

Aquinas on Attributes

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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-nominalist¹; to Armstrong, a "concept nominalist"²; to Edwards and Spade, "almost as strong a realist as Duns Scotus"³; to Gracia, Pannier, and Sullivan, neither realist nor nominalist⁴; to Hamlyn, the Middle Ages' "prime exponent of realism," although his theory adds elements of nominalism and "conceptualism"⁵; to Wolterstorff, just inconsistent.⁶ I now set out Aquinas' view and try to answer the vexed question of how to classify it.

Part of the confusion here is terminological. As emerges below, Thomas believed in "tropes" of "lowest" (*infima*) species of accidents and (I argue) substances.⁷ Many now class trope theories as a form of nominalism,⁸ while

1. F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1955), P. 94.

2. D. M. Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 25, 83, 87. Armstrong is tentative about this.

3. Sandra Edwards, "The Realism of Aquinas," *The New Scholasticism* 59 (1985): 79; Paul Vincent Spade, "Degrees of Being, Degrees of Goodness," in *Aquinas' Moral Theory*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 254–75. For present purposes, I need not discuss just what sort of realism Scotus holds.

4. Pannier and Sullivan suggest that this was where Aquinas aimed unsuccessfully to end up, at least in his earlier work: Russell Pannier and Thomas Sullivan, "Aquinas' Solution to the Problem of Universals," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994): 159–72. Jorge Gracia suggests that Thomas rejects aspects of the traditional formulation of the problem of universals ("Cutting the Gordian Knot of Ontology: Thomas' Solution to the Problem of Universals," in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy* ed. David Gallagher [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994], pp. 16–36. He does, however, wind up noting what I later call Thomas' ontology of particulars.

5. D. M. Hamlyn, *Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 97.

6. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Universals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 142–48.

7. Accidents also come in species and genera. As we see later, Thomas speaks regularly of species of number, a quantitative accident. If two is a species, even and number are genera into which it falls.

8. Following D. M. Armstrong, *Universals* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).

some call them a form of “moderate realism.”⁹ Trope theories clearly have a richer ontology than many forms of nominalism, just as clearly reject realism’s shared attributes, and are naturally developed in ways using natural classes or likenesses to do the work of universals. However, tropes are real items which are not substances, real referents for property-terms present in their bearers, whose presence *makes* their bearers what they are. So trope theories are more *like* realism than other forms of nominalism. But I class them ultimately as nominalist, reserving “realism” (as many do) for belief in single attributes able to be really present in many particulars.

THE STATUS OF GENERA

Another part of the problem is that Aquinas offers a mixed account, as Hamlyn sees. Like all medievals, he divided attributes according to the Porphyrian predicables, genus, difference, species, and accident. 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, and I will often follow his usage. An accident is any attribute that is not a genus, species, or difference. Many accidents are had contingently and temporarily—it is accidental to you to be reading these words. Some, however, are necessary: supposedly, it is a necessary accident of being human to have a sense of humor. Accidents both necessary to and unique to a single species are *propria* (proper accidents) of items in that species.

Aquinas clearly believes that accidents are individuals in non-substance categories, particulars dependent on their bearers: “tropes,” individuated by their subjects,¹⁰ like Fido’s loyalty¹¹: thus “this whiteness is . . . singular

9. John Haldane, “Forms of Thought,” in *The Philosophy of Roderick Chisholm*, ed. Lewis Hahn (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1997), pp. 151–52.

10. *Summa Theologiae* (henceforth *ST*) Ia 29, 1; 39, 3.

11. As Aquinas understands this, an accident could not be individuated by one item and then transferred to another: there could not be (say) a case of loyalty which

and particular and individual.”¹² On genera, he is a reductionist. The genus, Thomas writes, “signifies indeterminately the whole of what is in the species”.¹³

A genus . . . implies in its signification, albeit indistinctly, the whole of what is determinately in the species.¹⁴ The unity of a genus comes from its indetermination or indifference—not so that what the genus signifies is numerically one nature in diverse species, to which another thing supervenes which is the differentia determining it . . . but because the genus signifies a certain form, not determinately this or that form which the difference expresses determinately (which is not other than the form which the genus signifies indeterminately).¹⁵

If human is said in some way to come from animal and rational [a genus and difference], it will not be as a third thing from two things, but as a third concept from two concepts.¹⁶

There is a sense in which genera are, for Thomas, just a sort of concept, hence, perhaps, Armstrong’s classification and Hamlyn’s mention of conceptualism. Thomas speaks repeatedly of what genera “signify”; signification is a semantic property, of terms or concepts. Genus/difference is, for Aquinas’s, 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”). That reality is not “numerically one nature.” That is, there is not some one extramental attribute a genus-concept always signifies, even though generic concepts do always signify extramental attributes. There is a concept *animal*, but no single extramental attribute *animal*, which is the sense in which genera are just concepts. Instead, to predicate a genus is to say that an item has *some* form from among a range various differences express determinately. This “some form” predication is true in virtue of the same form the difference signifies: because the thing in question has *this* form from this range, it has *some* form from this range. This is the significance of saying that genus and difference signify the same form. Note that the genus signifies both “the whole of what is in the species” and the difference.

was first Fido’s, then Spot’s. Thomas thinks that certain individuated accidents can by miracle exist without any bearer (*ST* IIIa 77, 1), but this is obviously not the same thing as acquiring a new bearer.

12. *Quodl.* IX, 2, 2, p. 184. See also *In III Sent.*, d. 6, q. 1, a. 1.

13. *De Ente et Essentia*, R. Mandonnet, ed., *S. Thomae de Aquino Opuscula Omnia* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1927), vol. 1, (henceforth *EE*) 3, 150. All translations are my own.

14. *EE* 3, 151.

15. *EE* 3, 151.

16. *EE* 3, 150.

This makes sense: if genera are nothing distinct in reality from the differentiae which specify them, then there is no difference in reality between what species- and difference-concepts signify.

For Thomas, then, genus-predications in effect involve existential quantification over a (presumably) finite range of differences: “x is a G” analyzes as $(\exists D)(x \text{ has } D)$. This can also be read as predication of a finitely disjunctive concept.¹⁷ 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.) This is why the form the difference expresses determinately is the very one the genus signifies indeterminately.¹⁸ Note that there is not, in Aquinas’s eyes, a disjunctive *attribute* outside the mind to pair 1:1 with what is in effect a disjunctive concept. If he believed in one, he would not deny that there is “numerically one nature” for genus-concepts to signify, as a disjunctive attribute is numerically one. For that matter, Thomas does not think of genus-concepts as disjunctive: I speak so just to get at the logic of his position. Rather, there is for Thomas a logically unstructured concept abstracted from the natures of less extensive/more specific kinds, whose content is such that when used to speak of extramental things it signifies the difference of the lowest-level kind under which a particular falls and the lowest-level kind itself, but signifies these “indefinitely” or “indeterminately.”

For Aquinas, accidents are tropes and genera are just concepts; that is, there are no generic attributes in reality, although every suitable use of a genus-concept does signify some real attribute. Genera “reduce” without remainder to the species below them. And since every species save the lowest is also a genus, this part of Aquinas’ account applies to all species save *infima species*. We now need only Aquinas’ account of these species-attributes to have the whole of his account of attributes before us.

NATURES

Thomas approaches *infima*-species-attributes via the concept of a nature. Thomas tells us that

A nature . . . can be considered in two ways. One is according to . . . its proper content. This is an “absolute consideration” of the nature. It is true to say of the nature so considered only what accrues to it [as] “rational” and “animal” and other items which fall in its definition accrue to

17. For the claim that there are just finitely many species (and so differences), see S. Thomae Aquinatis *In Octos Libros Physicorum Aristotelis Expositio* (Turin: Marietti, 1965), on Book Three (henceforth cited in such forms as *In III Phys.*), l. 12, ##762–63.

18. The forms are the same reality; the concepts differ intensionally.

“human” . . . if, then, one is asked whether the nature considered absolutely can be called one or many, one should concede that it is neither. For either is outside the concept of humanity, and either can happen to it . . . it is one according as it is in Socrates (and it) is multiplied in many The nature is considered in a second way according as it has existence in this or in that This nature has two kinds of existence, one in singulars, the other in the mind . . . in singulars, it has multiple existence according to the diversity of singulars. Still, none of these existences belongs to the nature itself properly considered . . . it does not pertain to the human *qua* human that it exist in this or that singular. So . . . the nature of humans absolutely considered abstracts from any existence.¹⁹

There are three ways to consider a nature: as in a thing that instances it, as in a mind, or in itself (“absolutely”), apart from any relation to instances or minds. But there are only two ways natures exist, in particulars and minds. We can *consider* them without thinking them to be in either.²⁰ But for Thomas, they do not exist apart from these. If they did, it would not be true that “the nature of humans absolutely considered abstracts from any existence,” and natures would be some sort of Platonic abstract object.²¹ Thomas resolutely rejects these.²²

Considering natures absolutely, one considers only properties their definitions include (if they are definable).²³ Natures have in singulars

19. *EE* 4, 153. More precisely, this is an account of how those natures exist of which we have concepts via the senses. 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.

20. S. Thomae de Aquinatis *In Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentaria* (Turin: Marietti, 1925), on Book Two (henceforth cited in such forms as *In II de Anima*), l. 5, #379.

21. *In II de Anima*, l. 5, #378.

22. He goes so far as to call belief in such items “contrary to the Faith” (*ST* Ia 84, 5).

23. Accidents are definable, in an odd way (*EE* 7). So are *infima species*, in genus-difference form. As we have seen, for Thomas, everything above *infima species* in the tree of kinds “reduces” to *infima species*: concepts plus *infima species* are the whole ontology of kinds. So the only natures Thomas commits to extramentally are definable. Higher kind-concepts are also definable, in terms of concepts still higher in the tree of kind-concepts. Defining these higher concepts also amounts to defining a nature-but the nature defined is the *infima species*: the genus-term in its definition is definable, terms in this definition are definable, and so on up the tree. All these definitions would be included in a suitably expanded definition of the *infima species*. In a sense, then, the standard Aristotelian genus-difference definition for one of these is just a shorthand. Highest genera cannot have genus-species definitions, and so for Aristotelians are just not definable. But if there are such concepts, they too have-are-“intelligible content.” This content is given simply in a case of “apprehension of indivisibles.” That is, this content is apprehended when we grasp the concept, but as it is not further analyzable, it is “indivisible.”

properties their definitions do not include: “according as it has being in this or that . . . something is predicated of the nature *per accidens*, due to that in which it exists. Thus, it is said that the nature, man, is white because Socrates is white.”²⁴ Natures have in minds properties their definitions do not include and which they do not have in singulars: “human nature . . . does not have the nature of a species according to its absolute consideration. Rather, this is among the accidents that accrue to it according to the being it has in the intellect.”²⁵ Because of this, any sentence apparently ascribing a property to a nature is ambiguous. The sentence “*homo est species*” expresses something true if it is about the nature as it is in minds, but something false if it is about the nature as it is in matter. This ambiguity may even extend to logical form. “*Homo est animal*” and “*homo est albus*” can both state truths about the nature, *homo*. “*Homo est albus*” states that human nature is white, in a fairly literal sense *per accidens*: in a white human, human nature contingently and temporarily “coincides” with a case of whiteness, a white thing. So, as a claim about a nature, “*homo est albus*” is an accidental predication. On the other hand, one can render “*homo est animal*” as “to be human is (*inter alia*) to be an animal.” Thus, one can take “*homo est animal*” as an assertion that one concept includes another.²⁶ This is an essential predication, and has roughly a part-whole logic.

Let us look briefly at these ways to think about natures.

NATURES AND DEFINITIONS

Their definitions explicate natures considered absolutely. So we consider the nature of horse absolutely when we think of what it is to be a horse, that is, what is true of horses just *qua* horses. Asked “what *are* species-natures?,” Aquinas may have no better answer to give than “what species-definitions express.” Yet Aquinas’ claim that species-natures are definable can seem incompatible with other things he says.²⁷

Following Aristotle, Thomas holds that items definitions express have, as such, some sort of unity, that is, are one of something: a definition signifies “one what [*quid*].”²⁸ Thomas also holds that “one” just *means* “undivided being.”²⁹ If this is so, whatever is one of something is an undivided case of some strictly correlated sort of being. Yet as just noted, Thomas denies that

24. *EE* 4, 153.

25. *EE* 4, 154.

26. I would say “that one property includes another”; however, strictly speaking, for Thomas, there is no property of animality.

27. Edwards briefly alludes to what may be the following problem (“Realism,” 100).

28. *In VII Meta.*, l. 12, #1541.

29. *ST* Ia 11, 1c.

natures have any sort of being of their own. It seems that, then though definable (and so one) *per se*, natures are beings only accidentally; though definable (and so one) intrinsically, existing is extrinsic to them. Thus, Thomas seems committed to this inconsistent set of claims:

- (1) Natures absolutely considered are intrinsically one of something.
- (2) Whatever is intrinsically one of something intrinsically has some sort of being.
- (3) Natures absolutely considered have no sort of being intrinsically.

I submit that Thomas does not in fact hold (1), because he does not in fact hold that natures are *per se* definable.³⁰ For Thomas, recall, all species-definition is by genus and difference, and these are “composed” as *concepts*, not items in an extramental real order. Arguably, what words define are first and foremost other words; so, too, what a concept defines is first and foremost another concept. So natures are definable *in their being in the mind*, not *per se*. Thomas writes,

Of that which in no way is, nothing can be said. For that of which something is said is apprehended, and so has a certain lesser being in the apprehending intellect.³¹ One cannot form a proposition save about a being, for that about which one forms a proposition must *be* apprehended by the intellect.³²

“Of that which in no way is, nothing can be said”: natures apart from their being in minds or instances are *not* definable, save in the sense that they are able to exist in minds and *there* be definable.³³ Natures are in the fullest sense definable only insofar as they exist in some intellect. So whatever “unity” being definable involves is, like the nature’s being, accidental and extrinsic. Perhaps Thomas’s best account of what species-natures are is “items species-definitions express.” If so, this best account does not get to the core of what species-natures are (state their nature, if you will). It just lets us know when we are dealing with one.³⁴

30. Spade, on the other hand, argues that Thomas must at least implicitly reject (3) (Degrees of Being).

31. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum*, ed. Mandonnet (Paris: LeTheielleux, 1929), vol. 1 (henceforth *In I Sent.*), d. 19, q. 5, *ad* 5, p. 489. See also *In II Sent.*, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2, *ad* 3; *ST Ia* 16, 3 *ad* 2.

32. Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputate de Veritate*, in S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), vol. 3 (henceforth *DV*) 1, 1 *ad* 7, p. 4, my emphasis.

33. Nor need they have this modal attribute “on their own”: Thomas can say that they have it only in their instances and in minds.

34. In Thomas’s terms, it states a proper accident of being a nature.

This reply only moves Thomas from the fire to the frying pan if it entails that grasping a truth about a nature promotes it from utter nothingness to some strange half-existence. This, however, is not Thomas' view. He thinks rather that the sort of "being" involved here just *is* the existence of truths about the item: "Existence' has two senses Sometimes it signifies the truth of a proposition, even about things that do not exist: thus we say that blindness exists because it is true that a man is blind."³⁵ What a word "signifies" when used in a certain sense is what it means. Thus, Thomas here says that one kind of existence-assertion just *means* that certain propositions are true. But his point is really just that it means that there are certain truths. As Thomas sees it, there being truths does not require there being propositions. Truths exist in God's intellect with no propositional expression.³⁶ Thomas writes that,

"Being per se" has two senses. In one . . . it signifies the truth of propositions In (this) sense, one can call "being" anything about which an affirmative proposition can be formed, even if the proposition posits nothing in reality. It is in this sense . . . that we say . . . that blindness exists in an eye.³⁷

"Being" has many senses. In one sense, "being" means something existing in nature In another, "being" signifies the truth of propositions . . . whatever things are called beings in the first sense are beings in the second sense, for each thing that has natural existence in things can be signified by an affirmative proposition.³⁸

Note the modality: the "being" tied to truth requires that an item *can* be "signified by an affirmative proposition," not that it actually be so. So, for Thomas, the "being" a nature has when something is said about it just is there being a truth, which, for Thomas, requires that some mind grasp the truth. Thomas's "of that which in no way is" thus does not commit him to semi-existents or the like.

EXISTING IN, EXISTING AS

Natures are not in particulars as realist immanent universals, single constituents present in many things. For Thomas, everything in particulars is

35. *QD de Potentia Dei*, in S. Thomae Aquinatis *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Turin: Marietti, 1931) (henceforth *DP*) 7, 2 *ad* 1, p. 224.

36. *ST* Ia 14, 14.

37. *EE* 1, 143.

38. Aquinas, *Scriptum*, vol. 2, *In II Sent.* d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, p. 872. Thomas' point does not seem to be that calling beings in the first sense "beings" *makes* them beings in the second sense. Were that his meaning, he would surely say not that these beings *can* be signified by affirmative propositions but that they *are* so signified.

particular: “in Socrates no commonness is found. Instead whatever is in him is individuated. Human nature is not found in individuals with such a unity as to be one thing belonging to whoever is human, which the nature of a universal requires.”³⁹ Further, even in minds, natures are, in one sense, particular:

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.⁴⁰

For Thomas, in fact, being universal is a way of representing:

the universality of (a) form . . . is . . . according as it is referred to things as their likeness—as if one physical statue represented many people . . . it would have the nature of commonness according as it was the common representative of many.⁴¹

To be a universal is to represent more than one thing. Universals are just mental particulars standing in relations of representation.⁴²

Aquinas’ ontology is one of particulars. Yet one must still ask what kind of particulars result when species natures are particularized. As noted earlier, for Aquinas’, accidents are dependent particulars or “tropes.”⁴³ He also, I think, believes in tropes of species natures.⁴⁴ If he does not, then, the ultimate subjects of predication, substances, are themselves nondependent tropes of their natures: Socrates is Socrates’ human nature, even if we cannot say that Socrates is his humanity due to the *way* humanity signifies human nature.⁴⁵ Now Thomas is willing to let some concreta count as tropes; as he sees it, human souls are both concrete (causally involved) and tropes of the human substantial form. Further, he is willing to call Socrates an essence, not just a thing *having* an essence.⁴⁶ But Thomas argues that there

39. *EE* 4, 154.

40. *EE* 4, 154.

41. *EE* 4, 154.

42. Thus again Hamlyn’s “elements of conceptualism”: for Thomas, in one sense, the only thing we predicate which is literally shared is a mental representation.

43. This is not to say that he believes in a pure-trope ontology, as in the works of D. C. Williams or Keith Campbell. Rather, for Thomas, substances have prime matter in their makeup (see, e.g., *de Principiis Naturae*), and this is not any sort of trope. Nor, thinks Thomas, is any form of matter it constitutes in conjunction with a form-trope.

44. So Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 301, and Gyula Klima, *Ars Artium* (Budapest: Institute of Philosophy, 1988), pp. 150ff.

45. So Joseph Owens, “Common Nature,” *Medieval Studies* 19 (1957): 1–14.

46. *EE* 3, 152.

is composition of essence and “individual matter” in material things.⁴⁷ This is so only if each material thing’s “individual matter” is discrete from its essence. If a material thing just *were* its trope of its essence, every aspect of it would be an aspect of this trope, and so nothing in it would be beyond its essence—as in God, who is His own deity.⁴⁸ (In this case, oddly, its essence would include or have its accidents.) If material things are composed of essence and “individual matter,” they *have* species-tropes rather than *being* species-tropes.⁴⁹ Thus, according to Thomas:

Because Socrates is not his humanity, but is a thing having humanity, for this reason he has in himself material parts which are not parts of the species, but . . . parts of this individual matter which is the principle of individuation, as this flesh and these bones . . . if Socrates were his own humanity, there would not be in Socrates parts which were not parts of humanity.⁵⁰

FLAT CONTRADICTION?

Tropes or no, Thomas’ position can seem to land him in contradiction at once. For Thomas, natures have as existing in minds the property of universality.⁵¹ Yet natures are not universal as they exist in matter. Now suppose that, for Thomas, one single nature exists in matter and in mind at once. As it exists in matter, it is not universal. As it exists in the mind, it is. Supposing that it is one single thing, and is in both some matter and some mind at once, it seems to follow that one single thing both is and is not universal at once. Thomas is at pains to remind us *where* it is universal and not. But it’s not really clear why this is supposed to help. If one single nature is in Fido and is in my mind as a universal, the very nature that is in Fido is a universal. It thus seems to follow that it has this property even in Fido, though perhaps it acquires the trait elsewhere. If the full nature is fully in

47. *ST Ia* 3, 3, 18a; cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles* (henceforth *SCG*) I, 20.

48. *ST Ia* 3, 3.

49. Again, Thomas consistently speaks of natures as existing *in* singulars. Medieval Aristotelians were not willing to speak of things as containing and as improper parts of themselves (due to Aristotle’s discussion in *Physics* 4, 3). So Thomas would not speak as he does if he took each nature simply to *be* the singular it is in. These arguments assume that the referent of “individual matter” is the matter in which the substance exists rather than the matter from which it comes. (For the distinction, see *De Principiis Naturae*, c. 1, in R. Mandonnet, ed., *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opuscula Omnia* [Paris: LeThielleux, 1927], vol. 1, c. 1, p. 8.) But Thomas’s example of individual matter—“haec carnes et haec ossa”—is one of his standard examples of matter in which.

50. *In VII Meta.*, l. 11, ##1521, 1522, pp. 445–46.

51. *ST Ia* 85, 3 *ad* 1, 529a.

both locations at once, the whole nature fully has both properties at once—not at distinct times or in distinct temporal parts. It is a nice question just how this avoids being a flat contradiction.⁵² I now consider several attempts to show Thomas' position consistent.

For Thomas, the nature is both universal and non-universal *per accidens*, by its relations to other items, minds and clumps of matter.⁵³ Thus, being universal and being particular supervene on its relations to other things. If so, they are themselves nonintrinsic, relational properties. So, you might think, perhaps the seeming contradiction doesn't get to the "core" of the nature. But this does not help. Extrinsic as well as intrinsic properties can be incompatible. I cannot be both referred to and not referred to by the same utterance, for instance.

Another answer would say that, while natures absolutely considered are not immanent realist universals, they are like them, and this helps. The nature is at two places at once, and in one, it has extrinsic relations it does not have in the other, due to which it counts as a universal. This is no worse than caninity's being near some dog food in Fido but not in Spot. Be this as it may, Thomas would reject this move, as he will not tolerate immanent realist universals. If one and the same nature is fully in two dogs at once, it is a universal: period. And it is a universal in both, even if that character accrues to it in Fido due to its presence in Spot (and *vice-versa*). If one and the same nature is fully in the mind and in some matter at once, is not it for like reasons equally and in both locations a universal?

Thomas cannot relativize the nature's being universal and its being not so to distinct temporal parts. But some might suggest that he could relativize it to distinct spatial parts. Thomas allows that natures in matter are extended and partitioned *per accidens*.⁵⁴ If so, natures in some way have parts if they have material instances, and necessarily so. So one might wonder if necessarily, if a nature is both universal and nonuniversal, it has discrete parts, in some of which it is nonuniversal: a nature is non-universal in all its spatial parts, but universal in its nonspatial other "parts." Now this commits one to calling immaterial items in minds—*species impressae*—parts of the nature. For if all its spatial incarnations are parts of it, and then there is more of it beyond these, the more adds up to at least one further part. This then makes Thomas's natures bizarre beasts, consisting at any one time in (say) all dogs plus all impressed species of dogs. But even this will not buy an adequate answer. One problem is that this move is not sufficiently general. Thomas believes in angels, who think. Their

52. One I owe to Jan Cover.

53. It is a bit paradoxical to speak so. If the nature considered absolutely has no being, then the nature considered absolutely is a nonexistent, one wants to say, and so it cannot *be* related to other things: there is no "it" to stand in relations. Ultimately, I think this is correct.

54. *ST* Ia 8, 2 *ad* 3.

thoughts are among their accidents. As such they have natures and are definable, and there can be concepts of them. Each angelic thought is wholly immaterial, and a particular thing. The impressed species (perhaps impressed by God) other angels use to comprehend one angel's thoughts is universal (many thoughts might fall under it). The nature this species catches is on Thomas's terms both particular (in the angelic thoughts) and universal (in various minds' grasp of these thoughts), but without spatial parts.

Thomas is at pains to stress that the nature is universal in some locations (minds) but not others—universal here but not there, due to what receives it in each location. This naturally suggests an indexing response: caninity is not universal and non-universal, but universal-here and nonuniversal-there, universal-in-Leftow's-mind, nonuniversal-in-Fido. While these properties are compatible, Thomas does not explicitly make this move, and it might not solve the problem. If a sandwich has the indexed property of being fresh on Tuesday and it is in fact Tuesday, the sandwich also has the unindexed property of being fresh. So we would need a story to convince us that if the nature has the indexed property of being universal in Leftow's mind and it is at Leftow's mind, it is not just universal.

Still another reply would distinguish saying that the nature is universal or particular from saying that the nature is *in* a universal or a particular. We might treat a trope in a particular thing as really a compound or a set consisting of the absolute nature plus something that "contracts it" to the particular, and the mental trope as really a compound or set consisting of the absolute nature plus a mind. In this way, the nature never is particular or universal—contradiction averted—but items of which it is a constituent are both. This solution obviously moves Aquinas close to Scotus. A better answer, I think, is to recall that Thomas is not any sort of immanent realist. Not only does he not hold that Socrates and Plato share a constituent, human nature, but he also (I submit) holds that my impressed species of humanity does not share a constituent with Socrates. My impressed species (the item my concept of humanity expresses) is just one more particular trope, which happens to be in a mind. (Since we needn't worry about the niceties of Thomas' cognitive psychology for present purposes, I'll henceforth help myself to the convenience of speaking as if my *concept* of humanity were the trope of humanity in my mind.) There *is not* anything that is both universal and not universal. No existing thing has both properties. The nature absolutely considered precisely abstracts from any existence; the nature as it exists always is just universal or just particular.

WHY NATURES?

If no entity is common to human-concepts and humans, why speak as if the nature is? Why talk of things with no existence, no ontological status?

Thomas himself thinks one can't, as we have seen, and does not think he has, or at least does not think he has in any finally objectionable way. His point is that natures' ontological status is not intrinsic (again, natures with intrinsic being would be Platonic), not that they do not have one. Natures are tropes and concepts.⁵⁵ Both are comfortably real. "Absolute consideration" is just a way of *looking* at tropes and concepts.

To have a trope of Fness is to have what it takes to be (an) F, that is, what it takes to satisfy the concept *F*. The concept *F* is the concept whose content is what it takes to be (an) F, that is, what a trope confers on its bearer. These truisms suggest that there is a content, what it takes to be an F, which concepts embody as something satisfiable and borne tropes as something exemplifiable, which borne tropes confer and concepts represent. It is convenient, at least, to have a term for such a common content. Again, talk of "the" nature is like talk of "the" lion. It is a way to generalize about a lot of particulars. "Absolutely considering" natures prescind from inessentials, to make one particular generalization. Every human, in virtue of having a human-nature trope, satisfies "the same" definition (which exists only as contents of mental particulars). So we can focus on "the" definition, ignoring the plurality here, and say that the tropes have the same relation to "it."

Again, talk of natures is a convenient way to make distinctions. Humans satisfy many particular human-concepts, but not *qua* concepts or *qua* particular. They satisfy them in virtue of what they are concepts *of*: their content, usually a definition (according to Thomas).⁵⁶ They satisfy them in virtue of bearing tropes, but not *qua* tropes or *qua* borne. Rather, they satisfy them in virtue of what the tropes are tropes *of*—what a definition catches. And when you prescind from all these things, you find yourself giving the same account of what it is in virtue of which humans satisfy the concepts and what it is in virtue of which the concepts are satisfied by the humans. So, for convenience, you can introduce talk of "the" nature present in two ways. Thomas speaks of "the" nature present as a trope to make the point that it is not anything about the trope's character as a trope or its relation to a given individual that makes it a human-nature trope, but instead that about it which a concept catches. Thomas speaks of "the" nature present as a concept to make the point that concepts are concepts *of* one thing rather than another not due to any fact about them as mental particulars but due to their relations to definitions (to "what we have in mind" by them)—that is, due to their content, to what sort of trope they catch.

55. Which is not to say "wholes consisting of tropes and concepts."

56. Not, however, for concepts of the highest *genera* and the transcendentals: on Aristotelian terms, definitions for these are impossible, as definitions are all of genus-difference form and there are no higher kinds to serve as genera in these cases.

Thomas also asserts that the nature absolutely considered is what we predicate of particulars.⁵⁷ A thing cannot be predicated if it is not there to be. For Thomas, predication takes place in the mind; one predicates a predicate-concept of a subject. The point to his nature-talk is that we predicate concepts, but not *qua* concepts: rather, *qua* having a certain content. Why not just say that what is predicabile is a concept or a term? Thomas wants to say that we predicate of Socrates what he *has*, or exemplifies. Socrates does not “have” a concept. Socrates has a human-trope. But we cannot predicate that of him if we do not have the trope “in mind.” We have a concept “in mind.” So we need a way to say that by having the concept in mind, we have the trope in mind. Thomas uses talk of the nature absolutely considered as a shorthand for the story he wants to tell here— for an account of intentionality that is simply too long and cumbersome to plug in everywhere it is relevant. The shorthand version runs this way. By predicating the concept, we predicate having a trope. What makes the connection by which this is so is that by predicating the concept, we predicate the very nature of which Socrates has a trope. We predicate having *this* nature, the nature in *this* concept, and Socrates does have *this* nature, though not as it exists in the intellect.

Thomas fully spells out his account of predicates’ intentionality only in his account of elementary concept-formation. The elementary concept of human nature is the natural result of a properly-functioning intellect’s natural operations on data the senses present.⁵⁸ There is, Thomas argues, no way error can enter the process of concept-formation save through some organic defect or malfunction of the body. If the senses function properly, they deliver the sensible content of the external world. In fact, one can take this as a tautology: to be the sensible content is to be what optimally functioning senses would deliver. This tautology does not imply that whatever the senses happen in fact to deliver is the world’s sensible content. As the senses are powers of the appropriate organs, they can go wrong in as many ways as their organs can be damaged, diseased or in other ways fail to function properly.⁵⁹ Aquinas’s thinks the intellect is not sited in an organ and does not use an organ to function.⁶⁰ But it does not follow that on his account the body cannot impede the intellect’s function. For him, the brain generates phantasms without which the mind cannot think, and contributes to the mind’s memory as well. If the appropriate parts of the brain are damaged,

57. *EE* 4, 154–55.

58. “Elementary” distinguishes this concept from those which biologists, psychologists etc. develop. Scientific accounts fill out elementary concepts. See John Jenkins, “Aquinas on the Veracity of the Intellect,” *Journal of Philosophy* 88 (1991): 623–32; and Norman Kretzmann, “Infallibility, Error and Ignorance,” in *Aristotle and His Medieval Interpreters*, ed. Martin Tweedale and Richard Bosley (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 1991), pp. 159–94.

59. E.g., *ST* Ia 78, 3.

60. *ST* Ia 75, 2.

diseased, or fatigued, they will impede the mind's functioning.⁶¹ So, owing to the body's involvement, even the intellect can fail to function properly. If the intellect functions properly, it draws from the sensible content it is presented whatever is such that intellect can grasp it (what is "intelligible"). If both intellect and senses function properly, then whatever intelligible content existed in the external world finds its way to the intellect. And this amounts to a tautology much as in the sense-case: the world's intelligible content is what a properly-functioning intellect acting on the data of properly functioning senses would deliver. To be the world's intelligible content is to be what a properly-functioning intellect given appropriate data would deliver of the world. Note that here as in the sense case, the tautology does not imply that things' intelligible content is whatever the intellect happens in fact to deliver. Now a thing's intelligible content *is* its nature, that is, what an adequate statement of what it is would express. To have found its way to the intellect is to "exist" there. And this is in the intellect in the form of a universal concept because that is how intellect's contents are individuated. On Thomas's account, what human intellects do is receive sensible particulars' forms apart from matter and the conditions that go with matter.⁶² To do so is to receive a nature that is universal, or predicabile of many.⁶³ To Thomas, cases of natures outside the mind are multiplied only by existing in distinct clumps of matter.⁶⁴ So one condition of a nature which goes with matter is being paired 1 to 1 with clumps. Thus, if the intellect were to abstract humanity from Socrates, abstract humanity from Plato, and thereby grasp two natures rather than one nature equally predicabile of the two, it would not be grasping those natures apart from the conditions they have in matter. It is distinctive of intellect to individuate its contents in just this way, that is, to abstract the natures of two individuals of the same species and thereby grasp just one nature equally predicabile of two, or indefinitely many.⁶⁵ This is precisely why Thomas is willing to say that the human intellect has the universal as its proper object.⁶⁶ This concept is universal because it represents every other human as well as it represents Socrates; by way of it the intellect, as such, cannot discriminate Socrates from any other human.⁶⁷

So to say that the same nature that is in Socrates is in the intellect is simply to say that the intellect catches what it ought to catch of Socrates'

61. SCG II 79.

62. ST Ia 85, 1. The "form" here is the nature, or *forma totius*: for this equation see *In V Meta*, l. 2, #764, and l. 5, #822; *EE*, ch. 3, p. 18.

63. ST Ia 85, 3 *ad* 1; *EE*, chap. 3. Strictly, what the mind receives is the *species impressa*, but what is predicated is the concept the mind forms on that basis, the *species expressa*. I take it that predicating a concept which expresses our grasp of a nature is a way of predicating the nature itself.

64. E.g., *DT* 4, 2.

65. Edwards, "Realism," 99.

66. ST Ia 85, 3.

67. What is opaque here is explained below.

nature. We predicate of Socrates the nature he in fact has because we predicate of him a concept appropriately caused by something bearing a substantial-kind trope in conjunction with properly functioning senses and intellect. As I have construed Thomas's account of elementary concepts, natures absolutely considered play no real role: talk of them is just a *façon de parler*. Pasnau suggests that one cannot thus parse them out of Thomas's account of the mind-world relation. For as Pasnau sees it, Thomas's claim that the very nature (or form) of the object known is in the knowing intellect falls directly out of the story so far told, given Thomas's perfectly general claim that agents act by impressing some likeness of their form- however distant- on patients.⁶⁸

One thing heats another by impressing the form of heat on the other. The thing heated thus becomes formally identical with the agent, insofar as both are hot. Hence they also become like one another, insofar as they share the same form (the form of heat) . . . on this scheme, one object is like another (hence, is in some respect formally identical to another) if and only if the two are causally related . . . It's because external objects make an impression on our sensory organs and (indirectly) on our higher-order faculties that those impressions . . . are formally identical to . . . external objects. Formal identity is thus guaranteed by our causal connections with the world.⁶⁹

Given the general causal principle, Pasnau suggests, Thomas is committed to the claim that if the causal story exists, there is some likeness between what the intellect contains and what was originally in the agent. Likeness for Thomas is always founded on some "agreement or communication of form."⁷⁰ So if there is a likeness between concept and external thing, there is "agreement or communication" of form. Pasnau glosses this in terms of "formal identity," some literal identity of form, the same form being in both places. For if likeness is always based on an agreement and the agreement is just another likeness, then this likeness too will rest on an agreement, which itself will be a likeness, *ad infinitum*. The regress would moreover seem vicious, because we would never get to anything more basic than a likeness and so able to explain it.

But actually the causal likeness principle does not entail what Pasnau thinks. The external object makes its impact on the senses; the causal likeness principle thus entails that the senses' contents are somehow like the external object. The intellect in turn acts on the sense-content to generate

68. *ST* Ia 4, 3.

69. Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 304–5.

70. *ST* Ia 4, 3, 25b.

concepts and species. But the causal likeness principle *does not* guarantee that these in some way resemble the sense-contents. This is not a case of the senses acting on the intellect, a power of the immaterial soul that, according to Thomas, does not make use of any physical organ. The senses and their contents are patients, not agents. If the intellect acts on the sense-content, what follows given the causal-likeness principle is at most that the result of this is somehow like the intellect. Further, even if the causal-likeness principle did guarantee a likeness here, it still would not follow that the resulting intellectual representation was in any *particular* respect like the external object. If A is like B in some respect and B is like C in the same respect, it doesn't follow that A is like C in that respect. Red is like purple in respect of color and purple is like blue in respect of color, but red is not like blue in respect of color. Although they are alike in the looser sense that both *are* colors, they do not resemble in color. They are about as unlike as colors get. Thus we do not have to infer from Thomas's causal-likeness principle that his talk of single natures in both mind and world has any thickness, any metaphysical teeth. It remains, as I say, a *façon de parler*. Taken just as such, the absolutely-considered nature does not exist. What does not exist does not do ontological work.⁷¹ Thomas would be flatly inconsistent if he denied all intrinsic being to the absolute nature and yet had it do metaphysical or semantic jobs for which some intrinsic being is required.⁷² I am working out a reading of Thomas on which he is not inconsistent in this way. I try to show it textually adequate; if it is, charity suggests that we adopt it.

Another use Thomas has for nature-talk piggybacks on his story about intentionality. In Thomas's theory of attributes, nature-talk lets him claim that we can and do have the "right" classifying-scheme, that the divisions we make into things having one kind-nature and things having another are correct. Realists claim that we have the "right" conceptual scheme by saying that particulars share real constituents, and our concepts group together just items which share those constituents. Thomas's way to claim that our conceptual scheme catches things' real natures is to say that we have concepts that realize within the mind the very content which is realized in extra-mental things. If my concept of human nature realizes the same content that is realized in Socrates and the same content that is realized in Plato, it classes both as humans and is correct to do so, even if Socrates and Plato have no common constituents. Rather than speak of constituents common to many extramental things, Thomas speaks of an item common to mind and world. However, such talk is ultimately a placeholder for the complex

71. We do sometimes appeal to absences in causal explanations ("the ship was wrecked because the pilot was not at the wheel"). But absences exist—they are real lacks. More to the point, what really does the causal work is not the absence, which is, at most, a permitting factor which lets the real causes work. What wrecks the ship are the waves and the reef; by talking of the pilot we note only that had he been at the wheel, these factors would have been foiled.

72. Spade, "Degrees of Being," complains of just this.

story sketched above, told on the border of epistemology and Aristotelian cognitive science. It is by that story that Thomas tries to suggest that our concepts really do slice nature at its joints.⁷³

Thomas also uses talk of natures to keep his view of predication from generating absurd consequences:

The term “species” is not predicated of Socrates. It would be, of necessity, if the nature of a species accrued to *human* according to the being it has in Socrates, or according to its absolute consideration, i.e. *qua* human. For whatever accrues to *human qua* human is predicated of Socrates. [But] the nature of a species does not accrue to *human* according to the absolute consideration of human nature, but is among the accidents that follow according to the being it has in the intellect.⁷⁴

Thomas is discussing (albeit a bit obliquely) this argument:

- (4) Socrates est homo.
- (5) Homo est species. Ergo
- (6) Socrates est species.

One wants to avoid (6). But Thomas’s view of predication makes this hard. For Thomas, the copula in a subject-predicate proposition is a sign of identity *secundum rem*—a sign that the terms flanking the copula refer to the same item.⁷⁵ So for Thomas, this argument’s form is

- (7) A = B.
- (8) B = C. \
- (9) A = C.

Thomas’s account of predication makes (4) through (6) appear valid; however, his talk of natures lets him deny this. Thomas asserts that (4) predicates of Socrates the nature as absolutely considered. That is, in (4), the sense of “*homo*” includes only what we find in absolute consideration, a definition. Being a species is a property the nature has not in absolute consideration, but only in minds. So if (5) is true, the sense of “*homo*” includes not just a definition, but a further element appropriate only to concepts. So the inference is invalid due to equivocation. “*Homo*” has a different sense in (4) and (5). Note that this solution does not require ascribing any reality to absolutely-considered natures precisely as such. It works purely in terms of terms’ senses.

73. More than this is involved when Thomas speaks of natures as existing in God’s ideas (e.g., *Quodl.* 8, 1, 1). But I will not go into divine ideas here.

74. *EE* 4, 154. See also *In II de Anima*, l. 12, #380.

75. *ST* Ia 13, 12 *et* 85, 5 *ad* 3; *In IV Meta.*, l. 7, #616.

ARE NATURES IN PARTICULARS COMMON?

So far, Aquinas's theory seems to be that species natures exist as tropes, in matter and mind. Thomas sounds like a "trope" nominalist; however, here, the plot thickens. For Thomas writes in *ST* that "a form . . . as it is of itself, can be received by many . . . unless something else impedes it."⁷⁶ This seems to ascribe a modal property to the nature in itself. No trope can be received by many. Bearers individuate cases of forms, so that Socrates' humanity is essentially Socrates'.⁷⁷ Nor can a concept be received by many. Concepts are not received but satisfied. Picking up the notion of satisfaction, another parsing of the text would read "when you inspect the content of a general concept, ignoring everything else, it becomes clear that there's no reason inherent to that content that there couldn't be a number of things satisfying that concept."⁷⁸ This makes a claim not about a form as it is of itself, but about one as it is in the mind, and ascribes the modal property to the concept, in virtue of its content. But we have inconsistent concepts, concepts nothing can satisfy. These do not express natures, if natures are things that can have being extramentally. So it is not true of every concept, as such, that, if you inspect its content, you find no reason there cannot be many things satisfying it. It is true only of concepts expressing natures, or of consistent concepts or concepts of the metaphysically possible. Now, the claim that when you inspect the content of a consistent general concept, ignoring everything else, it becomes clear that there is no reason inherent to that content that there could not be a number of things satisfying that concept is true but simply tautologous.⁷⁹ Thomas's claim does not seem to be a tautology. It seems to be a significant metaphysical assertion. Thus, this is not likely to be his meaning. The claim that, when you inspect the content of a concept of something metaphysically possible, ignoring everything else, it becomes clear that there's no reason inherent to that content that there could not be a number of things satisfying that concept is just false. We do not have infallible insight into what's possible based on our grasp of concepts; we can have and fully grasp a concept of a metaphysically possible item and yet fail to know that it is possible. (Consider the concepts *proof of Goldbach's conjecture* and *disproof of Goldbach's conjecture*.) We ought not saddle Thomas with false

76. *ST* Ia, 3, 2 *ad* 3, 17b; see also *DV* 2, 5 and 2, 6. He had written in *EE* 4 that "neither unity nor community belong to (a) nature according to its absolute consideration." These texts may not contradict. *EE*'s point is likely that it is not part of what we see in absolute consideration of the nature that it actually have instances—being one common to many is the character of an instanced universal. The point *ST* and *DV* is likely that it is something we see in absolute consideration that a nature is *able* to have instances.

77. *ST* IIIa 77, 2.

78. I owe this suggestion to Jeff Brower.

79. That is, if inspecting the content reveals the absence of inconsistency, and any inconsistency could be a facet *of the content* that would prevent its satisfaction.

theses if we can help it. The claim that, when you inspect the content of a concept that expresses a nature, ignoring everything else, it becomes clear that there's no reason inherent to that content that there couldn't be a number of things satisfying that concept is, again, false. We do not know of every concept that expresses a nature that it does so, just by inspecting the concept. (Is there a nature, an exemplifiable attribute, of being a proof of Goldbach's conjecture?) So even if we know that whatever expresses a nature can have multiple satisfiers, we do not always know of concepts on this basis that they can have multiple satisfiers. And in any case, since we do not have infallible concept-based modal intuitions, there is no reason it cannot turn out that some concept expresses a nature, yet we fail to know by grasping it that there can be many things satisfying the concept. Further, this last claim does not reduce to one of the first two only if talk of expressing a nature-absolutely-considered-just-as-such is not just a *façon de parler*—that is, only if such natures are in some way really available to explain modal attributes of concepts. Since such natures *are not* really there, this reading is not open to us.

Thus our problem seems to remain. The text seems to ascribe a modal attribute to the nature absolutely considered. But something with no being of its own ought not to have any properties of its own. Intrinsic modal properties suggest intrinsic being, and so a strong form of realism. Moreover, “as it is of itself” seems to suggest that the modal property is part of what we would see in absolute consideration. But being exemplifiable is not part of the definition of any nature, and is not a property one could predicate of an individual. If Socrates could be received by many, he'd be a species. *De Potentia's* “a nature considered in itself is common,”⁸⁰ seems to ascribe the same modal property in different terms, as does *In I Sent.*'s “every form is of itself communicable.”⁸¹ *In I Sent.* was probably written in the same period as *EE*, the main source for the discussion so far. So we cannot shrug off the more realist language in *ST* and *DP* as suggesting that Thomas simply changed his theory over time. The disagreement with the account seen thus far—the apparent realism—*has* to be merely verbal, else Thomas was wildly inconsistent. These texts also suggest that Thomas may not mean by being common the property of being universal, at least in some contexts.⁸² For being universal is a semantic property, of representing other items. Only concepts and linguistic items have such properties for Thomas, and yet he does not mean that every nature, considered in itself, is a concept or a bit of language.

80. *DP* 9, 1, 268. See also *ST* Ia 7, 1.

81. *In I Sent.*, d. 29, q. 4, a. 2, p. 483.

82. If there *is* a principled distinction between commonness and universality in Thomas, his usage sometimes does not reflect it. He sometimes uses “common” where by my lights he should use “universal” (as, e.g., at *DP* 3, 16 *ad* 16, quoted below). But Thomas *is* sometimes loose with his terminology.

Thomas writes again in *ST* that “every form existing in a singular supposit which individualizes it is common to many, either in reality or at least in *ratio*.”⁸³ One might read the text as saying that nothing intrinsic to Socrates’ trope distinguishes it from Plato’s, so that there is in Socrates something we can pry away from individuating conditions mentally and then imagine correctly to be in Plato. But this just provides for commonality in *ratio*; it makes no sense of the disjunct “in reality.” There are two ways to take the contrast “in reality or in *ratio*.” On one, to be common in reality is to be one constituent in many particular things, and to be common in *ratio*—“in reason”—is to be conceivably so. By this, Thomas would presumably mean to suggest “possibly so”; otherwise, he would just be pointing out that those with [what he thinks are] false theories of universals may so conceive it. No trope in matter is common to many either way.⁸⁴ Thomas denies that numerically-one trope is in Socrates and Plato.⁸⁵ Further, as bearers individuate cases of forms, it is impossible that Socrates’ trope of humanity be Plato’s. Nor for that matter are concepts common in reality—they are not constituents of extra-mental things. A concept might be called common to many in *ratio*, in that its *ratio* (content) represents many. But, then, Thomas’s claim works out to be “every individualized nature is such as to be represented by a universal concept, one ‘common to many’ in the sense of being such intrinsically as to apply to many.” This however gives no reading at all for “in reality.” On the second reading, to be common in reality is to be numerically the same form in distinct individualizing supposits, as happens only in the Trinity, and to be common “in *ratio*” is to be common in whatever way natures are common in distinct particular things. But it is just false that every individualized form is actually common to many in this way: some species have just one member. One might take the claim as that every such form is represented by a universal concept. This, again, is probably false, as probably some kinds have never been observed by us or any other non-divine mind that employs such concepts.⁸⁶

The question of how something with no being of its own can have a modal property suggests an analogy: perhaps Thomas’s nature in itself is like Thomist prime matter.⁸⁷ Like prime matter, it cannot exist on its own in reality, but can be considered on its own, absolutely. Perhaps like prime matter, when considered absolutely, its only intrinsic features are modal—it is “pure potentiality” to exist in diverse material and mental incarnations. For the nature of humans is intrinsically apt to confer human nature on matter

83. *ST* Ia 13, 9, 86b.

84. See again *ST* IIIa 77, 2.

85. *EE* 4; *QD de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 9; *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 4, a. 2.

86. Every creature is observed by God, of course, but it does not seem likely that Thomas means to bring in the divine mind here: he does so nowhere else in his theory of attributes, save in *Quodlibet* (henceforth *Quodl.*) 8, 1, 1, where the issue is directly one about God’s ideas.

87. I could not have hit on this had I not read Spade, “Degrees of Being,” pp. 259–60.

and in minds and perhaps its definition captures not what it intrinsically is but what it is intrinsically apt to confer. While the prime matter of all sublunar material things is in a sense one, according to Thomas, the sense is simply that what distinguishes the prime matter of some earth from that of some water is not anything proper to prime matter, but consists entirely in “formal” factors.⁸⁸ Similarly, perhaps, the sense in which the nature of all humans is one may be simply that what makes humans’ tropes of humanity distinct consists entirely in factors outside the nature absolutely considered—the clumps of matter receiving them.

This would ascribe to the absolutely-considered nature a “real but less than numerical unity,” *au* Scotus, and yet also a lack of intrinsic positive unity to go with its lack of intrinsic positive being, as Aquinas’s doctrine of the “convertibility” of *ens* and *unum* demands. But this analogy will not help Aquinas much. Thomas’ account of substance-generation requires the same prime matter to exist in different substances. But notoriously, his system does not really let this be so, save in the “privative” sense just mentioned.⁸⁹ This analogy would leave it as unclear that two particulars can really have the same nature as it is that they can really have the same prime matter in some sense beyond the privative. But Thomas explicitly considers and rejects the claim that the merely privative unity of prime matter makes it a good analogue of the unity a common nature provides: “Prime matter is said to be one not because it has one form, as man is one by the unity of one form, but by the removal of all distinguishing forms.”⁹⁰ The unity having a nature in common provides is positive, not negative. In any case, few care to follow Thomas in believing that there can be such a thing as a material pure potentiality. So the analogy would hardly help his position’s credibility. Further, while we can make sense of the substantial forms that might actualize prime matter’s potentiality, it is hard to see how “material trope” and “mental trope” could serve as quasi-forms actualizing the nature’s quasi-pure-potentiality. Finally, if the nature absolutely considered were a prime matter analogue in tropes, it would not be true that “Human nature is not found in individuals with

88. *ST* Ia 16, 7 *ad* 2.

89. On Thomas’s account, when some water turns to air, all the water was nothing but water, there being but one substantial form in any batch of stuff (so *de Mixtione Elementorum*). So, too, all the air is nothing but air. Remove a substance’s substantial form, and not one bit of it survives, on Thomas’ terms. So not one bit of the water exists once its substantial form is gone. Thus, on Thomas’s terms, not one actual bit of water or air is common to the two bodies of stuff. At most, one could say that the subelemental matter of the water is the matter of the air. This is what Aquinas’s asserts in claiming that the two batches of stuff have the same prime matter. But if prime matter is just a pure potentiality for existing under substantial form, this can only mean that the pure potentiality to be some stuff that the water realized is realized also by the air. This is so, surely, only if something carries that very potentiality from one batch of stuff into another. On Thomas’s terms, not one bit of actual stuff survives to do so. So it is just not clear how this could come about.

90. *ST* Ia 16, 7 *ad* 2, 119b.

such a unity as to be one thing belonging to whoever is human.”⁹¹ For sublunary prime matter *does* have such a unity as to be one thing in whatever is sublunary and material, albeit a unity of a negative sort.

INCONSISTENCY THREATENS AGAIN

With the realist language added, Wolterstorff finds Thomas’ view inconsistent:

If human nature is the nature both of Socrates and of Plato, then is the nature of Socrates identical with the nature of Plato? To this question, Aquinas answers “no.” But surely the answer must be “Yes.” . . . If human nature is the nature of Socrates and also the nature of Plato, then the nature of Socrates is identical with the nature of Plato. On the other hand if “the nature of Socrates” and “the nature of Plato” . . . refer to different things, then neither (stands) for that nature which is supposedly the nature of both. Then it is false that human nature is the nature of Socrates and . . . of Plato.⁹²

Wolterstorff reads Thomas as holding that

- (10) Socrates’ nature = human nature,
- (11) Plato’s nature = human nature,
- (12) human nature = human nature, and yet
- (13) Socrates’ nature \neq Plato’s nature.

(10), (11) and (12) are Wolterstorff’s interpretation of the claim that human nature is common to Socrates and Plato. And, indeed, (10) through (13) are jointly inconsistent. But I want to suggest that Thomas in fact rejects (10) and (11).

As Thomas sees it, Socrates’ nature is not human nature *simpliciter*. It is Socrates’ human nature: *everything* in Socrates is individuated. Thus, Thomas rejects (10). Yet, as Socrates is human, there is also a sense in which Socrates has human nature *simpliciter*. This threatens Thomas with a redundancy. One surely does not want to say that Socrates has both Socrates’ human nature and another discrete trope, human nature *simpliciter*. Aquinas’ way out emerges when we link several texts:

To the truth of something’s nature considered in common pertain its form and matter taken in common. To the truth of the nature

91. *EE* 4, 154.

92. Wolterstorff, *Universals*, p. 146. See also John Fox, “Truthmaker,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1987): 193.

considered in this particular pertain individual signate matter and form individuated by this sort of matter. Just so, a human soul and body is of the truth of human nature in common; but this soul and this body is of the truth of human nature in Peter and Martin.⁹³

“Human nature in Peter” is surely Peter’s trope of human nature. The content of Peter’s human nature is “this soul and this body.” This is identified with “signate matter” and “form individuated” by it. Elsewhere, Thomas calls this sort of thing the singular essence⁹⁴: “A singular essence is constituted from designated matter and individuated form, as Socrates’ essence from this body and this soul.”⁹⁵ So, it appears that Thomas identifies Peter’s singular essence with Peter’s trope of humanity. To be Peter is to have Peter’s soul in Peter’s body. To have “human nature in common” is to have *some* soul and *some* body, the text tells us. Thomas also writes that,

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 so 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.⁹⁶

Here, Thomas 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. (The Latin can, of course, be read either way.) 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. We get much the same picture in another place:

“Picked out” [signatam] matter . . . under definite dimensions . . . is not put into the definition of the human *qua* human, but would be put in Socrates’ definition if Socrates had one. Matter which is not picked out is put in the definition of the human: not . . . this bone and this flesh, but bone and flesh absolutely, which are the non-picked-out matter of the human. It is clear therefore that the essence of human and the essence of Socrates differ only according to picked-out and not-picked-out.⁹⁷

93. *ST* Ia 119, 1, 705b.

94. I suggest that Thomas sees these as equivalent because they include the recipe for the body: given appropriate signate matter plus a human soul, a human body results.

95. *SCG* I 65. See also *ST* Ia 119, 1; *Expositio Super Librum Boethii De Trinitate* 5, 3; *Compendium Theologiae* 154; *Quodl.* II, q. 2, a. 2; *DV* 2, 7.

96. *ST* Ia 75, 4, 442b.

97. *EE* 2–3, 148.

“This” is a demonstrative. It does the picking out Thomas discusses. Peter has human nature by having Peter’s human nature because by having what makes one *this* human, one has what makes one *some* human. Being this human entails being some human; no further truthmaker for “is some human,” that is, “has human nature,” is needed. Socrates’ human nature is not identical with common human nature: Thomas denies (10) and (11). All the same, by having his human nature, Socrates has common human nature, that is, has what makes it true that Socrates is human, not just this human.

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. Here we can usefully bring in a comparison Thomas makes:

the essence of human and the essence of Socrates differ only according to the picked out and the not-picked-out . . . just as the essence of the genus and the essence of the species differ according to picked-out and not picked out, though the mode of picking-out differs in the two cases . . . the nature of the species is indeterminate in respect of the individual just as the nature of the genus is in respect of the species; whence it is that 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).⁹⁸

As we saw earlier, for Thomas, genus-concepts are in effect disjunctive. “Is an animal” *means* “is some species of animal” and so is equivalent to “is a dog or a cat or.” Thomas parallels the genus/species and the species/individual relationships. This suggests that species-concepts too are in effect disjunctive, and have their unity by a sort of indeterminacy among the disjuncts.⁹⁹ One satisfies a disjunctive concept by satisfying a disjunct, without any further truthmaker needed. If species/genus parallels individual/species, and both differ by a sort of “designation,” we can suggest that by having *this* human nature, one has *some* human nature (as by having this species one has some species, and so belongs to a genus). For Thomas, “—— is human” predicates “has a human nature,” and so in effect predicates “has Peter’s human nature or Paul’s or, etc.” It is as if this disjunction is its contribution to the truth-condition of a sentence. And, so it is clear, that, while Peter’s human nature is not identical with human nature *simpliciter*, by having Peter’s, Peter has human nature *simpliciter*.

A natural question to raise here is just how Thomas’s treatments of species and genera differ. If, in a sense, *infima* species are also disjunctive, one can wonder whether Thomas is as reductionist about *infima* species as

98. *EE* 3, 148, 151.

99. This is clear in another text below.

he is about species that are also genera. I think he is not. *Infima*-species-concepts always apply in virtue of tropes with no kind-differences between them, tropes that are *simpliciter* of the same kind. They represent the tropes due to which they apply directly, with complete definiteness and without indetermination. No higher species-concept that is also a genus-concept does so. Genera by definition have some indeterminacy of content, which lower species-concepts resolve. They leave it open to which lower kinds items to which they're applied belong. Thomas is reductionist about genera in that on his account, to fall under a genus-concept is in effect to fall under a disjunction of lower species-concepts, and the information genus-concepts provide reduces to information about disjunctions of lower species-concepts. No parallel reduction is available for lowest species-concepts, by definition.¹⁰⁰ The parallel point *in rebus* is that no reduction of lowest species tropes into disjunctions of tropes of still lower species is available.

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. Wolterstorff finds Thomas' claim unacceptable:

One can...abstract the nature of Socrates and abstract the nature of Plato. But then two distinct things have been abstracted...not one...thing, human nature...if one can indeed abstract human nature both from Socrates and from Plato, then there must be one thing, human nature, there to be abstracted from both... If one is abstractively attending to the nature of Plato and... of Socrates, then one is abstractively attending to either one thing or two... The activity of attending to one thing and ignoring the different accidental traits which may have accrued to it must not be confused with the activity of attending to two similar things and ignoring their differences.¹⁰¹

So, too, Fox: "This notion of abstraction gives rise to many problems. Likeness cannot be transmuted to identity either by inattention or by paring off difference. If two things are simply distinct there is no one thing that can be 'abstracted' from both."¹⁰² But, 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

100. A reduction to disjunctions of individuals *would* forfeit information. If "Socrates is human" asserts only that Socrates is one of Peter or Paul or..., then it does not tell what feature qualifies particulars for membership in this particular disjunction.

101. Wolterstorff, *Universals*, p. 148.

102. Fox, "Truthmaker," p. 193.

of some A and some B. Where a nature cannot be given in compositional terms, other, similar recipes are available.

While Thomas's realist language need not make his position inconsistent, it is still hard even to see what it can mean. Realists who say that humans have human nature in common mean that the same item, human nature, is present in all humans: humans have something like a constituent in common.¹⁰³ But Thomas rejects the claim that numerically one nature is in Socrates and Plato.¹⁰⁴ For him, "no commonness is found in Socrates. Rather, whatever is in him is individuated."¹⁰⁵ What is in Socrates is *Socrates'* humanity.¹⁰⁶ So, though Socrates and Plato are both human, Socrates' human nature \neq Plato's. If all this is true, what can it mean to say that human nature is common to Socrates and Plato, beyond that the same (disjunctive) universal concept applies to both? It should be clear that the roughly-existential-quantification account is not enough to explain the real commonness of human nature on its own. 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. Consider our species-definition formula, that 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: it is true for every member of this latter set that to be x is to consist of this body and this soul. Then equally, 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. It is something which binds some tropes (and their bearers) into a unity other sets of tropes (and bearers) lack.

CATEGORY-MISTAKES AND REINTERPRETATIONS

Aquinas allows two ways of talking about or considering a nature, "absolutely" and in its instances. He holds that "the nature . . . absolutely considered abstracts from any existence." That is, when one absolutely considers

103. E.g., Gustav Bergmann, *Logic and Reality* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), and Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism*.

104. *EE* 4; *QD de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 9; *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 4, a. 2.

105. *EE* 4, 154.

106. *ST* Ia, 3, 2 *ad* 3.

a nature, one cannot properly say that it exists.¹⁰⁷ “Existent” or “existent thing” are not part of any nature’s definition, and one can ascribe to a nature absolutely considered only what occurs in its definition. Even if “existent” did occur in a definition, further, this would mean only that being existent was part of the essence of items *satisfying* the definition, not that the essence itself had some sort of intrinsic being. This latter point shows us that part of the point of his regimentation of talk about the nature is to make it impossible even to make this Platonist claim, since one obviously cannot make it by talking about the nature as exemplified.

Now “non-existent” is not part of any nature’s definition either. But if Thomas could not say that the nature has no intrinsic being, he could not deny Platonism. His way to say that the nature has no intrinsic being is to say

- (a) the nature has existence only in its instances, and
- (b) it is not intrinsic to the nature to exist in any of these instances.

Here, (a) is clearly a claim about the nature’s being in its instances—that the being it has here and here and here adds up to all the being it has. So it is clearly compatible with Aquinas’s regimentation of nature-talk. One could take (b) as a claim about what occurs in a nature’s definition, that these attributes do not include the further attribute of existing in such or such an instance. (Surely if one can say what *is* in a definition when speaking in the absolute-consideration mode, one can also say what is not.) One might instead take (b) as a claim about the nature’s being in its instances, that this being is not intrinsic. Now, if it is compatible with his regimentation to assert (b) so taken, presumably it is also compatible with it to assert \neg (b) so taken. Yet, even doing so would not assert Platonism. Suppose that the nature’s being in a particular instance were intrinsic to it. This might show that natures have accidental intrinsics, which would hardly imply that they exist on their own. If one rejected that, it would follow that it is part of the nature to have this instance and so exist. But this would not entail that the nature could exist apart from any instance, or has any being it does not derive from its instances. Even if we take (b) as saying that the nature’s being in its instances is not intrinsic, and so as allowing as licit (though false) the claim that it *is* intrinsic, it would remain the case that Thomas had made Platonism unassertable.

One can consider a nature only either absolutely or “as it has existence in this or in that.” If one cannot both consider a nature absolutely and say that it exists, the only way to say that it exists is to speak of it “as it has existence in this or that.” For the nature to have existence in this or that is for this or that to have that nature. To say that a nature “has existence in this or that” is to say that it has instances- which one can gloss as there being borne tropes of the sort a particular nature-concept predicates, if one wants to be

107. This point (which I saw independently) is also in Gracia, “Cutting the Gordian Knot,” 28.

careful about avoiding commitment to natures absolutely considered. So, on Thomas's view, "human nature exists" *means* that there are humanness-tropes, in matter or mind. On his terms, this is all "human nature exists" can mean. To speak of the nature as existing in any other sense is to commit a category-mistake.¹⁰⁸ It is to try to say something this regimentation denies any sense—to speak of a nature as if it were a concrete particular thing.

If existing is a matter of having instances, so is existing in any particular number. So for Thomas, "the nature is one" *means* that it has one instance, mental or material, and "the nature is many" *means* that it has many: "if, then, one is asked whether the nature considered absolutely can be called one or many . . . either can happen to it . . . it is one according as it is in Socrates (and it) is multiplied in many."¹⁰⁹ The only way to answer "one or many?" is to talk about instances. Given Aquinas' general tie between being and unity, one would expect as much.¹¹⁰ This explains the peculiar argument he gives to "prove" that the nature absolutely considered is not one or many:

If plurality were of its proper content, it could never be one, as it is in Socrates. Similarly, if unity were of its . . . proper content, then the nature of Socrates and Plato would be one and the same, and it could not be made many in many.¹¹¹

One wants to say that this is missing the point: the nature, like every item, is one, and no single thing can be many.¹¹² But Thomas is committed to the claim that the only way to talk about the nature's existence or number-properties is to talk about instances. So this peculiar argument embodies the only way he can consistently interpret the "one or many?" question.

Before turning to how this parsing of nature-talk affects the commonness of natures, let me consider three objections. Edwards argues that Thomas cannot say only this that, in addition to explicating "human nature is *n* in number" as "human nature has *n* instances," Thomas must also call human nature one in some other way:

There must . . . be a sense in which the nature as such is one in itself, for it is distinct from other natures Humanity is not caninity, what it is

108. To call it a nature, or the nature of a particular, would similarly be a mistake *if* we are speaking of the nature absolutely considered. It would ascribe to the nature viewed abstractly a property it can have only in particulars. (Of course it is a nature *in particulars*.) Likewise, one cannot call it definable as that is a property natures have only in minds. Pannier and Sullivan suggest that Thomas does inconsistently ascribe natures absolutely considered such properties ("Aquinas' Solution," pp. 164–66), but I do not see that the text supports them.

109. *EE* 4, 153.

110. See e.g. *ST* Ia 11, 1.

111. *EE* 4, 153.

112. Wolterstorff, *Universals*, pp. 147–48; Pannier and Sullivan, "Aquinas' Solution," pp. 163–64.

to be human is not what it is to be a dog (and this would be the same even if the two natures had the same instances or if they had none).¹¹³

But the claim that humanity is not caninity does not even imply that humanity exists. It is also true if there is no such thing as abstract humanity as such: if there is none, it has no properties, including non-identity with caninity. If the nature considered absolutely does not exist as such, Thomas can make just this flat-footed response to Edwards. This move leaves Thomas the resources to say what is true about human and canine natures. For nothing keeps him from saying that no human is the same in species as any dog, or that God's ideas of creatures are such that if there were humans, none would be the same in species as any dog, or that nothing which satisfies "_____ is human" by so doing satisfies "_____ is a dog." Since we have broached the subject of category-mistakes, it might also be worth noting that Aquinas could deny both "humanity = caninity" and "humanity \neq caninity" were he willing to call both category-mistakes.

It can also seem in another way that Thomas must grant that human nature, apart from instances or minds, is itself one of something. For surely (you may say) human nature = human nature. And surely all things with the property of being human nature are identical with human nature. But if for some x all the F s are identical with x , there is just one F . I reply again on Thomas' behalf that if there is no such thing as human nature absolutely considered just as such, then nothing is identical with it, either. Of course, this move requires Thomas to deny too that humanity = humanity. This is acceptable. If there is no Santa Claus, nothing is identical with Santa, and if *that* is so, then surely it is not true in particular that Santa = Santa. There is some pull in the opposite direction. Some want to call "Santa = Santa" true regardless. But that way lies Meinong. And nothing keeps Thomas from saying that any individual human's humanity is self-identical.

Finally, Edwards also argues that Thomas' nature must

as such [have] its own unity [because] Aquinas holds that there is a real distinction between any individual and the nature it has . . . his nature is independent of Socrates in the sense that it does not have to exist in this individual. No individual is part of its intelligible structure. And the intelligible structure of an individual as an individual . . . contains more than its nature. (This) distinction is real in the sense that it is discovered . . . not manufactured by the mind.¹¹⁴

Edwards asserts that Socrates' nature doesn't have to exist in Socrates, that neither Socrates nor anyone else is part of its "intelligible structure." Now, if what she has in mind is Socrates' individual human nature, her claim is

113. Edwards, "Realism," p. 83.

114. Edwards, "Realism," pp. 85–86.

obviously false. Thus, she must have it in mind that Socrates' nature is humanness absolutely considered, in whose definition no individual figures. But the real distinction Thomas asserts is between an individual and its own trope of its nature. A real distinction between individual and nature absolutely considered *would* require two real terms, but Thomas does not clearly assert any such thing. Instead, he uses the fact that definitions do not mention individuals to argue the claim that material individuals contain more than just a nature-trope.¹¹⁵ Again, an individual's "intelligible structure" may be signate matter plus an individualized form, or plus a nature-trope, or the equivalent of the soul+body account of human nature in Peter discussed above, *per* the texts above. If it is, no commitment to an abstract nature absolutely considered with its own unity is needed. It is certainly possible that human nature exist while Socrates does not, for it is possible that humans exist while he does not. But it is not clear that Thomas needs any more than this latter common-sense fact plus the roughly-existential-quantification account of common human nature given above to explicate the way Socrates' nature is independent of Socrates.

HOW NATURES *IN REBUS* ARE COMMON

To Thomas, for a nature to exist is for there to be tropes in mind or matter. For it not to exist is for it to be no such tropes in mind or matter.¹¹⁶ For it to be many is for it to have many tropes in matter or mind. For it to be one is for there to be just one such trope. As Thomas sees it, all non-modal properties a nature has which its definition does not include are properties it has in mental or extra-mental instances- that is, properties of tropes. So I suggest that for Thomas, ascribing these properties to the nature is really a way to talk about properties of tropes and bearers. Being common, Thomas argues, is not part of a nature's definition. Were being common part of the definition of "human," then only common things would be humans; yet Socrates is both human and not common.¹¹⁷ Thomas must thus parse a nature's being common in terms of some property of its instances. To be common is to be one *in* many. To be common as attributes are supposed to be is to make many one. So Thomas must parse a species-nature's being common in terms of something about its tropes which makes their bearers one, in particular one in species, or else makes them one as mental tropes of

115. E.g., *ST*Ia 3, 3.

116. It might seem to follow that all possible natures always exist, since they are always in the mind of God. But this does not follow: it requires a realism about divine ideas and their contents that Thomas's doctrine of divine simplicity disallows or, rather, all natures "exist" there eternally only in the sense (discussed earlier) that God eternally knows all truths about them.

117. *EE* 4, 153–54.

(representing) the same nature are one, or one as mental and extramental tropes are.

Aquinas's account of intentionality and concept-formation provides the story about how mental and extra-mental tropes are one: they are one because the trope occurring in the mind represents tropes (and so their bearers) outside the mind. Mental tropes make minds one with external objects by uniting the mind with those objects' natures¹¹⁸; they unite mind and object by representing the nature within the mind.¹¹⁹ Here, commonness is really a matter of representation. I take it that representations of the same nature are one—that is, the same type of representation—by representing the same nature. Their unity is routed through that of the nature they represent, and so parasitic on it. The real question, then, is how natures make extramental particulars of the same kind one.

One might piggyback an account of this on the link between mind and the extramental, and say that natures make particulars of the same kind one by making them such as to be represented by the same mental tropes.¹²⁰ A text in Aquinas' *Metaphysics* commentary suggests this:

certain . . . things are called one . . . of which there is one understanding, which the soul apprehends by one apprehension . . . by a single concept (*apprehensio indivisibilis*). This happens (with) that which is one in species . . . what is indivisible in species is one . . . according to understanding and conception. For there is not in distinct singular things some numerically single nature one can call a species. But the intellect apprehends as one that in which all a nature's instances (*inferiores*) agree. And so the species which really is diverse in diverse individuals becomes indivisible in the intellect's grasp.¹²¹

Presumably Thomas does not want to say that things wait to be one in species for some intellect to abstract their common concept. The text suggests rather that being one in species is being one "according to understanding and conception," that is, being representable by a single species-concept. Presumably this cashes out as something like: just if Socrates is of the same species as Plato, an intellect abstracting a species-concept from Socrates forms "the same concept" it would have formed had it abstracted one from

118. *ST*Ia 14, 1–2.

119. *DV*2, 3 *ad* 9 *et* 5 *ad* 5; *DV*8, 1c *et* 11, *ad* 3; *In IV Sent.* d. 49, q. 2, a. 1c *et ad* 7.

120. This would have to be explicated as "token tropes," not "tropes of the same trope-kind," at least if one wants also to use the account of sameness of kind among mental tropes just given. Otherwise, one would have a circle, that what makes represented trope-bearers to be of the same kind is that the tropes which represent them are of the same kind, and what makes the representing tropes to be of the same kind is that the bearers they represent are of the same kind.

121. S. Thomae Aquinatis *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria* (Turin: Marietti, 1935), on Book Ten (henceforth cited in such forms as *In X Meta.*), l. 1, #1929–30, p. 556.

Plato instead—that is, one with that concept’s very content, one representing “the same species.” And the suggestion on offer is that we take this to define what it is for particulars species-concepts can represent to be one in species.

Now “the very content” raises a question: content of the same *type*, or token-identical content? If we say “type-identical,” we face immediately the question of what makes contents one in type. If we want to say that what makes particulars have the same nature is being representable by concepts with the same type of content, we cannot also adopt the intuitive suggestion above that what makes concepts have the same type of content is representing the same nature. So, we should take Thomas’ thesis as that the content we get from Socrates is not just type, but token-identical with one we would have obtained from Plato. This seems to be good Thomas- the concepts embody numerically the same nature- and also to accord with intuition.

This given, one could “define” Thomas’s same-species relation as Lewis “defines” theoretical terms: the same-species relation is that relation R between substances such that for all xy , Rxy iff the contents of a human intellect’s species-concepts of x and y would be token-identical, this fact represents R’s obtaining, and R is not a likeness—, numerical, or causal relation. This does not define the relation in terms of contingent properties. How the human intellect works is a function of human nature, and so necessary. So then is how the human intellect would interact with substances standing in a same-species relation. Further, on this account, the relation holds due to a causal power with which the nature (the relation’s foundation) endows particulars by necessity, to produce a certain effect in the considering mind. To take such a power as the same-species relation’s proximate foundation would fit Aquinas’ account of relations, because it assigns sameness of species a foundation in one of the categories of relation-foundations Thomas adopted from Aristotle, that of “action and passion.”¹²² We might simply identify the relation’s obtaining with the related things’ both having this power. Thomas probably would not; he does not identify relations with their foundations.

One *could* take this as Aquinas’ account of how natures make particulars one. However, the *In X Meta.* text might give a *proprium* of the same-species relation (or its obtaining), not an account of its inner constitution. If it gives the relation’s inner constitution, then if there were no determinate facts about what intellects would do were they on the scene, no extramental particulars would be one in species. This is unintuitive. It is not hard to imagine a world in which there are no such facts. Suppose that there is no God, the world runs in part by irreducibly indeterministic laws operating on partly-chance conditions, and the emergence of minds and their precise tendencies if they existed are both functions of irreducibly indeterminist laws and chancy conditions. In this case, which many believe actual, if there were no minds, there would be no facts about just how

122. *ST* Ia 13, 7; *ST* Ia 28, 4; *In V Meta.*, 1. 17, ##1023–25.

minds would represent the world, even granting that they (by chance) emerge. But, if there were two paramecia early in such a world, surely they would be one in species while they existed, before any minds existed, and even if no minds ever emerged, however precisely we cash this out.

More to the point, routing the commonness of natures through how they *would be* represented rests it on a dispositional property. Dispositional properties have categorical bases. So we should ask if Thomas has an account of something that would provide such a base. Well, you might say, the reason Fido would be represented by a dog-concept is that he has a dog-trope as his species-trope, and so too for Spot. This sort of same-kind relation rests immediately on the tropes involved.¹²³ Yet what is it about Fido's trope being one of *dog* and Spot's trope being one of *dog* that makes Fido and Spot generate the same concept? The answers here seem limited to "that's just how it is- you've struck bedrock" or "well, these tropes make Fido and Spot the same kind of animal." The latter answer is more natural and plausible, but requires Thomas to give an account of same-kind relations between particulars. This other account might yield a nondispositional account of the same-species relation that would equally make it supervene immediately on the tropes involved and permit a simpler account of how kind-tropes make particulars one. I think Thomas has a further account, and that it does involve this supervenience.

We have seen Thomas say both that natures are common extramentally and that nothing in Socrates is common. Both are true if a nature has commonness extramentally but not *in* Socrates. I now try to show that for Thomas, it does. My first step in doing so is to look a bit further at how Thomas can interpret the claim "human nature is common."

For Thomas, human nature in some sense has whiteness accidentally by being in Socrates.¹²⁴ If being in a white thing suffices for being accidentally white, then being in a thing married to Xanthippe suffices for being accidentally married to Xanthippe. So, on Thomas's terms, human nature is married to Xanthippe. Still, it might not be quite right to say that human nature has this property *in* Socrates. For being married is not something *in* Socrates, though he *is* married. We would not call it an intrinsic property of Socrates, as we think of intrinsic attributes as (very roughly) those an item could have if the universe ended at its skin.¹²⁵ Rather, Socrates' being married consists in his standing in certain relations to Xanthippe and to social institutions.¹²⁶ And so it might be better to say that human nature is accidentally married to Xanthippe in a situation or a whole (a couple in a

123. I show shortly why this matters.

124. *EE* 4, 153.

125. Limits of space preclude my trying to work out a more careful account of intrinsincness. I take it that this covers the main sorts of intuition such accounts must catch.

126. Here, an objection might arise: our idea that "intrinsic" and "relational" are mutually exclusive stems in part from our Russellian picture of relations, on

society) that includes Socrates and Xanthippe. Thomas, in fact, holds that of all the Aristotelian intrinsic categories, only relation fails *as such* to posit something in its bearers—that is, to make a genuine intrinsic difference: “what it predicates is not something but *to* something.”¹²⁷

Thus there might be a tenable distinction between attributes a nature might have accidentally “in” its instances and others it might have accidentally and extra-mentally but not “in” its instances, the latter being those it has due to certain relations its instances stand in. If there is, Thomas could appeal to it, and say that human nature is common due not to something “in” any human, but to relations between humans. So I suggest that for Thomas, a nature is common iff its instances are one in species, and this in turn is so iff its instances stand in a same-species-as relation. That its instances stand in a same-species relation might be for Thomas what we “really” assert in saying that the nature is common. And this might in turn provide an interpretation of what appear to be the modal attributes purely of the nature taken absolutely.

Let us therefore see what Thomas means by the claim that

(S) Socrates and Plato are the same in species.

Thomas insists that identity of species is a real and not a merely conceptual relation: “The relation the term “same” expresses . . . is of reason alone if it is taken as “simply the same.” . . . It is not so when things are said to be the same not in number but in generic or specific nature.”¹²⁸ The relation exists in the world. It is not an artifact of the mind. And this means both that the basis of the relation exists in the world and that the relation itself is

which they are single entities somehow “between” their terms. Thomas worked with an Aristotelian picture of relations, on which Socrates’ being married to Xanthippe consists not in there being a single relation, marriage, linking the two, but in Socrates’ having the accident of being married to Xanthippe and Xanthippe’s having the accident of being married to Socrates. On such a picture, do not relations come out as intrinsic as other attributes? Aquinas, in fact, groups relation, substance, quantity, and quality as “intrinsic” attributes, dubbing those of Aristotle’s other six categories extrinsic (*In V Met.*, l. 9, #892). Yet, I would argue that the short answer is “no”: medieval philosophers (and Aristotle) had the intuitions we express by saying that relations are not intrinsic, and these both complicated Aristotelian accounts of relations (e.g., *ST Ia* 13, 7 and *In V. Meta.*, l. 17) and led gradually to dissatisfaction with them. Mark Henninger tells this story in *Relations* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1989).

127. *DV* 1, 5 *ad* 16. See also *ST Ia* 28, 1; *In I Sent.* d. 26, q. 2, a. 1 and d. 20, q. 1, a. 1; *Quodl.* 1, 2 and 9, 4. Thomas’ point more precisely is that the sheer facts that an attribute is relational and A has it do not entail that A is intrinsically different than it might have been, while if an attribute is in the categories of substance, quantity and quality, then if A has it, it follows that A is intrinsically different than it might have been. For instance, some relations are purely “of reason” (e.g., *DP* 7, 11).

128. *ST Ia* 28, 1 *ad* 2, 187b.

something extra-mentally real.¹²⁹ One might think that if (S) does not rest on one item, a universal, literally being *in* Socrates and Plato, or purely and simply on the fact that Socrates and Plato are such as to be represented by the same species-concepts, (S) can mean only that Socrates and Plato are alike in certain ways. According to Copleston, for Thomas, “members of a species possess similar substantial forms . . . this objective similarity . . . enables us to have universal specific concepts, and so to apply the same universal term to all the members of a specific class.”¹³⁰ One might, in other words, think that sameness in species can only be likeness founded on species-tropes; however, Thomas explicitly rejects treating sameness of species as likeness. He accepts from Aristotle that “that is the same which is one in substance, the similar is the one in quality.”¹³¹ Sharing a species is being one in what Aristotle called a secondary substance.¹³² So for Thomas, being one in species is a mode of identity, not likeness.¹³³ Now sometimes Thomas can seem to see less than an absolute difference here:

When there is unity according to the whole nature (*ratio*) of the species, “identity” is said; when there is unity not according to the whole nature of the species, “likeness” is said . . . things generically one are similar; things one in species are identical.¹³⁴

A natural thought here would be that if unity according to part of the species is likeness, unity according to that part plus the other parts is also likeness. But if sharing a part is just overlap, it does not follow that sharing all parts is just overlap; sharing all parts may be not “just” overlap but identity. There *are* no genus tropes, and *infima species* tropes are indivisible save in concept. Two dogs on Thomas’ account bear kind-tropes that are distinct only because they inform distinct clumps of matter. If there are no real tropes for higher species, dogs and cats do not as such have any sort of trope of which this is true. There may be some principled distinction to be drawn between a case entailing having a trope “in common” and a case not entailing this.

Now it would not be unreasonable to reply here that sameness of kind is just perfect likeness—that the difference between the relevant relation between dogs and the relevant relation between dogs and cats is one of degree, not kind. However, we saw earlier that for Thomas, likeness always rests on some “agreement of form,” and that, on pain of regress, we cannot construe this agreement as another likeness. Now sometimes it is hard to

129. As versus the case of numerical self-identity, where the basis of the relation is in the world but the relation itself exists only in the mind (*DP* 7, 11 *ad* 3).

130. Copleston, *Aquinas*, p. 94. I believe that John of St. Thomas reads Thomas basically this way.

131. *In X Meta.*, l. 4, #1999, p. 571. See also *In V Meta.*, l. 17, #1022.

132. Aristotle, *Categories* 5, 2a15–19.

133. *In X Meta.*, l. 4, ##2005, 2009; *In V Meta.*, l. 11, #911.

134. *In X Meta.*, l. 4, #2009, pp. 572–73.

see what else Aquinas leaves room for this agreement to be. In the case of generic likeness, there is no sort of trope dogs and cats have in common as such, and so all we can say is that dogs and cats are alike in species though not the same in species. But where the agreement *can* be something more than a likeness, Thomas is committed to taking it to be. So for Thomas, the likeness of two dogs rests on an agreement between them which is not just another likeness. And there is some intuitive pull to Thomas's view here. We do want to say that dogs are as such in some way "the same." And we do see this as being or resting on some sort of relation between their kinds.

What is the same-species relation? Thomas writes that "oneness in substance makes identity... oneness in quality causes similarity... similarly... being one in quantity causes equality."¹³⁵ The parallel suggests that he sees the cases as similar. And, at least in the case of quantity and quality, Thomas is fairly explicit about what sameness of species is. Thomas writes in *In I Sent.* that the *differentia* of equality is having one quantity¹³⁶ and that having one quantity means more precisely having "the same species" of quantity.¹³⁷ For Thomas, there is no real difference between differentiae and their species. So equality for Thomas *is* the same-species relation for quantities.¹³⁸ Some might want to call being equal in height being perfectly alike in height. But this would rest equality, a quantitative attribute, on a form of likeness, or perhaps turn it into a likeness. This would be bad metaphysics, to Thomas, for he held that quantitative accidents were most immediate to substance, and qualities inhere in substances *through* their quantities.¹³⁹ It would also violate ordinary use and intuition. 2+2 pounds and 4 pounds are not perfectly *similar* quantities. "2+2 pounds" and "4 pounds" name the same quantity. It is because 2+2 pounds and 4 pounds are the same quantity that a 2+2- and a 4 pound thing are perfectly similar with respect to quantity. (Likeness rests on having "the same" attributes, said Thomas, and not without reason.) Equality is sameness of quantity. Equality involves something on the order of identity in a nonsubstance category. This is Aquinas' view. It acknowledges a realist intuition. The question is how a trope nominalist can accommodate it. Because Thomas does not believe in real universals to give it heft, and can't reduce it to a sort of likeness, he treats equality as a

135. S. Thomae Aquinatis *In Librum Beati Dionysii "De Divinis Nominibus" Expositio*, ed. Pera (Rome: Marietti, 1950), chap. 4, l. 6, #361, p. 118. This is a gloss on Aristotle's claim that the same are one in substance, the like one in quality, the equal one in quantity. For Thomas's endorsement of this *propria persona*, see *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1.

136. *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1 ad 4, p. 463.

137. *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1c, p. 462.

138. I show elsewhere that for Thomas, numbers are quantities and come in species. Thus, for Thomas, the sentence "2 + 2 = 4" asserts an identity between "two" species of quantity.

139. E.g., *ST IIIa* 77, 2.

direct same-species relation between equals, whose being such we recognize. When it seems to us that two four pound things have the same quantity, what we intuit, as Thomas sees it, is that two 4-pound things have the same *kind* of quantity.

For Thomas, likeness always is a matter of “agreement in one form.” But this can be because things share part but not all of their specific natures, or because they have the same quality, to the same or a different degree, or because they share more qualities than they differ in.¹⁴⁰ The first is a case of “generic likeness.” The others are said to involve having “one species” of quality.¹⁴¹ Thomas writes that

things are called similar (which) are in some way the same in species, as for example a larger quadrilateral is said to be like a smaller when one’s angles are equal to another’s and the sides . . . are proportional . . . this likeness (is) according to unity of figure and proportion.¹⁴²

So likeness seems in the genus-case to be irreducible, but in the others to be the same-species relation for qualities: it is a mode of identity for a non-substance category. And the genus case is not founded on attributes in the category of quality, but rather on “secondary substance,” and so it does not block our saying simply that likeness is the same-species relation for qualities. Following Aristotle, Thomas analyzes likeness in terms of unity, rather than providing an analysis of unity of quality in terms of likeness. Once more, this acknowledges realist intuitions: when two items are red, we want to say, they are not just alike, but alike because they have the same color. If Thomas were willing to say there was one entity that is the color of both, he could give this intuition full sway. As he is not, he acknowledges it baldly: yes, there is a sort of sameness here, which we recognize intuitively and which is not identity of constituent.

Thomas holds that relations rest on some kind of foundation in the relata, that is, that any *xy* stand in a relation only due to other facts about *x* and about *y*.¹⁴³ (For instance, if Smith is taller than Jones, this is because Smith is 5’1” and Jones is 4’11”.) So Thomas is committed to there being some foundation for the same-species relation. Elsewhere, Thomas writes that equality “follows upon” things’ quantities.¹⁴⁴ He explains,

If someone through a change in him becomes equal to me while I am not changed, that equality was first in me in some way, as in its root

140. *In X Met.*, l. 4, ##2009–12.

141. *In X Met.*, l. 4, ##2011, p. 573.

142. *In X Meta.*, l. 4, #2008, p. 572.

143. *ST* Ia 28, 1; *DP* 7, 9; *In V Meta.*, l. 17, *passim*; *In III Phys.*, l. 1, #549; *In I Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 1.

144. *DP* 7, 9 *ad* 5, p. 244.

from which it has real being. For since I have such quantity, it pertains to me that I be equal [in size] to all those who have the same quantity. So if someone has that quantity for the first time, that common root of equality is determined to him. And so nothing comes to me for the first time from the fact that I begin to be equal to another through his changing.¹⁴⁵

Smith is 5'1". Due to this, Smith is potentially equal in height to any other 5'1" object. When Jones becomes 5'1", the potentiality is actualized. Nothing else is needed; it follows that they are of equal height. Being 5'1" and being equal in height are obviously distinct attributes. Just one is nonrelational. Just one is intrinsic. And, of course, Smith and Jones could just as easily be equal of height at 5'2". If being 5'1" and being equal in height are distinct attributes, "Jones is 5'1" and Smith is 5'1" and "Jones and Smith are equal in height" express distinct states of affairs. So there *is* something on the order of supervenience here.¹⁴⁶ Thomas thus uses "one in quantity" to gesture at that on which equality supervenes: what it is about Jones and Smith when Jones becomes 5'1" that *makes* them equal, that *constitutes* them a case of equality in height. But this isn't anything profound. It is simply Smith's and Jones's both having tropes of being 5'1".

Equality is a not-further-analyzable sameness of species grounded on having tropes of what we intuitively want to call the same quantity. Likeness is a not-further-analyzable sameness of species grounded on having tropes of the same quality. Substantial sameness of species is the secondary-substance analogue of sameness of quantity and quality. So substantial sameness of species should turn out to be a primitive relation grounded on having tropes of "the same" kind-nature. As sameness of quantity and quality are *sorts* of sameness of species, perhaps we can also say that there is for Thomas a same-species relation, cases of which can link cases of substance, quality, or quantity. Or perhaps there are just three relations here which share an analogical likeness. In any case, it is just a brute fact about certain tropes, an ontological ultimate, that they subvene this (these) relation(s) between their bearers.

Thus, when Thomas writes that being one in substance "makes" identity, he may mean "one in substance" to suggest a foundation/explanation pattern like that in the quantity case. He may have in mind something like: Socrates is human. Plato is human. So they are of the same species. That is, their tropes are foundations for a same-kind relation; having tropes

145. *In V Phys.*, l. 3, #1292, pp. 283–84. (trans. Mark Henninger).

146. Henninger reads Thomas as holding that the equality and the height are not quite fully distinct: a relation and its foundation have the same being—make the same contribution to the intrinsic character and existence of the subject—but involve distinct forms (Henninger, *Relations*, 29–31; my phrasing of this summary is indebted to Jeff Brower). I am not sure what to make of this, but as long as the "forms" involved differ, the claim of supervenience seems secure.

and having them found this relation constitutes being of the same kind for substances. This relation is intrinsically founded, since being human is an intrinsic property. But for Thomas, this relation is irreflexive.¹⁴⁷ (Thomas holds that identity of species is a “real” relation, but also that no reflexive relation is in this sense “real.”¹⁴⁸) If it is irreflexive and a human enters it as a whole, it is not itself an intrinsic attribute of the human, if (again) intrinsic attributes are (very roughly) those an item could have if the universe ended at its skin. As intrinsically-based but nonintrinsic, the same-species relation can serve to interpret “the nature is common” in terms of facts about but not “in” the nature’s instances.

On this account, then, Plato and Socrates are the same in species although they have no constituents in common. Thomas does not explain how Plato and Socrates are the same in species by positing an abstract object, a species, to which both have the same relation. Such explanations are Platonist in form. Rather, for Thomas, sameness of species is a direct relation between items in the species, based on their kind-tropes. He reverses the Platonist’s direction of explanation. The Platonist appeals to the identity of an abstract object to explain a relation between Plato and Socrates: for the Platonist, Plato and Socrates are of one species because the species of Socrates = the species of Plato. Thomas instead appeals to a relation between Plato and Socrates to explain the oneness of some further object we can call their species: many humans stand in same-species relations, and this is why we can at least speak of and define such a thing as human nature absolutely considered.

For Thomas, a trope of a species-nature *is* a way things are one (or apt to be so, if they chance to be their natures’ only instance). For it is the sort of thing on which a same-species relation supervenes. (Just so, a trope of being 5’1” is a way quantities and so quantified things are apt to be one, as it is the sort of thing on which a same-species relation for quantities supervenes.) This, I suggest, is what Thomas means by “a nature considered in itself is common.”¹⁴⁹ This does not predicate a modal property of the nature considered absolutely. It asserts that each trope is intrinsically apt to subvene a same-species relation. An accident like whiteness exists in that by it, things are white. So, too, ways things are one (natures) exist in that by them, things are one (or apt to be so).

147. *ST* Ia 28, 1 *ad* 2 insists that no reflexive relation is real, asserts this in particular of self-identity, and expressly contrasts this with the case of generic and specific identity.

148. *ST* Ia 28, 2 *ad* 2 *et* 4 *ad* 1; *In V Meta.*, l. 11, #912; *In I Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 1; *In I Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1; *DV* 1, 5 *ad* 16. The scarequotes emphasize that (as should be clear) in this claim “real” has some other-than-usual sense. At *DP* 7, 11 *ad* 3, Thomas acknowledges that in a sense more like our usual one, we are really self-identical.

149. *DP* 9, 1, p. 268.

This gives us, I think, Aquinas' answer to the questions common predication raises about attributes. His view is a version of nominalism, a trope nominalism enriched by same-species relations. Trope theories have a limited menu of alternatives to Thomas's enrichment, if they genuinely want to accommodate realist intuitions that Smith and Jones have "the same" height. One might want to say that being one in height is there being one height a trope of which Smith and Jones both have. But trope theorists must take care how they parse this ontologically. They must avoid immanent realism about kinds of tropes. If tropes can instance real universals, why not particulars? For like reasons they must avoid Platonic abstract objects tropes instance. However, we have intuitions that tell against taking equality as a form of likeness. Thus, perhaps, Thomas's move: a primitive relation connects things bearing these tropes, a same-species relation, and it is because a trope of this relation unites them that they are of the same height. All 5'1"-tropes subvene same- or equal-height relations; to have tropes of "one" height subvenes being of equal height.

SO WHAT?

If we have Thomas's theory of attributes aright, the next and more interesting question is: should we adopt it? One weak point is doubtless his account of the same-species relation. The Lewis-style "definition" I have given it does not *analyze* a concept. So even if Thomas's same-species relation has this sort of "definition," it is primitive, or even *sui generis*. This is a problem when we do not find the primitive familiar, for example, if it is not somehow given in direct experience. And while Thomas can claim that this primitive responds to intuitions we truly have, it is another thing altogether to count these as forms of direct experience, "givens" (in whatever sense we have such). Yet, if Thomas invokes a primitive relation, this leaves him no worse off than many realists (consider Platonists' difficulties with participation, or other realists' with exemplification), and perhaps he might argue that it gives him an advantage over other forms of nominalism—e.g., a securer basis for claiming that only some classes/wholes are "natural," in addition to responding to the intuitions mentioned. Those who unify natural classes *via* likeness invoke a relation equally primitive, unless one defines it in something like Aquinas' way. It is a more familiar primitive, but this does not imply that it does a better ontological job than Thomas'. A full evaluation of his view would require seeing how it fares against the sorts of problem which bedevil other theories of universals. That is matter for a book, not an article.