

Concerning the Existence of God

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Vincent Turrietta
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St. Meinrad Seminary
St. Meinrad, Indiana



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Introduction

With regard to the existence of God, Saint Thomas studies the three following problems.

1. Whether the existence of God is a self-evident truth?
2. Whether, at least, it is a demonstrable truth?
3. Whether God exists?

A truth can be made known by way of evidence, either immediate evidence (self-evident), or mediate evidence (demonstration).^{1.}

To establish the problem in knowing the existence of God, the Angelic Doctor first of all asks himself if the existence of God is a truth evident in itself, that manifests itself to our intelligence through the single apprehension of its terms: namely, God and to exist.^{2.} If then it be an immediate truth, there is no room for demonstration.

But if this first problem be determined in a negative sense so that it be said that God does not exist, then spontaneously spurts another problem: for either, the existence of God cannot absolutely be known or, on the other hand be rationally demonstrated or again perhaps be known only by way of faith and tradition. If it is answered that the existence of God can be rationally demonstrated, a third and last problem is brought up. What is the proof for the existence of God? Is there more than one proof? Which are the proofs for this demonstration? The doctrine of Saint Thomas displayed at length is that the ex-

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istence of God is not self-evident but rather that it can be rationally demonstrated a posteriori^{3.}, beginning with five distinct aspects of created and contingent being that constitute five different means or ways to proceed from creature to Creator.

I. The existence of God is not self-evident.

Encountered with this question, the Angelic Doctor since the beginning of his magisterial career stated that the existence of God is not such an evident and manifest truth so that by simply apprehending the terms God and to exist is sufficient enough to make it be known. In order to apprehend that it must be thus, it is enough to propose the contrary concepts since those opposite opinions are found to be confused.

It is true, the existence of God can be accepted in one of two different manners. For either God's existence can be known under a common and confused knowledge as for instance from happiness in general or because of a proper reason through some proper and exclusive attribute of God such as unmoved mover, first cause, necessary being, subsistent being, and finally the intelligence that orders all natural things.

Knowledge that is had of the existence of God through some exclusive attribute of Himself, is proper, eventhough it might still be imperfect as regards the essence for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence.^{4.} But to know the existence of God because of some common, general, and confused reason, is not properly speaking to know the existence

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of God. Just like one who sees a man far away does not see Peter even though the man whom he is looking at might actually be Peter. In like manner to know the existence of God only because of happiness, is not to know the existence of God; even though in truth God might be our happiness, yet many think that happiness consists in power, others in riches, and not a few in pleasures.⁵ Hence it is clear that if the existence of God can be known through reason it has to be known through its proper reason.

At this point it is necessary to make another distinction considering that a truth can be evident in many ways. In general it is said that truth is evident when the predicate of a proposition is contained in its subject as for instance when we say that the whole is greater than the part. The predicate "greater than the part" is contained in the subject "whole". Hence this statement is self-evident in itself and to all men.

The containment of the predicate in the subject can be manifest to our intelligence or it can not. Whereby in some instances the predicate is contained in the subject without our perception of the two extremes of the proposition. On this supposition, the proposition is evident in itself but not to us.

Now in a proposition whereby a certain truth is evident to us may happen in two ways, either to every man or only to the wise according as the signification of the subject or predicate be manifest. The proposition whole is greater than the part is evident to all men since everyone knows what is whole and

4) what is part and consequently is clearly seen by all. On the other hand, however, in the proposition "incorporeal beings do not occupy space" is evident only to the wise because only they understand what is incorporeal and what is to occupy space, since things occupy space because of the quantity⁶ in them but quantity is entirely lacking in incorporeal beings.

The existence of God considered under a particular and proper reason is not evident to man because it is necessary that in the apprehension of the subject we may also see the predicate because then only is it self-evident. Eventhough it is certain that the existence of God is contained in the divine essence but are men able to have direct understanding of the divine essence and see that it is contained in its existence? This is what the Ontologists claim yet reason plainly shows that it is impossible for man who is spirit and matter cannot understand except by means of abstract ideas from images which are received through the senses.⁷

The intellect of man cannot directly and immediately know a being that is completely spiritual muchless be it also infinite. Man then must proceed from the material and sensible world to the spiritual and divine since St. Thomas says that because the essences of the simple substances are more hidden from us, we ought to begin with the essences of composite substances, so that, beginning with easier matters, we may advance more suitably in knowledge.⁸ The apprehension or intuition of the divine essence is naturally impossible for every-

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one, hence the existence of God in spite of being self-evident in itself is not self-evident to all men.⁹

II. The existence of God can be demonstrated.

Just because a truth is not evident does not mean that it is absolutely imperceptible. It can also be known by way of faith or through demonstration, from hence results the first question. Can this truth be demonstrated? Is it only known by way of faith?

Two major objections have proceeded denying the possibility for demonstration. One objects because it refuses to acknowledge the entire bond of causality between God and the world (lack of objective medium), the other because, eventhough this bond of causality is admitted, man, it claims, does not have enough power to see the transition from the effect to the cause lack of subjective medium . The Modern Agnostics have been founded on the first motive. Confirmed on the second the Traditionalists of all times have rejected it. Hence the ones who deny the demonstration of the existence of God without falling into atheism cleave to faith (Traditionalists), or practical reason (Kant), or to a religious sentiment (Modernists).

Demonstration in general is the acquiring of a truth by means of another truth that is more known to us. Demonstration is generally divided into propter quid and quia. However since here we are mainly concerned with the quia demonstration it will not be necessary to explain the propter quid. The quia

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demonstration can be of two kinds, either a priori or a posteriori. In the demonstration a priori we proceed from cause to effect, from a thing that is naturally first to another that comes afterwards as a truth that is more clear in itself to another that is less clear in itself. On the contrary in a posteriori demonstration, reason deduces from effect to cause,¹⁰ from a thing that is naturally posterior to another that has preceded, from a truth that is more clear to us to another that is more clear in itself.

The effect formally considered speaks subordination and actual dependence on the cause that has produced it and furthermore carries stamped in its being the seal of its proper cause since every agent produces an effect similar to itself in the form whereby it acts. The knowledge of the effect logically brings us to the knowledge of the cause, the knowledge of subordination and actual dependence of the effect to the knowledge of the existence of the cause upon which the effect depends.

The knowledge from the nature of the effect properly follows the nature of the cause either perfect or imperfect according as to whether the effects are univocal or analogical.¹¹ The actual dependence of an effect makes known to us the existence of its cause and the more or less perfect similarity which it has with the cause manifests to us a greater or lesser perfection of the nature of the cause. From here is inferred that in every a posteriori demonstration the effect formally considered as a dependent and subordinate being ought to be

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more known to us than the cause since the cause has to be known through the effect.

Consequently in order that a cause be demonstrated by its effects two conditions are required. In the first place the cause has to have effects, and secondly the effects formally considered as being dependent and subordinate have to be better known to us than the cause.^{12.}

Now there is no doubt that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated a priori because the divine being does not have a cause since He is uncaused being that exists in virtue of His own essence. On the other hand it can be perfectly demonstrated a posteriori because it has effects and because these effects are better known to us than His existence. God has effects because all the things of this sensible world have been caused, preserved and governed by Him. The sensible beings are better known to us than God, not only according to their nature but also according to their dependence and subordination because various characters are drawn from them like for instance motion, causality, contingency, and ordination to an end, which manifestly show their dependence to a superior cause.

Hence there is no other way to rationally demonstrate the existence of God than by that of causality. That is why if someone denies the objectivity of causality and consequently the value of the principle of causality condemns himself to agnosticism with respect to the existence of God. Now admitted the principle of causality, the demonstration of the existence

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of God is imposed to reason as a certain and necessary truth because by the principle of causality we know God as the first cause and final end of all beings in the universe. Hence we find God as the author and preserver of nature. That is why the existence of God is so necessary.

III. The Thomistic demonstration on the existence of God.

A. What we mean by God.

Whenever is intended the demonstration of the existence of a cause through its effects it is necessary to suppose beforehand the nominal definition of the cause. This is because then only are we able to esteem if the conclusion of such demonstration coincides with the cause of which existence we investigate.

For this reason in the demonstration of the existence of God we ought to begin with the current concept that all men have concerning God. All men when speaking of God desire to signify by this name a superior and transcendental being in contrast to all other beings. They designate God as the one who forms, governs, and directs all beings in the order to their respective ends.^{13.}

Now this is what is understood by the name God and consequently the problem of the existence of God may be proposed in the following terms. 'Whether there exists some being that transcends and that is superior to all other beings as forming, moving, governing, and directing them to their respective and common end? Hence if we can demonstrate the existence of such a being, we have proved the existence of God since we signify

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no other thing by this name.

B. How the demonstration ought to be proposed.

Every way used in demonstrating the existence of God will consist of a point of departure, beginning with created things. The point of departure is always a manifest sensible effect, a being of real experience. The different ways are taken from movement, the subordination of efficient causes, the contingency of sensible beings, the gradation of transcendental perfections and the ordination to an end. Now the question might be asked, how is it possible for reason to elevate itself to God from these beings that we know through experience.

The first step that reason has to take is to demonstrate that these beings are effects which have been caused. Following this sequence it is necessary to assure ourselves that whatever is moved is moved by another, a subordinate cause is moved by a superior cause, contingent being is caused by necessary being, participated perfection in distinct grades is caused by the same existing in the highest grade, and finally an unintelligible being that acts for an end is caused, moved, and directed by an intelligence. The effect once being assured then reason in virtue of the principle of causality is able to demonstrate the existence of the cause.

The second step is common to all five ways. It claims that in a subordination per se of causes it is impossible to proceed to infinity but that it is absolutely necessary to arrive at a first cause upon which all the rest of the causes depend.

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Hence there has to exist a prime mover that moves everything, a first cause that puts in activity all the rest, a necessary being that is the cause of all contingent being, a first being that is the origin of every other being in whatever it may exist, and a first intelligence that directs all things to their respective ends.^{114.}

Consequently all the ways of St. Thomas have at least: a point of departure, consignment of actual experience; a first step, the actual experience must necessarily be caused; a second step, in a subordination per se of causes it is necessary to arrive at a first cause; and the end of way, this first cause is God and therefore God exists.

C. Number, order and sufficiency of the arguments of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas proposes five ways to demonstrate the existence of God. Now has this number been intended or does it happen to be merely accidental? Here we have a new and interesting problem on the sufficiency and connection of the five ways.

There is always someone who thinks that not all the ways of the Angelic Master have proper and independent value to demonstrate the existence of God. Some denied the value of the first, second, and fourth proof. Others go to the other extreme and say that none of the ways by itself is sufficient but that all are like integral parts in one whole argument and it alone has demonstrative force.

However the ones that express themselves in this manner

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show that they have not reach the depth of the thought of St. Thomas. Without any shadow of doubt for the Angelic Doctor everyone of the ways is apodictically demonstrated. For St. Thomas there are five ways all of which are firm and certain arriving to the existence of God.

Authors have strained themselves in organizing and systematizing these five ways indicating the connection that exists within them and why there are five in number. Some tend to write mostly on the point of departure, others consider the connection between the creatures and God; yet all attach the proofs with the diverse genera of causality.

It is evident that St. Thomas distinguishes, ordains, and denominates his five ways according to the distincts points of departure. Five distincts points of departure from which reason proceeds by way of efficient causality until the existence of God is reached.

According to the letter and the spirit of the Angelic Doctor we are able to propound a system concerning the five ways. This system^{not only gives us} sufficient reason for the precise number of proofs, but at the same time shows us why there is no necessity for more.

Every demonstration concerning the existence of God has to be from some created being known by us. Created being is or can be divided properly into:

- 1) dynamic being or being in motion
- 2) static being or entitative being.

Consequently, the proofs for the existence of God have to

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proceed from:

1) Either created being considered in motion. This motion or "fieri" in the Aristotelian-Thomistic acceptance of the term comprises three elements. 1)actus mobilis 2)actus motoris and 3)via ad terminum. The first, second, and fifth proof for the existence of God are taken from these three concepts of created being.

2) Or created being considered as entitative being it is necessary to distinguish two formalities. 1)esse 2)duratio in esse or esse perdurans. Under the first formality as well as under the second, created being as the object of our experience is limited, finite, and consequently has been caused.

It is limited with respect to duration since we see that being in sensible things begins by generation and ends by corruption. It is corruptible being, contingent, possible to be and not to be, and as such has to be caused. St. Thomas uses this aspect of being as the bases for the third proof.

Furthermore it is limited by reason of existence. This supposes that it is not something of the essence of the created but ab extrinseco and the fourth way is derived from this consideration.

D. The five ways of St. Thomas.

1) The first way is the demonstration of the existence of an unmoved mover, who is God, from motion.

The first argument is based on motion perceived by the senses,¹⁵ and analyzed from the point of view of Metaphysics.

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Motion, considered from the point of view of Metaphysics, is any transition, successive of instantaneous, from potency to act. The argument concludes to the existence of an unmoved mover, because an infinite series of movers subordinated to one another in virtue of motion is impossible. A mover is an agent which reduces a mobile being from potency to act.¹⁶ An unmoved mover is used here to designate not a mover in potency, i.e., a mover having the immobility of potency, but a mover which actually moves without transition from potency to act, i.e., a mover that excludes all potentiality. Movers subordinated to one another because of motion are essentially subordinated movers, and as such are distinct from accidentally subordinated movers.

Essentially subordinated movers are movers of which the inferior is moved by the superior to the act by which it moves; v. g., when a child's hand writes under the actual influence of his teacher's hand.

Accidentally subordinated movers are movers which are subordinated to one another not because of actual motion, but in virtue of some other nexus; v.g., a boy acting not under the actual influence of his father is as an agent, i.e., a mover, accidentally subordinated to his father, because he received from his father the operative power by which he acts.

Now the demonstration may be summed up as follows. It is certain, and, indeed, testified by the senses, that some things move in this world. But everything which moves is moved by another, and ultimately by an unmoved mover. Therefore there

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exists an unmoved mover, which we call God.

Everything which moves is moved by another. A thing is moved in as much as it is in potency, and moves in as much it is in act; for to be moved is to be reduced from potency to act, and nothing is reduced from potency to act except by a being in act. But it is impossible that a thing be at the same time in potency and in act in the same respect principle of contradiction . Therefore it is impossible that a thing at the same time be moved and move in the same respect, i.e., everything which moves is moved by another.

Everything which moves is moved ultimately by an unmoved mover. Everything which moves is moved by another;^{17.} and, if this mover moves, it is moved by another, and this latter is moved by another, etc. But an infinite series of essentially subordinated movers is impossible, because the secondary movers move only because actually moved by the first mover; and, if the first mover does not exist, neither secondary movers nor motion can any longer exist. Therefore everything which moves is moved ultimately by an unmoved mover. Thus St. Thomas:

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once

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in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.¹⁸.

The argument may be summarized as follows: Motion of any kind must be reduced to an unmoved mover as to its proper and immediate cause. Moreover, motion is composed of potency and act. But the proper cause of a compound of potency and act is pure act.

The first of the five ways abstracts from the eternity or non-eternity of the world, for it proves only that all motion actually proceeds from the first unmoved mover.

Since an unmoved mover does not admit of potency, God is pure act, and therefore is a being that is infinite, simple, all perfect, im mutable, etc.

- 2) The second way is the demonstration of the existence of the first efficient cause, which is God, from essentially subordinated efficient causes.

The second argument is based on essentially subordinated efficient causes. An efficient cause is the first principle, i. e., first source, of motion. Essentially subordinated efficient

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causes are distinct from accidentally subordinated efficient causes.

Essentially subordinated efficient causes are causes which are subordinated to one another in virtue of their causality in such manner that the causality of the inferior cause actually depends on the causality of the superior; v.g., when a bat sets a ball in motion because it is set in motion by the hand, and the hand by another cause.

Accidentally subordinated efficient causes are causes which are subordinated to one another not because of their causality, but because of some other nexus; v.g., if in his work an artificer successively uses several hammers because he breaks one after the other, these hammers are subordinated to one another not because of their causality, but in time. Similarly, a son who engenders is an efficient cause subordinated to his father, not essentially subordinated, i.e., because of causality, but accidentally, in virtue of his origin.

The first efficient cause is that cause which depends on no other for its existence and operation, but on which others depend. ^{19.} It is an uncaused cause.

We find in our observation of sensible things that there are essentially subordinated causes. But regress into infinity in essentially subordinated causes is impossible. Therefore there must needs be a first efficient cause, which all call God.

The major is evident in virtue of the principle of causality. For everything composed of potency and act has a

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cause. But every sensible efficient cause, as actually efficient, is composed of potency and act: for its action is act which is really distinct from its operative power, because we see it pass from the state of repose to operation. Therefore every sensible efficient cause is constituted actually efficient by some other cause; in other words, it is essentially subordinated to a superior cause.

The minor states that if there is regress into infinity in essentially subordinated causes, there is no first cause. But there must be a first cause in a series of essentially subordinated causes; for the first is the cause of the intermediary, and the intermediary, whether one or many, is the cause of the last. To disallow the first cause is to disallow intermediary causes and effects. Therefore regress into infinity in essentially subordinated causes is impossible. Hence St. Thomas says:

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known neither is it, indeed, possible in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several or one only. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.²⁰

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A briefer exposition of the second argument may be made as follows: An efficient cause whose operation is act really distinct from its potency is essentially subordinated to a cause whose operation is not act really distinct from its potency, but which is its own operation. This is the principle of causality as applied in the order of efficient causes. Therefore, since the first efficient cause is its own operation, it is pure act, and therefore simple, infinite, all-perfect, etc. Therefore God operates in everything that is in operation, since He constitutes everything in actual operation.

- 3) The third way is the demonstration of the existence of a necessary being which is God, from the contingency of things which are engendered and corrupt.

A contingent being is a being which can exist or not exist. A necessary being is a being which cannot not exist, i.e., a being whose existence is indefectible. There are two kinds of necessary being: necessary being of caused necessity *ens necessarium ab alio*, and necessary being of uncaused necessity, i.e. being necessary of itself *ens necessarium a se*.

A necessary being of caused necessity is a being which once existing cannot not exist, but which receives its existence from another; the human soul. Such a being is contingent in as much as it can be produced, although absolutely necessary in as much as it is incorruptible.

A necessary being of uncaused necessity is a being which cannot not exist, because it is uncaused and incorruptible.

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This being is necessary of itself, and is called God.

Contingent beings which are engendered and corrupt exist. But the proper cause of a contingent being which is engendered and corrupts is a necessary being. Therefore a necessary being exists. But, if this necessary being is a being whose necessity is caused, its proper cause is a necessary being whose necessity is uncaused. Therefore there exists a necessary being whose necessity is uncaused, i.e., a necessary being of uncaused necessity, which we call God.

The major is evident from experience, for we see bodies engendered and corrupt.

The minor has to be such because the proper cause of a being produced from preexisting potency is a being in act not produced from preexisting potency: act is always prior to potency principle of causality. But a contingent being which is engendered is produced from preexisting potency, i.e., from prime matter. Therefore the proper cause of a contingent being which neither is engendered nor caused is necessary. Now an infinite series of necessary beings whose necessity is caused is impossible, because, in virtue of the principle of causality, the proper cause of a necessary being whose necessity is not caused. This proposition is evident from its very terms. St. Thomas with regards to this proof states as follows:

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is

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possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence, which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.²¹

Necessary being of uncaused necessity has no cause, and therefore is pure act.

- 4) The fourth way is the demonstration of the existence of a most perfect being, which is God, from the degrees of perfection.

The fourth argument is based on the different degrees of goodness, truth, and similar perfections found in things; v.g., a living being has more goodness and truth than a non-living being; likewise, a knowing being has more goodness and truth than either a living or a non-living being, because a knowing being has all the perfections of a living and a non-living being, and others as well.

Although goodness, truth, and similar perfections are not of themselves sensible notions, yet they are accidentally such, in as much as the intellect perceives that a thing known by the

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senses is good, true, etc. Hence the fourth argument, like the others, is founded on sense knowledge, according to the principle that knowledge in a way begins with the senses.

Goodness, truth, and similar perfections are absolute perfections perfectiones simpliciter simplices, and are distinct from mixed perfections perfectiones secundum quid simplices.

An absolute perfection is a perfection whose formal concept admits of no imperfection; v.g., every perfection which is convertible with being, as goodness, truth, unity, etc., and also every perfection which has a transcendental relation to being as such, as the intellect, the will, etc. A mixed perfection is a perfection whose formal concept admits of imperfection; v.g., extension, vegetative being, etc.

The fourth argument proceeds, in virtue of the principle of causality, from the degree of perfections to the being which possesses the fulness of perfection. An absolute perfection has different degrees in as much as it is participated and is limited, i.e., is received as act into potency which is really distinct from it and which limits it. The cause of any being composed of potency and act is a being which is not a compound of potency and act, i.e., pure act, which is being possessing the fulness of perfection.

Various degrees of goodness, truth, and nobleness are found in things. But the proper cause of beings which are more or less good, more or less true, and more or less noble is a being which possesses goodness, truth, and nobleness in an un-

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limited degree, and consequently is sovereign being. Therefore there exists a sovereign being which is the cause of being, the goodness, and all the other perfections of things; and this being we call God. St. Thomas writes the fourth way as follows:

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and less good, true, noble, and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that here is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. 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. 22.

The major is evident from the statement of the question. The minor states that the proper cause of a participated perfection is a being which is essentially this perfection. But goodness, truth, and nobleness have different degrees in as much as they are participated in different ways. Therefore the proper cause of beings which are more or less good, more or less true, more or less noble, is a being which of its essence is goodness, truth, and nobleness, i.e., a being which is sovereignly being: for a being which of its essence is good, true, and noble is pure act, for these perfections do not admit of potency in their formal concept.

Since every mixed perfection admits of imperfection, i.e., of composition of potency and act, in its formal concept, every

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mixed perfection has a cause. But we cannot proceed from a mixed perfection to a being which possesses the fulness of this perfection in the same genus, i.e., in the same order of perfection. For a mixed perfection cannot exist as the fulness of perfection, i.e., as pure act. Thus, for example, the proper cause of man is not a being which is the fulness of man, i.e., sovereign man; since man is a limited and participated being, his proper cause is a being which has no limitation, i.e., is being of its very essence.

- 5) The fifth way is the demonstration of the existence of the supreme intelligent author of finality, who is God, from the finality of natural things.

Natural things are things which lack knowledge. The fifth way proceeds from the finality of natural things, that is to say from the fact that natural things are directed to an end which is their operation, and consequently to the object to which their operation tends.

Natural things are in potency to the operation to which they are directed as to their end. Hence this fifth way argues from composition of potency and act, from the point of view of finality, appealing to the principle: all potency refers, i. e., has a transcendental relation, to act.

Natural things, i.e., things which have no knowledge, act for an end. But things which have no knowledge do not tend to an end unless directed to it by some being which has knowledge and intelligence. Therefore there exists some supreme intelligent

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being by which all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God. 23.

St. Thomas is here appealing to the fact of internal finality, not external; to the finality which is observable in things destitute of intelligence taken separately; as that the eye is directed to seeing, the ear to hearing, wings to flight.²⁴ External finality, the purpose of some noxious animal, such as a viper, or of a disease germ, is often difficult to discover; whereas internal finality, such as the purpose of the organs of the body, is plain.²⁵

Natural things always, or at least in the majority of cases, act in the same way, in order to attain what is best for them; v.g., vegetative being act for the attainment of the assimilation, nutrition, conservation, etc., proper to it. Therefore it is not by chance, but as a result of intention, that natural things tend to their end. Natural things have operation i.e., they operate. But every agent acts for an end. Therefore natural things operate for an end.

The directing of a thing to an end can be accomplished

25)

only by a being which apprehends the end as future and possible, and knows the relation and proportion of the things directed to this end. But only an intelligent being can know an end as future and know the proportions of several things to one another. Therefore things which have no knowledge do not tend to an end unless directed to it by some being which has knowledge and intelligence.^{26.}

Footnotes

1. S. Th., I, 2, 1c.
2. Ibid.
3. S. Th., I, 2, 2c.
4. S. Th., I, 2, 2, ad 2m.
5. S. Th., I, 2, 1, ad 1m.
6. Physics, Book I, c. 4, 409a. 20.
7. Post. Analyt., Book I, c. 1.
8. De Ente et Essentia, c. 1.
9. S. Th., I, 2, 1c.
10. Iosepho Gredt O.S.B., Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae, vol. II, p. 170.
11. S. Th., I, 4, 2c.
12. Post. Analyt., Book I, c. 2.
13. Iosepho Gredt O.S.B., Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae, vol. II, p. 193.
14. Ibid., p. 201.
15. Ibid., p. 194.
16. Physics, Book III, c. 3.
17. S. Th., I, 75, 1, ad 1m.
18. S. Th., I, 2, 3c.
19. Iosepho Gredt O.S.B., Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae, vol. II, p. 159.
20. S. Th., I, 2, 3c.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

Footnotes - Cont'd

23. S. Th., I, 2, 3c.

24. Garrigou-Lagrange, God: His existence and His nature, vol. I, p. 347.

25. Phillips, Modern Thomistic Philosophy, vol. II, p. 291.

26. Contra Gentes, II, c. 24.

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