

MARCO DAMONTE

AN HISTORIOGRAPHIC LABEL, ITS EVIDENCE, ITS
MISUNDERSTANDING AND ITS FUTURE:
WITTGENSTEINIAN THOMISM

ABSTRACT: The aim of my paper is to explain the label *Wittgensteinian Thomism* and to show its relevance in the history of contemporary philosophy. I will proceed through three steps. First of all, I will take the birth of this label into consideration. In the second step I will study in detail Wittgenstein's references to Aquinas. The fact that Wittgenstein possessed the first two volumes of the *Summa Theologica* is well-known, but the influence that Aquinas had on Wittgenstein must be clarified. I will conclude distinguishing two different levels in the use of the label *Wittgensteinian Thomism*: it can be appreciated as an historiographical or as a theoretical tool.

SOMMARIO: Lo scopo del presente articolo è quello di spiegare la definizione di *Wittgensteinian Thomism* e di mostrare la sua rilevanza nella storia della filosofia contemporanea. Procederò attraverso tre passaggi. Innanzitutto, prenderò in considerazione la nascita di questa etichetta. Nella seconda parte del lavoro studierò in dettaglio i riferimenti di Wittgenstein all'Aquinate. Il fatto che Wittgenstein possedesse i primi due volumi della *Summa Theologica* è ben noto, ma si deve approfondire l'influenza dell'Aquinate sul pensiero di Wittgenstein. Concluderò distinguendo due diversi livelli nell'uso linguistico del *Wittgensteinian Thomism*: come strumento storiografico oppure teorico.

KEYWORDS: Wittgenstein; Aquinas; Analogy; Being; Kenny

For the first time in 1992, during some conferences held at the 'Maritain Center' (Notre Dame University), thanks to John Haldane a new label appeared in contemporary philosophical historiography. He proposed *Analytical Thomism* as a label not to indicate "a movement of pious

exegesis, but to suggest how it is possible to deploy the methods and ideas of twentieth-century philosophy – of the sort dominant within the English-speaking world – in connection with the broad framework of ideas introduced and developed by Aquinas”.¹ This current is usually divided into two sub-currents: the first is the *Wittgensteinian Thomism*² and the second is the *Geach-Fregean Thomism*,³ as Roger Pouivet in 1997 and Giovanni Ventimiglia in 2012 dubbed them respectively. It is possible to trace the origins of these two sub-currents: the *Geach-Fregean Thomism* originated in a conference held by Peter Geach at the ‘Aristotelian Society’ (London) in May 1955⁴ and the *Wittgensteinian Thomism* arose in a conference delivered by Anthony Kenny at the ‘Socratic Club’ (Oxford) in May 1958.⁵ Despite the common reference to Aquinas, these two approaches⁶ are quite independent for the following reasons: (1) some authors are engaged in both projects, but a lot of scholars belong only to one of them; (2) they take different themes into consideration: *Wittgensteinian Thomism* has to do with epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophy of theology, while *Geach-Fregean Thomism* is involved in metaphysics, ontology and natural theology; (3) the appreciation of Aquinas is quite different: in *Wittgensteinian Thomism* his contribution is esteemed, while in *Geach-Fregean Thomism* his thought is criticized and there are also those who consider *Geach-Fregean Thomism* impossible and misleading.⁷ Kenny’s researches are a specimen of this dichotomy. In his

¹ J. Haldane, “Analytical Thomism. A Prefatory Note”, *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 486. A previous formulation can be found in Id., “Thomism, analytical”, in T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 875. For a general approach see M. Micheletti, *Tomismo analitico*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2007.

² See R. Pouivet, *After Wittgenstein, St. Thomas*, Indiana, St. Augustine’s Press, 2006 (ed. or. *Après Wittgenstein, saint Thomas*, Paris, Puf, 1997).

³ See G. Ventimiglia, *To be o esse? La questione dell’essere nel tomismo analitico*, Roma, Carocci, 2012.

⁴ See “Form and Existence”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 55, 1954-5, p. 251-271; reprinted in Id., *God and the Soul*, London, Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 42-64.

⁵ See A. Kenny, “Aquinas and Wittgenstein”, *The Downside Review*, 77, 1959, p. 217-235. This was Kenny’s first philosophical publication: see A. Kenny, *A Path from Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 141.

⁶ Really, another relevant approach in the analytic field has to be mentioned: it is formed by Norman Kretzmann’s and Eleonore Stump’s interpretations that are characterized by an exegetic claim.

⁷ See F. Kerr, “Un thomisme analytique?”, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 92, 2008, p. 556-573; B.J. Shanley, “On Analytical Thomism”, *The Thomist*, 62, 1999, p. 125-137 (it. tr. “Tomismo analitico”, *Divus Thomas*, 24, 1999, p. 79-91); J.F.X. Knasas, “Haldane’s Analytic Thomism and Aquinas’s Actus essendi”,

brief monograph on Aquinas, he concludes the last chapter on Aquinas's philosophy of mind with this appreciation: "Aquinas's doctrine of the intentional existence of forms remains one of the most interesting contributions ever made to the philosophical problem of the nature of thought". On the contrary, Kenny's opinion at the end of the previous chapter on Aquinas's philosophy of being is expressed thus: "even the most sympathetic treatment of these doctrines cannot wholly succeed in acquitting them of the charge of sophistry and illusion".⁸ The discrepancy between these two judgements is confirmed in the following Kenny monographs on Aquinas. The first consider the study of Aquinas necessary to contribute to themes as mind, perception, imagination, intellect, appetite, will, freedom, sense, universals of thought, knowledge of particulars, self-knowledge, soul, relationship between mind and body;⁹ the second, published almost ten years later, ends with a list of twelve different senses of the verb *to be* considered incoherent.¹⁰

I propose to pay attention to *Wittgensteinian Thomism* not only because of its relevance, but, first of all, because it has a textual ground. Following the diachronic development of the parallelism between Aquinas and Wittgenstein, the pioneers that must be quoted are Cornelius Ernst (1924-1977) who taught Fergus Kerr "that what Thomas meant by saying that the soul is the form of the body is pretty much what Wittgenstein meant by saying that the human body is the best picture of the human soul"¹¹ and the eclectic Dominican Herbert McCabe (1926-2001) "who learnt how to address both Thomas's questions and Wittgenstein's within a single enquiry".¹² Pouivet follows Gilbert Ryle, Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe and Kenny and he associates Aquinas and Wittgenstein with

in C. Paterson, M. S. Pugh (eds.), *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 233-251; M. Pérez de Laborda, *Tomismo analítico*, in F. Labastida, J.A. Mercado (eds.), *Philosophica: Enciclopedia filosófica on line*, 2007 (http://www.philosophica.info/archivo/2007/voces/tomismo_analitico/Tomismo_Analitico.html) e S. Theron, "The Resistance of Thomism to Analytical and Other Patronage", *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 611-618 (repr. in Paterson-Pugh, *Analytical Thomism*, p. 225-232).

⁸ A. Kenny, *Aquinas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 80 and 60.

⁹ See Id., *Aquinas on Mind*, London, Routledge, 1993.

¹⁰ See Id., *Aquinas on Being*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002.

¹¹ F. Kerr, *After Aquinas. Versions of Thomism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 21.

¹² See H. McCabe, *God Still Matters*. Foreword by Alasdair MacIntyre. Edited and introduced by Brian Davies, London, Continuum, 2002, p. VIII; Id., *God Matters*, London, Continuum, 2005 (or. ed. 1987), and Id., *On Aquinas*. Edited by Brian Davies. Foreword by Anthony Kenny, London, Continuum, 2008.

regard to externalism in epistemology, conception of mental acts in philosophical anthropology, intentionality in philosophy of language, will and freedom in moral philosophy. For these reasons he suggests that there is a theoretic common ground between Aquinas and Wittgenstein and that it is reasonable to speak of a current, that he is the first to name *Wittgensteinian Thomism*. Pouivet's book is heavily indebted to Kenny's and Geach's works, but I think it can be considered a primary source from an historical point of view not only because Pouivet is the first to introduce the label *Wittgensteinian Thomism*, but above all because he is the first to have identified a tendency in contemporary thought common to different scholars that cannot be reduced to extemporaneous or occasional comparisons between Aquinas and Wittgenstein. In his words:

the way of being Thomistic advanced by Geach, Anscombe, and Kenny is entirely different. It is no longer a question of criticizing modern thought in the name of a Christian tradition ridiculed by Enlightenment rationalism, as the neo-scholastics tended to do; nor is it even an attempt to return medieval philosophy to its rightful place in universities and other institutions of higher learning, as the historians of medieval philosophy have often proposed. Instead, it is an effort to understand St. Thomas in light of the possible reinterpretations of the *Summa Theologica* made available to us by Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. This approach is neither ideological nor historical, but philosophical, in the sense that, after Wittgenstein we need the illuminating insights of the *Summa Theologica*; we need the conceptual tools that are the primary concepts of St. Thomas' philosophy. Geach or Kenny will often on the same page go from Wittgenstein to St. Thomas. There is no historical chasm between Thomas and Wittgenstein, or at least the chasm is not as large as the one between modern philosophers (Descartes or Kant) and Wittgenstein. This is what enables Thomas Aquinas, in the interpretation offered here, to come *after* Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein makes Aquinas more understandable and enables us to grasp the extent to which Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy continues to be of great value.¹³

Moreover, some years later, Kerr explicitly refers to 'proto-wittgensteinian arguments' taking the Aquinas' theory of mind, and in particular the question of introspection, into consideration:

Augustine believed that, by the power of introspection, we could reach, to some degree, a vision of God, within ourselves though beyond ourselves. This was then, and to some extent remains, an immensely powerful and influential alternative to Aquinas's proto-Wittgensteinian conception of the dependence of our inner life on our involvement with things in the public world. [...] Thus, Aquinas has a proto-

¹³ Pouivet, *After Wittgenstein, St. Thomas*, p. 6-7.

Wittgensteinian conception of how subjective experience depends on our engagement with objects in the public world [...] ¹⁴

The relevance of Aquinas' quotations by all the above mentioned scholars must be evaluated carefully because the use of Aquinas' works is not always adequate and sometimes it seems more rhetoric than real. ¹⁵ More than once the references are implicit and not clear or, at best, not immediate. ¹⁶ It is relevant to note, for example, that in Pouivet's book the only reference to ontology is the distinction between *esse naturale* and *esse intentionale*, but no Aquinas quotation is used. More carefully, Kenny made a comparison between the answer given by Aquinas and Wittgenstein to the question "What makes a thought of X be a thought of X?", concluding:

I have attempted to combine Aquinas' theory of intentional existence with the prima facie very different account of intentionality sketched by Wittgenstein. The resulting theory, if I am right, has the merit that it enables one to avoid the realist idealism of Platonism without falling into the conceptualist idealism of many anti-realist, past and present. ¹⁷

In any case *Wittgensteinian Thomism* was appreciated as a fruitful field of inquiry able to promote the studies on Aquinas, to support some interpretations of Wittgenstein and to determine the philosophical agenda. Haldane's works in the philosophy of mind ¹⁸ are the most relevant example. This scholar suggests looking carefully at Aquinas because this medieval philosopher thinks of the objects in the world as becoming intelligible through actualising our intellectual capacities (*intellectus in actu est intelligibile in actu* ¹⁹): this approach has implications on epistemic and

¹⁴ F. Kerr, "Aquinas after Wittgenstein", in J. Haldane (ed.), *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Traditions*, Notre Dame (Indiana), University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, p. 6.

¹⁵ See, for example, F.X. Putallaz, "Wittgenstein, saint Thomas et l'intériorité, une discutabile lecture de Roger Pouivet", *Revue Thomiste*, 111, 2011, p. 35-65.

¹⁶ See G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1957; P.T. Geach, *Mental Acts*, South Bend (Indiana), St. Augustine's Press, 1971; G.E.M. Anscombe, P.T. Geach, *Three Philosophers*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1961; A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*, London, Routledge, 1963; Id., *The Anatomy of Soul*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1973; and Id. *The Metaphysics of Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

¹⁷ A. Kenny, "Intentionality: Aquinas and Wittgenstein", in Id. (ed.), *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, p. 76.

¹⁸ See J. Haldane, "La filosofia contemporanea della mente e il bisogno di tomismo analitico", *Iride*, 17, 2004, p. 619-629.

¹⁹ See *In II Sententiarum*, ds. 17, q. 1, art. I, resp. ad 4; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, bk I, ch. 46, n. 3; *Summa Theologica* Ia, q. 12, art. 9, obj. I et passim.

ontological realism,²⁰ on the question of mind-world identity,²¹ on the nature of language,²² on the nature of the intellect,²³ on the problem of personal identity²⁴ and on the notion of form.²⁵ Among the most relevant contributions in *Wittgensteinian Thomism* the following deserve to be remembered: the question of abstractionism;²⁶ the discussion of the epistemological grounds of certainty;²⁷ the relationship between the linguistic level and the ontological one;²⁸ the refusal of the concept of the self²⁹; themes belonging to the philosophy of theology;³⁰ the consequences of its anthropological presuppositions on bioethics;³¹ De Anna's work on realism and mental representation³² and my studies on the notion of intentionality³³ and on a new proposal of natural theology.³⁴ For each of these themes an anthology of Aquinas's and of Wittgenstein's passages could be drawn up. In the case of Aquinas it could be useful to point out

²⁰ See J. Haldane, "San Tommaso e Putnam: realismo ontologico e realismo epistemologico", *Intersezioni*, 8, 1988, p. 171-188 and Id., "On Coming Home to (Metaphysical) Realism", *Philosophy*, 71, 1996, p. 287-296.

²¹ See Id., "Mind-World Identity Theory and the Anti-Realist Challenge", in J. Haldane, C. Wright, *Reality, Representation, and Projection*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 15-37.

²² See Id., "The Life of Signs", *Review of Metaphysics*, 47, 1994, p. 451-470.

²³ See Id., "Analytical Philosophy and the Nature of Mind: Time for Another Rebirth?", in R. Warner, T. Szubk (eds.), *The Mind-Body Problem: a Guide to the Current Debate*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1994, p. 195-203.

²⁴ See Id., "(I am) Thinking", *Ratio*, 16, 2003, p. 124-139.

²⁵ See Id., "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind", *Ratio*, 11, 1998, p. 253-277.

²⁶ See Geach, *Mental Acts*.

²⁷ See P. Bearsley, "Aquinas and Wittgenstein on the Grounds of Certainty", *The Modern Schoolman*, 51, 1974, p. 301-334.

²⁸ See J.P. O'Callaghan, "Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas", *Review of Metaphysics*, 53, 1999, p. 69-98 and Id., *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn. Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.

²⁹ See A. Kenny, *The Self. The Aquinas Lecture 1988*, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1988 and F. Kerr, "Work on Oneself". *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Psychology*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2008.

³⁰ See B. Davies, "Letter from America", *New Blackfriars*, 84, 2003, p. 371-384; F. Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986 and Id., "Transubstantiation after Wittgenstein", *Modern Theology*, 15, 1999, p. 115-130.

³¹ See P. Sgreccia, *Tomismo analitico, etica e bioetica*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2011.

³² See G. De Anna, *Realismo metafisico e rappresentazione mentale. Un'indagine tra Tommaso d'Aquino e Hilary Putnam*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2001.

³³ See M. Damonte, *Wittgenstein, Tommaso e la cura dell'intenzionalità*, Firenze, MEF, 2009.

³⁴ See Id., *Una nuova teologia naturale. La proposta degli epistemologi riformati e dei tomisti wittgensteiniani*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 141-222.

which aspects of his thought are relevant today and to evaluate the validity and the coherence of their fruition.

It is remarkable that in this list ontological themes are quite absent with the only exception of the notion of *esse intentionale* which is very relevant, but which is not studied in depth explicitly. As we have seen, they are a prerogative of *Geach-Fregean Thomism*, but it must be underlined more than once that the only textual reference of Wittgenstein to Aquinas regards the theme of being. A first, obscure passage is from Kenny's quoted article:

perhaps I should remark in conclusion that the *rapprochement* I have attempted has not been entirely in the air. One of the very few philosophical works which Wittgenstein kept on his shelves was the Pars Prima of the *Summa*. Asked one day what he thought of St Thomas, he replied that he could not make much of his answers, but he thought his questions were very good. Coming from Wittgenstein, this was high praise. The *Investigations* contain 784 questions. Only 110 of these are answered; and seventy of the answers are *meant* to be wrong.³⁵

Geach confirmed this from an autobiographical point of view:

I remember on his book-shelves [...] a German-language selection from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*.³⁶

Only Garth Hallett is more careful:

Among the few philosophical works in W's possession when he died Rush Rhees lists two volumes of the *Summa Theologica*, in the Puster edition (Salzburg and Leipzig, 1934), which gives the German on the top half and the Latin on the lower half of the page. The first volume, given to W. by Ludwig Hänsel in 1938, contains Part One, Articles 1 to 13; the second, which Hänsel gave him a year later, contains Articles 14 to 26. "The only remark of Wittgenstein's about Aquinas that I remembered", adds Rhees, "was that who found him extremely good in his formulation of questions but less satisfactory in his discussion of them".³⁷

In a private correspondence dated February 2016, Michael Nedo – the Director of the 'Ludwig Wittgenstein Trust at Cambridge' – told me that unfortunately after the death of Rush Rhees, his inheritance (including Wittgenstein's books) was not dealt with in a professional manner and that, as a result, most of his books were dispersed among different book

³⁵ Kenny, *Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, p. 235.

³⁶ P. Geach, "History of Philosophy", in H.A. Lewis (ed.), *Peter Geach. Philosophical Encounters*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1991, p. 45.

³⁷ G. Hallett, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 761. This passage is also quoted in Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, p. 154 and Haldane, *The Life of Signs*, p. 451.

dealers. Nedo added that Rhees showed him the volumes of the *Summa* and that he is quite certain that they did not contain any annotation by Wittgenstein, otherwise he would have copied them. In any case the following question is legitimate: is there a lesson Wittgenstein learned from Aquinas? An annotation taken by Wittgenstein in 1949 could be read in this fashion: “God’s essence is said to guarantee his existence – what this really means is that here what is at issue is not the existence of something”.³⁸ Following Kerr this is a clear allusion to what Aquinas wrote in the third *Quaestio* of the first part of the *Summa Theologica*:

whatever its difficulties, and whether or not it secures the radical difference between everything and God that Aquinas thought it did, to Wittgenstein it seemed to have nothing to do with existence.³⁹

Already in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein distinguished various types of being. In 3.323 and 3.143, for example,⁴⁰ Wittgenstein catalogued some cases in which the superficial grammar does not correspond to the logic form and he referred to the word *is* explicitly. It can be used as copula, as a sign of equality or as an expression of existence. Just studying in depth the general logical form of the propositions, Wittgenstein opened his thought to the ineffable, to God and to the Mystic.⁴¹ Peter Winch notes that, for Wittgenstein, the way of speaking about religion is different from the way of speaking about science and, in particular, that the term *existence* is not

³⁸ L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, p. 94. This quotation is found in MS 138 30b and it is dated 17.3.1949.

³⁹ Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, p. 154. See L. Perissinotto, “Grammatica e esistenza. L’argomento ontologico e la filosofia analitica”, in L. Perissinotto, M. Ruggenini, I. Sciuto, E. Severino, L. Tarca, I. Valent, C. Vigna (eds.), *Dio e la ragione. Anselmo d’Aosta, l’argomento ontologico e la filosofia*, Genova, Marietti, 1993, p. 87-89.

⁴⁰ 3.143: that the propositional sign is a fact is concealed by the ordinary form of expression, written or printed. For in the printed proposition, for example, the sign of a proposition does not appear essentially different from a word. (Thus it was possible for Frege to call the proposition a compounded name). 3.323: in the language of everyday life it very often happens that the same word signifies in two different ways – and therefore belongs to two different symbols – or that two words, which signify in different ways, are apparently applied in the same way in the proposition. Thus the word ‘is’ appears as the copula, as the sign of equality, and as the expression of existence; ‘to exist’ as an intransitive verb like ‘to go’; ‘identical’ as an adjective; we speak of *something* but also of the fact of *something* happening. (In the proposition “Green is green” – where the first word is a proper name as the last an adjective – these words have not merely different meanings but they are *different symbols*.)

⁴¹ See Perissinotto, *Grammatica e esistenza*, p. 87-89 and 95-97.

univocal, but its meaning depends on its use in a specific language.⁴² So, the notion of existence is not only a major theme of *Wittgensteinian Thomism*, but Wittgenstein must be appreciated as the ‘gateway’ to analytical Thomism, to use John Cahalan’s metaphor⁴³. Real existences are what is known at first and this became the criterion to evaluate existential quantification (*Tractatus* 5.552), and, at the same time, to take intentional existence into consideration and moreover to reflect on the causal relationship between these two types of existence. Since in the *Blue Book*, which contains the notes dictated to his students during the lessons of the semester 1933-4, Wittgenstein had already distinguished different meanings of the term *to exist*: saying that something does not exist is one thing, while saying that a man exists is quite another. Even more so, saying that a centaur exists and even further saying that redness exists.⁴⁴ Moreover he quoted the *Tractatus*. Ventimiglia, following Geach, suggests a parallelism between the distinction *reference of a name / its bearer* made by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigation* and the distinction made by Aquinas *esse in rerum naturae / esse ut actus essendi*⁴⁵. Wittgenstein considered problems about *being* the principal troubles in philosophy:

One keeps hearing the remark that philosophy really doesn’t make any progress, that the some philosophical problems that occupied the Greeks keep occupying us. But those who say that don’t understand the reason it must be so. That reason is that our language has maintained constant and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. So long as there is the verb ‘be’ that seems to function like ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ [...] humans will continue to bump up against the same mysterious difficulties, and stare at something that no explanation seems able to remove. This, by the way, satisfies a longing for the transcendental, for in believing that they see the ‘limit of human understanding’ they of course believe that they can see beyond it.⁴⁶

Wittgensteinian Thomism is relevant for contemporary debates in ontology with regard to four aspects. The first is that it helps us to consider the importance to take not only the various uses of the verb *to be* into consideration, but above all to pay attention to different types of

⁴² P. Winch, *Meaning and Religious Language*, in S.C. Brown (ed.), *Reason and Religion*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 200-213.

⁴³ See J.C. Cahalan, *Wittgenstein as a Gateway to Analytical Thomism*, in Paterson-Pugh, *Analytical Thomism*, p. 195-224.

⁴⁴ See L. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books. Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations”*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975, p. 30-31.

⁴⁵ See Ventimiglia, *To be o esse?*, p. 101-105 and P.T. Geach, *Aquinas*, in Anscombe, Geach, *Three Philosophers*, p. 91.

⁴⁶ L. Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript*, XII (Philosophy), 90, 8, p. 313.

existence⁴⁷. In this respect it stimulates a passage from the linguistic level to the metaphysical one. A similar passage must be done also for the notion of analogy: this is the second aspect. In the case of being as existence, analogy is not only a family resemblance between the appearance of different objects, but first of all it consists in the various meanings that the verb *to be* assumes in different contexts, i.e. in different uses.⁴⁸ The third aspect concerns meta-ontology, in fact *Wittgensteinian Thomism* implies that the question about the essence and the existence are relevant also for (natural) theology and religion and not only for the stuff of the empirical world. So, *Wittgensteinian Thomism* overcomes some disciplinary barriers that separate different fields of philosophical enquiry. Finally, sustaining that in God there is no composition of *esse* and *essence*, does not coincide with affirming that it is possible to define God as *being itself* (*ipsum esse subsistens*⁴⁹), as, for example, Davies says⁵⁰. Denying this composition in God is not only compatible with negative theology, but is its quintessence and this is preliminary to referring to God as *ipsum esse subsistens* because it sets the meaning of *esse* in this last expression. Barry Miller notices a parallelism between Wittgenstein's position about identity – he argues that identity is not a relation at all – and Aquinas's argument according to which the mark of Subsistent Existence is not merely superiority, but transcendence.⁵¹ In the last conference on these arguments held on the 15th of May 2015 at the 'Istituto di Studi Filosofici in Lugano' (Switzerland), Kenny in the spirit of *Geach-Fregean Thomism* introduced the term *anitas* (i.e. what answers to the question *an est?*) distinguishing it from the term *quidditas* (i.e. the answer to the question *quid est?*) to solve some problems in the interpretation of Aquinas' ontology and, in particular, to analyse the word *esse* more in detail.⁵² In the case of God, if it is an absurdity to say that

⁴⁷ See G. Ventimiglia, "There are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be'. Il ritorno dell'analogia dell'essere nel cosiddetto 'tomismo analitico'", in P. Bettineschi, R. Fanciullacci (eds.), *Tommaso d'Aquino e i filosofi analitici*, Napoli, Salerno, Orthotes, 2014, p. 215-219 where *In IV Metaph.*, bk 1 and *In X Metaph.*, bk 4 are quoted.

⁴⁸ See R. Teuwsen, *Familienähnlichkeit und Analogie. Zur Semantik genereller Termini bei Wittgenstein und Thomas von Aquin*, Freiburg, Alber, 1988.

⁴⁹ See *In I Sentiarum*, ds. 23, q. 1, art. I, resp. ad 4 et passim; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, bk I, ch. 17; bk. 3, ch. 19, n. 3 et passim; *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 3. See E. Berti, "Il 'tomismo analitico' e il dibattito sull'*Esse ipsum*", *Giornale di Metafisica*, 31, 2009, p. 6-35.

⁵⁰ See B. Davies, "Aquinas, God, and Being", *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 500-517.

⁵¹ See B. Miller, *The Fullness of Being. A New Paradigm for Existence*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 2002, p. 16, 133 and 156-157.

⁵² See A. Kenny, "Quidditas and Anitas after Frege", *Giornale di Metafisica*, 1, 2016, p. 109-118.

His essence coincides with His *anitas*, it is interesting to ask if His essence coincides with His own *actus essendi* (that indicates the individual existence of an *ens*, as Kenny has affirmed in *Aquinas on Being*).⁵³ The essence is linked to a modality of living, as a potentiality is linked to an actuality. To comment the previous quotation takes from *Culture and Value*, Kenny quotes *Summa contra Gentiles* I, 22, 208 to indicate that there is a correspondence in saying that God is *ipsum esse subsistens* and in saying that He is *actum purum*. Kenny ends suggesting that perhaps Aquinas does not intend that in God *esse* and *essence* coincide, but that their distinction is inapplicable to God, as the distinction between odds and evens is inapplicable to colours. This interpretation has the advantage to make a difference between God and creation because it appreciates the existence (*esse*) of God not a way of existence, but the fullness and the beginning of what exists. However, as it has the drawback of generating a gap between the God of the philosophers and the God of revelation, because it suggests that in God there is no life. Aquinas was conscious of this problem and took the Aristotelian distinction between transitive and intransitive actions into consideration.⁵⁴

This perspective confirms that *Wittgensteinian Thomism* is able to articulate an often-overlooked fact: the work of the later Wittgenstein can help us discern the lasting value of Aquinas' ontology. At the same time Aquinas can help the reader avoid an influential misreading of Wittgenstein. Let's take the question of analogy as a paradigmatic example. In this case the comparison between Wittgenstein and Aquinas was underlined, for the first time, by Brian Davies in 1992:

there is a modern parallel to Aquinas's notion of analogy in the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein speaks of what he calls 'family resemblances'. A word, he says, though it is not always used in the same sense, need not always be used in a sense unrelated to that which it has on a given occasion.⁵⁵

The problem with this assertion is that it is based on too hurried a reading of the two authors considered. Davies does not quote them properly, neither does he contextualize them fairly. Wittgenstein's position is summarized as follows starting from paragraph 66 of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

⁵³ See *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 12.

⁵⁴ See *Summa Theologica* I, q. 18 art. 3.

⁵⁵ B. Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 74.

As the member of a family can resemble each other without looking exactly like each other, so, affirms Wittgenstein, words can sometimes mean something different on different occasions without meaning something entirely different on the occasions in question.⁵⁶

Aquinas' interpretation is based on religious language and it refers to *Summa Theologica* T I, 13:

This is very close to what Aquinas teaches concerning the way in which terms are applied to God and creatures. We may say, for example, that Solomon is wise and that God is wise. We do not mean that God's wisdom is just what Solomon's wisdom amounts to. But nor do we mean that it is something wholly unlike this. Solomon and God are alike, even if they are also very different. In calling both of them wise we are not equivocating. But neither are we putting them on a level with each other.⁵⁷

Even if Davies is quite prudent of his own position, his suggestion was ascertained by the secondary literature on this topic.⁵⁸ This parallelism is grounded on philosophy of language and it does not take any ontological element into consideration. This is misleading, in fact the notion of analogy is used by Aquinas first of all in the language about *being*, and only in a second step in theological language. In its ontological value it could be compared with Wittgensteinian position. This means that Aquinas's doctrine of analogy might be better understood if it is likened with Wittgenstein's doctrine of 'meaning as use' and, conversely, that Wittgenstein's theory of 'family resemblances' could be better appreciated in the context of Aquinas' proposal about abstraction.

I conclude distinguishing different levels in the use of the label *Wittgensteinian Thomism*: it can be appreciated as an historiographical or as a theoretical instrument. In the first case, it indicates a current of contemporary history of philosophy and, in particular, an area of *Analytical Thomism* or, better, an area of the *Twentieth-century Thomism*. My aim was to shed light on the relationship between *Wittgensteinian Thomism* and *Geach-Fregean Thomism* through the notion of ontological analogy. In the second one, it denotes a set of historiographical and theoretical thesis useful to discuss some post-modern philosophical presuppositions. In this regard, *Wittgensteinian Thomism* has not only a cultural value, but its

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See M. Damonte, "Somiglianze di famiglia: un modo contemporaneo per dire analogia?", *Archivio di filosofia*, 84, 2016, p. 239-251.

ontological and anthropological claims are worth studying in depth because they can contribute to changing the dialectical forms of philosophizing. In short, *Wittgensteinian Thomism* seems able to promote the exegesis of some difficult passages of Wittgenstein and of Aquinas and to indicate the agenda of the studies of both of them. In particular it encourages a rediscovery of Aquinas in order to face up to contemporary problems in metaphysics.

REFERENCES:

- Anscombe, G. Elizabeth M., *Intention*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1957.
- Anscombe, G. Elizabeth M., Geach, Peter T., *Three Philosophers*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1961.
- Bearsley, Patrick, "Aquinas and Wittgenstein on the Grounds of Certainty", *The Modern Schoolman*, 51, 1974, p. 301-334.
- Berti, Enrico, "Il 'tomismo analitico' e il dibattito sull'Esse ipsum", *Giornale di Metafisica*, 31, 2009, p. 6-35.
- Cahalan, John C., *Wittgenstein as a Gateway to Analytical Thomism*, in Craig Paterson, Matthew S. Pugh (eds.), *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 195-224.
- Damonte, Marco, *Wittgenstein, Tommaso e la cura dell'intenzionalità*, Firenze, MEF, 2009.
- Damonte, Marco, *Una nuova teologia naturale. La proposta degli epistemologi riformati e dei tomisti wittgensteiniani*, Roma, Carocci, 2011.
- Damonte, Marco, "Somiglianze di famiglia: un modo contemporaneo per dire analogia?", *Archivio di filosofia*, 84, 2016, p. 239-251.
- Davies, Brian, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Davies, Brian, "Aquinas, God, and Being", *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 500-517.
- Davies, Brian, "Letter from America", *New Blackfriars*, 84, 2003, p. 371-384.
- De Anna, Gabriele, *Realismo metafisico e rappresentazione mentale. Un'indagine tra Tommaso d'Aquino e Hilary Putnam*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2001.
- Geach, Peter T., "Form and Existence", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 55, 1954-5, p. 251-271; reprinted in Id., *God and the Soul*, London, Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 42-64.
- Geach, Peter T., *Mental Acts*, South Bend (Indiana), St. Augustine's Press, 1971.
- Geach, Peter T. "History of Philosophy", in Harry A. Lewis (ed.), *Peter Geach. Philosophical Encounters*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1991, p. 45-47.
- Haldane, John, "San Tommaso e Putnam: realismo ontologico e realismo epistemologico", *Intersezioni*, 8, 1988, p. 171-188.
- Haldane, John, "Mind-World Identity Theory and the Anti-Realist Challenge", in John Haldane, Crispin Wright, *Reality, Representation, and Projection*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 15-37.

- Haldane, John, "Analytical Philosophy and the Nature of Mind: Time for Another Rebirth?", in Richard Warner, Tadeusz Szubk (eds.), *The Mind-Body Problem: a Guide to the Current Debate*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1994, p. 195-203.
- Haldane, John, "The Life of Signs", *Review of Metaphysics*, 47, 1994, p. 451-470.
- Haldane, John, "Thomism, analytical", in Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 875.
- Haldane, John, "On Coming Home to (Metaphysical) Realism", *Philosophy*, 71, 1996, p. 287-296.
- Haldane, John, "Analytical Thomism. A Prefatory Note", *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 485-486.
- Haldane, John, "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind", *Ratio*, 11, 1998, p. 253-277.
- Haldane, John, "(I am) Thinking", *Ratio*, 16, 2003, p. 124-139.
- Haldane, John, "La filosofia contemporanea della mente e il bisogno di tomismo analitico", *Iride*, 17, 2004, p. 619-629.
- Hallett, Garth, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Kenny, Anthony, "Aquinas and Wittgenstein", *The Downside Review*, 77, 1959, p. 217-235.
- Kenny, Anthony, *Action, Emotion and Will*, London, Routledge, 1963.
- Kenny, Anthony, *The Anatomy of Soul*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1973.
- Kenny, Anthony, *Aquinas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Kenny, Anthony, "Intentionality: Aquinas and Wittgenstein", in Anthony Kenny (ed.), *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1984, p. 61-76.
- Kenny, Anthony, *A Path from Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Kenny, Anthony, *The Self. The Aquinas Lecture 1988*, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1988.
- Kenny, Anthony, *The Metaphysics of Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kenny, Anthony, *Aquinas on Mind*, London, Routledge, 1993.
- Kenny, Anthony, *Aquinas on Being*, Oxford, Clarendon, 2002.
- Kenny, Anthony, "Quidditas and Anitas after Frege", *Giornale di Metafisica*, 2016, p. 109-118.
- Kerr, Fergus, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Kerr, Fergus, "Transubstantiation after Wittgenstein", *Modern Theology*, 15, 1999, p. 115-130.
- Kerr, Fergus, *After Aquinas. Versions of Thomism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002.
- Kerr, Fergus, "Aquinas after Wittgenstein", in John Haldane (ed.), *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Traditions*, Notre Dame (Indiana), University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, p. 3-19.
- Kerr, Fergus, "Un thomisme analytique?", *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 92, 2008, p. 556-573.
- Kerr, Fergus, *Work on Oneself. Wittgenstein's Philosophical Psychology*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Knasas, John F.X., "Haldane's Analytic Thomism and Aquinas's Actus essendi", in Craig Paterson, Matthew S. Pugh (eds.), *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 233-251.
- McCabe, Herbert, *God Still Matters*. Foreword by Alasdair MacIntyre. Edited and introduced by Brian Davies, London, Continuum, 2002.
- McCabe, Herbert, *God Matters*, London, Continuum, 2005.

An Historiographic Label: Wittgensteinian Thomism

- McCabe, Herbert, *On Aquinas*. Edited by Brian Davies. Foreword by Anthony Kenny, London, Continuum, 2008.
- Micheletti, Mario, *Tomismo analitico*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2007.
- Miller, Barry, *The Fullness of Being. A New Paradigm for Existence*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 2002.
- O'Callaghan, John P., "Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas", *Review of Metaphysics*, 53, 1999, p. 69-98.
- O'Callaghan, John P., *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn. Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.
- Perissinotto, Luigi, "Grammatica e esistenza. L'argomento ontologico e la filosofia analitica", in Luigi Perissinotto, Mario Ruggenini, Italo Sciuto, Emanuele Severino, Luigi Tarca, Italo Valent, Carmelo Vigna (eds.), *Dio e la ragione. Anselmo d'Aosta, l'argomento ontologico e la filosofia*, Genova, Marietti, 1993, p. 83-110.
- Pouivet, Roger, *After Wittgenstein, St. Thomas*, Indiana, St. Augustine's Press, 2006 (ed. or. *Après Wittgenstein, saint Thomas*, Paris, Puf, 1997).
- Putallaz, François-Xavier, "Wittgenstein, saint Thomas et l'intériorité, une discutable lecture de Roger Pouivet", *Revue Thomiste*, 111, 2011, p. 35-65.
- Sgreccia, Palma, *Tomismo analitico, etica e bioetica*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2011.
- Shanley, Brian J., "On Analytical Thomism", *The Thomist*, 62, 1999, p. 125-137.
- Teuwsen, Rudolf, *Familienähnlichkeit und Analogie. Zur Semantik genereller Termini bei Wittgenstein und Thomas von Aquin*, Freiburg, Alber, 1988.
- Theron, Stephen, "The Resistance of Thomism to Analytical and Other Patronage", *The Monist*, 80, 1997, p. 611-618.
- Ventimiglia, Giovanni, *To be o esse? La questione dell'essere nel tomismo analitico*, Roma, Carocci, 2012.
- Ventimiglia, Giovanni, "There are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be'. Il ritorno dell'analogia dell'essere nel cosiddetto 'tomismo analitico'", in Paolo Bettineschi, Riccardo Fanciullacci (eds.), *Tommaso d'Aquino e i filosofi analitici*, Napoli, Salerno, Orthotes, 2014, p.193-226.
- Winch, Peter, *Meaning and Religious Language*, in Stuart C. Brown (ed.), *Reason and Religion*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 200-213.

MARCO DAMONTE
Università degli Studi di Genova
marco.damonte@unige.it