Zeitschrift: Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie = Revue philosophique et théologique de Fribourg = Rivista filosofica e teologica di Friburgo = Review of philosophy and theology of Fribourg

Band: 43 (1996)

Heft: 1-2

Artikel: St. Thomas Aquinas on the speech of the angels

Autor: Raukas, Mart

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-761242

MART RAUKAS

St. Thomas Aquinas on the Speech of the Angels

If the lion could speak we would not understand him.
L. Wittgenstein

You cannot trust me when I tell you of what passes on earth;
how will you be able to trust me
when I tell you of what passes in heaven?
John 3:12

1. Preliminary remarks

In this paper I make an attempt to analyse Aquinas' doctrine of the angels' speech, both as such and with regard to understanding the texts in which Thomas speaks about it.[1]

It is well known that Thomas was always very clear to distinguish philosophical arguments from theological arguments. However, in the modern reception of Aquinas philosophical arguments, there are problems of interpretation in which we need:

(a) to specify their factual or historico-theological background. Consider, for instance, Thomas' doctrine of *ecclesia* or his writings on the Jewish problem. We would label such problems roughly as *historico-factual* problems.

(b) to reflect logically on what is already factually and contextually known. J.M. Bochenski, A. Kenny and many modern commentators of Aquinas have demonstrated that sometimes behind the commonly understood passage the deeper conceptual scheme reveals itself only if our interpretation is assisted by some kind of «mental scalpel» – scrupulous

[1] This is a revised version of my presentation «Warum die Engel sprechen?», read in Febrauary 1992 in the workshop «Mittelalterliche Lehren zu Ursprung und Wesen der Sprache», which was held at Fribourg University. My gratitude belongs to Prof. Ruedi Imbach and prof. Guido Küng (Fribourg) for many useful insights and to Prof. Wim A. de Pater (Leuven) and Vincent Brümmer (Utrecht) for helpful comments on an earlier draft. The responability for the possible mistakes is, of cours, mine alone.

logical analysis or some other technique of contemporary analytical philosophy. I would label such problems as *logico-conceptual* ones.

In what follows, I intend to restrict myself to the last sort of problems. This is neither a paper about angelology nor about the history of medieval ideas. My approach will not be apologetic. That is, I will neither try to prove the rightfulness of Aquinas' arguments nor to refute them. Instead of asking Aquinas' question: «Whether one angel speaks to another?», I will ask: How would the conception of angels' speech, described by Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae* Ia. 107, 1–5 be comprehended in the light of contemporary analytical mind?

The way how medieval philosophy approached divine things are, no doubt quite different from what the analytical philosophers are approaching today. First, then there is distinction of human knowledge in respect to its possible origins between *lumine divinae revelationis* and *lumine naturalis rationis*. It is the epoch-making distinction which covers all the «conceptual architectonic» of the *Summa Theologiae*, and which, with some qualification can be found in medieval philosophy in general. This is the distinction what states: There are truths that transcend our natural reason but do not contradict it; these truths are the truths of revelation, obtained by saints through the grace of God; evident to angels, and in some way to saints, but not understandable to us.

Secondly, I will try to show that the effectiveness of relating Thomas' *locutio angelorum* to modern philosophical context, inaugurated by Wittgenstein and Searle, largely depends on the following points:
(1) It is highly complicated to understand Thomas' idea about how the angel's mind works in the exercising speech acts. What I shall try to do here is to discuss in some detail the idea of communicating without medium and understanding the other without the smallest error i.e. perfectly. These problems will be in the center of our discussion.
(2) Since only human talk is commonly regarded as speaking a language in proper sense, the question arises: Can the terms «speaking» and «talking» designate literally (non-metaphorically) communication process between separated substances? My answer is yes. But with the reservations of Aquinas masterly method of thinking, namely analogy.

Before trying to assess the main points of Thomas' conception of *locutio angelorum*, I have to say one last thing. As far as I know, there exists only one paper devoted to our problem and published some years ago by B. Faes de Mottoni in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*.[2] Since I am relating the same subject to the contemporary analytical thought, the accents and

[2] FAES DE MOTTONI, Barbara, «Thomas von Aquin und die Sprache der Engel», in: Zimmermann, A. (ed.), Miscellanea Mediaevalia: Thomas von Aquin. Werk und Wirkung im Licht neuerer Forschungen, vol. 19. Berlin 1988, p. 140–155.

the kind of thinking in which Faes de Mottoni is involved in her illuminating paper are very different from mine.

2. Quaestio 107. Preliminary reflections.

Let me, first, present extracts from question 107, starting with three passages which are the most central, as I think, and continuing with passage (D) which is related with others.

(A) « ... the will moves the intellect to its operation. Now an intelligible object is present to the intellect in three ways; first, habitually, or in the memory, as Augustine says; secondly, as actually considered or conceived; thirdly, as related to something else. And it is clear that the intelligible object passes from the first to the second stage by the command of the will ...

So likewise the intelligible object passes from the second to the third stage by the will; for by the will the concept of the mind is ordered to something else, as, for instance, either to the performing of an action or to being made known to another. Now when the mind turns itself to the actual consideration of any habitual knowledge, then a person speaks to himself; for the concept of the mind is called the interior word. And by the fact that the concept of the angelic mind is ordered to be made known to another by the will of the angel himself, the concept of one angel is made known to another; and in this way one angel speaks to another; for to speak to another only means to make known the mental concept to another.»[3]

(B) «Our mental concept is hidden by a twofold obstacle. The first is the will, which can retain the mental concept within, or can direct it externally. In this way God alone can see the mind of another ... The other obstacle whereby the mental concept is excluded from another one's knowledge, comes from the body; and so it happens that even when the will directs the concept of the mind to make itself known, it is not at once made known to another; but some sensible sign must be used ... But an angel is under no such obstacle, and so he can make his concept known to another at once.»[4]

(C) « ... but only interior speech belongs to him (an angel, M.R.) and this includes not only the interior speech by mental concept, but also its being ordered to another's knowledge by will. So the tongue of an angel

[3] ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologica. Compleate English Edition in Five Volumes, Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 1. Westminster, Maryland 1981, Ia. 107, 1.

[4] Ibid., Ia. 107, 1 ad primum.

is called metaphorically the angel's power, whereby he manifests his mental concept.»[5]

(D) «There are images of creatures in the angel's mind, not, indeed, derived from creatures, but from God, Who is the cause of creatures, and in Whom the likenesses of creatures first exist.»[6]

Well, how does one angel speak with another? After Thomas' passage (A) the reader could form the opinion that in the angel's mind the volitions play the role of some kind of Janus-headed go-between faculty, through which thinking acts are transformed step by step into the practice of speaking. This scheme of Thomas reflects evidently the classical Platonian theory of mind, according to which the mind has three parts – thought, feelings, and will – and the will functions as executive mental process, putting the tongue to speak or the hand to write. The problems of will are one of the most controversial topics in contemporary philosophy of mind. One who attempts to approach *locutio angelorum* in this apparatus, looks like one who is trying to clarify what is unclear in terms of even less clear. But we do not need to concentrate ourselves especially on the problem of volitions. I will shift the accent of analysis elsewhere.

Reading further the passages (B) and (C), we could say that *locutio angelorum* is an mysterious language, without voice and gesture, despite the perfect communication between the angels, taking place in absolute silence. This fascinating picture is coherent with Thomas' general doctrine of the angels and should be interpreted in the context of his theory of the angels' nature and knowledge, developed most profoundly in *Summa Theologiae* Ia, 50–59.

According to Aquinas' view, angels are separated substances, nonmaterial forms, existing on their own in the state of actual intelligibility.[7] Every angel understands himself *per essentiam* – through his angelic substance, so to speak.[8] Moreover, all angels see the essence of God immediately. But not all the angels' knowledge is obtained in this way: the substance of angels, being of the definite, limited kind, cannot itself contain all truths about God. In order to come to understand the mysteries of God – which angels do not know to the same degree – enlightments must be used.[9] An superior angel knows more about the essence of God than an inferior angel and the former enlightens the latter.

Further, I have the impression in reading Aquinas that there is something similar to medieval university debate in heaven. Angels are very

[5] Ibid., Ia. 107, 1 ad secundum.

[6] Ibid., Ia. 55, 2.

[7] Ibid., Ia. 55, 1.

[8] Ibid., Ia. 56, 1.

[9] Ibid., Ia. 55, 2.

keen on spelling out truths about God's great secrets.[10] Like good professors, the superior angels do not enlighten their students-angels by giving them automatically the light of grace and glory, but – as Thomas explains, by strengthening their natural light and manifesting the truths concerning the state of nature and of grace.

Every moment, there are enormous number of questions and answers in heaven. However, the angelic discussions are in no way discursive[11], angels comprehend each other in simple and single visions and in their conversations they can never fall into error.[12] Every angel has the will, but does not possess the smallest ability of imagination.[13] Since the angels do not use the arguments in their divine debates, one can easily see that no analytical philosopher can be an angel. At last, an angel always loves his discussion partner.[14]

The conclusion of all this sounds quite enigmatic: the richness and deepness of the grace of God are reflected best by the simplest minds and debated by the angels in absolute silence.

3. The agnostic and anthropomorphic (trivial) solutions of the problem

Can we have a clear understanding of what kind of language *locutio angelorum* is? A language, commonly understood is a *system* for communication. If so, the following agnostic objection seems to be in place: We can not in principle form a satisfactory understanding of what kind of communication system *locutio angelorum* is, because there is something wrong with the problem itself. There are problems which are *difficult* or very difficult, like Fermat's great theorem. Some problems are unsolvable, simply because they are *senseless*, like the problem: «Is the square root of redness greater than Schopenhauer's dog?» But there are also group of problems which are called *logically unsolvable*, for example, a system of mathematical equations containing too many variables. Might it not be the reason of our difficulties to find out what kind of language the angels are speaking?

Well, one thing that characterizes human speech – and I wish to say – grounds the very possibility of language phenomena, is that speaking involves *regularity*. There exist syntactic- and semantic- and pragmatic regularities. These regularities make possible linguistic characterizations so that human mind can reflect itself and this reflection forms the most

[10] Ibid., Ia. 57, 5.
[11] Ibid., Ia. 58, 3.
[12] Ibid., Ia. 58, 5
[13] Ibid., Ia. 55, 3.
[14] Ibid., Ia. 60, 4.

important part of human culture. As to the *locutio angelorum* we do not have any information about the syntactic and semantic regularities; we are not even in the position to decide, as I will state later on, whether the speech of the angels is rule-governed or not. In what sense then, if any, *locutio angelorum* can be interpreted as the *system* of communication? To put it another way: Which features of *locutio angelorum* can be seen systematic rather than unsystematic ways of communication.

An anthropomorphically minded philosopher claims that there is only one kind of language, namely *human language*. The language of man is highly complicated semiotic system, manifesting itself in a plurality of abstract forms and materialized in beautiful edifices of the human spirit. Just think of the great variety of material forms in which human language exists: the poems of Shakespeare, written or sung; the theories of Kant; the theorems of Galois ... Think, at last of the ordinary man performing his everyday speech acts. In what a great number of different material forms human language manifests itself!

Nothing like this seems to occur in *locutio angelorum*. No sign on paper; no voice in the air; no errors; no imagination. Only silence. If so, then the speech of the angels and the speech of man belong to fundamentally different categories and our problem has reached its simplest solution: *Locutio angelorum* is not language. It is simply accidental equivocity *(aequivocum a casu)* to say that the angels have language; or perhaps Aquinas is using a metaphorical expression like *lingua angelorum* used by him in the same *quaestio 107*.

For me the solution of the anthropomorphist does not seem a very interesting one. I call it trivial. Of course, anthropomorphist can be right in saying that human beings differ from wild animals by using an abstract symbols. Certainly, this is not the case of animals. At least, we can distinguish human beings from animals in this way. What our anthropomorphist has failed to show is why it is necessary to think that speaking activity is restricted only to humans.

In what follows, I have attempted to spell out in detail some of the tacit presumptions our anthropomorphically minded philosopher is using. In order to avoid an agnostic collapse – which could be second temptation, and look deeper than anthropomorphist, I will develop my conceptual strategy and turn the tables. I will argue that the difficulties we have in understanding the idea of *locutio angelorum* are rooted in certain difficulties we have in understanding any communication different from human. When reading Thomas' question 107 I have the impression that his ideas of language and speaking a language are more less anthropomorphic than many contemporary views.

In general our strategy will be quite simple: if there seems to be something like an unsolvable problem, then it is always meaningful to ask what exactly makes it unsolvable. After all, there are numerous failures in

philosophy, and even from the failures – as Socrates teaches us, we can learn something of value.

4. Looking more deeply. Necessary conceptual clarifications.

Where there are conclusions, there are premises. And it is, in most cases, possible to change the arguments by shifting the center of discussion. Let us postulate that Aquinas' *locutio angelorum* is *analogous* to the human speech. Let us assume further, that this analogy is not an evident or obvious similarity (or at least not obvious for some kind of thoughtful philosopher). Keeping in mind the difficulties in seeing *locutio angelorum* in type of human speech, we have to look for the deeper analogy by spelling out conceptual premises which are obscuring the stated analogy.

First, there are, what can be called – *odd* features in *locutio angelorum:*

(1) *locutio angelorum* is purely intuitive (non-discursive) way of communication.

(2) *locutio angelorum* does not contain any sensibly registrable expression.

(3) a communicative act between angels is performed if there exist at least: (a) a speakers conversing with himself in his inner thought; (b) a speakers will to communicate with others.

We can go deeper and look for the *characteristic* features in angels' speech, determining the way of angelic communication. Which features of speaking activity should we spell out? Well, so far the topic has been discussed largely in non-technical terms. But we need not be absolutely bound to this general level. One way of approaching postulated analogy more precisely would be by means of contrast with J. Searles' speech act theory.[15]

Locutio angelorum conception	*Searle's speech act theory*
to speak to another only means to make known the mental concept to another.	speaking a language means performing speech acts, such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises ...

[15] SEARLE, J.R, Speech Acts. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988. (First edition 1969).

locutio angelorum consists only of performing illocutionary acts. Utterance acts and propositional acts are not necessary.	speaking a language consist characteristically of utterance acts, propositional acts, and illocutionary acts. In general, illocutionary acts are performed only within language and by virtue of certain constitutive rules. It is not possible to perform illocutionary acts without the medium.
What is understood is exactly what is meant to be said. Locutio angelorum is a language equipped with hyper-expressibility.	whatever can be meant can be said (Searle's principle of expressibility).

At last, the problem of the possibility of any hypothetical language (private language, for example) is the problem of how something (words, symbols etc.) mean. If there are *rules* according to which this something mean and speech acts (whatever they could be) are performed, then there can be a language. If not, the analogy becomes very weak, for it is not clear in which sense then, if any, we are still talking about «language». Since *locutio angelorum* is a hypothetical language without a medium, the question stands in a reduced form: What does it mean to have a language without the medium? To which I add another problem: What does it mean that there is a language with hyper-expressibility?

5. Partim diversa et partim eadem.

Our previous comparison is based on the presupposition that there exist at least some kind of analogy between the speech of the angels and human speech activities, for it does not make any sense to compare absolutely different things.

The relevance of analogy for Aquinas *Sacra Doctrina* is well known. Analogy for Aquinas is the way how the world as something other than a mere collection of isolated and disconnected domains of being can be understood. There has been lot of discussions about the proper meaning of Thomistic analogy. For me, Thomistic analogy is more of the heuristic strategy or conceptual inquiry than a formal method what can be followed automatically.

What kind of analogy we are talking about when we analyse *locutio angelorum*? To say that there is analogy between X and Y is to state two

things: (a) X and Y have a common name, (b) definition corresponding to the name partially differs and is partially the same. Thomistic analogy knows two main forms: *attributive analogy (analogia attributionis)*, which is the basis of our literal God-talk, when we say, for example, that God is love and life; and *analogy of proportionality (analogia proportionalitatis)*, which is the semantical model for metaphorical talk (God is my rock).

It has been widespread mistake to associate attributive analogy exclusively with God-talk. *Analogia attributionis* can be defined as: which have the name in common, but for which the corresponding «ratio» is the same as regards the terminus and differs in accordance with proportion to the terminus. As the definition makes clear, attributive analogy presupposes a «focal» point, first *analogatorum*. The definition does not contain necessary requirement that first *analogatorum* is God. Aquinas' own example of attributive analogy was «healthy» said of both medicine and a living organism as first *analogatorum*. Likewise, we can turn the tables and postulate, that *locutio angelorum* is first *analogatorum* of every language as the system for communication. I think Aquinas says truly and literally that angels have a language. Only as regards to *locutio angelorum* some human communication activities can be described as speaking a language and not vice versa. Thus, analogy shows the middle way between the dilemma of agnosticism and anthropomorphism.

6. Communication without the media?

Why was it so difficult to interpret *locutio angelorum* as a language in the proper meaning of the term? As it may be anticipated, our natural inclination is to reply: We cannot decide whether it is a language or not, because it is the kind of enigmatic communication without the medium. Every language must have a medium. Must it?

Suppose, I fail to decide the rightfulness of the statement: «Deux et deux font cinq.» The reason of my failure lies obviously not in the absence of mathematical knowledge, but in my inability to understand French.

Now, is the absence of medium the main reason of our failure to take *locutio angelorum* as a language? I want to suggest that if the absence of the medium in *locutio angelorum* is the reason why no good arguments for the language can not be produced, it is also the reason why contra arguments can not be produced.

Imagine, that the speech of the angels has got a medium. Suppose, that suddenly through some miracle – like an apparition of the fingers of an invisible hand writing on the palace wall of King Baltassar[16], certain

[16] Dan 5:5.

communication processes between the angels will become registrable to us. How exactly the registration will take place – in some form of strange signs, written on the wall or on the beach sand, sequence of voices in the air, combination of somebody's gestures, or otherwise – is not important.

Suppose further, that such an event has happened and there is a philosopher having a close-up view of these strange signs on a wall and trying to decide whether they are manifesting some kind of communication or not. Could he be able to work out his decision? I think our philosopher is not in the position to work out definitive decision. The phenomenon of language rests on *regularity* and *agreement*. But how could our philosopher verify or falsify the statement about the regularity, looking only at particular cases in which angels' speech is registrable to us? Regular in what sense? According to which standards? Are these signs not just natural phenomenon? Could he start by assuming that *locutio angelorum* has the regularities in the way human language has regularities? Obviously not. We should not follow Descartes in assuming that human mind works like angels' one. The only conceivable standard would be angels' own use It does not make any sense to say that there exist linguistical regularities (or the opposite) in the way how the strange signs point to angels «inner thought» unless some specific linguistic framework is being taken for granted.[17] As Rush Rhees explains:

> «When we talk about something, our language does not point to it, nor mirror it. Pointing or mirroring could refer to things only within a convention, anyway: only when there is a way in which pointing is understood and a way in which mirroring is understood. I point for the sake of someone who understands it. Apart from that it were an idle ceremony; as idle as making sounds in front of things.

Our words refer to things by the way they enter in discourse; by their connection with what people are saying and doing, for instance, and by the way they affect what is said and done.»[18]

Clearly then, our philosopher, looking at particular cases in which *locutio angelorum* is sensible to us, could not work out any universally valid standard for linguistic regularity. What he fails to understand is the way how *locutio angelorum* is connected with the forms of life of angels and with their divine being. So far as he fails to possess this understanding, he can not produce any definitive proof concerning linguistic rules and linguistic regularities.

Above we have assumed that *locutio angelorum* becomes in some miraculous way sensible to us. We could have come to the same conclusion,

[17] This idea was brought to my attention by Prof. Lars Herzberg (Abo Academy).

[18] RHEES, Rush, Discussions of Wittgenstein. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1970, p. 55.

we obtained, from the other end, namely by supposing that utterance acts and propositional acts of normal human speech are disappearing step by step.

Consider some situations in which human speech is existing in very minimal forms:
(1) A dog standing at door, wishing to go out and looking questioningly at his master.
(2) A boy standing at the door and looking questioningly at his father, when wishing to go out to play football with his friends.
What, it may be asked, is the difference between the standing dog and the standing boy? The behaviorist could not see or hear anything special which distinguishes the behavior of the former from that of the latter. They both are nervous, they both are wishing out, performing illocutionary acts – the dog in its usual way, the boy in minimized way. Yet the boy's father understands not only: «My boy looks at me, he wishes to be out», but also: «My child thinks that I understand him and I really understand him», perhaps even: «My boy knows that I am thinking about his volitions and therefore thinking so he will assume that I may understand his volitions and let him go.» And so on. How does the knowledge of the father come up? Why he is not expecting the same from the dog? Animals, we incline to think, do not have multiple intentions. The dog is not thinking: «I am thinking now» or «my master thinks on my volitions and therefore ... » The dog is just only a dog. The point of departure may be generalized:

> «When I take a noise or a mark on a piece of paper to be an instance of linguistic communication, as a message, one of the things I must assume is that the noise or mark was produced by a being or beings more or less like myself and produced with certain kinds of intentions. If I regard the noise or mark as a natural phenomena like the wind in the trees or a stain on the paper, I exclude it from the class of linguistic communication, even though the noise or mark may be indistinguishable from spoken or written words.»[19]

It should be stressed, that the *human mode* of intentions is very relevant to human speech acts. The boy standing silent at the door and waiting his father's opinion is related quite differently to his intentions than when I am standing at window and looking absent-mindedly St. Nicolaus' Cathedral.

However the problem remains: How does the father know that his son has actually performed highly complicated speech act and the dog a very simple one? He knows that his son is a human being, *like himself*, like all normal men, sharing his intellectual abilities, needs and volitions in some

[19] SEARLE, J.R, Speech Acts. p. 16.

extent with other men. But if I do not know what kind of intentions alien beings possess, I cannot understand their messages.

Even if one angel is turning to another by using plain English sentences, we would not decide whether there has been performed speech act or not. George Pitcher has a nice comment on Wittgensteins' «If the lion could speak we would not understand him». He explains:

> «Suppose a lion says: «It is now three o'clock» but without looking at a clock or his wrist-watch – and we may imagine that it would be merely a stroke of luck if he should say this when it actually *is* three o'clock. Or suppose he says «Goodness, it is three o'clock; I must hurry to make that appointment», but that he continues to lie there, yawing, making no effort to move, as lions are wont to do. In these circumstances – assuming that the lion's general behavior is in every respect exactly like that of an ordinary lion, save for his amazing ability to utter English sentences – we could not say that he has *asserted* or *stated* that it is three o'clock, even though he uttered suitable words. We could not tell what, if anything, he has asserted, for the modes of behavior into which his use of words is woven are too radically different from our own. We could not understand him, since he does not share the relevant forms of life with us.»[20]

What about angels? Do we understand their intentions better? Do we share their volitions to some extent? Turning to Thomas I leave the right to answer to my dear reader:

> «We must necessarily place a will in the angels ... This is most perfectly inclined towards what is good; not, indeed, as if it were merely guided by another towards good, like things devoid of knowledge, nor towards some particular good only, as things which have only sensitive knowledge, but as inclined towards good in general. Such inclination is termed (angelic – M.R.) will.»[21]

7. The principle of hyper-expressibility

Another reason for excluding *locutio angelorum* from the class of the language was its hyper-expressibility. According to John Searle's speech act theory the principle of expressibility states for human speech acts:

> «For any meaning X and any speaker S whenever S means X then it is possible that there is some expression E such that E is an exact expression of the formulation of X.»[22]

[20] PITCHER, George, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, Englewood Cliffs 1965, p. 243.

[21] ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, S.Th., Ia. 59, 1.

[22] SEARLE, J.R., Speech Acts, p. 20.

Searle's principle of expressibility (which seems to me strongly idealized) does not imply that (1) expression E produces the understanding in the hearer that the speaker would like to produce. (2) neither is it possible for any hearer to always understand E.

Now, in the case of *locutio angelorum*, the analogous principle states: «For any speaker S, and any hearer H, and any meaning X, (inner thought) S intends to communicate to H, there is always H perfect understanding of X.»

The principle of hyper-expressibility can be formulated without mentioning expression E (medium). It does not involve, of course, that the communication without medium is possible. It involves that the speaker and the hearer always communicate perfectly, i.e. they understand each other perfectly. Here is the difficulty: What is meant by understanding each other perfectly? One of the reasons why we possess a language is that sometimes we misinterpret the meaning of the expressions. Since there are *misunderstandings*, it is meaningful to use the phrases like: «This word means ... », or «That word can't be used in this way.» As the speaker does not simply repeat the sentences one after the other like a parrot, but having learned to speak, he can tell something about *himself.* I mean – about his feelings and thoughts and problems. Since the speaker, telling about himself, brings something new to the conversation, misinterpretations and linguistic explanations are very typical to linguistic communication. It would be hard to imagine that the hearer is always grasping the proper meaning of what has been put into the words. Can it not happen that the speaker simply fails to find proper words? The principle of hyper-expressibility eliminates all such realities. Since there exists such perfect understanding without the error, the function of language itself seems to become meaningless. Speaking a human language in human way presupposes misunderstandings. Otherwise this would not be called «language» but simply «system of electronical signals.»

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein describes two men working with building stones. One of them shouts orders, the other reacts to the orders. Wittgenstein says this might be not only the language but the *entire* language of the tribe. Can it be speaking a language in human way? I find once again Rush Rhees arguments some assistance to explain the difficulty:

> «I feel there is something wrong here. The trouble is not to imagine a people with a language of such of the limited vocabulary. The trouble is to imagine that they spoke the language only to give these special orders on this job and otherwise never spoke at all. I do not think it would be speaking a language ...

If it is an actual building job, it will not always go according to plan; there will be snags. But when these builders come on a snag which holds

up the work and baffles them, then although they have been speaking to one another in the course of their routine, they do not speak while they are trying to find what the trouble is. What they have learned are *signals* which cannot be used in any other way.»[23]

To understand a language is to comprehend the way it is used.

8. Conclusion

These are all powerful objections or at least so seems to me. It might be thought that I have treated our postulated analogy in a wrong way. Can there be a speech of the angels? Our analysis tends to result that there can be in principle no definitive answers.

However, one who thinks, as Thomas often did, in the forms of *analogia attributionis*, has to distinguish between two different things – *res significata* and *modus significandi*. To postulate that angels have a language in proper sense, according to which every communication process will be measured, is to state *res significata*. Nothing confronts. *Locutio angelorum* is a ideal language. To say that *locutio angelorum* is very different from the way human beings are using their language is to state something else, namely *modus significandi*. This is the mode how something can be named to be a «language». As human beings we tend to see everything in human mode. To understand what language is, is to comprehend how speaking is related to the lives which speakers lead and which is more or less like ours. And this is exactly why we do not tend to consider *locutio angelorum* as a language. Maybe there are language games in heaven – just remember Aquinas picture of learning and debating in heaven. May be, I really do not know. If there are language games in heaven, then probably there are some rules according to which communication goes. But the philosopher who is equipped with natural reason only, is not in the best position to understand how the divine rules are related with angelic substance. Unable to comprehend this, he is more less able to understand the rules how the angels put their questions, make exclamations, or express their love.

My conclusion, in brief, could be summarized as follows: Although the human language gives us a very week imitation of *locutio angelorum* the analogy can be used as clue of better understanding of what exactly is making human language to be *human language*.

Some of the first-hand refutations of *locutio angelorum* as a language might be eliminated because they rely on too anthropomorphic interpretation of language phenomenon. As ordinary human beings we are not in

[23] RHEES, Rush, Discussions of Wittgenstein. p. 77.

the possession to understand the way angelic communication is related to the life the angels lead.

Is it surprising, then, that for a better understanding of angels we must turn to Aquinas who was a little bit close to angels than to us?