

**PROOF OF GOD EXISTENCE: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS' A CRITIQUE OF
COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS**

BY

OBAH GENEVIEVE NKIRUKA (MISS)

ART2101117

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

EDO STATE

SEPTEMBER, 2025

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY,
FACULTY OF ARTS, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS, (B.A)
DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, FACULTY
OF ARTS, NNAMDI UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA.**

SEPTEMBER 2025

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Wesley Osemwegie in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.

OBAH GENEVIEVE NKIRUKA

DATE

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project **PROOF OF GOD EXISTENCE: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS' A CRITIQUE OF COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS** was carried out by Obah Genevieve Nkiruka, with Matriculation Number: ART2101117 of the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, and that it is sufficient in both scope and content in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in Philosophy.

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.....

DR. WESLEY OSEMWEGIE
OSEMWEGIE

(Supervisor)
Department)

.....

DR. WESLEY

(Acting Head of

Date:.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty and to my parents Prince Michael Obah and Mrs. Tolani Obah and also my elder sister, Miss Dumebi Obah for their unweaving support and believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this project.

First and foremost, I thank God Almighty for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this work.

I am eternally thankful to my parents, who through their selfless dedication and hard work, gave their all to me and ensured I got the best quality education from my early foundational years through my University education. I owe every milestone I have achieved today to their love, care and spiritual guidance. Prince Micheal Obah, Tolani Obah, and Dumebi Obah thank you so much.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Head of Department, Dr. Wesley Osemwegie, who is also my Amiable Project Supervisor whose supervision and guidance propelled me towards my successful completion of this project.

My profound gratitude also goes to all my amazing lecturers and academic mentors, whom I have had the privilege to be under their philosophical tutelage; amongst whom are esteemed Professor Peter Omonzejele, Professor Anthony Afe Asekhauno, Professor George Uzoma Ukagba, Professor Felix Airoboman, Professor Sylvester Idemudia Odia,

Professor Valentine Obiyan, Dr. Wesley Osemwegie, Dr. Emmanuel Asia, Dr. Odigie Joseph, Dr. Christopher Osawaru, Dr. Paul Michael, Dr. Victor Jeko, Dr. Sylvester Apologun, and other members of staff and Non- Academic staff of the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. I am grateful to my academic peers who were more than just classmates, but were indeed supportive. Lastly, to all the staff of the Faculty of Arts, University of Benin and my institution as a whole, the Great University of Benin, for providing the broader academic support system, I am wholeheartedly grateful to you all.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines St. Thomas Aquinas' classical arguments for the existence of God, as stated in his Summa Theologica, which is popularly known as the "Five Ways. " One of the most influential syntheses of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology is found in Aquinas' discussion of motion, causation, contingency, degrees of perfection, and teleology. The analytical approach will be used in the research to analyze each proof, emphasizing its logical structure, theological ramifications, and philosophical underpinnings. Despite the Five Ways' logical justification for the need for an ultimate purpose and first cause, later critics have questioned them. philosophers for basing their work on pre-modern metaphysics, endless regression worries, and subjective ideas of perfection and design. The assessment examines the lasting significance of Aquinas' arguments in the philosophy of religion as well as their limitations in the context of modern scientific and philosophical research. Despite the fact that Aquinas' proofs cannot produce complete demonstrative certitude, the research nevertheless concludes that they are still useful as cumulative, logical indicators of the plausibility of God's existence. improving the discussion between faith and reason.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The idea that a supernatural entity might exist has thrived curious minds, starting from ancient Greece and continuing to the modern era. For many years, those who ponder the origin of the universe and the fundamental nature of existence have struggled to agree on a universal explanation. As a result, this remains a debatable topic. For thousands of years, the question of whether God exists has been fundamental in human intellect, spanning across various fields like religion, philosophy, science, and culture. From the earliest legends and holy writings to the complex reasoning of ancient philosophers, the notion of a higher power has influenced how individuals perceive their place in the cosmos. The discussion around God's existence is not just a simple assertion or rejection of a divine being; it also involves intricate, often opposing attempts to logically support or dispute the presence of a deity. The question of God's existence has been a central concern in human thought across cultures and eras. From ancient philosophical inquiries to medieval theological structure, thinkers have long sought to establish rational grounds for belief in a supreme being. One of the most influential attempts to reconcile faith and reason in this pursuit is found in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, a 13th-century Dominican friar, theologian, and philosopher. His Five Ways, presented in his seminal

work *Summa Theologiae*, represent a monumental effort to prove the existence of God using natural reason

Historically, the belief in one or more gods has been widespread. Early societies, including those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India, created complex systems of belief that interpreted natural phenomena, moral principles, and human destiny as a result of divine influence. In Western thought, scholars from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic backgrounds significantly advanced the idea of a single God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and benevolent. In the realm of classical thought, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle established the groundwork for later arguments concerning theism. Aristotle's concept of a "Prime Mover" had a considerable impact on Christian thinkers such as St. Thomas Aquinas, who merged Christian teachings with Aristotelian ideas to formulate the Five Ways, five arguments that seek to prove God's existence. These arguments, especially the cosmological and teleological, continue to play a crucial role in defending theology.¹

However, during the Enlightenment, philosophers like David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Voltaire began to question conventional religious beliefs through logical reasoning and skepticism based on observation. Hume was particularly critical of the validity of miracles and the design argument, while Kant dismissed the ontological argument and

¹ Gaven Kerr, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.57

highlighted the limitations of human understanding in verifying metaphysical assertions. In recent philosophy, the topic has only become more intricate.

The emergence of scientific naturalism, theories of evolution, and existential thought has posed fresh challenges to traditional beliefs in a deity. Thinkers such as Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Richard Dawkins have provided strong arguments against the necessity of a god for explaining the universe or moral standards. At the same time, theologians and philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, William Lane Craig, and John Hick have crafted advanced defenses of belief in God, including arguments rooted in personal religious experiences, moral truths, and modal logic.

Additionally, this matter stretches beyond academic interest; it carries real-world and existential consequences. Whether one has faith in God or not often influences their perspective on life, morals, and their understanding of meaning. The continuous role of religion in worldwide issues, along with a rise in secular beliefs and scientific progress, keeps the debate about God's existence central to intellectual exploration. Consequently, the question of whether God exists remains an evolving area of research that draws on a rich historical background while addressing modern issues related to knowledge, existence, ethics, and what it means to be human. The discussion regarding God's existence primarily involves the fields of Epistemology (the nature and extent of

knowledge) and Ontology (the study of the nature of value), as ideas of goodness and perfection relate closely to concepts of God.²

In the Western philosophical tradition, discussions about God's existence began with Plato and Aristotle, who formulated cosmological arguments. Following them, St. Anselm introduced the first Ontological argument; Descartes claimed that the logical necessity of a kind and benevolent God gives meaning to sensory evidence; Immanuel Kant argued that the existence of good implies God's existence; and St. Thomas Aquinas offered an enhancement of Plato's and Aristotle's Cosmological argument. St. Thomas Aquinas was a philosopher and theologian within the Catholic Church, who addressed issues beyond the narrow bounds of Catholic theology. He proposed five logical arguments to affirm God's existence: the argument from motion, the cause of existence, the distinction between contingent and necessary beings, degrees of perfection, and the argument from design. These logical and Cosmological arguments state that “every being that exists, or has ever existed, is either dependent or self-existent, but not every being can solely depend on others existing; thus, a self-existent being must exist.”³

² Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: Saint Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, London UK: Routledge Publications, 2001, p.75

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, London: Boms Oales Arol Washbourne, 1942, p.45

The existence of God remains a topic of contention in the fields of philosophy of religion and theology. Numerous arguments both for and against God's existence including similar discussions regarding the existence of multiple gods can be classified into logical, empirical, metaphysical, subjective, or scientific categories. Philosophically, the question revolves around epistemology (the exploration of knowledge) and ontology (the investigation of being or existence) along with theories of value since some definitions of God incorporate the idea of "perfection." The Western philosophical discussion regarding God's existence originated with Plato and Aristotle, who argued for a being responsible for creating the universe, known as the demiurge or the unmoved mover, which is categorized today as cosmological arguments.

Various arguments supporting the existence of God have been suggested by different thinkers. St. Anselm introduced the first ontological argument. Thomas Aquinas offered his interpretation of the cosmological argument, known as the first way. René Descartes argued that for sensory evidence to hold meaning, a benevolent God must exist logically. John Calvin proposed the idea of *sensus divinitatis*, which allows all people to have an awareness of God's existence. In the Islamic tradition, philosophers who argued for God's existence include Averroes, who based his arguments on Aristotle's idea of the unmoved mover, as well as Al-Ghazali and Al-Kindi, who put forward the Kalam cosmological argument. Avicenna is known for the Proof of the Truthful, and Al-Farabi contributed through Neoplatonic arguments.

Within the realm of philosophy, particularly in the philosophy of religion, atheism describes the belief that God is not real. Certain religions, like Jainism, deny the concept of a creator God. Thinkers who have argued against God's existence include David Hume, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Bertrand Russell.

1.1.2 - PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON GOD'S EXISTENCE

The Problem of the Supernatural

One issue that arises when considering whether God exists is that traditional viewpoints often attribute various supernatural abilities to God. Supernatural entities might have the capability to hide or make themselves known according to their own needs, as illustrated in the story of Baucis and Philemon. Furthermore, in understanding God, He is seen as not being part of the natural world, but rather as the ultimate source of nature and the scientific principles within it. In Aristotelian philosophy, God is considered essential for explaining scientific findings, with any abilities attributed to God being fundamentally linked to the natural world since He is viewed as the creator.

Karl Popper's ideas on science suggest that belief in a supernatural God lies beyond what can be studied scientifically, as scientific theories need to be able to be proven false within the natural realm.⁴ Stephen Jay Gould's concept of non-overlapping

⁴ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, London: Kegan Paul LTD, 1963, p.67

magisteria also states that whether God exists or not is beyond the scope of science and does not affect it. Scientists use the scientific method, which requires that ideas be confirmed through physical experiments. Most major concepts of God propose a being whose existence cannot be proven or disproven through evidence. Hence, by definition, the matter of whether God exists may fall outside the realm of contemporary science. The Catholic Church asserts that understanding God's existence comes from the "natural light of human reason." Fideists argue that belief in God's existence is based solely on faith and cannot be proven or disproven.

Logical positivists like Rudolf Carnap and A. J. Ayer regarded discussions about gods as meaningless. For logical positivists and those who share similar beliefs, claims about religious or transcendent experiences lack truthfulness and are seen as devoid of meaning, as these statements lack clear ways to be verified. As Christian biologist Scott C. Todd expressed, "Even if all the evidence suggested an intelligent designer, such a theory is excluded from science since it is not grounded in naturalism."⁵ This perspective restricts science to what can be empirically observed while confining God to the realm of what cannot be proven through empirical means.

Nature of Relevant Proofs and Arguments

⁵ A.J. Ayer, *Philosophy and Religion*, London UK: Macmillan Co, 1973, p.78

John Polkinghorne proposes that the closest comparison to God's existence in the realm of physics is found in quantum mechanics, which appears contradictory yet explains a significant amount of varied information. Alvin Plantinga parallels the inquiry into God's existence with the investigation of other minds, arguing that both questions are notoriously difficult to "prove" against a skeptic who is resolved. One method, recommended by authors like Stephen D. Unwin, is to approach (certain forms of) theism and naturalism as if they were competing hypotheses in a Bayesian framework. This involves compiling specific data regarding the world and arguing that the probability of this data supporting one hypothesis is considerably greater than the other. Many arguments for or against God's existence can be interpreted as highlighting certain features of the universe in this manner.

Generally, proponents do not claim their arguments are definitive, but rather that they make one perspective appear much more plausible than the alternative. Nonetheless, the evaluation of the strength of evidence is influenced by the initial likelihood assigned to each viewpoint, meaning that what one theist finds persuasive may seem weak to an atheist, and vice versa. Some philosophers, including Wittgenstein, adopt an anti-realist stance and challenge philosophical reasoning concerning God's existence. For example, Charles Taylor asserts that the real consists of things that do not disappear. If discussions about God cannot be simplified, replaced, or disproven, then perhaps God's reality is as valid as anything else. In his 1710 work, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human*

Knowledge, George Berkeley asserted that a "naked thought" cannot exist, arguing that a perception equates to a thought; thus, only minds can be demonstrated to exist, as everything else is merely an idea expressed through perception. From this, Berkeley concluded that the universe is fundamentally based on observation and not objective. However, he pointed out that the universe contains "ideas" beyond human perception, which implies the need for an all-knowing super observer that perceives these aspects. Berkeley viewed this as evidence for the existence of the Christian God.⁶

Outside of Western Thought

The notion of living in complete truth is fundamental to the study of knowledge in Vedanta. Approaches that rely on traditional sense perception have been challenged, as they may be misleading because of preconceived notions. While it is true that we can question all understanding of objects, the reality of the person doubting remains true, even in atheistic schools of thought like the mayavada tradition that follows Adi Shankara. The five eternal concepts to be explored in ontology start with God, or Isvara, who represents the Ultimate Reality. This cannot be established through logic alone and often requires stronger evidence.

⁶ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.85

In Vaisnavism, Vishnu, or his closely related form Krishna, is seen as the personal absolute God, similar to concepts in Western belief systems. Krishna's nature as svayam bhagavan in the original Absolute Truth, known as sat chit ananda, is understood to arise from three key qualities of Krishna's form: "eternal existence" or sat, which relates to the brahman aspect; "knowledge" or chit, which connects to the paramatman; and "bliss" or ananda in Sanskrit, which pertains to bhagavan.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of whether God exists is quite complicated. This complexity arises because the Universe could not have originated from nothing, indicating that there must be an initial cause for its existence. However, if one were to accept that God not only created the Universe but also brought Himself into being, it becomes flawed reasoning, as God would need to exist first in order to create Himself. So, what is the source of the Universe? Is there a supernatural entity that created it? Furthermore, where does this supernatural being come from? If this being is all-good and all-powerful, then why does evil exist in the Universe?

Early philosophers could not agree on the matter of God's existence. Many dismissed the idea of God's existence due to a lack of logical evidence to support it. In contrast, those who believed in God, particularly Christian philosophers, sought to develop arguments that defended this belief.

The goal of our research is to critically assess the arguments made by St. Thomas Aquinas, aiming to provide a concrete resolution to the long-standing discussion about God's existence. We hope to highlight the importance of Aquinas' arguments in today's context, examine the criticisms against the idea of a supernatural being, and determine whether these criticisms are justified or not.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In the view of Aristotle, a piece of work is considered scientific based on its methods. These methods reveal the process of how things are accomplished. Thus, it is essential for a researcher in this field to implement specific methodologies that allow our findings to be confirmed.

The analytic method is the methodology for this study. Consequently, this paper is organized into four sections.

The first section presents a general introduction, which includes the background, the issues at hand, the scope, the objectives, the importance of the research, and the related literature.

In the second section, we explored the ideas of other philosophers such as Aristotle, Augustine, St. Anselm, Rene Descartes, and Bishop Berkeley, who also provided arguments supporting the existence of God.

The third section discusses St. Thomas Aquinas's answers to the question of God's existence. We begin by reviewing his life story and then move on to assess his arguments and their effectiveness, offering a critical perspective. We utilized the critical method to conduct a detailed examination of his cosmological arguments.

The final section reflects our thoughts on the contributions of Thomas Aquinas, including an evaluation, a summary, and a conclusion.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this work is to present the arguments put forth by St. Thomas Aquinas that support the existence of God.

This research gains significance due to the implications and outcomes of the mistaken beliefs some philosophers have regarding a supernatural being. It focuses on the different arguments made to defend the belief in such a being.

Additionally, this thesis seeks to provide resources for serious academic inquiry among university students, helping them articulate their ideas in written assignments. It is intended to assist current and future students with their essays, as well as encourage more exploration in the fields of Metaphysics and Epistemology.

The objective of this study is to:

1. Demonstrate the soundness of the arguments presented by St. Thomas Aquinas regarding the question of God's existence.
2. Determine the Strength of the Rational Basis for Belief in God
3. Explore the Relationship Between Faith and Reason.
4. Clarify Key Metaphysical Concepts.
5. Understand the Influence of Aquinas on Western Thought

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this research shows that God is not just a legend; He truly exists and plays a vital role in our everyday lives. St. Thomas Aquinas provided valuable insights into God's existence by presenting Cosmological arguments to support His case. St. Thomas Aquinas's proofs for the existence of God is significant because it deepens philosophical understanding, sharpens logical reasoning, and clarifies key metaphysical concepts such as causality and necessity. It bridges faith and reason, offering insight into whether belief in God can be supported by rational argument. It sheds light on Aquinas's lasting influence on both theology and Western philosophy and allows for meaningful engagement with contemporary debates about the existence of God. Overall, it provides a foundation for exploring the relationship between human reason and ultimate reality.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study does not aim to cover every element of St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, as doing so is simply not feasible due to its complexity.

The researcher's focus in this study is specifically on a part of St. Thomas Aquinas's ideas related to metaphysics and epistemology, especially the question of whether God exists. As various other philosophers have attempted to address this issue in different ways, I will explore their ideas to provide a more thorough analysis.

Therefore, while the main emphasis of this work is on St. Thomas Aquinas, it will also include the perspectives of other philosophers whose thoughts have shaped Aquinas's views on God's existence.

1.7 - LITERATURE REVIEW

It is widely recognized that various scholars and specialists have expressed their opinions or authored works related to St. Thomas Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God, as well as the broader topic of God's existence. Therefore, the following reviewed texts hold significant relevance for this study.

The first text under examination is the *Summa Theologica*. In this work, St. Thomas Aquinas asserts that the claim "God exists" is clear to God alone, but not to human beings, necessitating a demonstration that can indeed be achieved. Aquinas then presents five arguments as evidence for God's existence. The first, second, and fifth arguments rely on observations of the natural world, while the third and fourth arguments

come from logical reasoning. After presenting these proofs, Aquinas elaborates on God by discussing attributes such as perfection, simplicity, goodness, and knowledge.⁷

Bertrand Russell, in his book *History of Western Philosophy*, discusses the philosophical and theological ideas of figures like St. Augustine, Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Bishop George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and St. Thomas Aquinas. This text summarizes Western philosophical thought from the time of the pre-Socratics to present-day philosophers.⁸

In Fredrick Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, he provides a thorough examination of Western philosophy, covering the period from Socrates to contemporary thinkers. This work also reflects Copleston's Roman Catholic (Thomistic) perspective.⁹

Pantaleon Ireogbu's *Metaphysics, Kpim of Philosophy*, discusses St. Thomas Aquinas' theology, clearly outlining the five cosmological arguments that Aquinas proposed to support the existence of God.

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, London: Boms Oales Arol Washbourne, 1942, p.57

⁸ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1955, p.65

⁹ Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, New York USA: Doubleday Prints, 1974, p.36

Another text for review is *The Kpim of Theodicy*; Proving God's Existence via Hermeneutics. In chapter two, Ireogbu evaluates various arguments supporting God's existence, utilizing perspectives from cosmology, ontology, and teleology. Meanwhile, chapter three critiques the belief in God's existence, drawing from forms of thought such as empiricism, skepticism, agnosticism, rationalism, positivism, and atheism. This work makes a significant effort to address enduring philosophical and theological issues, integrating African values and philosophical insights. Ireogbu's contributions greatly enhance the philosophical discourse surrounding the existence of God.¹⁰

According to Fredrick Copleston in his book *Aquinas*, he concentrates on the themes of God and creation within the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This significant multi-volume work chronicles the evolution of Western philosophy, spanning from the pre-Socratic era to modern times. Written from the viewpoint of a Jesuit priest and scholar, Copleston strives to provide a balanced, scholarly, and comprehensive overview of philosophical thought, without promoting a specific agenda. The text is highly regarded for its thoroughness, clarity, and impartiality.

This text highlights Christian philosophers such as Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, among others, examining how Greek philosophy merges with Christian theology. Although objective in nature, Copleston's writing tends

¹⁰ Panteleon Ireogbu, *Kpim of Theodicy: Proving the Existence of God via Hermeholiontica*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2002, p.55

to align with Thomism, which is based on Aquinas, and is frequently studied in Catholic seminaries and philosophy classes.

He argues that Aquinas acknowledged other ways for individuals to know God besides philosophical reasoning, emphasizing familiar facts that are cosmological and a posteriori. Aquinas also mentions that words like "Wise" or "Good," when used about God, have an analogical meaning, and when negative descriptors are applied to God, they signify the removal of certain attributes from Him.¹¹

In Evan Cockshaw's journal titled, *Arguing for the Existence of God in the Age of Quantum Indeterminacy*, he investigates the classical arguments supporting God's existence, particularly those proposed by St. Thomas Aquinas, along with Immanuel Kant's critiques of these theories. He also explores biblical traditions, focusing on Paul's theology in relation to the existence of God.¹²

In Frank David's book, *Historical-Critical Evaluation of Aquinas' Argument for the Existence of God*," he suggests that the text of the Summa Theologica was written for the people of its time, reflecting their understanding of God. He refers to question two,

¹¹ Frederick Copleston, *Aquinas*, New York: Unwin brothers LTD, 1955, p.84

¹² Evan Cockshaw, *Arguing for the Existence of God in the Age of Quantum Indeterminacy*, in *Quodlibet Journals*, 2013, p.52

which deals with the Existence of God in the Summa Theologica, as well as the Bible itself.¹³

¹³ Frank David, "Historical-Critical Evaluation of Aquinas' Argument for the Existence of God", *American Journal of Biblical Theology*, 2006, p.44

CHAPTER TWO

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: LIFE, WORKS AND INFLUENCES

2.1 - LIFE AND TIMES OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

One of the most influential characters in the history of Christian theology and Western philosophy is St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Aquinas, who is well respected in both religious and secular academic circles, not only combined the Catholic Church's spiritual teachings with the intellectual rigor of Aristotelian philosophy, but he also established the basis for theological and metaphysical study for many years to come. His all-encompassing philosophy integrated reason and revelation, nature and grace, faith and intellect. By such seminal works as the “Summa Theologiae and the Summa Contra Gentiles”, Aquinas redefined the boundaries of theology and philosophy, raising both to a harmonious pursuit of truth. Aquinas was a man of unparalleled intellectual capacity, spiritual profundity, and historical significance. Aquinas demonstrated an exceptional combination of faith and reason, from his illustrious origins in Southern Italy to his crucial position at the center of medieval intellectual culture.¹

Despite being most known for his academic pursuits, his life also demonstrates extraordinary humility, holiness, and unwavering devotion to the search for the truth. His

¹ McNerny Ralph, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, Washington USA: Catholic University of America Press, 1982, p.53

contributions to theology and philosophy have lasted for centuries, making him one of the most important people in Christian history. Aquinas is still a role model for intellectual perfection and spiritual dedication, having been canonized as a saint, named a Doctor of the Church, and referred to as the “Angelic Doctor”.

2.1.0 His Early Years

Aquinas was born in 1225 in Roccasecca, a little hill village in what is now Lazio, Italy, which was then part of the Kingdom of Sicily. He was the youngest child of Theodora, a woman of noble Norman lineage, and Landulf of Aquino, a member of the lower aristocracy. The Aquino family kept ties to both Church and imperial officials, expecting that Thomas might seek a prominent position in the Church, perhaps even as abbot of Monte Cassino, where he received his early education.

Thomas was sent to the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino for his early schooling at the age of five. Established by St. Benedict himself, this school was a thriving intellectual hub in addition to its religious function. Here, Thomas received his first introduction to the liturgy, theology, and classical education that would serve as the basis for his future work.²

2. 1. 1 His Studies in Naples and Meeting with Aristotle

² Davies Brian, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.76

One of the first universities in Europe not under the control of the Church but under the administration of the secular authorities of the Kingdom of Sicily was the University of Naples, where Aquinas was enrolled at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Thomas discovered the recently translated writings of Aristotle there, which were making their way into the Christian West through Arabic and Jewish intermediaries. Additionally, he was impacted by Dominican preachers and thinkers who supported a life of poverty, preaching, and learning.³

Thomas met members of the Dominican Order, formerly the Order of Preachers, a mendicant religious society established by St. Dominic, during his tenure in Naples. The Dominicans placed a high priority on preaching, education, and living a life of evangelical poverty, in contrast to conventional monastic orders.

Thomas entered the Dominican Order when he was around 19 years old, to the chagrin of his aristocratic family. His family responded strongly, hoping that he would have a distinguished career in the church. In an effort to discourage him from pursuing a Dominican vocation, his brothers kidnapped him and kept him hostage in the family castle for more than a year. According to folklore, his family even dispatched a woman to seduce him into breaking his pledge of chastity, which he fought off with intense prayer.⁴

³ Pieper Josef, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, California: Ignatius Press, 1991, p.85

⁴ Stump Eleonore, *Aquinas*, London: Routledge publications, 2003, p.45

The turning point in Thomas's life came from this meeting with the Dominicans and Aristotle. In defiance of his family's wishes, he entered the Dominican Order about 1244. His choice caused a lot of opposition, and in an attempt to persuade him, his family kept him imprisoned for more than a year. Thomas, however, was determined. As the story goes, his siblings sent him a prostitute to entice him while he was imprisoned, but he repelled her with a burning log. This episode perfectly illustrated his tenacity and moral integrity.⁵

2. 1. 2 His Education Under Albertus Magnus

Thomas was dispatched to learn under Albertus Magnus, one of the most revered academics of the period, after fleeing his family and reaffirming his Dominican calling. He attended classes in Cologne from 1248 to 1252, where he followed Albertus.

⁵ Kretzmann Norman, and Stump Eleonore, *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.61

Albertus is reported to have foreseen that "You call him a dumb ox, but his bellowing in doctrine will one day resound throughout the world," despite Thomas's silence and physical size, which earned him the moniker "the Dumb Ox."⁶

Albertus brought Thomas to a thorough examination of Aristotelian philosophy and how it relates to theology. Thomas acquired an understanding of the value of empirical observation and logical reasoning techniques that he would later employ to construct his theological synthesis under Albertus's guidance. Thomas attended the University of Paris, the leading theological school of the era, from 1245 to 1252. He excelled in theology, producing commentaries, debates, and scriptural exegesis. His theology was distinguished by systematic reasoning, dialectical methodology, and a commitment to bringing philosophy and faith into harmony.

2. 1. 3 Mysticism and Religious Life

Aquinas is well-known for his intelligence, yet he was also a very humble and spiritual individual. He practiced regular prayer, was devoted to the Eucharist, and led an ascetic existence. Much of his theological knowledge came from contemplation and prayer, not just from academic study.

⁶ Weisheipl James, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1983, p.105

In December 1273, while performing Mass, Aquinas had a spiritual experience towards the end of his life. He then stopped writing and is said to have remarked, "All that I have written seems like straw compared to what I have seen. " His legacy was already secure, even though his *Summa Theologiae* remained incomplete.

2.1.4 Death and Canonization

In early 1274, Pope Gregory X summoned Aquinas to attend the Second Council of Lyons to address issues of church reform and reunion with the Eastern Church. While en route, Aquinas fell seriously ill and was taken to the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova. There, he died on March 7, 1274, at the age of 49.⁷

Thomas Aquinas was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323. In 1567, Pope Pius V declared him a Doctor of the Church, one of the highest honors in Catholic tradition. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which officially endorsed Thomism as the foundation of Catholic education and theology.

2.2 WORKS

One of the most complete and long-lasting attempts to combine classical philosophy, especially the works of Aristotle, with Christian teaching is represented by the philosophical writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. He is a central figure in the

⁷ Ibid., p.106

Scholasticism tradition, which placed an emphasis on dialectical thinking in order to advance knowledge through inference and resolve inconsistencies. His philosophy embraces practically every significant field, including ethics, political theory, metaphysics, epistemology, and natural law.

2. 2. 1 Important Publications and Academic Results

In his comparatively brief lifetime, Aquinas wrote over sixty books. Among them are sermons, debates, theological monographs, commentaries, and polemical writings. In the scholastic tradition, he methodically and clearly poses a question, raises arguments, makes a counterargument (*sed contra*), and then gives his own solution (*respondeo*).

A. Summa Theologiae

The *Summa Theologiae*, which is a full synthesis of Christian theology, is arguably his most well-known and ambitious piece. It is divided into three main sections, making it an excellent teaching resource for theology students:

1. The first section discusses the existence and essence of God, the creation of the cosmos, angels, and the nature of humanity.
2. Secunda Pars: addresses law (including natural law), ethics, human behavior, virtues, and vices.
3. Tertia Pars: covers Christology, the sacraments, and eschatology. (Aquinas's followers finished this section after his death)

The Summa is noteworthy for both its breadth and its dialectical approach. Each theological issue is handled with accuracy, striking a balance between authority (Scripture and Church Fathers) and experience and reasoning.⁸

B. Summa Contra Gentiles

Another important theological work, the Summa Contra Gentiles, is primarily intended for missionaries and apologists who interact with non-Christian communities. In contrast to the Summa Theologiae, this book places a greater emphasis on philosophical reasoning and attempts to demonstrate that reason alone can lead to the understanding of many Christian truths.⁹

⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, New York: Christian Classics, 1911, p.115

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles", Vol 1, USA: University of Notre Dame Press 1957, p.77

It is arranged into four volumes:

1. Facts about God that are accessible via logic
2. Truths about God that go beyond reason
3. The nature and fate of the human spirit
4. The sacraments and the Incarnation

Aquinas' dedication to logical discussion with non-Christian intellectuals, such as Muslims and Jews, whose ideas had a profound impact on his writings, is evident in the *Contra Gentiles*.

C. Debates and Comments

Aquinas also produced comprehensive commentaries on several of Aristotle's most important works, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Metaphysics*, and *Physics*. These discussions were essential for incorporating Aristotelian ideas into the Christian intellectual history.

Furthermore, Aquinas participated in *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Disputed Questions), which were intellectual discussions about difficult subjects like truth, evil, the soul, and virtue. His interaction with current academics and his approach to resolving contradictions through rigorous analysis are evident in these debates.

A. The Structure of Reality, Metaphysics

The foundation of Aquinas's metaphysics is Aristotle's notion of being (ens) and essence (essentia). Between the substance of what something is and the reality that it exists, Aquinas made a distinction. The essence and existence of all created things are different: a human, for example, has a certain essence (rational animal), but that essence does not necessarily exist unless it is realized.

Aquinas came to the conclusion that essence and existence are the same only in God. God is the necessary being who brings about the existence of all other beings; he is existence itself (ipsum esse subsistens). In particular, in his Five Ways, Aquinas employed this metaphysical tenet as the foundation for many of his proofs for the existence of God.

He also relied heavily on Aristotle's ideas of act and potency. Everything in the world is made up of possibilities and realities. His initial method for establishing God's existence is the argument from motion, which holds that something changes when it goes from being possible to being real.

B. Epistemology: Reason and Revelation

An Aristotelian basis is also consistent with Aquinas's notion of knowledge. All human knowledge originates from the senses, according to his rejection of the Augustinian Platonist notion of innate knowledge. By using abstraction, the mind derives

general ideas from specific sensory experiences. With this empiricist epistemology, Aquinas was able to argue for the reliability of human reason while still acknowledging that certain truths, like the Trinity, are beyond reason and need divine revelation.

The contrast between the following was highlighted by Aquinas:

Natural knowledge, which can be gained via reason alone (e. g. , the existence of God),
supernatural knowledge, which is contingent upon revelation (such as the Incarnation).

Ethics and the Natural Law

The *Summa Theologiae*, mainly in the *Secunda Pars*, contains Aquinas's most influential contribution, his theory of natural law. Aquinas argues that humans have an inherent inclination toward their proper ends, which can be found through reason. The objective moral order is reflected in the natural law, which is a participation in God's eternal law.

Aquinas recognized a number of basic principles of natural law, including:

The preservation of life

The upbringing and reproduction of children

The pursuit of a tranquil and truthful society

Particular ethical regulations arise from these guidelines. The natural law theory of Aquinas has had a long-lasting effect, notably on the evolution of Western legal and ethical philosophy.

D. Political Opinion

Aquinas made significant contributions to political philosophy, particularly in his *De Regno* (On Kingship) and the *Summa*. He affirmed the legitimacy of secular authority but maintained that it must be oriented toward justice and virtue and serve the common good.

Aquinas believed that government is both natural and essential, but that it is constrained by moral law. Tyranny, which undermines the common good, is something that can be fought. His political philosophy, which strikes a balance between divine authority and rational government, had an impact on later thinkers such as Bellarmine, Dante, and even the early modern social contract theorists.

2.2.3 Theological Contributions

Aquinas, a theologian, made significant advancements in almost every facet of Catholic theology, including Christology, salvation, the sacraments, and the essence of God. Because his theological approach was firmly based on scripture and tradition but also receptive to philosophical thinking, his system was exceptionally comprehensive and internally consistent.

A. God's Teachings

Aquinas's theology is centered on his teaching about God being pure act, unchanging, everlasting, and simple (without parts or composition). He maintained that reason may lead us to conclude that God exists, but that we can only learn what God is in his essence by knowing what he is not (via negativa) and how he interacts with the universe.¹⁰

Aquinas is well-known for his Five Ways (Quinque Viae), logical demonstrations of God's existence:

1. Movement, ranging from change to an immovable mover.
2. Causation: from consequences to a cause that is not brought about by anything
3. Contingency—From finite beings to a necessary being
4. Levels of perfection, alluding to a supremely perfect being
5. Teleology – from order in nature to an intelligent creator

Although these points have been discussed, they are central to classical theism.

B. Christology

¹⁰ Brock Stephen, *The Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas: A Sketch*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2016, p.125

In accordance with the Chalcedonian definition, Aquinas' conception of Christ strikes a balance between Jesus' complete divinity and perfect humanity. He stressed the hypostatic union—the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ.¹¹

He examined the consequences of this relationship for knowledge, will, and suffering. For example, Aquinas said that Christ had three types of knowledge: acquired (acquired through experience), infused (God-given knowledge of created realities), and beatific (knowledge of God).

C. Sacraments

The sacraments, according to Aquinas, were potent symbols of grace established by Christ and given to the Church. He listed seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, reconciliation, matrimony, holy orders, and anointing the sick.

His teachings on the Eucharist, in particular, were significant. Aquinas supported the theory of transubstantiation, which states that the substance of bread and wine transforms into the Body and Blood of Christ, but that the accidents (appearances) persist.

This lesson is still fundamental to Catholic doctrine.

¹¹ Clarke Norris, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*, USA: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, p.52

D. Grace, Free Will, and Salvation

Aquinas gained a thorough knowledge of free will and grace. He maintained that salvation begins with prevenient grace, a gift from God that allows the will to strive for good. Although grace is always the first priority, human cooperation is essential.

He made a distinction between:

The habitual gift of sanctifying grace, which renders the soul holy, is known as such.

True grace: God's aid in particular endeavors

Operative and collaborative grace: God acts alone or in conjunction with human free will, respectively.

Extreme positions, like predestinarianism (which downplayed free will) and Pelagianism (which overemphasized human effort), were mitigated by this balanced stance.

2.3 INFLUENCES

Thomism's Ascent and Medieval Reception

Aquinas' writings were occasionally met with skepticism throughout his life. His application of Aristotle's philosophy raised concerns among some theologians and religious officials about the integrity of the Christian faith. Bishop Étienne Tempier of

Paris denounced several principles linked to Aristotelianism in 1277, only three years after Aquinas passed away. Some of these ideas came from Aquinas.

Nevertheless, this doubt was short-lived. Aquinas's works were well-accepted by the beginning of the 14th century. Pope John XXII canonized him in 1323. In 1567, Pope Pius V named him a Doctor of the Church, and in 1879, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* urged that Thomistic philosophy be brought back as the cornerstone of Catholic education.

The 20th Century Resurgence of NeoThomism: Under the leadership of Pope Leo XIII, the 19th and 20th centuries saw a revival of NeoThomism. In the fields of politics, epistemology, and science, thinkers like Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, and Réginald GarrigouLagrange applied Thomistic concepts to contemporary problems.

Aquinas's theory of natural law also had a big impact on moral theology, Catholic social teaching, and discussions about human rights and the law.

Contemporary Relevance: Aquinas is still relevant in a number of fields today.

Religious Philosophy: for discussions on the existence of God, metaphysics, and ethics

Political philosophy: having an impact on Catholic instruction regarding justice, peace, and the common good

Medical ethics and bioethics: using the theory of natural law

Interfaith discussion as a model for reasoned conversation.

Modern researchers continue to engage with Aquinas's writings in light of modern difficulties, such as secularism, existentialism, and postmodernism. Some people criticize his reliance on metaphysical realism, while others compliment his intellectual honesty and receptivity to discussion.

CHAPTER THREE

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS' PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE: A CRITIQUE

3.1 ARGUMENT FROM MOTION

The first of St. Thomas Aquinas' renowned Five Ways to prove the existence of God, which are described in his groundbreaking work *Summa Theologica*, is the Argument from Motion. Aristotelian metaphysics underpins this claim, which is based on a popular understanding of how change and cause operate in the physical world. Aquinas deduces the need for a first unmoved mover, which he identifies as God, from the reality of motion, which he understands broadly as any kind of change. One of the strongest traditional arguments for God's existence is the Argument from Motion. Through observation of the undeniable fact of motion and its connection to an essential first cause, Aquinas offers a logically sound route to supporting the existence of a transcendental being. God, the unmoved mover, provides an explanation for the ongoing existence and transformation that we see in the cosmos, grounding all motion in a singular, unchanging source.¹

Aquinas's argument in the First Way starts from the fact that all living beings, including humans, animals, and plants, have come into being and are also generating

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1920, p.78

other things through their activity. In this line of reasoning, Aquinas focuses especially on how objects in the universe interact with and influence one another. He claims that everything we see in the world is either moving in potentiality or moving in actuality. As an example, Aquinas cites fire. Wood has the potential to be hot, but it hasn't started to burn yet. However, that wood is quite warm once the fire starts to burn it. However, keep in mind that the wood cannot ignite on its own; it requires the heat from the fire's spark to do so. The fire uses its ability to start things on fire, and it uses its muscles to move the wood from a potentially hot area to an actually hot one. Aquinas notes this ability of some things to cause other things to move and questions, "How did all this motion get started? " Things can't start on their own; if they could, they would have to invent themselves, which is not possible.²

Next, Aquinas claims that an external stimulus is necessary for initiating the chain of events. In his own words, According to Aquinas, there are things in the world that are in motion, and this is clear to our senses. Nothing can be in motion unless it is in potentiality to what it is moving toward; rather, a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. Currently, everything that is in motion is set in motion by something else. Since movement is simply the conversion of something from potential to reality. However, nothing can be brought from potentiality to actuality unless something is in a state of

² Gaven Kerr, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.70

reality. Therefore, wood, which has the potential to be hot, is made truly hot by things like fire, which are truly hot, and is thus moved and transformed by them. The same thing cannot be both real and possible at the same time in the same way, but only in different ways. Because what is truly hot cannot also be possibly hot, but it can be simultaneously potentially cold. For this reason, it is impossible for a thing to be both the mover and the moved in the same sense and in the same way, i. e. , for it to be able to move itself. As a result, everything that is moving must be moved by something else. If the means by which it is set in motion is itself set in motion, then this must also necessarily be set in motion by another, and that by another as well. However, since the staff moves only as it is moved by the hand, and since later movers move only as they are initiated by the first mover, this cannot continue indefinitely because there would then be no first mover and, as a result, no other mover. As a result, we must identify a first mover who is not motivated by anyone else, and everyone recognizes this to be God.³

3.1.1 Understanding ‘Motion’ in Aquinas’ Philosophy

It is necessary to define Aquinas' use of "motion" before examining the argument itself. Aquinas, like Aristotle, defines motion as any transition from potentiality to actuality, in contrast to the contemporary notion of motion as merely physical movement. For instance, ice melts and turns into real water, a seed (perhaps a tree) develops into a

³ Ibid., p73

real tree, or a sleeping person (maybe awake) actually wakes up. This idea of movement or change encompasses growth, change, and even shifts in state or circumstance.

1. Observation of World Movement: Aquinas starts by observing that things in the world are moving. We observe moving objects, expanding and evolving living things, and processes that are constantly happening. The universality and undeniable nature of this empirical fact are both undisputed.

2. Everything in Motion is Caused by Something Else: Aquinas continues by arguing that whatever is in motion is set in motion by something else. The mover must already be real because anything cannot go from potentiality to reality on its own without already being real (since an inert object cannot activate itself).

3. The Impossibility of an Infinite Regress of Movers: According to Aquinas, there is a limit to how far back this line of movers may extend. There would be no initial mover to start the whole chain if every mover were moved by another indefinitely. The observable fact is that there would be no movement at all without a first mover, and there would be no following movers, which would be contrary to reality.

4. The Need for a First Unmoved Mover: There must be a first mover that is itself unmoved—a being that causes motion in others without being moved by anything else. This first unmoved mover is the ultimate cause of all motion and change.

5. Aquinas names God the first unmoved mover, who sets all motion in motion while remaining immutable. God is the essential being, devoid of potentiality and pure actuality.

In Aquinas's words, "Whatever is moved is moved by another. " Since nothing can be moved unless it has the potential to move in that direction, it is imperative to identify a first mover that is moved by nothing else. This is universally accepted to be God.

3.1.2 The Foundation of this Argument is Philosophical

Empirical Basis: The argument is based on the straightforward and observable fact that motion exists, rather than on hypothetical or abstract assumptions.

Aquinas' argument against an infinite regress of movers is based on the principle of sufficient reason, which holds that every movement must have a sufficient explanation.

Aquinas blends Aristotelian metaphysics by viewing motion as a transformation from potentiality to actuality, providing a deep framework for comprehending causality and existence.

3.2 ARGUMENT FROM EFFICIENT CAUSE

By tracing the chain of causation back to a necessary first cause, Aquinas's second evidence for the existence of God, the Argument from Efficient Cause, offers a strong rational basis for the existence of God. It argues that the existence of contingent things necessitates an uncaused cause that serves as the foundation for all reality. God, the

original cause, provides the definitive answer as to why there is something rather than nothing. The second of the Five Ways that St. Thomas Aquinas suggested in his *Summa Theologica* to prove God's existence is the Argument from Efficient Cause. The foundation of this assertion is the common experience of causation, which states that every action has a reason. Aquinas uses this observation to support the idea that there must be a first uncaused cause, which he refers to as God. The foundation of this claim is the Aristotelian metaphysics and the notion of causality, and its goal is to account for the reality of the contingent world. Aquinas' Argument from Efficient Cause, which draws on Aristotelian causal theory, was influenced by earlier thinkers like Aristotle himself and the Islamic philosopher Avicenna. The discussion is still important in classical theism, and it has had an impact on numerous theologians and philosophers who came after.⁴

Aquinas continues his second line of reasoning in the Second Way by noting that there is efficient causality in the universe, which is that things cause other things to occur. As in the last Way, Aquinas asks, where did this causality all begin? Aquinas makes the following argument: We observe in the sensory world that there is an order of efficient causes. It is not only impossible but also unknown for anything to be discovered to be the efficient cause of itself, since it would then precede itself, which is impossible. Since

⁴ Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009, p.55

every efficient cause follows in order, with the first being the cause of the intermediate cause and the intermediate being the cause of the ultimate cause, regardless of the number of intermediate causes, it is now impossible to proceed to infinity in efficient causes. The effect vanishes when the cause is removed. If there is no initial cause among efficient causes, there cannot be an ultimate or intermediate cause. However, if there is no first efficient cause, no ultimate effect, and no intermediate efficient causes in efficient causes, then it is clear that it is possible to proceed to infinity. Therefore, a first effective cause, which everyone refers to as God, must be acknowledged.⁵

3.2.1 Grasping the Idea of Efficient Cause

The agent or source that brings something into existence or starts a change is, in Aristotelian words, an efficient cause. For instance, a sculptor is the efficient cause of a statue, a builder is the efficient cause of a house, and parents are the efficient cause of their offspring.

Material causes (the substance something is made of), formal causes (the form or nature of anything), and final causes (the aim or purpose) are different from efficient

⁵ Gaven Kerr, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.75

causes. Aquinas's reasoning is particularly concerned with the chain of efficient causes in the universe.

1. Observing Cause and Effect: Aquinas begins by noting that we see an ordered sequence of causes and effects in the world. Everything that exists appears to be the result of a cause.

2. No Effect Can Cause Itself: A thing cannot cause itself because it has to exist before it can bring itself into existence. The idea that a cause must come before its effect appears to be obvious.

3. The Impossibility of an Infinite Regression of Causes: Aquinas then claims that there cannot be an infinite chain of causes going backward in time or ontologically (i. e. , no cause causing a cause ad infinitum). Why? Because if there were no first cause, then there would be no intermediate causes or effects either. Nothing would exist now if there were no original cause, since there would be no following causes or consequences.

4. The Need for an Uncaused First Cause: In order to avoid this absurdity, there must be a first cause that is not caused by anything else an uncaused cause that sets off the whole causal chain.

5. God as the First Cause: Aquinas identifies God as the first uncaused cause, which is necessary and the origin of all other causes.

As Aquinas said, "In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. " As a result, we must accept a first efficient cause, which everyone refers to as God, since there are no known instances of anything being the efficient cause of itself.⁶

3.2.2 The Argument's Philosophical Strengths

Intuitive Appeal: The argument is based on a common-sense observation of cause and effect that is well understood by anyone.

Aquinas demonstrates that an infinite regression of causes is logically inconsistent because it would negate the very notion of a causal chain.

Metaphysical Necessity: By establishing a first cause, Aquinas addresses the need for a fundamental explanation for the existence of contingent beings.

3.3 ARGUMENT FROM NECESSARY BEING

Aquinas' third argument in favor of the existence of God, known as the Argument from Necessary Being, is a powerful philosophical demonstration that delves into the metaphysical underpinnings of life beyond what can be seen empirically. Aquinas demonstrates the logical necessity of God as the ultimate cause and sustainer of all contingent reality by differentiating between contingent beings and a necessary being.

⁶ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, London: Routledge Publications, 1969, p.57

This essential being clarifies the reason for the existence of everything by establishing a basic foundation for existence itself. Neoplatonism and Aristotle's philosophy are two earlier metaphysical concepts upon which this theory is based. It continues to be important in modern theological and metaphysical debates and had a profound impact on several medieval thinkers. The third of St. Thomas Aquinas' renowned Five Ways to prove God's existence, which is found in his *Summa Theologica*, is the Argument from Necessary Being. This claim tackles the question of the existence of contingent beings those that may or may not exist and makes the case for the inevitability of a being that must exist by its very essence. Aquinas identifies God as this essential being, who is the supreme cause of all contingent reality.

Aquinas observes in this argument that some creatures are contingent upon others for their existence. Consider that your life is dependent on your parents. You don't exist without them. However, this reliance implies that it's very probable that you wouldn't have lived. Imagine that your parents never crossed paths! Since you are actually here, there must be a valid explanation for why you are here. As a result, Aquinas believes that the universe is made up of beings that are dependent in this manner. They must have a cause, a rationale for their existence rather than nonexistence. Aquinas makes the following argument in our book.

As an example, consider the film *It's a Wonderful Life*, in which George Bailey wonders what his life would be like if he had never been born and gets a glimpse of a

potential world where he doesn't exist. The concept of Aquinas is similar here. You may have never existed at all. However, Aquinas extends the thought experiment beyond George Bailey: Aquinas believes that something bigger than you must explain your existence because it is possible that you never would have existed. Your existence is explained by who brought you into being and what they have accomplished. However, Aquinas argues that if the only beings in the universe were those who relied on others for their existence, it's very possible that nothing would have existed at all. This is due to the fact that at some point, every being whose existence may or may not have been is nonexistent. Therefore, a necessary being something that has always existed must bring the non-existent into existence.⁷

3.3.1 Comprehending Beings that Are Contingent and Necessary

According to Aquinas, There are two Primary Categories of Beings: These are contingent beings whose existence is not essential; they are born and die. Other factors or circumstances determine their existence. Material things, plants, animals, and people, for example, are contingent because they are dependent on causes and can cease to exist.

Essential Beings: These are beings that cannot exist because their existence is contingent upon necessity. Their existence is obvious and independent of anything else. They can't not exist. For Aquinas' thesis, this distinction is essential.

⁷ Ibid., p.64

1. The Contingency of Existence: Aquinas begins by noting that there are many contingent things in the world. Although they exist, they may not have existed, and they will disappear in the future. Every finite, temporal being exhibits this.

2. The Impossibility of Contingent Beings: If everything were contingent, then it would be conceivable for everything to not exist at some point. At one point in the past, there may have been nothing.

3. The Absurdity of Nothing Ever Existing: Nothing would exist now if nothing had ever existed. The reason for this is that something cannot come from nothing; existence cannot exist without a reason.

4. Consequently, there must be a necessary being: Since not everything can be contingent, there must be at least one necessary being whose existence is essential rather than contingent. This essential being has to exist in its own right and not rely on anything else.

5. The Contingent Being Is Caused by the Necessary Being: This essential being is the cause or origin of all contingent beings. Without it, contingent beings could neither exist nor continue to exist.

6. Recognizing God as the Necessary Being: Aquinas equates this necessary being with God, the being whose existence is essential, eternal, and unaffected by anything else.

In addition, he argues that "We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be... But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which can not be at some time is not. " As a result, not all beings are just conceivable; rather, there must be something whose existence is essential.⁸

3.3.2 The Argument's Philosophical Strengths

Addresses the Problem of Contingency: Instead of focusing on the fundamental metaphysical question of why anything exists at all, the book tackles the issue of contingency.

Logical Necessity: It bases itself on the tenet of adequate reason, which dictates that everything that exists must have a justification for its existence.

A coherent ontology is what Aquinas provides by postulating a necessary being as the basis for existence, upon which all contingent reality is based.

3.4 ARGUMENT FROM GRADATION OF GOODNESS

⁸ G.K. Chesterton, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Image books, 1956, p.45

Aquinas' fourth evidence for the existence of God is his Argument from Gradation of Goodness. By focusing on the measurable degrees of traits such as goodness, truth, and perfection, the Argument from Gradation of Goodness provides a compelling argument for God. Aquinas offers a metaphysical justification for the existence and hierarchy of values in the world by asserting the need for a maximum that completely embodies these characteristics. God, the highest being, serves as the foundation for objective goodness and the ultimate source and norm of all perfection. This argument complements the other Four Ways by emphasizing qualitative features over motion, causality, or contingency. It places a high priority on metaphysical perfection and value as proof of God's existence. The fourth of St. Thomas Aquinas' Five Ways, which he lays out in his *Summa Theologica*, is the Argument from Gradation of Goodness. This assertion is based on the fact that traits like goodness, truth, nobility, and perfection are present in varying amounts among different people. These gradations, according to Aquinas, indicate the existence of a maximum or ultimate standard, a being that represents the greatest extent of these characteristics. He recognizes God as this supreme entity⁹.

Aquinas begins this argument by pointing out that different objects possess different amounts of certain qualities. Heat is the example provided by Aquinas. Some

⁹ Stephen Brock, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2015, p.71

things are hotter than others. The heat of the sun and a cookie-baking oven at 350° are both high, but the sun is undeniably hotter than the oven. However, since the oven and the sun both share in the nature of heat and what it means to be hot, we are correct in referring to them as hot. Aquinas adopts this concept and extends it to existence and to goodness. It is true that some people are better or worse than others in terms of morality, nobility, and other qualities. However, "more" and "less" are based on distinct things, as a thing is said to be hotter according to how closely it resembles that which is hottest in its various ways; thus, there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, as a result, something which is uttermost being, since those things that are greatest in truth are also greatest in being. As fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things, the maximum in any genus is now the cause of all in that genus. Hence, there must be something that is the reason for all beings existence, goodness, and other perfections; we refer to this as God.¹⁰

According to Aquinas, every living thing has being and goodness to some extent. For instance, Aquinas believes that human beings are the sort of beings who use their rationality to think and act well, especially in terms of moral perfection. Thus, in Aquinas' view, a decent human being is someone who makes good use of their reason and behaves with moral distinction. However, keep in mind that, of all the people who have ever lived, some have been better at reasoning well and others have been better at

¹⁰ Ibid., p75

moral virtue. In other words, every individual has some measure of goodness, but it varies from person to person. However, keep in mind that if you have degrees of goodness like this, there must be an ultimate standard of perfection against which these degrees of goodness are compared. Aquinas claims that the ideal standard of goodness is what we may refer to as the Perfect Being.¹¹

3.4.1 Grasp Gradation

In our daily lives, we frequently rate things as "better" or "worse," "more" or "less" good, true, noble, or perfect. For instance, some individuals are kinder than others, some items are hotter or colder, and some assertions are more truthful or precise. These distinctions imply that these traits fall along a spectrum or scale.

In addition, the rationale for this claim is as follows:

1. Observation of Degrees of Qualities: Aquinas points out that the world is filled with varying degrees of qualities, such as truth, goodness, and nobility. Some things are better or more genuine than others, and some have these characteristics to a lesser degree.

2. The Existence of a Maximum: There must be something that is the maximum or ultimate standard of any quality that we see a gradation of. For instance, the highest level of truth is the most accurate statement, and the greatest level of heat is the hottest thing.

¹¹ Christopher Kaczor, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ*, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2002, p.54

3. The Maximum is the Cause of the Quality in Others: According to Aquinas, the maximum in every genus either causes or imparts that quality to others. The supreme good generates goodness in all other good things, much as the warmest item in a hot environment causes heat in those items.

4. The Existence of a Being that possesses the pinnacle of all qualities: Because we see degrees of perfection in beings, there must be a being that is the best, most perfect, and most real, beyond which no higher being can be imagined.

5. Aquinas identifies this supreme being as God, the origin of all beauty, truth, and perfection in the cosmos.

In his ideology of gradation of goodness, Aquinas writes; "Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble... But more and less are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum... Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God. "¹²

This argument is based on philosophy in these fields;

Intuitive Appeal: The argument is founded on common sense observations about differences in value and quality.

¹² Ibid., p57

Grounding Objective Values: It avoids relativism by establishing a metaphysical basis for objective goodness and perfection.

Reason and Explanation: It supports the idea that effects are contingent upon causes by proposing a cause for the existence of gradations of qualities.

3.5 ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

By alluding to the deliberate order and direction seen in nature, St. Thomas Aquinas' Argument from Design his fifth proof for the existence of God makes a compelling case for God's existence. Aquinas supports the reality of God as the ultimate director of the cosmos by arguing that non-intelligent natural objects only act towards goals when guided by an intelligent entity. The harmony between empirical observation and metaphysical reasoning in classical theism is emphasized by this argument. Medieval philosophers like Aquinas expanded upon Aristotle's teleology to create the Teleological Argument. In the contemporary period, particularly in the writings of Paley and others, it underwent a resurgence. Despite scientific explanations to the contrary, it is still philosophically and theologically relevant. The fifth of St. Thomas Aquinas' Five Ways to prove the existence of God, as stated in his Summa Theologica, is the Argument from Design, also known as the Teleological Argument. This reasoning infers the existence of an intelligent being who directs all things toward their ends by observing order, purpose, and regularity in the natural world. Aquinas bases his argument on Aristotle's notion of

final causes, stating that natural objects, which are unintelligent, act in ways that necessitate a wise directing God.¹³

Aquinas notes in this argument that there is a purpose in the natural world. However, what does Aquinas mean by direction? The concept that, in the natural world, all things strive toward a certain objective, and in particular, they strive for what makes them thrive. Aquinas makes the following case. We can see that inanimate objects like natural bodies act for an end, and this is obvious by their consistent, or almost consistent, behavior, which is designed to produce the optimum outcome. Thus, it is obvious that they accomplish their goals on purpose, not by chance. As the archer shoots the arrow to its mark, anything without intellect cannot advance toward an end unless it is guided by a being with intelligence and understanding. As a result, there must be an intelligent being who directs all natural phenomena toward their conclusion, and this being is known as God.

We make plans and take actions because we believe they will benefit us. However, Aquinas points out that plants and other beings that lack intelligence seem to behave in this way as well. For science class, I conducted an experiment when I was in elementary school. I put a bean in damp ground and placed it in a dark cupboard. About a week later, I checked on the bean and noticed that it had sprouted in the direction of the sparse light

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, London UK: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1920, p.80

in the cabinet. How did the tiny bean sprout know to do that? Something has to be thinking and reasoning in order to have a goal or a strategy. However, plants do not think or reason! And yet the bean sprout grew in the direction of the light. According to Aquinas, the most plausible explanation for how plants can do this despite their lack of intelligence is that someone or something is guiding them toward what they need to thrive by performing that thinking and planning for them. Furthermore, God is the intelligent being we refer to as this director.¹⁴

3.5.1 Understanding the Idea of Design and Final Causes

According to Aristotelian philosophy, every aspect of nature has a final cause—an end or purpose that it is inherently driven toward. For example, natural laws govern the behavior of things and living beings towards particular outcomes, the ultimate purpose of the acorn is to become an oak tree, and the heart's function is to pump blood. Here, design refers to the apparent purposeful order of nature, not necessarily humanlike planning, but a natural orientation toward ends.

To help people grasp the argument more fully, it is further explained as follows:

¹⁴ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, London: Routledge publications, 1969, p.66

1. Observing Purpose and Order in Nature: According to Aquinas, many natural phenomena behave in a consistent and predictable manner, working towards a specific aim or objective. For example, physical bodies consistently act to maintain their own existence and create specific outcomes.

2. Lack of Intelligence in Natural Things: Many natural things, such as plants, irrational creatures, and even lifeless things, do not possess intelligence and are thus unable to use knowledge or intention to guide themselves towards an objective.

3. Things that lack intelligence only act toward goals by being guided: Similar to how an arrow can only hit its target because an archer aims it, things that lack intelligence cannot move toward their goal unless directed by some being with knowledge and intelligence.

4. Therefore, There Must Be an Intelligent Being That Directs All Natural Things: This intelligent being orchestrates the order and purpose we see in the universe by guiding everything natural toward its goals.

5. Aquinas comes to the conclusion that this guiding intelligence is God, the ultimate cause and ruler of the natural order, thereby identifying this intelligent director as God.

He further asserts that "We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end... Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve

their end. Thus, there must be an intelligent being that guides all natural things toward their purpose; and this being is what we refer to as God.¹⁵

3.5.2 The Argument's Philosophical Strengths

Empirical Observation: The argument is based on empirical evidence the apparent order and purpose seen in natural phenomena.

Explanatory Power: It offers a convincing explanation for the intricacy and predictability in nature that chance or randomness cannot readily explain.

Historical Impact: William Paley and other later thinkers were influenced by this argument, which is still a crucial piece of evidence for God's existence in the classical world.

¹⁵ Christopher Kaczor, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ*, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2002, p.57

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 EVALUATION

One of the most important persons in the history of Christian theology is St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar and philosopher of the 13th century. Aquinas offers five arguments in his *Summa Theologiae*, known as the Five Ways, that seek to prove God's existence via logic. These arguments are based extensively on natural philosophy and Aristotelian metaphysics. Philosophers, both theistic and atheistic, have seriously challenged Aquinas' arguments on logical, empirical, and epistemological issues, despite their historical importance. This essay examines these critiques, contending that although Aquinas's attempts are intellectually ambitious, his arguments ultimately lack decisive support for the existence of a theistic God.¹

The Five Ways of Aquinas are a major fusion of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy. They represent a deep effort to anchor religious beliefs in reason instead of just faith. Nevertheless, the arguments depend on old metaphysical assumptions and do not connect the dots between the abstract first principles and the personal, all-powerful God of Christian theology. The credibility of these proofs has been

¹ Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.69

even more undermined by modern science and analytic philosophy. Although Aquinas' works are historically important, his reasoning fails to definitively establish God's existence and is still open to profound philosophical examination.

1. The Argument from Motion (First Way): According to Aquinas' first argument, anything that is moving must have been set in motion by something else. He establishes that there must be a First Mover, which he defines as God, since an infinite regress of movers is not feasible. David Hume and Bertrand Russell, later, have questioned the requirement for a first mover. For example, Hume challenged the very principle of causation, proposing that our conviction in cause and effect is more of a mental routine than a logically essential reality. Russell went on to question why an infinite regress should be unthinkable, stating that the universe is simply there and that's it. Additionally, the fundamental premise of the argument is called into question by modern physics, especially quantum mechanics, which has revealed that some particles can seemingly change states or positions without an obvious cause.²

2. The Argument from Efficient Cause (Second Way): According to this argument, everything that exists has a cause, and because nothing can be the cause of itself, there must be an initial efficient cause, which is God. The rejection of infinite regress is the primary issue, as it was in the beginning. Not everyone agrees that an infinite regress of

² Matt Fradd & Robert Delfino, *Does God Exist? A Socratic Dialogue on the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas*, Ohio: En Route Books & Media, 2018, p.56

causes is metaphysically feasible. Additionally, why should God be excluded if everything needs a cause? By suggesting God as a necessary being, Aquinas introduces a special pleading exception, but he fails to provide a sufficient explanation for why this endpoint is logically indispensable or why the same rationale cannot be applied to the universe itself.

3. The Argument from Contingency (Third Way): Aquinas notes that items in the world are contingent because they appear and disappear. There would have been a moment when nothing existed if everything were contingent. This necessitates the existence of a necessary being who brings about contingent beings; this being is known as God. This argument is based on contentious assumptions regarding necessity and contingency. The notion that nothing existed at one point if everything is contingent does not follow logically. It is entirely possible that there has always been a chain of contingent things without a beginning, or at least the one contingent thing. Furthermore, it is unjustified to leap from a required being to a God who is personal, all-knowing, and all-powerful. Even if one accepts the existence of a necessary being, it does not necessarily follow that this being is the God of classical theism.

4. The Argument from Gradation (Fourth Way): Aquinas notes that there are different levels of attributes in the world, such as goodness, truth, and nobility. According to him, these degrees suggest that there is either a highest God or a supreme standard. This is usually regarded as the least persuasive of the Five Ways. It is based on a Platonic

concept of forms, according to which a flawless example of a quality is implied by the presence of degrees of that quality. This, however, is a questionable jump. A maximum being is not required by current understanding of comparative terms. For instance, the presence of different levels of heat only suggests relative comparisons, not the existence of an absolute maximum heat (a hottest conceivable item). The same reasoning holds true for goodness and nobility.³

5. The Teleological Argument (Fifth Way): This design argument posits that the purposeful behavior of natural objects implies the direction of an intelligent being, God. The teleological argument assumes that nature has a purpose or design. Yet, with the introduction of natural selection and Darwinian evolution, natural processes may account for the appearance of design. Additionally, David Hume maintained that the comparison between the cosmos and human creations is not strong. If the universe is similar to a machine, what reason do we have to believe that its creator resembles a human mind? If complexity necessitates an intelligent origin, this line of reasoning also raises the issue of who created the designer, as God would ostensibly also require a cause given that he is the most complex being.

some philosophers' criticisms;

³ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, New York: Kegan Paul press, 1980, p.70

(A) David Hume's Criticisms of Aquinas' Arguments for the Existence of God

David Hume's philosophical skepticism challenges the core of Aquinas' logical arguments for the existence of God. Hume reveals the bounds of natural theology and the speculative assumptions underlying the Five Ways by questioning the need of causation, the impossibility of infinite regress, and the appropriateness of the design analogy. While Aquinas tries to base faith on reason, Hume reveals that reason is itself fallible and restricted when it comes to theological and metaphysical issues. In contemporary philosophical thought, his objections continue to be fundamental, promoting continued discussion on the reasonableness of faith in God in a world that is increasingly influenced by science and doubt.

The well-known Five Ways of St. Thomas Aquinas seek to demonstrate God's existence via logic and real observation. These arguments based on motion, causation, contingency, gradation, and design make extensive use of Aristotelian metaphysics and the presumption that empirical reality needs a necessary, ultimate cause or explanation. David Hume, the 18th-century Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, however, posed serious objections to natural theology and the logical underpinnings of religious faith. Hume subverts the logical soundness and epistemological presuppositions of Aquinas' arguments through his skeptical empiricism. This paper explores Hume's critiques of Aquinas' cosmological and teleological arguments and evaluates their enduring influence on religious philosophy.

1. Critique of Causation and the Cosmological Arguments: Many of Aquinas' arguments, particularly the First, Second, and Third Ways, are variations of the cosmological argument. This argument assumes that every effect has a cause and that this causal chain must ultimately point to a first, essential being, which is God. Hume famously assaults the law of causation in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He claims that our faith in cause and effect is rooted in experience and habit rather than logical understanding. In other words, we never see a necessary link between cause and effect; rather, we only see that one event follows another consistently. "All reasoning about matters of fact appears to be based on the cause-and-effect relationship." However, when we examine more closely, we never find any power or requisite link. This calls into question Aquinas' dependence on the causal principle as a metaphysical guarantee. The demand that everything must have a cause becomes less persuasive if causation is not a logically essential aspect of existence, and the argument for a First Cause (God) is no longer convincing.

Aquinas asserts that an infinite regress of causes is impossible. Hume questions this premise by inquiring as to why such a regression would be illogical. He contends that the fact that we do not intuitively grasp infinity does not imply that it is metaphysically unattainable. Furthermore, just because each separate event has a cause doesn't imply that the entire causal chain must have a single starting cause. "Why may not the material universe be the necessarily existent being, according to this pretended explanation of

necessity? " Hume thus raises the question of whether the universe itself might be eternal or self-explanatory without the need of a transcendent cause.⁴

2. Critique of the Teleological Argument (Design Argument): According to Aquinas' Fifth Way, a God with guiding intellect is suggested by the apparent order and purpose in the universe. This line of reasoning resembles the watchmaker analogy that William Paley later popularized. In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume has Philo, one of the characters, present a number of compelling objections to the design argument:

Analogy's Flaw: It's difficult to compare the cosmos to a human-made object, such as a watch. A watch is obviously well designed since we are aware of its purpose and creator. However, we have never seen a universe created, therefore we have no similar foundation for asserting that the universe is designed. The comparison disregards huge disparities while relying on selective similarities.

Issue with Flawed Design: The world has a lot of flaws, pain, and chaos if it was created. Hume questions the jump from seen order to a completely benevolent and all-powerful God. Does this suggest a bad or incompetent designer?

Alternative Explanations: Hume proposes that the universe's apparent order may be the result of natural processes such as chance or self-organizing principles rather than

⁴ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, London: Hackett Publication, 1748, p.77

an intelligent origin. This suggests the evolutionary theories that developed after Hume's era. "A world... arranged by generation or vegetation, might have all the order we see at present".

Multiplicity of Causes: Hume also asks why we should presume there is just one designer. Perhaps the universe was formed by an inferior deity experimenting or a committee of gods, just as complicated machines are frequently constructed by many individuals. This calls into question the premise that the design indicates a single, ultimate deity.

3. The Epistemological Boundaries of Human Reason and the Issue of Anthropomorphism: A central idea in Hume's philosophy is the recognition of the limits of human comprehension. As limited creatures, we are trying to comprehend an infinite or uncertain reality. When we assert that the universe must be the creation of a being akin to us, albeit infinitely more powerful, we are attributing human characteristics to the divine, a practice that Hume deems both intellectually unjustifiable and arrogant. He poses the question, "What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must make it the model of the whole universe?" This critique

undermines Aquinas' trust in analogical reasoning, which claims that God is somewhat similar to humans but beyond complete understanding.⁵

(B) Jean-Paul Sartre's objection to Aquinas' argument for the existence of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas' The Five Ways use logical reasoning and empirical observation to try to demonstrate God's existence. Aquinas' arguments, which are based on motion, causation, contingency, gradation, and teleology and are grounded in Aristotelian metaphysics, lead to the conclusion that there is a necessary, purposeful entity: God. However, centuries later, the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre outright denied the perspective that underpins such assertions. Sartre's philosophy provides a profound and potent critique of Aquinas' method by deconstructing the metaphysical foundation on which it relies, rather than by directly refuting each logical step. This critique is rooted in human freedom, radical contingency, and the absence of objective meaning. This article will explore Sartre's fundamental objections to Aquinas' argument for the existence of God, particularly in light of his existentialist views on freedom, contingency, and meaning.

Jean-Paul Sartre's critique of Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God is based on a radical rethinking of existence itself, rather than a logical step-by-step

⁵ Joseph Catalano, *The Saint and the Atheist: Thomas Aquinas and Jean -Paul Sartre*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021, p.54

refutation. Sartre asserts that existence does not need an explanation, that essence does not come before existence, and that a transcendent being does not provide meaning. According to Sartre, Aquinas' quest for God is motivated by a wrongly perceived desire for stability and organization in a world that is fundamentally absurd and uncertain. Sartre encourages us to create our own values in a world without God, rather than depending on God for significance. This involves accepting our liberty and embracing responsibility. Thus, Sartre's philosophy presents one of the deepest existential threats to Aquinas' theistic perspective.⁶

1. Sartre's Atheistic Existentialism vs. Aquinas' Theistic Essentialism: The foundation of Aquinas' work is the assumption that the cosmos and all its contents have a divinely ordained purpose or essence. According to Aquinas, God is the essential being who produces and sustains every contingent being. According to this perspective, a divine creator determines both human nature and the meaning of life. This essentialism is openly rejected by Sartre's existentialism. In his well-known statement, existence precedes essence, Sartre asserts that people first exist and then define themselves. Existence is not grounded by a required being, a cosmic goal, or a divine plan. "Because there is no God to have an idea of it, there is no human nature. " Humanism Is Existentialism. In this perspective, Sartre not only rejects the notion of God, but also the necessity of a God to explain existence or give meaning. In Sartre's opinion, Aquinas'

⁶ Ibid., p67

quest for a necessary being is rooted in the erroneous assumption that essence requires a transcendent origin.

2. The Rejection of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: Aquinas' arguments, especially those based on causation and contingency, are grounded on the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which holds that everything must have an explanation or cause that eventually points to a necessary being (God). This principle is completely rejected by Sartre. He portrays existence itself as radically contingent in *Being and Nothingness*. Things exist for no final cause or need whatsoever. They are just that way. "Every existing thing is born without reason, extends itself out of frailty, and dies by chance. " According to Sartre, the cosmos is absurd due to its lack of intrinsic structure or intended purpose. From any philosophical necessity, the need for a first cause or needed being, such as God, comes from a psychological or emotional want for order. As a result, Sartre believes that Aquinas' effort to deduce God from the necessity for an explanation is an expression of earthly desire onto the universe.

3. Freedom and Responsibility Without God: Aquinas views God as the origin of both existence and the moral order. Aquinas contends that ethics, purpose, and ultimate meaning would lack a foundation in the absence of God. This notion is vehemently rejected by Sartre. He maintains that people are completely free and that without a God, they are "condemned to be free. " This implies that we must establish our own significance, values, and core via our decisions. "Man is nothing but what he makes of

himself if God does not exist. " According to Sartre, having faith in God, particularly in the kind that Aquinas' proofs endorse, is a way of avoiding one's obligations. Religious faith enables people to evade the weight of self-creating meaning by suggesting an outside source of purpose or morality.

4. The Illusion of a Necessary Being: According to Aquinas' argument from contingency, there must be a necessary being to account for the existence of anything since all beings are contingent (i. e. they might not have existed). This idea is turned on its head by Sartre. By this Sartre implies that; Instead of contingency implying necessity, contingency exposes the lack of necessity existence is groundless, gratuitous, and without ultimate explanation. He claims that the concept of a necessary being is illogical. According to Sartre, existence cannot be metaphysically necessary since it is not based on anything outside of itself. Trying to force necessity onto existence is a form of bad faith and a way to avoid facing the absurdity and freedom of existence. For Sartre, being is just. Seeking a foundational explanation, as Aquinas does, is an example of denying existence's extreme freedom and unpredictability.

5. The Psychological Critique: God as a Projection: Although Sartre is not a psychologist, he includes a psychological critique of religious faith in his existentialism. Similar to Freud and Feuerbach, Sartre argues that the concept of God is a projection of human anxieties and wants, particularly those about freedom, death, and meaninglessness. Although Aquinas may seem more thorough than fideistic believers in his rational

attempts to demonstrate God's existence, Sartre would argue that such proofs are also rooted in the necessity of imposing order on a fundamentally chaotic world. As a result, the Five Ways are not only philosophically incorrect, but also existentially deceitful.

(C) Bertrand Russell's criticism of St. Thomas Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God

Aquinas of St. Thomas in Western philosophy, the Five Ways are among the most significant efforts to demonstrate the existence of God through reason and observation of the physical world. These arguments based on motion, causation, contingency, gradation, and design all attempt to demonstrate that the universe needs a necessary being, which Aquinas calls God. However, Bertrand Russell and other contemporary philosophers have made strong counterarguments to these assertions. Russell was a well-known 20th-century British philosopher, logician, and vocal atheist who wrote works like *Why I Am* that analyzed religious arguments. Not a member of the Christian faith. His opposition to Aquinas is based on three primary issues: the fallacy of the cosmological argument, the unsubstantiated assertions regarding causality, and the difficulty of defining God into existence. This essay will discuss these arguments and analyze their importance.⁷

⁷ Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian: And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, London: George Allen & Unwin Publication, 1957, p.67

Russell's criticisms of Aquinas' proofs of God's existence are based on logic, contemporary science, and a dubious view of metaphysics. He questions the cosmological argument's premises regarding causation and necessity, refutes the notion that God can be immune from causal chains, and opposes the attempt to define God into existence. The limits of human reason and the significance of empirical data are highlighted by Russell's more expansive philosophical perspective. His criticism is still a potent counterpoint to traditional theistic claims, and it still has an impact on current discussions in the philosophy of religion.

1. Rejection of the Cosmological Argument: The cosmological argument is comprised of Aquinas's first three proofs, which are based on motion, efficient causes, and contingency. They contend that a necessary being or first cause is essential for the universe's existence.

Russell's Response: The Universe May Not Require a Cause: In *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Russell directly addresses Aquinas's argument that everything must have a cause by asking, "If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. " The planet may just as well be God if anything is possible without a cause. This shows a significant logical error in Aquinas' line of thinking. By referring to God as a "necessary being," Aquinas claims that everything in the universe must have a cause, but that God is excluded from this rule. Russell contends that this is a case of special pleading, where

God is treated differently without sufficient proof. We may as well accept that the universe itself is uncaused if we can accept that God is uncaused.

Aquinas contends that an infinite regression of causes is impossible, but Russell queries why. The notion of an infinite regress is not always illogical. An infinite chain of contingent events doesn't make sense to him. He believes that bringing up a first cause only moves the issue rather than resolving it. The question of what caused God arises when one claims that God is the origin of the cosmos.

2. Criticism of Causal Hypotheses: Aquinas posits that the principle of causality is universal. But Russell, who was impacted by advancements in logic and modern physics, disputes the notion that causality is a metaphysical necessity. Russell was already beginning to demonstrate in the 20th century that not all events have clear or deterministic causes, particularly in the field of quantum mechanics. Russell's doubt that every occurrence must have a prior cause is supported by this. Russell also made the case that causation is a psychological projection rather than an objective need. He maintained, like David Hume before him, that people attribute causality to events based on repeated observation rather than logical understanding. As a result, employing causality as the basis for demonstrating God's existence is epistemologically unsound.⁸

⁸ Ibid., p69

3. The Fallacy of Defining God into Existence: Aquinas bases his argument for the necessity of God on conceptual analysis, even if he doesn't specifically use the ontological argument, which holds that the existence of God is implied by the very definition of God. According to Russell, "a being whose essence involves existence exists by necessity" is not a compelling argument for defining God into existence. Russell claims that existence is not a predicate—that is, one cannot demonstrate that something exists by just incorporating it into its definition. The mere fact that we can imagine a creature as ideal or necessary does not imply that it actually exists.

4. The Issue of Random Vocabulary: Russell also claims that when applied outside the empirical world, Aquinas's use of terms like "necessary being" or "first mover" is unclear or meaningless. To illustrate, he queries, "What is the real meaning of saying that God is a necessary being?" Russell emphasizes that metaphysical necessity is distinct from necessity in mathematics and logic. Making the assertion that something must exist necessarily is a metaphysical claim that lacks empirical support. According to Russell, this makes the argument unverifiable and hypothetical.

5. Ethical and Psychological Issues: In addition to providing a straightforward logical counterpoint to the Five Ways, Russell also questions the psychological and moral underpinnings of faith in God. He argues that belief in God is frequently based on cultural conditioning or emotional necessity rather than logical reasoning. Additionally,

he asks if a being that demands worship or permits suffering can be deemed morally flawless.

4.1.1 Merits

St. Thomas' Five Ways in which his well-known proofs for God's existence continue to be among the most significant and lasting contributions to the field of religion. Despite contemporary critics' concerns (from Hume, Russell, Sartre, etc.), Aquinas' methodology has a number of important advantages or virtues that are still valued, even by those who disagree with his conclusions. The proofs for the existence of God provided by St. Thomas Aquinas are still held in high regard today, not just for their theological worth but also for their philosophical complexity, empirical foundation, and logical organization. Their advantages reside in their clarity, logical profundity, and desire to harmonize reason and faith and to establish a common basis for the notion of God, even if they are not without fault. Aquinas' ideas continue to be a pillar of philosophical theology, regardless of whether they are approved or refuted.

The following are the most important:

1. The Rational Basis for Faith: Aquinas uses a logical, methodical framework to support his belief in God, rather than relying just on blind faith or revelation. Aquinas tries to demonstrate the compatibility of faith and reason. He uses philosophical reasoning based on observations of the natural world, such as motion and causality, to support his claim that God exists. As a result, his work is intellectually appealing to both believers and those looking for a logical basis for theism.

2. Empirical Observation Use: Rather than relying on abstract or entirely theoretical assumptions, his reasoning is founded on observable events like motion, change, and causality. Aquinas begins with what we can see in the world, in contrast to Anselm's ontological argument, which is based on a definition of God. Because of this empirical basis, his arguments are easier to comprehend and more practical, particularly for individuals who have been impacted by Aristotelian or scientific methodologies.

3. Clarity and Logical Organization: Aquinas' arguments are logically sound and well-organized, making them helpful resources for teaching, discussion, and analysis. The Five Ways all adhere to a straightforward syllogistic structure: There is a phenomenon (such as motion). A phenomenon needs an explanation (like a mover). An infinite regress is considered untenable. As a result, God must be identified as the ultimate cause or unmoved mover. In part because his proofs are still so important in theological and philosophical instruction, this clarity makes them simple to analyze and assess.

4. Compatibility with Science and Metaphysics: Aquinas' ideas are founded on metaphysical notions that were commonly held and in agreement with the scientific understanding of his day. Despite the evolution of contemporary science, Aquinas' metaphysical concepts, such as actuality vs. potentiality, or the concept of contingent vs. necessary beings, continue to have an impact on current discussions in metaphysics and cosmology. In light of current science (e. g., Big Bang cosmology), some modern theologians and philosophers have reinterpreted Aquinas's arguments to support a creator.

5. The Notion of a Necessary Being: His argument from contingency (Third Way) raises the strong idea of a necessary being a being that is compelled to exist and is not dependent on anything else. This notion has significantly impacted subsequent philosophical theology and continues to be a key topic in discussions about the reason for the existence of anything. The notion that not everything is contingent leads to worthwhile discussions regarding ultimate explanation, a subject that runs through both theistic and atheist metaphysical investigations.

6. Philosophical Theism rather than Religious Dogma: Aquinas promotes the God of philosophy over any particular faith. His arguments are not based on Christian theology, but rather seek to establish the reality of a first cause, a necessary being, or an intelligent creator, as opposed to the Trinity, the Bible, or salvation. Because of this, his work is pertinent to discussions of religion and even secular philosophy.

7. Influence and Longevity: The very fact that Aquinas' Five Ways have had such a significant and lasting impact is proof of their potency. Theologians, philosophers, and even detractors have discussed Aquinas' Five Ways for more than 700 years. His ideas have contributed to the development of Scholasticism, Catholic theology, and a large portion of Western metaphysical thought. They are still taken seriously in classes on the philosophy of religion all across the world.

4.1.2 Demerits

The Aquinas of St. Thomas Although there are valid criticisms, Five Ways is one of the most persuasive arguments for the existence of God. His reasoning has been shown to have logical, metaphysical, and empirical flaws by philosophers in both theist and atheist schools of thought. Aquinas' Five Ways are historically important and philosophically profound, but they also have some significant drawbacks, such as logical assumptions (e. g. , no infinite regress), outdated metaphysics, selective exemptions for God, and a lack of connection between a first cause and the personal God of religion. In a contemporary philosophical and scientific framework, these critiques undermine the arguments' persuasiveness even if they don't invalidate them completely.

The primary drawbacks of Aquinas' arguments (or weaknesses) are listed below:

1. The Problem of Infinite Regress: Aquinas maintains that a first cause (God) is required because an infinite regression of causes or movers is not possible. However, this premise is not supported by evidence. According to detractors like Bertrand Russell and David Hume, infinite regress is not logically inconsistent. It's impossible to say for certain why the series of events couldn't continue indefinitely into the past. The notion of a multiverse with no "first cause" or an infinitely existing cosmos is even supported by some current cosmological models.

2. Special Pleading: Why exclude God? Aquinas makes the case that everything requires a cause other than God. This leads to a logical contradiction: If everything must have a cause, then why is God an exception? The cosmos itself may be uncaused or necessary if God can be uncaused or necessary. This objection demonstrates that Aquinas' reasoning might arbitrarily apply laws to the cosmos while excluding God, thereby undermining the argument's objectivity.

3. Relies on Aristotelian Metaphysics: Aquinas' reasoning is based on Aristotelian principles, such as potentiality vs. reality, formal and ultimate causes, and the notion that all things strive towards specific goals. These metaphysical concepts were common in medieval philosophy, but they are now widely refuted, particularly in analytic philosophy and modern science. For example, Aquinas' framework seems obsolete since physics today does not make use of the ideas of "final causes" or "essences. "

4. Reliance on the Principle of Sufficient Reason: Aquinas bases his argument on the notion that everything must have a cause or explanation, which is a tenet that many thinkers, including David Hume, have refuted. According to Hume, causation is a habit of mind, not a requirement of the universe. For instance, quantum physics demonstrates that certain events, such as radioactive decay, can happen without any underlying causes, calling into question the universality of Aquinas' principle.

5. The Leap to the Christian God: Even if Aquinas' arguments successfully establish a first cause or necessary being, they do not demonstrate that this being is the God of Christianity. Aquinas' arguments do not demonstrate that the being is: Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnibenevolent, or Personal. As a result, much more effort is required to connect a metaphysical first cause to the God of the Bible or any particular religious tradition.

6. The Contingency Argument is Conceptually Weak: Aquinas's Third Way, which derives from contingency, asserts that the existence of contingent beings necessitates the existence of a necessary being to account for them. According to critics, necessity is not a logical result of contingency. The fact that something may not have existed does not mean that it must exist. It's conceivable that there is no explanation for the existence of the universe. This is referred to as a "brute fact" argument.

7. Theologically Driven and Anthropocentric: Aquinas' reasoning frequently posits that the universe is purposeful, ordered, and headed toward ends, assumptions that seem to be influenced by theological or anthropocentric biases. For instance, the Fifth Way derives design from the natural order. However, modern science (such evolution, natural selection) offers naturalistic explanations for apparent design. Critics contend that Aquinas viewed nature through a religious perspective as opposed to a neutral one.

8. Using God as a "Stopgap" Explanation: Aquinas employs God to provide an explanation for what caused the cosmos or why it exists, which is something that humans are unable to comprehend. This is sometimes referred to as the "God of the gaps" fallacy, which involves bringing up God as the solution to the unknown. The explanatory power of such claims has diminished as human knowledge has increased, particularly in the sciences, and many gaps formerly ascribed to God have closed.

4.2 SUMMARY

Through a methodical and logical approach to theology, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), one of the most influential medieval theologians and thinkers, attempted to bridge the gap between faith and reason. Aquinas offered five proofs or Five Ways in his masterwork, the *Summa Theologica*, to support the existence of God. These assertions are based on observation, experience, and Aristotelian philosophy, rather than divine revelation. His aim was to establish a logical basis for believing in a Creator and to

demonstrate that faith and reason are not in opposition. This essay offers a synopsis of the fundamental principles underlying each of the Five Ways, along with a quick discussion of their philosophical significance.

In conclusion, Aquinas' Five Ways provide a philosophical basis for belief in God by appealing to observable phenomena such as motion, cause, contingency, degrees of perfection, and design, all of which point to the existence of a transcendent being. All of the arguments, despite their different emphases, attempt to demonstrate the need for an ultimate being or first cause, which is known as God. In these debates, Aquinas doesn't try to establish every characteristic of the Christian God, but he does lay the foundation for a logical faith in a Creator. His attempts to reconcile faith and reason are still at the center of classical theology and continue to have an impact on philosophy.

1. The Argument from Motion (The First Way): Aquinas noted that everything in the universe is in motion and that nothing moves by itself. In contrast, anything that moves is moved by something else. Nevertheless, there would be no first mover and thus no movement at all if this chain of movers were to continue forever. As a result, there must be a First Mover who initiates everything while being unaffected by outside forces. According to Aquinas, we recognize God as this unmoved mover.

2. The Causation Argument (The Second Way): Aquinas observed that in the natural world, every consequence has a cause. Because it would imply that something existed

before it did, which is a contradiction, nothing can bring itself into being. However, similar to motion, the chain of causes cannot regress indefinitely. The First Cause must be uncaused. God, according to Aquinas, is this unavoidable first cause.

3. The Argument from Contingency (The Third Way): Aquinas noticed that everything in the universe is contingent, meaning that it may or may not exist. Because contingent beings don't have to exist, there must have been a time when there were none. However, this cannot be the case since it is impossible to create something out of nothing. As a result, there must be a necessary being that is inherently necessary and the cause of the existence of all contingent beings. God is this indispensable being.

4. The Argument from Gradation (The Fourth Way): Aquinas observed that the world's objects exhibit varying degrees of goodness, truth, and nobility. These gradations imply that other things are judged against a yardstick of utmost excellence. Similar to how there must be a maximum of being perfectly good, true, and noble, there must also be something that is warmest to measure all degrees of heat. Aquinas identifies this being as God, the ultimate source of all perfection.

5. The Argument from Design (The Fifth Way): Aquinas's last proof is based on the obvious order and purpose of the cosmos. He observed that non-intelligent things, such as natural forces and objects, behave regularly and predictably in pursuit of goals. In the same way that an arrow hits a target because it is guided by an archer, their directedness

must originate from something intelligent because they are not intelligent themselves. Consequently, Aquinas refers to God as the intelligent creator implied by the natural order.

4.3 CONCLUSION

One of the most enduring intellectual accomplishments in the history of Western philosophy and theology is Aquinas' proofs for God's existence. Aquinas's Five Ways sought to show that belief in God can be founded on logical reasoning about the natural world rather than only on religious teachings or revelation. He said that the existence of a necessary, uncaused, intelligent entity—which he calls God—is implied by the observed characteristics of motion, causality, contingency, degrees of perfection, and the perceived order in the universe. The logical and methodical aspect of Aquinas' method is its strength. He bases his arguments on universal experiences that everyone, regardless of faith, can identify with, rather than starting with presumptions of faith. Both philosophical thinkers looking for a rational foundation for metaphysical faith and religious audiences found this logical framework appealing. By doing so, Aquinas helped build the intellectual underpinnings of the Catholic Church and the Scholastic tradition for centuries to come by establishing a connection between Christian theology and classical philosophy, notably the teachings of Aristotle.

Despite the impact of Aquinas' arguments, they do have some drawbacks. His rejection of infinite regress has been criticized, as has the leap from a "first cause" to the personal God of religious worship, and his dependence on outmoded metaphysical ideas has been refuted. Additionally, advances in modern science and philosophy, notably in quantum mechanics and existentialism, have brought up new issues that Aquinas's medieval perspective may not be able to completely answer. Nonetheless, Aquinas' initiative is still quite important. His arguments are not empirically conclusive, but rather provide a philosophical justification for believing in a Creator as logical and consistent within a metaphysical framework. The Five Ways still elicit debate and discussion on some of the most profound themes regarding existence, causality, purpose, and the divine, regardless of whether they are accepted or refuted. As a result, Aquinas' work stands out as a historical turning point as well as a vital contribution to the continuous discussion about faith and reason.

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