Aquinas, Stump, and the Nature of a Simple God

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Abstract. In order for God to be simple, He must be *esse* itself, but in some texts Aquinas seems to distinguish between *esse* and *id quod est*, so it seems that God cannot be an *id quod est*. To resolve this tension, Eleonore Stump proposes quantum theology, whereby we are able to attribute contradictory predicates to a thing of which we have no quidditative knowledge; so God then can be seen as *esse* itself and as an *ens*. In this paper I criticise this approach and hold that there is a principled philosophical approach that we can take to these matters through a greater clarification of what it means for God to be pure *esse*. It is seen that this latter approach entails that God is indeed an *ens*, so that the *ens*-hood of God is derived from His being pure *esse*, in which case quantum theology is not needed for a Thomistic resolution of the problem.

I.

Introduction. Eleonore Stump has highlighted what appears to be an inconsistency in Aquinas's doctrine of divine simplicity. That doctrine holds that given God's pure actuality, understood in Thomistic terms as God's being pure *esse* (*esse tantum*) or *esse* itself (*ipsum esse*), God is subject to nothing, in which case God can in no way be composed out of anything. Hence, whilst all other things are fundamentally composites of potency and act (essence and *esse*), God is not. But, as Stump points out, what follows from this are some religiously and theologically disturbing consequences. Fundamentally, if God is simply *esse*, it follows that God cannot be a being, an *ens*, an *id quod est*; for beings are those things that simply have *esse* and are not pure *esse*. Given the latter, indeed, God cannot be a person.[1]

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[1]Eleonore Stump, "The Nature of a Simple God," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 87 (2013): 35. See also Stump's article "God's Simplicity" in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 135–47, and her forthcoming essay, "Simplicity and Aquinas's Quantum Metaphysics," in *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gerhard Krieger, footnoted on p. 42 of her "The Nature of a Simple God." Alvin Plantinga raises a similar objection to Aquinas's

Stump's response is to begin by appealing to Aquinas's denial of any quidditative knowledge of God, yet not to slip into an extreme negative theology.[2] She then points out that conceiving of God as pure *esse* should not be taken as significative of God's essence, given our lack of knowledge thereof; possible and seemingly contradictory attributions can be made about God without degenerating into absurdity, since we have no idea of the essence of God, which may in fact be able to accommodate such seemingly inconsistent predicates. In defence of this approach, Stump appeals to what she calls quantum theology, which she illuminates as follows.[3]

Consider the dispute over the interpretation of light in physics as either a wave or a particle. Given that light can be considered as both, we do not really know what kind of thing it itself could be so as to be both. Thus, at a more fundamental quantum level, things get "strange," forcing us to attribute incompatible characteristics to something whilst recognising that we do not know what sort of thing can be both. The same goes for God, since at the fundamental level of God's divine essence, we are ignorant.[4] So, whilst we know that God is both *esse* and an *ens*, we do not know the kind of thing that could be both, yet we should not hesitate to think of God in both ways. Given quantum theology, God's simplicity is guaranteed insofar as He is pure *esse*, but the unacceptable consequences of that doctrine which would deny His being an *ens* are avoided.

I do not find Stump's solution to this problem compelling. Before turning to the central criticisms that I wish to offer, I should point out that she does not advert to Aquinas's view of the analogical nature of positive predications about God in order to dissolve the tension, as she sees it, between God's being pure *esse* (hence simple) and His being an *ens*. What the doctrine of analogy amounts to is that when we attribute some perfection to God that is also found in creatures, it is not attributed to Him in the same manner that it is attributed to creatures; for insofar as creatures are composite entities (at their most basic, they are composites of essence and *esse*), the perfection attributed to a creature

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thought, arguing that God cannot be a bare property (such as *esse*) since a property cannot be what we, including Aquinas, typically take God to be. See Alvin Plantinga, *Does God have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 37–61. Note in particular 47: "No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all. If God is a property, then he isn't a person but a mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life." For my response to Plantinga, see ch. 6 of *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[2]Stump, "The Nature of a Simple God," 34–5.

[3]Ibid., 36–8.

[4]Aquinas, *ST* (Turin: Marietti, 1926), I, q. 3, Proem.: "De Deo scire non possumus quid sit"; *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Turin: Marietti, 1961), I, ch. 14: "Divina substantia omnem formam quam intellectus noster attingit, sua immensitate excedit: et sic ipsam apprehendere non possumus cognoscendo quid est."

signifies an actuality not identical to but distinct from the being of the creature and thus signifies a mode (substantial or accidental) of the creature's being. On the other hand, given that essence and *esse* are identical in God and only in God, the perfection attributed to Him does not signify an actuality distinct from His being, thereby modifying it, but signifies the divine being itself. Indeed, as I shall argue later, whereas a creature is an *ens* because it is an individual having *esse*, God is an *ens* in virtue of being pure *esse*; whilst both can be attributed to God, the manner in which the attribution is made to Him is quite different from that of creatures. So on the basis of analogy, one can make joint predications of God without threat to His simplicity, thereby precluding a move in the direction of quantum theology. I think that Stump's position is problematic precisely because underlying it is a neglect for the analogous nature of positive predications of God.[5]

Now, as I see things, the specific problems for Stump's position are twofold: (1) it fails to grasp the consequences of the fact that on a number of occasions Thomas simply states that God is *esse* itself so that *esse* is most proper to God, and indeed the name *qui est* is even more proper to God than *Deus* precisely because *qui est* is derived from *esse*;[6] and (2) it ignores the fact that many of the divine attributes that Aquinas enumerates are derived fundamentally from his conception of God as pure *esse*. These two facts taken together entail that God's being pure *esse* is so fundamental to Thomas's conception of God that any account of God which fails properly to engage with that, as I submit Stump's does, loses sight of Thomas's conception of God. Consequently, an alternative approach to reconciling the simplicity and *ens*-hood of God must be adopted.

In what follows I shall present these problems for Stump's position (§II). Having done that, I will present an alternative approach to the issue of God's simplicity, one which recognises that God can be both pure *esse* and an *ens* without

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[5] A good treatment of Thomas's doctrine of analogy is Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004). See also John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 73–94 (for analogy in general) and 543–72 (for analogical knowledge of God); Gyula Klima, "Theory of Language," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 371–90; Gyula Klima, "Aquinas's Theory of the Copula and the Analogy of Being," *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 5 (2002); Brian Davies, "The Limits of Language and the Notion of Analogy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 390–401.

[6] *ST*, Ia, q. 13, a. 7: "Hoc nomine, *qui est* . . . est maxime proprium nomen Dei. Primo propter sui significationem. Non enim significat formam aliquam, sed ipsum esse. Unde cum esse Dei sit ipsa ejus essentia, et hoc nulli alii conveniat . . . manifestum est quod inter alia nomina hoc maxime proprie nominat Deum." Note also in particular the response to the first objection wherein this name is even more proper than *Deus*: "Hoc nomen, *qui est*, est magis proprium nomen Dei, quam hoc nomen, *Deus*, quantum ad id a quo imponitur, scilicet ab esse."

losing sight of the central Thomist conception of God as *esse* itself (§III). Finally, I shall offer a brief conclusion dealing with a possible objection to my position presented herein and offering some closing remarks highlighting the need for an awareness of the role of analogy in making predications of God (§IV).

II.

Problems. As noted, the problems with Stump's position are twofold: (1) it does not fully grasp the consequences of the fact that for Aquinas God is simply pure *esse* (i.e., that in Him essence and *esse* are identical); and (2) it ignores the fact that God's being pure *esse* is often essential to his derivation of various other divine attributes central to the classical conception of God. All in all, I shall argue that whilst Stump explicitly affirms that God is pure *esse*, her account nevertheless loses sight of the centrality of *esse* in Aquinas's conception of God.

In a number of places Aquinas simply asserts that God is *esse*,[7] and as noted above, he holds that the name *qui est* is even more proper to God than *Deus* precisely because it is derived from *esse*. This stands to reason, since in Aquinas's metaphysical thought *esse* is the act of all acts, without which there would be nothing, such that God, as the creator of all that is, is naturally identified with *esse*.[8]

Now in thinking of God as pure *esse*, we must be careful (1) not to think that this gives us any quidditative knowledge of God's essence and (2) not to confuse God's being pure *esse* with God's being the *esse* that is common to all creatures (*esse commune*).

Concerning (1), whilst it is clear that Thomas denies that we can have any knowledge of God's divine essence, he nevertheless affirms in a number of places that God's essence is His *esse*. This would seem to raise a contradiction such that

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[7]*Summa Contra Gentiles* 3, ch. 19: "Esse habent omnia quod Deo assimilantur, qui est ipsum esse subsistens"; *ST* I, q. 4, a. 2: "Cum Deus sit ipsum esse subsistens, nihil de perfectione essendi potest ei deesse"; ibid., q. 11, a. 4: "Est enim maxime ens, inquantum est non habens aliquod esse determinatum per aliquam naturam cui adveniat, sed est ipsum esse subsistens"; *Quaestio Disputata De Anima* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), a. 6, ad2: "Si sit aliquid quod sit ipsum esse subsistens, sicut de Deo dicimus, nihil participare dicimus"; *Quaestio Disputata De Spiritualibus Creaturis* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), a. 1: "Unde dicimus, quod Deus est ipsum suum esse"; *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), q. 16, a. 3: "Deus enim per suam essentiam est ipsum esse subsistens"; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), Quod. 3, q. 1, a. 1: "Cum autem Deus sit ipsum esse subsistens, manifestum est quod natura essendi convenit Deo infinite absque omni limitatione et contractione"; *De Divinis Nominibus* (Turin: Marietti, 1950), ch. 5, lect. 1: "Sed solus Deus, qui est ipsum esse subsistens, secundum totam virtutem essendi, esse habet"; *De Causis* (Turin: Marietti, 1955), lect. 7, n. 182: "Causa autem prima non est natura subsistens in suo esse quasi participato, sed potius est ipsum esse subsistens."

[8]For details of the centrality of *esse* in Aquinas's thought, see *Aquinas's Way to God*, ch. 3, and my article, "Thomist *Esse* and Analytical Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (2015): 25–49, doi: 10.5840/ipq20151725.

it undermines Thomas's intellectual agnosticism when it comes to the divine essence. But we must be clear about what is going on when Thomas denies any quidditative knowledge of God's essence whilst at the same time affirming that His essence is His *esse*.

When we affirm that essence and *esse* are identical in God, we do so not because we have had some direct insight into the divine essence, but because God as the cause of all in which essence and *esse* are distinct is something in which essence and *esse* are indistinct; otherwise, He would not be the cause of all that is.[9] Thus, it is a direct inference from the proof of God as the primary cause of all things to the fact that He must be metaphysically unlike such things which illustrates that in Him essence and *esse* are identical—i.e., that His essence is His *esse*. This fact does not require any quidditative knowledge of God's essence in order to be known as true, since its truth is garnered from the fact that God is the cause of all things, a fact that can be known by natural reason.

Concerning (2), *esse divinum* is the divine *esse* itself that is identical with God's essence, and *esse commune* is the *esse* that all creatures possess as a distinct principle of act by which their essences are actuated. The *esse* common to all creatures (*esse commune*) signifies nothing more than the abstracted totality of the individual acts of existence possessed by creatures; it is not an individual *esse* in itself but the notion of the *esse* common to all creatures. *Esse commune*, whilst a principle of act, is caused by something more fundamental than it, and that is *esse divinum*.[10]

Esse commune is such that it can be added to, for whilst it may be *de facto* complete, God can always choose to create more creatures and extend the scope of *esse commune* to what He has created.[11] *Esse divinum* on the other hand is such that it is intrinsically without addition, so it is not only *de facto* but *de jure* without addition; it is complete and perfect in itself and does not stand to be completed or extended by anything else.

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[9] *ST* I, q. 3 a. 4; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, ch. 22, "Amplius."

[10] See the telling text from *De Divinis Nominibus*, ch. 5, lect. 2, n660: Alia existentia dependent ab esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune dependet a Deo . . . Omnia existentia continentur sub ipso esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune continetur sub eius virtute, quia virtus divina plus extenditur quam ipsum esse creatum . . . Omnia alia existentia participant eo quod est esse, non autem Deus, sed magis ipsum esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo Ipsius. See also *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, ch. 26 for the explicit disassociation of *esse divinum* from *esse commune* such that it is not God's *esse* that comes into composition with the essence of any creature as its principle of actuality.

[11] See, *In I Sent.*, dist. 8, q. 4, a. 1; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, ch. 26; *De Potentia Dei* q. 7, a. 2, ad4; *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad1; *De Divinis Nominibus* ch. 5, lect. 2. For commentary on several of these texts see my article, "The Meaning of *Ens Commune* in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas," *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2008): 32–60.

The distinction between *esse divinum* and *esse commune* is an important one to make, because whilst one might argue that there is an incompatibility between *esse commune* and *id quod est*—since *esse commune* is the act by which some created *ens* actually exists—it does not automatically follow that there is an incompatibility between *esse divinum* and *id quod est*, as we shall see in the next section.[12]

Not only is the understanding of God as pure *esse* central to Aquinas's whole philosophical approach to God, but it is also essential to the derivation of a number of divine attributes.[13] What this highlights is that for Thomas God's being pure *esse* is not just another divine attribute, but it is most proper to God and hence foundational for our knowledge of various other divine attributes.[14] Hence God is simple, perfect, infinite, omnipresent, etc., because He is pure *esse*, but the converse does not hold—i.e., it is not the case that He is pure *esse* because He is simple, perfect, infinite, omnipresent, etc. This is not to say that the other divine attributes are somewhat lesser than pure *esse* or accidents thereof, for the very doctrine of simplicity that we are here discussing and that Thomas endorsed amounts to the fact that the divine attributes are in some way all identical with God's essence so that whatever is in God is God. We have already indicated above how this is possible on the Thomist account of analogy such that predicated perfections do not signify actualities in God distinct from His being and thus are not distinct from the divine *esse*. Hence, it is because God is pure *esse* that God is all of the other divine attributes, those attributes themselves being identical to the divine *esse*.

Given the centrality of the notion of God as pure *esse* in Thomas's thought, any philosophical approach to God that is seeking to present itself as a genuinely Thomistic one cannot have the consequence that it undermines this central notion. Now in Stump's account of quantum theology, no divine attribute can be explanatorily more fundamental than the other. This is because on her account of quantum theology, standing behind the divine attributes is the mystery of the divine essence, and it is that which is explanatorily prior, not God's being pure *esse*. So, only through implicitly denying the explanatory priority of God's

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[12]Stump is aware of this distinction. See "The Nature of a Simple God," 41n12. But I think she is wrong to say: "Even with this distinction between common and divine *esse*, however, divine *esse* considered just as *esse* is not concrete or particular." I aim to show in the next section that divine *esse* is concrete and thereby capable of being signified particularly.

[13]Here are just a few drawn from the *ST* I q. 3, a. 7 (God's simplicity); q. 4, a. 2 (God's perfection); q. 6, a. 3 (God's goodness); q. 7, a. 1 (God's infinity); q. 8, aa. 1–2 (God's omnipresence); q. 9, a. 1 (God's immutability); q. 10, a. 2 (God's eternity); q. 11, a. 4 (God's unity).

[14]One could say that the divine attributes mentioned in the previous note can be derived by argumentation that does not focus on God's being pure *esse*. However, that would be to pass over some of the argumentation that Thomas does indeed offer and would in turn downplay the centrality of this conception of God in Thomas's thought, which is exactly my point.

esse over the other divine attributes and substituting for that the divine mystery can Stump make quantum theology appealing; if what is explanatorily prior to the divine attributes is a mystery, then the seeming inconsistency between thinking of God as pure *esse* and as an *ens* is resolved not at the level of the attributes themselves but at the quantum level. On the other hand, if the divine attributes were ordered such that they are derivable from God's being pure *esse* (see n. 13 for various affirmations of this in Aquinas), then there is scope for saying that whilst one divine attribute, such as God's being an *ens*, does seem incompatible with God's being pure *esse*, they really are not so since the one is derivable from the other and has a significance that the other does not. Aquinas adopts the same approach with the transcendental properties of being, holding that whilst they are convertible with being, they express something about being not already contained in the expression "being" itself.[15] So here the other divine attributes in whose derivation the notion of God as pure *esse* is essential signify something about pure *esse* not already contained within the expression thereof.

Stump cannot avail of the latter approach because what is entailed by her view is that God's being *esse* is, just like any of the other divine attributes, explanatorily derivable from the divine mystery, and so quantum theology ensues. Stump of course does not object to the characterisation of God as pure *esse*; rather, her position removes its fundamental role from Aquinas's characterisation of God so that it does not come across as so inconsistent with God's being an entity. But such downgrading moves Stump away from the Thomist conception of God in which God's being pure *esse* plays a fundamental role in deriving the divine attributes. The upshot of Stump's position is that she can consistently think of God as both *esse* and an *ens*; the downside is that she loses sight of Thomas's conception of God. For these reasons, I think an alternative approach to the dilemma is warranted, one that preserves the centrality of *esse* whilst at the same time recognising that God can be an entity; to this task I now turn.

<div align="center">III.</div>

Esse Divinum and Id Quod Est. As noted in the introduction, Stump motivates quantum theology by highlighting a tension in Aquinas's thinking on *esse* and *id quod est*; in that discussion she focuses predominantly, though not exclusively, on the commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus* of Boethius, and the following discussion will focus predominantly, though not exclusively, on the same.

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[15]For the classic deduction of the transcendentals in Aquinas's thought see *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate* (Turin: Marietti, 1927), q. 1, a. 1, and note in particular the following: "Aliqua dicuntur addere super ens, in quantum exprimunt modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur."

Aquinas clearly distinguishes between *esse* and *id quod est*, such that *esse* signifies abstractly, whereas *id quod est* signifies concretely—just as we signify "running" (*currere*) abstractly and "one who runs" (*currens*) concretely.[16] In composite things such diverse significations pertain to the things themselves, such that there is a real metaphysical difference between *esse* and *id quod est*; whereas in simple things such diverse significations do not pertain to the things themselves, in which case such diversity is not real but only intentional.[17] And this is the case for God; in Him there is no distinction between *esse* and *id quod est*.[18]

The tension, as Stump sees it, is that for all else there is diversity of *esse* and *id quod est*, but for God there is none; and this because of His simplicity. So whilst God is pure *esse*, He is also somehow an *id quod est*; this seeming contradiction motivates Stump's proposal of quantum theology.[19] But before turning to a resolution of the tension at the quantum level (the level of divine mystery), I think that Thomas's position provides us with the resources for a principled philosophical solution.

There is an equivocation in Stump's discussion between *esse divinum* and *esse commune*, such that it is not clear which *esse* Stump has in mind when she, interpreting Thomas, maintains that *esse* is incompatible with *id quod est*. Arguably, Stump holds that both *esse divinum* and *esse commune* are incompatible with *id quod est* since, as *esse*, both are abstract and neither are concrete. Indeed, she states this to be the case (see n. 12 above). But whilst it is true that *esse commune* cannot be an *id quod est*, it is not entirely clear why *esse divinum* cannot be such.

Esse commune cannot be an *id quod est* because it is a metaphysical component of an *ens* actuating its essence. Hence it must be a constitutive part of an *ens* and not the *ens* itself. This is clear from the discussion in *De Hebdomadibus*, Lect. II, nn. 22–5; for whilst Thomas does not use the terminology of "*esse commune*" in that discussion, he envisages therein the *esse* that is the act of the essence of the thing, in which the thing participates in order to be, which elsewhere he labels *esse commune*. Thus, the diversity of *esse commune* and *id quod est* is owing to the fact that *esse commune* is a component of *id quod est*, not simply because it is *esse*. The abstract nature of *esse commune* is not a real feature of it but one

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[16]Aquinas, *De Hebdomadibus* (Rome: Leonine, 1992), lect. II, n. 22. I shall refer to the Leonine text of the *De Hebdomadibus*, but for ease of reference I shall include the paragraph numbers printed in the Marietti edition.

[17]Ibid., n. 32: "Sicut esse et quod est different in simplicibus secundum intentiones, ita in compositis different realiter."

[18]Ibid., n. 35: "Hoc autem simplex, unum et sublime est ipse Deus."

[19]Stump, "The Nature of a Simple God," 37: "If we remember Aquinas's insistence that we cannot know the *quid est* for God, then another interpretation of the doctrine of simplicity suggests itself. Another way to think about the doctrine of simplicity as Aquinas understands it is as the expression of a kind of quantum theology."

we attribute to it in forming the idea of *esse commune*.[20] Hence, the mere fact of being *esse* is not enough really to distinguish it from that which is (*id quod est*); there must in fact be something about the *esse* under question, such that it is the actuating principle of that which is, which distinguishes it therefrom.

Turning then to *esse divinum*, its being *esse* does not prima facie entail that it is incompatible with being an *ens*; it could do so only if there were something about *esse divinum* that stood in tension with its being an *ens*, as was the case with *esse commune*. Now, Stump highlights the abstract signification of *esse* as being in tension with the concrete signification of *ens* and thus infers the incompatibility of *esse divinum* and *ens*. But at this point of the *De Hebdomadibus* (Lect. II, nn. 22–5), it is *esse commune* that Thomas has in mind—i.e., the distinct actuating principle by which any *id quod est* actually is; he is not at this point considering *esse divinum*, so we cannot take what he says there to be directly applicable to *esse divinum*.

Furthermore, even if *esse divinum* is signified in the abstract, this need not necessarily be derived from any fundamental incompatibility it has with being an *ens*; rather, its abstract signification is situated in the fact that it is metaphysically unlike anything else, given the identity of essence and *esse* in it. Thus, it is not like any created being and so is completely transcendent. But such transcendence does not stand in tension with its being an *ens*. At most one could say that *esse divinum* and *id quod est* differ in signification, but that does not entail that they signify different realities; for as the doctrine of analogy maintains and as Aquinas explicitly states, in simple things like God, *esse* and *id quod est* differ only in intention, not in reality.[21]

All of this goes to show that the diversity of *esse* and *id quod est* can only apply to real things if the *esse* in question is *esse commune*. There is nothing in the *De Hebdomadibus* or in Aquinas's wider thought that would show any real diversity between *esse divinum* and *id quod est*.

So far our argumentation has been negative, to the effect that the incompatibility that Stump makes use of to motivate quantum theology does not in fact obtain. We now turn to positive reasons, stemming from a consideration of *esse divinum* itself, that entail that *esse divinum* is an *ens*, an *id quod est*. Given the

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[20]*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Lib. 1, Cap. 26: "Quod est commune multis, non est aliquid praeter multa nisi sola ratione: sicut animal non est aliud praeter Socratem et Platonem et alia animalia nisi intellectu, qui apprehendit formam animalis expoliatam ab omnibus individuantibus et specificantibus; homo enim est quod vere est animal; alias sequeretur quod in Socrate et Platone essent plura animalia, scilicet ipsum animal commune, et homo communis, et ipse Plato. *Multo igitur minus et ipsum esse commune est aliquid praeter omnes res existentes nisi in intellectu solum*," (my emphasis).

[21]Aquinas, *De Hebdomadibus*, lect. II, n. 32: "Esse et quod est different in simplicibus secundum intentiones."

latter, we shall see that quantum theology is not required in order to circumvent the suggested incompatibility between *esse divinum* and *id quod est*.

Esse divinum is pure *esse* and so is not subject to composition of essence and *esse*; its essence is its *esse*.[22] As pure *esse*, *esse divinum* cannot be composed in any way, since what is composed is subject to some kind of potency.[23] Given the latter, there is no distinction in *esse divinum* between what it is and that it is—i.e., between nature and supposit—in which case *esse divinum* is not an instance of some nature.[24] *Esse divinum* then cannot be multiplied in any way since there is nothing to which it is subject, not even a nature, that could multiply it. *Esse divinum* participates in nothing; it is one and unique. Now, *esse divinum* cannot enter into composition with anything else, since then it would be subject to the composite whole of which it is a part.[25] It follows from all this that *esse divinum* is one, unique, and incommunicable.

Given that *esse divinum* is one, unique, and incommunicable, it is a concrete individual. It is concrete because, given the lack of distinction between nature and supposit therein, it cannot be instantiated in anything else. It is individual because it is one and unique, in which case there is nothing that is like *esse divinum*.

Now an *id quod est*, an *ens*, is a concrete individual; and most *entia* that we come across are such because they are composed of metaphysical parts (like matter and form, nature and supposit) making them so. But what permits their being referred to as *entia*, as so many entities, is the fact that they are concrete individuals, capable of being signified particularly. *Esse divinum* is a concrete individual, not because it is composed of any metaphysical parts, but, owing to its utter lack of composition, because it is one, unique, and incommunicable, such that there is nothing at all that is like it. Its unicity then resides in the fact that everything else is unlike it. As such it can be signified in the concrete and thus particularly as a subsistent individual, and so it can be referred to as an *ens*. But its *ens*-hood is not like that of the other things that we take to be *entia* (e.g., composites of matter and form); rather, it is an *ens* given its special status as *esse divinum*. It is precisely because it is *esse divinum* and nothing else is like it that it is a unique, subsistent individual. Simply because the *ens*-hood of *esse divinum* is unlike that of all other *entia* with which we are familiar does not entail that it is incompatible with being an *ens*; it only entails that *esse divinum*, God, is unlike any other *ens* that exists.

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[22]*ST* I, q. 3, a. 4.
[23]Ibid., a. 7.
[24]Ibid., a. 3.
[25]Ibid., a. 8.

At the end of the discussion in *De Hebdomadibus* Lect. II, n. 35, when, having earlier argued for their distinction, Thomas seems to backtrack and hold that *esse* and *id quod est* are indistinct in God, we must bear in mind that this is because God is pure *esse*, one and simple, inhering in nothing, but subsisting in Himself. Now, as Thomas has highlighted earlier in the same treatise, being (*ens*) is said properly and per se of a substance, of which it is proper to subsist.[26] Thus, it is precisely because God is one, simple, participating in nothing, and subsisting in Himself—i.e., it is because God is *esse divinum*—that God is most properly an *ens* because it is most proper to Him to be unique, individual, and subsisting. This then means that maintaining Thomas's intellectual agnosticism about the divine essence, we can attribute names to God that signify Him in the abstract (e.g., *esse*) and also names that signify Him in the concrete (e.g., as an *ens*) without falling into a contradiction the resolution of which requires quantum theology.[27]

I submit then that we need not turn to quantum theology in order to resolve the seeming tension between God's being pure *esse*, and hence simple, and an *id quod est*. This tension can be resolved through understanding the significance of God's being pure *esse*, which *esse* is unlike everything else, thereby entailing that God is an *ens* unlike any other.

<center>IV.</center>

Conclusion. Despite what has been argued above, it might be objected that my disagreement with Stump is merely verbal and that it centres on our differing interpretations of the terms "abstract" and "concrete." It was precisely the abstract and concrete natures of *esse* and *ens* respectively that brought about the tension which motivated quantum theology in the first place, so if my resolution of this tension at the non-quantum level revolves around a different understanding of these terms from that of Stump, then I have not adequately addressed her concerns.

Now, on Stump's account, whilst she is not explicit about the matter, it appears to be the case that she is adopting interpretations of "abstract" and "concrete" which seem to revolve around spatial-temporal location and the concomitant ability to be causally active—such that something is abstract when it is inert, lacking in causal power, and not located in space and time (white-

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[26]Aquinas, *De Hebdomadibus*, lect. II, n. 23: "Non enim ens dicitur proprie et per se, nisi de substantia, cuius est subsistere."

[27]*ST* I, q. 13, a. 1, ad2: "Quia igitur et Deus simplex est, et subsistens est, attribuimus ei et nomina abstracta, ad significandam simplicitatem eius; et nomina concreta, ad significandum subsistentiam et perfectionem ipsius, quamvis utraque nomina deficiant a modo ipsius, sicut intellectus noster non cognoscit eum ut est, secundum hanc vitam."

ness, for example), whereas something is concrete when it is active and located in space and time (for example, Socrates).[28] On the other hand, I have taken the meanings of "abstract" and "concrete" to revolve around instantiation, such that something is abstract when it is instantiable whereas something is concrete when it is non-instantiable. The objection then is that whereas I have shown the legitimacy of thinking of God as both abstract and concrete (i.e., as both *esse* and an *ens*), I have not demonstrated the same legitimacy when these terms are interpreted as Stump interprets them, in which case the tension remains.

I see no merit in such an objection. Throughout her paper Stump is focussed on Aquinas's texts, and indeed she motivates quantum theology by focussing on the discussion of the significations of *esse* in the *De Hebdomadibus*. Now, I see no evidence that Thomas would have shared what I take to be Stump's understanding of the terms "abstract" and "concrete." Aquinas is rooted in the classical Greek conception of these terms, especially in the *De Hebdomadibus* given its Platonic heritage, whereby their meanings pivot around instantiation.[29] Not only that, the neat division between the poles of (i) spatial-temporal and active and (ii) non-spatial-temporal and inactive would have been unrecognisable to Aquinas, precisely because there is one very important being in his metaphysical thought Who is neither spatial nor temporal, yet from which all actuality, and hence all causality, is derived—namely, God. Stump does not deny the latter; in fact her purpose is to push for the dynamic activity of God. Nevertheless, she still seems to opt for a neat cleavage between (iii) abstract and inert and (iv) concrete and active, and given the difficulty this raises for thinking of God as both abstract and active, Stump proposes quantum theology. But to my mind it would have been better simply to deny the neat division between (iii) and (iv) rather than straightjacket Aquinas with such a framework and thereby create tensions in his thought which otherwise would not have arisen.

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[28]Note in particular the following, "The Nature of a Simple God," 35: "Nothing which is not a concrete particular, an *id quod est*, has temporal or spatial parts. And nothing which is not an *id quod est* has intrinsic accidents either. Consider whiteness, for example. Like *esse*, *whiteness* is not an *id quod est*. For this reason, *whiteness* has no intrinsic accidents . . . *Whiteness* does not have a certain size, for example; it does not engage in action or receive action of anything else—and so on."

Immediately this characterisation of these terms raises a problem for God's ability to be causally active since God is not located in space and time, yet Stump wishes to defend God's causal activity; this worry, part of the more general worry about God's being both pure *esse* and an *ens*, is itself dissolved for Stump on her account of quantum theology (cf. the section on "Action and Free Will in God" in "The Nature of a Simple God," 38–40). However, as I shall argue, we do not need to appeal to quantum theology in order to circumvent the tension; we simply need to consider what I submit to be a more genuinely Thomist view of the natures of abstract and concrete.

[29]This is also in accord with Carlson's definitions of these terms in *Words of Wisdom: A Philosophical Dictionary for the Perennial Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2012).

It is illegitimate to motivate a contradiction in Aquinas's thought between God's being pure *esse* and an *ens* on the basis of meanings attributed to these terms, which meanings Thomas himself would not have recognised. We are left then with two horns: either (1) we work with a Thomistic conception of "abstract" and "concrete," in which case the supposed tension between God's being pure *esse* and an *ens* can easily be resolved without the need for quantum theology; or (2) we work with what I take to be Stump's conception of these terms, in which case the tension does emerge but does not apply to Aquinas. Either way, quantum theology is unnecessary for the Thomist.

At this point we are brought back to the analogy of being. The motivation for Stump's quantum theology was the joint affirmation of two seemingly contradictory attributes of God: His being pure *esse* (hence simple) and an *ens*. These attributions are taken to be contradictory if it is assumed that God is a being in the same way that creatures are beings, in which case His *ens*-hood has to be distinct from His *esse*, just like ours. But the doctrine of analogy permits us to deny that there is univocity between terms predicated of creatures and God without thereby falling into equivocity and, inevitably, some sort of extreme negative theology. Analogy permits us to hold that terms which are predicated of both God and creatures are predicated proportionately of the being subject to the predication. Thus, if we are considering a being that is wholly different from creatures, then the mode of predication for that being must be different from the mode for creatures. We have seen that God is fundamentally different from creatures, so that when we attribute perfections to both God and creatures, we cannot attribute them in the same way. We have seen that both God and creatures can be called beings, and that the beingness of both involves *esse* in some way; but as we have also seen, whilst both God and creatures are legitimately referred to as beings, they are not beings in the same way but in different ways—the latter because they have *esse*, the former because He is *esse* itself. As I mentioned at the beginning, at root of Stump's position is a lack of appreciation of the notion of analogy at the heart of Aquinas's views on the divine attributes, and such lack of appreciation entails that on her account God cannot be thought of as *esse* itself and an *ens* without threatening His simplicity, thereby motivating quantum theology. But what this paper has shown is that we can indeed think of God as such without recourse to quantum theology. Given the latter, the position advanced in this paper is the more genuinely Thomistic one.[30]

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