Divine Ineffability and Franciscan Knowledge

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Abstract: There's been a recent surge of interest among analytic philosophers of religion in divine ineffability. However, divine ineffability is part of a traditional conception of God that has been widely rejected among analytic philosophers of religion for the past few decades. One of the main reasons that the traditional conception of God has been rejected is because it allegedly makes God too remote, unknowable, and impersonal. In this paper, I present an account of divine ineffability that directly addresses this concern by arguing that the deepest knowledge of God's nature that we can attain is personal, rather than propositional. On this view, it is precisely because knowledge of God's nature is personal that it cannot be linguistically expressed and communicated.

> *Interior intimo meo et superior summo meo.*
> More inward than the most inward place of my heart and
> loftier than the highest.
> -Augustine (*Confessions* III.6.11)[1]

> God is, like, the teeniest and the biggest.
> -David Francis Keller (age 5)

1 Introduction

Traditional Christian doctrine is characterized by the mysterious claim that God is ineffable. Examples abound. Here are five: according to Gregory of Nyssa, "His nature cannot be named and is ineffable" (*Ad Abl*, 259).[2] The liturgy of John Chrysostom (c. 400) calls God "the

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[1] Citations of Augustine's *Confessions* are to Augustine 1991 [c.397–401], followed by book, chapter, and paragraph number.

[2] All references to *Ad Ad Ablabium: Quod non sint tres dei* are to Nyssa 1954 [c. 380] and are abbreviated '*Ad Abl*'.

inexpressible, incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable" (Liturgy of John Chrysostom, Anaphora). Pseudo-Dionyisus claims, "We must not then dare to speak, or indeed form any conception, of the hidden super-essential Godhead, except those things that are revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures" (*DN*, 28–29).[3] The Fourth Lateran Council states, "Between Creator and creature no similarity can be expressed without including a greater dissimilarity."[4] And Thomas Aquinas writes, "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him" (*SCG* 1, 30).[5]

Analytic philosophers of religion have rightly worried about these claims, but recently there's been a surge of interest among analytic philosophers in defending—or at least exploring—some sort of divine ineffability thesis.[6] Rejecting an *extreme*—and arguably self-undermining—apophaticism according to which reference to God is impossible, analytic philosophers have interpreted divine ineffability as the claim that we cannot (truly) say anything "positive" or "substantial" about God, that we cannot say what God is like intrinsically, that we cannot describe God's essence, or that we cannot express any fundamental truths about God.

These defenses are primarily motivated by a more general defense of apophatic theology. I will argue, however, that the defender of Classical Theism, who is committed to traditional divine attributes such as simplicity, already has a reason for defending some form of divine ineffability claim, whether or not her theology is, properly speaking, "apophatic."

Claims about divine ineffability are often raised in tandem with claims about divine incomprehensibility. Whatever the precise nature of the relation between them, the two are obviously related—*prima facie*, ineffability is the linguistic analogue of incomprehensibility—and this gives rise to a different reason for defending divine ineffability: the view that knowledge of God is unlike knowledge in other domains because such knowledge is inherently personal. Some have thought it plausible that personal knowledge is distinctive (in part) because it is non-propositional.[7] The claim that theoretical knowledge of God (knowledge of *what* God is) depends on personal knowledge of God (knowledge of *who* God is), conjoined with some other plausible premises, would then entail that, ultimately, knowledge of God's nature cannot be expressed in propositional form.

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[3] All references to Pseudo-Dionysius's *Divine Names* and The Mystical Theology are to Pseudo-Dionysius 1920 and are abbreviated '*DN*'.

[4] Lateran Council IV. 1215. Canon 2: On the Error of Abbot Joachim.

[5] The original Latin translated as "grasp" is *capere*. All references to Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* are to Aquinas 1957 [1264] and are abbreviated '*SCG*' followed by book and chapter number.

[6] See, for example, John Hick (2000), Jonathan Jacobs (2015), Samuel Lebens (2014), Michael Rea (2016, 2018), and Sameer Yadav (2016).

[7] For a recent example, see Matthew Benton (2017, 2018).

The sort of non-propositional knowledge gestured at above is similar to what Eleonore Stump calls **Franciscan knowledge of persons**, which she contrasts with Dominican knowledge.[8] Roughly, Dominican knowledge is knowledge-*that*—knowledge of facts that can be expressed as propositions. Franciscan knowledge—which includes, but is not limited to, knowledge by acquaintance—defies such expression.[9] I think that we acquire Franciscan knowledge of God primarily, though not solely, through what I will call **contemplative experience**.[10] But to know God through contemplative experience requires one to become a certain kind of person, because the relevant contemplative experiences require the union of one's will with God's.

The view of our language and thought about God that I ultimately want to defend is one that is consistent with Classical Theism, while insisting on the centrality of Franciscan knowledge. Knowledge of God is ultimately personal in a way that is irreducible to propositional knowledge, and this is why such knowledge is, in some sense, incommunicable. Franciscan knowledge of God is also, in this life, only partial, due to our limited acquaintance with the divine.

At the end of the day, is the resulting view committed to divine ineffability? That depends on one's metasemantics. I'll distinguish two types of metasemantics, which I'll call the **Lax View** and the **Strict View**. Because of the way the Lax View distinguishes expressibility and comprehensibility, divine ineffability is much more difficult to defend on the Lax View than on the Strict View. However, even if a proponent of the Lax View has

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[8] See Stump 2010, Chapter 3. Stump's categories concern knowledge across various domains, not just knowledge of God. A quick note on notation: throughout this paper, I will use **boldface** instead of mention quotes and corner quotes, "double quotes" for direct quotation, and *italics* both for emphasis and to indicate concepts.

[9] My reliance on Stump's distinction between Franciscan and Dominican knowledge as a way of explaining divine ineffability has some overlap with the account defended by David Efird and David Worlsey (2017). We agree (i) that this distinction is central to explaining divine ineffability, (ii) that Franciscan knowledge of God is possible for human beings (if not fully in this life, then in the beatific vision), but not Dominican knowledge (with some qualifications), and (iii) that Franciscan knowledge of God cannot be communicated propositionally (with some qualifications). However, I define **ineffability** differently than they do, and I depart from their account by distinguishing ineffability and incomprehensibility. A result of this is that, on my account, it would not make sense to say that something is personally effable, which they claim about God. I thank an anonymous referee for bringing Efird and Worsley's excellent paper to my attention.

[10] I'm using **contemplative experience** here as a stand-in for the relevant sort of experience instead of **mystical experience** because the latter has connotations that I think are misleading for my purposes. I cannot fully explain here the sort of experience of God I have in mind, but I hope to do so in future work. Suffice it to say for now that I'm talking about a relatively common sort of experience among people of faith who pursue the contemplative life—not necessarily anything extraordinary such as visions, locutions, or ecstasies. Also, I want to leave open the objective nature of such experiences—that is, whether they involve acquaintance with God or merely acquaintance with divine grace or the divine energies. In this way, I may be departing from Stump's characterization of Franciscan knowledge of persons. I think my conception is closely related to hers, though.

to give up divine ineffability, she can do so consistently with holding the related doctrine of divine incomprehensibility. I think that this preserves what traditional proponents of ineffability were really concerned with.

Classical Theism has been criticized for making God too remote, unknowable, and impersonal.[11] I believe there is a way of developing a view of our language and thought about God, consistent with Classical Theism, that not only allows but makes *central* the possibility not just of nearness to, but union with, God. My goal in this paper is to present a plausible account of divine ineffability, using tools from contemporary philosophy of language to clearly explain the limitations of our language for describing God. At the same time, I try to show how this semantic account dovetails nicely with an account of divine incomprehensibility that preserves central insights from the mystical tradition regarding our capacity for divine intimacy. My hope is that the account defended here will go some way toward defending Classical Theism from the aforementioned criticisms.

The paper will proceed as follows: in section 2, I present preliminary characterizations of ineffability and incomprehensibility and explain the distinction between (and relevance of) strict and lax metasemantics. In section 3, I give a semantic framework and show how it works for a fragment of theological language (viz., positive, intrinsic, divine predications). In section 4, I explain how Franciscan knowledge of God "fills in the gaps" of semantically incomplete, intrinsic divine predications. Finally, in section 5, I explain the sense in which the view I defend is committed to divine ineffability and incomprehensibility.

2 Divine Transcendence, Ineffability, and Incomprehensibility

All theists seem to agree that God is transcendent, in the sense that God is independent of the created world; *a fortiori,* God radically differs from creation because God is not dependent on anything else for God's existence. However, the classical theist, who holds that God is eternal, immutable, simple, and impassible, arguably has to go further than this. If God is, for example, simple, then predications of intrinsic properties to God cannot be taken at face value. If (i) God has no intrinsic properties or (ii) all of God's intrinsic properties are identical with God's essence, then predications such as **God is wise** cannot have the same semantic interpretations as predications such as **Socrates is wise**.[12] For the classical theist, such predications are linguistically defective—so there's at least some sense in which God's nature is ineffable. And because we strain to understand what it is for wisdom, power, and goodness to be the same in something, there is

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[11] See, for example, the criticisms in Pinnock et al. 1994.

[12] Some Classical Theists—specifically, those who are committed to the univocity of divine intrinsic predications—would not agree with this claim about what divine simplicity entails. See, for example, Katherin Rogers (2000, 15–18) and Thomas Williams (2005). I cannot address their arguments here.

an important sense in which God's nature is incomprehensible to us. Thus, Classical Theism seems to entail some version of divine ineffability and incomprehensibility.

But giving a perspicuous account of ineffability and incomprehensibility is far from straightforward, and the task is not made any easier when God is the target. At a first pass, to say, of some x, that x is ineffable is to say that x cannot be expressed in some language or class of languages.[13] It may seem initially that objects in general are *trivially* ineffable, since objects don't seem like the sorts of things that can be expressed linguistically. If this were correct, then the claim that God was ineffable would be boring and trivial—along with the claim that Barack Obama, Taylor Swift, and the Earth's moon are ineffable. However, on the widely held Direct Reference theory, objects *are* sometimes expressed by linguistic items (viz., names, and, on some views, indexicals and demonstratives)—that is, objects are the *contents* or *semantic values* of some linguistic expressions. And even on a Fregean semantics, they are *indirectly* expressed, by being determined by Fregean senses or concepts.

Since there is a plausible sense in which objects are linguistically expressible, we should have some account of the conditions under which an object is ineffable. Say that an object or individual o is **strongly ineffable** in a language L, spoken by a community C, if there is no denoting term for o in L (or in extensions of L learnable by C). Since we obviously do have expressions that denote God (otherwise we could not truly say that God is ineffable), it's not plausible to claim that God is strongly ineffable.[14]

Instead, accounts of divine ineffability have typically focused on some class of divine predications—predications that attempt to express what God is like in Godself. For example, John Hick claims that divine substantial predications are not true (2000), and Jonathan Jacobs claims that intrinsic divine predications are true, but not fundamentally true (2015). These accounts could perhaps be said to be committed to *weak* divine ineffability.

Say that an object or individual o is **weakly ineffable** in a language L, spoken by a community C, if there are no expressions in L (or in extensions of L learnable by C) that have, as their semantic contents, truths about o's intrinsic nature or properties. On the account I will defend, God is weakly ineffable. I will argue that positive, intrinsic, divine predications are semantically incomplete—that is, they do not semantically express propositions, even relative to a context of utterance. In other words, sentences that purport to predicate intrinsic properties to God or express

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[13] To be more precise about the modality of ineffability claims would be beyond the scope of this paper, but see André Kukla (2005) and James R. Shaw (2013) for in-depth discussion. See also Silvia Jonas (2016) for an excellent overview and spirited defense of an account of ineffability that differs from the one presented here.

[14] Both Augustine (1958 [397]) and Alston (1956) give this argument against divine ineffability. See Rea 2015 and 2018 for further discussion of the problems and prospects of strong divine ineffability (or, as he puts it, 'transcendence').

God's nature do not *semantically* express truths about God's intrinsic properties or nature.

Similarly, we can distinguish strong and weak senses of incomprehensibility. Say that an object or individual *o* is **strongly incomprehensible** for a community *C* if the members of *C* are unable to grasp *o* singularly or single *o* out conceptually (i.e., to have the mental analogue of a definite description for *o*). The sorts of objects that count as strongly incomprehensible will depend on the correct account of singular thought. For example, if singular thought requires acquaintance, then anything with which it's impossible to be acquainted (by a community *C*) will be strongly incomprehensible (for *C*).

Say that an object or individual *o* is **weakly incomprehensible** for a community *C* if members of *C* are unable to grasp truths about *o*'s intrinsic nature or properties (i.e., what *o* is like in itself). An example of a weakly incomprehensible object would be some object *o* such that members of *C* could identify *o* by its extrinsic properties while *o*'s nature was cognitively impenetrable to *C*.

Ineffability and incomprehensibility are often conflated—not just in the writings of the early church fathers and medieval theologians, but in contemporary accounts as well. But these concepts should be distinguished. Why think that whatever we can't express linguistically we cannot grasp? On the other hand, why think understanding is required for linguistic expression? It might be that one or both of these entailments hold, but this should not be assumed without argument at the outset of our investigation.

Oversimplifying considerably, one could argue that ancient and medieval writers treated ineffability and incomprehensibility interchangeably largely because they held, or were influenced by, an Aristotelian view of language and thought, expressed in the following influential passage from the *De Interpretatione*:

> Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of—affections in the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same. (*De Int* 1, 16a, 3–7)[15]

Affections (*pathemata*) of the soul are mental entities that are "likenesses" of the things they represent—they are, roughly, concepts. On the Aristotelian view, then, (i) words signify concepts and (ii) understanding a word requires grasping the concept it expresses. On this view of the

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[15] Citations to Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* are to Aristotle 1984 and are abbreviated '*De Int*' followed by book, Bekker page, and line number.

relation between language and thought, if something *o* is incomprehensible to a linguistic community C, then *o* will be ineffable in the language of C.[16]

2.1 Strict versus Lax Metasemantics

If the forgoing account of the history is on the right track, this would presumably be the result of the fact that the pre-moderns implicitly assumed something along the lines of what I call a **Strict Metasemantics.**[17] On the Strict View, semantic competence requires comprehension. So, on the Strict View, I do not count as competent with a word unless I grasp its content. Since my use of a word to express a content in a given context requires semantic competence, I cannot use a word to express a content unless I grasp that content. Ignorant, successful reference, then, is not possible. If it turns out that Schmidt, and not Gödel, proved the incompleteness of arithmetic, then a speaker S who associates the description **the guy who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic** with the name **Gödel** refers to Schmidt when she uses **Gödel**. If S thinks that arthritis is an ailment of the thigh, then **arthritis**, uttered by S, does not mean *arthritis*, but something else (whatever she thinks it means).

Similarly, on the Strict View, reference-fixing requires comprehension. If no one in the community of *L*-speakers grasps the relevant individual, property, or kind, then terms for those items cannot be introduced into *L*.

Contrast this with what I call a **Lax Metasemantics**. On the Lax View, semantic competence does not require comprehension, but merely an intention to use a word in a particular way (e.g., to refer in the same way as the person from whom one picked up the term, or to defer to experts' use of the term). One can be competent with a term while having radically false beliefs about its content (though just how radically false is a source of contention), because knowledge of standing meaning is compatible with ignorance about content—in particular, for context-sensitive expressions. For example, speaker S's knowledge of the standing meaning of **I** does not entail that S knows the content that **I** expresses in a particular context (e.g., one in which S is ignorant of the speaker of the context). Similarly, knowledge of the standing meaning of **water** does not entail knowledge that water is H_2O.

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[16] I'm not well versed enough in the history of ancient and medieval views of language to put forth this account of the history with a great deal of confidence, but see Klima 1996 and Harris 2017, especially pages 35–38 for a more historically informed account of the linguistic background to Aquinas's views on analogy that I believe is consistent with the story I tell here.

[17] The distinction between Strict and Lax Metasemantics roughly maps onto the distinction between Semantic Internalism and Externalism. I use different terms than these familiar ones here because the views I'm presenting are caricatures—to do justice to all the variations of semantic internalism and externalism there are, and to be sensitive to all of the distinctions proponents of such views would want to make, would require a much longer and more intricate discussion than it would be advisable to have in this context.

What one means—what one *can* mean—is determined in part by one's socio-linguistic community and environment. If a speaker S is on Twin Earth, she cannot use **water** to pick out H_2O. If S is a normal English speaker, she succeeds in making a claim about arthritis with her utterance of **I have arthritis in my thigh**. If S thinks that Gödel proved that arithmetic is incomplete, if consistent—when in fact it was proven by Schmidt—then she has a false belief about Gödel. However, her use of **Gödel** still refers to Gödel, not to Schmidt.[18]

Similarly, on the Lax View, the standards for reference-fixing are not stringent. One can fix the reference of a term by ostension, demonstration, or description. A speaker need not have uniquely identifying knowledge of the relevant individual, property, or kind in order to introduce a term for that individual, property, or kind into the language. So, descriptive knowledge of or acquaintance with a content *c* by a member of the linguistic community of *L*-speakers is not required to introduce a term expressing *c* in *L*. The result is that everyone in a linguistic community of *L*-speakers may have mistaken beliefs about the content of a given *L*-term (though just *how* mistaken is a source of contention).

On the view I will defend, intrinsic divine predications are semantically incomplete: sentences that express such predications do not linguistically express propositions. This does not mean that theological language has an aberrant semantics, since the phenomenon of semantic incompleteness is widespread in natural language, as I'll explain below. Furthermore, speakers can use intrinsic divine predications to convey truths about God by having the appropriate communicative intentions in the appropriate contexts. However, speakers are able to grasp and communicate such truths only to the extent that they have Franciscan knowledge of God. This sort of knowledge comes in degrees and is only ever partially possessed by creatures. So, although a partial glimpse of God's intrinsic nature is attainable in this life, it cannot be perspicuously communicated linguistically.

3 The Semantics of Positive, Intrinsic, Divine Predications

My account will focus on positive predications of intrinsic properties to God, predications such as **God is good** and **God is wise**.[19] The reason for focusing on this category of predications, rather than negative or extrinsic predications is that positive, intrinsic predications purport to express facts about God's intrinsic nature.[20]

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[18] These familiar examples are from Putnam 1975, Burge 1979, and Kripke 1980.

[19] In his construal of Aquinas's theory of analogical predication, Daniel Bonevac also focuses on purported attributions of intrinsic properties to God, as a contemporary gloss on Aquinas's invocation of items from Aristotle's categories (2012, 6).

[20] Following Aquinas, I think that the classical theistic attributions of immutability, eternity, simplicity, and impassibility to God are negative predications. So, for example, to say that God is simple is to say that God is *not* (mereologically or metaphysically) complex. Of course,

What is problematic about positive, intrinsic, divine predications?[21] Why can't we take such sentences as **God is good** or **God is wise** at face value? First, I'll give a somewhat impressionistic presentation of the problem, and then I will present more specific reasons for thinking that such claims are problematic.

First note that intrinsic divine predications are, at the very least, misleading: when someone utters **God is wise**, she seems to falsely imply that God shares a property with Socrates. When she tries to correct this false impression by saying **God is wisdom,** she seems to falsely imply that God *is* a property.

It might seem like the best (i.e., least misleading) option is to say something like **God is maximally wise,** but this turns a *positive* intrinsic predication into a *negative* one. To be maximally wise is to be *un*limited in wisdom. It may be that, in the order of nature, our ordinary predicate **wise** should be defined in terms of **perfect wisdom**—for example, **approximately (perfectly) wise**. But since we are only acquainted with imperfect wisdom, and hence, *for us*, perfect or maximal wisdom must be understood (negatively) in terms of ordinary (approximate) wisdom. Of course, some might want to claim that any perfectly or maximally wise thing is also approximately wise. But this is *very* misleading, and we can only predicate approximate wisdom of God in virtue of God's having another attribute (maximal/perfect wisdom) that we can only "negatively" grasp. We aren't getting any closer to (positively) grasping God's intrinsic nature.

The Scholastics called terms like **good** and **wise** "pure perfection" terms. Despite the difficulties discussed above, Thomas Aquinas maintained that what we express with predications of pure perfection terms to God is literally true. He was able to account for this linguistic feat by distinguishing among the *res significata,* the *ratio nominis,* and the *modus significandi* of a word—very roughly, the aspect of reality a word signifies (something like its referential content), the concept it expresses (something like its sense), and its mode of signifying (which includes how it functions syntactically). This enabled him to say that intrinsic predications of pure perfections such as goodness and wisdom are literally true, only they are predicated differently of God than they are of creatures. For example, consider

(1) Plato is wise.
(2) Socrates is wise.
(3) God is wise.

Wise is predicated univocally in 1 and 2—it makes the same semantic contribution to these sentences: *prima facie,* both are true iff the denotation of the subject term instantiates the property expressed by the predicate

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this point is apt to raise questions, and one could certainly quibble about the prospect of a principled distinction between positive and negative predications, but this is too big of an issue to do justice to here.

[21] For readability, I leave off **positive** in what follows.

(though I will qualify this claim below). 3, however, cannot be interpreted univocally, for the reasons we discussed above. It does not follow, however, that the token of **wise** in 3 has a completely different, unrelated meaning from the tokens in 1 and 2. For example, the relation between the 3 and 1/2 tokens of **wise** is not like the relation between the tokens of **port** in

(4) The pirates drank all the port.
(5) The pirates were hung at the port.

The occurrences of **port** in 4 and 5 are homonyms: they are tokens of different word-types—phonetically and graphically identical but with unrelated meanings.

Although the occurrences of **wise** in 1–3 don't seem to be tokens of different word types, they also don't seem to have *exactly* the same meaning. For example, one might think that the occurrences of **wise** in 1/2 and 3 are polysemes, like **fearful** in

(6) Camille was a fearful woman.
(7) Camille was a fearful storm.

In 6, **fearful** means something like **easily afraid**, while in 7 it means **fear-inducing**. These two standing meanings are obviously closely related.[22] It's plausible that **fearful** has a single entry in our mental lexicon, with different sub-definitions. By contrast, **port** as it appears in 4 and **port** as it appears in 5 have different entries in our mental lexicon.

But the difference between 1/2 and 3 cannot be explained completely by appeal to the polysemy of **wise**. The reason for this is that part of the difference between 3 and 1/2 seems to be syntactic, for even if **wise** in 3 were assigned a different (but related) meaning than **wise** in 1/2, 3 would still have the misleading implication that God instantiates the intrinsic property expressed by **wise** (whatever property that happened to be). This seems to be Thomas's point when he attributes the defect in sentences like 3 to their *modus significandi*. Our intellects understand predications of the form of 1–3 by composing the semantic values of noun phrases (**Socrates, Plato**) and verb phrases (**is wise**). In the case of Plato and Socrates, this is not misleading, since they are distinct from the wisdom they instantiate. However, since God is not distinct from God's wisdom, the form of the predication has misleading implications in the divine case, which we can correct by denying the *modus significandi* of intrinsic divine predications.

On Thomas's view, however, it's not just the *modus significandi* of intrinsic divine predications that is problematic, but also their *ratio nominis*. Our concepts of *wisdom, goodness*, etc., are acquired from experience with creatures and apply primarily to creatures. The concepts these pure perfection terms signify, then, do not apply straightforwardly to God.

Then in what sense are predications like 3 correct? According to Thomas, the *res significata* of intrinsic divine predications can be affirmed since the

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[22] It could also mean **fear-inducing** in 6; context is needed for disambiguation.

ultimate reality to which terms like **wisdom** point is in God, insofar as God is the source of wisdom in creatures.[23] In what we might call "the order of knowledge," pure perfection terms, as applied to God, are misleading and defective, since what we understand when we use these terms are the concepts we acquire through our experience of wisdom and goodness in creatures. However, in "the order of nature," pure perfection terms are aptly applied to God, because true goodness and wisdom are in God alone, since God is goodness itself and wisdom itself.[24]

On the view I will defend, intrinsic divine predications are semantically incomplete; they do not *linguistically* express propositions and so are not (without pragmatic supplementation) true or false. To explain this view properly, I will need to introduce some terminology.

3.1 Background Semantics

The semantics for a language *L* (i) assigns semantic values (SVs) to the basic expressions of *L*, and (ii) assigns SVs to complex expressions *e* of *L* as a function of the SVs of the basic expressions that compose *e* and the syntax of *L*. So, the SV of a complex expression (of which the sentence is a special case) is a projection of its syntax.

Since natural languages contain context-sensitive expressions, we need to distinguish two types of SV: the value that an expression has in context, which contributes directly to truth conditions, and the context-invariant value that an expression has, the appropriate cognitive connection to which constitutes semantic competence. The former I will call **content** and the latter **standing meaning**.[25] The standing meaning of a lexical item *e* of *L* is just its conventional, linguistic meaning—intuitively, what an *L*-speaker needs to know to use *e* competently. An expression has a *stable* standing meaning if it has the same content in different contexts; for example, singular terms such as proper names have stable standing meanings because they refer to the same objects in different contexts.

A word has an *unstable* standing meaning if it may have different contents in different contexts, consistent with its standing meaning in *L*. For example, indexicals such as **I** and **here** and demonstratives such as **that** and **those** have unstable standing meanings. The standing meaning of **I** is invariant—every English speaker learns the same rule for how to use **I**—while the content of **I** varies with context—its content (outside of quotation)

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[23] See Rocca 1991, 182, and Wippel 2000, 22).

[24] Bonevac makes a similar point: "We have an idea of goodness, for example, derived from our interactions with the things of this world. It approximates, but does not represent completely and perfectly, the property of goodness. We use the features of things of this world as models for the features of God" (2012, 12). It's because of this point that Thomas's view is in agreement with Mark 10:18, in which Jesus says that God alone is good.

[25] The distinction being made here is roughly equivalent to David Kaplan's distinction between character and content (1989). The notion of standing meaning comes from Richard Heck (2002).

is the speaker of the context (or perhaps a concept or mode of presentation that uniquely determines the speaker).

The semantic content of a sentence *s* of *L* in a context *c* is a function of *s*'s syntax and the semantic contents determined by the standing meanings of the words that compose *s* in *c*. So, for example, **I am hungry now**, in a context in which Maggie is the speaker and the time is noon on December 4, 1988, has as its content the proposition that Maggie is hungry at noon on 12/4/1988.[26] What a sentence *semantically expresses* in a context of utterance is its semantic content—typically, a proposition. The semantic contents of sub-sentential expressions are what they contribute to the semantic contents of sentences in which they occur, either by composing or determining those contents[27]

Two types of things have semantic properties on this view: uttered (or inscribed) sentences and the communicative intentions of speakers (or writers).[28] *Speaker's meaning* is determined by a speaker's communicative intentions in uttering a sentence. What is said in a context of utterance is semantically constrained speaker's meaning. It's a familiar point that a speaker may use a sentence *s* to communicate a content that's distinct from *s*'s semantic content. For example, I may communicate to you that I'd like you to close the window by uttering **It's cold in here** in the appropriate context.[29]

A speaker may also communicate a content with a sentence *s* that conflicts with *s*'s semantic content. Irony and sarcasm are good examples of this—I could say, **You're the best** in the appropriate context to communicate that you're the worst, or **I love you, too** to communicate that I reciprocate your disdain for me. Given this account of linguistic expression (i.e., as the relation between a sentence and its semantic content in a context of utterance), it's clear that one may communicate a content without linguistically expressing it.

3.1.1 Semantic Incompleteness

Since I'm going to invoke semantic incompleteness in my account of the semantics of intrinsic divine predications, I think it will be helpful for me to discuss a few examples first and to make it clear that this is not

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[26] I'm leaving open the nature of propositions here; this will depend on what the semantic contents of words are thought to be, and on whether propositions are composed of the semantic contents of the words that make up the sentences that express them or not.

[27] So, how one conceives of sub-sentential expression contents will depend on how one conceives of sentential semantic contents (i.e., propositions). For example, a Fregean who construes propositions as sentential senses will think of the contents of sub-sentential expressions as the senses of those expressions (or, equivalently, the modes of presentation of the references of those expressions). A Russellian will conceive of the contents of sub-sentential expressions as the Fregean's reference-level semantic values (viz., objects, properties, and functions).

[28] Here I'm following Bach 2006.

[29] This is an example of the familiar phenomenon of Gricean implicature. See Grice 1975.

some *ad hoc* maneuver—semantic incompleteness is actually widespread in natural language.[30] The phenomenon of semantic incompleteness is to be distinguished from context-sensitivity: a well-formed declarative sentence with no indexicals is incomplete if it does not express a proposition.[31] Here are some examples:

   (8) David was late.
   (9) Ava ate breakfast.
 (10) Maria prefers puppies.

Other examples of lexical items that generate incompleteness include **effective, poisonous, to the right, ready, local,** and **better.** Recall that a sentence is semantically incomplete if it does not semantically express a proposition—that is, a truth-conditional content, *even* relative to context. Why think that 8–10 are semantically incomplete? Consider: under what conditions is 8 true? David may have been late for the dinner party, but not late for the performance (which occurred midway through the party). Someone cannot be just plain *late*, she has to be late *for* something. Also, when someone assertively utters 9, she is not intending to express a content that is true iff Ava ate breakfast at any time at all—the speaker's intentions intuitively delimit some range of times (typically, but not always, the day of utterance). And what does Maria prefer puppies to? Iguanas? Little brothers? Cats?

Let's call the result of supplementing these sentences with additional lexical items to get complete semantic contents their **complete counterparts**. So, some complete counterparts of 8–10 would be

  (8*) David was late for Jack's birthday party on Sunday, March 19, 2017.
  (9*) Ava ate breakfast on Monday.
 (10*) Maria prefers puppies to cats as pets.

It would be implausible to think that hearers failed to understand what was communicated with assertive utterances of 8–10. But this is because what speakers intend to communicate are some complete counterparts (such as 8*–10*) of 8–10, and they typically (and easily) can exploit broad features of context to make their communicative intentions clear.

The upshot is that, while the semantic contents of 8–10 are incomplete, a speaker can nonetheless convey propositions with 8–10 by intending to

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[30] It should be noted that there's lively debate about this issue among philosophers of language, and Bach's view—that some univocal, indexical-free sentences are semantically incomplete—is very controversial. Even philosophers who agree that the phenomenon of semantic incompleteness is real still disagree over cases. I'm adopting Radical Minimalism (Bach's view) here because I think it's correct, and I have to take a stand in order to develop a semantics for intrinsic divine predications at all. However, arguing for the superiority of this view to its competitors would take me too far afield. Also, as I point out in the text, one could develop the view defended here along indexicalist lines as well.

[31] To be more precise, *some*, but not all, cases of incompleteness are due to context sensitivity.

communicate some complete counterparts (such as 8*–10*) of these sentences and successfully exploiting broad contextual features to do so. Take note that the propositions speakers succeed in communicating by uttering 8–10 are *not* the semantic contents of 8–10, but the speakers' meanings conveyed by the relevant utterances. These are just a few examples. It should be clear that even if semantic incompleteness is pervasive, this does not stop us from communicating successfully.

3.2 The Semantic Incompleteness of Intrinsic Divine Predications

Part of the reason for thinking that intrinsic divine predications are semantically incomplete, apart from the fact that a semantic account of their linguistic defectiveness is needed, is that pure perfection terms like **good** and **wise** are gradeable adjectives.[32] What sentences containing gradable adjectives express depends on features of the context of utterance. Consider, for example, the gradable adjective **big.** We cannot infer **Fifi is big** from **Fifi is a big flea**, because something can only be big relative to a standard or a comparison class.[33] In many cases, this can be specified by including a sortal that indicates the *kind* to which the subject belongs.

Peter Geach and Judith Thomson make similar remarks about **good,** which they call an **attributive adjective**.[34] For example, we cannot infer **David is good** from **David is a good hustler.** I will return to this point below.

But for now, notice that a sentence such as

(11) Fifi is big.

cannot, on its own, be assessed for truth or falsity. It is missing information, viz. the relevant comparison class. Is Fifi big for a flea? Big for an animal? The difference matters, for the truth of the former is consistent with the falsity of the latter.

There are two ways to deal with sentences containing gradables: treat them as (i) context sensitive or as (ii) semantically incomplete. Call (i) **Indexicalism** and (ii) **Minimalism**. According to Indexicalism, gradable adjectives have hidden argument positions that are filled in by the context. Indexicalism thus involves a conjecture about the covert syntactic features

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[32] The claim that positive, intrinsic, divine predications are semantically incomplete requires more qualification even than this, for consider the sentence **God is square**. Being square seems like a standard example of an intrinsic property, but this sentence expresses an obvious falsehood. So I would not want to claim that it is semantically incomplete. (However, it should be noted that some contextualists hold that even predicates like **is square** are context sensitive, cf. Francois Recanati [1994] on **France is hexagonal**.) My analysis only focuses on *apt* intrinsic divine predications, and those involve predications of pure perfection terms to God, which are gradeable adjectives.

[33] Kennedy 2007 defends the view that gradables are relativized to standards.

[34] See Geach 1956 and Thomson 1997, 2008. Thanks to John O'Callaghan for drawing my attention to the relevance of Geach's paper for this topic.

of gradable-containing sentences. On Indexicalism, gradable-containing sentences *linguistically* express truth-evaluable contents (i.e., propositions) in contexts of utterance.

According to Minimalism, while gradable-containing sentences are syntactically impeccable, they are semantically deficient. They do not linguistically express propositions in contexts of utterance. However, they may be used by speakers to communicate propositions in context. For example, in the relevant context, David can use 11 to communicate the proposition that Fifi is a big flea—this proposition will be the speaker's meaning of David's utterance (given that it is the content of his communicative intention). Though the sentence David utters is semantically incomplete, he can still use that sentence to successfully communicate something truth-evaluable. In what follows, I will adopt Minimalism—according to which gradable-containing sentences are semantically incomplete—because it makes less controversial syntactic assumptions.[35] But note that this view can be converted *mutatis mutandis* to accommodate Indexicalism instead of Minimalism.

On the view being defended here, sentences such as

(12) Gandhi is good.

and

(13) Tomatoes are good.

are semantically incomplete. In order to express propositions, 12 and 13 need to be supplemented with additional content. At the very least, 12 requires a sortal, and 13 requires an adjunct (e.g., **to eat, to throw**).[36] Speakers can *communicate* propositions with 12 and 13 in the appropriate contexts, with the appropriate communicative intentions. They can do this by intending to communicate the propositions expressed by the *complete counterparts* of these sentences; for example, **Gandhi is a (morally) good (human being)** and **Tomatoes are good (to eat)**.[37] However, even in context, 12 and 13 have incomplete semantic contents—that is, what they *linguistically express* is not propositional, hence, not truth-evaluable.

Note the consequences of this view for the semantics of intrinsic divine predications, which contain gradable adjectives. First, the obvious point: **God is good** is semantically incomplete, so it does not *semantically express* a proposition. Furthermore, since God is not a member of any kind and, hence, does not fall under any sortal, it looks like intrinsic divine predictions can*not* be completed in context in the same way as other gradable-containing sentences—that is, **God is good** doesn't seem to have

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[35] Here, I follow Bach 2011 and 2012. As far as I know, however, Bach never discusses terms like **good** and **wise**.

[36] Geach conjectures that proper name-containing sentences predicating **good** of their subject tend to sound fine to us because (on his view) competence with a proper name requires knowledge of the sortal under which the name-bearer falls, see Geach 1956, 34.

[37] There's of course more than one way to make semantically complete sentences out of 12 and 13.

any complete counterparts, at least none that we can grasp. Is it possible for speakers to communicate truths using intrinsic divine predications then? If so, how?

I think there's clearly a sense in which **God is good** *can* be used to express a truth, even if what makes this claim true is not the same sort of thing that makes **Gandhi is good** true.[38] We can say, as above, that God is maximally or perfectly good. Alternatively, we might say (more closely following Thomas) that God is the *source* of goodness, wisdom, etc. (Although note that, for example, **source of goodness** doesn't express an intrinsic property.)

But God isn't merely the cause of perfections in creatures: Thomas claims that created things are good, wise, etc., because they *participate* in the goodness and wisdom of God. The language of participation makes some philosophers queasy, but even those theists who are uncomfortable with participation-talk can endorse the claim that creatures are good or wise *because* of God, and that the goodness and wisdom of creatures reflects God in some way. So it doesn't seem plausible to say that in 3, **wise** has some mysterious meaning, completely different from its meaning in 1/2. We have *some* conception, even if very dim, of what it means.

But whatever it is in virtue of which we are able to express truths with intrinsic divine predications such as **God is good**, it's not God's falling somewhere on a scale with respect to the relevant comparison class—it seems more accurate to say that God Godself is the source of all such standards—and so intrinsic divine predications, if they do express truths, are misleading and deficient in some way. Insofar as we don't understand what it is for something to be good, wise, etc., apart from a comparison class, and insofar as we don't understand what it is for goodness, wisdom, etc., to be the same in someone, we don't understand the meaning of intrinsic divine predications of pure perfections. In this sense, at least, we do not understand what God is like in Godself. So, although intrinsic divine predictions can express truths, they are misleading.

Let me contrast the approach I'm taking with two influential approaches to explaining divine intrinsic predications in a way that's consistent with the tenets of Classical Theism: Michael Bergman and Jeffrey Brower's approach in terms of truth-makers and Jonathan Jacobs's approach in terms of the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental truths. These approaches to *explaining* the problematic predications are not attempts to explain their semantics, as I am trying to do here.

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[38] In what follows, whenever I talk about intrinsic divine predications expressing truths, I mean this to be understood as their being used to express truths by speakers in contexts of utterance—that is, they can be used to express truths that are the speakers' meanings of the relevant sentences.

Bergman and Brower's account is an attempt to "explain the truth" of the relevant divine predications (2006, 362).[39] They give an account of predications of the form **a is F** in terms of truth-makers instead of in terms of subjects and "exemplifiables" (their term for whatever plays the property-role) (*ibid.*). What makes a sentence like **God is good** true is just God Godself—not God and the property of goodness that God exemplifies.

I have no objection to their account *per se*, but it doesn't explain the *semantic* features of the relevant divine predications. The reason for this is that truth-maker theses are not about what sentences mean, what we assert with sentences, or what is linguistically communicated. For example, many sentences that have the same truth-maker will have different semantic contents (consider, e.g., all of the sentences that have Socrates as their truth-maker—on some views, every simple predication of an essential property to Socrates).

Now consider the sort of account Jacobs offers in terms of the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental truths. Unlike Bergman and Brower, Jacobs is not trying to explain the truth of the relevant divine predications (viz. intrinsic predications), but to make sense of divine ineffability. On Jacobs's apophatic view, intrinsic divine predications do not carve reality at the joints, and so he says that although they are true, they are not *fundamentally* true. Briefly, a truth-bearer carves nature at the joints if its structure corresponds to the structure of the chunk of reality it represents. For example, **Emeralds are green** represents reality better than **Emeralds are grue**, since **green** represents an objective joint in nature while **grue** does not. If a truth-bearer S corresponds more closely to the structure of reality than another truth-bearer S*, then S is more fundamental than S*.

I think Jacob's view captures an important insight: there is something defective about intrinsic divine predications. Specifically, they look like claims the truth of which requires that an object instantiate the property normally expressed by that predicate, and those conditions are not satisfied. So it seems right to say that intrinsic divine predictions appear to "carve up" reality in a misleading way; they represent reality in a way that does not correspond to the way that it is. However, unlike Jacobs, I would say that what it is that makes (an utterance of) **God is good** true—God's hyper-goodness, say—is *more* fundamental than for example, human goodness. God's hyper-goodness is the source of, and is imperfectly reflected by, the goodness of creatures. However, to represent this fundamental truth perspicuously is beyond our conceptual and linguistic resources.

One might wonder: Why can't we just introduce terms in our language for God's perfections? Why not just say declare that **hyper-goodness** picks out whatever feature of God is the source of goodness in creatures, such

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[39] Bergman and Brower are concerned with divine essential predications rather than divine intrinsic predications, but the difference need not concern us since, ostensibly, the two classes of predications are co-extensive.

that creatures are good by participating in this perfection of God, etc.? Consider

(14) God is hyper-good.

But **hyper-goodness**, here, is no better than **maximal/perfect wisdom**. As discussed above, these predicates are defined negatively (for us): to be maximally wise is to be unlimited in wisdom, and to be hyper-good is to be unlimited in goodness. So even extending our language with these terms does not allow us to make totally apt intrinsic divine predications.

However, because of the fact that creatures have good-making features that reflect the "perfections" of God, we are not *completely* in the dark with respect to understanding what God is like intrinsically.[40] The perfections of creatures we express with adjectives like **good** and **wise** have God as their source, and creatures reflect God to the extent to which they are good and wise instances of their kinds. By experiencing the goodness and wisdom of creatures, we begin to glimpse what God is like.

4 Intrinsic Divine Predications and Franciscan Knowledge

I want to elaborate a bit on the extent to which we can grasp, albeit partially, what intrinsic divine predications express. We start with our experience of the perfections of God reflected in creatures: goodness, wisdom, compassion, truthfulness, etc. Perhaps at this stage we do not realize that intrinsic divine predications are semantically defective. We then come to the realization that the concepts of pure perfections we acquire from our experience with creatures are inadequate—God is *not* good, wise, etc., in the same sense that creatures are. In other words, we come to appreciate the *transcendence* of God—that is, we enter into what Pseudo-Dionysius calls the *via negativa*. At this stage, we may think that intrinsic divine predications are false or perhaps meaningless. We then realize that God is good and wise in a way that far surpasses the goodness and wisdom of creatures: as Pseudo-Dionysius puts it, God is *hyper*-good and *hyper*-wise, etc. This is the *via superlativa*. At this point, we conclude that intrinsic divine predications, though misleading, can be used to express truths about God; they "point to" God although they fail to perspicuously represent God's nature.

But how do we grasp *hyper-goodness* and *hyper-wisdom*? Since all of God's perfections are one, we really only grasp them to the extent that we grasp God's essence. So we can only grasp them (partially) by experiencing God, *via* Franciscan knowledge. However, we can only attain Franciscan knowledge of God by becoming like God, and we become like God by undergoing a transformation that only God can achieve in us. I cannot give

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[40] The scare quotes are there because the plural form of **perfection** misleadingly implies that God has multiple intrinsic properties.

a full account here of the sort of transformative personal experience I have in mind, but I will provide a preliminary description.[41]

First, recall that the sentences we use to (attempt to) express intrinsic divine predications are semantically incomplete; they do not semantically express propositions. However, unlike other semantically incomplete sentences (e.g., 8 and 9 above), intrinsic divine predications do not have complete counterparts. Insofar, then, as sentences are the vehicle for expressing and grasping propositions, it seems that any truths in the vicinity about God's intrinsic nature are not propositional.[42] If so, then knowledge of such truths does not consist in grasping propositions. I think it's plausible that our language leaves a "gap" here that must be filled in by contemplative experience of God.

Eleonore Stump's explanation of Francis of Assisi's conception of God seems ideally suited to play this role:

> For Francis, God is personal, and the personal nature of God is most fully revealed by Christ. The ultimate foundation of reality for Francis . . . is thus also personal, and for that reason knowledge of it will be a knowledge of persons. (2010, 47)

As Stump explains, there is a kind of knowledge of persons, which she calls "second-person knowledge," that is not reducible to propositional knowledge (or knowledge that can be expressed in the form of a **that**-clause).

To illustrate second-person knowledge, Stump presents an analogue of Frank Jackson's thought experiment involving Mary, the neuroscientist confined to a black-and-white room who allegedly learns something new when she sees red for the first time. In Stump's version of the thought experiment, Mary is deprived of all contact with persons, and the sorts of second-hand experience of persons that can be gained by watching movies, reading plays and novels, etc. However, Mary has complete scientific knowledge of people; she knows all the theoretical facts (facts that can be expressed propositionally) about them. Now imagine that Mary is rescued from her imprisonment and finally meets her mother, who loves her deeply. As Stump explains,

> When Mary is first united with her mother, it seems indisputable that Mary will know things she did not know before, even if she knew everything about her mother that

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[41] I hope to flesh this account out further in a future paper.

[42] I don't mean to assume here that propositions can *only* be grasped through linguistic expression, or even that the propositions must be *in principle* linguistically expressible (though many philosophers do seem to be committed to this latter view). However, if something is in principle linguistically *inexpressible*, that's pretty good evidence that it's not propositional.

> could be made available to her in non-narrative proposi-
> tional form, including her mother's psychological states.
> (2012, 53)

Similarly, I am claiming here that we can really only understand God by experiencing God, even if we can have an inchoate grasp of what is expressed by intrinsic divine predications without such experience. To understand what it is that makes intrinsic divine predications true, one has to have contemplative experience of God. What one gains through this experience is incommunicable, just as Mary's knowledge of her mother when she met her for the first time was something that couldn't be communicated to her in her imprisonment.[43] Just as Mary learned truths about her mother when she met her that could not be expressed as knowledge-*that*, one could say that she learned about what her mother was like intrinsically. So, human beings learn truths about God that cannot be expressed as knowledge-*that* through contemplative experience of God.[44]

The resulting view, then, is that intrinsic divine predications can be used to *convey* truths, but what they linguistically express is semantically incomplete. Furthermore, the way that we convey the relevant truths is misleading because the structure of our language and conceptual apparatus is deficient for representing the transcendent reality of God. Not only are the sentences we use semantically incomplete, but our language does not contain the resources for expressing complete counterparts of these sentences. We can attain a better grasp of what it is that grounds intrinsic divine predications by acquiring Franciscan knowledge of God, but this better "grasp" is still only partial.

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[43] This is not quite right. For the sake of simplicity here, I am setting aside an important part of Stump's account: that knowledge of persons can be communicated *to some degree* through narratives. I think this is important, and it's something I'd like to work into a more detailed presentation of my account in future work. In particular, I think that this detail makes good sense of the fact that Jesus primarily used parables to convey God's nature to his disciples, although I think even the parables can be misconstrued (and their intended audience can fail to understand them) apart from contemplative union with God.

[44] Matthew Benton (2018) develops an account of interpersonal knowledge of God that is similar in some ways to Stump's account, to which I allude here. However, they differ in some important ways: on Benton's account, *A* can know *B* interpersonally only if *B* exists. By contrast, Stump holds that we can have Franciscan knowledge of fictional characters. Benton criticizes Stump's view for having this feature. However, on many views of fictional characters, they *do* exist, only (of course) they are not persons, but abstract objects. Also, it seems to me that Stump's view has this feature because it encompasses both Benton's second and third grades of interpersonal knowledge. I'm not sure that this is a problem for Stump's account, though, since she holds that Franciscan knowledge comes in degrees. Perhaps she could say that the "deeper" forms of Franciscan knowledge require the existence of the one who is known.

Because this account combines elements of Thomas Aquinas's thought and Stump's conception of Franciscan knowledge, I will call it the **Franciscan-Thomist (FT) View**.[45] Next, I will address the question posed at the beginning of this paper: In what sense is the FT view committed to divine ineffability?

5 The Metasemantics of Ineffability

I claimed above that the view that I would defend would be committed to weak divine ineffability—the view that there are no expressions in our language (or in learnable extensions thereof) that have, as their semantic contents, truths about God's intrinsic nature. On the FT view, the sentences we use to attempt to semantically express such truths—viz. positive, intrinsic, divine predications—are semantically incomplete. Whether the FT view is even committed to weak ineffability depends on the metasemantics.

On the Strict View, divine incomprehensibility entails divine ineffability. For suppose no speaker of L grasps whatever it is that makes divine, intrinsic predications true (if they are true). Then no L-speaker can introduce a term into L for the relevant property, object, or state of affairs.

On Thomas's view, speakers (can) grasp something (viz., creaturely goodness) that is an *effect* of the perfection of God that we try to express with intrinsic divine predications. But because we don't have the relevant experience of God, in particular, of whatever it is about God that makes such predications true, we cannot introduce the relevant terms into our language—or at least, if we can, they must be defined negatively.

On the Lax View, expressibility does not require comprehensibility. So we can introduce words for features or items that we do not grasp. An L-speaker can introduce a term into L by saying, "let whatever it is about God (God's intrinsic nature) that makes it true that God is good be called **hyper-goodness**." Now, it seems that speakers of L can express a true divine, intrinsic predication with **God is hyper-good**. However, L-speakers still don't understand what hyper-goodness is. Furthermore, **hyper-goodness** has been defined relationally. While hyper-goodness is, in the order of nature, defined to be an intrinsic property, it can only be defined, by us, extrinsically. Finally, the syntactic structure of such predications is

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[45] I use the title **Thomist** with some trepidation, since I realize that the view I end up endorsing differs (at least superficially) in some radical ways from Thomas's. For example, he holds that divine intrinsic predications are literally true, while I claim that they do not semantically express propositions. However, I think a deeper examination of the difference between Thomas's view of truth and assumptions about truth held by most contemporary philosophers, and also a deeper investigation into the nature of truth conditions, would reveal that there is more similarity between our views than appearances would indicate. I undertake the latter investigation in "Semantics for Divine Intrinsic Predications" (in progress). However, since my aim here is to develop a view inspired by Thomas's rather than to engage in faithful exegesis of his view, those who are mortified by the way I build on his view of analogy should feel free to use the label **Franciscan-*Pseudo*-Thomist View.**

misleading, since they are not made true by God having the *property* of hyper-goodness, but by God Godself. In any case, *incomprehensibility* is the crucial component of ineffability, and introducing terms like **hyper-goodness** into our language does not bring us any closer to grasping God's nature.

Whether one adopts a Strict or a Lax metasemantics, the FT View is committed to divine incomprehensibility. We cannot understand what true intrinsic divine predications express. To the extent that we gain a partial understanding through Franciscan knowledge, we cannot communicate what we understand to other members of our linguistic community. Because intrinsic divine predications are semantically incomplete, and because the way we express them is defective and misleading, this view is still committed to a form of divine ineffability: such truths about God cannot be *completely* and *perspicuously* expressed in human language.

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