceived. So, Leftow concludes that Aquinas's view is a "trope nominalism enriched by same-species relations."⁵⁰

Because Aquinas's views of matter are controversial, especially with respect to what kind of matter partially composes species-natures and what kind of matter individuates substances, I now explain the relevant views that I assume before developing my alternative. As I noted above, for Aquinas the species-natures of material things are composites of a substantial form and some portion of matter. Because, as I argued above, there is no non-designated matter in reality, it is clear that the relevant portion of matter is not non-designated matter. The other types of matter that Aquinas discusses include prime matter, designated matter, and matter considered under some kind of dimensions. Although in one quotation I gave above Aquinas identifies designated matter with matter considered under determinate dimensions and he says that such matter is the principle of individuation, I do not take such designated matter to be what numerically distinguishes individual members of the same-species. For I assume Brower's recent account of Aquinas's view of the individuation of substances. Brower notes that Aquinas expresses his views about individuation differently in different contexts. Brower has recently given an interpretation of Aquinas's view intended to reconcile the various claims Aquinas makes about individuation into an account whose overall structure Brower takes to be represented throughout Aquinas's works, despite changes in some of the details.⁵¹ Brower's account seems to me to be the best of those I know; even if it is not correct as an interpretation of

⁵⁰ Leftow, 41. Leftow favors the classification of trope theories as nominalist, since he thinks the term 'realism' is best reserved for views on which properties are universals, i.e., able to be shared by multiple things in the sense of being numerically the same across those things. Leftow, 2.

⁵¹ Brower, "Aquinas on the Individuation of Substances."

Aquinas, though Brower thinks it is, it seems to me to be the best view on offer given the main features of Aquinas's metaphysics.

One of the main controversies in Aquinas scholarship on the individuation of substances concerns whether the principle of individuation is prime matter, which is an essential principle of substances, or quantitative dimensions, which are accidents of substances. Brower offers a resolution to this controversy by distinguishing within Aquinas's account between two distinct issues concerning the distinctness of substances belonging to the same species: i) accounting for the non-identity of substances belonging to the same species, and ii) accounting for the spatial distinctness of substances belonging to the same species.⁵² Brower argues that prime matter, which Aquinas refers to in one context as "the primary principle of individuation," accounts for the non-identity of substances of the same nature. Brower argues that prime matter and dimensions, which Aquinas refers to in the same context as "a secondary principle," jointly account for the spatial distinctness of numerically distinct substances.

Brower characterizes Aquinas's notion of prime matter as a unique type of substratum that serves as the substratum for substantial forms, which inhere in, i.e., depend in a particular way on, prime matter and thereby together constitute a hylomorphic compound.⁵³ Further, prime matter serves as the ultimate substratum for accidental forms,

⁵² Brower characterizes both of these issues as concerning the "numerical distinctness" of substances belonging to the same species for Aquinas. Commenting on a quotation from Aquinas's *Sentences Commentary*, Brower explains that Aquinas takes "properly 'numerical' distinctness to be that which follows on the 'division of quantity or matter' and hence 'is found only in material beings.'" Brower, 144.

⁵³ As I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Brower argues that the central notions of Aquinas's hylomorphism—namely, matter, form, and compound—exactly resemble, in their structural relations to one another, those of the central notions of contemporary substratum theory—namely, substratum, property, and complexes of each.

which inhere in substantial form-prime matter compounds, as well as for the compounds that result from the inherence of accidental forms in substantial form-prime matter compounds. Brower explains that, for Aquinas prime matter also accounts for the materiality of material things. Further, Brower argues that Aquinas's standard characterization of prime matter as pure potentiality does not, as some scholars think, entail that prime matter does not exist at all, but only that it does not exist in and of itself; instead, prime matter exists in another, i.e., by having a form, which is an actuality, inhering in it.⁵⁴ Finally, given Aquinas's characterization of prime matter as the ultimate principle of the singularity of corporeal things and given Aquinas's views about change, Brower argues that prime matter must, for Aquinas, come in portions that are primitively distinct.⁵⁵ Given all this, Brower concludes that, for Aquinas a primitively distinct portion of prime matter accounts for the numerical distinctness of members of the same species.

I shall combine Brower's view of prime matter with my modifications to Brower's characterizations of different types of distinctness and internal sameness as well as my critique of Brower's account of Aquinas's common natures in order to give an alternative account of the same-species relation. First, though, in order to clarify how my view differs from Brower's, I explain what results from the conjunction of Brower (2015)'s account of

⁵⁴ In Aquinas's technical terms, what this means is that prime matter is not an actuality nor does it have actuality as a proper part or constituent; rather, prime matter has actuality (or exists) insofar as a being in actuality (in this case, a form) inheres in it. Brower gives the following quotes from Aquinas, "... only that matter which is understood to be without any form or privation but also to be a substratum for form or privation is called *prime matter* (DPN 2.70-8)." "Prime matter can never exist through itself (*per se*). Indeed, since it does not have any form in its nature, it does not have being in actuality, but only in potentiality, since being in actuality comes only through a form. For the same reason, nothing that is a being in actuality can be called *prime matter* (DPN 2.114-19)." Translated by Brower in Brower, "Aquinas on the Individuation of Substances," 133.

⁵⁵ See Aquinas, *In CA* 1.9.65-6 and Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*, 113–29.

Aquinas's solution to the problem of universals and Brower (2017)'s account of Aquinas's view of the individuation of substances, the former of which he assumes in the latter. Recall that Brower (2015) assumes that Aquinas's common natures are composites of a substantial form and non-designated matter and that such common natures are internally the same because numerically distinguished wholly by a distinct kind of matter (which Brower doesn't specify) that is external to them. Brower (2017) implies that prime matter is the matter that is external to the common nature and that numerically distinguishes the common nature.⁵⁶

In addition, Brower (2017) claims that, for Aquinas, because substances belonging to the same species possess the same common nature, they also possess the same substantial form.⁵⁷ Brower implies that the common nature and the substantial form, which are each parts of a member of a given species, are internally the same as the common nature and the substantial form, respectively, of other members of the species because they are each numerically distinguished by the primitively distinct portion of prime matter that is external to them (but is also a constituent of the substance). Brower does not distinguish the relationship that a substantial form bears to prime matter from the relationship that a common nature bears to prime matter. Since, on Brower's view, prime matter is external to both the substantial form and the common nature, it seems that, for Brower, the only

⁵⁶ Brower says, "whereas the portions of prime matter associated with distinct material substances are primitively distinct, the substances themselves, as well as their substantial forms, are derivatively distinct—that is to say, distinct solely in virtue of their relationship to the primitively distinct portions of prime matter that serve as their substrata or individuators (141)."

⁵⁷ Brower says, "Aquinas assumes that substances belonging to the same species must possess the same common nature or essence, and hence, the same substantial form." Brower, "Aquinas on the Individuation of Substances," 130.

difference between the common nature and the substantial form of a given substance is that the former is composed of non-designated matter in addition to a substantial form.

As I explained above, in contrast to Brower, I do not think non-designated matter is a real constituent of the natures of things, for Aquinas or at all. Instead, given Brower's account of prime matter, I think the natures of material substances are composites of a portion of primitively distinct prime matter and a substantial form. Whereas on Brower's view, prime matter is external to the nature and so numerically distinguishes the nature "from the outside," on my view, prime matter is internal to, in the sense that it is a part of, the nature, and so numerically distinguishes the nature "from the inside." Yet Brower and I agree that the portion of prime matter that a substantial form inheres in to compose a material substance is external to the substantial form and hence numerically distinguishes the substantial form from others that are constituents of members of the same species "from the outside."

Given my revision to Brower's internal sameness relation, which reflects the distinction I drew between internal and external derivative distinctness, it follows that the substantial forms of members of the same species stand in the relation of internal sameness* to one another (since they are merely externally derivatively distinct from one another). Further, because, on my view, the natures of members of the same species are internally derivatively distinct, i.e., numerically distinct from one another wholly in virtue of the primitive distinctness of one of their parts, namely their portion of prime matter, the natures of members of the same species are not internally the same. Nonetheless, we may properly speak of the natures of members of the same species as "common" in the sense they are each composed of a substantial form that is internally (but not numerically) the

same as that of the others. Thus, two or more substances are members of the same species if and only if they are each partially composed of a substantial form that is merely externally derivatively distinct from, and hence, internally the same, as that of the other(s).

I summarize my alternative account as follows:

My Alternative Account of Aquinas's Same-Species Relation: x and y are members of the same species iff x and y are each partially composed of a substantial form that is internally the same* as that of the other.

Internal sameness:* x is internally the same* as y iff either (a) $x = y$, or (b) x and y are merely *externally* derivatively numerically distinct.

External derivative distinctness: the source of x's numerical distinction from y is external to x.

*Common nature** = *def* a nature that is partially composed of a substantial form that is *internally the same* (but not necessarily *identical*) for all members of the same natural kind.

Before concluding, I want to note that my account of the substantive resemblances between things with respect to their natures may be extended to account for the substantive resemblances between things with respect to their accidents. I suggest that the substantive similarities between things with respect to their accidental characteristics are explained by the internal sameness* of those things' relevant constituent accidental forms, which are internally the same* as one another insofar as each is numerically distinguished from the other by the functional matter that is external to them and in which they inhere. In the next chapter I explain that in the case of hylomorphic/material substances the functional matter in which accidental forms inhere is the nature of the given material substance, where the nature is, again, a substantial form-prime matter compound.

3. Conclusion

I conclude by contrasting my account of the same-species relation with contemporary accounts and explaining how it makes sense of the controversy in Aquinas scholarship regarding Aquinas's view. Recall Brower's suggestion that Aquinas offers a distinctive type of trope theory according to which tropes are derivatively distinct individuals, rather than primitively distinct individuals (as they are standardly conceived). Given the distinction I draw between internal and external derivative distinctness, it follows that there are two kinds of derivatively distinct individuals. On my view, species-natures are internally derivatively distinct individuals and substantial forms are externally derivatively distinct individuals. On Brower's view, species-natures and substantial forms are both externally derivatively distinct individuals. As I explained above, since, for Aquinas, substantial forms and species-natures occupy distinct categories of beings, if Brower wants to maintain that substantial forms and species-natures are both tropes in a substantive sense, then he must endorse a pluralist view of substantive properties/tropes.

Since I do not think there is good reason to affirm a substantive conception of properties, as I explained above, I do not think species-natures or substantial forms are tropes in a substantive sense. Nonetheless, they are trope-like insofar as the species-natures and substantial forms that have extramental existence are particulars and they fulfill the property roles of accounting for certain aspects of the intrinsic character of substances. However, because the substantial forms of members of the same species bear to one another the relation of internal sameness*, which is stronger than mere resemblance but weaker than numerical sameness, they account for the same-species relation in a way that is distinct from both standard trope theories, on which members of the same species possess natures

that merely resemble one another, and extreme realist views, on which members of the same species possess natures that are numerically the same.

Finally, as Brower explains, insofar as realism is taken to be the view that there are common characteristics and insofar as individual characteristics that stand in the internal sameness* relation to one another may be regarded as ‘common’ characteristics, it is clear that one may be regarded as a realist because one accepts common characteristics, and yet also be regarded as a nominalist because one rejects (extra-mental) universal characteristics.⁵⁸ Further, it is because one can posit common characteristics that are at most internally the same (rather than numerically the same) that it makes sense to distinguish moderate from more extreme or robust forms of realism as is found in characterizations of medieval solutions to the problem of universals. All of this helps to illuminate why Aquinas’s solution to the problem of universals has been so variously classified and controversial.

⁵⁸ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 19.

CHAPTER SIX

Groundwork for a Thomistic Account of two Metaphysical Property Roles: “Property” Characterization and the Status of Accidental Unities in Aquinas

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In this chapter, I lay some groundwork for a comprehensive Thomistic account of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the metaphysical constitution and the characteristics of substances. This chapter provides only groundwork rather than a comprehensive account of such property roles, because the focus of the chapter is limited to the constitution of *material* substances (rather than that of all substances) and to the role of forms (rather than the roles of all the constituents of a substance) in accounting for the characteristics of substances. I build on Brower’s basic account of the metaphysical constitution of Aquinas’s hylomorphic compounds, but I give an alternative to Brower’s account of Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds, which, I argue, enables a more plausible account of how Aquinas’s accidental forms characterize material substances.

After arguing that Aquinas’s hylomorphism is usefully characterized as a unique type of substratum theory, Jeffrey Brower argues that Aquinas’s hylomorphic account of change entails a distinction between “property” possession and “property” characterization.¹ Given that and Brower’s assumption that Aquinas’s fundamental

¹ Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*. I use scare quotes around the term ‘property’ in the introductory paragraphs because, as I explain in chapter five, Brower uses property terms differently

hylomorphic compounds are material substances and accidental unities, it follows that material substances are not characterized by the accidents they possess. In order to avoid that counterintuitive consequence, Brower stipulates a form of derivative “property” characterization and a numerical sameness without identity relation, which together enable him to affirm that material substances are derivatively characterized by the accidents they possess. I argue that, by affirming a plausible alternative to Brower’s account of Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds, we can maintain that accidents characterize material substances in the primary sense without having to affirm the real existence of accidental unities or Brower’s objectionable numerical sameness without identity relation.

I begin by briefly summarizing Brower’s justification for his view that Aquinas’s hylomorphism is a unique type of substratum theory that includes a distinction between “property” possession and “property” characterization. Next I explain why that distinction together with Brower’s account of Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds entails that substances are not characterized by the accidents they possess. I explain Brower’s solution to that counterintuitive consequence and then note some implausible consequences of Brower’s numerical sameness without identity relation. Then I show that by affirming a plausible alternative to Brower’s account of Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds, we can maintain that accidents characterize substances in the primary sense.

in different contexts. In the relevant context, Brower uses ‘property’ to refer to the substantial and accidental forms of material things, all of which he takes to be functional properties for Aquinas in the sense that they function as do properties on substratum theory, but only some of which he takes to be substantive properties, as I explain below. Recall that I argued in chapter five that there is good reason to think there are no substantive properties and, instead, to regard properties as merely functional entities that fulfill some property role(s).

Finally, I show that my alternative is compatible with Aquinas's account of accidental change and the passages from Aquinas's works that Brower gives to support his view.

1. Brower on Aquinas's Hylomorphism as a Substratum Theory

Hylomorphism is the view that certain things are composites of form and matter. On Aquinas's view, every material being is composed of matter and immaterial form. Brower has argued that Aquinas's hylomorphism is a distinctive type of substratum theory, which is to say that Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds may be understood as substratum-property complexes. In contemporary philosophy, substratum theory is the view that substances are composed of properties and a *sui generis* particular called a 'bare particular', which serves as a substratum for the properties. Brower characterizes Aquinas's view as a type of substratum theory only in virtue of the structural similarities between the components of Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds and the components of substratum-property complexes. Brower denies that Aquinas holds any of the substantive metaphysical views of substratum theory concerning the nature of substrata and of properties. Given the substantive differences between Aquinas's hylomorphism and substratum theory, the characterization of Aquinas's view as a type of substratum theory can be misleading. Nevertheless, I think Brower's analysis of Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds as structurally similar to substratum-property complexes is useful for understanding Aquinas's view and its relation to contemporary views.

Brower argues that Aquinas's hylomorphism is similar to contemporary substratum theory insofar as both account for the existence of an ordinary material object, such as Socrates, by appeal to three distinct types of being: (i) an immanent property (loosely

speaking) or conjunction of immanent properties, in this case the property *humanity* or the properties constituting *humanity* or, for Aquinas, the human substantial form,² (ii) a *sui generis* type of being that serves as the substratum for this property, and (iii) a complex that exists in virtue of and so long as such a substratum possesses such a property.³ For Aquinas, these three types of being are forms, matter, and hylomorphic compounds. On contemporary substratum theory, these three types of being are properties, substrata, and substratum-property complexes. Brower characterizes Aquinas's forms – specifically, the forms of material things – as properties in a functional sense, i.e. in the sense that they function within hylomorphic compounds as do properties within substratum-property complexes.⁴ Similarly, Brower characterizes Aquinas's matter as a substratum in the sense that it functions within hylomorphic compounds as does a substratum within a substratum-property complex. On substratum theories, a substratum possesses properties and together they compose a substratum-property complex. So too, on Aquinas's view, a substratum that Aquinas calls 'matter' possesses what Aquinas calls 'forms' and together they compose a complex that Aquinas calls a 'hylomorphic compound.'

Brower explains that in Aquinas's general account of change, from which his hylomorphism emerges, Aquinas gives functional characterizations of matter, form, and

² For Aquinas, the substantial form of each human being is the human soul, which Brower regards as a property in a merely functional sense. Whereas for Aquinas there is only one substantial form that accounts for kind membership, on contemporary substratum theories, kind membership is typically explained in terms of a conjunction of properties.

³ Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*, 131.

⁴ Brower also characterizes Aquinas's forms, excluding the human soul, as properties in a substantive ontological sense. While I depart from him in that respect, our disagreement is not relevant to the substance of this paper.

hylomorphic compounds. That is, Aquinas characterizes these hylomorphic notions in terms of how they function or the roles they play in ordinary instances of change.⁵ Aquinas affirms the common sense view that change involves a subject that endures the given change as well as something with respect to which the enduring subject is changed.⁶ Aquinas gives the example of a lump of bronze that is made into a bronze statue. When the statue is made, the bronze is the subject that endures the change and that changes with respect to its shape. Aquinas introduces the term ‘matter’ (*materia*) to refer to the enduring subject of change and the term ‘form’ (*forma*) to refer to that with respect to which the matter is changed. He introduces the term ‘a compound of matter and form’ (*ex materia et forma composita*) or ‘a hylomorphic compound’ to refer to that which comes to be when some matter possesses a form, and so what serves as the terminus of change.

Aquinas also makes reference to two distinct relations in his analysis of change. He introduces the term ‘inherence’ (*inhaerentia*) to refer to “the relation that distinct forms successively bear to the matter that takes them on in a given change” and the term ‘composition’ (*compositio*) to refer to “the relation that both matter and form jointly bear to the hylomorphic compounds of which they are a part.”⁷ Because Aquinas conceives of these relations as primitive types of dependence built into the nature of forms and hylomorphic compounds respectively, these relations are not additional entities in

⁵ Aquinas’s hylomorphic characterization of ‘form’ according to which form is correlative with matter is his primary sense of the term form. Although Aquinas sometimes speaks of God and angels as forms or even substantial forms, his usage of the term ‘form’ in those contexts is in an analogous sense.

⁶ As I explain below, Aquinas’s view that the subject of substantial change endures the substantial change must be qualified.

⁷ Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 72. Brower notes that Aquinas uses the term ‘composition’ (*compositio*) and related terms in a broad sense that covers both ‘mereological structure’ and non-mereological structure (or ‘constituency’) in contemporary philosophy. Brower, 27.

Aquinas's analysis. Rather, Aquinas's analysis of change involves just three entities: form, matter, and a hylomorphic compound. On Aquinas's view, all change involves some form coming to inhere in matter resulting in a hylomorphic compound composed of that form and matter. Brower argues that the structural relations of these central hylomorphic notions are identical to those of the central notions of substratum theories, such that, with respect to their structural relations to one another, portions of matter may be identified with substrata, forms may be identified with properties, and hylomorphic compounds may be conceived of as substratum-property complexes.⁸ Figure 1 below is identical to the figure that Brower gives to illustrate these similarities.⁹

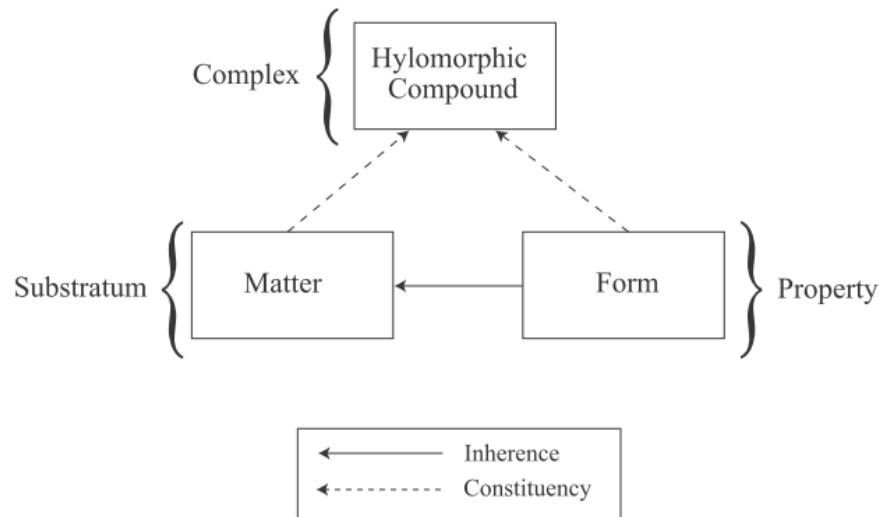


Figure 1. Aquinas's Hylomorphic Compounds as Substratum-Property Complexes

⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁹ Brower, 110. I am grateful to Brandon Dahm for his assistance in making electronic versions of the figures in this chapter.

Brower notes that apart from the overlap in the structural relations between a form, matter, and a hylomorphic compound, on the one hand, and a property, a substratum, and a substratum-property complex, on the other hand, the only core thesis that Aquinas and contemporary substratum theorists affirm is that both substrata and properties exist; they disagree about what substrata and properties are ontologically speaking.¹⁰ So, Brower isn't claiming, for example, that the matter role, on Aquinas's view, is played by a bare particular as it is on substratum theories.

Aquinas applies his general account of change to what he identifies as the two subtypes of change, namely substantial and accidental change. Brower explains that this specification of his general account of change has a number of implications for his hylomorphism. I discuss these implications after first explaining the two subtypes of change. Whereas substantial changes involve the generation and corruption of substances, accidental changes involve pre-existing substances that are the subjects of change and that change with respect to their accidental (i.e. non-essential) characteristics. Corresponding with each type of change are distinct types of matter, forms, and hylomorphic compounds, which we may conceive of as distinct types of functional substrata, properties, and substratum-property complexes. In substantial change in the material world, a substantial form comes to inhere in a portion of prime matter resulting in a material substance. Examples of material substances include metals, plants, animals, and human beings. In accidental change, an accidental form comes to inhere in a material substance that functions as matter resulting in an accidental unity (e.g. a bronze statue or tan-Socrates).

¹⁰ Brower, 39.

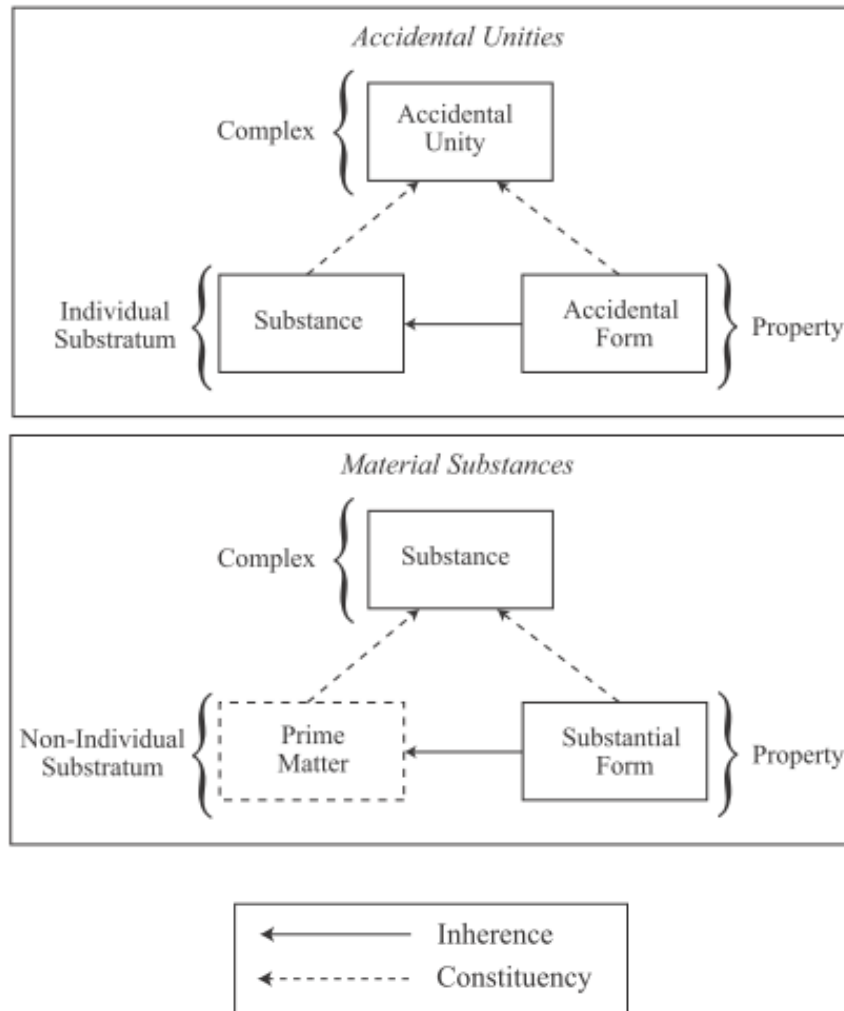


Figure 2. Aquinas's Complete Hylomorphism according to Brower

According to Brower, some of the implications for hylomorphism of Aquinas's analysis of the two subtypes of change are as follows:

- (a) "There are different kinds of matter, form, and hylomorphic compound (in fact, two kinds of each—primary vs. secondary matter, substantial vs. accidental forms, and material substances vs. accidental unities).
- (b) Matter possesses forms via inherence.
- (c) Hylomorphic compounds exist in virtue of the inherence of form in matter.
- (d) Hylomorphic compounds possess matter and form via constituency, and hence are composed of them."¹¹

¹¹ Brower, 104.

As his parenthetical qualification of (a) indicates, Brower assumes – but I depart from him on this below – that the termini of substantial and accidental change, namely material substances and accidental unities, are the fundamental hylomorphic compounds in Aquinas’s ontology. So, moving from Aquinas’s analysis of change to his ontology, Brower illustrates the composition of what he takes to be Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds in a figure identical to figure 2, which follows.¹²

Brower explains that Aquinas’s general account of change involves functional characterizations of the hylomorphic terms because when we compare substantial and accidental change, the roles of matter, form, and hylomorphic compound are played by things that are fundamentally distinct.

Brower explains that Aquinas’s hylomorphic account of change entails a distinction between two kinds of property possession, conceived in terms of two distinct relations: i) constituency, which is a relation between a complex and one of its parts, and ii) inherence, which is a relation between distinct parts of some larger complex. The functional matter that a given form inheres in to compose a hylomorphic compound possesses that form by inherence but not by constituency, i.e. by having the form inhere in it but not by having the form as a part. In contrast, a hylomorphic compound possesses a form by constituency but not by inherence, i.e. by having the form as a part but not by having the form inhere in it. On this view, property possession and property characterization come apart—where characterization is expressed at least partially as follows: “If a subject *a* is characterized by

¹² Brower, 111.

a property *F*-ness, then *a* is *F*.”¹³ For, on Aquinas’s view, the functional matter involved in any change comes to possess a form by having that form inhere in it without also being characterized by that form. Aquinas assumes this is the case for the functional matter involved in both substantial and accidental change, which is a portion of prime matter and a material substance respectively. For Aquinas assumes that such functional matter is the underlying subject of change, which remains the same throughout the given change in the sense that it does not itself become characterized by the form that is acquired in the change.¹⁴

Given that the substratum of change does not itself become characterized by the form acquired in the given change, property possession via inherence is such that the form possessed by inherence does not characterize the functional matter in which it inheres. For Brower, this means that substantial forms do not characterize the prime matter in which they inhere, nor do accidental forms characterize the material substances in which they

¹³ Brower, 77.

¹⁴ Brower himself does not state this precise sense in which the functional matter remains the same throughout change. I do so in this way because it is compatible with another plausible sense in which an underlying subject of change may not remain the same throughout the given change, namely the sense in which the prime matter that underlies substantial change loses the identity it derives from one substantial form when that substantial form is replaced by a different substantial form. There are good reasons to think that the diachronic identity, i.e. the identity over time, of the prime matter that is the ultimate substratum of a given material substance derives from the substantial form that inheres in that prime matter. For since it is plausible that the composition of the underlying prime matter changes over time, the diachronic identity of the underlying prime matter must derive from something other than itself. It is worth noting that such a view is compatible with the view I give in chapter 5 on which the numerical distinctness of one substantial form from another of the same species derives from the respective primitively distinct portions of prime matter in which each substantial form inheres. I just need the further qualification that the relevant portions of prime matter that numerically distinguish multiple members of the same species are those in which the respective substantial forms each inhered at the time they began to inhere in prime matter, which is the time at which the relevant hylomorphic compounds came into existence. I thank Rob Koons for drawing my attention to these issues.

inhere.¹⁵ In contrast, the form that comes to inhere in some functional matter in an instance of change does characterize the hylomorphic compound that it partially composes as a result of its inherence in the functional matter. So, property possession via constituency is such that the form possessed by constituency does characterize that which it partially composes. For Brower, this means that substantial forms characterize the material substances they partly compose and that accidental forms characterize the accidental unities they partly compose.¹⁶

2. Brower on how Accidents Characterize Substances

Following Brower, I have been using the term ‘material substance’ to refer to a hylomorphic compound composed of prime matter and a substantial form. I have explained that, on Aquinas’s view, such a material substance is the enduring subject of accidental change and is that in which accidental forms inhere. Further, I have explained that, for Aquinas, forms possessed via inherence do not characterize that which they inhere in, since what they inhere in is the enduring subject of change and something only endures a change in the relevant sense if it does not become characterized by the form that comes to inhere in it. Given all this, it follows that accidental forms do not characterize material substances, but merely inhere in them. The notion that accidental forms do not characterize material substances seems contradictory to the common sense view, on a substance ontology, that accidental forms do indeed characterize material substances.

¹⁵ The latter raises a problem for how we are to conceive of substances being characterized by their accidents, which I address in the next section.

¹⁶ Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 89–90.

The claim that accidental forms do not characterize material substances and the claim that accidental forms do characterize material substances are only genuinely contradictory if the term ‘substance’ has the same sense in both claims. Brower assumes that the term ‘substance’ does have the same sense throughout, for Brower assumes that the hylomorphic compounds that Aquinas identifies as the termini of substantial and accidental change, i.e. material substances and accidental unities respectively, are the fundamental hylomorphic compounds in Aquinas’s ontology. That is to say, Brower thinks Aquinas holds that material substances and accidental unities exist and that there are no other types of hylomorphic compounds that exist. Given this, Brower cannot affirm that material substances are characterized by accidents.

Brower’s solution to this counterintuitive consequence of his view is to stipulate a form of derivative property characterization that enables him to maintain that although accidental forms do not primarily characterize substances, accidental forms derivatively characterize substances. Brower stipulates that a hylomorphic compound is characterized primarily or *simpliciter* by a form or property if and only if it possesses that form or property as an immediate proper part or constituent. In contrast, a hylomorphic compound is characterized derivatively by a form or property *F-ness* if and only if it shares the same matter as a distinct hylomorphic compound that is characterized *simpliciter* by *F-ness*. So, although a material substance is not characterized primarily or *simpliciter* by any accidental form since no material substance possesses any accidental form as a proper part or constituent, a material substance is characterized derivatively by those accidental forms that inhere in it. For the material substance will have the same matter as any accidental unity that results from the inherence of an accidental form in that material substance.

Brower assumes that sharing all the same prime matter at a given time is necessary and sufficient for two non-identical hylomorphic compounds to bear a relation of numerical sameness without identity.¹⁷ Given Brower's assumption that accidental unities actually exist, they share all their prime matter in common with the material substance that partially composes them. So, Brower takes such material substances and accidental unities to be numerically the same without being identical.

Brower summarizes these views as follows:

- (e) "Distinct hylomorphic compounds sharing the same matter (at a time) are numerically one and the same material object (at that time).
- (f) Hylomorphic compounds are characterized by the forms they possess (via constituency), but matter is not characterized by the forms it possesses (via inherence).
- (g) Hylomorphic compounds are characterized *primarily* or *simpliciter* by the forms they possess via constituency, whereas they are characterized *secondarily* or *derivatively* (and typically also contingently) by the forms they possess via inherence."¹⁸

Brower characterizes these views as further implications of Aquinas's view of change for his hylomorphism. While I agree with Brower that (f) is an implication of Aquinas's view of change, (e) and (g) are not, for (e) and (g) only follow from Aquinas's view of change given that the hylomorphic compounds that Aquinas identifies as the termini of substantial and accidental change, i.e. material substances and accidental unities respectively, are, as Brower thinks, the fundamental hylomorphic compounds in Aquinas's ontology (and that accidents characterize material substances, i.e. compounds of prime matter and substantial form). I give an alternative account of Aquinas's fundamental hylomorphic compounds below that yields an alternative to (e) and that makes the

¹⁷ Brower, 94.

¹⁸ Brower, 104.

distinction in (g) between two forms of property characterization unnecessary. In order to motivate my alternative, let us first consider some implausible consequences of Brower's view.

Brower acknowledges and others have drawn attention to some counterintuitive consequences of Brower's notion of numerical sameness without identity.¹⁹ The first consequence is that whenever a material substance has two or more accidental forms inhering in it, on Brower's view, there are actually two or more coinciding accidental unities present, which each have the same material substance as a part, but they are not themselves compositionally related. So, for Brower, the accidental unities including sitting-Lindsay, typing-Lindsay, red-headed-Lindsay, etc. are each fundamental entities that coincide in the place I occupy. But common sense tells us that in the place I occupy, there is just one thing that is sitting, typing, and possessing red hair. In addition, because, for Brower, material substances are derivatively characterized by the accidental forms that inhere in them, it follows that in the place I occupy there is a sense in which there are two things sitting, two things typing, and two things with red-hair. But common sense tells us that there is just one thing sitting, one thing typing, and one thing possessing red hair. Since these consequences of Brower's view are contrary to common sense, it would be nice to have an alternative that doesn't have these consequences.

¹⁹ Brower, 164; Alexander Pruss, "Brower and Rea's Constitution Account of the Trinity," in *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, by McCall, Thomas and Rea, Michael (Oxford University Press, 2009), 315–25. Jeremy Skrzypek, "Dynamic Structure or Enduring Activity? Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Neo-Aristotelians on Substantial Form (Doctoral Dissertation)" (St. Louis University, 2016).

3. *My Alternative to Brower's View of How and What Accidents Characterize*

I now propose such an alternative that enables us to avoid affirming the existence of accidental unities or a relation of numerical sameness without identity while still affirming Aquinas's account of change, the distinction between property possession and property characterization, and the assumption that accidental forms characterize substances in some sense. My proposal is that, instead of affirming the existence of accidental unities, we should affirm the existence of individual material supposita that are composed of what I have been calling a 'material substance' (i.e. a substantial form-prime matter compound) and all of the accidental forms that inhere in that substance at a time.

Jeremy Skrzypek has argued, persuasively I think, on both textual and philosophical grounds that Brower is mistaken to limit Aquinas's fundamental hylomorphic compounds to material substances and accidental unities. Skrzypek argues that Brower mistakenly excludes individual supposita from Aquinas's fundamental ontology.²⁰ Skrzypek notes that Aquinas uses the term 'substance' not only to refer to a substantial form-prime matter compound, as I have followed Brower in using the term, but also in another sense to refer to an individual suppositum or individual substance. The first sense of the term 'substance' refers to the substantial form-prime matter compound, which Aquinas regards as the essence of a material thing. The second sense of the term 'substance' refers to the compound composed of the essence and the accidental forms that inhere in that essence at a time. Given this distinction, henceforth I shall refer to the substance understood as the

²⁰Skrzypek, "Dynamic Structure or Enduring Activity? Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Neo-Aristotelians on Substantial Form (Doctoral Dissertation)." In the draft of the relevant chapter from Skrzypek's dissertation that I saw when forming my own views, Skrzypek did not state a clear view on whether or not accidental unities have fundamental existence. In the final version he tentatively suggests that accidental unities do not have fundamental existence.

essence of a thing as ‘the essence’ and I shall refer to the substance understood as the suppositum composed of the essence and any accidental forms that inhere in that essence at a time as ‘the suppositum’.

Assuming, with Aquinas, that every material thing possesses a multiplicity of accidental forms at any given time, I maintain that the ordinary substances we encounter in the material world are supposita composed of an essence and some accidental forms. So, for example, I am a suppositum composed of my human essence and whatever accidental forms I possess at any given time, such as my shape, size, color, and position. Now many of the accidental forms that are possessed by supposita are possessed by them temporarily. Given this, the composition of a suppositum changes over time. Nevertheless, a suppositum persists through any mere accidental changes, i.e., changes only in its constituent accidental forms,²¹ so long as its essence persists through the changes.²² On this view an ordinary suppositum is composed of but is not identical to its essence and all the accidental forms it possesses at a given time. Given my view that Aquinas’s fundamental hylomorphic compounds are material essences and material supposita but not accidental unities, I maintain the following alternative to Brower’s claim (e).

(e*): Distinct hylomorphic compounds sharing the same matter (at a time) bear a part-whole relation (in particular, a material essence is a part of a material suppositum).

²¹ I say ‘mere accidental changes’ in order to remain neutral regarding the post-mortem state of human beings wherein the human soul survives death in a disembodied state. Since death is a kind of substantial change (whether that substantial change entails the corruption of the suppositum or not), it is not a mere accidental change.

²² As Aquinas explains, “A difference in accidents makes a thing ‘other’... [but] it is clear that, in created things, the otherness that results from a difference in accidents can pertain to the same hypostasis or suppositum. In such cases, numerically the same thing can underlie different accidents. ... Hence ... that one thing is said to be ‘other’ does not signify a difference in suppositum, but only a difference in accidental forms (ST, III, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1).”

Figure 3 is an illustration of how I conceive of the composition of an ordinary (material) suppositum, which, in this case, is Socrates with only a subset of his accidents.²³

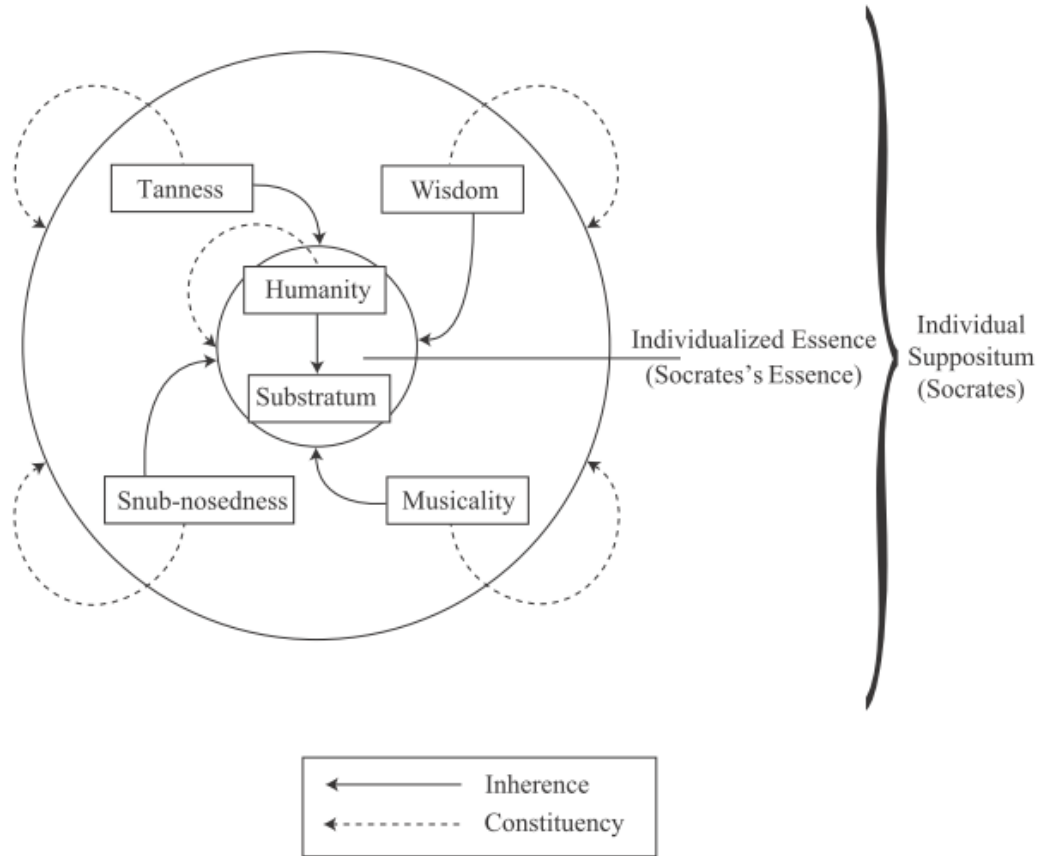


Figure 3. The Composition of a (Material) Suppositum²⁴

²³ I say ‘ordinary’ in order to exclude the person of Christ, who, from the time of his incarnation, is unique in possessing two natures, the unassumed divine nature and an assumed human nature. In order to account for the person of Christ, Tim Pawl argues that persons are identical to an unassumed nature. So, the person of Christ is identical to his unassumed divine nature and all other persons are identical to their unassumed created nature. Timothy J. Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 65–68.

²⁴ I follow Brower in using the term ‘humanity’ to refer to the substantial form in this figure even though that departs from Aquinas’s own practice. For Aquinas uses ‘humanity’ to refer to the nature/essence composed of a substantial form and prime matter. The ‘substratum’ in the figure is a portion of prime matter. It is also worth noting that there is some evidence that Aquinas thinks of quantitative dimensions as the first

As the figure depicts, the accidental forms that inhere in Socrates's essence are constituents of the suppositum that is Socrates. Given that forms possessed by constituency characterize the compounds they partially compose, as Brower maintains, it follows that accidental forms characterize supposita in what Brower calls the primary sense of property characterization.²⁵ So, Socrates is characterized, in the primary sense, by the accidents of tanness, wisdom, snub-nosedness, and musicality. I am characterized, in the primary sense, by the accidents of sitting, typing, and being red-headed, among other accidents, insofar as those accidents inhere in my essence and so, together with my essence, compose the suppositum that I am.

By simply affirming that there are supposita composed of an essence and all the accidental forms that inhere in that essence at a given time, we can affirm that accidental forms characterize substances, i.e., supposita, in the primary sense and preserve the distinction in Aquinas's view between property possession and property characterization (which is needed to account for change) without having to affirm Brower's notion of derivative property characterization or the numerical sameness without identity relation. To be clear, I am not claiming that accidental forms characterize essences. I agree with Brower that since essences possess accidental forms only by inherence and not by constituency, accidental forms do not characterize essences in what Brower refers to as the

accident that inheres in the essence of any given material substance and that other accidents inhere immediately in quantitative dimensions and only mediately in the essence. Although that view is not reflected in my illustration, it is compatible with the account I give here. I am thankful to Robert Koons from bringing that issue to my attention.

²⁵ Skrzypek also seeks to account for the accidental character of supposita, but he does by introducing some mereological principles. He does not distinguish between property possession and property characterization as I follow Brower in doing in order to explain how accidents characterize supposita.

primary form of property characterization. But, unlike Brower, I do not think we need to affirm that accidental forms characterize essences at all, even in the derivative way that Brower defends. For I think the common sense view that accidental characteristics actually characterize substances concerns supposita and not essences.²⁶ Given this, on my alternative, there is no need for the distinction between primary and secondary/derivative property characterization expressed in Brower's claim (g). Since Brower implicitly denies the existence of supposita, my alternative is not open to him.

4. *The Ontological Status of Accidental Unities*

I now argue that, given that accidental forms are parts of supposita, not only can we affirm that substances, i.e. supposita, are characterized by accidents, but we can also affirm Aquinas's account of change without having to affirm the fundamental existence of accidental unities understood as the compound of an essence and a single accidental form. I do not argue that the view that accidental unities do not have fundamental existence was in fact Aquinas's view, but only that it is compatible with Aquinas's account of accidental change.

Recall that in Aquinas's analysis of accidental change, the terminus of any accidental change is an accidental unity composed of a material substance, i.e. an essence,

²⁶ Tim Pawl raised the objection that it seems that the Ecumenical Councils that clarified the proper understanding of Jesus Christ imply that the human nature of Christ was characterized by certain accidents for they predicate of Christ's human nature certain accidents, e.g., that it was sorrowful, humble, crucified, and weary. (For relevant sources and Pawl's own treatment of such statements see Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*.) In response, I say that it is very plausible what such predications express is that the relevant accidents inhered in Christ's human nature and in virtue of inhering in Christ's human nature, they characterized the whole suppositum composed of Christ's human and divine natures and all the accidents that inhered in Christ's human nature at the given time. In the case of Christ it makes sense to predicate such accidents of Christ's human nature in order to clarify that such accidents inhered only in Christ's human nature and not also in his divine nature, which is a view the relevant Councils affirmed as true.

and exactly one accidental form. One may think that if Aquinas thought that accidental unities so understood do not really exist, but supposita do, then Aquinas would have identified a suppositum rather than an accidental unity as the terminus of accidental change. In response, I suggest that it is very reasonable that, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, Aquinas would focus his analysis of accidental change on change in a single respect, i.e. change with respect to one and only one accidental form, such that an accidental unity would be the terminus rather than a suppositum. For, given Aquinas's assumption that accidental forms include each of the nine Aristotelian categories of accident, it follows that any suppositum is, at any given time, characterized by multiple accidental forms, many of which come quickly into and out of existence, e.g., one's position or quantitative parts.²⁷

Given that supposita are, at any time, characterized by multiple accidental forms with varied rates of change, an account of all the ways a given suppositum might change over the course of a given time would require a very complicated analysis. Given this, it is sensible to focus one's analysis of accidental change on only one respect in which a suppositum might change and then generalize that analysis to the actual hylomorphic compound that undergoes change, which I assume is a suppositum composed of an essence and a multiplicity of accidental forms that inhere in the essence at the given time. So, for example, when considering a change in Socrates with respect to a single accident, say

²⁷ With respect to quantitative parts, Aquinas explains, "In the body of a human being, for as long as the human being is alive, the parts are not always the same with respect to their matter, but only with respect to their species. With respect to the matter, the parts flow in and out. But this does not prevent a human being from being numerically one from the beginning of his life to the end of it. An example of this can be taken from fire, which, while it burns continuously, is said to be numerically one, on account of the fact that its species remains, even though the wood is consumed and new wood is added. So also in the case of the human body. For the form and species of each part remains continuously through the whole of its life, but the matter of the parts is dissolved through the action of natural heat and new matter is generated through nourishment (*SCG*, IV, 81, 12)."

losing his tanness, it makes sense to identify the accidental unity pale-Socrates as the terminus of that particular change. But, in reality, there is no pale-Socrates composed only of Socrates's essence and the accidental form paleness. Rather, pale-Socrates is merely a conceptually distinct part of the whole that is Socrates, understood as the suppositum composed of Socrates's essence and all the accidental forms that inhere in Socrates's essence at the given time. Figure 4 below is my illustration of this view of accidental change that depicts a change in Socrates with respect to only one accident and includes only a subset of the accidents Socrates would really possess at a given time.

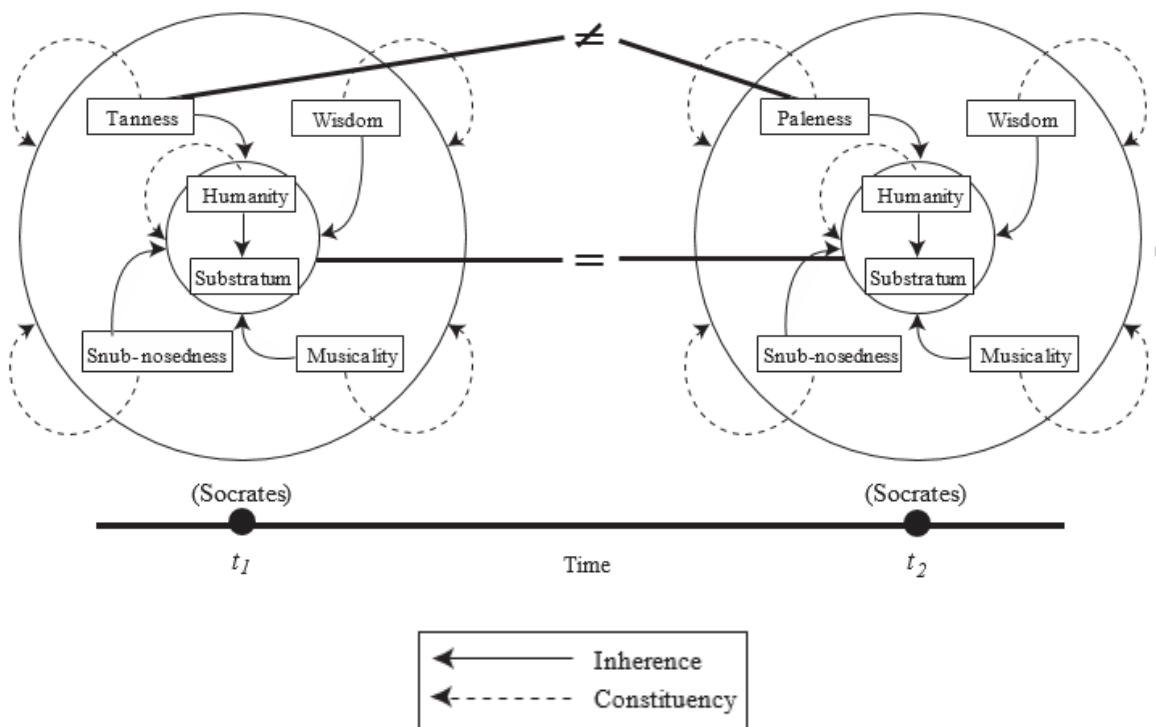


Figure 4. Accidental Change

I maintain that pale-Socrates understood as an accidental unity composed of only Socrates's essence and paleness does not really exist, but is merely a conceptual entity that

we may isolate for consideration from the whole suppositum composed of Socrates's essence and all of the accidental forms Socrates has at the given time. Although the accidental unity pale-Socrates has no real existence, the relevant accidental form – Socrates's paleness – is a really distinct part of the suppositum that is Socrates. Given, as I explained above, that a change in accidents does not entail a change in suppositum, I maintain that what actually results from any accidental change is a different composition of the same suppositum and that the suppositum survives the change in virtue of the persistence of the essence that underlies the accidents.

5. *The Compatibility of My Alternative with Select Passages from Aquinas*

I now argue that my alternative to Brower's account of Aquinas's fundamental hylomorphic compounds is compatible with the claims Aquinas makes that Brower interprets as supporting his own view that material substances and accidental unities are numerically the same but not identical. First is the following passage from Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*:

Those things are one in number whose matter is one; *for insofar as matter has certain designated dimensions it is the principle by which a form is individuated.* And for this reason a singular thing is numerically one and divided from other things as a result of matter. (*In Meta.* 5.8.876)²⁸

Brower excludes the italicized portion when he quotes this passage. Brower claims that the first sentence (up to the semicolon) is “naturally read as an assertion of the central idea behind the doctrine of numerical sameness without identity—namely, that *matter-sharing* (at a time) is sufficient for numerical sameness (at that time).” But when we consider the

²⁸ St Thomas Aquinas, “Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,” trans. John P. Rowan,, <http://www.dhspriory.org/thomas/Metaphysics.htm>.

passage in its entirety and in context, and without assuming Brower's view of Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds, it is implausible that Aquinas is giving an account of how distinct hylomorphic compounds may be the same material object at some time. Instead, Aquinas is explaining the oneness of singular material things. The passage appears in a context in which Aquinas is explaining the different ways Aristotle discussed that things may be one, which include being one in number, one in species, one in genus, and one analogically. Aquinas explains that each singular material thing is one, in the sense of being singular, in virtue of its designated matter (i.e. matter with designated dimensions), which individuates its form. This claim is compatible with both Brower's view and my view of Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds, so Brower is mistaken to cite it as decisive evidence for his own view.²⁹

Next Brower quotes a passage from Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*:

When someone becomes musical, the man survives, but the [form or property] contrary [to being musical] does not...Nor does the *compound of subject and contrary* survive, for the *non-musical man* does not survive after the man has become musical. (*In Phys.* 1.12.5)

Aquinas claims that a given man (say, Socrates) survives the change when he becomes musical, whereas neither the contrary, i.e. being non-musical, nor the compound, i.e. non-musical man, survive. Because Brower assumes that accidental unities have fundamental existence, Brower claims that "Aquinas is assuming that, when Socrates becomes musical, we have two distinct things (namely, Socrates and musical-Socrates) that become numerically one and the same."³⁰ But, again, what Aquinas says is compatible with my

²⁹ Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*, 96.

³⁰ Brower, 97.

view, which, applied to this case, is that when Socrates becomes musical, we have only one thing, namely Socrates, who changes in his composition in virtue of gaining the accident of musicality but who remains the same substance in virtue of having the same essence throughout the change. In other words, there is one thing, namely Socrates, who survives the accidental change from being unmusical to being musical because his essence survives the change. When Socrates becomes musical, we can say that the *non-musical man* does not survive the change. But this doesn't entail that there really existed an accidental unity composed only of Socrates's essence and non-musicality that ceases to exist. It is much more plausible to take 'the non-musical man' in this context to refer to Socrates understood as the suppositum composed of Socrates's essence and whatever accidents Socrates possessed at the time prior to his coming to possess the accident 'musicality.'

Finally, Brower argues that the doctrine of numerical sameness without identity appears to be required by Aquinas's account of accidental predication.³¹ Brower thinks a problem is raised by Aquinas's view that when we predicate an accident, e.g., whiteness, of a subject, say, a man, we are asserting that "a man is something having whiteness" and "the man and the thing having whiteness are the same in subject."³² Brower takes Aquinas to be claiming here that the man "is the same as something having whiteness as a constituent."³³ Given Brower's assumption that 'the man' refers to the essence (i.e. the substantial form-prime matter compound), there is a problem of explaining how the man,

³¹ Brower, 99.

³² *ST* 1.85.5 ad 3. I have given Brower's translation that he gives in Brower, 98.

³³ Brower, 99.

who is not composed of whiteness (nor of any other accident), is the same as something having whiteness as a constituent. And Brower seems to be correct that the doctrine of numerical sameness without identity provides the only solution to that problem. But if instead we assume that ‘the man’ refers to a suppositum composed of a human essence and whatever accidents, including whiteness, inhere in the man, then there is no problem with the claim that the man is the same as something having whiteness as a constituent. For insofar as the man is truly white, then he will have whiteness as a part.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that my view that accidental unities have merely conceptual, rather than real, existence and that supposita have real existence is compatible with Aquinas’s passages that Brower quotes in support of his view and with Aquinas’s account of accidental change. I also showed that by affirming the existence of supposita instead of accidental unities, we can maintain Brower’s distinction in Aquinas’s account between property possession and property characterization, which is necessary to account for change, without having to affirm Brower’s relation of numerical sameness without identity to account for the accidental character of things. I argued that we can maintain that supposita are characterized primarily or *simpliciter* by the accidents that partially compose them at a given time and that they survive changes merely in their accidental forms so long as their essence survives such changes.³⁴

³⁴ I am grateful to Jeffrey Brower, Scott Cleveland, Brandon Dahm, Kelly Gallagher, Robert Koons, Timothy Pawl, Alexander Pruss, and Jeremy Skrzypek for comments or conversation helpful to the development of this chapter.

This chapter brings the dissertation as a whole to a close. The work I did in this chapter to provide an alternative to Brower's account of the metaphysical constitution of Aquinas's hylomorphic compounds and of how Aquinas's accidental forms characterize material substances is groundwork for a complete Thomistic account of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the metaphysical constitution and the characteristics of all kinds of substances, including immaterial ones. I explained how substantial and accidental forms, as constituents of material substances (i.e., *supposita*) that inhere in some functional matter, account for some of the characteristics of those substances. In chapter five I argued that the substantive similarities between material substances with respect to their species-nature are explained by the mere internal sameness*, i.e., the mere external derivative distinctness, of the substantial forms that partially compose the natures/essences of those material substances. I noted that my account of the substantive resemblances between things with respect to their natures may be extended to account for the substantive resemblances between things with respect to their accidents.³⁵ I also used property roles to help disambiguate various uses of property terms in contemporary Aquinas scholarship and, by endorsing the view that properties are merely functional entities (i.e., they do not occupy a fundamental ontological category), which I argued is independently motivated, I resolved the remaining disagreement regarding what are properties for Aquinas.

In chapter four I clarified some differences between Augustine's and Aquinas's views of the divine ideas, on the one hand, and those of the theistic Platonists, particularly

³⁵ I suggested that the substantive similarities between things with respect to their accidental characteristics are explained by the internal sameness* of their relevant constituent accidental forms, which are numerically distinguished from one another wholly by the functional matter that is external to them and in which they inhere.

the theistic activists, whose view, I argued in chapter three, is incompatible with divine ultimacy and divine aseity. Whereas the theistic activists identify at least some Platonic properties with divine ideas and take the divine ideas to fulfill the property role of accounting for some of the characteristics of created things in the sense of being that in virtue of which those created things have their character, I argued that for Aquinas God's ideas in conjunction with God's infinite power and perfection, all of which are identical to God, account, most fundamentally, for the possibility of any possible characteristic, including those that are merely possible characteristics. Given that, I concluded that for Aquinas God's ideas fulfill the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized.

My accounts, in chapters five and six, of the metaphysical property roles of accounting for the substantive resemblances between material substances and for the characteristics and metaphysical constitution of individual material substances in terms of the created constituents of those things are evidence that for Aquinas the divine ideas play only the property role of accounting for the intuition that there are more possible characteristics than those that have been or will be actualized, while the other metaphysical and semantic property roles are accounted for by something more proximate. In addition, it is evident from my Thomistic account of some of the metaphysical property roles that Aquinas's metaphysical views yield a systematic, pluralist account of the contemporary property roles according to which a plurality of kinds of things, including God, substantial forms, portions of prime matter, natures/essences, and accidental forms, fulfill one or more contemporary property roles. And since, as I argued in chapter five, there are good reasons to regard properties as merely entities that fulfill certain roles rather than as occupying a

substantive ontological category and good reasons to regard my account of Aquinas's view of the substantive resemblances between things as distinct from contemporary accounts, there are good reasons to consider the Thomistic account of contemporary property roles I have given.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A Sketch of My Thomistic Explanations of Contemporary Property Roles

In this appendix I briefly sketch my Thomistic explanations of the eight main metaphysical and semantic property roles. Summaries of the explanations of the metaphysical property roles that I give in the body of the dissertation are included in this sketch.

As I explain in chapter five, I maintain that we should think of properties as mere functional entities, rather than as constituting one or more substantive ontological categories of things. The set of things (loosely speaking) within Aquinas's metaphysical and semantic framework that I take to fulfill the eight metaphysical and semantic property roles taken together includes God, substantial forms, accidental forms, portions of prime matter,¹ essences/species-natures (i.e., substantial form-prime matter compounds),² and mental concepts. On my view, no property role in general is fulfilled by just one of these kinds of things. Rather, each kind of thing in the set fulfills one or more of the eight property roles in conjunction with some of the others in the set. Each kind of thing in the set other than God is created by God and exists contingently. Below are the eight property roles I state in the dissertation with a sketch of my explanations.³

¹ As I explain in chapter five, I follow Jeffrey Brower in assuming that prime matter comes in portions that are primitively distinct. Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*.

² In chapter five, I argue that essences/species-natures are, in the case of material beings, composites of a substantial form and a portion of prime matter.

³ These eight property roles are the main property roles that figure in contemporary theories of properties taken together. I do not assume there are no other property roles.

1. The metaphysical property role of accounting for the characteristics of concrete particulars

I maintain that the essential characteristics of a created substance (whether material or immaterial) are ultimately explained by the substantial form that is a constituent part of that substance. The portion of prime matter that is a constituent of a material substance partially explains the materiality of the material substance insofar as the portion of prime matter is that in virtue of which the substance is material. But it is the substantial form of the substance that determines the substance to be partly composed of matter. Similarly, the essence/species-nature of a material substance, which is composed of the substantial form and a portion of prime matter, partially explains the essential characteristics of the material substance insofar as the essence/species-nature is that in virtue of which the material substance is the kind of substance it is. But, again, it is the substantial form of the substance that determines the substance to be the kind of substance it is.

I maintain that the accidental characteristics of a created substance (whether material or immaterial) are explained by the accidental forms that are constituent parts of the substance and which inhere in the essence/species-nature of the substance. I hold that God is simple and is thus, identical with His attributes. As such, there is nothing beyond God himself needed to explain God's attributes.

2. The metaphysical property role of accounting for attribute agreement between concrete particulars

I account for attribute agreement between distinct things with respect to the kind of thing they are or some accidental characteristic they possess in terms of a relation of

internal sameness, which is less than numerical sameness.⁴ I hold that the substantive similarity between things with respect to the kind of thing they are is explained by the internal sameness* of each of those things' constituent substantial form, which is internally the same* as that of the other insofar as each is numerically distinguished from the other wholly by the portion of prime matter that is external to it and in which it inheres. (E.g., the particular cat substantial form that is a constituent of one cat is internally the same as that of every other cat.)

I suggest that the substantive similarities between things with respect to their accidental characteristics are explained by the internal sameness* of those things' relevant constituent accidental forms, which are internally the same* as one another insofar as each is numerically distinguished from the other by the individualized essence/species-nature that is external to it and in which it inheres. (E.g., the particular accidental form of wisdom that is a constituent of one wise person is internally the same as that of every other wise person.)

If there is any attribute agreement between the essential characteristics of things that belong to different natural kinds (e.g., God, angels, and humans are all thought to be rational), it cannot be explained by the internal sameness of their substantial forms. For I assume that each substance possesses only one substantial form and that the substantial forms of things belonging to different natural kinds are primitively distinct from one another. I also assume that God is simple and so has no constituent forms or parts at all. I suggest that attribute agreement with respect to essential characteristics between things that

⁴ In chapter five, I modify Brower's account of the internal sameness relation given in Brower, "Aquinas on the Problem of Universals."

belong to different natural kinds may be explained in terms of some overlap in the causal powers that are entailed by their respective natures.

3. *The metaphysical property role of accounting for the metaphysical constitution of substances*

In chapter six, I argue that material substances are composed of an essence/species-nature, which is a substantial form-prime matter compound, and some accidental forms, which inhere in the essence. The portion of prime matter that is a part of the essence serves as a substratum for the substantial form. The essence (i.e., the substantial form-prime matter compound) serves as the substratum for accidental forms.⁵

4. *The metaphysical property role of accounting for the causal powers of concrete particulars*

I think my Thomistic explanation of the causal powers of concrete particulars will be similar to my explanation of the characteristics of concrete particulars. That is, while the constituent prime matter or species-nature/essence of a substance may be that in virtue of which the substance has certain essential causal powers, it is the substance's substantial form that ultimately determines which essential causal powers the substance has. The constituent accidental forms of a substance determine which accidental causal powers the substance has.

⁵ In chapter six, I build on Jeff Brower's account of Aquinas's hylomorphism as a unique kind of substratum theory from Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*.

5. *The metaphysical/semantic property role of accounting for merely possible characteristics*

I deny that unexemplified properties exist. I account for the intuition that and our speaking as though there are more kinds and characteristics of things that could exist beyond those that are actually instantiated in terms of God's knowledge of all possible things God could create. Given that God's creating is rational, that God's ideas for what He creates derive from Himself, and that God is simple, it seems to follow that all the things God could create are limited imitations of God that God knows through knowing Himself. Given this and given that God's perfection is infinite and He is omnipotent, it is plausible to think that there are more kinds and characteristics of things that God could create beyond those that are actually instantiated.

6. *The semantic property role of serving as the referents of predicate terms in ordinary language*

I hold that every meaningful predicate immediately signifies a human concept, i.e., the content of thought that results from an act of human understanding. But only some meaningful predicates ultimately signify an actually existing substantial or accidental form or species-nature/essence (by means of the given concept).⁶ I hold that the subject term in a subject-predicate sentence supplies the referent for the predication. I suggest that the predication of a common term F of an individual u is true if and only if the form or species-

⁶ This and what follows regarding predication and abstract reference builds on Gyula Klima's reconstruction of Aquinas's semantic framework. Gyula Klima, "The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 1 (1996): 87–141. For how this avoids skepticism see Gyula Klima, "The Anti-Skepticism of John Buridan and Thomas Aquinas: Putting Skeptics in Their Place vs. Stopping Them in Their Tracks," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, ed. H. Lagerlund (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 143–166.

nature/essence ultimately signified by F is a proper or improper part of u (relative to the time and modality of the copula of the proposition).⁷

I hold that humans form abstract, universal concepts of forms and natures, which are universal in the sense that they represent the multiplicity of particular instances of a given form or nature. They do so by making the conceiver aware of the given form or nature in abstraction from the individuating conditions, which actual instances of the form or nature cannot exist apart from. (E.g., we can consider a cat qua cat while disregarding its distinguishing features.) The information content carried by universal concepts of forms or natures is the same for all humans because such universal concepts are formed as a result of the cognition of particulars whose relevant forms are internally the same. (E.g., a human being forms the universal concept of a cat as a result of her cognition of at least one particular cat and each particular cat has a particular cat substantial form that is internally the same as that of every other cat.) Concepts themselves are particulars that exist as accidents of human minds, but the content of concepts is abstract and universal.

7. The semantic property role of serving as the referents of abstract singular terms in ordinary language

I hold that the function of the abstract counterpart (e.g., felinity) of a concrete common term (e.g., cat) is both to signify and refer to the significata of the concrete

⁷ Here I depart from Klima, who says that “the predication of a common term F of an individual u is true if and only if the form or nature ultimately signified by F *inheres in* u.” Instead of “inheres in”, I say “is a proper or improper part of” in order to account i) for essential predications, according to which the nature/essence ultimately signified by the predicate does not inhere in the subject, but is rather a proper part of the subject (as is the case for material substances whose composition I discuss in chapter six), and ii) for divine predications, according to which the nature (i.e., the divine nature) ultimately signified by the predicate is an improper part of God, i.e., is identical to God.

common term, where those significata include the concept immediately signified by the term and, if there is one, the form or essence/nature ultimately signified by the term.⁸

8. *The semantic property role of being some of the things quantified over in true statements of ordinary language*

I maintain that quantification over any entity in a meaningful statement does not entail the existence of that entity, but only that that entity is a human concept, i.e., an object of thought, where objects of thought considered in themselves do not exist but are simply the information content of human acts of thought. Human acts of thought are accidental forms of humans. So, quantification over any entity in a meaningful statement only entails the existence of some particular act of human thought, which is an accidental form.⁹

⁸ Klima, "The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being."

⁹ Klima; Gyula Klima, "The Changing Role of Entia Rationis in Mediaeval Semantics and Ontology: A Comparative Study with a Reconstruction," *Synthese* 96, no. 1 (1993): 25–58.

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