

The ^A analogy of Vision

Knowing is like seeing. Knowing is seeing in an analogous sense of the word "see." What ~~does~~ such statements mean? Presently, ~~we~~ we shall consider the hypotheses that the meaning is to be sought in the realm of symbol or in the realm of myth. For the moment we shall restrict ourselves to the cases in which an analogy is really meant.

First, the meaning might be that of a fully intelligible analogy of proportion: seeing stands to the seen, so knowing stands to the known. Moreover, one understands adequately not only seeing and what is seen but also knowing and what is known.

But, as it stands, this is absurd. We do not adequately understand God's knowing and what God knows, angelic knowing and what the angels know. At least, the analogy must be restricted to human knowing and what humanly is to be known.

Even with this restriction, however, it cannot be said that we have reached the meaning of the analogy of vision. For this analogy does not make its appearance at the close of a complete investigation of what human knowing is and what humanly is to be known. In other words, the analogy of vision is not a ~~xi~~ conclusion reached as a result of proper knowledge of human knowing; on the contrary, it commonly is presented as a self-evident key to guide one in the study from the start in the study of human knowing.

not only will all the names be used accurately but also, since one really understands the principles, one also will really understand the conclusions. One's metaphysics turns out to be neither obscurely profound nor profoundly obscure but transparently intelligible.

Let us distinguish then between the nominal and the intelligible use of the analogy of proportion. In the nominal use one understands the names; in the intelligible use one understands what is named.

There is, however, a further ambiguity. The common definition of analogy contrasts univocal, analogous, and equivocal terms. Two uses of the same term are (1) univocal if they denote the same type of thing, (2) equivocal if they denote quite different things, but (3) analogous if they denote things that are partly similar and partly ~~analogous~~ dissimilar. But obviously, if one cares to be more precise, one may go on to distinguish different kinds of dissimilarity.

Different makes or models of motor-cars are partly similar and partly dissimilar. But all makes and all models are implementations of essentially the same basic idea. Their differences reside in the manner in which identical principles are implemented.

Angels and men are partly similar and partly dissimilar. But the dissimilarity lies in the very constitution of their respective essences. The essence of a man is a compound of matter and form; but the ~~essence~~ essence of an angel is a pure form without any matter.

Men and animals are partly similar and partly dissimilar. Their essences differ, but the structure of their being does not differ. In both one finds prime matter, substantial form,

watch is (1) partly the same, (2) partly different, and (3) just how different I do not know.

Further, because grasping ~~XXXXXX~~ a structure is a general

Further, because grasping a structure is a generic understanding, it is equally relevant to a very large variety of species. Each of the species, no matter what the watchmaker, will have the same structure; they will be ~~identical~~ equivalent in their generic, intelligible form, and so will be named isomorphic. At the same time they will differ specifically, by intelligible differences, and not merely materially, because the same firm has turned out a large number of watches on the same model.

THE ANALOGY OF VISION

I am concerned with the ambiguities of the statement that knowing is like seeing or, indeed, that knowing is seeing in an analogous meaning of the word "see." I shall endeavour to distinguish (a) proper knowledge, (b) knowledge of isomorphic structures, (c) analogy, (d) symbol, and (e) myth. Finally, I shall illustrate a tendency to substitute myth for analogy from a recent contribution to a philosophic journal.

Proper Knowledge