

Some ideas, images, observations on God-creature relationships  
in St. Thomas (De.Pot. Q.7, aa 7-11; S.T. I, Q.13, a 7)

What the God-creature relationship is not:

1. Univocal, since the created, material and multiple, is in no way equal to the uncreated, simple and spiritual.
2. Purely equivocal, since the caused is in some way similar to the cause.
3. It is not a relationship of father and son, nor of seed and flower; for both father and seed are somehow perfected in the son and flower. No cause-effect relationship in which the cause is perfected in the effect is adequate to the God-creature relationship.
4. Nor is it the relationship of red and blue (under the genus of color) nor of snow and frost (under the genus of white) nor of mountain and hill (under genus of size or quantity). God shares no common genus with creatures, and cannot be so related - rather, he is the cause of genus, and its finality (principium and finis.)
5. Nor is it a comparison based in mutual difference; rather, God is not mutually different in regard to creatures - they are lacking in regard to him.

What the God-creature relationship is:

1. Analogical - not in the type of analogy by which something is predicated of two things in regard to a third (as when both quality and quantity relate to substance). Rather, in the type of analogy by which something is predicated of two things, the first in regard to the second (as when quantity is related to substance).
2. A "one-way" relationship: Creatures are really related to God, but God is not similarly related to creatures. This is not at all a matter of personal relationships: rather, of Creator and creatures, etc.

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3. Creatures are related to God as

An army is related to its leader;

Value is related to a jewel;

Directions

("to the left of...  
"to the right of...") are related to a landmark;

A man's reflection is related to the man;

Human knowing is related to the object known;

Genus is related to the cause of genus.

In each case, the term in the right column is unaffected by variations in the term in the left column and, strictly speaking, is not really related to the latter item; whereas the left-hand item is really related to the right-hand item.

(Important: notice that the point of the "one-way" relations has nothing to do with personal relations; for instance, Thomas is not saying anything about whether the leader loves his men, etc.)

The items in the left-hand column are incomplete without reference to the other column; but not as if the leader is part of the soldiers, or the jewel part of its value.

4. Conclusions, and points for discussion:

1. It would be unfair, and unfortunate, to criticize Thomas' views on relations, as failing to provide an adequate God-man relationship. Unfair, because Thomas is not considering that problem at this point - there is a great danger in using the word "relations" in a slippery way. Unfortunate, because such a criticism would miss the point of Thomas' effort to describe how the finite and created are related to the infinite and uncreated.
2. Thomas would probably agree wholeheartedly with process thought, as being a deeper understanding of what it means to be created: temporal and historical. But, for him, process thought is speaking only univocally, and not about God at all.
3. Process thought does not seem to leave room for an Incarnation; or, rather, implies that it has always already occurred.