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Ways, Proofs, and the Intelligibility of God:

Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways as Leading into the Intelligibility of an Existing God

by
Bruce John Paolozzi

Claremont Graduate University
2020

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Bruce John Paolozzi as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion with a concentration in Philosophy of Religion and Theology.

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Abstract

Ways, Proofs, and the Intelligibility of God:

Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways as Leading into the Intelligibility of an Existing God

By
Bruce John Paolozzi

Claremont Graduate University: 2020

There is some question about how to understand Thomas Aquinas's five ways of demonstrating that God exists. Often philosophers and theologians portray Thomas as a strict Aristotelian rationalist with a strong emphasis on syllogistic epistemology. Against this view a competing existential, metaphysical, and theological understanding of the five ways has been gradually gaining ground, beginning in the early 20th century, due to the work of existential Thomists such as Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, and Joseph Owen. This understanding has been expanded more recently in the work of John Wippel and others.

The rise of the existential view has led to the question of whether Thomas meant for the five ways to be strict epistemic proofs or whether they are instead a way to talk about God that presumes faith and metaphysics. This dissertation will present the five ways within a full range of contextual issues. These include epistemic, metaphysical, theological, historical, anthropological, and literary contexts. When all contexts are taken into account, the conclusion is that the ways are primarily metaphysical-theological yet they produce epistemic *scientia* resulting in knowledge that God exists. The five ways are primarily examples of how to properly talk about God in light of revelation, metaphysics, and the proper mode of the human knower, yet also syllogistic demonstrations that God exists. Such an understanding holds the potential to

answer some of the arguments of the critics of the five ways, such as Anthony Kenny. Thomas shows himself to be thoroughly grounded in both faith and reason in such a way that there is a healthy balance between them that does proper justice to both faith and reason. The significance of this dissertation comes in two places. The first is the weaving together of a wide range of contextual interpretive factors that are not usually applied specifically and explicitly to the five ways in one unified work. The second is in the unification of the epistemic and theological interpretations of the ways, under a synthesis that accounts for both manners of interpreting the five ways.

Dedicated to my boys.

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Table of Abbreviations

Below is the list of abbreviations used for works by Thomas Aquinas. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and citations are from the listed translations.

- CT* *Compendium theologiae*. Translated by Richard J. Regan as *Compendium of Theology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- DAM* *De aeternitate mundi*. Translated by Ralph McNerny, as “*On the Eternity of the World.*” In *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- DEE* *De ente et essentia*. Translated by Armand Mauerer, CSB as *On Being and Essence*. Second revised edition. Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968.
- De Sensu.* *Sententia libri De sensu et sensate.*
- De Mem.* *Sententia libri De memoria et reminiscencia*
- Diu nom.* *Expositio super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*. Translated by Ralph McNerny, as “*Preface to Exposition of On the Divine Names.*” In *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- DPN* *De principiis naturae*. Translated by Ralph McNerny, as “*On the Principles of Nature.*” In *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- DSS* *De substantiis separatis*. Translated by Francis J. Lescoe as *Treatise on Separate Substances*. West Hartford, CN: Saint Joseph’s College, 1959, Kindle Edition, 2015.
- DUI* *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. Translated by Beatrice H. Zedler as *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1968, 2010.
- In BDH* *Expositio in librum Boethii De hebdomadibus*. Translated by Janice L. Schults and Edward A. Synan as *An Exposition of the “On the Hebdomads” of Boethius*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- In BDT(a)* *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate*. Translated by Armand Maurer as *Faith, Reason, and Theology*. Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987.

- In BDT(b)* *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate*. Translated by Rose E. Brennan and Armand Maurer as *Super Boethium de trinitate*. Veritatus Splendor Publications, Kindle Edition, 2012.
- In CA* *Expositio super librum De causis*. Translated by Vincent A. Guagliardo, OP, Charles R. Hess, OP, and Richard C. Taylor as *Commentary on the Book of Causes*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996.
- In DA* *Sententia libri De Anima*. Translated by Kenelm Foster, OP, and Silvester Humphries, OP, as *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1994.
- In Meta* *Sententia super Metaphysicam*. Translated by John P. Rowan as *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, revised edition. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995.
- In PA* *Sententia libri Posteriorum Analyticorum*. Translated by Richard Berquist as *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 2007.
- In Peri herm.* *Expositio Libri Peri hermeneias*. Translated by Jean T. Oesterle as *Aristotle: On Interpretation Commentary by St. Thomas and Cajetan*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962.
- In Phy.* *Sententia super Physicam*. Translated by Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel as *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995.
- In SA.* *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*. Translated by Joseph B. Collins, SS as *The Catechetical Instructions*. Veritatus Splendor Publications, Kindle Edition, 2012
- QDA* *Questions on the Soul*. Translated by James H. Robb as *Questions on the Soul*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1984, 2009.
- QDM* *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*. Translated by Richard Regan as *On Evil*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003, Kindle edition.
- QDP* *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*. Translated by Richard Regan as *The Power of God*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- QDV* *Questiones disputatae de veritate*. Translated by Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, and Robert Schmidt as *Truth*, 3 vols. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1954, 1994.
- SCG* *Summa contra gentiles*. Translated by Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and Charles J. O'Neil as *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

ST *Summa theologiae*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province as *Summa Theologica*. 5 vols. New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1948. Reprint, Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981.

Super Sent.(a) *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. Translated by E.M. Macierowski as *Thomas Aquinas's Earliest Treatment of the Divine Essence: Scriptum super libros Sententiarum, Book I, Distinction 8*. New York: SUNY Press, 1997.

Super Sent.(b) *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. Translated by Raph McNerny as “The Nature of Theology: Commentary on *Sentences* I, Prologue,” and “The Work of the Six Days of Creation: Commentary on *Sentences* 2.2, d. 12,” in *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

Chapter One: Background

The five ways are the product of a man, and, as such, the life of Thomas Aquinas is important for understanding his work. As with anyone, he was himself the product of the time in which he lived. His historical location in space and time influenced his work. This chapter will explore the initial contexts that are important for understanding work of Thomas Aquinas and the situation of the five ways within the *Summa theologiae* (*ST*), including Aquinas's biography, philosophical and theological influences, the structure of the *ST*, and the initial question of the *ST*. The historical sketch will begin with Aquinas's biography before moving to the rediscovery of Aristotle and the associated controversies at the University of Paris in the 13th century, which was part of an interconnected world comprised mainly of the Mediterranean basin.¹ Thus, the historical outline will then examine the common broad philosophical and theological influences on Aquinas. This chapter will include influences upon Aquinas's thought derived from both European and non-European sources, which includes Islamic and Jewish philosophers. Losing sight of these influences yields a less than complete picture at best, and a distortion of Aquinas's thought at worst. These influences come through in the structure of the *ST* and Aquinas's method articulated in the first question. All of these issues are preliminary to a full understanding of the five ways.

This chapter will not discuss specific precursor arguments to the five ways, but instead, relate the influence of philosophical ideas from Jewish and Islamic thinkers that provide a framework for the five ways. The reason for this is twofold. First, the five ways are highly dependent on the contextual elements from Aquinas's theological and philosophical thought. Such contextual elements are therefore more important than comparing the five ways directly to

¹ David B. Burrell, "Aquinas and Jewish and Islamic Authors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65.

their precursor arguments. Second, there already exist exemplary works that describe precursor arguments found in the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Jewish, and Islamic thinkers.²

The Life of Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas lived from 1224/25 to 1274 C.E. He was born into a minor noble family, the counts of Aquino.³ The family resided in Aquino Italy at a castle fortress known as Roccasecca, which the family had held since entering the region from Lombardy in 887. Situated between Rome and Naples, the location of Roccasecca was important, as this part of Italy had an orientation toward Islamic culture. Burrell writes that the area “reflected a face of Europe turned to the Islamicate, as evidenced in the translations commissioned from Arabic...”⁴ This openness was reflected in the scholarly community established in Naples in 1224 by Emperor Frederick II.⁵ The school fostered cooperative dialogue with Jewish and Islamic thinkers.⁶ His time at the school in Naples exposed Aquinas to broad philosophical and theological ideas originating in the Islamic-Arabic culture that would eventually shape the five ways.

As a noble and politically conscious clan, the Aquino family involved itself in the politics of their time, which held implications for young Thomas. The family’s political situation was between loyalties to the emperor and the Pope.⁷ Part of this was because of the geographic location of Roccasecca between Papal and Imperial power centers. The family political

² The best known and most thorough recent work is William Lane Craig, *The Cosmological Argument From Plato to Leibniz* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980, 2001).

³ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P. *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 1: The Person and His Work* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996, 2005), 2.

⁴ David B. Burrell, “Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 61-2.

⁵ Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Life and Works,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

⁶ Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 142-3.

⁷ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Aquinas’s Summa: Background, Structure, & Reception*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 1.

ambitions meant something specific for Thomas as their youngest son. He was expected to join an abbey with the eventual goal of becoming an abbot or attaining another leadership position in the Church. Such a career would be beneficial for the family's political stature and goals.

Entry into the Church benefited Aquinas by setting him on his intellectual path and, eventually, introducing him to the Dominican Order. They are a mendicant order founded in 1216 by St. Dominic de Gusman and known as the Order of Preachers since they dedicated themselves to preaching and hearing confessions. He began his studies at the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, most likely at the age of five. In 1239, the monks sent him to study liberal arts at the University of Naples, where he eventually joined the Dominicans in 1244. Joining a mendicant order put him outside of the traditional career line associated with leading an Abbey. Aquinas's absence from an ecclesial career path would result in less political power for the family within the Church. The family responded to this threat to their political aspirations by holding Aquinas captive. His mother relented after having his brothers hold him for a year in captivity, and he was free to join the Dominicans afterward.⁸

The Dominicans were interested in ensuring that the bright young Thomas Aquinas received the best education possible. The Order initially sent him to Rome where the leader of the Dominican order resided, John the Teuton.⁹ Aquinas arrived in Rome as John was about to leave for the general chapter meeting at the University of Paris. John brought the young Aquinas with him to Paris where he first met Albert the Great, who would become his mentor. Though this initial Parisian stay is somewhat controversial, Torrell makes a convincing argument that Aquinas finished his initial education at Paris under Albert. Aquinas accompanied Albert as his

⁸ Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 12.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, revised edition, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996, 2005).

teaching assistant when Albert moved on to Cologne.¹⁰ Aquinas stayed with the Dominicans there from 1248 to 1252, and it was in Cologne that he first began teaching.¹¹

Aquinas's theological education then received its capstone through a return to the University of Paris. This was the most prominent university of the time and was central to the intellectual life of Christian Europe.¹² Paris played an extremely important role in medieval education. Nathan Schachner writes that "No education was complete without a sojourn in Paris; the roster of its graduates was a complete list of all the great minds of Europe, of Popes and Kings and Princes, spiritual and temporal."¹³ Aquinas's final education lasted from 1252 to 1256. It was followed by a period of teaching at the University of Paris from 1256 to 1259.¹⁴ Between 1259 and 1269 Aquinas taught at several locations in Italy, including Orvieto. He returned to the University of Paris in 1268, where he held class as *Magister regens* in theology. Aquinas once again left Paris in 1272 under orders from the Pope to set up a new school in Naples.

This call back to Naples would be the final stage of his career and life. His superiors wanted him to set up a new faculty of theology in Italy. He chose the Dominican *Stadium generale* in Naples over other locations because of the inter-faith environment there.¹⁵ He also took the opportunity to reconnect with his family, and his brother-in-law named Aquinas as the executor of his estate. Aquinas was at the height of his career and prestige, which came with an enormous amount of demand. Aquinas experienced numerous mystical experiences, and the stress on him resulted in what has been described as "massive physical and nervous fatigue."¹⁶

¹⁰ Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, 3.

¹¹ Torrell, *The Person and His Work*, 18-24.

¹² Jan A. Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in Its Historical Setting," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.

¹³ Nathan Schachner, *The Mediaeval Universities* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), 56.

¹⁴ Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in Its Historical Setting," 13.

¹⁵ Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," 62.

¹⁶ Torrell, "Life and Works," 27.

During this period, his work slowed and finally ceased in December of 1273. The reason for this cessation is not entirely known. After spending time in ecstasy before God, Thomas told his companion, Reginald, that what he had seen made all his work seem like straw. Not long after this cessation of work, Pope Gregory X called him to journey to Lyons in preparation for the upcoming council. This would prove to be a fateful journey, as he would receive an injury in route that would lead to his death within a few months.

Rediscovery marked the intellectual life of the twelfth and thirteen centuries. Prior to this time, much of Greek science and philosophy had been lost and what remained was difficult to find. Schachner puts this into perspective, writing that, "It is almost impossible for the modern mind to visualize the paucity of that knowledge and the tremendous efforts required to attain it."¹⁷ The rediscovery of Aristotle was new and revolutionary for many Western Europeans, the impact of which cannot be overstated. Steven Marrone writes that this is "Perhaps the most significant single event associated with the ripening of civilization...."¹⁸ The works of Aristotle were copied and made easier to obtain, spreading Aristotelian thought throughout Western Europe. This led to what some call the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.¹⁹ The rediscovery, translation into Latin, and distribution of Aristotle's works transformed the state of human knowledge in Western Europe. There had been translations of Aristotle's *Categories*, but it was only recently in Aquinas's time that the entirety of Aristotle's works were translated into Latin.²⁰

¹⁷ Schachner, *Mediaeval Universities*, 12.

¹⁸ Steven P. Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGraide (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32.

¹⁹ Schachner, *The Mediaeval Universities*, p 12.

²⁰ John F. Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions to the Encounter between Faith and Reason*, the Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1995), 8. The earliest translations of Aristotle into Latin occurred in the sixth century C.E. with Boethius' translations of *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, *Prior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*, (Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," 44). A second wave of translations was from James of Venice in the twelfth century with *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, and *De anima*, and the final wave occurred in the thirteenth century with Michael Scot's nearly complete translation of *Metaphysics* and Robert Grosseteste's translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*. The twelfth and thirteen centuries also saw the translation of major Arab thinkers

Knowledge of the full breadth of the works of Aristotle was a new revelation for medieval scholars, giving them new insight on the world and philosophical issues.²¹

The rediscovery of Aristotle and translations from the Arab world precipitated many changes and controversies, particularly at the University of Paris. These philosophical works prompted a rethinking of the relationships between philosophy and theology as well as faith and reason. Marrone points out that, “So radical a shift in educated attitudes and interests, and so massive an infusion of learning from foreign sources, could hardly avoid provoking opposition.”²² The academic community initially embraced Aristotle, but some thinkers put Aristotle above the received doctrine of the Church. These Radical Aristotelians attempted to fit the articles of faith within the realm of reason. Their work drew the ire of regional Church leaders, who then pushed for banning Aristotle. The difficulty was that Aristotelianism was one of the first intellectual alternatives to Christianity. In his works, Aristotle articulates a full-bodied worldview that owed no debt to Christianity and stood on its own as a viable alternative.²³ Christian thinkers were required to engage these newly encountered sophisticated philosophical works in philosophical terms.²⁴ Steven Marrone writes, “If religion was to attain its full intellectual dignity, theologians had to be conversant with all that the mind could know, no matter what the source.”²⁵ Theologians, therefore, put philosophy to work in service of theology as a handmaiden or *ancilla theologiae*. The controversies at Paris formed many aspects of Aquinas’s work as he dealt with issues derived from the debates there.

from outside of Europe such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Algazel, Averroes, and Moses Maimonides (Frederick Charles Copleston, *Aquinas*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1955, 1991), 65.)

²¹ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 65.

²² Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," 26.

²³ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 65.

²⁴ Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions*, 10.

²⁵ Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," 34.

There were two main periods in which Church leaders condemned Aristotelian propositions. A brief period of relaxation of rules restricting the study of Aristotle overlapped important periods of Aquinas's life. The Charter of the University of Paris prohibited some of the works of Aristotle by 1210, stating that, "Neither the books of Aristotle on natural philosophy nor their commentaries are to be read at Paris in public or secret, and this we forbid under penalty of excommunication."²⁶ Church leaders often applied excommunication in a rather serious and harsh manner that included orders for degradation and life imprisonment for the living, and burning of works, disinterment, and desecration for those posthumously excommunicated.²⁷ In opposition to the Condemnation of 1210, students were privately encouraged to read Aristotle after acquiring the Masters in Arts.²⁸

In 1231 the papacy had recognized some good in the works of Aristotle and ordered that they could be read once "expurgated."²⁹ The Church leadership also made it clear that some sections of Aristotle should be excluded, stating to "entirely exclude what you shall find there erroneous or likely to give scandal or offense to readers...."³⁰ This allowed lecturing and discussion of Aristotle to gradually increase, until circa 1250 the works of Aristotle were firmly entrenched within the University, and by 1255 the reading of the entire known corpus of Aristotle and attending lectures was required of all students.³¹

²⁶ Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, "The Condemnation of 1210 (Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, I, 70)," in *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lynn Thorndike (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp 26 – 27. See also Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions*, 11. The same condemnation also ordered the excommunication of David of Dinant and burning of his works.

²⁷ Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, "The Condemnation of 1210," 26.

²⁸ Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions*, 11.

²⁹ Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, "The Books on Nature to Be Expurgated, 1231 (Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, I, 143 - 44)," in *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lynn Thorndike (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 39 – 40.

³⁰ Chartularium, "The Books on Nature to Be Expurgated," 40.

³¹ Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions*, 12.

Controversy would reappear along with a resurgence of Radical Aristotelianism; however, this time instead of banning Aristotle in general only certain offensive propositions and articles were condemned. Bishop Stephen Tempier of Paris issued this set of condemnations in 1270 and again in 1277.³² It is not possible to know with certainty the sources that prompted the prohibition of these propositions since many of the original sources have not survived and others are simply unidentified.³³ It is important to note that some propositions held by Aquinas were included in the condemnation, even though he spent his time during his second tenure at Paris pushing back against both the Radical Aristotelians and the general detractors of Aristotle.

Aquinas reacted to Aristotle with intellectual engagement, adapting Aristotle as he saw fit. Frederick Copleston writes that “Aquinas, while utilizing Aristotelianism, rethought it critically in the process of building up his own synthesis and of showing the harmony between theology and philosophy.”³⁴ Aquinas’s reliance on Aristotle is most apparent with the form used throughout his works. Aquinas consistently relied on Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* and *On Interpretation* to guide him in developing syllogistic arguments.³⁵ While his knowledge of Aristotle certainly was extensive, it was the case that Aquinas knew Aristotle primarily through Arab interpreters and translations from Arabic to Latin.³⁶ This was not necessarily a ‘pure’ Aristotle. Aquinas received a version of the Stagirite through Islamic and Jewish thinkers that included elements of Neo-Platonism, which he retained.³⁷

³² Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, "Thirteen Errors Condemned by Stephen, Bishop of Paris, 1270 (Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, I, 486 - 487)," in *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lynn Thorndike (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 80 – 81. See also Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions*, 14.

³³ Wippel, *Mediaeval Reactions* 26. This may be a result of the burn orders associated with excommunication as noted in the condemnation of 1210. See Chartularium, "The Condemnation of 1210," 26 – 27.

³⁴ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 67-68.

³⁵ James Doig, "Aquinas and Aristotle," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33.

³⁶ Doig, "Aquinas and Aristotle," 33.

³⁷ Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in Its Historical Setting," 22.

Aquinas continued this inherited synthesis between Plato and Aristotle in light of sacred scripture, keeping some core Platonic concepts and Augustinian theology intact while rearticulating it in Aristotelian terms. In many ways, it is possible to characterize Aquinas's philosophy as a Neoplatonic metaphysic with a distinctly Aristotelian epistemology. Aquinas's contemporaries considered him an advanced thinker because of his adoption and innovation using the philosophy of Aristotle.³⁸ Unlike the Radical Aristotelians, he was not interested in using Aristotle to build a system only accidentally related to Christianity. Rather, he wanted to use Aristotle's philosophy to strengthen and support Christianity. Aquinas adopted what was valid and well supported in Aristotle and rejected what was incompatible with Christianity.³⁹ He never shied away from using the best resources within his tradition as well as those found in Islamic and Jewish sources.

Islamic and Jewish Influence

Aquinas was interested in learning what he could from other faiths, which indebted him to Islamic and Jewish thinker to whom he paid more attention than many of his contemporaries.⁴⁰ It was not uncommon for Medieval Christian thinkers to respectfully consult Jewish commentaries on Old Testament books, Aquinas went further by also consulting Jewish and Islamic philosophy.⁴¹ He did not adopt Islamic and Jewish philosophy uncritically but developed the borrowed concepts while modifying them to suit his Christian theological commitments. Jewish and Islamic thinkers deeply influenced each other. Herbert Davidson writes that "Treating the several branches of medieval philosophy—Islamic, Jewish, and Christian—in

³⁸ Copleston, *Aquinas*, p 66.

³⁹ Copleston, *Aquinas*, p 67.

⁴⁰ David B. Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60.

⁴¹ Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 142.

conjunction with one another is surely justified considering the extent to which they draw sustenance from the same, or similar, sources and are animated by the same spirit.”⁴² The Islamic and Jewish tradition in many ways embodied strands of a single tradition adapted to serve two different faith communities. Aquinas’s early studies at Naples exposed him to a variety of texts from thinkers outside of Europe.

Exposure to extra-European thought would put Aquinas in contact with ideas that would shape the general philosophy in which he worked, especially metaphysics. Much of Aquinas’s basic metaphysical framework relies on terms developed within the work of Islamic interpreters of Aristotle. The Islamic philosophers developed a Platonized Aristotle by blending Plotinus and Aristotle along with natural science and mysticism, which was part of the outcome of their efforts to translate Greek works into Arabic.⁴³ Aquinas carefully chose each of the five ways from specific arguments of other thinkers for use in his own way in the *Summa Theologiae*. As is well known, he has utilized arguments not only directly from Aristotle but also from important interpreters of Aristotle, such as Moses Maimonides, Averroes, Avicenna, and St. Albert, as well as others.⁴⁴ He is quite consciously standing on the shoulders of others, but his arguments are not simply versions of other arguments. On the surface, they look like they are the same or quite similar, but they are reframed in terms of his innovations in metaphysics, epistemology, and theology. This section will briefly look at key concepts developed out of Arabic and Jewish thought used in developing these arguments.

⁴² Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 6.

⁴³ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument* ⁵⁹. One unintentional outcome of this translation effort was the misattribution of some Neo-Platonic works to Aristotle, such as the *Liber de causis*. Aquinas was one of the first to recognize the Neoplatonic nature of the *Liber de causis* and its relation to the work of Plotinus.

⁴⁴ Edward Sillem, *Ways of Thinking About God: Thomas Aquinas and Some Recent Problems* (Darton, Longman & Todd, LTD, London: 1961), p 61.

Islamic thinkers acquired their Platonized Aristotle through the particulars of the historical development of Islamic theology. While Christianity developed its key theological notions within lands dominated by Greek philosophical thought, Islam developed its concepts on its own. Thérèse-Anne Druart examined the difference between Islamic and Christian philosophy writing that “The importance of cultural context can hardly be exaggerated. Where Christianity came as a new religion into a Graeco-Latin civilization in which the classical philosophical schools were well represented, the situation was just the opposite in Islam.”⁴⁵ Islam developed its own philosophy and encountered Greek philosophy as outside thought whereas Christianity developed within the cradle of classical philosophical thought.

Islamic philosophy resolved into two basic camps known as *kalām* (meaning word of Allah) and *falāsifa* (meaning philosophy).⁴⁶ Arabic translators did not maintain the various Greek schools of thought as they went to work translating Greek Philosophy into Arabic. They placed all Greek philosophy into one category, which they labeled *falāsifa*. *Falāsifa* is marked by philosophy as the starting point, making it a movement of philosophical theology.⁴⁷ *Kalām* is marked by the *Qur’an* as a starting point and developed out of disputes regarding how to interpret the *Qur’an*.⁴⁸ The *kālām* movement elaborated its own genuine and original philosophical points.⁴⁹

The great Islamic synthesis would begin with Al-Farabi and reach its height with Avicenna.⁵⁰ Al-Farabi recognized the need to reconcile the views of Plato and Aristotle in his

⁴⁵ Thérèse-Anne Druart, “Philosophy in Islam,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.S. McGrade, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100.

⁴⁶ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument* ⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument* ⁶⁰.

⁴⁸ Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, (Oxford: One World Press, 1997, 2003), 13-14.

⁴⁹ Druart, “Philosophy in Islam,” 98, 100.

⁵⁰ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 132. See also Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 86

treatise titled *Reconciliation of the Two Sages*.⁵¹ Avicenna would build on the work of Al-Farabi, freely admitting a great debt to the earlier thinker. The metaphysical component of the synthesis was a Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation, with the Abrahamic God standing in for the core unifying principles of The Good or The One. As Majid Fakhry explains, “In this metaphysics, the progression from the First Being through the many stages of emanation leading to the prime matter is exhibited.”⁵² This was used to answer the lacuna in Aristotle regarding the nature of being, beginning with distinguishing essence from existence and moving toward an ultimate explanation of being.⁵³ Etienne Gilson writes that “it is not enough to show why it is *this* being and why it is such and such a being, but it must also be shown why it is ‘being.’”⁵⁴ The epistemological component came in the reliance on Aristotelian logic, syllogisms, and demonstration.⁵⁵ Islamic epistemology reached maturity in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, 980-1037), who built a system based on indubitable first principles that syllogistically lead to certain conclusions.

Avicenna’s search for first principles would lead him to adopt three key terms, “the being,” “the thing,” and “the necessary.”⁵⁶ He thought that he could not define the three terms by higher terms; they are known immediately by the soul. Aquinas would use Avicenna’s terms to derive the basic metaphysical terms that he would develop into the important distinction between essence and existence.⁵⁷ Aquinas translates “the thing” into his own thought under the term’s

⁵¹ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 120.

⁵² Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 392.

⁵³ David B. Burrell, “Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers,” 65.

⁵⁴ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956, 2006), 131.

⁵⁵ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 64.

⁵⁶ R.E. Houser, “Introducing the Principles of Avicennian Metaphysics into *Sacra Doctrina*: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiarum*, Bk. 1, d. 8,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2, Spring 2014, 202-205.

⁵⁷ See Aquinas’s commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences* where he overtly cites Avicenna and uses Avicenna’s terms in establishing that being is properly attributed to God. Thomas Aquinas, *Thomas Aquinas’s Earliest Treatment of the Divine Essence: Scriptum super libros Sententiarum, Book I, Distinction 8*, trans. E.M. Macierowski, (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), q1, a1. Hereafter cited as *Super Sent(a)*.

‘quiddity’ and ‘essence.’ Houser writes that Avicenna “explicitly had made the connection between ‘thing’ and ‘quiddity,’ but he had not made explicit the correlative connection of ‘the being’ with ‘existence.’ It is Thomas’s own conclusion”⁵⁸ Avicenna developed the distinction between essence and existence, but the relation of the two remained unexplored in his thought.

Avicenna concerned himself with the problem of the one and the many, especially where it comes to the relation between individuals and universals.⁵⁹ Mereology informs the account of the primary notions (being, thing, one, something, the good, and the true) developed by Avicenna and Aquinas.⁶⁰ The term ‘thing’ or *res* connects with essence and part orientations while ‘being’ or *esse* refers to the whole. Avicenna had pointed out that the way we know the meaning of universals is through the analysis of lower terms.⁶¹ The analysis of lower terms cannot go on to infinity and must end with universals grounded in being, which is prior to one, good, and true.

Avicenna’s work on the distinction between essence and existence is in terms of potentiality and actuality. He wrote that “It is obvious that the actuality of persistence in it must not be the same as the potentiality of persistence in it.”⁶² The potentiality, which is a possibility associated with the essence of a being, is not the same as the persistence of the being, which is its actual existence. Further, the distinction in terms of actuality and potentiality accounts for the

⁵⁸ Houser, “Introducing the Principles of Avicennian Metaphysics,” 204-205.

⁵⁹ Michael E. Marmura, “Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna,” in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 81-2.

⁶⁰ Daniel D. De Haan, “A Mereological Construal of the Primary Notions *Being* and *Thing* in Avicenna and Aquinas,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2, Spring 2014. pp. 335-360.

⁶¹ Houser, “Introducing the Principles of Avicennian Metaphysics,” 206.

⁶² Ibn Sīnā, “On the Soul,” in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50-1. This discussion is in the context of a discourse on the nature of the soul, which is eternal. Avicenna is explaining the being of beings and the difference between the eternal human soul and composed beings.

contingency of beings, thus setting the stage for the argument from contingency. The contingency of beings has to do with their potentiality, while the being of beings accounts for the continued existence of a given being. Avicenna writes that “The concept of potentiality is opposed to the concept of actuality, and the relation of this potentiality is opposed to the relation of that actuality because one is related to corruption and the other is related to persistence.”⁶³ Contingency relates to the potential for corruption or the passing away of being and actuality relates to persistent being of beings. The actualization of a potential being comes from outside of a being’s essence. The existence of any given being is not part of the essence of that being, except in the case of God. Avicenna writes “That potentiality will not actually pertain to a certain essence, but rather to something that occurs to its essence enabling it to persist in actuality, which is not the reality of its essence.”⁶⁴ Thus, if essential possibility does not entail actual existence, then there must be a distinction between essence and existence. Yet, Avicenna leaves the relation between things and being itself unclear. Without an explicit explanation of how being comes from outside of essence, Avicenna leaves open the interpretation that being is an accidental property.⁶⁵ This is indeed how Aquinas and many other interpreters of Avicenna took his meaning.

Creation is one of the key areas of commonality between Christian, Islamic, and Jewish philosophy and theology. The theological doctrine that God freely created the world was a driving force behind much of Islamic philosophy, especially when it comes to theistic proofs. This connects with an emanationist philosophy in that God as creator emanates forth the world.

⁶³ Ibn Sīnā, “On the Soul,” 50-1.

⁶⁴ Ibn Sīnā, “On the Soul,” 50-1.

⁶⁵ There is considerable debate on Avicenna’s view of being. See Olga L. Lizzini “‘A Mysterious Order of Possibles’: Some Remarks on Essentialism and on Beatrice Zedler’s Interpretation of Avicenna and Aquinas on Creation (al-Ilāhiyyāt, the *Quaestiones de Potentia*),” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2, Spring 2014. pp. 237-270, and R.E. Houser, “Introducing the Principles of Avicennian Metaphysics,” 204-5.

Unlike with the Greeks, emanation in the Abrahamic tradition is free rather than a necessary act. In Aristotelian thought, eternity entails necessity. Thus, if the world is eternal, then it must be co-eternal with God from whom the world is generated by necessity. David Burrell remarks that “Since the free creation of the universe marked the divide separating medieval from the ancients, the task of reconciling biblical faith with Greek metaphysics found its natural focus there.”⁶⁶ Because of this, philosophers and theologians operating in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were forced to grapple with the theological notion of free creation against the thought of the rising Aristotelians who denied this doctrine. Indeed, most Jewish and Islamic philosophers endeavored to resolve the issue of creation, as either eternal or free, prior to moving on to the subject of God.⁶⁷ The issue of free creation is played out philosophically in the realm of metaphysics, specifically in philosophical investigations of the nature of causality and being.

Islamic philosophers looked for arguments to connect the world causally to God the creator through each of the four causes; efficient, formal, material, and final. Knowledge of the causes is necessary to understand the answer to the question ‘Why?’ As Avicenna writes in the “Physics” of *The Healing*, “Since we have explained the number of causes and their states for you, we should add that the natural philosopher must be interested in comprehending all of them, and especially the form, so that he completely comprehends the effect.”⁶⁸ Thinking of the world as an effect, the world cannot be fully understood until and unless all four causes are understood. Even when a question only entails an answer about one of the causes, a full and complete answer must go beyond such questions to encompass all causes.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ David B. Burrell, “Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers,” 71. See also Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 133.

⁶⁷ Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2.

⁶⁸ Avicenna, “The Physics” of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), Book One, Chapter 15, paragraph (1), p. 103.

⁶⁹ Avicenna, “The Physics” of *The Healing*, Book One, Chapter 15, paragraph (7), p. 106.

Such a critical concern inevitably sparked debate regarding the nature of causality and how causality relates to God as creator. The Arabic philosophers used cause in two ways, “that which necessarily accompanies its effect” and “that which is free and precedes its effect.”⁷⁰ Al-Ghazālī (c. 1056-1111) was critical of the first type of cause and argued that only God was the second type.⁷¹ Ghazālī writes,

To wit, we say that God’s (may He be praised!) origination of the motion in the servant’s hand is intelligible without the motion’s being an object of power for the servant. But as long as He creates the motion and creates along with it a power over it, then He is sole Author of the origination of both the power and the object of power.⁷²

Ghazālī’s theological commitment to the primacy and absolute freedom of God drove his argument. His commitment was to the idea that God as first cause cannot be causally conditioned in God’s own actions since God then would not be free creator. Ghazālī took this to be so important that he denied secondary causality, framing God as the only cause in every moment.⁷³

The objective for positing God as uncaused cause for each finite cause is not necessarily for the sake of ‘proving’ the existence of God so much as to ensure that God is not Himself conditioned, not even by the will and power of human beings. The arguments that God is uncaused maintain the free creation of God. This does not mean that theistic proofs are not part of what these thinkers were attempting to do, but that proving the existence of God was

⁷⁰ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 55.

⁷¹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 56.

⁷² Al-Ghazālī, “The Incoherence of the Philosophers, ‘The First Discussion,’ On Refuting Their Claim of the World’s Eternity,” in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, trans. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2007), 260-1.

⁷³ Al-Ghazālī, “The Rescuer from Error,” in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71-2. Similarities between Ghazālī’s argument and that of David Hume are pointed out by William Lane Craig, see Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 50. Averroes would later defend secondary causality against the argument of Ghazālī, see Ibn Rushd, “The Incoherence of the Incoherence,” in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 159-72.

secondary to proving the causal and thus ontological independence of God. This is seen in Avicenna in his *Metaphysics of Healing* where he argues first for the finitude of the four causes.⁷⁴ It is only after establishing the finitude of the four causes and that Avicenna then moves on to prove the existence of God as the self-sufficient principle behind each of these finite and dependent causes. As De Haan writes,

Avicenna's approach to the existence of God requires that we first demonstrate the finitude of the four causal orders, then show that God is the first efficient cause of existence, and then, finally, we must establish that God, the first efficient cause, is the ultimate cause of the existence of the first material, formal, and final causes.⁷⁵

The finitude of the first causes is the first step in Avicenna's argument for the existence of God because he must make sure that the first ultimate cause of existence is not conditioned.

Avicenna's manner of argument maintains the general Abrahamic theological concern for a free creator is maintained and is perhaps more important than the theistic proof itself.

Aquinas was following the lead of the Arabic thinkers in connecting the five ways with causality.⁷⁶ He was following Avicenna to close the gap between the aitiological, ontological, and theological concerns of Aristotle, as well as accomplishing the subalternation of philosophy and metaphysics to theology.⁷⁷ De Haan notes that Aquinas follows the basic structure of argument in Avicenna. Like Avicenna, he is trying to show in the last four of the five ways that the four causal orders all end with God as first uncaused cause. Aquinas concludes with God from each line of causality and then further develops the attributes of God based on these

⁷⁴ Daniel De Haan, "Why the Five Ways? Aquinas's Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian Metaphysics and Sacra Doctrina," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 86, 2013, 146-7.

⁷⁵ Daniel De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 147.

⁷⁶ Daniel De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 141-158.

⁷⁷ Daniel De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 149.

insights. How the five ways connect to each cause will be discussed in a later chapter, it is sufficient here to note the debt owed to Avicenna.

The influence of Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-1198) on Aquinas is different than the influence of Avicenna, yet also crucially important. Aquinas seemed to have appropriated less of Averroes and been more critical of him overall. Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle would garner enough credibility for him with the philosophers at the University of Paris that they would pay close attention to his views, as would Aquinas. The rationalism of Averroes was barely tenable in Islam and not tenable for faculty at the University who answer to ecclesial authority.⁷⁸ The rationalism of Averroes was a precursor to the Renaissance that would force the Christian philosophy to confront rationalism and make changes in the light of this challenge.⁷⁹ The Latin philosophers who followed Averroes modified Averroism to better suit Christianity. Still, many would become the Latin Averroists or Radical Aristotelians who Aquinas would encounter at the University of Paris.

Averroes's Latin advocates were important interlocutors for Aquinas and prompted significant philosophical responses from him. Averroes thought that the world was eternal, in accord with Aristotle,⁸⁰ and thought that there was only one agent intellect for all of humankind.⁸¹ These views of the intellect and the eternity of the world would later cause much controversy during Aquinas's time in Paris. These two issues prompted Aquinas to write two important short treatises, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* and *De aeternitate mundi*, dealing with the agent intellect in the former and the eternity of the world in the latter.⁸²

⁷⁸ Gilson, *Reason and Revelation*, 40-54.

⁷⁹ Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1938, 1966), 37-8.

⁸⁰ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 106.

⁸¹ Druart, "Philosophy in Islam," 112.

⁸² Frederick C. Copleston, S.J., *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972, 1990), 120-2.

Averroes also was against the emanationist metaphysics of Avicenna, wanting to turn somewhat away from Neoplatonism and adhere more closely to Aristotle on creation.

Averroes held positive influence on Aquinas through his commentaries on Aristotle and through his definitions of contingency and necessity. Averroes defines possible being as any being that comes into existence and passes away, and necessary being as any eternal thing.⁸³ While Averroes was not the first to use this definition, he was able to innovate and clearly articulate the nature of ‘possibility.’⁸⁴ The simply possible being is one that comes into being and passes away. This would be any stone, rock, tree, or human body. A necessary being is one that comes to be but then does not pass away, such as the human soul. Since the created necessary being retains its aspect of being created, any argument from contingency would need to take account of both. Therefore, Averroes uses a two-stage argument not found in Avicenna that Aquinas would later clarify in his third way.⁸⁵ Though he was undoubtedly familiar with Averroes’s version, it would be the argument from Maimonides that Aquinas develops into the third way.⁸⁶

Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) has had a more enduring influence on Jewish and Christian thought than any other medieval Jewish philosopher.⁸⁷ The philosopher Idit Dobbs-Weinstein writes that

Maimonides’ influence on subsequent philosophy, both Jewish and Christian, can scarcely be overemphasized. His influence on Christian philosophy is most evident in

⁸³ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument* 106

⁸⁴ Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, 111-15.

⁸⁵ Stephen P. Menn, “Metaphysics: God and being,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153.

⁸⁶ Menn, “Metaphysics: God and being,” 167, note 4.

⁸⁷ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 128.

Thomas Aquinas, whose frequent references to the views of ‘Rabbi Moyses’ are highly respectful, even when he disagrees with the Rabbi.⁸⁸

Aquinas saw Maimonides as an authority even early in his career, citing him in an early contra in his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*.⁸⁹ Like Aquinas, Maimonides concerned himself with serving his faith community through the resolution of issues of faith and reason. His goal was to save the Jewish community that he served from falling into error, and Maimonides wrote with pastoral concern.⁹⁰ He accomplished his mission through *Responsa* to questions of law, religion, and philosophy directed to Jewish communities across the Mediterranean region.⁹¹

The *Guide for the Perplexed*, which is considered to be Maimonides’s key philosophical text, resembled Aquinas’s own project of using philosophy to think through the things of faith found in Sacred Scripture.⁹² As Burrell puts it, Maimonides project was “that of using philosophical inquiry to articulate one’s received faith, and in the process extending the horizons of that inquiry to include topics unsuspected by those lacking in divine revelation.”⁹³

Maimonides was thoroughly Aristotelian in his interpretive method, yet he did not think it appropriate to attempt to prove those things that are contained in divine science or the content of the Torah. Maimonides’s method entailed making the revelation of the Torah more probable rather than trying to demonstrate the things of faith.⁹⁴ His writing style was dialectic in that he wanted the reader to grasp the totality of the subject matter.

⁸⁸ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 136-7.

⁸⁹ *Super Sent(a)* Book I, Distinction 8, q. 1, a. 1.

⁹⁰ Alexander Broadie, “Maimonides and Aquinas on the Names of God,” *Religious Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Jun., 1987, (pp. 157-170), p. 157.

⁹¹ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 129.

⁹² Jacob I. Dienstag, “St. Thomas Aquinas In Maimonidian Scholarship,” *The Monist*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 1974, (104-118), p. 104.

⁹³ Burrell, “Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers,” 60.

⁹⁴ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 129-33.

The negative theology of Maimonides was something Aquinas was quite open toward, even though Aquinas criticizes Maimonides.⁹⁵ Torrell remarks that “Thomas does not share Maimonides equivocation or extreme apophatic position, but it is worth noting this lineage because it confirms Thomas in his choice of a negative theology.”⁹⁶ Maimonides and Aquinas both affirmed negative theology, but this opens up difficulties for faith and practice that must be resolved. The fact that their faith communities required some way to speak of God prompted both thinkers to develop different forms of analogical predication.

Maimonides begins his negative theology with the idea that all anthropomorphic language leads to idolatry. This was a view that went against many of his contemporaries who thought that anthropomorphic language was valuable for religious instruction.⁹⁷ In framing language in this manner, he re-opened the traditional Jewish struggle against idolatry by redefining the nature of idolatry to include mental representations of God.⁹⁸ Maimonides writes that “Idolatry is founded on the idea that a particular form represents the agent between God and His creatures.”⁹⁹ He focuses on language as the chief mode of creating mental representations, in order to purge any language of corporality applied to God. Since the categories of Aristotle describe corporeal beings, then human beings cannot use the categories to describe God.

Because of his view of linguistic idolatry, Maimonides took a very strong stand in favor of this negative theology. He thought that the radical distinction between creator and creature is more instructive regarding the nature of God than any positive attribute of God.¹⁰⁰ As an

⁹⁵ *ST I*, 13, 2.

⁹⁶ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2003), 46.

⁹⁷ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 132.

⁹⁸ Halbertal, *Maimonides*, 290.

⁹⁹ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedlander, 4th revised edition, (originally published, New York, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1904 edition, reprinted by Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2013. Kindle edition), Part I, Ch. 36.

¹⁰⁰ Dobbs-Weinstein, “Jewish Philosophy,” 131.

example, Maimonides uses the metaphor of a house. One can know that something is in the house, but not what or who is in the house.¹⁰¹ This is not to say that one can know nothing of God, but that negations are more instructive than positive statements. The language derived from Aristotle's categories needs to be negated when speaking of God. The categories are descriptive of material things that in their very materiality cannot possibly apply to the immaterial God. This goes for any attribute of God, since any positive attribute applied to God "would in reality not be of the same kind as that imagined by us but would only be called by the same name..."¹⁰² Even in claiming that God is one, the creaturely aspects need to be negated. This is because any creature that is one is still a composition of matter and form, compared to God who is simply one without composition.

Both Maimonides and Aquinas developed theories of analogical predication in light of negative theology. The chief difference between the two is that Maimonides held to an analogy of action, while Aquinas focused on a more epistemic analogical predication.¹⁰³ Maimonides writes that "Many of the attributes express different acts of God, but that difference does not necessitate any difference as regards Him from whom the acts proceed."¹⁰⁴ For Maimonides, the actions of God are the best guide to knowing God, but even these are mere exemplars for human actions to imitate without being true of God.¹⁰⁵

As with the Islamic philosophers, the question of the eternity of the world was an important issue for Maimonides to resolve prior to attempting any theistic proof. Plotinus

¹⁰¹ Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Part II, Chp. 58.

¹⁰² Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Part II, Chp. 60.

¹⁰³ There is about how different the two are when it comes to analogical predication. See, Alexander Broadie, "Maimonides and Aquinas on the Names of God," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), 157-70, and Joseph A. Buijs, "The Negative Theology of Maimonides and Aquinas," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Jun., 1988), 723-38, and Joseph A. Buijs, "A Maimonidean Critique of Thomistic Analogy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), 449-70.

¹⁰⁴ Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Part I, Ch. 53.

¹⁰⁵ Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 132.

influenced the Islamic tradition to interpret an eternal creation as the view of Aristotle.¹⁰⁶

Maimonides did not argue directly against an eternal world. Instead, he argued that the issue of whether the world was eternal or created in time was not one that anyone could resolve through philosophical reasoning. Maimonides writes,

For it is well known to all clear and correct thinkers who do not wish to deceive themselves, that this question, namely, whether the Universe has been created or is eternal, cannot be answered with mathematical certainty; here the human intellect must pause.¹⁰⁷

He thought that Aristotle's view posed the larger threat to revelation than Plato since Aristotle thought that his position was philosophically demonstrable. Plato was not as destructive to the faith of those who are not so philosophical, but the Aristotelian notion of a co-eternal world still compromised too much of the revealed Torah and restricts the creative act of God.¹⁰⁸ Denial of the demonstrability of the eternity of the world puts all three views on equal probability, thus elevating the Torah as equally valid to the other views. Aquinas adopts Maimonides's stance on creation in his work, *De aeternitate mundi*.¹⁰⁹

Maimonides can move toward his theistic proofs once he has placed the view of God as creator on equal footing with that of an eternal world. Avicenna heavily influenced his development of theistic proofs.¹¹⁰ Maimonides's proofs, as well as his stance on creation, support his commitment to the absolute ontological independence of God. Maimonides's focus on the independence of God in his theistic proofs constituted a break from Avicenna who thought that

¹⁰⁶ Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," 71.

¹⁰⁷ Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Part I, Ch. 71.

¹⁰⁸ Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 134-5.

¹⁰⁹ Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," 72.

¹¹⁰ Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 132.

God was bound by causal necessity.¹¹¹ Maimonides utilized four main causal proofs for the existence of God,¹¹² including three versions of the first mover argument and the argument from contingency.¹¹³

Maimonides's version of the argument from contingency would be the one that Aquinas would utilize the most in developing the third way. Using the definition of necessary and contingent developed in Islamic Philosophy, he realized that Avicenna's version did not adequately account for created eternal substances, such as the human soul and angels. Thus, like Averroes, he adds the second clause to the argument that was missing in Avicenna and retained by Aquinas in the third way.¹¹⁴ Maimonides assumes infinite time for the sake of argument, and this means that anything that can happen to an entire class of beings does actually happen.

Maimonides uses these arguments to draw conclusions about the nature of God, such as incorporeity, transcendence, aseity, and eternity.¹¹⁵ This is in conjunction with his view of negative theology and analogy. Creation as an act of God allows ascription of the conclusions and qualities of this act to God, albeit not in any univocal manner.

The Neoplatonic Philosophical & Theological Influence

Though Aquinas did not read Plato or Plotinus directly, he nonetheless absorbed some significant ideas from Neoplatonism. His understanding of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* enabled him to identify the *Liber de causis* as a Neoplatonic work related to Proclus. Prior to Aquinas's insight, scholars assumed that the *Liber de causis* was a work of Aristotle.¹¹⁶ The three most important Neoplatonic sources for Aquinas were Augustine, Boethius, and Pseudo-

¹¹¹ Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 132.

¹¹² Dobbs-Weinstein, "Jewish Philosophy," 132.

¹¹³ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 131-152.

¹¹⁴ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 144-6. Craig claims the third way is a streamlined version of Maimonides's argument.

¹¹⁵ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 140.

¹¹⁶ Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," 55.

Dionysius. Augustine's theology was a measure and authority through all of Aquinas's work. Boethius contributed a model for integrating faith and reason, metaphysics, and for the relation between academic disciplines.¹¹⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius provided Aquinas with a version of negative theology that he found more palatable than that of Maimonides, a model for incorporating Neoplatonic metaphysics with an epistemology based on the senses, and a method for how to speak of God. This section will proceed with a general review of the influence of Neoplatonic thought on Aquinas, a summary of the influence of Augustine and Boethius, and, finally, a more in-depth look at the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius.

Aquinas did not see Platonism and Aristotelianism as an "either / or" choice. Indeed, it is not uncommon to characterize Aquinas as having an Aristotelian epistemology and a Neoplatonic metaphysic. Such a synthesis of Aristotle and Plato did not begin with Aquinas, though it reached its pinnacle in his thought.¹¹⁸ As is well known, he did not approve of Platonic epistemology, but he saw positive elements within one strand of Neo-Platonism. Aquinas characterized Platonism as developing knowledge from intelligible reasons while Aristotelianism develops knowledge from the sensible world.¹¹⁹ The Neoplatonic tradition originating in Iamblichus, which including Proclus and Dionysius, agreed that cognition begins with the sensible world.¹²⁰ In contrast, Augustine and Avicenna held to an epistemology of intelligible forms. Aquinas noticed an affinity between Aristotelian sense-based epistemology and the Iamblichian Neoplatonic tradition.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boethium de trinitate*, trans. Rose E. Brennan and Armand Mauer (Veritatus Splendor Publications, Kindle Edition, 2012), Questions IV and V. Hereafter abbreviated *In BDT(b)*.

¹¹⁸ For an in-depth study of the Neoplatonism found in the Islamic thinkers, see Parviz Morewedge ed., *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 1992).

¹¹⁹ *In BDT(b)*, q5, a2. See also, Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, revised edition, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), Book I, lect. 14, hereafter abbreviated *In Meta*.

¹²⁰ Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," 60.

Since Dionysian metaphysics was therefore not automatically incompatible with Platonic metaphysical principles, Aquinas had room to develop the Dionysian metaphysics within his Aristotelian epistemology. Aquinas writes of the Platonic view of the good that “This argument of the Platonists is not in harmony with either the faith or truth with respect to what it says of separate natural species, but it is most true and consonant with the Christian faith with respect to what it says of the first principle of things.”¹²¹ With this characterization and influence, Aquinas placed Platonists and Aristotelians in a dialogue such that each school of philosophy ultimately compliments and corrects the other in order to serve the Christian faith.

The influence of Augustine on Aquinas and his contemporaries cannot be overstated.¹²² Aquinas agreed with Augustine on theology but disagreed on some points of philosophy. Gilson summarizes Aquinas’s attitude toward Augustine, writing that “Augustine’s philosophy lagged behind his theology, but his theology itself was perfectly sound. Hence St. Thomas could take it as it stood, find therein exactly the same trust, but penetrate it more deeply than Augustine had done.”¹²³ The influence of Augustine is present throughout Aquinas’s writings as the primary measure of theological orthodoxy. Aquinas often cites Augustine throughout the *Summa Theologiae*. As with all other authorities that Aquinas cites in his *sed contra* sections, he then proceeds to use reason to add philosophical depth in answering the question at hand without contradicting the cited authority.

Augustine followed Plotinus when it came to metaphysics but halted short of full Neoplatonic metaphysics because of his theological commitments, since there is none above God

¹²¹ Aquinas, “Preface to Exposition of On the Divine Names,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerney (New York: Penguin Books, 1998). Hereafter abbreviated *Diu nom*.

¹²² Alexander Fidora, “Augustine to Aquinas (Latin-Christian Authors),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46.

¹²³ Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 136.

in Christian thought.¹²⁴ Augustine's God as *He Who Is* takes the place of both the 'One' and of 'Being' in the thought of Plotinus. Yet, Augustine seems to recognize that there is a missing component of his thought as the question of being makes him restless as he grapples with the question without finding a fully satisfactory answer.¹²⁵ Augustine must look for the source of being outside the realm of beings.¹²⁶ He expresses the idea that things do not have being in themselves but must obtain being from an outside unchanging being. While he does not ignore being, Augustine does not philosophically penetrate the depths of being. He frames being as an antimony between becoming and the immutable that constitutes an ontology of history. Aquinas then takes up the question of being left philosophically unanswered in Augustine and develops Augustine's Neoplatonic notions of God in light of Aristotle.

Boethius lay within the same tradition as Augustine, and Aquinas paid closer attention to Boethius than many of his contemporaries. The fact that Aquinas wrote commentaries on Boethius's *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus* is indicative of his great interest in this thinker. It was common in the twelfth century to comment on Boethius's texts, but the practice had disappeared by the thirteenth.¹²⁷ Boethius worked with the same metaphysical principles listed above for Augustine and developed those principles further. Although, Boethius never managed to release being from essence, for he used *esse* to mean essence rather than act of being as Aquinas would interpret the term.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd Edition (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949, 1952, 2014), 30-1.

¹²⁵ Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 134-5.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin, (Penguin Books, 1961), VII, 11 (p. 147).

¹²⁷ Fidora, "Augustine to Aquinas," 48.

¹²⁸ Janice L. Schults and Edward A. Synan, introduction to *An Exposition of the "On the Hebdomads" of Boethius*, by Thomas Aquinas (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), xxxvii-lxiii. There is a scholarly dispute on this issue. See also Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," 55.

Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* is important because he wrote it earlier in his career and addresses questions concerning knowledge of God and faith. It is Aquinas's original reflections on Boethius in light of Aristotle and Avicenna that are particularly valuable. Aquinas develops his epistemic theory of sense-based knowledge as applied to knowledge of Divine Things and Divine Truth in the first two questions. Aquinas writes that "It remains that God is known only through the form of his effect."¹²⁹ In questions 5 and 6, Aquinas develops the epistemic categories allowing for differentiated concepts of philosophy and theology.¹³⁰ These concepts appear in the first question of the *Summa Theologiae* and set the stage for the entire work.

In his exposition on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, Aquinas develops key ontological notions. Boethius writes that his treatise is concerned with "the obscure question which deals with the way in which substances are good insofar as they are, although they are not substantial goods..."¹³¹ Boethius argues that beings are good insofar as they participate in the First Good and expounds on the convertibility of the Good and Being. The nature of being is central to the work and Aquinas builds on Boethius's distinction between *id quod est* and *esse*, interpreting *id quod est* as *ens*.¹³² The distinction is between that which participates in the act of being and being itself. Aquinas's development of Boethius's question in *De hebdomadibus* is also critical for understanding the fourth way. As he does with Augustine, Aquinas is here giving concepts received from Boethius a deep and innovative meaning.¹³³

¹²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, Reason, and Theology*, Translated by Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), q1, a2. Hereafter cited as *In BDT(a)*.

¹³⁰ *In BDT(b)*, qq 5 & 6

¹³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of the "On the Hebdomads" of Boethius*, trans. with an introduction by Janice L. Schultz and Edward A. Synan, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), Chp. 1. Hereafter abbreviated *In BDH*.

¹³² Fidora, "Augustine to Aquinas," 49.

¹³³ Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 132.

Aquinas would bring this same deepening of meaning seen in his work on Augustine and Boethius to Pseudo-Dionysius. Aquinas held the Dionysian Corpus in very high esteem, behind only Augustine and Aristotle, and never contradicts Pseudo-Dionysius.¹³⁴ Wayne Hankey writes that the reception of Pseudo-Dionysius's work as a whole, or *Corpus*, that "its quasi-Apostolic origin for Aquinas, was his most authoritative and influential source of Neoplatonism..."¹³⁵ This source would provide Aquinas with the Neoplatonic theme of emanation and return within a hierarchy of being culminating in God as Being Itself.¹³⁶ The sense-based epistemology in Dionysius provided Aquinas with ample philosophical material for integrating Aristotle, Plato, and Christian theology. He used Aristotelian principles to deepen Dionysian epistemology while using the Dionysian metaphysics to address the lacunae on being in Aristotle and Augustine.

Knowledge of God in Dionysius is through a form of analogic predication that begins with negative theology. The Dionysian *via negativa* begins with the proportionality of knower and what is known. Dionysius writes, "For, if we may trust the superlative wisdom and trust of scripture, the things of God are revealed to each mind in proportion to its capacities."¹³⁷ Aquinas takes this principle of proportionality and develops it in depth.¹³⁸ Since human beings know through the human senses, then human beings know most surely those things that are capable of being known through the senses. God is not material and thus not properly known through the senses, which is the regular proportionality by which human beings know. Dionysius writes that "we have a habit of seizing upon what is actually beyond us, clinging to the familiar categories of our sense perceptions, and then we measure the divine by our human standards and, of course,

¹³⁴ Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," 59.

¹³⁵ Hankey, "Aquinas, Plato, and Neoplatonism," 55.

¹³⁶ Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992; reprinted Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), xvi-xvii.

¹³⁷ Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Dionysius), "The Divine Names," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), Chp I, 1, p. 49.

¹³⁸ O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 23, 58.

are led astray by the apparent meaning we give to divine and unspeakable reason.”¹³⁹ All knowing begins with sense experience, but in order to truly know God one must purify the concept of God from all human physical knowing. These negations of materiality from the language of God are therefore truer of God than positive predications of God. The perfections of God found in creatures are traces of Being Itself and Goodness Itself; however, the materiality of the created world hides these perfections thereby making the negation of materiality a necessary step.

This is not to say that God cannot be known through created objects, for Dionysius and Aquinas both endorse the principle that God can be known through God’s effects. Dionysius writes that “we know him from the arrangement of everything, because everything is, in a sense, projected out from him, and this order possesses certain images and semblances of his divine paradigms. God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things.”¹⁴⁰ Dionysius uses this causal principle as the starting point for naming God. The idea is that God as creator is the exemplar cause of the world, which means that all of creation reflects what is exemplified. Dionysius writes that

It is the power of divine similarity which returns all created beings toward their cause, and these things must be reckoned to be similar to God by reason of the divine image and likeness. But we cannot say that God is similar to them, any more than we can say that man is similar to his own portrait.¹⁴¹

Pseudo-Dionysius likens the similarity between God and the world to the similarity between a portrait or mirror and the one painted or reflected. It is an asymmetric relationship, for the world

¹³⁹ Dionysius, “The Divine Names,” Chp VII, 1, p. 106.

¹⁴⁰ Dionysius, “The Divine Names,” Chp VII, 3, p. 108.

¹⁴¹ Dionysius, “The Divine Names,” Chp IX, 6, p. 117.

is like God, but God is not like the world. Using analogy allows human beings to begin to humbly say something of God, yet this is merely one step in predicating divine names.

It is the causal principle that is an origin for the crucial *ratio* in Aquinas that we can know causes through their effects, and he specifically cites Dionysius for this concept.¹⁴² This maxim is the primary epistemic principle behind the five ways. It allows Dionysius, and Aquinas, to acknowledge the radical transcendence of God and the inability of human beings to know God's essence while also providing an origin point for naming God.¹⁴³ The main difference between the two is that Dionysius holds to two-step predication, while Aquinas breaks one of the steps out to make it three.¹⁴⁴ Dionysius's two steps are a simultaneous movement of transcending negation and the identification of God as the cause of all. This is particularly clear in a passage from *The Mystical Theology* in which Dionysius writes about the Cause that

Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion.¹⁴⁵

This passage expresses the simultaneity of positing an affirmation and negation of God. The principle of causality allows us to identify a Cause from whom we can make predications and name God. Yet in one move, Dionysius negates all earthly meaning in divine predication with

¹⁴² *STI*, Q 42, a 1, ad 3.

¹⁴³ O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 36-7.

¹⁴⁴ O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 34-5.

¹⁴⁵ Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Dionysius), "The Mystical Theology," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), Chp I, 2, p. 136.

the acknowledgment that God transcends all earthly meaning, both affirmative and negative, in the most eminent way possible as the one who is beyond being.

The Structure of the *Summa Theologiae*

There were four basic genres for theological writing and teaching during Aquinas's time. Torrell describes these as *lectura*, questions and *quodlibets*, sentences, and *summas*.¹⁴⁶ The *lectura* are writings based on lectures, usually commenting on scripture, but can also be commenting on philosophical works or any topic. The question or *quaestio* form began as a series of questions embedded within *lectura* as further explanation and commentary on questions raised by a text. The *quodlibet* form is a series of mostly related questions on a given topic that represents the extraordinary debates of the time. The *Sentence* genre encompasses the practice of bachelor's and master's commenting on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, which was one of Aquinas's tasks in his education. The *summa* genre simply constitutes a body of work in any discipline. *Summas* can be more of an encyclopedic compilation, a summary of the main concepts in a field, or a systematic presentation of the material within a discipline or sub-discipline.¹⁴⁷ It need not be theological; there were *summas* of law, grammar, medicine, and other topics.¹⁴⁸ Aquinas used the *questio* format found in the *quodlibet* genre to compose his own *Summa*.

Aquinas began writing the *Summa theologiae* to fill a pedagogical need within the Dominican Order for a guide to sacramental and moral theology that was holistically situated

¹⁴⁶ Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, 63-71. Chenu writes that the historical development began with the *lectio*, then proceeded through the *quaestio*, *disputatio*, and *quaestio de quolibet* to finally achieve the article form prevalent throughout the *Summa theologiae*. Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. By A.M. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P., (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), 80-93.

¹⁴⁷ Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, 70.

¹⁴⁸ Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, 69.

within a systematic presentation of the entirety of Christian Doctrine.¹⁴⁹ That Aquinas's main concern was with moral theology accounts for the size of the *secunda pars*, the locus of moral thought in the *Summa theologiae*. The Dominicans, as a practical order, dedicate themselves to preaching and hearing confessions, thus making matters of practical morality of immense interest to the Order. There were many manuals in use dedicated to meeting the brothers' need for knowledge on issues pertaining to the sacraments and morality. As stated in the prologue to the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas was not happy with how these manuals presented the material.¹⁵⁰ Building the *Summa* according to a proper theological plan was therefore of major concern to Aquinas.

Aquinas also mentions in his prologue that he is writing for beginners, who are likely the Dominican brothers sent to him at Santa Sabina and the brothers of the Order in general. As with many other medieval thinkers, Aquinas did not see a division between theory and praxis. As Marie-Dominique Chenu writes, "Theology in St. Thomas's hands creates an organic structure for the content of this truth: it is wisdom that is at once both contemplative and active."¹⁵¹ For Aquinas, any presentation of moral thought that was not properly situated in the whole of Christian doctrine is not properly presenting the material.

Aquinas drew upon Pseudo-Dionysius in situating moral thought within the greater scheme of Christian theology, drawing upon a dialectic of contemplation and action within the universe.¹⁵² Under this inspiration, the *Summa theologiae* exhibits a basic circular structure also found in Dionysian Neoplatonic thought. This *exitus et reditus* (exit or emanation, and return)

¹⁴⁹ Leonard E. Boyle, "The Setting of the *Summa Theologiae*," in *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: Critical Essays*, ed. Brian Davies (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006 – Kindle Edition), p 11.

¹⁵⁰ Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa*, 39.

¹⁵¹ Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. Paul Philibert, O.P. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002, original French, 1959), p 45.

¹⁵² Chenu, *Aquinas*, p 53.

structure that has been well documented.¹⁵³ Dionysius depicts a classic example of the theme in *The Divine Names*, where he writes that “The Good, as scripture testifies, produced everything and it is the ultimately perfect Cause. In it ‘all things hold together’ and are maintained and preserved as if in some almighty receptacle. All things are returned to it as their own goal.”¹⁵⁴ God creates or emanates the world which then yearns for reunion with God from whom and of whom the world is imaged. Emanation and return are intelligibly framed between God as efficient cause and sustainer, and God as final cause.¹⁵⁵ The final cause is the ultimate happiness of humankind found in reunion with God through the incarnation as an historical reality.¹⁵⁶ This doctrine of emanation and return permeates all of the *Summa theologiae*, with each part describing some aspect of the emanation and return.

The *Prima pars*, the location of the five ways, lays out the *exitus* stage of the Neoplatonic structure. Question 1 lays out his considerations of the principles underlying the *Summa theologiae* and his theological method. Questions 2 through 43 consider God from whom all things come. Aquinas begins his explication of creation with question 44, including the emanation of angels and the attributes given to human beings as creatures. The *secunda pars* describes the actions of human beings. This is in relation to each other in the *prima secundae*, and then in relation to human action regarding the return to God in the *secunda secundae*. Finally, the *tertia pars* explains Christ and the sacraments by whom human beings attain the final *reditus* to God.

¹⁵³ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 55. See also Torrell’s *Aquinas’s Summa*, 27-29; Bernard McGinn, *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa theologiae: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014 – Kindle Edition), chp. 2, p. 66. Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.M. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), pp 310-318.

¹⁵⁴ Dionysius, “The Divine Names,” Chp IV, 4, p. 75.

¹⁵⁵ Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, 311.

¹⁵⁶ Chenu, *Aquinas*, p. 72.

The five ways have a location at the beginning of the *exitus et reditus* structure of the *Summa theologiae* as a whole and fill several preliminary functions necessary to Aquinas's exposition on God. He cannot simply define God as he develops his doctrine of God. This is because the essence or definition of God cannot be known.¹⁵⁷ God can be most clearly known only through negation, or what God is not. The naming of God through effects allows Aquinas an acceptable preliminary way to speak and write about God. The five ways each end with naming God through effects. This gives him a philosophical basis for moving forward in his exposition. He often refers back to the five ways throughout the first part of the *ST*.

Question One of the *ST*

In question one, Aquinas treats preliminary issues related to the use of both scripture and reason in theology. Question one is where Aquinas articulates his theological method and is where he describes and defends the method that he will use throughout the *Summa theologiae*. The relation of faith and reason is the main starting point for medieval philosophical theology of all stripes and traditions.¹⁵⁸ This is not the only place where Aquinas writes on this topic. By the time he was working on the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas had developed the concepts in some detail. This section will review the use of scripture in Aquinas, the use of reason, his mode of argument, and the preambles of faith.

One of the first terms in Question one that contemporary readers find strange is Aquinas's use of 'science.' Aquinas is quite adamant here that theology, or Sacred Doctrine, is a science.¹⁵⁹ This is strange to us today because theology cannot be science in the same way as we

¹⁵⁷ *ST*, I, q2, a1.

¹⁵⁸ Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 2nd English Edition, trans. Edward Bullough, and ed. Rev. G.A. Erington, (New York: Dorset Press, 1929), 37.

¹⁵⁹ *ST*, I, q1, a2.

understand and practice contemporary science.¹⁶⁰ ‘*Scientia*’ is the Latin term translated as ‘science’ in Question one, and it refers to certain knowledge derived according to the deductive reasoning set forth by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics*.¹⁶¹ An in-depth discussion of deductive reasoning must wait for a subsequent chapter on Aquinas’s epistemology. It is sufficient to note here that for deductive reasoning to count as *scientia*, it must be in the form of a demonstrative syllogism.¹⁶² The principles that one argues from must be certain, and the conclusion must necessarily follow from the premises in order to result in a certain conclusion. In question one, Aquinas demonstrates the certitude of the articles of faith as first principles that can be used in deductive reasoning that results in *scientia* proper.

There has been much recent work on Aquinas’s use of scripture, which is becoming ever more regarded as central to the thought of Aquinas. Bernard McGinn and Wilhelm G.B.H. Valkenberg have particularly incisive expositions on the topic. Valkenberg challenges and undermines prejudices in the views of both proponents and detractors of the Thomist tradition who frame Aquinas’s work as primarily philosophical and only secondarily integrating scripture as an ornament.¹⁶³ He focuses on the resurrection in particular and compares texts in the *ST* and the *Commentary on the Sentences* looking at how Aquinas uses scripture. Valkenberg concludes that scripture is theologically primary for Aquinas even in works where it does not seem to have an overt place. He argues that scripture provides a framework in the *ST* such that it should be

¹⁶⁰ Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Is Theology a Science?* trans. A.H.N. Green-Armytage, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 11.

¹⁶¹ Roy J. Deferrari, *scientia, ae*, in *A Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1960). See also Bruno Niederbacher, S.J., “The Relation of Reason to Faith,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 340-1; also John I. Jenkins, CSC, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Scott MacDonald, “Theory of Knowledge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics*, Trans. by Richard Berquist, (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 2007), Book I, lec. 1. Hereafter abbreviated *In PA*.

¹⁶³ Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 44-8.

considered biblical theology.¹⁶⁴ McGinn notes that Aquinas cited scripture more than any other authority.¹⁶⁵ This includes all aspects of his arguments, explanations, responses, and in the *sed contra* sections. As with other medieval theologians, Aquinas viewed scripture through the received tradition of the Church Fathers and placed scripture ahead of any other authority. McGinn comments that “Thomas did his theology with the Bible at hand (or in his head), and he insisted that the bible be read ecclesially.”¹⁶⁶ Aquinas’s goal was to translate the scriptural narrative understood through the rich tradition of the Church using the dialectic reasoning of his time to reveal the intelligibility of faith.

Aquinas is articulating the importance of scripture and its relation to his work in the opening question of the *Summa theologiae*. In the first article Aquinas explicitly states that human reason alone cannot lead to salvific knowledge, as he writes “It was necessary for man’s salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason.”¹⁶⁷ Human beings cannot grasp the content of the mysterious doctrines of faith, such as the Trinity and incarnation of Christ, and therefore God must reveal the articles of faith. In the second article, Aquinas defends the notion that sacred doctrine is a science.¹⁶⁸ All sciences need to have assumptions that are either self-evident or adopted on the basis of other sciences and then proceed according to their subject and object. Aquinas observes that in scientific inquiry there are two ways to establish starting principles. Some principles are established “by the light of the intelligence, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like” and “there are some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 206-8.

¹⁶⁵ McGinn, *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa theologiae*, chp 2, p. 63.

¹⁶⁶ McGinn, *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa theologiae*, chp 2, p. 63.

¹⁶⁷ *ST I*, q1, a1.

¹⁶⁸ *ST I*, q1, a2.

¹⁶⁹ *ST I*, q1, a2.

Therefore, it is common for one discipline to be subalternated under another, or reliant on another, to provide its principles. Aquinas's examples are of music's reliance on mathematics and perspective's reliance on geometry. So also, theology starts with the articles of faith as a revealed higher science and uses reason to explain how all things relate to God. In a similar fashion, the knowledge of God possessed by God as the highest and most certain knowledge forms the basis of the articles of faith as God shares this knowledge with human beings.

In article three Aquinas defends the unity of sacred doctrine as a science, which is particularly important considering article four where he affirms that it is both speculative and practical. Sacred doctrine is united in its treatment of creator and creature in that it considers all things as revealed in scripture.¹⁷⁰ It can treat many different subjects and does so as these subjects are present in divine revelation. The unity of divine science is particularly seen in its treatment God and creatures as they refer to God as creator rather than as creatures considered in themselves.¹⁷¹ Under the formal aspect of revelation, sacred science can extend to everything.¹⁷² As one unified, science it can extend to both speculative and practical matters, though it is more speculative than practical.¹⁷³ The speculative-practical combination of divine science with its accompanying certitude through revelation allows Aquinas to affirm in article five that sacred doctrine nobler than other sciences.¹⁷⁴ From a practical standpoint, it is nobler because its goal is eternal bliss, which is the highest and most dignified subject matter. It is because of this ultimate practical purpose that sacred science is the noblest practical science. From a speculative standpoint, sacred science is nobler than other speculative sciences because of the greater degree

¹⁷⁰ *ST I*, q1, a3.

¹⁷¹ *ST I*, q1, a3, *ad.* 1.

¹⁷² *ST I*, q1, a3, *ad.* 2.

¹⁷³ *ST I*, q1, a4.

¹⁷⁴ *ST I*, q1, a5.

of certainty that comes from divine knowledge. That divine science makes use of philosophy is not due to a flaw in divine science. It is due to the flaws and tendency to err in the human intellect that theologians make use of lesser disciplines, such as philosophy.

Aquinas further places sacred doctrine as the highest wisdom in both its theoretical and practical aspects in article six.¹⁷⁵ The highest wisdom entails knowledge of the ordering of means to ends. Since God is the highest cause and end, then knowledge of the ordering of things toward God is the highest wisdom. Aquinas clarifies in article seven that this highest wisdom has God as its object and deals with how God can be the object of sacred science if the essence of God cannot be known. In theological science, reason uses the articles of faith as a starting point to examine all things in light of God, or *sub ratione Dei*.¹⁷⁶ Aquinas writes, “all things are treated of under the aspect of God: either because they are God Himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end.”¹⁷⁷ Knowledge of God, provided through revelation, gives the theologian a scientific starting point for articulating how all things relate back to God. The theologian can then examine all of reality not as it is in itself but as it relates to God, looking at how creatures refer back to God as creator. God is the primary object of study as cause of creatures, which allows this science to make demonstrations even though the essence of God is unknown.

In article eight, Aquinas clarifies the importance of sacred scripture and how to use scripture in argument; the general method for using reason in theology.¹⁷⁸ Theology ultimately derives its principles from the highest science, Sacred Scripture. Theology begins with the principles of faith and moves to derive further points from those principles. As Chenu writes,

¹⁷⁵ *ST I*, q1, a6.

¹⁷⁶ *ST I*, q1, a7.

¹⁷⁷ *ST I*, q1, a7.

¹⁷⁸ *ST I*, q1, a8.

“The work of theological reasoning proceeds from a foundation of definitions to a superstructure of analysis, classification, division, distinction and all those other operations which tend to bring order...”¹⁷⁹ The functions of theological reasoning fall into four basic categories, as Anselm Min notes, that of “preliminary, defensive or apologetic, deductive, and explicative.”¹⁸⁰ Theological reasoning is used in the preliminary function in support of the faith, such as “that God exists, that He is one, and the like.”¹⁸¹ Natural theological reason can arrive at preliminary ideas related to faith that are themselves exceeded and presupposed by the principles presupposed by faith. The defensive or apologetic function defends the articles of faith against charges that the faith runs contrary to reason. The deductive function uses the articles of faith to deduce further theological points, and the explicative function adds further rational explanation to the articles of faith.

In articles nine and ten, Aquinas explains his method for the interpretation of sacred scripture, noting that it properly uses metaphors and signifies its meaning in several senses. Sacred scripture uses metaphor to signify the divine since human beings most properly know through the senses.¹⁸² Metaphors are best suited for use by sacred doctrine since physical imagery is necessary for human knowing. The signification of sacred scripture has four senses, literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical.¹⁸³ The literal sense is the simplest signification whereby the words have meaning. The allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses, also called the spiritual senses, refer to other levels of signification beyond the literal. The allegorical sense refers to occurrences wherein the Old Law signifies something in the New Law. The moral sense encompasses passages that signify Christ and His actions as an exemplar for human actions.

¹⁷⁹ Chenu, O.P., *Is Theology a Science?*, 58.

¹⁸⁰ Anselm K. Min, *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter Between Aquinas and Recent Theologies*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 21.

¹⁸¹ SCG, BK I, chp. 3.

¹⁸² ST I, q1, a9. Aquinas follows Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy* in developing his view.

¹⁸³ ST I, q1, a10. This was a common way to understand scripture during the medieval period.

The theologian relies on scripture for the principles that escape human reason alone and then uses philosophy to articulate both the revelation of God and how all of creation refers back to God, further explaining, applying, and clarifying the articles of faith. The articles of faith provide a certain starting point for theology as a science or as justification for the certitude of theological reasoning in general. The articles of faith are like principles made clear through analogies rather than conclusions.¹⁸⁴ Victor White notes that with Aquinas's theology, "It in no way substitutes a 'natural theology' for revelation, nor does it appeal to reason for what only revelation can impart."¹⁸⁵ The five ways would not mean much for the faithful if they did not cohere with the account of God found in Christian scripture. If all one sees on the surface is philosophical analysis, one can be sure that scripture provides the invisible principles underneath it, like the massive underwater portion of an iceberg.

As important as revelation is, what if an interlocutor does not accept the theologian's starting points? Aquinas's experience in Paris and Naples exposed him to many varying points of view. Thus, he is fully aware of the difficulties in communicating with those who do not accept his principles. Therefore, Aquinas advocates arguing according to the authorities recognized by one's opponent. He writes that "we can argue with heretics from texts in Holy Writ, and against those who deny one article of faith, we can argue from another."¹⁸⁶ This requires getting to know one's interlocutor and moderating arguments accordingly. Chenu write that "Too easy or too pretentious an explanation would be an insult to the nonbeliever. Further, the explanations that we give need to be calculated according to appropriate norms of argumentation."¹⁸⁷ The

¹⁸⁴ *In BDT(a)* q2, a2, *ad. 4*. See also *Super Sent.(b)* q1, a3, *ad 1*.

¹⁸⁵ Victor White, "Prelude to the Five Ways," in *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: Critical Essays*, ed. Brian Davies (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006 – Kindle Edition), 32.

¹⁸⁶ *ST I*, q1, a8.

¹⁸⁷ Chenu, *Aquinas*, p. 68.

argument needs to fit with what one's interlocutor accepts. When there are no articles of faith accepted whatsoever, then the philosophical theologian can only answer objections.¹⁸⁸

The preambles of faith come under Aquinas's understanding of faith and reason, beginning with the object of faith. Aquinas differentiates between the formal object and the material object in any field of study. The material object is the matter under study, such as how human interaction is the object of study for sociology. The formal object is the perspective from which one engages in study. Thus, the same material object of human interaction can become the basis for not just sociology but economics and politics as well. Aquinas uses geometry as an example.¹⁸⁹ The conclusions in geometry are the material object of study while the means of demonstration is the formal object. Applied to matters of faith, the formal object of faith is First Truth, "For the faith of which we are speaking, does not assent to anything, except because it is revealed by God."¹⁹⁰ The faith under consideration is not just any faith; it is not faith in your friends or that the sun will come up tomorrow. Faith is precisely faith in Divinely revealed Truth. Divine truth is the formal rather than material object of faith because faith touches on many different areas. The material object can include many different topics viewed from the perspective of Divine Truth. Aquinas cites the medical field as an example, since medicine encompasses many different things from the perspective of health.

Aquinas further explains that the object of faith is complex in accordance to how human beings know and cannot contain anything false.¹⁹¹ God as the object of faith is simple yet understood by human beings in a complex manner.¹⁹² Human beings know through their proper

¹⁸⁸ *ST I*, q1, a8.

¹⁸⁹ *ST II-II*, q1, a1.

¹⁹⁰ *ST II-II*, q1, a1

¹⁹¹ *ST II-II*, q1, a2 & a3

¹⁹² *ST II-II*, q1, a2

mode of knowing and this entails synthesis and analysis of concepts. Thus, human beings know God, who is metaphysically simple, though complex means. What human beings know through faith cannot be false because the object of faith is Divine Truth.¹⁹³ Habits or acts operate through their formal objects. In this way, sight operates to recognize color through light. Similarly, conclusions are known through demonstrations. Since First Truth contains nothing false, and faith has First Truth as its object, then nothing false can be known through faith insofar as it stands in relation to First Truth.

Faith implies assent to an object that cannot be seen and cannot be the object of faith and science in the same way at the same time.¹⁹⁴ Assent happens through one of two ways.¹⁹⁵ The object of assent that moves the intellect can be known in itself or through another previously known principle, or through a free choice moved by the proper object of assent without previous knowledge of the object. Aquinas uses “sight” as metaphor for knowledge or intelligible ideas that move the assent through their compelling intelligibility. Science compels assent through the sheer intelligibility of certain knowledge. In contrast, one sees the credibility of the articles of faith only after one has faith in them. Aquinas writes, “The light of faith makes us see what we believe.”¹⁹⁶ Assent to the articles of faith through free will makes faith credible and one can then see the credibility of what is believed. This is why Aquinas then demonstrates that one cannot have science and faith at the same time,¹⁹⁷ for the assent of faith is not moved by prior credible knowledge. Aquinas writes that “it is impossible that one and the same thing should be believed and seen by the same person. Hence it is equally impossible for one and the same thing to be an

¹⁹³ *ST* II-II, q2, a3.

¹⁹⁴ *ST* II-II, q2, a3 & 4.

¹⁹⁵ *ST* II-II, q2, a3.

¹⁹⁶ *ST* II-II, q1, a4, *ad.* 3.

¹⁹⁷ *ST* II-II, q1, a5.

object of science and of belief for the same person.”¹⁹⁸ Scientific demonstrations cannot provide compelling credibility resulting in the assent of faith; a free will choice to assent to faith precedes the intelligibility of the things of faith.

Aquinas writes in several places that human reason is capable of paralleling revelation to a limited point.¹⁹⁹ It is possible for human beings to grasp preliminary doctrines, or preambles, without recourse to Scripture, such as the existence of God and immortality of the soul. These preambles are presupposed by the articles of faith and included within the articles precisely as presuppositions rather than as overtly articulated. This is not to say that preambles, such as the five ways, have revelation as the presumption and starting point behind them thereby making a circular argument. That Scripture also assumes these doctrines does not detract from the fact that human reason can reach them on its own. Aquinas notes in the *ST* that “There is no reason why those things which may be learned from philosophical science, so far as they can be known by natural reason, may not also be taught us by another science so far as they fall within revelation.”²⁰⁰ The fact that they are discoverable by human reason without recourse to revelation means that they are not circular arguments even as they cohere with the articles of faith.

The understanding of how the preambles of faith integrate with Aquinas’s view of faith and reason is a point of contention among interpreters of Aquinas. Daniel DeHaan writes about two answers to the question of whether or not belief in God must be held on faith rather than demonstrative arguments.²⁰¹ One interpretive paradigm, the Rationalist Thomists (RT), claims

¹⁹⁸ *ST* II-II, q1, a5.

¹⁹⁹ *ST* I, q2, a2, *ad* 1; *SCG*, chp 4; *In BDT* q2, a3; *CT* 36.

²⁰⁰ *ST* I, q1, a1, *ad* 2.

²⁰¹ Daniel De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge of God’s Existence in St. Thomas,” in *Faith, Hope, and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, edited by H. Goris, L. Hendriks, and H.J.M. Schoot, (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 137-43. A full account of De Haan’s excellent analysis will be addressed in chapter 6.

that one can both rationally know that God exists and have faith that God exists. The other, Fideist Thomists (FT), claims that rational knowledge and faith are mutually exclusive, it must be one or the other.

Those who side with RT argue that it is a violation of the law of non-contradiction to assent to the same proposition through both faith and reason. One can only assent to a proposition in one of several modes of assent. As De Haan puts it, “Thomas does not deny that there can be faith and rational knowledge of the same doctrine; rather, Thomas asks that we distinguish the two different ways of assenting to this doctrine, namely, by faith and reason.”²⁰² This leads the FT paradigm to an important distinction in answer to the RT objection. FT distinguishes between ‘God Exists’ as a philosophical statement and as a theological statement since believers mean far more by the term than any philosopher.²⁰³ One can assent to the philosophical proposition ‘God Exists’ by either faith or reason. The philosophical proposition only includes what can be known through reason and does not include the content of the articles of faith, such as the Trinity and incarnation. The theological proposition ‘God Exists’ can only be assented to by faith, since it necessarily includes articles of faith that are intrinsically beyond the reach of philosophical inquiry. De Haan concludes with a harmonization of the two positions by moderating them. One can assent to ‘God Exists’ by both faith and reason to the extent that the philosophical version under the preambles can be assented under reason while the full theological understanding that ‘God Exists,’ which includes implicitly the revealed truth of the articles of faith, can only be assented by faith. This means that one can assent to the ‘God Exists’ of the preambles by either faith or reason, and assent to the full theological notion that ‘God Exists’ only through faith.

²⁰² De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 152.

²⁰³ De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 153-60.

Conclusion

The five ways are an outpouring of all of Aquinas's background, studies, and faith commitments. Thomas Aquinas's birth order, as youngest son, combined with the social structures of the day and political aspirations of his family resulted in his family sending him into the Church. His early studies in Naples brought him into contact with the writings of thinkers from non-Christian traditions and introduced him to the Dominican Order. His education under Albert Magnus resulted in his becoming well versed in both the Christian tradition and the known works of Aristotle. His early exposure to Islamic and Jewish thought would invigorate his scholarship as he adopted and adapted what he saw as fitting with the Christian faith. He would inherit a certain Neo-Platonic/Aristotelian synthesis that he would perfect, resulting in a distinctly Dionysian metaphysic combined with an Aristotelian epistemology. Aquinas wrote the *Summa theologiae* with a Neo-Platonic *exitus et reditus* structure and the Dominican pastoral mission in mind. Question one then provides the justification for the first principles behind the work as a whole and sets up Aquinas's theological methodology vis-à-vis his use of reason as part of the theological endeavor. He first establishes the priority of revelation and does so in a way that does not denigrate the power of human reason. As preambles of faith, Aquinas does not intend the five ways to lead to the full Christian God of revelation.

Chapter Two: Metaphysics and Theology

Understanding the five ways entails an understanding of Aquinas's metaphysics. Aquinas begins with first principles derived from metaphysics before engaging in epistemology, for things are known according to the mode of the knower. He places metaphysics as the highest science that human reason can achieve noting that that metaphysics "rightly lays claim to the name wisdom; for it is the office of the wise man to direct others."¹ The five ways are also situated within a distinctly Christian framework. Aquinas's theological commitment to the doctrines of divine simplicity and creation connect his metaphysics and the five ways.

This chapter will begin with a summary of Aquinas's general metaphysics, including an account of being (*esse*) in general as the subject of metaphysics, the nature of truth, and the transcendentals of being (*esse*). The next section will focus on the existence of things including participation, hylomorphism, the act/potency distinction, time, and the four causes. The third section will delve into the theological doctrines of divine simplicity and creation as the connecting principle between Aquinas's metaphysics and his Christian theology.

Metaphysics: Of Being (*esse*) in General

This section will focus on Aquinas's theory of being (*esse*) in general as the subject of metaphysics, the metaphysical nature of truth, and the transcendentals of being (*esse*). This will not be a comprehensive review.² This discussion of the nature and place of metaphysics for Aquinas is needed to clarify Aquinas's understanding of metaphysics, underscore the importance of metaphysics in Aquinas's thought, and set the stage for the remaining section.

¹ *In Meta, proemium.*

² For an important contemporary analysis of metaphysics in Aquinas see John C. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000). See also James F. Anderson editor, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by James F. Anderson, (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1953).

Metaphysics holds for Aquinas a place of penultimate importance behind only the study of Sacred Doctrine. Aquinas explains that metaphysics has as its object that which is most intelligible, thereby making it the wisest science.³ He points out three ways to understand the object of metaphysics that support its importance. The first is knowledge of the highest cause, which is the highest possible knowledge. Second, metaphysics studies universals, which is higher than knowledge of particulars. Third, things that are separate from matter in “their intelligible constitution” are most intelligible.⁴ Thus, the universal highest cause that is purely intellectual in nature is most intelligible and the subject of metaphysics.

Aquinas finds it necessary to demonstrate the common object of metaphysics. All three ways of understanding the most intelligible are examined according to how they relate to being (*esse*) in general. Aquinas notes that “For the subject of a science is the genus whose causes and properties we seek, and not the causes themselves of the particular genus studied, because a knowledge of the causes of some genus is the goal to which the investigation of a science attains.”⁵ The subject of metaphysics is being (*esse*) in general, first truth, or the horizon of being(*esse*), which touches on the above three areas as a matter of investigation of the subject. Aquinas recognizes three names for the study of being (*esse*) that arise according to the approach used. *Divine science* or theology is the study of God, intellectual substances, and being (*esse*) in general. *Metaphysics* studies the structure of being (*esse*) and of particular beings (*ens*). *First philosophy* examines the first causes of beings (*ens*). All three names really depict activities of one singular discipline with one object examined in different modes.

³ *In Meta, proemium.*

⁴ *In Meta, proemium.*

⁵ *In Meta, proemium.*

Metaphysics overlaps with divine science and other disciplines but differs in its proper object. The fact that metaphysics includes divine science does not mean that God suddenly comes completely under the scope of human reason. The divine science of metaphysics is not the same sort of divine science as that which proceeds from revelation. Przywara helpfully notes that for Aquinas, philosophy is centered on the act of the creature so a philosophical investigation of the Divine would pivot on the relation between the divine and creatureliness.⁶ Each science has a specific object, and Aquinas considers being (*esse*) as being (*esse*) to be the proper object of metaphysics.⁷ The proper object of metaphysics is being (*esse*) in general while divine science has the source of being (*esse*) as its object. Other sciences look at particular beings (*ens*) rather than being (*esse*) in general, which means that there is thus a certain overlap with metaphysics, but not in terms of the material object of study.

Divine science as one aspect of metaphysics does not properly have God as the subject matter, including God only in treating one mode of divine science. Wippel notes that “for Aquinas metaphysics is indeed divine science but philosophical divine science. This does not mean that divine things are the subject of this science or that they are included within its subject.”⁸ God is studied only insofar as God is the common principle of being (*esse*) in general and an independent substance devoid of matter and motion. Aquinas writes that “Philosophers, then, study these divine beings only insofar as they are the principles of all things.”⁹ He affirms in this context that God can only be studied by natural reason through her effects. The subject of divine science in metaphysics includes God only as the principle of metaphysics. God is the

⁶ Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 162-3.

⁷ *In Meta*, IV, lec.1. See also Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 11-22.

⁸ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 18.

⁹ *In BDT(b)*, Q5, a4.

creator and ultimate cause of being (*esse*) in general, which is the proper subject of metaphysics. There are therefore two types of theology, the theological aspect of metaphysics, called Divine science, and the theology taught in Sacred Scripture that has the revealed divine things as its subject.¹⁰

Having established the general structure of being (*esse*) as being (*esse*) as applied to specific types of beings (*ens*), Aquinas clarifies the nature of the goal of metaphysics, which is to study “the first and universal causes of things.”¹¹ Aquinas writes that “Now just as there are certain common principles of any particular genus extending to all the principles of that genus, so too all beings, inasmuch as they share in being, have certain principles that are the principles of all beings.”¹² Being (*esse*) is an act that is common to all things; it is the common principle or horizon of being (*esse*) for all that exists. Aquinas further clarifies that common principle of existence has two senses. The first in the sense of predication such that existence can be predicated of all things that exist. The second sense is that of causality such that all things have a common cause of their being (*ens*). Aquinas gives the sun as an example of the second sense, stating that the single sun is the common principle of things subject to generation.¹³ He then reasons that the single common principle of being (*esse*), as cause of being (*ens*), must possess the complete or perfect being (*esse*) with no potency.

Being (*esse*) is most universal transcendental and is convertible with the other transcendental notions of truth, one, good, and beauty.¹⁴ The subject of the transcendentals, being (*esse*), one, good, truth, and beauty, have the same subject matter (*ens*).¹⁵ Being (*esse*) is

¹⁰ *In BDT(b)*, Q5, a4

¹¹ *In Meta*, I, lec. 3.

¹² *In BDT(b)*, Q5, a.

¹³ *In BDT(b)*, Q5, a.

¹⁴ *QDV* q1, a1. See also *In Meta*, I, 2, [46], and Anderson, *An Introduction*, 44-7.

¹⁵ Anderson, 44-5.

apprehended prior to the other transcendentals, which are then understood according to different intellectual aspects. The intellect first encounters and cognizes being (*ens*) as a concept.¹⁶ Nothing can be added to being (*ens*) since every subject is being (*ens*) by nature, which is why being (*ens*) is not a genus. Even though nothing can be added to being (*ens*), there are different modes of existence (*esse*).¹⁷ The terms truth, one, good, and beauty express different modes of the being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*). Each mode is understood/cognized subsequent to encountering being (*ens*). Modes of being (*ens*) express either a mode of being (*ens*) among diverse grades of existence (*esse*) or a mode consequent to being (*ens*). The consequent mode of being (*ens*) expresses either a common mode for every being (*ens*) or a mode that accompanies every being (*ens*) when considered in relation to another being (*ens*). These modes are conceptual and express various conceptual modes already present within the notion of being (*esse*). In other words, the transcendentals express modes of being (*esse*) present within being (*ens*) that are not articulated by the name being (*esse*).

As with the other transcendentals, truth is convertible with being (*esse*) insofar as the conceptual notion of truth as a relation of being (*ens*) to intellect.¹⁸ Aquinas begins by pointing out that knowers derive knowledge through the correspondence of or assimilation of the knower to the thing known. Being (*ens*) is encountered by the intellect and assimilated by the knower where it can be called “true.” The conformity of being (*ens*) to intellect as the core definition of truth adds the notion of truth to the known being (*ens*) and thus truth as a particular mode of being (*ens*). A thing must be (*esse*) in order to be known and called true. As Aquinas writes, “the true cannot be apprehended unless the idea of being be apprehended also.”¹⁹ Thus, truth is a

¹⁶ Anderson, 46.

¹⁷ *QDV*, q1, a1. *Sunt enim diversi gradus entitatis, secundum quos accipiuntur diversi modi essendi.*

¹⁸ *QDV*, q1, a1; Anderson, 61-2.

¹⁹ *ST I*, q16, a 3, *ad* 3.

mode of being (*esse*) adding the notion of conformity of knower and known to being (*esse*). All being (*esse*) must be true and everything true must have being (*esse*) to some extent, so true does not add to being (*esse*). True expresses a mode of being (*ens*) found within being (*ens*) that is not expressed by the name being (*esse*).

Like the other transcendentals, the concept of the good adds a relation of reason as a mode of being (*ens*) that is not found in the word being (*ens*). The concept of the good adds the notion of final causality to the term being (*esse*).²⁰ The good as final cause adds the notion of perfectibility to being (*ens*), since perfectibility implies a striving or ordering toward an end.²¹ Goodness pertains to the appetite in the sense that a given good is desired by a given being (*ens*) and existence is most desirable.²² Existence itself is most desired by beings (*ens*) according to the proper form for an act of existence. Goodness thus relates to the act of being (*ens*) as a mode related to the form and perfection as a complete act of existence is more desirable than an incomplete act, such as an increase in the act of being wise.²³ The act of existence is itself good, and beings (*ens*) derive their goodness through participation.²⁴ As will be discussed later, participation is causal participation in the exemplar cause, which is God.²⁵

The other transcendentals, beauty and one, similarly add a modal relation of reason that is not found in the term being (*ens*). Beauty adds the notion of delight to the senses to being (*ens*)²⁶ that is not found in the word being (*ens*). The delight of the senses consists in encountering “a) integrity or perfection, b) right proportion or consonance, [and] c) splendor of form.”²⁷ God is

²⁰ *QDV*, q21, a1. See also Anderson, 72-87.

²¹ Anderson, 77-8.

²² *QDV*, q21, a2.

²³ Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 52-3.

²⁴ Anderson, 83.

²⁵ Anderson, 84-7.

²⁶ Anderson, 88.

²⁷ Anderson, 88.

the cause of the harmony of beauty in that God orders all things toward God and each other.²⁸ This harmony of existence is a mode of being (*ens*) that lies at the core of the notion of beauty as an excess from divine beauty.²⁹ Finally, one adds the modal notion of negation of division to being (*ens*) that is not present in the term being (*ens*). Aquinas writes that “*one* means undivided *being*. This is the very reason why *one* is the same as *being*.”³⁰ One is a mode of being (*ens*) considered under the notion of unity. Even compound beings (*ens*) are considered as an undivided whole in their act of being. The compound aspect of compound beings (*ens*) is negated by the concept ‘one’ in considering the unity of the act of being (*esse*) of composite beings (*ens*).

Metaphysics: Of Particular Beings

This section will focus on the structure of particular beings (*ens*) or finite being (*ens*), and the dependence of finite being (*ens*) upon being (*esse*) in general. The first topic to consider is the idea of participation, which connects finite being (*ens*) with being in general (*esse*).³¹ The beings (*ens*) that participate in the act of existence have a structure involving a distinction between essence and existence. This distinction parallels the act/potency distinction that also allows for change and the concept of time, with act standing for existence and potency standing for essence. The structure of finite being (*ens*) requires causal participation in existence for each finite being (*ens*). Participation in being (*esse*) through causality is the point of contact between a philosophical investigation of being (*esse*) and the doctrine of creation. The act/potency distinction is the starting point for understanding the doctrine of divine simplicity, which describes God as pure act.

²⁸ Anderson, 89-90.

²⁹ Anderson, 90-92.

³⁰ *ST I*, q11, a1. See also *In Meta*, IV, lec. 2.

³¹ Gilson remarks that participation is important for understanding the five ways. See Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 91.

Participation is a key concept for Aquinas. A given particular being (*ens*) participates in a given perfection or quality if that being (*ens*) only partially possess that quality.³² No particular being (*ens*) is identical to a given universal quality or perfection. Aquinas acknowledges three modes of participation, one logical, one formal, and one causal.³³ Aquinas develops the logical sense of participation by conducting a linguistic analysis. The subject of ‘to be’ does not signify ‘being itself’ any more than the subject of ‘to run’ signifies ‘running itself.’³⁴ It is the subject of a proposition that participates in the verb. When we write ‘Jane ran a half marathon’ the subject, Jane, participates in the verb, ‘to run.’ Similarly, we can write ‘the car is here.’ The subject, a car, participates in the verb ‘to be’ (‘here’ is merely a spatial clarification of where the car exists). The formal sense of participation is that “‘to participate’ is, as it were, ‘to grasp a part.’ And, therefore, when something receives in a particular way that which belongs to another in a universal way...”³⁵ The first example that Aquinas gives is that humanity taken as an abstract universal participates in the more universal abstract nature of animal, for all humans are animals. Individual humans, such as Socrates, participate in the abstract universal of humanity, which participates in animality. The theme in Aquinas’s examples of formal participation is that determinate individuals rely on a common universal form in its intelligibility. Determinate beings (*ens*) ‘grasp a part’ of an abstract and more universal form determining their intelligible ontological structure. Causal participation is the participation that an effect has in a cause, especially when the cause and effect are unequal in power.³⁶ Aquinas gives the example of air

³² Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 96-7.

³³ Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 97-107. While the following analysis does not necessarily mirror Wippel, it is deeply indebted to him.

³⁴ *In BDH*, lec. 2.

³⁵ *In BDH*, lec. 2.

³⁶ *In BDH*, lec. 2.

receiving light from the sun. In this case, air lights up but not with the brilliance and self-sufficiency of the sun.

Existing things always exist as definite individuals determined by their form. Everything that is, is something. Abstract linguistic modes of predication cannot properly account for the being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*) since language alone cannot determine being (*esse*). So too, participation in a universal alone cannot account for the being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*). Abstract notions can be categorized and participate in other abstract notions in a way that being (*esse*) cannot. For example, whiteness participates in color and humanity in animality; however, being (*esse*) participates in no other abstract universal. Being (*esse*) itself is not determined for it is common to all existing things as *ens commune*, or common being.³⁷ *Ens commune* cannot be determined or differentiated in the same way that a subject takes part in a verb or matter takes part in form. Being (*esse*) itself as undifferentiated abstract common existence is that in which all else participates rather than participating in anything else. Since being (*esse*) and goodness are convertible, participation in being (*esse*) is also participation in goodness.³⁸ In the same way that an entire being (*ens*) exists, so also the entire being (*ens*) is good.

Participation entails a real distinction between essence and existence because there must be something that participates as well as that in which it participates.³⁹ Everything that exists (*esse*) has an essence or definition “though which and in which the thing has existence.”⁴⁰ No created being (*ens*) contains existence as part of its essence, and therefore each particular being (*ens*) participates in existence from an exterior source.⁴¹ According to Aquinas “It is possible for

³⁷ For an extended discussion of Aquinas’s view of *ens commune*, see Gavin Kerr, “The Meaning of *Ens Commune* In the Thought of Thomas Aquinas,” *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2008):32 – 60.

³⁸ Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 8-30.

³⁹ Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 105. Wippel outlines five arguments that Aquinas uses to establish the distinction between essence and existence, Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 132-76.

⁴⁰ DEE, c1.

⁴¹ As will be seen, the five ways argue for the necessity of an external source of existence for all created beings.

one to say that that which participates in something, of itself lacks that thing; just as a surface which has the nature to participate in color, considered in itself is not color and not colored.”⁴² Essences themselves lack being (*esse*) as an intrinsic principle and thus must causally participate in being (*esse*) itself in order to have existence. The essence of that which exists determines or conditions the mode of being (*ens*) given to what is,⁴³ therefore “we posit something in a genus only by reason of its essence, not its existing.”⁴⁴ Existence itself escapes categorization due to its indeterminacy. The essence of that which exists determines its category rather than merely the fact that it exists. Many things exist but differ in their act of existence, which is informed by the essence or *quiddity* of the existent.

The particular beings (*ens*) participating in being (*esse*) have an essence or *quiddity* that provides the qualities inherent in each being (*ens*). Compound substances are those material things that we encounter every day, while simple substances are spiritual in nature, such as angels and separated souls. Whether a being (*ens*) is simple or composite, the being’s (*ens*) essence is the intelligible structure of the being (*ens*) as understood by the intellect. Humans understand the structure of composite beings (*ens*) more readily than that of simple beings (*ens*). The properties of an existing being (*ens*) allow that being (*ens*) to be defined. An essence, or nature, is a definition designating what a thing is or its ‘nature.’ Aquinas writes that “In this sense [nature] anything is called a nature which the intellect can grasp in any way; for a thing is intelligible only through its definition and essence.”⁴⁵ An essence is grasped and defined by the intellect.

⁴² *DSS* c. 8.

⁴³ *DSS* c. 8.

⁴⁴ *QDP*, q7, a3. See also *ST*, I, q3, a5.

⁴⁵ *DEE*, c1.

Compound substances are a unity of form and matter, but neither of these alone comprises the essence of a thing, since “it cannot be said that either one of these alone is called the essence.”⁴⁶ Aquinas often uses ‘form’ interchangeably with the terms ‘nature,’ ‘essence,’ and ‘quiddity.’⁴⁷ If essence is form and matter together, then there is a sense of the term ‘form’ that is not equivalent with essence. ‘Form’ signifies the principle that shapes a thing as well as that by which a thing is actual.⁴⁸ Gilson notes that “We may then say that in exact proportion as it possesses perfection and being, it is ‘in act,’ and we shall give the term ‘form’ to that principle which gives it its actuality.”⁴⁹ Form is a principle that proportions being (*ens*) in actuality according to a proper mode of existence. In other words, form determines actually existing matter informing its act of existence. Although form includes some definitional content, it cannot alone account for essence in compound substances. The form as it defines the genus and species of anything has a universal quality applicable to all individuals under that genus when taken in abstract prescinding from individuals, and alone is not enough to comprise an individual.⁵⁰

Matter is the principle of individuation that converts an abstract genus into an existing material entity,⁵¹ such as the abstract form of humanity instantiated as a particular human. It is not matter in itself that is an individuating principle, but matter considered according to determinate dimension.⁵² The potency of matter relates to potency within the genus of substance rather than an added quality to an essence.⁵³ Matter considered in itself aside from any form, or

⁴⁶ *DEE*, c2.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, “On the Principles of Nature,” trans. by Ralph McInerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), c.1 (hereafter abbreviated *DPN*).

⁴⁸ *DPN*, c1.

⁴⁹ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 189.

⁵⁰ *DEE*, c3.

⁵¹ *DEE*, c2; *DPN*, c2.

⁵² Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes*, 357.

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics*, trans. by Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel, (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), Book I, lec. 15, (Hereafter abbreviated *In Phys.*).

‘prime matter,’ holds potential to receive many different forms. Undesignated or prime matter with no determination is pure potentiality with no actuality or being (*esse*). It would be a contradiction in terms to say that matter actually exists yet is without act,⁵⁴ therefore the existence of undesignated matter is as contradictory as a square circle. Aquinas is aware that “Prime matter can never exist just as itself because, since it does not include form in its notion, it cannot actually be.”⁵⁵ In order for matter to determine individuals, it must be united with a form, which is the principle of actuality for matter.

The compositional unity of matter and form is necessary for all hylomorphic beings (*ens*) to exist. Form is the principle of actuality, and matter is the principle of individuation. The term ‘principle’ here means a point of origin or beginning.⁵⁶ This beginning point is not also the beginning point of existence, which requires further causes. Composed individuals are differentiated from the abstract genus of the form alone by formed matter, such that form and matter are the two principles of composition. It is not correct to conclude that these components are separable. Matter without form is not anything since “matter does not properly have an essence. It is, rather, part of the essence of the whole.”⁵⁷ Universal form without matter is an abstracted idea rather than an individual. As an abstract idea, form alone has no particular concrete existence. The individual composed of these parts is some third united thing that is not merely a composite of the two components.⁵⁸ Recalling the convertibility of transcendentals, to say that a thing exists is also to say that it is one. It is this one thing that has this single essence,

⁵⁴ *STI*, q66, a1.

⁵⁵ *DPN*, c2.

⁵⁶ Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Matter and Form and the Elements: A Translation and Interpretation of the De Principiis Naturae and the De Mixtione Elementorum of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, 2006), 40.

⁵⁷ *QDP*, q3, a5, *ad sed contra* 2.

⁵⁸ *DEE*, c2.

or nature, derived from both matter and form that determines its whatness, *quiddity*, or definition.⁵⁹

In addition to essences, there is a second type of being (*ens*) classified as accidental.⁶⁰ Accidental being (*ens*) is the being (*ens*) of qualities, such as colors, shapes, textures, or abilities. Aristotle divided being (*ens*) into ten categories, nine of which are accidental qualities (quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, condition, action, and affection). Aquinas frequently uses ‘white’ and ‘musical’ as examples of accidents. Such concepts have no real being (*ens*) in themselves. Accidental properties are only intelligible in terms of some other concrete being (*ens*) or substance that possesses these qualities. It is possible to have a concrete human but not concrete whiteness or musicality. Whiteness and musicality are dependent on concrete substances, such as human beings, in order to exist. Aquinas writes that “terms designating accidents concretely, like ‘something white’ or ‘something musical,’ cannot be placed in a category except by reduction. They are only in a category when expressed abstractly, like ‘whiteness’ or ‘music.’”⁶¹ An accident has a form in the sense that it has a definition, but it is quite different from a substantial form. Accidents associated with matter are part of the differentiation of individual members of a species, while accidents associated with form are found in any substance of a particular genus or species.

Just as there are essence/existence and matter/form distinctions, so too there is a co-relative distinction between potency and act.⁶² This distinction is one of the more critical concepts in Aquinas’s thought, especially to five ways with the first way as particularly

⁵⁹ *DEE*, c2.

⁶⁰ *DEE*, c6. See also *In Meta*, V, lec. 9.

⁶¹ *DEE*, c6.

⁶² Kerr, *Aquinas’s Way to God*, Chp. 3, loc. 1200. See also Christopher Hughes, “Matter and Actuality in Aquinas,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, edited by Brian Davies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

dependent on it.⁶³ Garrigou-LaGrange advocates that this is “the soul of Aristotelian philosophy,”⁶⁴ and Dewan frames the five ways in terms of the act/potency distinction.⁶⁵ The importance of the distinction between act and potency is related to its status as a first principle of being (*esse*). Aquinas writes “The first principles which are understood to be most universal are actuality and potentiality, for these divide being as being.”⁶⁶ The act-potency distinction divides being (*ens*) in the sense that each being (*ens*) is a particular being (*ens*) differing from the universal. Each particular being (*ens*) holds actuality and potency to different degrees. Aquinas uses ‘principle’ here in the sense of an order or sequence. It is because motion as change is most apparent to the senses that motion is understood and is the mode of being (*ens*) most apparent to the senses.⁶⁷ As universal principles of being (*esse*), act and potency are transcendental concepts that divide all beings (*ens*) whether composite or simple.⁶⁸

Actuality is indefinable in itself precisely as a simple state of being (*esse*). Aquinas writes that “simple notions cannot be defined, since an infinite regress in definitions is impossible. But actuality is one of those first simple notions. Hence it cannot be defined.”⁶⁹ Actuality cannot be directly understood or defined but can be understood in terms of a proportion between two things. Aquinas gives the example of the proportion between someone who is actively building and someone with the capability to build. Actuality has a sense of action indicating the ability or power of a particular being (*ens*) to engage in a specific action, such as the builder building. The act is an act of existence of the whole substance such that a thing is. Aquinas writes that “being

⁶³ Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, endnote *, 78-9.

⁶⁴ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. By Patrick Cummins, OSB, (Ex Fontibus Co., 2012, Kindle Edition), chapter 5.

⁶⁵ Lawrence Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” *The Downside Review*, vol. 92, issue 306, Jan. 1974, pp. 1-18.

⁶⁶ *In Meta*, XII, lec. 4.

⁶⁷ *In Meta*, V, lec. 1. See also *In Meta*, IX, lec. 3.

⁶⁸ SCG 2, cap. 54.

⁶⁹ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 5.

itself is the proper act, not of the matter, but of the whole substance; for being is the act of that whereof we can say that it is.”⁷⁰ Everything that exists is engaged in an act of existence.

Furthermore, no substance creates its own principle of existence and is dependent on an outside source for its act of existence.

Potency is at its core a capability or power as a first principle for motion or change.⁷¹ The act/potency distinction is Aquinas’s way of describing how substances can undergo change yet have a unity between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of the change. In other words, potency is the principle of continuation for changing substances. Aquinas observes that “being divided in this way is more common than complete being, for potential being is being only imperfectly and in a qualified sense.”⁷² A being (*ens*) is then ‘moved’ toward another potential state of being (*ens*), “For potency and actuality are referred in most cases to things in motion, because motion is the actuality of a being in potency.”⁷³ The subject is identical at the beginning and end of the change, and potency as the principle of continuity is critical to this metaphysics of change. Aquinas gives the examples of a statue of Mercury that is potentially present in a stone block and of half of a line that also is potentially present in a full line.⁷⁴ The act of making the block into a statue or of cutting the line in half has not occurred; it only holds the possibility of occurring. A third biological example is that of unripe grain, which is still present as potentially ripe in a blade of wheat. All of these cases are examples of one state of existence that can potentially move toward another state.

⁷⁰ *SCG* 2, cap. 54.

⁷¹ *In Meta*, V, lec. 14.

⁷² *In Meta*, V, lec. 9. See also *In Meta*, IX, lec. 1.

⁷³ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 1. See also Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 67.

⁷⁴ *In Meta*, V, lec. 9.

Aquinas analyzes the potency of substances in terms of active and passive potency as a power or capacity to change (active) and be changed (passive). Active potency is the ability of a substance to change another substance based on a “definite disposition” for this change.⁷⁵ This definite active disposition corresponds to a definite passive disposition in the substance that is changed. Aquinas uses the example of a healer who has the active disposition to heal corresponds to the passive disposition to be healed in the patient. Actuality is in one sense the state of being (*ens*) before and after a change, and in another denotes activity or operation.

The structure of act and potency is such that act has priority over potency. The priority of the act of being (*ens*) over potency is seen in the modes of intelligibility, time, and substance.⁷⁶ Objects are defined by something else that exists and is already understood as existing. The additional concept is defined by a simpler previously understood idea. For example, an understanding of animal precedes the understanding of a full definition of a human. In the same way, the act/potency distinction is first understood in terms of act as the first act of being (*ens*). Aristotle defines potency in terms of act but only inductively defines act, since the act of being is prior to potency in time for any given category of being (*ens*).⁷⁷ Aquinas writes that “a thing’s substance or form or specifying principle is a kind of actuality; and from this it is evident that actuality is prior to potency in substance or form.”⁷⁸ When it comes to any single individual, potency comes before a given secondary act. Aquinas gives the example of a “seed, which is potentially grain, was prior in time to what is actually grain.”⁷⁹ Forms have their own kind of existence prior to the existence of any given composite substance associated with the form.

⁷⁵ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 6.

⁷⁶ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 7.

⁷⁷ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 7. See also *In Phys*, II, lec. 5.

⁷⁸ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 8.

⁷⁹ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 7.

Potency is always potency for being (*ens*) and non-being, or perfection and corruption.⁸⁰ Even eternal substances devoid of matter hold a qualified potency through their form insofar as their form allows them to have potency for changes in quality or place.

From the priority of actuality over potency, Aquinas argues that what is actual is necessary to bring a given potency to actuality. What is moved acquires motion by another substance already in possession of the qualities acquired,⁸¹ so that “whatever exists potentially must always be brought to actuality by an agent, which is an actual being.”⁸² The agent (the mover) is always exterior to the patient (the moved) in actualizing any given potency. Aquinas uses the example of a human who relies on another human to be generated. Another example is a musician who becomes musical through the action of learning from a teacher who is already musical. Some sort of actual being (*ens*) or agent moves a given potential in a patient toward the mode of being (*ens*) possessed by the agent. All that changes is changed or moved by something else acting as an agent in the mode of the motion involved. Framing the actual as an agent moving a patient’s potential towards actuality infers a relationship of cause and effect. Gavin Kerr observes that “in Thomistic terms, causality is analyzed in terms of act and potency, such that a cause is what actualizes the effect and the effect thereby stands in potency to it.”⁸³ Act and potency are present insofar as the agent is a causal agent acting on a potency to accomplish an effect.

Causality is the locus in Aquinas’s thought where metaphysics and epistemology meet as an analysis of act and potency. Aquinas notes that causes are the answer to the question ‘why’ and defines causality metaphysically by stating that “A cause is that upon which the existence of

⁸⁰ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 9.

⁸¹ *In Phys*, VI, lec. 8; VII, lec. 1; VIII, lec. 7.

⁸² *In Meta*, IX, lec. 7.

⁸³ Kerr, *Aquinas’s Way to God*, Chap 4, loc. 1881.

another follows.”⁸⁴ Causality as a mode of understanding [*ratio*] for being (*ens*) and change has a distinct metaphysical quality. Knowledge of causality establishes knowledge of any subject or substance, as Aquinas writes

We have knowledge of truth only when we know a cause. This is apparent from the fact that the true things about which we have some knowledge have causes which are also true, because we cannot know what is true by knowing what is false, but only by knowing what is true. This is also the reason why demonstration, which causes science, begins with what is true...⁸⁵

Recalling the convertibility of truth and being (*esse*), whatever exists is true insofar as it exists and has a cause of its being (*esse*), which is the same as having a cause of its truth. Aquinas notes later in the same *lectio* that effects have the same intelligible structure as their causes. To fully know a truth is to know the intellectual structure of the cause or principle behind the being (*ens*) of an effect.⁸⁶ Further, demonstrations that result in *scientia* or knowledge must begin with truth. In order to produce a true demonstration resulting in knowledge, one must have causal knowledge of the truths that make up the starting propositions of the demonstration. Knowledge of causes integrate into knowledge producing syllogisms by providing the definition of a given effect,⁸⁷ and answering the question ‘why.’⁸⁸ As the cause of *scientia*, such a causal definition is the middle term in a syllogistic demonstration.⁸⁹

Natural philosophy must account for all possible causal classes in the course of scientific demonstration. Following Aristotle, Aquinas reduces all classes of causes to four: formal,

⁸⁴ *In Phys*, II, lec. 10.

⁸⁵ *In Meta*, II, lec. 2.

⁸⁶ *In Meta*, II, lec. 2. See also *In CA*, proemium.

⁸⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, trans. by Richard Berquist, (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 2007), Book II, lec. 8. Hereafter abbreviated *In PA*.

⁸⁸ *In Phys*, II, lec 10.

⁸⁹ *In PA*, II, lec. 9.

efficient, material, and final.⁹⁰ Each has a particular place in causal relation to *hylomorphic* substances. There is also the exemplar cause, which is related to formal causality and pertains most properly to God. Each cause is an answer to the question ‘why’ pertaining to the act of being (*ens*) of a given substance. Although, occasionally the ‘why’ follows solely upon the form, such as in mathematics.⁹¹ The ‘why’ related to action can depend upon the first moving or efficient cause, such as the source of a dispute leading to a fight. The ‘why’ connected to final causality applies to the purpose of an action, which in the fighting example is fighting for the sake of ruling. The material cause answers the question ‘why are bodies corruptible’ through the material composition of corruptible bodies.⁹²

The causes divide into two that operate from outside a substance (efficient and final) and two that operate from inside (formal and material). Aquinas writes that “the material and the formal are said to be intrinsic to the thing because they are constitutive parts, whereas the efficient and final are called extrinsic because they are outside the thing.”⁹³ The material and formal causes are thus intrinsic to the substance as joint causes of substantial *quiddity* or essence.⁹⁴ The efficient cause depicts the action of the agent upon a substance, putting together matter and form resulting in the substance. The final cause is the goal, or end, of the agent in producing the substance. The interior and exterior causal categories mean that there is a certain correlative mutuality between causes.⁹⁵ The material and formal causes are jointly responsible for the being (*ens*) of a substance, as Aquinas explains that “form is a cause of matter inasmuch as it gives actual being to matter, and matter is a cause of form inasmuch as it supports form in

⁹⁰ *In Meta*, V, lec. 3. See also *DPN* 3, and *In Phys*, II, lec. 10.

⁹¹ *In Phys*, lec. 10.

⁹² *In Phys*, II, lec. 11.

⁹³ *DPN*, 3.

⁹⁴ *In Meta*, V, lec. 2.

⁹⁵ *In Meta*, V, lec. 2.

being.”⁹⁶ A bronze statue has bronze for the material cause and the shape of the statue as its formal cause making it a statue and not merely a lump of bronze. The form causes the matter to have being (*ens*) in a particular shape, and the matter causes form insofar as form does not exist outside of matter.⁹⁷ In a similar way, efficient and final causes are also correlative. The efficient cause acts in light of the final cause, such that the final cause can bring about the efficient cause. In the example of the bronze statue, the bronze is the material cause, the formal cause is the shape that makes it a statue, the efficient cause is the action of the artist, and the final cause is the purpose of the artist in making the statue.

Causality underlies the five ways through the metaphysical and epistemic principle that every effect bears in itself, in its act of being (*esse*), some similitude to its cause, and the cause is known through the act of being (*ens*) of the effect. Dewan’s summarization is apt: “an effect depends on its cause,” and “This consideration thus commands the entire discussion of the five ways.”⁹⁸ The similitude between cause and effect is a dependent causal similitude of being (*ens*) in the sense that every cause produces something similar to itself in an effect. This principle linking cause and effect on an existential level is what makes knowledge of a cause possible from the nature of the effect. The similitude of being (*esse*) through causation provides the metaphysical ground for analogical understanding.⁹⁹ Aquinas writes that “from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends on its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *In Meta*, V, lec. 2.

⁹⁷ *DPN*, 4.

⁹⁸ Lawrence Dewan, O.P., *Form and Being: Studies in Thomistic Metaphysics*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 66-7. From Aquinas’s *ST I*, q2, a2 that *effectus dependeant a causa*.

⁹⁹ Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The ‘Divine Science’ the Summa Theologiae*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 109. Te Velde aptly warns against both making analogy overly metaphysical and overly epistemological.

¹⁰⁰ *ST*, I, q2, a2.

Aquinas usually justifies this principle through a deductive argument, yet sees it as self-evident.¹⁰¹ He develops this principle in some detail in the *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) where he notes that agents produce their like through the nature of their action and “each thing acts according as it is in act.”¹⁰² An effect has a form that is, in some degree, found in a cause that transcends it. The form present in the cause provides the form of the effect. It is this similitude of form that provides the link of intelligibility between cause and effect since the form is what the mind grasps first in understanding.¹⁰³ In other words, the effect formally participates in the cause.¹⁰⁴ Aquinas uses heat from the sun as an example.¹⁰⁵ The sun is a transcendent cause of heat on the earth through its active power, which is related to the effect of heat. Aquinas notes that the heat of the sun is not precisely the same as heat on earth, though the sun's heat bears some likeness to the heat that we experience. This causal similitude is sufficient to allow the convertibility of terms needed to establish a knowledge producing syllogism and is necessary when moving from an effect that is better known than a cause.¹⁰⁶ The heat of the sun is thus understood from the heat on earth that is caused by the sun insofar as there is a similarity of form between the two. Nonetheless, heat on Earth is different from the heat of the sun.

The exemplar cause is not some sort of ‘fifth cause,’ but a confluence of the causal principle and the causes themselves that is crucial to understand Aquinas’s metaphysics. Gilson notes that “exemplarism is one of the essential elements in the system of St. Thomas.”¹⁰⁷ In many ways, the exemplar cause is the same as the formal cause. The exemplar cause is the

¹⁰¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 517-19. See also Dewan, *Form and Being*, 67.

¹⁰² SCG, I, *cap.* 29.

¹⁰³ Dewan, *Form and Being*, 70-3.

¹⁰⁴ *In CA*, lec. 3.

¹⁰⁵ SCG, I, *cap.* 29.

¹⁰⁶ *In PA*, I, lec. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 91.

formal cause as it exists in an agent producing an effect.¹⁰⁸ For Aquinas “it is clear that it is necessary for effects to preexist in causes by way of exemplarity, because causes produce effects according to their likeness. Conversely, *effects have the image of their causes*, as Dionysius also says...”¹⁰⁹ The term ‘image’ is a metaphor for similitude between cause and effect. This ‘image’ aspect of exemplarity means that Aquinas often reserves the term ‘exemplar’ to describe the image present in the mind of an artisan. Aquinas writes “For an artificer produces a determinate form in matter by reason of the exemplar before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally, or the exemplar interiorly conceived in the mind.”¹¹⁰ As an illustration, the formal cause as the shape of a bronze statue pre-exists in the mind of the artist. This mental image is the exemplar cause. The idea of the statue guides the artist in producing the statue as the efficient cause. The being (*ens*) of the statue participates in the being (*ens*) of the idea of the statue through the causal action of the agent, the artist. The statue mirrors the exemplar idea in some fashion since the exemplar guides the artist in making the statue. Aquinas explicitly relates this to ideas in God’s mind, that “all natural things are related to the divine intellect as artifacts to art and therefore a thing is said to be true insofar as it has its own form, according to which it represents divine art...”¹¹¹ Aquinas relates the created world as artifacts that are only true insofar as they represent the idea in the mind of God.

The being (*ens*) of the world around us is derived from and understood through each of the four causes as causal orders (causal chains or sequences). Questions about the nature of the world are therefore answerable in terms of the causality making up an entity or event. In order

¹⁰⁸ Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 2-4, and 21-6. See also Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 92-116.

¹⁰⁹ *In CA*, lec. 14.

¹¹⁰ *ST I*, q44, a3.

¹¹¹ Thomas Aquinas and Cajetan, *Aristotle: On Interpretation Commentary by St. Thomas and Cajetan*, trans. by Jean T. Oesterle, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), Book I, lec. III, hereafter abbreviated *In Periherm*.

for a causal order to be intelligible, it must terminate in an ultimate cause sufficient to explain ‘why.’ Thomistic scholars debate the degree to which the five ways connect to causality.¹¹² Virtually every scholar recognizes that the five ways are causal arguments; the issue is whether or not the four causes provide an organizing framework for the five ways. Dewan,¹¹³ Mark Johnson,¹¹⁴ and Wippel¹¹⁵ each question how the four causes fit with the five ways and Wippel is skeptical of any single organizing theme for the five ways.¹¹⁶ De Haan argues that Aquinas is following the example set by Avicenna in making certain that each of the four causal orders terminate in an uncaused ultimate cause.¹¹⁷ Johnson¹¹⁸ and Kenny¹¹⁹ both point out that the second, fourth, and fifth ways cohere nicely with efficient, formal, and final causality, and argue for a connection between the third way and material causality.

Aquinas recognizes two modes in which causal orders can be configured, the *per se* and *per accidens* modes.¹²⁰ *Per se* causal orders are causal orders organized in a hierarchical manner such that all immediate causes responsible for existence operate in the present moment such that

¹¹² The issue will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 6.

¹¹³ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 1-18.

¹¹⁴ Mark F. Johnson, “Why Five Ways?”, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 65, 1991, 107-21.

¹¹⁵ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 497-500

¹¹⁶ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 497-500,

¹¹⁷ Daniel De Haan, “Why the Five Ways? Aquinas’s Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian Metaphysics and Sacra Doctrina,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 86, 2013, 141-58.

¹¹⁸ Harold J. Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” *Studies in medieval culture*, 3, 135-144 (Kalamazoo, MI: The Medieval Institute of Western Michigan Univ, 1970).

¹¹⁹ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas’ Proofs of God’s Existence*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1969, 2003), 35-7.

¹²⁰ Stephen T. Davis, “Hierarchical Causes in the Cosmological Argument,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 13-27. See also Stephen T. Davis *God, Reason & Theistic Proofs*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 70-3; Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginners Guide*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009, 2011), 69-73; Frederick C. S.J. Copleston, *Aquinas*, (London and New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1955, 1991), 122-3; and Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 460-2. Note: There are three terms often used to describe this concept, “*per se* cause” (used by Aquinas in *ST I*, q46, a2, ad7, and by Feser), “hierarchical cause” (used by Davis and Copleston) and “essentially ordered cause” (used by Wippel, and Feser, who uses two terms). This work will use “*per se* cause” following Aquinas, and “hierarchical cause” following Davis and Copleston as a clear contemporary meaning for the term.

the intention of the first cause carries through all intermediate causes to the effect.¹²¹ Aquinas writes that “The order is *per se* when the intention of the first cause respects the ultimate effect through all the mediating causes, as when a craftsman’s act moves the hand, and the hand a hammer that pounds out the iron, to which the intention of the art reaches.”¹²² This multitude is continually involved in causing an effect at the level of being (*ens*). In other words, the very being (*ens*) of an effect depends on a multitude of causal agents in the here in now. *Per accidens* causal orders occur in a non-contemporaneous linear series such that there is no need for the first cause to provide a principle of operation through all intermediary causes, such as a series of parents generating children or candles lighting further candles.¹²³ The parents and children are finite, and therefore there is no time in which an infinite multitude of parents and children present. Aquinas thinks that an infinite series of *per se* causes is impossible, but an infinite series of *per accidens* causes is possible.

Aquinas held to primary and secondary causal relationships, and this distinction is key to understanding his position on *per se* and *per accidens* causal orders. The primary or first cause is the principle that makes the secondary cause possible.¹²⁴ The first cause gives being (*esse*) to the second cause thereby adding the potential for the second cause to act as a cause upon the ultimate effect. Aquinas writes that “the second cause has its potency, or power, to act from the first cause.”¹²⁵ The first cause must, therefore, be more universal than the secondary cause since it generates both the possibility for the second cause to act on the effect and the possibility for the effect to be acted upon. Without a first cause it is as if all causes are instruments operating

¹²¹ *In CA* lec. 1. See also Davis, “Hierarchical Causes,” 13-14 and Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 164-70.

¹²² *In CA* lec. 1.

¹²³ *ST I*, q7, a4.

¹²⁴ *In CA* lec. 1.

¹²⁵ *In CA* lec. 1.

without an entity behind their operation, “For example, this is as if, regarding the construction of an arch or a bed, one should posit a saw or an axe without a carpenter at work.”¹²⁶ Ending with a proximate or secondary cause would be accepting a saw or axe as sufficient explanation for the existence of a bed or of a stick hitting a rock as a sufficient explanation to the question ‘why is the rock moving?’ The *per se* hierarchical ordering explains the existence not only of the bed but of the action of the ax and the existence of the material that forms the bed. Wippel observes that Aquinas’s concern is not so much about refuting an actual infinity of hierarchical causes “but with showing that such a series is meaningless and has no explanatory power unless one also admits that there is an uncaused cause.”¹²⁷ The existential question keeps getting put off until one has an infinite multitude of dependent beings (*ens*) all in need of support in order to exist as a whole, but for whom that support is missing.

Aquinas thinks that it is possible to have an infinite *per accidens* causal series. Aquinas uses two examples to illustrate this point. The first is the use of many hammers that are each sequentially broken in the act of building.¹²⁸ An infinite number of tools can be used without all of them actually existing at once, avoiding the issue of an actually infinite multitude. The second example is that of human generation, since “likewise it is accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man. For all generating men hold one grade in efficient causes—viz., the grade of a particular generator.”¹²⁹ A human can generate another who then generates the next, and so on. This series is possible for two reasons. First, it is not necessary in human generation for the parent to continue existing indefinitely after generating a child, avoiding an actually existing multitude. Second, while the parent is indubitably responsible for

¹²⁶ *CT I*, 3.

¹²⁷ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 461.

¹²⁸ *ST I*, q46, a2, *ad* 7.

¹²⁹ *ST I*, q46, a2, *ad* 7.

the existence of a child, the child's continued existence after generation is not dependent upon the parent. The existential independence of the child is another reason why an infinite multitude is not necessary. It would then seem that from an epistemic standpoint questions about *per accidens* and *per se* causal orders are different questions accepting different parameters for adequate answers.

Aquinas holds as the basic definition of 'infinite' "that a thing is called infinite because it is not finite,"¹³⁰ meaning a negation of limits and boundaries. Aquinas writes that the infinite "excludes every limit, whether it be a starting point or terminus."¹³¹ Prime matter and form are both infinite in the sense that these concepts themselves are not determinate and have no particular boundaries or limits in and of themselves.¹³² Prime matter is described as pure potency, which is infinite in the sense that it is completely undetermined. Similarly, the form of a dog is not determined until it is united with matter and becomes a particular determinate dog. As applied to God, the term 'infinite' is a negative term that eliminates the possibility of placing God within any determinate genera.¹³³ While generally a negative term under the "not finite" definition, this does not mean that it indicates a privation. When numbers and geometry are designated 'infinite,' it is an imperfection or privation since numbers and dimensions have in their nature to be limited. An infinite number lacks an end or limit that it otherwise would have. God, on the other hand, is complete or perfect with no limits. It is the negation of any exterior limits on God that warrants describing God as infinite, and the negation of exterior limits on God maintains God as absolute unlimited plenitude of being (*esse*).¹³⁴ The application of infinite to

¹³⁰ *ST*, I, q7, a1.

¹³¹ *In Meta*, II, lec. 3.

¹³² *In Phys*, III, lec. 11.

¹³³ *SCG* I, *cap.* 43. For an informative analysis of God's infinity in relation to the doctrine of divine simplicity, see James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 77 - 81.

¹³⁴ James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 77 - 81.

God results in a positive rather than negative attribute as God's infinite perfection describes the positive unbounded completeness of God's being (*esse*).

Aquinas holds that mathematical and *per accidens* infinite series are intelligible while an actual hierarchical infinite series is unintelligible. Mathematicians do not need an infinite in act, or an infinite existing in the concrete world outside of mathematics in order to intelligibly use infinity in their calculations. Mathematicians "merely require that there be some line which is as great as is necessary for them, so that from it they are able to subtract what they wish. And for this some greatest magnitude is sufficient."¹³⁵ *Per accidens* series' are likewise intelligible since they too need not be in existence all at once. A *per accidens* series is intelligible because it does not address continued existence and does not result in an actual infinite multitude. The fact that mathematical and *per accidens* infinities are intelligible does not mean that a hierarchical infinite is likewise intelligible. *Per accidens* and mathematical infinities do not depict the existence of actually existing things. An actually existing infinite multitude is precluded by Aquinas's notions of matter/form composition and the infinite as a negation of limit.¹³⁶ An actual hierarchical infinite cannot exist in the actual world, for actual existence entails completion or limit. In order to actually exist, all things have a potential that is determined by form. For an infinite to exist, it would have to be limited and determined, but then it would by definition no longer be infinite.

Theological Principles: The Doctrines of Divine Simplicity and Creation

As discussed in the previous chapter, in Aquinas's thought scripture holds priority over philosophy and even the Fathers of the Church. Aquinas's philosophy is a handmaiden that serves his theology. Aquinas's metaphysics coheres with concepts received in Scripture and articulated as the articles of faith. This section will treat the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity

¹³⁵ *In Phys*, III, lec. 12.

¹³⁶ *In Phys*, III, lec. 12.

(DDS).¹³⁷ These two theological doctrines connect Aquinas's metaphysics and the five ways. The proximity of the DDS to the five ways as well as references to the content in question 3 within question 2 warrant a discussion of this doctrine, especially in light of the epistemic ramifications of the DDS that will be discussed in the chapter 3. This section will look at the DDS as a doctrine of negative theology that sets up Aquinas's analogical divine naming, how the five ways are used in question 3, the DDS as connecting God with self-subsisting being (*esse*) itself, and how the DDS sets up epistemic questions whose answers govern the discursive form of the five ways. The doctrine of creation is key in the theological justification for naming the cause of created effects "God." The doctrine of creation connects to participation and God as the source of being (*esse*).¹³⁸ Creation provides the theological basis to conclude each of the five ways with a first mover, first efficient cause, necessary being (*esse*), cause of perfections, and an intelligence directing things toward their ends.¹³⁹ Participation is causal participation in God as source of being (*esse*) precisely in light of the doctrine of creation. What it means to create, God's role as ultimate cause in each causal order, participation, and existential causal dependency will be explored as connecting Aquinas's metaphysics with the theological concept of creation. This allows Aquinas to use ultimate causes as names for God insofar as they signify through philosophical language what it means for God to be Creator.

The Doctors of the Church formulated the DDS in consideration of the articles of faith

¹³⁷ The DDS has recently resurfaced in philosophical theology as a major topic of discussion. Eleanore Stump gives an excellent summary of the DDS along with many of the current issues and some solutions to problems. See Eleanore Stump, *Aquinas*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 92-130. For an insightful analytic critique of Aquinas's DDS see Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980). For a defense of the DDS, see James Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011). For a critique of Divine Complexity see Steven J. Duby, "Divine Simplicity, Divine Freedom, and the Contingency of Creation: Dogmatic Responses to Some Analytic Questions," *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 6 (2012), 115-142.

¹³⁸ *ST I*, q44, a1; *ST I*, q45, a3.

¹³⁹ *ST I*, q2, a3.

without making them a positive faith statement about God.¹⁴⁰ The DDS articulates a negation of concepts of God that are opposed to articles of faith while maintaining God as the absolute giver of Life, of being (*esse*). Aquinas writes that “Now it can be shown how God is not, by denying of Him whatever is opposed to the idea of Him—viz., composition, motion, and the like.”¹⁴¹ Aquinas is able to develop these negations about God into certain tempered positive statements. As Eleanore Stump points out “It is true that Aquinas explains divine simplicity only in terms of what God is not ... But in the course of showing what God is not, Aquinas relies heavily on positive statements claims about God.”¹⁴² The positive statements referred to by Stump are all conclusions derived from the five ways, which immediately precede Aquinas’s development of divine simplicity. Aquinas uses the first, second, and fourth ways in part as justification for the DDS.

Aquinas affirms in the *proemium* to question 3 that humans cannot know the essence of God yet can come to some understanding through knowledge of what God is not, which is the principal function of the DDS as negative theology. Aquinas writes that “Now it can be shown how God is not, by denying of Him whatever is opposed to the idea of Him—viz., composition, motion, and the like.”¹⁴³ Question 3 then carries out these negations of composition in God, not only in regards to materiality, and matter/form composition, but also essence/existence composition and the idea that God is in any way composed of parts. Aquinas’s citations of Pseudo-Dionysius in his treatment of the DDS in his commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences* shows that his development is located within a tradition of negative theology that is related to

¹⁴⁰ Christopher A. Franks, “The Simplicity of the Living God: Aquinas, Barth, and Some Philosophers,” *Modern Theology*, 21:2, April 2005, 275-300, p. 276.

¹⁴¹ *ST I*, q3, *proemium*.

¹⁴² Stump, *Aquinas*, 94. See also Dolezal, *God without Parts*, 31.

¹⁴³ *ST I*, q3, *proemium*.

Divine Naming.¹⁴⁴ The statement ‘God is simple’ has the equivalent of meaning ‘God is not made of parts, whether physical or metaphysical.’ In making these negations, Aquinas leans heavily on the five ways, especially the first way.

Aquinas uses the conclusion of the first way as a premise in several demonstrations related to the DDS.¹⁴⁵ He uses that God is unmoved mover to negate the embodiment, matter/form composition, accidental composition, and essence/existence composition in God. The act/potency distinction is inherent to change, as change is a movement from one actual state to another state that was previously merely potential. Since motion/change is a trait of embodiment, if God is not subject to motion then God cannot be a body. Aquinas writes that “Now it has been already proved that God is the First Mover, and is Himself unmoved. Therefore, it is clear that God is not a body.”¹⁴⁶ Accidents in God are similarly negated by this argument since they also relate to and rely upon potency.¹⁴⁷ Accidents inhering in subjects are in some sense a potential made actual by those accidents. Since accidents are a comparative potency in a subject and God has no potency, then there cannot be a distinction between subject and accident in God. Accidents are part of what differentiates a formal genus into various species.

Aquinas deploys the second way in support of negating materiality, matter/form composition, and essence/existence composition, as well as affirming the absolute simplicity of God and that God does not enter into composition of other things.¹⁴⁸ Since God is first being, as established in the second way, then God is pure act with no potency. The act/potency distinction

¹⁴⁴ *Super Sent.*(a), I, d8, q4, a3.

¹⁴⁵ Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 34, fn 8.

¹⁴⁶ *ST I*, q3, a1.

¹⁴⁷ *ST I*, q3, a6.

¹⁴⁸ *ST I*, q3, a2, a4, a7, and a8.

is introduced in the first way, but the starting point here is the end of the second way. It follows then that since potency is a trait of embodiment, then God is not a body. It follows from the same argument that God is not composed of matter and form, for the same argument that negates embodied materiality correlatively negates matter/form composition insofar as the matter component is concerned.¹⁴⁹ He uses the second way to argue that since what is essentially a first agent, as established by the second way, must be essentially a form. The principle establishing this premise is that “every agent acts by its form.”¹⁵⁰ Since God is first efficient cause, as demonstrated in the second way, then God is first agent. As first agent, God acts by virtue of God’s form, and thus operates like a form rather than a matter/form composite. Aquinas offers a general argument against composition in God from the second way that anything composed requires a cause bringing the components into composition. God as first cause is uncaused and therefore not composite.¹⁵¹ Finally, Aquinas demonstrates from the second way that God does not enter into composition with things.¹⁵² The efficient cause is necessarily exterior to what is caused and not numerically identical to it. Aquinas gives the example that one human begets another separate human. Since God is the first efficient cause, then all that God causes is necessarily exterior to God rather than composite with God.

Aquinas uses the fourth way to negate embodiment and matter/form composition.¹⁵³ The fourth way, as will be discussed at length in a later chapter, argues from participated transcendentals of being (*esse*) (truth, beauty, one) to absolute formal being (*esse*).¹⁵⁴ Anything with these qualities participates in another that has them absolutely. Aquinas uses the example of

¹⁴⁹ *ST I*, q3, a2.

¹⁵⁰ *ST I*, q3, a2.

¹⁵¹ *ST I*, q3, a7.

¹⁵² *ST I*, q3, a8.

¹⁵³ *ST I*, q3, a1 and a2. For more on the connection to the fourth way see Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 47

¹⁵⁴ *ST I*, q2, a3.

fire to make his point in that fire has heat absolutely and whatever is hot participates in the heat of the fire. Aquinas argues against the embodiment of God by pointing out that there are degrees of nobility.¹⁵⁵ An animate body is nobler than an inanimate body. Animated bodies do not hold their animation in themselves but obtain animation from outside. Therefore, the principle of animation must be most noble, and since it would be nobler than an animated body, this principle cannot itself be a body. Aquinas negates matter/form composition arguing from the fourth way to God based on form.¹⁵⁶ Aquinas writes that “everything composed of matter and form owes its perfection and goodness to its form, therefore its goodness is participated, inasmuch as matter participates the form.”¹⁵⁷ Any matter/form composition holds the goodness of being (*esse*) due to participation in a higher good that comes first. Since God is the first and highest unparticipated good, as established in the fourth way, God cannot be a matter/form composition.

Aquinas negates that God is composed of a *supposit* and nature, which is to say that God is the same as God’s essence.¹⁵⁸ The claim is that God is not an individual subsisting something, or *supposit*, that participates in a nature or essence. God is God’s essence existing in a subsistent manner. God is God’s divinity such that divinity is not a separate essence of which God is an individual example, such as the Greek or Indian Gods. Since an essence includes all attributes of existence, God is God’s attributes and expresses those attributes through God’s act of existence. Aquinas writes that “Since God is not composed of matter and form, He must be His own head, His own Life, and whatever else is predicated of Him.”¹⁵⁹ Nothing that makes God divine comes from outside of God. This is different from human experience with a human nature that lies

¹⁵⁵ *ST I*, q3, a1.

¹⁵⁶ *ST I*, q3, a2.

¹⁵⁷ *ST I*, q3, a2.

¹⁵⁸ *ST I*, q3, a3. See also Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 52-55.

¹⁵⁹ *ST I*, q3, a3.

outside of any human. Matter and the inherent accidents of matter individuate humans as *hylomorphic* composite beings (*ens*) who are not equivalent to human nature itself. Since God is not a matter/form composition, then God cannot be a *supposit/nature* composition.

The negation of essence/existence composition in God is a cornerstone in Aquinas's thought.¹⁶⁰ Dolezal notes that "In denying that God is composed of essence and existence Thomas makes his most important contribution to the DDS."¹⁶¹ Aquinas gives three demonstrations that rely on the first way's act/potency distinction, the second way's first efficient cause, and the fourth way's participated being (*ens*).¹⁶² First, any form is actual only insofar as it exists. The form has potential to exist in relation to actuality such that the essence provides a principle of potency while existence is a principle of actuality as a type of act/potency composition. If there is no potency in God, then there is no real distinction between act and potency in God. Correlatively, essence and existence are the same in God.¹⁶³ Second, God as first efficient cause sets the being (*esse*) of God aside from the being (*esse*) of any being (*ens*) with exteriorly caused being (*ens*). Any being (*ens*) who has an essence that differs from existence must receive existence from an exterior source. That God is uncaused first cause means that God's being (*esse*) is self-sufficient and not from an exterior source. Since God's existence is intrinsic, then there must not be an essence/existence composition in God. Third, Aquinas uses an argument from participated being (*ens*). Aquinas uses the same fire imagery found in the fourth way as a metaphor for participated existence. Aquinas writes that "just as that which has fire, but is not itself fire, is on fire by participation; so that which has existence but is not

¹⁶⁰ *ST I*, q3, a4.

¹⁶¹ Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 62.

¹⁶² *ST I*, q3, a4.

¹⁶³ *ST I*, q3, a4.

existence, is a being by participation.”¹⁶⁴ A fire has heat by virtue of heat as part of the essence of fire and provides heat to other objects that do not have heat essentially. In the same way, anything whose existence is not part of its essence must have existence by participation in something else. God cannot exist by participation because then God would not be first being (*esse*). God must have essential existence, and since God is God’s essence, then God is being (*esse*) itself.

Reference to the third way is missing from the third question of the *ST*, but this should not be altogether surprising considering that the third way relates to material causality.¹⁶⁵ The third way has two movements or parts to the demonstration. The first movement of the third way relates to the first material principle and its reliance on being (*esse*). The second movement connects the first material principle to God as the source of being (*esse*) through the second way. Since Aquinas uses the second way to negate materiality in God, and the third way relies on the second way, it is not surprising that Aquinas does not use the third way in support of the DDS.

The DDS sets the stage for the incomprehensibility of God through the negation of genus/species distinction in God, establishing that God is without composition and thus indefinable, radically different, and utterly transcendent.¹⁶⁶ Aquinas writes that “Now the difference from which the species is derived, is always related to that from which the genus derived, as actuality is related to potentiality.”¹⁶⁷ Since God is pure act with no potency, God is not in a genus. Aquinas applies this further, arguing that since God is God’s essence, then God cannot be in a particular genus.¹⁶⁸ An individual human is part of the genus humanity and every

¹⁶⁴ *ST* I, q3, a4.

¹⁶⁵ Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 135-144; Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 35-6.

¹⁶⁶ *ST* I, q3, a5. See also Dolezal, *God Without Parts*, 55-8.

¹⁶⁷ *ST* I, q3, a5.

¹⁶⁸ *ST*, I, q3, a5.

member differs from the genus. Since God is God's essence there is no individuation of God in relation to an essence, God is not in a genus. Aristotle points out that being (*esse*) has no genus. Since everything has being (*ens*), common being (*ens commune*) is most general and cannot be further differentiated. God then is also most general and cannot be placed into a genus. Aquinas writes that "it is plain that God is not in a genus as if He were a species. From this it is also plain that He has no genus nor difference, nor can there be any definition of Him; nor, save through His effects, a demonstration of Him: for a demonstration is a definition."¹⁶⁹ If God cannot be placed as a species within a particular genus, then God cannot be formally categorized or defined.

Aquinas references the DDS's negation of *supposit* and nature just prior to the five ways as part of his proof that God's existence is not self-evident.¹⁷⁰ Again, this reasoning is how Aquinas preserves the radical transcendence of God. The statement "God exists" is self-evident, since according to the DDS God's essence and existence are the same. It is only in this tautological sense, similar to "all triangles have three sides," that God is self-evident. That God's essence is incomprehensible entails that any demonstration lacks a middle term. God is radically different from the world, transcending all that exists. The difficulty in forming a definition is due to the lack of definition and univocal similitude between God and creatures. Aquinas's epistemology depends on the idea that understanding relies on union of the knower and the known in the intellect.¹⁷¹ Understanding takes place with the abstraction of the material world to the phantasms and union of the phantasm with the intellect. The phantasm, or mental image, has some similitude with the thing imaged. No such similitude of God is possible by nature. Since no

¹⁶⁹ *ST I*, q3, a5.

¹⁷⁰ *ST I*, q2, a1.

¹⁷¹ *ST I*, q12, a2.

creature holds its own existence essentially, there is no material form available to abstract to a phantasm and stand in as a representation of God's essence.

Aquinas carefully defines "creation" through an article on the topic in the *Summa theologiae* and in several other places.¹⁷² Aquinas is concerned with defining creation as "the emanation of all being (*potius entes*) from the universal cause, which is God,"¹⁷³ and explaining the implications of this definition in detail. Creation is the emanation of universal being (*esse*), which in its universality includes not only particular beings (*ens*) but also what pertains to the act of being (*ens*) of every individual particular being (*ens*) in any way.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the emanation of being (*ens*) is the creation of total being (*esse*). No being (*ens*) is responsible for the total being (*ens*) of any other. Since creation is the emanation of universal being thus described, then this emanation of being is from *not-being*.¹⁷⁵ Aquinas uses the example of man from *not-man* and white from *not-white* arguing that creation is by definition *ex nihilo* or out of nothing. Further, the "ex" in *ex nihilo* does not signify nothing as some sort of matter from which all being (*ens*) emanates but signifies a logical order in that first there is nothing then there is something.¹⁷⁶ Creation is complete ontological emanation of all beings (*ens*) with their particular acts of being (*ens*).

Creation is not an alteration of pre-existing matter since creation follows a logical order rather than temporal order such that creation and the created are simultaneous.¹⁷⁷ Aquinas writes "For change means that the same something should be different now from what it was

¹⁷² *ST I*, q45, a1. See also *QDP* q3, a2; *SCG II*, *chp.* 17; *CT I*, *cap.* 69, and Aquinas's *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, article 1, translated as "The Apostles Creed" in *The Catechetical Instructions*, trans. Joseph B. Collins, SS, (Veritatus Splendor Publications, Kindle Edition, 2012), hereafter abbreviated *In SA*.

¹⁷³ *ST I*, q45, a1.

¹⁷⁴ *ST I*, q44, a2.

¹⁷⁵ *ST I*, q45, a1.

¹⁷⁶ *ST I*, q45, a1, *ad 3*.

¹⁷⁷ *ST I*, q45, a2, *ad 2* & *ad 3*. For parallel arguments see *QDP* q3, a2; *SCG II*, *cap.* 17

previously.”¹⁷⁸ In order for something to change it already has to exist, for to change is to move from one state to another state. Since creation is out of nothing, there is no prior state to change to a new state. A given being (*ens*) must already exist in its full nature and ability to act and change before something else can change it. Since there is no change in creation, the act of creation and the created are simultaneous.¹⁷⁹ There is no temporal order but only logical order between creator and the created, “since creation is without movement, a thing is being created and is already created at the same time.”¹⁸⁰ Creation is a simultaneous event without change or motion that generates the being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*) in their full ontological capacity to act.

What is created has a relation to God without sharing in the substance of God or as an attribute of God either substantial or accidental, since creation is without change.¹⁸¹ The act of creation places nothing substantial in the creature because creation is not a motion or change from something pre-existing. All that pre-existed creation was God, and there is nothing of the substance of God placed into the creature.¹⁸² Aquinas writes that “God is in all things; not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident; but as an agent is present to that upon which it works.”¹⁸³ God is the first principle and first cause responsible for the full ontological being (*ens*) and preservation of all that is. God’s act of creation and preservation without motion leaves a causal relation between creator and creature.¹⁸⁴ Aquinas uses the term “real relation” for a dependent relation, and “relation of reason” for a non-dependent relation. The relation between creatures and God is a real relation on the part of creatures in that all creatures depend on God for existence. In contrast, the relation of God to creatures is a relation of reason in that God is not

¹⁷⁸ ST I, q45, a2, *ad* 2.

¹⁷⁹ ST I, q45, a2, *ad* 3.

¹⁸⁰ ST I, q45, a2, *ad* 3. See also SCG II, cap. 19.

¹⁸¹ ST I, q45, a3.

¹⁸² ST I, q45, a3.

¹⁸³ ST I, q8, a1.

¹⁸⁴ ST I, q45, a3.

dependent on creatures for existence. The creator-creature relationship applies to God through reason in such a way that God is not dependent on the relationship to define the nature of God.

Aquinas defends the position derived from Maimonides that creation in time is not philosophically demonstrable and is an article of faith. *Per accidens* causal orders are a possibility, and an eternal world would rely on an infinite *per accidens* order in time for its eternity. Thus, there is nothing inherently contradictory, either philosophically or theologically, with the concept of an eternal world.¹⁸⁵ Aquinas argues in several places¹⁸⁶ that there is nothing inherently incoherent for the universe to exist eternally yet also be created and sustained by God. In an eternally existing universe, the actually existing *per accidens* causal order stretching back in time is continually sustained by a *per se* causal order in the here and now of every moment. God's ontological creative act in each moment could hypothetically be immediate and concurrent with creation as the effect. God's effects need not precede the cause. As Aquinas writes "if the action is instantaneous and not successive, it is not necessary for the maker to be prior to the thing made in duration."¹⁸⁷ This is because God does not produce effects through the motion of potency moving toward actuality, and so the act of continual ontological creation and sustenance is not a change.¹⁸⁸

Aquinas does not think that a philosophical or empirical argument can settle the issue of the eternity of the world, since "everything according to its species is abstracted from *here* and *now*; whence it is said that universals are everywhere and always."¹⁸⁹ Empirical abstraction is always from the present, and the result is a universal idea. The resulting universal cannot be

¹⁸⁵ *ST I*, q46, a2, *ad* 7. See also *DAM*.

¹⁸⁶ Aquinas, *De aeternitate mundi*, trans. by Ralph McInerny as "On the Eternity of the World," in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), hereafter abbreviated *DAM*. *ST I*, q46. *QDP* q3, a14 & a17.

¹⁸⁷ *ST I*, q46, a2, *ad* 1.

¹⁸⁸ *ST I*, q46, a1, *ad* 5.

¹⁸⁹ *ST I*, q46, a2.

proven to have a finite existence any more than other universal ideas. Aquinas thinks that the lack of direct access to a beginning in time is grounds for calling creation in time unprovable from an empirical standpoint, which is why he considers the beginning of the world a matter of faith. Aquinas writes that “the divine will can be manifested by revelation, on which faith rests. Hence that the world began to exist is an object of faith, but not of demonstration or science.”¹⁹⁰ God freely could have created an eternal world, and we only know that the world was created in time through revelation. As an article of faith creation in time escapes human reason and must be subject to the assent of faith.

God’s immediate motionless power of creation applies to each causal order in all of their full ontological properties. Aquinas follows Avicenna in positing that all four causal orders must end in an uncaused cause sufficient to explain the existence of the causal order. Aquinas places God as creator and first principle of each causal order in his treatise on creation in the *ST*.¹⁹¹ Aquinas writes that “Since God is the efficient, the exemplar and final cause of all things, and since primary matter is from Him, it follows that the first principle of all this is one in reality.”¹⁹² Aquinas addresses the necessity of God as efficient cause, then God as creator of prime matter, God as exemplar cause, and God as final cause.¹⁹³ God is the cause of being (*ens*) for each hierarchical per se causal order in their full act of being (*ens*).

Aquinas demonstrates the efficient causal participation of being (*ens*) to God as the first efficient cause of being (*ens*) through the conclusion reached to the DDS.¹⁹⁴ He begins with the principle that what is found in a something by participation as an effect exists more perfectly in

¹⁹⁰ *ST* I, q46, a2.

¹⁹¹ *ST* I, q 44, a1, a2, a3, and a4.

¹⁹² *ST* I, 44, a4, *ad* 4.

¹⁹³ *ST* I, 44, a1, a2, a3, and a4.

¹⁹⁴ *ST* I, 44, a1.

the cause. He uses the example of iron heated by fire, wherein the heat in the iron is found more perfectly, or completely, in the fire from which the iron causally participates in the heat. In the same way, the causal participation of all things in itself entails that all things must causally participate in that which most perfectly has being or is essentially self-subsisting being (*esse*). Aquinas then invokes the DDS and its conclusion that God is self-subsisting being (*esse*) to identify God with the conclusion. Every being owes its act of being to participation in God's ontological causal act of creation.

The idea that God is the creator of prime matter,¹⁹⁵ poses a particularly difficult problem for Aquinas since, as explained above, prime matter is pure potency with no actuality.¹⁹⁶ The difficulty is how to frame prime matter as created, since it does not have any actuality, and anything created should be actual. Aquinas deftly handles this objection by pointing out that this critique “does not show that matter is not created, but that it is not created without form; for though everything created is actual, it is still not pure act.”¹⁹⁷ The creation of beings (*ens*) includes the totality of each being (*ens*), which necessarily includes the matter existing as part of the unified substantial being (*ens*). Beings (*ens*) that are not pure act are mixed with potentiality, and this potentiality is created as belonging to the actual being (*ens*) of what is created. God's act of creation results in the ontological causal generation of all qualities supporting each being's (*ens*) act of being (*ens*). Since potentiality is associated with prime matter, Aquinas uses this connection to affirm that God creates the potential in each being (*ens*).

Having explained the origin of matter, Aquinas then turns to the origin of the determinate form in matter.¹⁹⁸ Aquinas demonstrates that God is the exemplar cause from which all forms

¹⁹⁵ *ST I*, 44, a2.

¹⁹⁶ *ST I*, 44, a2, arg. 3.

¹⁹⁷ *ST I*, 44, a2, *ad. 3*. See also *QDP* q3, a6, *ad. 3*.

¹⁹⁸ *ST I*, 44, a3.

exist through participation. Aquinas's concern is the manner in which God is the exemplar form. The entire universe is present in the mind of God as an image, which makes the universe an idea in the mind of God, for "God does not understand things according to an idea outside Himself."¹⁹⁹ Since from the DDS God is not composed of parts, the ideas in the mind of God are part of the essence of God and therefore are God.²⁰⁰ The formal causal order terminates in the essence of God, who as exemplar cause produces the determinate being (*ens*) of all beings (*ens*).

Aquinas begins his defense of God as final cause by citing the principle that "every agent acts for an end."²⁰¹ All things are goal-directed, but the context of the article indicates that it is not just any end that Aquinas has mind. The goal or final cause spurring all of creation forward is the will toward perfection of being (*ens*). Imperfect agents intend a greater perfection of being (*ens*). God shares being (*esse*) with creatures not out of need but out of an overflowing abundance of being (*esse*) or goodness. Aquinas notes that it is "because He does not act for His own profit, but only for His own goodness."²⁰² Beings (*ens*) are acting even as they are subject to action since they are incomplete in themselves. In contrast, the First Agent acts on beings (*ens*) without beings (*ens*) acting upon the First Agent, whose only intention is to share perfection and goodness through causal participation. Aquinas writes that "All things desire God as their end, when they desire some good thing, whether this desire be intellectual or sensible, or natural, i.e., without knowledge; because nothing is good and desirable except forasmuch as it participates in the likeness of God."²⁰³ The goal spurring the creature forward is to be like God whenever a creature endeavors to preserve and perfect its own being (*ens*). This is the case even when a

¹⁹⁹ *ST I*, 15, a1, *ad*. 1.

²⁰⁰ *ST I*, 44, a3.

²⁰¹ *ST I*, q44, a4, *respondeo*.

²⁰² *ST I*, q44, a4, *ad* 1.

²⁰³ *ST I*, q44, a4, *ad*. 3.

creature is unaware of God, for inasmuch as anything exists to be desired, it is good and true due to the causal participation in God. The order of final causality thus terminates in a First Agent who acts without reciprocal action and whose being (*esse*) and goodness is desired by all of creation.

Conclusion

Since Aquinas puts metaphysics before epistemology and derives his epistemology from metaphysics, he grounds the five ways in metaphysics. This is because what is known must be and be a certain kind of being (*ens*) in order to be known. All beings (*ens*) insofar as they exist participate in common being, or *ens commune*. Participation in *ens commune* is a causal participation involving all aspects of the existence of individual beings (*ens*), who participate in being (*esse*) through causality as the most proper mode of participation in being itself (*ipsum esse*). Each of the five ways begin with beings (*ens*) and work up through participated causality to being itself (*ipsum esse*). The five ways demonstrate from aspects of beings (*ens*) to being itself (*ipsum esse*) through each causal order in which the being (*ens*) is an effect by the principle that every effect contains something of the cause. Each of the causes invoked must end in a self-sufficient cause of being (*ens*). Each of the four causes represents a *per se* causal series that owes its act of being (*ens*) to causal participation in being itself (*ipsum esse*) as the first cause. Yet, why conclude that the first cause in each causal chain can be labeled “God”?

An answer begins with the DDS, which establishes the identity of God with existence itself by utilizing three of the five ways. The DDS negates all composition in God, whether matter/form, *supposit/nature*, genus/difference, substance/accident, or essence/existence. The negation of the *supposit/nature* distinction means that God is God’s own essence and that God’s essence is existence. All that exists does so through participation in God. In his treatise on

creation in the *ST*, Aquinas explicitly identifies God with the terminus of each of the four causal orders, efficient, material, formal, and final. Each causal order terminates in self-sufficient being with no need for further causal explanation. It may be that any given uncaused cause, such as the first efficient cause, is not on its own philosophically identified with God. Given the description of God as creator in the articles of faith, God must be the self-subsistent being (*ipsum esse subsistens*) at the terminus of each causal order. As each way terminates in necessary being, then it is a proper correlation to identify this being with the Christian God.

Chapter Three: Anthropology, Epistemology, and Analogy

It is well known that the five ways have a particularly Aristotelian epistemic structure involving syllogistic demonstration, and any work pertaining to them would be remiss to neglect this. There is an impressive amount of secondary literature that treats the five ways in light of Aquinas's Aristotelian epistemology and metaphysics. Among them, there is no shortage of authors who both include and exclude Aquinas's anthropology/philosophy of mind alongside an account of his Aristotelian logic.¹ This chapter will discuss the classic understanding of Aquinas's epistemology considering his anthropology/philosophy of mind with the additional aspect of analogical predication. Aquinas's anthropology/philosophy of mind conditions the form and structure of the five ways according to the most proper mode for human knowing.² The semantic question of divine naming involving analogical predication is relevant since each of the five ways end with naming God. The five ways demonstrate God in a way that accounts for the proper mode of human knowing, syllogistic demonstration, and analogy as the proper mode for speaking of God. This chapter will begin with Aquinas's anthropology as context for his metaphysics of knowledge, move into Aquinas's epistemology as outlined in his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, and survey his theory of analogical naming before concluding.

Anthropology

Aquinas is careful to develop his anthropology in a manner consistent with his general metaphysics in which human beings have the same matter/form composition as any other material being. It is precisely this composition that determines the proper mode of human

¹ See C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); William Lane Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980, 2001); J.F. Donceel, S.J., *Natural Theology*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962); Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*. London & New York: Routledge, 1969, 200; Maydole, Robert E. "The Modal Third Way." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2000): 1.

² *ST I*, q12, a4 & a11; *ST I*, q76, a2, ad. 3; *ST I*, q84, a2.

knowing and allows the development of an appropriate epistemology. Human beings are beings with unified matter and form composition. The component in which the immaterial mind resides is most appropriately the form. The bodily sense organs encounter the world and translate it into immaterial images capable of being united with the immaterial mind/soul/form. The process of changing sensible species into intellectual images present in the mind is the process of abstraction. The mind assembles these images into phantasms to implement in cognitive union with the human mind. Intellectual knowledge is only possible through an encounter with the physical world.³ The five ways as arguments from facts of our encounter with the world must navigate these processes. This section will begin by exploring Aquinas's methodical concerns regarding the definition and study of the soul and human *hylomorphic* composition. This will be followed by an investigation of how the intellect operates.

Aquinas defines the soul as “the first principle of life in those things which live.”⁴ This is inferred by examining the qualities of living beings to derive a suitable definition describing not just a part of the soul, but the entirety of the soul in general.⁵ The first observation is simply that some beings are alive and others are not.⁶ Since all living things are *hylomorphic* (matter/form) composites, then the principle of life must be part of the composite. Matter by itself does not seem to be able to solely account for life since a living oak tree, and an oak table are materially the same. The matter of the oak is potentially alive yet does not hold life as an intrinsic principle. The principle of life must reside in the form for “the matter of a living body stands to the body's

³ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych, S.J., (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 20.

⁴ ST I, q75, a1.

⁵ DA II, lec. 1. See also Norman Kretzmann, “Philosophy of Mind,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, edited by Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128-31.

⁶ DA II, lec. 1. See also *DUI*, c.1, ST I, q75, a1, and Madden, *Mind, Matter, and Nature*, 251-5.

life as a potency to its act; and the soul is precisely the actuality whereby the body has life.”⁷ The life that the body has is not something accidentally added to the body, for the body is both alive and has its being from the soul, which Aquinas states is “the primary actuality of a physical bodily organism.”⁸ The soul governs all activity of the organism as the act of the body, including intellectual acts, as the ‘prime actuality’ of a given being.⁹ Since there are different kinds of organisms, there must be different kinds of souls. As Etienne Gilson notes “there is a vast difference between the conditions of souls in the various grades of the hierarchy of living things.”¹⁰ The soul as the form of the body infuses life into a particular type of body, such as the human soul infusing life into a human body.

Aquinas demonstrates that the soul is the form of the body primarily through three arguments.¹¹ The first argument is from the soul as the first principle of actuality of the body. The definition of the soul, defined as the principle by which the body moves, lives, and operates, fits the role of a form in the sense that without these qualities a body is simply not a living body at all. That the soul is also the principle by which human beings understand does not change the fact that it is by the soul that living bodies exist as living bodies. The second argument is from the dependence of the intellect on bodily sensation. Predication of understanding to a human being is predicated of the entire person essentially. One and the same person is conscious both of understanding and sensing, “But one cannot sense without a body: therefore, the body must be some part of man.”¹² The full union of the body and the intellectual soul thus indicates a matter-

⁷ *DA* II, lec. 1. See also Aquinas, *Questions on the Soul*, tr. James H. Robb, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1984, 2009), (Hereafter abbreviated *QDA*), q1, where he writes that “to live is the ‘to be’ of living things. Therefore, a human soul is that by which a human body actually exists...”

⁸ *DA* II, lec. 1.

⁹ *DA* II, lec. 2.

¹⁰ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 187.

¹¹ *ST* I, q76, a1. See also *QDA* q8 and q9.

¹² *ST* I, q76, a1.

form union such that there is one being. The third argument is from the nature of humanity. The knower obtains knowledge of the definition or nature of a being through that being's operation. Aquinas affirms that the most proper operation of human beings is to understand. As already mentioned, the principle by which human beings understand is the soul, and the nature or definition of humanity has its origin in the soul. Since the definition of a species derives from its form, then the soul must be the form since it is through the soul that humanity is defined.

It is the body and soul together that compose a human being rather than either component alone since human beings arehylomorphic matter/form composites.¹³ There are two senses in which the soul can be said to be the human being and Aquinas rejects both of them. The first sense is that 'soul' defines human beings as a species.¹⁴ Aquinas rejects this because the definition of a natural species includes both matter and form. Human beings cannot be soul alone because human beings are also inherently material, made of flesh and blood. The second sense is that individual human beings are souls. Under this view, every capability of an individual would be retained when the soul is separated from the body. All of the ways in which a human being acts or all of the capabilities inherent to being human would be contained only in the soul. This is not the case because sense powers rely on bodily sense organs for their operation. Since sense organs are outside the soul yet are a human ability, then the full human operation requires a body/soul composite. The soul holds a *per se* intellectual operation while the body provides the material sense organs, and it is the body and soul components united together that account for a given human being.

It is the *per se* intellectual operation of the soul that allows it to have a subsistent existence aside from the body, because "only that which subsists can have an operation *per se*."

¹³ *ST I*, q75, a2 & a4. See also *QDA* q2.

¹⁴ *ST I*, q75, a4. See also *DUI*, c.2 & c.3.

For nothing can operate but what is actual...¹⁵ The intellect is united to the body as form yet when apart from the body does not require a bodily organ in order to operate. Aquinas thinks that since the immaterial intellect knows material things that it cannot have a material principle itself. If it did have a material principle in its operation, then the matter would interfere with the intellectual ability to know material things. Since the soul works without matter, it holds the principle of its own operation within itself and thus has subsistent actuality on the basis of this *per se* operation.

The soul is present in every part of the body as the substantial form of the body with the corporeal sense organs housing the power of the soul associated with sense cognition.¹⁶ This arises from the very unity of body and soul proposed by Aquinas. That the soul is in each part of the body is an outcome of the soul being the substantial form. Aquinas writes that “since the soul is united to the body as its form, it must necessarily be in the whole body, and in each part thereof. For it is not an accidental form, but the substantial form of the body.”¹⁷ The soul as form provides the structure and governs the operation of every part of the body as all parts constitute the whole. Aquinas demonstrates the union of the soul with the entire body from the fact that when the soul is withdrawn from a particular body part, that body part loses its ability to properly act according to its function. The soul is in each part, but not every power of the soul inhabits each part, such as the power of sight residing in the eye or hearing in the ear. The very presence of sense organs indicates a sensory power in the soul. The form conditions the matter which requires an examination of matter in order to understand form.¹⁸ The fact of sensation indicates a sensory power in the soul united with matter properly suited to house the sensory power of the

¹⁵ *ST I*, q75, a2. See also *QDA*, q1.

¹⁶ *ST I*, q76, a8. See also *De Sensu* lec. 4.

¹⁷ *ST I*, q76, a8. See also *SCG II*, cap. 72.

¹⁸ *ST I*, q76, a5.

soul. This power remains in the soul as the first principle or root of those powers even if the body is destroyed.¹⁹

The actuality of the sense organs is through the soul as form of the body, existing in order to convert the material world into an immaterial form suitable for intellectual cognition.²⁰

Aquinas distinguishes five powers of the soul; the rational, sensitive, appetitive, locomotive, and vegetative.²¹ Each power describes one aspect of how human beings exist. The powers are those of reasoning, desiring, sensing, moving, and growing. Aquinas distinguishes between the sensitive soul and intellectual soul since both are involved in cognition. The operation of powers must be united in some manner with the object of said powers such that the soul's power of sense must in some way be united to the material world. Sense organs provide the means for sense cognition, which is then processed by higher intellectual cognition, "for every sense power knows through individual species, since it receives the species of things in bodily organs."²² The singular qualities of the material world are passively detected by the sense organs, yet sensory "powers are not for the organs, but organs for the powers."²³ Sensations, or the sensible species, can be said to 'emerge' from the sense organs.²⁴ The sense organs operate according to material physiological processes resulting in sensible species that are not identical to any internal or external material process.

The mind knows by a unification of the sensible species with the mind as "phantasms" produced by an act of imagination.²⁵ The mind engages in an act of imagination to form phantasms, which are mental constructs representing material objects. This is not to say that the

¹⁹ *ST I*, q77, a8.

²⁰ *ST I*, q78, a1, a3 & a4.

²¹ *ST I*, q78, a1.

²² *SCG II*, cap. 66. See also *ST I*, q78, a4.

²³ *ST I*, q78, a3. See also *CT I*, c82.

²⁴ Madden, *Mind, Matter, and Nature*, 256-8.

²⁵ *ST I*, q84, a1, a2, a3, a6, and a7.

phantasms work alongside human cognition, but that human thought and sense are unified as knowledge.²⁶ The sensible species cannot contain any materiality prior to cognition because materiality interferes with the union of the immaterial intellect and the thing known. Aquinas writes that “The truth, in fact, is that knowledge is caused by the knower containing a likeness of the thing known; for the latter must be in the knower somehow.”²⁷ Aquinas derives his metaphysics of knowledge according to this crucial principle. The union of knower and known must occur according to the natural mode of being for the knower. Human beings know according to material senses as material being is the natural human mode of being. To know that something is true, that something must exist in some manner in the mind in some similitude to the something in the world.²⁸ Imagination serves to bridge the gap between the material world and the immaterial mind.²⁹ The cognitive process joins the phantasms with the intellect to produce understanding.

Aquinas divides the intellect into active and passive to account for cognitive processes that result in change within the intellect with the joining of phantasms and mind. The passive intellect is passive in the sense that it holds the capacity or potential for understanding.³⁰ The intellect must be capable of change in order for there to be knowledge growth. Furthermore, the intellect has an operation that extends to universal being as the human intellect strives to understand universal being. No created intellect can hold the totality of universal being, for to do so would require the intellect to be in act toward universal being, and only God is pure act. Therefore, the intellect must be in potency to universal being as the intellect strives toward

²⁶ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 237-41.

²⁷ *DA I*, lec. 4.

²⁸ *QDV 1*, a1.

²⁹ *ST I*, q84, a7.

³⁰ *ST I*, q79, a2.

understanding. The blank canvas of the passive intellect requires an active intellect to move or change the passive intellect in the process of cognition.³¹ The form of natural things does not exist outside of matter. The active intellect moves the passive intellect by making the world intelligible by abstraction of the sensible species. Aquinas writes that “nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act; as the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible. We must therefore assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible.”³² The human soul contains in itself the principle endowed by the creator by which the active intellect “lights up” the phantasms causing them to be actually intelligible.³³

Once the sensible species are immuted into phantasms and united with the mind, the phantasms are utilized in cognitive processing. The object of sense cognition is the form within matter, while the object of the intellect is “to know a form existing individually in corporeal matter, but not as existing in this individual matter.”³⁴ The senses detect the form within matter and moves it into the intellect as a phantasm. The individual form is then further abstracted and understood as a universal form aside from the individuated matter that originated the sense impression. The mind knows a form existing in matter, but not in a particular individual. This abstraction allows the consideration of things apart from their individual existence.³⁵ Kretzmann refers to this as direct realism in that there is a direct correlation between the abstracted representation and the real world.³⁶ The mind knows by more than simple sense impressions as the intelligible forms of individuated matter are abstracted and known.³⁷

³¹ *ST I*, q79, a3.

³² *ST I*, q79, a3.

³³ *ST I*, q79, a4.

³⁴ *ST I*, q85, a1.

³⁵ *ST I*, q85, a1, *ad. 1.*

³⁶ Kretzmann, “Philosophy of Mind,” 138-9. See also Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 233-59.

³⁷ *ST I*, q85, a2.

The abstraction of universals from individuated matter entails knowing through a universal/singular dynamic. As already discussed, intellectual knowledge arises from sensible knowledge.³⁸ This process involves a movement from the singulars constituted of sensed individuated matter to the abstracted universal forms derived from the singular sensible forms or species “because sense has singular and individual things for its object, it follows that our knowledge of the former comes before our knowledge of the latter.”³⁹ This process of moving from potential knowledge of singulars to actual knowledge of universal forms is not immediate or necessarily smooth. Pasnau refers to the slow process of understanding through uniting and comparing various ideas as ‘interweaving.’⁴⁰ Aquinas gives the example in the case of human beings that animal is understood first and rational or irrational is understood second, “our intellect knows animal before it knows man; and the same reason holds in comparing any more universal idea with the less universal.”⁴¹ Knowledge of a whole comes incompletely at first with parts being known prior to the whole that can lead to a confused notion of the whole. Prior to grasping the whole, it is the more common aspects of the form that are grasped prior to the more specific aspects. Animality as the common quality of all animals is understood prior to identification of specific qualities of animals, such as rational or irrational (or, taking Aquinas further, avian, or non-avian, aquatic, or non-aquatic, and so forth).

The intellect reasons through a process of comparison that Aquinas refers to as composition and division.⁴² Composition is the comparison of similarities among members of a particular sensible species, and division is an identification of the differences.⁴³ Aquinas writes

³⁸ *ST I*, q85, a3. See also Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 318-24 and Madden, *Mind, Matter, and Nature*, 267.

³⁹ *ST I*, q85, a3.

⁴⁰ Pasnau, *Aquinas on Human Nature*, 325-6.

⁴¹ *ST I*, q85, a3.

⁴² *ST I*, q85, a5.

⁴³ *ST I*, q85, a5, *ad. 1*.

that the mind “necessarily compares one thing with another by composition or division; and from one composition and division it proceeds to another, which is the process of reasoning.”⁴⁴ This process of composition and division is what Aquinas means by judgment. Since the mind moves from potency to act in cognition utilizing the phantasms to unify sensible species with the mind, the mind acquires a likeness of the world by degrees. Knowledge gradually builds since things are known imperfectly at first. The mind starts with an understanding of the *quiddity* (or definition, the “whatness”) of an object represented by phantasm and then moving to understand the object’s full spectrum of properties and relations. The mind understands the further properties and relations through the process of composition and division, which is to say a process of identifying similarities and differences. The mind uses the conclusions from one reasoning process to move on to another.

Human reasoning inherently cannot fully comprehend the infinite.⁴⁵ Faculties require a proportional relation to the infinite in order to understand. The finite human faculties cannot abstract or transform an infinite into a mode that the finite mind can hold. The nature of material things is the proper object of and natural relation to human knowing. Any purely immaterial substance with no material analog simply does not fall within the mode of human knowing. There is no proportional point of materiality that the mind can use to grasp the purely immaterial. Following the mode of knowing through the material, the mind cannot know an actual infinite, but only a potential infinite. Aquinas writes that “it clearly appears that immaterial substances which do not fall under sense and imagination, cannot first and *per se* be known by us, according to the mode of knowledge which experiences proves us to have.”⁴⁶ Immaterial substances escape

⁴⁴ *ST I*, q85, a5.

⁴⁵ *ST I*, q86, a2.

⁴⁶ *ST I*, q88, a1.

the process by which phantasms are formed such that there can be no proportion to the sense power and no phantasm of immaterial substances.⁴⁷ The lack of proportion of the intellect and immaterial substances has important consequences for whether and how the intellect can apprehend God, who is an uncreated immaterial substance. God cannot be the direct or first object of human understanding as an uncreated immaterial substance since the first object is the nature of material substances.⁴⁸ Despite a lack of proportion, the intellect can obtain at least some imperfect knowledge of immaterial substances.⁴⁹

Epistemology

As noted in the previous section, Aquinas holds to a process of reasoning that involves reasoning through sense perception by composition and division.⁵⁰ The reasoning process moves in stages, gathering sense data, composition and division identifying essences based on that data, then proceeding to another idea. The stages all together are inferential reasoning.⁵¹ As Owens puts it, “Sense experience is the origin of all further human cognition.”⁵² Aquinas writes in his commentary on Aristotle’s *On Interpretation* that sense perception, composition and division, and reasoning build upon each other.⁵³ Sense data is defined through composition and division, which in turn demonstrates the unknown from the known. The process of reasoning can thereby be expected to rely heavily on definitions as it moves from one known concept to another concept. Aquinas develops his theory of syllogistic demonstrations with definitions derived from material substances through composition and division as the key starting feature. Aquinas writes

⁴⁷ *ST I*, q88, a1, *ad 3* and *ad 5*.

⁴⁸ *ST I*, q88, a3. See also *QDV* q10, a11.

⁴⁹ *ST I*, q88, a2, *ad 1*.

⁵⁰ *ST I*, q85, a5.

⁵¹ *ST I*, q85, a5. See also Scott MacDonald, “Theory of Knowledge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160-2.

⁵² Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 35.

⁵³ *In Peri herm. I, Proemium*.

that “demonstrations presuppose definitions” and “from definitions other things are known.”⁵⁴ Syllogistic demonstration presupposes the material in the previous section and works out how human beings can hold sure knowledge, *scientia*, according to the proper mode of human knowing.

This section will examine the reasoning process of the highest level of cognition, which consists of *scientia* producing demonstrations. This will entail a sustained engagement with Aquinas’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*. As MacDonald notes, Aquinas “develops his account of the inferential stage as a part of his logic, following Aristotle’s lead in *Posterior Analytics*.”⁵⁵ This section will begin with a return to Aquinas’s concept of *scientia*, developing the concept in more detail than chapter one, with an emphasis on the role of first principles in demonstration. Next will be an examination of the nature of demonstration. This will include an examination of definition as the middle term in demonstration and the two types of demonstration, why-demonstration (*demonstrationes propter quid*) and fact-demonstration (*demonstrationes quia*). The section will conclude with a discussion of the limits of *scientia* and implications for the five ways.

The premises of syllogistic scientific knowledge provide the first principles that must be known prior to reaching the conclusion. As mentioned in chapter one, *scientia* is deductive reasoning from certain premises to an equally certain conclusion that necessarily follows from the premises. Aquinas writes that “we must foreknow the principle from which the conclusion is inferred. For a conclusion becomes known through its principle.”⁵⁶ Aquinas has two specific sorts of foreknowledge in mind that must be known about the subject, namely, *that it is* and *what*

⁵⁴ *In Peri herm.* I, lec. 1. See also *PA* I, lec. 1.

⁵⁵ MacDonald, “Theory of Knowledge,” 162.

⁵⁶ *PA* I, lec. 4.

it is.⁵⁷ In other words, we must know that something exists and be able to define it. The existence of a substance comes first because anything must exist in order to be defined, for what does not exist in some sense cannot be defined. Even novel abstractions exist in an immaterial sense and can be defined in some manner, such as a unicorn or the flying spaghetti monster. The abstraction and universalization of the properties of the subject through which a definition is derived rely on the existence of the subject. Definitions are based upon the process of abstraction and universalization since they cannot be formed through demonstrative syllogisms, although they can be crafted into a logical form.⁵⁸

Aquinas illustrates the basics of a *scientia* producing syllogism by using Aristotle's example of the triangle. As a mathematical concept, a triangle is rooted in the abstraction of a universal from matter. It is this connection with real abstracted matter that allows the universal mathematical concept to take shape and be defined as a three-sided figure. Syllogisms can then be built that further demonstrate the properties of a triangle based on the definition, such as the Pythagorean Theorem or the total of the angles. The conclusion pre-exists in the sense that it is already present in the premises as necessary following.⁵⁹ This foreknowledge is not without qualification, because the learner may not be aware of the conclusion prior to encountering the syllogistic proof. The foreknowledge or pre-existence of the conclusion does not mean that the syllogizing logician knows the answer prior to working out a problem through a formal syllogism.

The first principles that make up the premises of paradigmatic syllogistic *scientia* must be immediate, better known than the conclusion, indemonstrable themselves, and non-circular.⁶⁰ An

⁵⁷ *PA I*, lec. 2.

⁵⁸ *PA II*, lec. 6 & 7.

⁵⁹ *PA I*, lec. 3.

⁶⁰ *PA I*, lec. 5, 6, 7, & 8.

immediate premise is one that is present as a premise without relying on a middle term or another idea prior to its inclusion as a premise.⁶¹ Immediate premises have two varieties. Aquinas labels the first immediate premise a “posit,” which is immediate because it is indemonstrable. The “posit” is not necessary to syllogistic reasoning as it can be affirmed or denied without disrupting syllogistic logic itself. The second type of immediate premise is an ‘axiom,’ which is self-evident such that anyone considering it must assent upon understanding the axiom. Axioms are presupposed in syllogistic reasoning, such as the law of non-contradiction. The immediate principles of a given syllogism must be better known than the conclusion, for the first principles contain the conclusion.⁶² The first principles of a demonstration must themselves be indemonstrable in order to avoid an infinite regress that would not be capable of producing *scientia* because the conclusion would never be reached.⁶³ Indemonstrable first principles are a type of *scientia* that is not derived through demonstration. Finally, first principles cannot be part of a circular argument, which is to say that the first principle cannot be the same as the conclusion.⁶⁴ A circular demonstration creates a contradiction in the sense that the premise would have to be greater than itself, by the rule that the premise is greater than the conclusion. Circular demonstrations could be used to demonstrate anything whatsoever, even what is inherently contradictory, thereby stripping the syllogistic demonstration of its *scientia* producing value.

Besides the first principles that make up the premises of a *scientia* producing syllogism, there is the middle term, which is a definition assumed by the premises derived through

⁶¹ *PA I*, lec. 5.

⁶² *PA I*, lec. 6.

⁶³ *PA I*, lec. 7.

⁶⁴ *PA I*, lec. 8.

identification of causes.⁶⁵ Much of knowledge building is a quest to find the middle term that adequately ties together all of the other terms of a *scientia* building syllogism, “For when we ask for the cause which explains why the sun is eclipsed, we are not looking for it insofar as it is the middle term of a demonstration. Rather, we are asking about that *thing* which is the middle term, because, when we have it, we are able to demonstrate.”⁶⁶ The middle term or definition tends to be most clear when it is known through the senses and less clear when the middle term is not evident to the senses, requiring an inquiry into sensible things in search of the middle term. For instance, while a lunar eclipse is noted by the senses, the cause of the eclipse is not. Since the cause is not clear to the senses, one must inquire into what it is and why it is. Answering these two questions is key to discovering the definition of something that is not already clear to the senses. Knowing what something is, is the same as knowing the cause of its existence, for something must first exist in order to be defined and have its *quiddity* known.⁶⁷ As articulated in the previous chapter, there are internal and external causes that define and explain an existing substance. Internal causes are the formal and material while external causes are the efficient and final. Each of the four causes has a part to play in definition that sheds a particular light on the subject from the standpoint of one or another cause.⁶⁸ Thus, the four causes build upon one another, and each provides one aspect of a definition.

Aquinas discusses each of the causes in light of how they pertain to *scientia* producing demonstrations, beginning with the material cause.⁶⁹ Aquinas uses the term ‘material cause’ here more broadly than matter as the parts from which a demonstration is composed. A compositional

⁶⁵ *PA* I, lec. 4; *PA* II, lec. 1.

⁶⁶ *PA* II, lec. 1.

⁶⁷ *PA* II, lec. 7.

⁶⁸ *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁶⁹ *PA* II, lec. 9.

mathematic diagram uses the parts of two triangles within a circle as the material cause for solving for a whole angle of the two. It is in the analysis of a whole that the parts operate as a material cause. Aquinas notes that Aristotle prefers the term cause of necessity to material cause in math. The structures laid out when properly understood in their components, or matter, necessarily leads to a conclusion.

Aquinas sees the preceding discussions in the Posterior Analytics about definitions as having adequately shown that the formal cause is related to the middle term.⁷⁰ The middle term is not the parts of the syllogism, which are the material cause. The formal cause is the definition or essence of a thing, and, as previously discussed, the definition is the middle term. Therefore, the middle term and the formal cause are the same. From this standpoint, Aquinas's entire epistemic model deals with how to know formal causes and use them to proceed to new knowledge.

The principle behind the act that sets a chain of events into motion is the efficient cause.⁷¹ The example given is from ancient Greek war, "The Athenians, together with some Greek allies, attacked the Sardians, who were subject to the king of the Medes, and, because of this, the Medes attacked the Athenians."⁷² The principle behind the act of the Medes is that a country which is attacked goes to war against the attacker. When asking why the Medes attacked the Athenians, an answer can be developed that Aquinas formalizes, writing "Let A, the major extreme, be 'war'; B, the middle term, 'those who attacked first'; C, the minor extreme, 'Athenians.'"⁷³ The first cause of the war is the middle term rather than either of the two other terms and serves the definitional role. The middle term 'because attacked first' is the key toward

⁷⁰ *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷¹ *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷² *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷³ *PA* II, lec. 9.

answering the question. So, an answer that ‘the Medes went to war because the Athenians attacked first’ relies on the principle behind the act as efficient cause to make the definition intelligible.

The final cause used in definition operates in a similar manner to the efficient cause. In this case, the principle of intelligibility in the definition comes not from the middle term but the minor extreme. The main principle behind the final cause is “that for the sake of which something is done.”⁷⁴ The example used is that of taking a walk after a meal. The reason or purpose for taking a walk is to promote health, in this case, the avoidance of heartburn and is the answer to the question ‘why take a walk after a meal?’ Again, Aquinas formalizes the answer, “Let C, the minor extreme, be ‘taking a walk after dinner’; B, the middle term, ‘the food not rising up in the stomach’; and A, the major extreme, ‘healthy.’”⁷⁵ Aquinas points out that in this case ‘healthy’ provides the portion of the definition that makes the answer intelligible. It is by not having heartburn that one is healthy, such that not having heartburn is an instantiation of health or healthiness.

Aquinas is aware that an effect can be viewed through more than one species of causality such that one effect can have numerous causes. He writes “that one and the same effect can take place for the sake of an end and also result necessarily from a prior cause.”⁷⁶ For example, light comes through a lampshade because there is a light source within the shade. The efficient cause of light through a lampshade is the light source within the shade. When the light source is active, the shade is necessarily lit by the light source. The final cause is to light a room, a cause without which the light source would never have been placed within the lamp. A thorough examination

⁷⁴ *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷⁵ *PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷⁶ *PA* II, lec. 9.

of the effect of a lit lampshade would then include a notation of both the efficient cause and the final cause.

Thus far, the emphasis with causality in demonstration has been on the use of causes as middle terms and premises, which is the why-definition. The why-demonstration is the paradigmatic, or unqualified, way of forming syllogistic *scientia* proceeding from first immediate causes. In addition, Aquinas holds that it is possible to demonstrate from an effect to a cause, which is the fact-demonstration.⁷⁷ The fact-demonstration method moves from immediate convertible effects to the cause. This mediated route relies on the causal principle that the effect must retain something of the cause. Fact-demonstration is most appropriate when the effect is better known than the cause. This ‘better known’ requirement is necessary for the fact-demonstration to produce *scientia*, “For sometimes the effect is more known to us and more known according to the senses than is the cause, although, in an unqualified sense and by nature, the cause is always more known.”⁷⁸ The essential characteristic of the premises of fact-demonstrations is that the effect used as a premise must be better known than the cause. The fact-demonstration yields *scientia*, but, as MacDonald notes, it can only “establish that something is the case without providing a theoretically deep explanation of it of the sort metaphysically prior facts would provide.”⁷⁹ The reliance of the fact-demonstration on convertible effects allows production of scientific knowledge of the fact, but not of the why. In other words, it is possible to know something meaningful about a cause, but the essence of the cause still is unknown. This is especially the case regarding God; one can posit meaningful propositions about God as cause using effects, but the essence of God remains unknown.

⁷⁷ *PA I*, 23.

⁷⁸ *PA I*, 23.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, “Theory of Knowledge,” 175.

Aquinas's example of the fact-demonstration in action is the proof that planets are nearer than stars because they do not twinkle.⁸⁰ Non-twinkling here is the observed effect. It is possible to establish a syllogism supporting the fact that does not explain anything of why planets do not twinkle. He writes, "Let C, the minor extreme, be 'planets'; let B, the middle term, be 'non-twinkling'; let A, the major extreme, be 'near.'"⁸¹ The middle term, combined with the major extreme, results in the conclusion that non-twinkling is near. This combined proposition is borne out through induction by sense data. When C is combined with this proposition, there is a full demonstration that the planets are near.

The fact-demonstration can then be used as the basis for a why-demonstration, as Aquinas shows, continuing to use the example of the planets.⁸² The fact that planets are near can be used to demonstrate that it is this nearness that is the cause of non-twinkling. Aquinas adjusts the terms of the syllogism, writing, "Let C, 'the planets,' be the minor extreme; let B, 'near,' be the middle term instead of the major extreme; and let A, 'non-twinkling,' be the major extreme instead of the middle term."⁸³ The middle term is established by the prior syllogism demonstrating fact from effect, giving a definition to what was previously unknown. The first two terms are combined such that planet and nearness are together. The final term is then convertible with the previous such that nearness is established as the reason for the non-twinkling. The same strategy can be used to show that the moon is spherical, and its waxing and waning is due to this shape.

The discussion of the function and nature of first principles in Aquinas's epistemology raises the issue of whether his epistemology constitutes a type of foundationalism, a view that

⁸⁰ *PA I*, 23.

⁸¹ *PA I*, 23.

⁸² *PA I*, 23.

⁸³ *PA I*, 23.

has come under attack in the 20th century.⁸⁴ Foundationalism is the view that true propositions must either be self-evident or derived from principles that are self-evident.⁸⁵ In other words, true propositions must end in some principle that does not require further explanation. The five ways are examples of foundationalism since Aquinas ends each with a self-sufficient principle in no need of further demonstration. Stump argues that Aquinas does not hold to foundationalism but to what she refers to as “a sophisticated theological externalism with reliabilist elements.”⁸⁶ She notes that Aquinas holds that an external world exists independent of the human mind and dependent upon God’s creative activity.⁸⁷ Aquinas is a reliabilist regarding sense data in that under ideal conditions we can trust that our senses are providing reliable data about the independently existing external world. This does not mean that Aquinas thinks that all sense perception is accurate. He admits that the senses may be inaccurate in cases where there is some impairment to proper function. Stump notes that when the senses operate as God created them in the world they were created for, human sense and intellect are reliable.⁸⁸ When cognizing faculties are operating properly, the *scientia* producing goal is to locate the causes that provide the first principles or premises of a demonstration. Stumps point is that for Aquinas finding a causal explanation is at the core of having a *scientia* producing demonstration, and this lies outside of what constitutes foundationalism.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ For a critique of foundationalism and critique of Aquinas as a foundationalist see Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). For a Thomistic response see Leonard A. Kennedy, CSB, ed. *Thomistic Papers IV*, (Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988).

⁸⁵ Henry B. Veatch, “Preliminary Statement of Apology, Analysis, and Critique,” in Leonard A. Kennedy, CSB, ed. *Thomistic Papers IV*, (Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), 10. See also John I. Jenkins CSC, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 40.

⁸⁶ Eleanore Stump, *Aquinas*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 243. A full engagement with Stump is outside the scope of this work, although her insight is valuable to the discussion at hand.

⁸⁷ Stump, *Aquinas*, 226-35.

⁸⁸ Stump, *Aquinas*, 233.

⁸⁹ Stump, *Aquinas*, 238-41.

There are limits to what can be *scientia* by the very nature of how the demonstrative process operates. The paradigmatic principles of the why-demonstration seem to apply only to a very limited type of inquiry.⁹⁰ The *scientia* producing why-demonstration must have premises that are immediate, better known than the conclusion, indemonstrable themselves, non-circular, and have a conclusion that is contained within the premises beforehand such that the premises cause the conclusion. There are many objects of knowledge that do not fit into a demonstration from sure universal premises or sense data. Stump notes that *scientia* cannot be the sole sort of knowledge possessed by human beings and that Aquinas recognizes that we do indeed know singulars and contingent things through cognitive processes that start with the phantasms representing the sensible species.⁹¹ Definitions cannot be derived through the syllogisms that result in *scientia* yet must be known in order to provide the middle term that allows a given *scientia* producing syllogism to operate.⁹²

The reliance of the paradigmatic why-demonstration on sense data to derive its universal premises precludes this type of demonstration from being used to produce *scientia* about purely immaterial substances, such as God and angels.⁹³ Aquinas writes that “Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause.”⁹⁴ This is a significant gap in the operation of *scientia* producing demonstrations. The human mode of knowing through abstraction from sensible things precludes direct knowledge of anything that is not available to

⁹⁰ Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 36-40; MacDonald, “Theory of Knowledge,” 188; Pickave, “Human Knowledge,” 320-3; Stump, *Aquinas*, 223-226.

⁹¹ Stump, *Aquinas*, 224. See also *ST I*, q86, a1 & a3.

⁹² *PA II*, lec. 1 – 6.

⁹³ *ST I*, q12, a4.

⁹⁴ *ST I*, q12, a12.

our senses, such as immaterial substances.⁹⁵ There is no possible similitude between God and any abstracted image.⁹⁶

This lack of similitude preventing the sensible abstraction and definition of God leads Aquinas to the conclusion that God's existence is not self-evident.⁹⁷ Aquinas defines a self-evident proposition as one in which the definition of the subject is in the predicate. Aquinas uses the example of 'animal' being part of the definition of human. We understand that human beings are animals because the essence of humanity includes animality. Human beings can either understand the definition of the subject or not. If human beings understand the definition of the subject, then a proposition is self-evident in itself and to human beings. If human beings do not understand the definition of the subject, the proposition is not self-evident to human beings. Since God's essence is to exist, God's existence is self-evident in the sense that the predicate is contained in the subject. To know God's existence would be to know that the proposition "God exists" is true and fully understand the meaning or definition of every term in the proposition. It is not the case that human beings comprehend the definition of God, which means that God is not self-evident for human beings. The lack of definition precludes the use of paradigmatic why-demonstrations, which is why Aquinas turns to the fact-demonstration method.

The fact-demonstration helps to bridge the epistemic gap in obtaining *scientia* of immaterial substances, but it is only partially successful since the fact-demonstration does not yield the metaphysically deep account of the why-demonstration.⁹⁸ Aquinas describes that what we can know is "His relationship with creatures so far as to be the cause of them all; also that

⁹⁵ *ST I*, q12, a4.

⁹⁶ *ST I*, q12, a9.

⁹⁷ *ST I*, q2, a1.

⁹⁸ Pickave, "Human Knowledge," 320-3.

creatures differ from Him, inasmuch as He is not in any way part of what is caused by Him.”⁹⁹ While this is not enough to proceed with a why-demonstration, it is sufficient for engaging in a fact-demonstration. The creator-creature relation is an effect that is better known than the cause and can provide the middle term of a fact-demonstration. The principle that a cause can be known through an effect fills in the void left out by a definition that includes causal knowledge. The effects of immaterial substances can then be used to demonstrate the fact of immaterial substances without delving into metaphysical depth regarding their nature. Human beings can know certain meaningful things about immaterial substances through analogical predication, which includes causality, negation, and eminence.

Aquinas himself informs his readers that he is undertaking a fact-demonstration with the five ways. He writes in the article immediately preceding the *quinque viae* “Another [demonstration] is through an effect, and this is called the fact-demonstration.”¹⁰⁰ He then proceeds to lay out the same demonstrative principles for fact-demonstration laid out in the *Posterior Analytics*. He writes that “from every effect the existence of proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us.”¹⁰¹ The effect has to be better known than the cause and stands in as the definition or middle term in the demonstration.¹⁰² The word ‘God’ is defined through the effect, but this is not the same as knowing the essence of God, because knowledge of essences follows on existence. Fact-demonstration must come prior to further developing the concept of God. In this sense, the five ways are preambles to faith derived from fact-demonstration that add definitional intelligibility to the term ‘God’ that would not

⁹⁹ *ST I*, q12, a12.

¹⁰⁰ *ST I*, q2, a2. My translation of *Alia est per effectum, et dicitur demonstratio quia*.

¹⁰¹ *ST I*, q2, a2

¹⁰² *ST I*, q2, a2, *ad. 2*.

otherwise be available.¹⁰³ Aquinas uses the fact-demonstration results in the five ways in further why-demonstrations in the *Summa theologiae*, as already seen with the DDS.

Even though the effect fills in as a definition in the middle term, the effect is not the same as a definition of essence. The effect takes the place of a definition and provides some necessary intelligibility without providing insight into an essence. The five ways do not and cannot define God in God's essence, whose essence is beyond what human beings can cognize. Aquinas writes that "if the fact that a thing exists were its essence, then, at the same time we were showing the fact that the thing exists, we would be showing what it is, and the fact that a thing exists would not be the whole of what a demonstration demonstrates. But this is false."¹⁰⁴ Because a definition serves as a middle term in demonstration, a demonstration whose conclusion was also the middle term would be inherently circular. The five ways would also be circular if the conclusion was the same as the middle term, but this is not the case. The effects that constitute the middle term result in the identification of a cause sufficient to explain the effect. From this standpoint, each of the five ways does not conclude with God so much as with the fact of an uncaused cause. This keeps intact that God cannot be defined through human cognition through a lack of proportionality. The five ways fill a need at the beginning of the discourse on God in the *ST* allowing the reader to access the intelligibility of God.¹⁰⁵ The proposition 'God exists' needs to be intelligible in some manner for the reader to follow a theological work.

The lack of proportionality keeping human cognition from fully understanding and defining God does not prevent Aquinas from identifying the uncaused causes at the end of each of the five ways with God. He writes "this everyone understand to be God," "to which everyone

¹⁰³ *ST* I, q2, a2, *ad.* 2.

¹⁰⁴ *PA*, II lec. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 38-47.

gives the name of God,” “This all men speak of as God,” “This we call God,” and “this being we call God.”¹⁰⁶ The fact-demonstration mode of coming to *scientia* does seem rather effective, but when considered alongside what has already been noted about the indefinable nature of God, it does not seem that fact-demonstration alone would allow him to conclude with God. Pickave helpfully observes that one does not need to know what God is in order to prove that God is.¹⁰⁷ Perfect defining knowledge of God is unnecessary, only some sort of preliminary understanding. In the same way that we can prove that there is water in a cup without understanding the nature of water, we can prove that God exists without understanding the full nature of God. While Pickave makes a good case, it does seem that Aquinas needs a way to predicate God of the first uncaused causes in the five ways that does justice to the ineffable nature of God. This is found in his theory of analogical predication.

Analogy

The concept of analogy is one of the central notions of Aquinas’s thought. It is the key in the five ways connecting an epistemology based on sensible objects with a metaphysics that includes a mysterious God who is equated with being itself. Phelan writes that while analogy is not a “master-key” to Aquinas’s thought it lies “at the very heart of his philosophy, and, as Cajetan has truly said, without an understanding of analogy it is impossible to acquire a knowledge of metaphysics.”¹⁰⁸ There is a metaphysical likeness that the created have with their creator that is itself a type of analogy. This real causal connection allows the intellect to investigate that which lies beyond the mode of human knowing through the effect-oriented fact-demonstration. Analogy allows a mode of predication such that the conclusions of the five ways

¹⁰⁶ *ST I*, q2, a3.

¹⁰⁷ Pickave, “Human Knowledge,” 320-3.

¹⁰⁸ Gerald B. Phelan, *St. Thomas and Analogy*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1973), 9.

can conclude with God and retain the humility appropriate to a mode of demonstration that cannot lay claim to knowledge of God's essence.¹⁰⁹

This section will begin by examining Aquinas's definition of analogy. The next step is to clarify the need for analogy by taking a brief look at Aquinas's negative theology. This will overtly connect the *DDS* in chapter 2 and limits of human knowing discussed previously in this chapter to negative theology. After reviewing these preliminary issues, the section will delve into analogical predication. This will include discussions of the perils of univocal and equivocal naming, before discussing the elements of three-step analogical predication and concluding.

Aquinas seems to assume that the common linguistic usage and experience with analogy is sufficient for his readers to understand what the term 'analogy' means without further explanation.¹¹⁰ A systematic discourse on analogy was simply not one of his concerns. There is a general recognition among scholars that Aquinas uses analogy in different senses as applied to different areas of his work.¹¹¹ Uncertainty about analogy is a result of the scattering of Aquinas's comments on analogy through his works, with no particularly systematic treatment in one place. McNerny points out that,

There is no extended formal discussion of analogy in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. What we find are many identifications of terms as analogous and, here and there, the elements of a formal account of what it is such names are instances of. Aquinas's

¹⁰⁹ For an essay on how analogical naming keeps the theologian humbly within the limits of human knowing see Anselm K. Min, "The Humanity of Theology: Aquinian Reflections on the Presumption and Despair in the Human Claim to Know God," in *Rethinking the Medieval Legacy for Contemporary Theology*, ed. Anselm K. Min, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

¹¹⁰ Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 109.

¹¹¹ John R. Mortensen, *Understanding St. Thomas on Analogy*, (Rome: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2006), 7-9.

teaching on analogy, accordingly, must be gleaned from a variety of places in his work and fashioned into a systematic account.¹¹²

The development of the necessary systematic account is beyond the scope and purpose of this work; however, it seems prudent to define the approach to analogy used to proceed in this work.

McInerny further notes that the regulating meaning of analogy in Aquinas's thought is that of mathematics, which is a paradigm consisting of proportions.¹¹³ Aquinas writes regarding causal principles that "The alternation of proportionals, for example, is found univocally in many things, e.g., in numbers and in line."¹¹⁴ Of course, the way Aquinas uses the term in the analogical naming of God is not a matter of mathematics, and he is quite clear that univocal language of God is inadequate.¹¹⁵ God as subsisting immaterial substance necessarily escapes the grasps of mathematics. According to McInerny, Aquinas uses the mathematical understanding for the basic concept of analogy, but then analogy, as pertains to divine naming, is itself an analogous concept to mathematical analogy.¹¹⁶ If analogy is analogous, then this explains the confusion.

This work will approach analogy as differentiated between the metaphysical analogy of being and epistemological analogical naming, with analogical naming thoroughly resting upon the metaphysical analogy of being. A number of commentators critique Cajetan as having set the stage for an overly logic-oriented interpretation of analogy,¹¹⁷ and at least one defends analogy

¹¹² Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 51.

¹¹³ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 137-41.

¹¹⁴ *PA* II, lec. 19.

¹¹⁵ *ST* I, q13, a5; *CT* I, cap. 27; *SCG* I, cap. 32.

¹¹⁶ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 137-41.

¹¹⁷ David Burrell, SCS, *Analogy and Philosophical Language*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*; Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E.M. Macierowski, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004, 2014); D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

as wholly logical.¹¹⁸ The crux of this particular debate is whether analogical naming belongs wholly within logic or whether there is a strong metaphysical aspect of analogy. This work will consider the analogy of being to be derived from the causal principle that all effects contain something of the cause within them such that the existence of creatures as effects contain some analogous being of the Creator as cause. This principle is founded on the concepts of God as exemplar form and on participation in being, as discussed in the previous chapter. Analogical naming is the proper mode of speaking about the analogy of being such that the creator and creature do not become confused in one of several possible manners. It is precisely in the sense that analogical naming is a mode of understanding how to talk about God that it falls under epistemology and logic. Like Aquinas's general epistemology, analogical naming rests solidly on metaphysics in that the analogical relationships upon which it rests must actually exist in order to then be known.

Predicate names are a matter of human convention applied to ideas and likenesses of things, as Aquinas outlines at the beginning of his commentary on Aristotle's *On Interpretation*. The main reason why naming is a matter of convention "is that no name exists naturally. It is a name because it signifies; it does not signify naturally, however, but by institution."¹¹⁹ Names do not pre-exist in things but are imposed or instituted on things. There is nothing present in matter that is then abstracted that contains a particular name as part of its essence. Until a name is associated with a particular idea, it is just a sound. The name of a thing is associated with its definition, which is derived through abstraction from the senses as previously discussed. The definition is then connected with the name as signifier by the will of human beings. Since a definition is needed in order to produce a name signifying the definition, what is indefinable is

¹¹⁸ Mortensen, *Understanding St. Thomas on Analogy*.

¹¹⁹ *In Peri herm* I, lec. 4.

also unnamable. From this standpoint, the difficulties discussed in defining God carry over to naming God such that there is a sense in which God's name is hidden.

Divine hiddenness means that human language cannot univocally apply to both God and creatures. Aquinas analyzes univocal predication determining that it falls short of providing an adequate theory of divine naming.¹²⁰ Univocal predication treats the similitude between cause and effect as having the same meaning on the same ontological level. Aquinas argues that univocal predication falls short because all perfections pre-exist in God in a more perfect way than in the effect. All perfections existing in creatures exist in a divided manner while perfections that exist in God are possessed by God in simple unity. The wisdom of an individual human being is an accidental quality, while wisdom predicated of God is not different from God's essence, power, or existence.¹²¹ The meaning of 'wise' as applied to a human being defines that individual as possessing the accidental property of wisdom. In contrast, the meaning of wise applied to God so far exceeds that of human beings that the use of the word in reference to God yet leaves God uncomprehended "as exceeding the signification of the name."¹²² God is not merely the source of wisdom, for God pre-possesses wisdom in the most perfect and complete way through God's essence.

That the difference between God and creatures that defeats univocal predication may seem to indicate that terms between the two are entirely equivocal, but Aquinas shows this is not the case. Equivocal predication is the idea that there is absolutely no similitude between cause and effect such that nothing in the name of the effect applies to the cause. If equivocation were the case, it would destroy the ability of the theologian to construct any *scientia* producing

¹²⁰ *ST I*, q13, a5.

¹²¹ *ST I*, q13, a5.

¹²² *ST I*, q13, a5.

demonstrations about God. The equivocal position results in fallacious demonstrations since “the reasoning would always be exposed to the fallacy of equivocation.”¹²³ Equivocity would result in purely ambiguous demonstrations that would amount to mere wordplay rather than *scientia*.

Aquinas also cites the authority of scripture against equivocity, noting that Romans 1:20 states that some things of God can be known from the world. Further evidence against equivocity is the fact that various philosophers have made successful demonstrations about God.

Aquinas’s solution to the problems inherent in univocal and equivocal predications of God is to put forward a theory of analogical predication as the most appropriate means for divine naming. There are two ways in which a proportional analogy can be made, either of many things to one thing or of one to one.¹²⁴ Aquinas uses the example of health to illustrate his point. To demonstrate the many to one proportion, he points out that both medicine and renal function can be called healthy, medicine as a cause of health and renal function as an indicator of health. Healthy can also be predicated of medicine and an animal in a one to one mode as the medicine is the cause of health in the animal. God is named similarly from creatures as healthy is predicated in the one to one causal mode. Aquinas writes that “Thus, whatever is said of God and creatures, is said according to the relation of a creature to God as its principle and cause, wherein all perfections of things pre-exist excellently.”¹²⁵ Aquinas sees this as a mean between the extremes of simple univocity and pure equivocity. The proper operation of analogical predication involves a three-stage process of affirmation, negation, and eminence,¹²⁶ which is a distinctly human way of arriving at knowledge of God.¹²⁷

¹²³ *STI*, q13, a5.

¹²⁴ *STI*, q13, a5.

¹²⁵ *STI*, q13, a5.

¹²⁶ *STI*, q13, a1. See also *QDP* q7, a5, *ad. 2*.

¹²⁷ Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God*, (Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 49.

The first step in analogical predication is one of an affirmative statement about God. Affirmation necessarily precedes negation for three reasons.¹²⁸ First, affirmation is prior to negation because it is simpler. Negation adds a negative to an affirmative and thus is compound and more complex than an affirmative statement. Second, affirmation as a thought process represents intellectual composition while negation represents intellectual division, “for division is posterior by nature to composition since division is only of composite things.”¹²⁹ Third, affirmation signifies the “to be” of a thing and comes before the negation which signifies the “not to be.”

The affirmative predication names God causally based on the causal principle that all effects contain some similarity to their cause. Since predicate names are a matter of convention, any intellectual idea can be named. Anything conceivable is namable, and God is no different, as “we can give a name to anything in as far as we can understand it.”¹³⁰ Affirmative names of God are derived from creatures insofar as creatures are an effect of God’s operations and cannot be construed to signify the essence of God,¹³¹ as Aquinas writes “hence this name God is a name of operation so far as relates to the source of its meaning.”¹³² While human beings do not have knowledge of God’s essence, we have knowledge of God’s operation, especially in relation to God’s operation as creator.¹³³ God as creator, first principle, or cause of the world allows human beings to name God from the world insofar as the world is an effect of God’s causal operation. Naming God based on God’s causal operation in the world does not grant human beings insight

¹²⁸ *In Peri herm.* Lec. 8.

¹²⁹ *In Peri herm.* Lec. 8.

¹³⁰ *ST I*, q13, a1.

¹³¹ *ST I*, q13, a1.

¹³² *ST I*, q13, a8.

¹³³ *ST I*, q13, a8.

into the divine essence itself while allowing human beings to name God in a mode appropriate to human understanding, namely a mode reliant upon the material world.

Human names for God according to the human mode of signification necessarily retains a primary signification related to the material world that falls short of expressing God as the thing signified.¹³⁴ Predicate names derived from concrete subsisting things are applied to God's substance and perfection, while abstract names are applied to God's simplicity. Appropriate names for God reference a quality that God holds by virtue of God's essence in the most perfect or complete way.¹³⁵ The affirmative names for God apply to God's perfections, such as good, wise, and life, apply more properly to God than to creatures.¹³⁶ The human intellect identifies these qualities in creatures first and subsequently applies the terms to God; however, the mode of signification does not properly apply to God, but only to creatures. Even such appropriate names as good, wise, and life must have their materiality removed and be elevated in order to properly signify God, for they retain the materiality inherent in their mode of signification.

The next step in analogical predication is that of negation or remotion. This is the step that acknowledges that the human mode of signification necessarily includes creaturely understanding. Following the lead of Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas affirms the primacy of negations as a way of showing God's absolute transcendence over the creature. Negative names, such as infinite, signify the relation of creatures to God in a mode that emphasizes God's distance from creatures.¹³⁷ In other words, negation recognizes that divine predication does not apply in the same way that it applies to creatures. Names apply to things as known and not immediately as they exist. O'Rourke helpfully writes that "negations are absolutely true while

¹³⁴ *ST I*, q13, a1, *ad 2*.

¹³⁵ *ST I*, q13, a6.

¹³⁶ *ST I*, q13, a3.

¹³⁷ *ST I*, q13, a2.

affirmations, although not false, are only relatively true.”¹³⁸ Negative language is logically posterior to affirmation yet holds a priority in understanding over affirmative language.

Importantly, Aquinas tempers negative language to avoid outright agnosticism or an attitude of impossibility when it comes to divine predication.¹³⁹

Gregory Rocca helpfully analyzes Aquinas’s grammar of negation and recognizes three distinct types of negation used by Aquinas, which are qualitative, objective modal, and subjective modal.¹⁴⁰ The qualitative negation is an absolute negation of some quality applied to God, such as stating that God is not material. Aquinas uses qualitative negation to remove materiality and temporality from God and to ensure that “the characteristics and properties of bodies are being totally removed from the realm of spiritual reality.”¹⁴¹ The objective modal negation removes creaturely particularity from qualities, such as goodness, that are found both in God and creatures. Goodness is possessed by creatures in an imperfect manner and the objective modal negation makes it clear that God does not possess goodness in a limited fashion but in a complete and unlimited way.¹⁴² Rocca explains that this brings out God’s modeless existence in contrast with the particular existential mode of creatures. The subjective modal negation negates the creaturely predication found in the human mode of cognition.¹⁴³ Rocca gives the example of wisdom, for “wisdom does not reside in God as a nonsubstantive quality in a subject.”¹⁴⁴ The subjective modal negation protects against imputing creaturely particular qualities to God as a result of our creaturely mode of subjective cognition.

¹³⁸ O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 51.

¹³⁹ O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 54-57. See also Torrell, O.P., Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 37-9.

¹⁴⁰ Rocca, *Speaking*, 58-62.

¹⁴¹ Rocca, *Speaking*, 58.

¹⁴² Rocca, *Speaking*, 59.

¹⁴³ Rocca, *Speaking*, 59-60.

¹⁴⁴ Rocca, *Speaking*, 60.

The third stage entails acknowledging that wisdom is denied of God not because God is devoid of wisdom, but because God holds wisdom more highly, purely, eminently, or perfectly than any creature and in a way that does not imply imperfection or finitude. The wisdom of God is the wisdom that comes through God's existence as God. Aquinas goes on to say that the most appropriate names applied to God signify perfections that are found in creatures yet are more appropriately and primarily applied to God than creatures.¹⁴⁵ These are names such as being, goodness, and life.

The final stage of analogical predication is that of eminence, which is the raising up of a name or quality in recognition that God holds it in a manner higher, nobler, and more perfect than that of any creature. In other words, the raising up of a proper predicate for God in an infinitely higher mode than any creaturely predicate. Rocca points out that recognition of God's eminence is the reason why negations are applied to the initial affirmative predication.¹⁴⁶ There is a sense in which God's eminence is the final cause driving the process of analogical predication. Rocca notes that negative predicates, such as eternal and infinite, emphasize the eminent transcendent perfection of God through their usage. God is eternal as a result of God's perfect self-subsistent existence.¹⁴⁷ Time is a function of the movement inherent in change as beings (*ens*) move from potency to act, and since God is pure act with no potency, then God is eternal and God's own eternity. Aquinas writes that "He is His own eternity; whereas no other being is its own duration, as no other is its own being."¹⁴⁸ God's perfection as self-subsistent

¹⁴⁵ *STI*, q13, a3.

¹⁴⁶ Rocca, *Speaking*, 66-8.

¹⁴⁷ *STI*, q10, a1 & a2.

¹⁴⁸ *STI*, q10, a2.

pure act of existence with no potency means that God is removed from a creaturely experience of time, and that God is God's own perfect duration raises God up in a more transcendent and eminent mode, which is expressed in the term "eternal."

Aquinas recognizes that even names such as good and wise apply to God in a more eminent mode than how they apply to creatures. God is good, but not good in the same way that my children are good or that a pastry is good. It would be quite improper to refer to a cupcake as 'good' and insist that the term 'good' applies to God and a cupcake in the same mode of signification. God is the cause of goodness, yet even describing God as the cause of goodness falls short. God is more than simply the cause of the goodness that we encounter in the world. God is not one cause among causes; God is the hierarchically first source or first principle of the causal powers of all creatures. God as exemplar form contains all perfections and goodness in a simple and universal mode. This allows names such as good and wise to be predicated of God in a non-metaphorical sense. God is not simply a cause but the principle outside of any causal order providing for the causal orders themselves and pertaining to the qualities that are predicated of God. In other words, God is the principle behind goodness such that God is beyond goodness as a causal series that ends in an individual goodness. Goodness or any perfection "represents Him not as something of the same species or genus, but as the excelling principle of whose form the effect falls short, although they derive some kind of likeness thereto..."¹⁴⁹ This is due to the fact that God's simple perfect act of self-subsistent existence raises God as the most eminent source of all perfections.

As eminent source of all perfections, the most proper of the names applied to God's essence is "He Who is."¹⁵⁰ Aquinas lists three reasons why this is the case. First is that on the

¹⁴⁹ *ST I*, q13, a2.

¹⁵⁰ *ST I*, q13, a11.

DDS God is being itself, which is perhaps the most important consideration. Since God's essence is to be, and form denominates definition, then 'He Who Is' most properly communicates that God is being. Second, the name 'He Who Is' has a universal quality befitting of being, since being is the most universal concept. The more universality and indeterminate the name applied to God, the more proper its use to name God. The name 'He Who Is' fits the criteria of a universal and indeterminate name for God and is, therefore, a more proper name than other names. As Aquinas notes, quoting Damascene, "He Who Is, determines no mode of being, but is indeterminate to all; and therefore denominates the *infinite ocean of substance*." ¹⁵¹ Finally, there is a sort of eternal presentism to the name, describing a simple existence without past or future. We apply the term 'He Who Is' more properly to God than 'God' but only as denotes the source of existence and mode of signification. The term 'God' retains its propriety in signifying the divine nature. ¹⁵² 'He Who Is' even takes precedence over naming God 'good,' since 'good' applies to God as cause while 'He Who Is' considers existence prior to causality. ¹⁵³

The names given to God do not all mean the same thing; they are not synonymous. ¹⁵⁴ The fact that we can use the terms good and wise to describe God and understand each term to signify something different shows that good and wise are not synonymous, which is to say they do not have the same meaning. Human beings derive the basic meanings of the terms 'good' and 'wise' from creatures who hold these attributes in different degrees and ways. We can describe a bee as wise for finding the best flowers, yet this is different from how Socrates is wise. Similarly, we describe a child as good differently from how we describe a donut as good. God possesses wisdom and goodness in the most eminent and perfect way, while creatures receive these

¹⁵¹ *STI*, q13, a11.

¹⁵² *STI*, q13, a11, *ad* 1.

¹⁵³ *STI*, q13, a11, *ad* 2.

¹⁵⁴ *STI*, q13, a4.

qualities from God in a “divided and multiplied” way.¹⁵⁵ As mentioned, human beings can appropriately name God as good and wise in the mode of containing the perfect first principle of goodness and wisdom. Since on the DDS God is simple, God possesses goodness and wisdom in a simple and unified manner. The terms good and wise do not signify synonymously among creatures and are not synonymous in signification of God. Human beings in our imperfect understanding do not understand the unified first principle of all goodness and wisdom in the world. Our limited understanding signifies goodness and wisdom of God under different nonsynonymous aspects. Human beings can appropriately apply goodness and wisdom to God in a literal mode of signification because it is the mode of signification that implies corporeal elements rather than implying a corporeal essence in God.¹⁵⁶ In other words, calling God good and wise does not signify corporeality in God even though the human understanding of the terms includes corporeality.

Conclusion

When it comes to how human beings can know God, Aquinas’s view of cognition drives the manner in which demonstrations can be developed such that they are most appropriate to the human mode of knowing. Human beings as *hylomorphic* matter-form/soul compound substances soul must utilize the sensible species of the material world immuted into immaterial phantasms that can be united to the immaterial soul. Any demonstrations must begin with the sensible species in some fashion, which the five ways exemplify. The abstracted phantasms form the basis for defining material objects used in *scientia* producing demonstrations. The paradigmatic why-demonstration uses a definition derived from abstracted material substances for the middle term. Since separated substances cannot be detected by the senses, the fact-demonstration

¹⁵⁵ *ST I*, q13, a4.

¹⁵⁶ *ST I*, q13, a3, *ad* 3.

method of obtaining *scientia* must be used. This form of demonstration uses effects that are better known than a cause to fill in for the definition as the middle term, and Aquinas explicitly identifies the five ways as this type of demonstration. The fact-demonstration works from effects to a cause but does not produce a very metaphysically deep account, resulting in imperfect *scientia*.

Negation of materiality and examination of relations are the road to this imperfect knowledge, as Aquinas writes, “we may have a scientific knowledge of them [immaterial substances] by way of negation and by their relation to material things.”¹⁵⁷ Relational knowledge occurs through the relation of cause and effect, which is the principle that something of God as a cause can be known through material effects.¹⁵⁸ Relational knowledge and negation must occur together in order to achieve what understanding is possible, as Aquinas writes in *Questions on the Soul*,

we can proceed from lowly effects to a knowledge of higher causes, so that we know only that these causes exist; and at the same time that we know that these causes are superior, we know that they cannot be of the same order as the effects we observe. And this is rather to know what they are not than to know what they are.¹⁵⁹

The way of knowing God according to the proper mode of human knowing begins with the sensible species of the world as an effect. From this effect, we can know that there is a cause and even name the cause based on the effect.

Aquinas’s theory of divine names explains how he is able to end five ways with causal names for God, such as ‘first mover,’ ‘first efficient cause,’ and so forth. Aquinas does not use

¹⁵⁷ *ST I*, q88, a2, *ad 2*. Explanatory bracketed term added.

¹⁵⁸ *ST I*, q86, a2, *ad 1*.

¹⁵⁹ *QDA* q16.

these names in a purely univocal manner. God is not the cause of motion, or actuality, in the same way that batter puts a ball into motion, an artist crafts a sculpture, or a baby is conceived and born. The inherent materiality of language must be negated since God holds actuality in a higher manner than any material thing. On the DDS, God is pure act, and therefore is the first principle of all motion and all actuality. Further, it is not simply that God holds motion or actuality in a higher manner than material things, but this is a proper name to apply to God's essence. God's most appropriate name is 'He Who Is' indicating that God is existence itself and the source of all existence. Since each of the five ways engage different aspects of existence, these names denominate aspects of God as pure being emanating being to all that exists. It is precisely as source or cause of being that God is understood and named by any who speak of God whatsoever.¹⁶⁰

The five ways follow the fact-demonstration method rather closely. Each begins with an effect that is known through the senses, observed in the world around us. The material effects are appropriate objects for sense cognition according to the mode of human knowing. The effects are then used as the middle term in fact-demonstrations moving from a well-known effect to a less known cause. All of the effects in question relate to some aspect of the being of beings, so the cause must be the source of being. Naming God after causes depicting God as the source of being coheres with the most proper name of God, 'He Who Is.' That God is the source of being coheres with the doctrine of creation as discussed in the previous chapter, with God responsible for each causal series that explains the world as an effect. Naming God after ultimate causes for the perceived effects is theologically justified and semantically possible. All the same, the material aspects of the names must be negated. God is not a cause among causes but beyond

¹⁶⁰ *ST I*, q13, a10, *ad. 5*.

causes as the first principle of any causal series. Therefore, God is the most eminent cause of being as ultimate source of being itself. The results of the five ways are then used in further demonstrations beginning in question three regarding the DDS.

Chapter Four: The First Three Ways

Chapters four and five will deal with the five ways in light of the preceding three chapters. Chapter four will be concerned with the first three ways, which are the demonstrations from motion, from efficient cause, and from contingency to necessity. These three ways are usually grouped together and considered to be cosmological in nature. The cosmological assumption derives from their explicit starting point with the nature of the material world. The first three ways work from directly observed cosmological features to an ultimate cause of that feature. While this distinction has merit, it should not be taken to mean that there is some fundamental difference between the first three ways and the remaining two. Aquinas is engaging in a fact-demonstration in each of the five ways,¹ or *demonstratio quia* structure, which moves from an observation about the world to a conclusion.

All of the five ways have a common metaphysical structure as Maritain notes that “the nerve of the proof, the formal principle of the demonstration, is the same in each of the five ways, to wit, the necessity of a cause which is pure Act or Being.”² The division between the five ways into cosmological and non-cosmological should be taken as a practical division for organizational purposes rather than as representing a fundamental difference between arguments that are metaphysical in nature. The five ways are about the cause of existence itself focused on one specific aspect of existence in each way. The issue at stake here is the first principle of being for all beings in their various modes and degrees of being. Aquinas writes that “all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly.”³ Only God can create out of nothing

¹ See Chapter 3, see also Copleston, *Aquinas*, 117.

² Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1954, 2015), 14.

³ *STI*, q44, a1.

and the five ways each end by highlighting a necessary first principle of being that is identified with God. Aquinas defines creation as the emanation of all being from God as the universal cause.⁴ Since it is being itself that is produced by the creative act, creation necessary implies being from non-being or nothing.

All five ways should be interpreted in light of causality since creation is linked to God as universal cause of being. Aquinas demonstrates the cause of existence in the five ways by causal change in general and the first principle for each of the four causal orders. Aquinas recognizes hierarchical and accidental as the two types of causal series. The hierarchical causal series (also called *per se* or essential) has a one to many relationship such that one principle provides the causal power of the entire series.⁵ There is no causal efficacy for any causal agent in the series without the first cause providing the first principle of causality for every member of the series. The example of this series is the stone moved by a stick moved by a hand moved by a mind such that the mind provides the causal efficacy for the entire series. The accidental causal series holds a one to one relation such that each member in series is not responsible for the causal efficacy of any other member of the series. The example of this series is the parent begetting offspring who beget offspring who beget offspring, and so on.

Each section of this and the following chapter will begin with a reconstruction of the way in question followed by a general overview or introduction, a reconstruction of the way, and address various objections before concluding. The common objection of a quantifier shift fallacy in the first three ways will be treated as part of the objections to the third way.⁶ Elements of each

⁴ *STI*, q45, a1.

⁵ Gavin Kerr, "Essentially Ordered Series Reconsidered Once Again," in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 2, (Spring 2017): 155-174, pp. 156-7.

⁶ The quantifier shift fallacy charge against the fifth way will be dealt with in the next chapter since the solution to the quantifier shift accusation in the first three ways does not necessarily apply to the fifth

demonstration will be numbered for ease of reference and discussion, with supporting arguments or examples indicated with a number and letter to show the relationships.

The First Way: The Demonstration from Motion

The first way has garnered the most attention out of the five ways. Aquinas himself refers to it as “the first and most manifest way.”⁷ There is no other attribute of reality that is more apparent to our senses than that of change.⁸ That Aquinas put great stock in this particular demonstration is clear from the fact that he develops the demonstration from motion in greater detail in the *SCG*, and also reduces demonstrations for God in the *CT* to only the one from motion. Because of these factors, many commenters on Aquinas will examine the first way as paradigmatic of his natural theology without going further.⁹ Aquinas proceeds with the first way as follows:

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. [1] It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. [2] Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, [2a] 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. [2b] For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. [2c] But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. [2d] Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. [3] Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and

⁷ *ST* q2, a3.

⁸ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 81.

⁹ Examples include Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, ed. John R. Catan, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1980); Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The ‘Divine Science’ of the Summa Theologiae*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 48-51; and J.F. Donceel, S.J., *Natural Theology*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962).

potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. [3a] For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. [3b] 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. [4] Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. [5] 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. [6] But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; [6a] seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; [6b] as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. [7] Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; [8] and this everyone understands to be God.¹⁰

The first way holds strong links to Aristotle's argument from motion found in the *Physics* and was a popular argument amongst the Arabic philosophers that Aquinas had read.¹¹ Aquinas held his predecessors in high regard yet subtly reworked the way from motion to better cohere with the Christian God. Joseph Owens notes that "Aquinas recognizes that the Aristotelian reasoning presupposed eternal cosmic motion and required souls in the heavenly bodies. Yet without these tenets, acknowledged as essential for Aristotle, he finds the arguments much stronger!"¹² Aquinas tempers his adoption of Aristotle with the theme of emanation of being found in Dionysius, Augustine, and other Neo-Platonists.¹³ Due to the adaptations mentioned,

¹⁰ *ST I*, q2, a3.

¹¹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 161-2. See also Chapter 1.

¹² Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 134. See also Owens 144 and Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 48-9.

¹³ Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 132-4. See also chapter 1.

Aquinas's *prima via* is a different demonstration than that of Aristotle's unmoved mover, although Aquinas uses the Aristotelian language, structure, and principles.

It is important to understand the meaning of the primary term 'motion,' since the entire demonstration hinges on this term. There is some controversy regarding whether Aquinas is working from change in general or if he is looking at one or more types of change. Kenny maintains that while the Latin term *motus* is broader than the English term 'motion,' it falls short of change broadly construed or change in general.¹⁴ Kenny writes

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas distinguished three kinds of *motus*: change of quality, change of quantity and change of place. The first is exemplified when a hot body becomes cold, or a white surface becomes black; it is technically 'alteration.' The second is increase or decrease in size. The third is called by St. Thomas 'local motion': it is the only one which would naturally be called 'motion' in English.¹⁵

Kenny makes his argument by appealing to Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. He observes that *motus* as discussed in the *Physics* cannot take into account relational changes, such as a change in comparative height between growing boys, or mental changes, such as Anselm deriving the ontological argument. The key point that Kenny makes is that *motus*/motion does not include substantial change. Substantial change lies in the category of *mutatio* or mutation rather than *motus*.¹⁶ The distinction is that *motus* refers to movement restricted to three specific types of motion while *mutatio* encompasses what is meant by *motus* plus substantial change.¹⁷

Substantial change would entail the destruction of a given being through change in form even if

¹⁴ Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1969, 2003), 7-9.

¹⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 7.

¹⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 8.

¹⁷ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 162-3. Craig accepts the translation of *motus* as change but argues for change applied in the same restricted sense that Kenny argues.

there is continuity through the matter involved, such as when a tree is cut down and made into a chair. Kenny and Craig both claim that *motus* does not include this sort of change.

The project of interpreting *motus* is aided by Aquinas in [2b] by defining motion through the act/potency distinction, which parallels his definition of in both of the commentaries on the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.¹⁸ In the commentary on the *Physics* Aquinas acknowledges in book three that the early definition at this point includes all motion in general as any movement of potency to actuality rather than one of the more specific forms of motion defined and elaborated later in the *Physics*.¹⁹ Johnson observes that this general interpretation of *motus* "is simply any reduction of a potentiality to an actuality and it could, and presumably would include any generation or destruction of a substance, any alternation of quality, any increase or diminution of quantity, and any locomotion from place to place."²⁰ As an abstract universal, the general term cannot be the starting point. By defining *motus* as a passage from potency to actuality Aquinas can move from the restricted sense of motion observed in the physical world to a broader sense of motion later in the argument.²¹ The focus on the underlying act/potency composition of all movement allows the terms of the demonstration to remain the same as Aquinas moves from observed motion to a general source of motion. The restricted sense of *motus* abstracted from sensible species as the principle of actuality and potency as universal concepts, which as universals are first principles of being.²² The restricted sense of *motus* is the starting point as what is most present to our senses.

¹⁸ *In Phys*, III, lec. 2. See also *In Meta*, IX, lec. 1.

¹⁹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 444-446.

²⁰ Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 141.

²¹ Lubor Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae 1a 2, 3*, (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1994), 75-6.

²² *In Meta*, XII, lec. 4.

If the first way remained only within a restricted sense of motion, the result would not be a universal unmoved mover, but an unmoved mover only within this restricted sense of motion. The source of a restricted type of motion could theoretically be some finite being rather than the source of being that is required to properly name the unmoved mover as God. Aquinas makes an absolute statement about the nature of God in the DDS that God is pure act with no potency. A restricted sense of *motus* used throughout the first way would result in an unmoved mover only for the restricted sense, which could be some sort of finite non-absolute mover. It would make no sense for Aquinas to identify God as pure act with no potency but only regarding locomotion and not regarding any other change. A proper source of motion that could be called God would need to be responsible for a first principle of being as self-subsistent being itself. “The first principles which are understood to be most universal are actuality and potentiality, for these divide being as being.”²³ A broad sense of motion is related to being in a meaningful way. A source of the being of motion is necessary to account for the various modes of being found in the created world.

Furthermore, Aquinas connects motion and being in order for the demonstration from motion to cohere with the DDS, creation, and other areas of the *ST* that equate God with being itself. As Velecky writes, “The intended contrast in the First Argument is between finite beings which are mixtures of the actual with the potential and their infinite Cause which is presented as unqualified actuality.”²⁴ Under the aspect of the act/potency distinction as a division of being, the demonstration from motion could be framed as a demonstration from divided beings to undivided or simple Being itself. As Cornelio Fabro notes, the concept of participation, which is theological linked to creation, hinges first and foremost on act as perfection in itself and in

²³ *In Meta*, XII, lec. 4.

²⁴ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 75.

created beings.²⁵ Act as perfection and affirmation of being (*esse*) has priority over potency. Fabro helpfully defines potency as “whatever takes on or conditions the act.”²⁶ Prime matter as pure potency is the subject that receives and conditions the act of existence for each creature. Fabro notes that the notion of participation in Aquinas’s thought entails “distinguishing *esse* as act not only from essence which is its potency, but also from existence which is the fact of being...”²⁷ The importance of the act/potency distinction in Aquinas’s notion of participation strongly implies that Aquinas deliberately invokes a broad definition of change in [2b], because this step is necessary if he is to end with universal actuality sufficient to account for the act/potency distinction and can be named as self-subsistent perfect act of being, which is God.

The first way follows the fact-demonstration structure beginning with change as an effect known through the senses and developing it to knowledge of the fact of a cause. Aquinas starts with [1] stating that our senses clearly show us a world that is in motion or changing. The criteria that the effect is better known than the cause is met just by the fact that change is the single ‘most manifest’ effect that our senses detect in the world around us. Change is readily evident in the most personal way possible as we observe our bodies age and is also readily present in the observation of seasons, cultivation of crops, growing children, and many other changes. All observed changes of any type, whether alteration, quantitative, locomotive, accidental, or substantial, have the structure of moving from a state of potency to a state of actuality.

Aquinas’s analysis of change or motion results in a concept that is not merely a change of location but goes deeper into a metaphysical level. As mentioned, Aquinas defines motion in

²⁵ Cornelio Fabro, “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” in *Selected Works of Cornelio Fabro, Vol. 1: Selected Articles on Metaphysics and Participation*, Edited by Nathaniel Dreyer, (Chillum, MD: IVE Press, 2016, Kindle Edition), section IV.

²⁶ Fabro, “The Intensive Hermeneutics,” section IV.

²⁷ Fabro, “The Intensive Hermeneutics,” section IV.

[2b] as a reduction from potency to actuality. Any actuality is the actuality of existence. As a definition, actuality stands as the middle term in the [2a]-[2d] demonstration in support of [2]. This definition establishes the cause of motion as something already holding the actuality toward which a change is moving, which Aquinas himself affirms in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*.²⁸ The act/potency distinction is a first principle of being in that it is the division of being most recognized by the senses.²⁹ Everything in actuality has the capacity or power in some manner to be moved or changed itself and to move or change another. Element [2a] provides the first principle that in the act/potency distinction, actuality holds priority over potency. A given being must exist or be actual first in order to be changed or change. The actuality of the seed in potency to become grain comes before the actuality of the grain.³⁰ Insofar as something is actual, it also has potency, and the potency of any given actual being is determined by its actuality through its form. Element [2c] puts together elements [2a] and [2b] for if actuality has priority over potentiality, and motion is the reduction of potency to act, then a state of actuality must precede the movement from potentiality to actuality, which is [2c]. An actual state of existence is required to move a being from one state of potentiality to a new actual state of existence. Any change whatsoever is effectively a change in state of existence.³¹

The example that Aquinas uses in [2d] also serves to indicate that he is concerned with the sort of substantial change governed by the act/potency distinction. The act/potency distinction is a transcendental that divides all being.³² Since act and potency are differences in being, both act and potency are prior to motion.³³ The act/potency distinction results in the

²⁸ *In PA*, VII, lec. 1.

²⁹ See chapter 2.

³⁰ *In Meta*, IX, lec. 7, as cited in chapter 2.

³¹ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1997), 138-9.

³² Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 60.

³³ *In Phys*, III, lec. 2. See *In Meta*, IX, lec. 1.

potency for both being and non-being as things can come to be and then cease to be. The most common definition of motion through the primary act/potency distinction is mutation or substantial change. Fire does not merely heat wood, but substantially changes wood into ash as well. The existence of the wood is substantially changed by fire into a new form of existence or a new actuality. The fire example indicates that Aquinas is after the production of existence in general and existing beings in particular. Aquinas adopts this Aristotelian argument but modifies it in light of Dionysius. Owens points out Aquinas's modification of Aristotle, writing that "The nerve of the argument in both thinkers is that potentiality is actualized only by something already in actuality. For Aristotle, to be actualized meant to acquire form. For Aquinas, it meant to be brought into existence, since for him existence is the actuality of every form or nature."³⁴ The changing form of the wood is a change in the actuality or existence of the wood.

In elements [3], [3a], and [3b] Aquinas offers a supplementary demonstration establishing that a given thing undergoing change cannot itself provide the actuality toward which the change moves. Element [3] derives from the law of non-contradiction as applied to act/potency motion and fulfills a role here as an axiomatic first principle. Aquinas gives the example that something can be hot in potency and cold in act, but not both at the same time or in the same manner.³⁵ Element [3a] further elaborates on the foregoing principles in [2] such that the actuality of a hot object determines the potency for any given new state of actuality. In this case, the object is already hot, so therefore 'become hot' is no longer a viable state of potency. A hot object can always cool down such that it has the potency to be cold. An object cannot have the potency for heat and be actually hot in the same way. Of course, a hot object can have the

³⁴ Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 134.

³⁵ *In Phys*, III, lec. 2.

potency to become hotter, but if it already held that greater heat in actuality, then this potency hotter state would not be possible.

The example of heat is not about heat in itself but how objects exist and change. Heat is merely the paradigmatic example. The demonstration is about substantial changes in existence rather than heat. It is about the production of existence with heat as a metaphor for existence.³⁶ Fire is endorsed by Dionysius as an appropriate symbolic image for God as “shapeless Being” changing things according to its activity.³⁷ This particular demonstration effectively establishes that the new actuality or state of existence is dependent on an outside source.³⁸ The thing being changed does not contain the existence within itself of the new state of being after the change. An outside source of being is required.

The existential interpretation of the first way is greatly indebted to the work of Gilson and Owens and has come under criticism from Craig and Kenny.³⁹ Kenny claims that a primarily metaphysical interpretation is a sort of change only accessible to metaphysicians and “So understood, the thesis seems nonsensical in itself.”⁴⁰ His argument can be summarized as a claim that the ordinarily restricted sense of *motus* governs the first way and keeps it from traversing into metaphysical territory.

Craig engages Owens nearly point by point and marshals several primary sources to claim that the first way is a purely physical proof governed by the restricted sense of *motus*.⁴¹ He notes that the examples that Aquinas uses in the *ST* and *SCG* are of the restricted meaning of

³⁶ Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 152-3.

³⁷ See chp. 15 of Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Celestial Hierarchy*. See also Pseudo-Dionysius's *Letter to Titus the Hierarch*.

³⁸ Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 447.

³⁹ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 66-78; Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 208-227; Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 162-73; and Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 9-11.

⁴⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 10.

⁴¹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 172. Craig gives several arguments for his case that cannot be fully reproduced here.

motus, solar movement, heating, and “the hand and the stick.”⁴² Craig argues that the first mover passage in the *SCG* contains several demonstrations that what is moved is moved from another derived solely from the *Physics*, thus entailing a purely physical interpretation. He claims that the reason why the *ST* contains only the most metaphysical of the three demonstrations in the *SCG* is that Aquinas is writing a simplified version for beginning theological students.⁴³ In addition, the version of the first mover demonstration in the *CT* does not include reference to the act/potency distinction. Craig claims that as an example of Aquinas’s latest and most mature work, the *CT* should be heavily weighted. The argument is that the data cited about the *SCG* and *CT* indicate a limited definition of *motus* and that Aquinas did not intend a metaphysical proof in the *ST*.⁴⁴ Craig raises a possible counter argument that Aquinas uses the first mover argument to make metaphysical claims later in the *ST*, but this is unfounded since Aquinas uses the other four ways to demonstrate further the attributes of God rather than using the first way.

The objections to the metaphysical interpretation by Kenny and Craig are not insurmountable. The point that *motus* refers solely to the restricted sense has already been addressed. While this is sufficient to refute the argument by Kenny, the points that Craig raise require additional attention. Craig’s point that Aquinas’s examples of *motus* are all consistent with the restricted sense does not necessarily lead to physical interpretation of the first way. As already stated, the first way begins with the restricted sense and moves into metaphysics through the act/potency distinction present within the restricted sense and then moves toward a universal principle. As for the portions of the demonstration in the *SCG* that are culled from the physics, this does not necessarily entail a purely physical interpretation. It is well known that the God of

⁴² Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 165.

⁴³ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 169.

⁴⁴ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 170-1.

Aquinas is different from the unmoved mover of Aristotle and that Aquinas has modified and deepened Aristotle to comport with Christian theology. The fact that these arguments are directly derived from the *Physics* does not mean that Aquinas intends a purely physical demonstration. As established, motion is analyzed in terms of potency and act regardless of the type of motion. The act/potency distinction can legitimately be considered as implicit in any mention of change or motion. The fact that only one of the three demonstrations in the *SCG* overtly references the act/potency distinction does not mean that it is not present, and this also applies to the demonstration in the *CT*.

Craig's treatment of the *CT* as Aquinas's mature thought and more regulative of the prime mover argument than the *ST* may not be valid. According to Torrell the first part of the *CT*, where the first mover demonstration resides in this work, dates to just after the *SCG* rather than late in Aquinas's career.⁴⁵ If this is the case, then the passage in the *CT* should not be considered a mature and regulative work compared to the *ST*.

Finally, as fact-demonstrations, the five ways produce definitions that can be used later. It is clear that Aquinas does use the conclusion of the first way in later why-demonstrations. The fact that Aquinas also uses the other five ways and may even favor the second way is irrelevant to how the first way is to be interpreted. The metaphysical view considers the movement of potency to actuality as a universal principle of being that is not self-contained within the existence of any given being. Motion as a fundamental mode of existence derives the cause of its ultimate principle from an outside source that is self-subsistent existence.

After providing demonstrations that movement is not self-contained and is dependent on an exterior mover, Aquinas continues with the next step in the *prima via*, which is to demonstrate

⁴⁵ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 164-5.

that there cannot be an infinite regress of movers. Element [5] sets up the demonstration against infinite regress of movers by stating that any mover would need to rely on another and so on. Element [6] then counters [5] and lays out the basic argument. Element [6a] with its hand and staff example shows that Aquinas has a hierarchical series of movers and moved in mind. The motion in question is the motion in the present moment rather than stretching out into the past. The hand is moving the staff now rather than in a temporal sequence. As Feser puts it, “he doesn’t mean first in order of time, but rather first in the sense of being most fundamental in the order of what exists.”⁴⁶ The motion here and now is concurrent motion or change that is essentially ordered. Each being in motion is essentially dependent on another for its principle of motion. Every movement in the hierarchical causal sequence of movers is a secondary cause dependent upon a primary cause for their very existence as secondary causes.⁴⁷ Since the hierarchical series is a series whose members currently exist, then the reference to movers ‘subsequent’ to the first mover indicates a logical ordering rather than a temporal ordering.

The demonstration concludes with element [7] that a first mover is necessary. The utter dependency of the series of motion upon a first mover for its essential principle of change indicates not that the first mover is at the top of this hierarchy, but that first mover is the first principle responsible for the entire series of change.⁴⁸ The entire hierarchical chain of movement itself exists without containing existence itself as a first principle within any given entity in the hierarchy. The hierarchy itself requires a principle of existence to be a hierarchy of motion. As Gilson notes, the causal “efficacy of the individuals must therefore be sought above the

⁴⁶ Feser, *Aquinas*, 69.

⁴⁷ Feser, *Aquinas*, 72-3.

⁴⁸ Robert Fogelin takes issue with applying hierarchical causality to the five ways. Since he interacts primarily with the second way, his objections will be addressed in that section. See Robert T. Fogelin, “A Reading of Aquinas’s Five Ways,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, no. 4 (Oct., 1990), pp. 305-13.

species.”⁴⁹ The first mover is not a part of the hierarchical series of change so much as the first principle that makes change possible. The mover's exteriority to the hierarchical series comes across in Aquinas's discussion of how God moves the intellect.⁵⁰ Aquinas writes that “God so moves the created intellect, inasmuch as He gives it the intellectual power, whether natural or superadded.”⁵¹ The first mover of the intellect holds status as the first mover precisely because the first mover provides the principle by which the intellect operates. The very existence of the created intellect and its relation to the world is provided by God as first mover. This is an example of the first mover holding the title of first mover not because the first mover is part of a causal chain of intellectual action but by providing the very principle that allows the intellect to operate as a secondary cause. There is no reason to think that Aquinas would treat the series of movers in the *prima via* in a different manner. Gilson puts this in perspective, writing that “The immovable First Mover cannot cause the existence of the effects of the motions of the heavens if it does not first cause the existence of this motion.”⁵² Just as God moves the intellect by creating it and giving it its qualities, so also God is first mover of the hierarchy of movers by creating the hierarchy. There is no change whatsoever without a first mover who makes change possible in the first place.

Aquinas ends the demonstration by stating in element [8] that the first mover is understood as God. This is a proper predication in the sense that an unmoved mover is a negation applied to God and thus comports with Aquinas's contention that we can know what God is not.⁵³ The very term ‘unmoved’ is a negation of movement. While this is so, it is also the case that

⁴⁹ Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 77.

⁵⁰ *ST I*, q105, a3. See also Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 452-3.

⁵¹ *ST I*, q105, a3.

⁵² Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 80.

⁵³ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 132.

Aquinas uses the term as a positive predication, as Stump points out.⁵⁴ A positive predication of God poses specific issues that Aquinas addresses later in the *ST*. Naming God as first mover cannot be construed as either a univocal or equivocal naming.⁵⁵ To do so would be to put the first way in conflict with what Aquinas writes later in the *ST* about how to talk about God. Analogical predication must be assumed in order to preserve concert between the five ways and the following portions of the *ST* on naming God. It is precisely the identification of the first mover as pure act of existence that allows Aquinas to claim that the first mover can properly be named as God.⁵⁶ The first mover as pure act is equated with existence itself which is a proper name for God when expressed as ‘He Who Is.’⁵⁷ Identification of the first mover as pure act allows the initial affirmative moment of predication as cause of existence.⁵⁸ The DDS establishes God as pure, unchanging act of existence or self-subsisting being.⁵⁹ The doctrine of creation then connects the existence of creation with this self-subsisting being.⁶⁰

A positive predication based on the DDS and creation is not yet sufficient to analogically describe the first mover as God. The ‘first mover’ as abstracted universal still contains its creaturely roots derived from sensible species. It is easy to fall into picturing the first mover as a pool cue moving billiard balls or as part of any other material causal chain of motion. Such sensory based material images must be negated before the name ‘first mover’ can be applied to God without falling into a mistaken conception of God. God is not a mover in the same way that any other being in the world is a mover. God is not merely an agent of movement among agents of movement. The first mover as applied to God would be the most eminent mover responsible

⁵⁴ Stump, *Aquinas*, 94.

⁵⁵ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 133-4.

⁵⁶ Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 158-60.

⁵⁷ *ST I*, q13, a11.

⁵⁸ Donceel, *Natural Theology*, 38-40. See also Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 153-4.

⁵⁹ *ST I*, q3, a4.

⁶⁰ *ST I*, 44, a1.

for the entire hierarchy of movement without being a part of that hierarchy. Even though Aquinas does not establish that God is pure actuality (which is the same as God's essence being existence) until the next question in the *ST*, he indicates in the first article of question two that he does understand that in God existence and essence are the same. Aquinas understands this notion of God as part of the rich Christian theological heritage and only lays the rational demonstration of the theological principle after the five ways.

Objections to the First Way

This section will explore various objections or general issues pertaining to the first way. Most of these will be culled from Anthony Kenny's highly influential critique of the five ways and will also include some objections raised by William Rowe. Kenny is an ideal interlocutor due to the strong influence of his work. For example, Kenny's critique of the five ways prompted Richard Swinburne to write off four of the five ways with merely a footnote to Kenny, and Velecky to devote a chapter in response.⁶¹ Five objections will be reviewed: a challenge to the premise that what is moved is moved by something else; the claim that change is a brute fact that needs no further explanation; a critique of the argument against infinite regress in the first way; the objection that the first way does not lead to God; and the claim that Newtonian physics makes the first way irrelevant. Some of these objections may have some application to other of the five ways, especially in Rowe's objections as he addresses both the first and second way at once. Overlapping objections will not be repeated later but will be addressed here since the issues are raised in conjunction with the first way.

⁶¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd Ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 2004), 135-6. Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 68-95.

Kenny takes issue with element [2] that “whatever is in motion is put in motion by another.”⁶² He points out that there are obvious counterexamples. It is not simply that X acquires attribute ϕ through the motion of Y, but that according to [2c] Y must already be in an actual state including attribute ϕ .⁶³ Kenny points to Aquinas’s example of fire in [2d] as evidence that the actuality intended in [2c] is that whatever sort of change is occurring in X must already be possessed by Y. There appear to be self-movers, such as human beings, and it seems that qualities can be passed on that do not previously exist in the causal agent, such as rubbing two sticks together or using an electric circuit to produce fire. Kenny also provides more absurd examples that on Aquinas’s principles only a king could make a king or that only the dead can commit murder.⁶⁴

Kenny’s critique of [2] is based on his use of the restricted sense of *motus* and a purely physical interpretation of the first way. A metaphysical view of the first way based on the broad conception of *motus* adequately avoids Kenny’s criticism. Velecky points out that the key to understanding [2] is not that a particular quality has to pre-exist in Y to change X, but simply that any change occurs because of something that actually exists.⁶⁵ What Aquinas demonstrates “is that changes in X are brought about only by causes which are actual or, if X changes itself, in virtue of what in X is actual.”⁶⁶ The new state of being relies on an outside source of being or actuality to attain that new state. Two sticks may not be hot, but they certainly do exist. A kingmaker may not be a king, but she exists and moves an individual into a new existence as king. A human being moves based on the actual power of a human being to move. The actual

⁶² *ST I*, q2, a3.

⁶³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 12-24. See also William Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1975, 1998), 14-16.

⁶⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 21.

⁶⁵ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 76-7.

⁶⁶ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 76.

existence of any given individual is not self-contained, and there is no possible change without a source of actuality to generate both potency and the actualization of potency. The example of fire should not be taken so very literally as a physical example, but as a deliberate metaphor for metaphysical change.⁶⁷

Rowe critiques element [2] by claiming that motion or change can be a brute unexplained fact of reality.⁶⁸ If motion is simply a brute fact or unexplained feature of reality, then [2] is not necessarily true because some things are simply in motion without explanation.⁶⁹ Rowe gives no evidence or examples of X undergoing change with no cause. He claims that since Aquinas has not ruled out this possibility, then it counts as a valid third option invalidating Aquinas's premise.⁷⁰ Ultimately, Rowe's objection amounts to claiming that motion needs no explanation.

Since Aquinas defines motion as a transition from potency to actuality, any motion that is a 'brute fact' would still be a transition from potency to act. Since actuality exists prior to motion, the brute fact of motion would rely on a correlative brute fact of actuality. This brute fact would be an actuality that always exists without explanation alongside the motion spurred by this actuality. It is still the case in this scenario that no finite being holds its actuality in itself. Even under the brute fact of motion, actuality must come from outside any finite being. The only alternative would be to posit a finite entity with self-sufficient actuality. An entity with self-sufficient actuality necessarily holds none of the potency required for movement, since all potency in the entity would be actualized by virtue of self-subsistent actuality. It would be difficult to call a being with no potency finite. Aquinas notes that self-subsistent being with no

⁶⁷ Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 58; see also Feser, *Aquinas*, 68.

⁶⁸ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 16-17, 37, 48-51.

⁶⁹ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 16-17.

⁷⁰ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 17.

potency would not be contracted or determined as finite and therefore would be infinite.⁷¹ A 'brute fact' that satisfactorily accounts for motion would be equivalent to the unmoved mover that the first way endeavors to demonstrate. The difference between Rowe's 'brute fact' and Aquinas's conclusion is that Aquinas is willing to name the result 'God,' while Rowe names it a 'brute fact.' To call motion a brute fact is to concede the argument without conceding that the result is 'God.'

Kenny claims that Aquinas engages in question-begging in element [6], which is Aquinas's claim that an infinite causal chain of movers is impossible.⁷² Kenny points to an observation by Cajetan that Aquinas is engaged in equivocation on the term 'first' in [6], [6a], and [6b] that results in question begging. The term 'first' in the first portion of the demonstration means prior or "'earlier,' used in a non-temporal sense," while the term 'first' used later means "'mover preceded by no earlier mover.'" ⁷³ If the term 'first' is taken in the sense of the latter usage throughout the demonstration, then it is question begging by containing what it undertakes to demonstrate in its initial term. The hand moving the stick example [6b] would not be a first cause but an intermediate cause. The final element [7] is different from the intermediate cause in [6b] and is not justified by the preceding steps unless the first element [6] is understood in the same sense as the conclusion.

Kenny's critique is based on a flawed understanding of Aquinas's demonstration. Rowe (writing with awareness of Kenny) warns that one should look into the possibility of a misunderstanding when a thinker of Aquinas's caliber engages in what seems question-begging.⁷⁴ Following this statement, Rowe proceeds with a charitable reconstruction of

⁷¹ *ST I*, q7, a1.

⁷² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 25-7.

⁷³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 26.

⁷⁴ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 19.

Aquinas's view of hierarchical causation.⁷⁵ Since Aquinas has a hierarchical series in mind, his concern is not with a temporally first member or even a member sitting at the top of the hierarchy. Aquinas has an explanation in mind for the causal series itself, one that is not part of the causal series but is the principle behind the series. The metaphysical meaning of the term 'first' is more like 'principle' or fundamental. Taken in this sense, Aquinas is looking for an underlying principle of being that explains the existence of change as a feature of reality rather than some entity lying at the logical beginning of a causal series. Rowe reconstructs the first way without question begging to accurately reflect this aspect of the first way (and second) using a three-part syllogism, (paraphrased in more metaphysical language than Rowe uses):⁷⁶ First, either a hierarchical causal series has a fundamental principle responsible for the activity of the series or there is no principle for the series; Second, every hierarchical causal series must have a metaphysical principle sufficient to sustain its activity; Third, every hierarchical causal series holds a metaphysical first principle sustaining the causal activity of the series. Since this is the most charitable and accurate way of interpreting Aquinas and it does not contain question-begging, then Kenny's argument fails.

Rowe holds his own critique of Aquinas's principle in element [6] that there cannot be an infinite causal series of movers. In the reconstructed syllogism supporting [6], Rowe would deny premise two that a hierarchical causal series would need a first principle sustaining its causal activity.⁷⁷ He justifies this move by interpreting Aquinas (and Duns Scotus) as holding to a version of the principle of sufficient reason (PSR) and then denying its validity.⁷⁸ Rowe explains that the PSR is "a principle that in its strongest form states that no thing can exist and no fact can

⁷⁵ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 19-36. See Chapter 2 for an explanation of hierarchical causation.

⁷⁶ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 36.

⁷⁷ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 36-7.

⁷⁸ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 49-55.

obtain without there being an explanation for that thing's existence or that fact's obtaining."⁷⁹

Rowe claims that the PSR as a faulty principle invalidates infinite regress in a hierarchical causal series, and is presupposed even though it is not an overt part of the demonstration. Rowe attacks the PSR by reconstructing the well formulated 18th Century versions used by Leibniz and Clarke.⁸⁰ If Rowe is correct in attributing the PSR to Aquinas, and the PSR is problematic as an underlying assumption behind the first three ways, then this could be an issue.

Davis changed his mind later but his clear analysis of how the PSR could be construed as question begging in the simplest variety of cosmological argument is rather clear and helpful for understanding the issue.⁸¹ Proponents claim that the PSR is an analytical truth that is assumed in all reasoning, somewhat like the law of non-contradiction. The PSR, therefore, cannot be proved but must be assumed. Davis notes that the PSR should not be granted by opponents of theistic proofs since it does sneak in a question-begging premise.⁸² Reconstructions of cosmological arguments involving the PSR are simplified versions. No one is claiming that Aquinas's first way is a simple form of the cosmological argument. If he does hold to a version of the PSR, then it must be explained how Aquinas avoids question begging.

Rowe's attribution of the PSR to Aquinas's demonstrations against infinite hierarchical regress is faulty since the demonstration is based on metaphysical principles. As already noted, the PSR states that all effects require a causal explanation for the effect and that explanation is possible through human reason. Aquinas does not rely on the PSR or even some sort of weak causal principle to invalidate infinite regress in hierarchical causality. Instead, the argument

⁷⁹ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 37.

⁸⁰ Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 60-114.

⁸¹ Davis, *God, Reason, & Theistic Proofs*, 144-6.

⁸² For Davis's analysis of the PSR as question begging see Davis, *God, Reason, & Theistic Proofs*, 144-6. For Davis's retraction and new analysis see Stephen T. Davis, "The Cosmological Argument and the Epistemic Status of Belief in God," *Philosophia Christi*, Series 2, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1999).

relies on the metaphysical nature of a hierarchical causal series.⁸³ Each member in the hierarchical causal series pertaining to change does not contain its own actuality, which is a necessary first principle for change. All members of the series are changing toward an actual existence that is not self-contained.⁸⁴ Since no member of the series contains the self-sufficient principle of the series, then this principle must come from outside the series. Further, as already noted, the nature of infinity for Aquinas precludes the possibility of a presently existing actual infinite multitude comprising an infinite hierarchical causal series. Aquinas's argument against infinite regress relies not on any version the PSR but on the nature of the potency/actuality distinction in a hierarchical series combined with the nature of the infinite.

A popular critique of the first way is that it does not result in the Christian God or even in an entity with the minimal qualities needed to be called 'God.' Kenny comments early in his analysis that taken according to his initial reconstruction "the First Way will not lead to an unmoved mover we can call God; it will not lead us beyond a stationary billiard ball."⁸⁵ It is not difficult to see that this conclusion is based on the restricted interpretation of *motus* that launches Kenny's reconstruction as he portrays the first way as a series of billiard balls leading to an unmoved ball. The broad concept of *motus* combined with the existential interpretation of the first way leads not to a passive billiard ball, but to an active source of actuality or existence as first principle of change. Feser rebuts Kenny by noting that this is "precisely because it is that which actualizes the potencies of second causes. It is active, not 'at rest.'"⁸⁶ The activity of the unmoved mover or unchanged changer as the source of change successfully evades the accusation of the argument leading to a passive entity at the top of the causal hierarchy.

⁸³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 72.

⁸⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 72.

⁸⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 13.

⁸⁶ Feser, *Aquinas*, 74.

Still, the popular version of the critique remains with the paradigmatic version characterized by Richard Dawkins. He writes of the causal terminator in the first three ways that “there is absolutely no reason to endow the that terminator with any of the properties normally ascribed to God: omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, creativity of design, to say nothing of such human attributes as listening to prayer, forgiving sins and reading innermost thoughts.”⁸⁷ Of course, Dawkins is right that the first way does not result in being able to predicate all of the attributes of God to the unmoved mover. Aquinas also does not seem to think that the five ways are sufficient of themselves to demonstrate all of the attributes of God that are attainable by human reason. Aquinas uses the result of each of the five ways as definitions or middle terms that he uses in subsequent demonstrations in questions 3 to 13 to develop God’s attributes.⁸⁸ What allows Aquinas to identify the unmoved mover with God is not that the classic attributes are present, but that the demonstration leads to a self-subsistent source of all actuality or existence. Since the most proper name for God is “He Who Is,” this is captured by the unmoved mover who holds pure actuality with no potency that actualizes the potency in others.

Kenny and Mackie both critique the first way as outdated by contemporary physics. The claim is that physics has developed past Aristotle through Newton and Einstein and our current understanding of motion invalidates motion in the first way. Kenny claims that the Newtonian law of inertia invalidates the first way, which is that any object in motion tends to stay in motion.⁸⁹ Mackie writes off the first and second ways as based on antiquated theory.⁹⁰ The assumption is that any given object in motion does not need a hierarchical causal series to

⁸⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 77.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁸⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 30-2.

⁹⁰ J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the existence of God*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 87.

explain how and why it stays in motion. There is no need to appeal to a source of motion at any given moment. Further, Einstein's theories further muddle the first way since any two bodies would have a mutual gravitational attraction causing then both to move toward each other.⁹¹ Movement in relativity is a mutual relation rather than the asymmetrical relationship under Aristotelian physics.

The critique from modern physics can also be adequately addressed through the broad view of *motus* and metaphysical interpretation of the first way. The argument goes further than local motion. The sense of motion is the actualization of potency and how this requires an actualizer to move potency to actuality. Feser notes that it is helpful to think of Newtonian inertia and other concepts in modern physics as meaning that objects are in a particular state.⁹² Modern physics does not seem to deny that actual objects in one state have the potency to enter a different state. From this standpoint, the first way can work quite well within the world of Newton or Einstein, neither of whom would deny that changes occur. It could be objected that the broad sense of motion includes local motion, which is yet problematized through the law of inertia. Any existing object moving through its own inertia still must exist in order to be subject to the law of inertia. Actuality still comes before potency. The first way is arguing through causal hierarchy for a source of actuality in the present existence. Feser writes that the first way “would show that no natural substance could exist at any given moment without a purely actual actualizer either directly or indirectly maintaining it in existence.”⁹³ Anything changing must exist in order to change, whether this is inertia driven local motion or another type of change.

⁹¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 27-30.

⁹² Feser, *Aquinas*, 78-8.

⁹³ Edward Feser, “Existential Inertia and the Five Ways,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 85, issue 2, Apr. 2011, 237-267, 243.

The first way is a fact-demonstration using the effect of motion in place of a definition of God. Aquinas uses a broad sense of motion as a movement from potency to actuality to a source of actuality that holds no potency, which is the unmoved mover or God. The broad sense of motion through the act/potency distinction allows a metaphysical interpretation of the first way. Every actual being holds potency that must be actualized by another actual being resulting in motion. The series of movers constitutes a hierarchical causal series in which no member of the series intrinsically possesses the principle of the activity of the series, which is the actuality that moves potency to actuality. This principle must exist outside of the series as the metaphysically first source of the actuality that drives motion. This source of actuality or existence is unmoved or holds no potency in itself; it is pure actuality. It is most proper to call a source of existence 'God.' This existential interpretation successfully deals with objections from Kenny and Rowe to the first way. The existential interpretation is an appropriate interpretation since it connects with Aquinas's metaphysics, theology of participatory creation, and view that God is self-subsistent being itself.

The Second Way: The Demonstration from Efficient Cause

The second way is perhaps the easiest to understand of the five ways and has garnered much attention in the secondary literature. Efficient causality is the form of causality most recognized today, thereby accounting for the ease in which it is understood. The demonstration as a whole is simpler and shorter than the other four ways. Key terms in the demonstration are intelligible today without too much additional explanation, other than the concept of hierarchical causation and the medieval concept of infinity. Arguments from efficient causality can also be found in the works of Avicenna and Maimonides, two thinkers with whom Aquinas was well acquainted. Like the other demonstrations in the five ways, the conclusion of the second way

finds its way into further demonstrations throughout the *ST* as a definitional term. Aquinas proceeds with the second way proceeds as follows:

The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. [1] In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. [2] There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; [2a] for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. [3] Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, [3a] 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 only one. [3b] Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. [3c] Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. [3d] 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; [3e] all of which is plainly false. [4] Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, [4a] to which everyone gives the name of God.⁹⁴

It is not uncommon for the second way to be understood and interpreted in light of the first way or the first way given the second, but the second way is different from the first way. C.F.J. Martin mentions that “An obvious reaction one might have on passing from the First Way to the Second Way, is that the First Way is a particularly clear or paradigmatic case of the same phenomenon investigated in the Second Way; or if you prefer, that the Second Way is a generalization of the First.”⁹⁵ The concept of motion and movers can easily be misinterpreted as

⁹⁴ *ST* I, q3, a3.

⁹⁵ Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 146-150. Martin admits that his own analysis of the first way may lead readers to an erroneous conflation of the first and second ways since he tends to use examples of efficient causality in his reconstruction of the first way.

equivalent to efficient causes of movement. It is natural to focus on what is causing motion rather than motion itself, which is where the first way derives its demonstration.⁹⁶ In the first way Aquinas is demonstrating from a broad concept of motion as a reduction of potency to actuality. Harold Johnson suggests that Aquinas begins with the first way as change in general and then moves into the four causes in each of the remaining ways as demonstrations from specific causes.⁹⁷ The first way introduces motion as potency and actuality and the remaining four ways articulate specific causes of motion correlated to the four causes. The second way is the first of the demonstrations from a specific causal series rather than motion in general. The relation between the first way and the following four does not mean that the five ways are one single proof, but that "each starts from a different order of effects and consequently throws light on a different aspect of Divine causality."⁹⁸ The second way further develops the concepts introduced in the first way without being parasitic or a continuation in some sense of the demonstration from motion.

As with the first way, Craig challenges an existential interpretation of the second way.⁹⁹ Craig's argument is that since only God can unite existence and essence, then only God could be the source of the cause of existence and not any created thing. Since the second way purports to start with created things and then work up to God, then the causality involved is an efficient cause short of existence itself. As Craig writes, "Aquinas holds that God alone can produce *esse*; He cannot even use the instrumentality of secondary causes in producing the being of things. Therefore, an existential series such as we have in the second way would be impossible, if

⁹⁶ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 176-7.

⁹⁷ Johnson, Harold J. "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," in *Studies in Medieval culture*, 3, 135-144, (Kalamazoo, MI: The Medieval Institute of Western Michigan Univ, 1970), 135.

⁹⁸ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 82.

⁹⁹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 176-8.

Aquinas is thinking of causes of *esse*.”¹⁰⁰ Craig’s contention is that Aquinas would not engage in an existential version of the demonstration from efficient causality because it would conflict with his theological convictions. He notes that the resulting non-existential hierarchical series preserving existence would be based on an Aristotelian cosmology of celestial spheres that condition the form in existing matter. Craig appeals to Kenny at this point as another who interprets the second way in the same manner with the same result.¹⁰¹

Feser offers a compelling rebuttal to Craig, arguing for the metaphysical second way through an appeal to the metaphysical version found in the *DEE*.¹⁰² He begins with the distinction between essence and existence, which is one of the most important concepts articulated in *DEE*.¹⁰³ No finite essence contains existence as an intrinsic part of the essence, for only God would hold this quality of intrinsic existence. Thus, nothing can bring itself into existence. Aquinas writes that “being itself cannot be caused by the form or quiddity of a thing (by ‘caused’ I mean by an efficient cause), because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible.”¹⁰⁴ Any existing thing would have to obtain existence from an outside source, and the essence/existence distinction remains.¹⁰⁵ Since the essence/existence distinction remains in an existing being, the essence and existence of a given being must be preserved together to maintain the existence of a given being in the present. The *DEE* demonstration concludes that only that for which essence and existence are the same could hold essence and existence together in composite beings.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 177.

¹⁰¹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 177. Kenny’s argument will be addressed later.

¹⁰² Feser, *Aquinas*, 84-8. See *DEE* c. 4 for the demonstration.

¹⁰³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 84-5.

¹⁰⁴ *DEE*, c. 4. See Feser, *Aquinas*, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 84-5.

¹⁰⁶ Feser, *Aquinas*, 85-6.

Feser also suggests that Craig's contention about the second way is not entirely convincing.¹⁰⁷ The essence/existence distinction is too important for Aquinas for him to neglect a proof that relies on this distinction. The first way rather quickly and overtly connects to the metaphysical concept of the act/potency distinction.¹⁰⁸ It is not unreasonable to think that the second way also connects to metaphysical principles that are crucial to Aquinas's system. Craig is correct that Aquinas sees God as the only one capable of holding essence and existence together in created beings. Even so, Aquinas engaged in a demonstration against an infinite regress of existential efficient causes.¹⁰⁹ Either way, the presence of an explicitly existential version of an efficient causal regress demonstration in the *DEE* casts doubt on Craig's argument. Feser certainly thinks that these factors, as well as a general Thomistic tradition of reading the second way through the *DEE*, makes the existential interpretation plausible.¹¹⁰

The second way begins with the observation that efficient causality is plainly apparent to the senses in [1]. The second way from efficient causality focuses on the efficient causal series as an effect in place of definition in a fact-demonstration. The fact-demonstration begins with the sensible species in the order of efficient causes as a causal series and uses the efficient causal order as an effect in place of a definition. The entire order of efficient causes needs explanation. Aquinas clarifies that the observed series of efficient causes is not simple causal manipulation in his comment in [2] that nothing can be the cause of itself. We do see that beings in the world owe their existence to outside forces that cause them to be. Even animals and plants take part in this particular causal series. The efficient causality in question is not simple causal manipulation of the world; it is efficient cause of existence. Human beings tend to understand the concept

¹⁰⁷ Feser, *Aquinas*, 86-8.

¹⁰⁸ Feser, *Aquinas*, 87-8.

¹⁰⁹ Feser, *Aquinas*, 87-8.

¹¹⁰ Feser, *Aquinas*, 88.

socially through family trees of ancestors who are causally efficacious for the existence of individuals.

After establishing the sense observation of an efficient causal order, Aquinas demonstrates that nothing can be the cause of itself in [2]-[2a]. Aquinas justifies this principle on both general observation and logic in [2a]. The demonstration in [2a] is that nothing can be self-caused because then it would have to exist first before causing its own existence, which is contradictory. This acknowledgment that efficient causality operates exterior to a given being is why efficient causality is classified as an extrinsic cause. Aquinas does not assume that his readers would take this for granted and proceeds to demonstrate the principle. A self-caused entity lies entirely outside of our experience, as Velecky notes “Aquinas draws attention to the obvious fact we neither do nor can experience anything which causes itself.”¹¹¹ Logic bolsters this observation, for only what already exists can be a cause of existence.¹¹² What does not exist is simply nothing and holds no causal power. What does not exist cannot bring itself into existence. Furthermore, all that exists necessarily has form, for existence is through form. Every being exists as a finite determined instantiation of a form. Finite form is actual only as it exists. The form dictates the powers and capabilities of a given being. Without form, a being has no actuality and no causal power to act on itself or anything else.

The existential causal relation exhibited in the efficient causal order should not be taken as a temporal relation but as a metaphysical relation. Aquinas was working with the hierarchical causal series paradigm. This paradigm entails that the causes pertain to existential causation in the here and now, or preservation in existence, rather than to a temporal causal series. Copleston writes that in the second way, Aquinas “supposes that there are efficient causes in the world

¹¹¹ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 65.

¹¹² *DEE*, Cap. 4.

which even in their causal activity are here and now dependent on the causal activity of other causes.”¹¹³ Each cause in the hierarchy is preserved by other causes within the hierarchy. Any individual human being depends on parents for their initial existence and then on other factors, such as air, water, the laws of nature, and other preserving factors.¹¹⁴ There is an immense web of causal factors running throughout all of reality at every given moment. Causes can be complementary, conditioned, and interdependent in any number of ways.¹¹⁵ The hierarchy does not contain within itself the principle of its own causal activity.¹¹⁶ The causal principle allowing each being in the series to act as efficient cause upon other beings is not contained in any being.

The next step in the second way is to establish the impossibility of an infinite regress of causes in [3] – [3e]. This portion of the second way bears significant similarity to the first way. It is perhaps more apparent here that Aquinas is working with a causal order as a whole rather than with specific instances of causality that the reader must interpolate into a causal order. Aquinas is clear at the beginning that he is working from the existence of the efficient causal order as a whole. As with the other four ways, this causal order is a hierarchically arranged order. Each efficient cause in the order is reliant on an outside source for its existence in the present moment and also for its own causal power.¹¹⁷ Aquinas notes in [3a] that the causes in the order are all either intermediate or ultimate causes of a given effect. The causal power of the intermediate causes is not essential to the intermediate causes. The existence/essence distinction entails that no causal being contains existence essentially and therefore does not contain its own principle of causal power. In other words, none of the intermediate efficient causes contain within themselves

¹¹³ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 122.

¹¹⁴ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 122.

¹¹⁵ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 82-3.

¹¹⁷ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 460-1.

the existential efficient causal power from which they operate. He then introduces the obvious premise in [3b] that “to take away the cause is to take away the effect.”¹¹⁸ If any cause ceases to act as a cause, then the related effect would also cease. To use an example from Davis (that he adopts from Geach), if a minstrel is making music, when the minstrel ceases playing so does the music as an effect.¹¹⁹ Intermediate causes do not contain their own principle of causal activity and cannot be sustained on their own as an intermediate causal order.

The previous step established that the intermediary causes cannot operate without a primary principle giving them their causal power. Aquinas then moves to eliminate the possibility of infinite regress in efficient hierarchical causes. Wippel notes that Aquinas “is not concerned here with refuting the very possibility of a beginningless series of essentially ordered caused causes, but with showing that such a series is meaningless and has no explanatory power unless one also admits that there is an uncaused cause.”¹²⁰ Aquinas is ruling out not just the possibility that an infinite efficient causal order can be self-sustaining, but also that it is unintelligible without a first principle. An actual infinite multitude would need to become a concrete reality entails an existential completion that is contrary to the concept of infinity. An actually infinite efficient causal hierarchy would by definition be unbounded, undefined, and incomplete. A first causal principle as primary principle would necessarily provide definition and boundary that is incompatible with an actually infinite causal series. An actual infinite would, therefore, preclude the possibility of a first causal principle. Such an infinite series would be unintelligible because the causal order as a whole does not contain the principle of its own causal power within itself. First cause here refers not to a temporally first cause but to a primary cause

¹¹⁸ *ST I*, q2, a3.

¹¹⁹ Davis, *Hierarchical Causes in the Cosmological Argument*, 14-15.

¹²⁰ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 461.

or first principle that allows the other causes to operate as causes. The causal hierarchy is not oriented such that the cause precedes the effect, but such that the cause and effect are simultaneous.¹²¹

Since existence is the issue, the first principle would be existence itself sharing existence with the intermediary causes. The causal activity is the preservation of existence in any given moment. As Maritain writes, the demonstration leads to “a First Cause in being, in the intelligible conditions of things, and in the very exercise of causality.”¹²² Without a causal principle, the intermediary causes would not be causally efficacious, and there would be no intermediate causes or ultimate effect. Aquinas notes in [3e] that we do indeed see an order of efficient causes, and this runs counter to what would be the case if there was an infinite series without a primary causal principle. The very fact that we have an efficient causal order indicates both that this is a finite order and there is a first causal principle.

The second way leads to an uncaused cause that is identified as God through the proper naming of God and the doctrine of creation. The first principle of the efficient causal order must be self-contained in holding this principle, and the existential nature of efficient causality here allows Aquinas to identify the first causal principle with God in [4a]. The primary causal principle for the entire hierarchically ordered series of efficient causes of existence must be the first principle of existence itself lying outside of the series. As with the first way, the link with existence allows the conclusion. The first cause of existence must be existence itself, and as ‘He Who Is’ is most appropriately called ‘God.’ The first principle of efficient causality lies outside of the order of efficient causes and is thus not like any other cause in human experience. As

¹²¹ Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 151-2.

¹²² Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 20.

creator, God is the source of all causal principles. The being of all creatures participates in God as self-subsisting being through the efficient causal activity of God.¹²³

Objections to the Second Way

This section will look at three objections to the second way, culled from Kenny and Michael Martin. Rowe combined his objections of the first and second ways, and so his objections have already been addressed. Likewise, Kenny's claim that the second way engages in question-begging has already been effectively addressed in the first way. The first critique addressed will be from Kenny that the second way is based on archaic Aristotelian cosmology such that its starting point is invalid, and without a starting point, the entire argument is rendered null and void. The second objection is from Michael Martin that Aquinas provides no real reason why there cannot be an infinite regress among hierarchical causes. Finally, Kenny and Martin both claim that the first cause need not be God.

Kenny's argument that Aquinas's archaic cosmology invalidates the second way is a complex argument with several stages.¹²⁴ He begins with translating the second way into formal logic and analyzing the terms of the demonstration and concludes that the formal structure is unassailable. He states that the relational causal term must be transitive, irreflexive, and constricted to the finite domain for the formal structure to operate effectively. The transitive causal relation occurs when a being transfers a property from one to another. Kenny gives an example that "if A is heating B and B is heating C, then A is heating C; and on the other hand if A is heating B, then B is not heating A."¹²⁵ The causal relationship illustrates the transitive and asymmetrical relationship that Kenny claims is necessary for the validity of the second way. An

¹²³ ST I, q44, a1.

¹²⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 37-40.

¹²⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 40.

irreflexive causal relationship is one that applies in relation to other beings but not to a being itself. Kenny illustrates the irreflexive with human generation in that a child holds a similarity to her parents but cannot generate her own being.¹²⁶ Aquinas would understand this type of causal relationship as an accidental causal relationship. The human generation example fulfills the requirements of a causal relation that is transitive, irreflexive and applies to the finite order. Kenny notes that this example demonstrates an accidental causal order while Aquinas is actually depicting a hierarchical causal order.¹²⁷ Kenny claims that the examples so far do not support the necessary causal relationship to support the validity of the demonstration. This is understandable considering that Aquinas does not have such an accidental causal series in mind.

Kenny then attempts to derive a hierarchical or essential causal order that meets the validity conditions for the second way and concludes that the second way is based on a faulty premise. Kenny describes a hierarchical or essentially ordered series as a causal series of heavenly bodies involved in the production of forms.¹²⁸ Kenny describes the activity of the sun and elements as part of the preservation and begetting of terrestrial beings. He seems to think that a causal series consisting of the sun and elements is a hierarchical or essentially ordered causal series. He concludes that element [1] is an efficient causal order made up of a hierarchy of celestial spheres that influence and preserve what happens on earth. Since modern cosmology has invalidated this view, “the Second [Way] starts from an archaic fiction.”¹²⁹ Kenny’s clear implication is that since the initial premise of the demonstration is faulty, the entire argument is invalid.

¹²⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 41.

¹²⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 41-2.

¹²⁸ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 42-3.

¹²⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 44.

As with his critique of the first way, Kenny's supposed defeat of the second way is directly related to his failure to understand the metaphysical nature of the demonstration. Kenny's description of hierarchical causality is missing the existential element that is crucial to Aquinas's argument. A hierarchical cause in Aquinas's sense is essentially ordered rather than simply arranged hierarchically. A true essentially ordered causal series relies on a first principle to provide causal efficacy to all members of the series. While it is undoubtedly true that Aquinas held to the prevailing cosmological thinking of his day, it is not the case that his argument relies on that cosmology. Aquinas's point is that in any given present moment the continued existence of a given being is reliant upon a vast interdependent causal network.¹³⁰

Craig takes Kenny's contention that the second way is based on archaic cosmology as true and suggests that this is not a defeater.¹³¹ He proposes a sympathetic reformulation pointing out the many dependencies of the human body upon terrestrial qualities that in turn rely upon stellar, interstellar, galactic, and finally the universe. It seems that this interdependence would be true regardless of which cosmological theory one holds. All one needs is the observed truth that the entire universe in some sense forms a single interdependent causal network. The precise nature, structure, and laws that describe this network are irrelevant. All causal factors in continued existence persist and operate as efficient causes in the here and now to the extent that they exist.¹³² Neither the existence nor the operational causal principle of a given causal agent is self-contained within that agent. The point of the second way is that this vast causal network relies on an outside source for the principles of existence and efficient causal efficacy. Maritain writes that "it is clear that not only being, but also the action of all other causes, or the causality

¹³⁰ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 19-20.

¹³¹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 177-8.

¹³² Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 21-4.

itself that they exercise depend at every moment on that First Cause (since it is the supreme reason for all the rest).”¹³³ This source is not merely at the top of the hierarchical order but lies outside of the order, giving being and causal efficacy to the order. The metaphysical nature of the demonstration sidesteps any given cosmology and avoids Kenny's critique.

Michael Martin claims that Aquinas does not adequately support his demonstration against infinite regress in the second way. His objection relies on his analysis of what he calls the simple version of the cosmological argument.¹³⁴ Martin first notes that there is no empirical evidence of either an infinite causal series or a causal series terminating in a first uncaused cause. It is simply beyond the capacity of empirical observation to ascertain the nature of a causal series with sufficient thoroughness to settle the question. He writes that "the presumption of the existence of a first cause seems to be a non-empirical assumption that some people see as obvious or self-evident."¹³⁵ He sees the need for a first cause as an assumption brought into a cosmological argument that begs the question.

Martin's error is that he seems to assume that the first cause rests at the top of the hierarchical series. If the first cause was part of the causal order, then certainly to assume that a first cause is needed would be to beg the question and make an unwarranted assumption. The demonstration in the second way moves from the empirical to the metaphysical. As discussed against Kenny, the first premise of an efficient causal order is an empirical observation of reality. It is not necessary that the causal series be empirically observed as infinite or that there is a terminus. The hierarchical series does not contain within itself or any member the principles for either its existence or causal activity. Aquinas demonstrates the dependence of causes on the first

¹³³ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 21.

¹³⁴ Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990), 97-99.

¹³⁵ Martin, *Atheism*, 97.

cause in [3a] to [3c] with his demonstration that all causal activity in the series is dependent on the first cause as first principle of causal activity. In positing an infinite hierarchical series, the infinitude of the series does not solve the lack of a causal principle for the series.

Kenny and Martin both question whether the result of the second way can be rightly called God; however, Martin does not take into account the analogical nature of Aquinas's predication and Kenny's critique is due to his misunderstanding of the argument. Kenny bases his assessment on his interpretation that the second way relies on archaic cosmology.¹³⁶ He cites Aquinas's examples in which human beings are part of the series. He thinks that there is no reason to believe that a human being in a hierarchical cosmological series begets as a part of this series aside from the incorrect assumptions of Aristotelian cosmology. For Kenny a human parent outside of this series would adequately stand as the uncaused cause. He writes that "the uncaused cause is the human parent and not any creator of the world."¹³⁷ Kenny proposes a human parent as a sufficient source of being for a hierarchical causal series.

It has already been shown that Kenny's assumption that the second way rests on an invalid first premise is incorrect. Since the demonstration has more to do with a provider of existence and the principle of efficient causality, the second way cannot end with a first parent. Any finite being who does not hold intrinsic being and causal efficacy in itself cannot stand in as first cause, granting being and causal efficacy to the entire series.

Martin thinks that there is simply no good reason to think that the first efficient cause is God.¹³⁸ It is precisely a being who holds existence as an intrinsic self-sustaining principle that is most properly analogically predicated as God. Only self-sustaining existence itself that emanates

¹³⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 44.

¹³⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 45.

¹³⁸ Martin, *Atheism*, 99.

existence to all reality is most properly labeled as God. Aquinas notes that the most proper name of God is “He Who Is” since this name depicts the fact that God’s essence and existence are identical.¹³⁹ The second way ends with self-sufficient being existing as an uncaused cause of existence and thus is properly called “God,” though Aquinas is certainly aware that he has not yet developed all of the attributes of God.

The second way is a fact-demonstration using the efficient causal series as an effect in place of a definition of God. The second way is a separate demonstration moving on to efficient causality as a specific mode of change after the first way grounds change in general in an unchanging God. Interpreted based on a similar argument in the *DEE*, the causal series in question is an existential causal series arranged hierarchically preserving beings in existence. Aquinas’s demonstration against an infinite regress points out that nothing contains within itself the principles of its own existence or causal efficacy. An external principle for both existence and efficient causal power is needed for the existence of any efficient causal series. This first cause would necessarily reside outside of the causal series and would contain the required elements of existence and efficient causal efficacy and intrinsic principles. The first efficient cause would be being itself and thus appropriately predicated of God as creator. All created beings participate in being through the first efficient cause. An existential understanding the second way effectively addresses critics, such as Kenny.

The Third Way: The Demonstration from Possibility to Necessity

The third way historically derives primarily from Rabbi Maimonides and Avicenna, and there is controversy today about its validity. Even though these earlier thinkers heavily influenced Aquinas, he adapted this demonstration in his own unique way.¹⁴⁰ The demonstration

¹³⁹ *ST I*, q13, a11.

¹⁴⁰ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 466.

has two movements, with more controversy concerning the validity of the first movement than for the second. The first movement argues that contingent beings require a necessary being for their existence, and the second movement argues that necessary beings acquire their necessity from a self-sufficient source of necessity. The first movement has spurred so much controversy that Wippel remarks “Few other texts in Aquinas have occasioned so much controversy among interpreters as the first phase of this argument.”¹⁴¹ The controversy over the first movement makes interpretation of this portion difficult. One view is that the demonstration deals with material causality, but under different aspects in each movement. As with other aspects of the demonstration, the connection to material causality has dissenters. Aquinas proceeds with the third way as follows:

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. [1] We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, [1a] since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. [2] But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. [2a] Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. [2b] Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, [2c] because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. [2d] Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; [2e] and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. [3] Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. [4] But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. [4a] Now it is

¹⁴¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 463.

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. [4b] 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. [5] This all men speak of as God.¹⁴²

The first point to clarify regarding the third way is the meaning of the key terms possible and necessary. The general structure of the demonstration matches Maimonides more closely than Avicenna,¹⁴³ and the argument employs Aquinas's distinction between essence and existence. The term 'necessary' in the third way is a crucial term in the thought of Avicenna.¹⁴⁴ Several commentators find the need to remark on the fact that the terms are easily taken the wrong way by those familiar with modal logic.¹⁴⁵ Modal logic evaluates propositional truth in terms of three modes, the possible, the impossible, and the necessary.¹⁴⁶ A possible proposition is one that can be true or not true depending on changing conditions, such as 'it is now raining.' An impossible proposition is a statement that entails a logical contradiction such that it cannot possibly be true, such as a square circle or married bachelor. A necessary proposition must be true in a self-evident manner, such as the laws of logic (i.e. the law of non-contradiction), or a tautology (i.e. all triangles have three sides). These features of modal logic associated with the terms are why Alvin Plantinga develops a modal ontological argument and titles his book *The Nature of Necessity*. Since Aquinas explicitly denies the validity of the ontological argument and thinks that any demonstration of God's existence cannot begin with a self-evident truth, it is safe

¹⁴² *STI*, q2, a3.

¹⁴³ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 84; Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 182.

¹⁴⁴ Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 70.

¹⁴⁵ For See Feser, *Aquinas*, 91, C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 156-6, and Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, 40.

¹⁴⁶ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, 2007), 1-13.

to say that Aquinas would reject an argument along the lines of Plantinga's.¹⁴⁷ While valid modal versions of the third way have been developed, these are contemporary arguments inspired by Aquinas rather than expositions that are true to Aquinas's intent.¹⁴⁸

Aquinas understands the terms possible, or contingent, and necessary as metaphysical terms rather than as logical terms. Aquinas's hints of the meanings of these terms are within the third way, and additional explanations are in his other writings. Aquinas writes in [1a] that possible beings are those can be generated and corrupted. He has in mind here beings that are composed of matter and form. Aquinas writes in the *QDP* that, "only those things in which there is matter subject to contrariety have in their nature the possibility not to exist."¹⁴⁹ The matter/form hylomorphic composition of material beings results in a contrariety between the material and immaterial form resulting in corruption of material beings. The possibility involved here is the possibility inherent in matter. Prime matter, as pure potency, requires a form to be actual and is disposed to accept new forms. The third way thus concerns itself in the first movement with matter/form hylomorphic composite beings with an emphasis on the matter side through the discussion of possibility. Because matter and form together account for the essence of hylomorphic beings, the possibility of passing away is inherent in the essence or nature of such beings.

The necessity discussed in the second movement is the necessity of being. Both movements of the demonstration involve the essence/existence distinction to the extent that neither assumes that existence is held as an intrinsic principle in existing beings. Aquinas writes that "the necessity of existing belongs to other things by their nature, with the possibility of not

¹⁴⁷ *STI*, q2, a1, a2.

¹⁴⁸ Robert E. Maydole, "The Modal Third Way," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2000): 1-28.

¹⁴⁹ *QDP* q5, a3.

existing removed by their nature. Nonetheless, this does not eliminate the necessity of their existence being from God.”¹⁵⁰ The second movement of the demonstration involves the essence/existence distinction of beings that are not matter/form composites, such as separated human souls and angels. Such purely spiritual creatures are compositional creatures of essence and existence rather than a matter-form composition. For Aquinas, possible beings are beings who begin to exist and then pass away as part of their essential nature, and necessary beings are beings that begin to exist and continue in existence as part of their essential nature. In either case, the principle of actuality lies outside of their being.

Like the other ways, the third way is a fact-demonstration using an effect in place of a definition derived from perception of the sensory world. Aquinas draws on the observation of impermanence in the world in [1] and [1a]. Wippel writes that “Once more Thomas takes as his point of departure something which we may derive from sense experience, that is, our awareness that certain beings are possible beings.”¹⁵¹ Things that we encounter are possible to be and not to be. We see that the things and beings around us come to be and then pass away. As Maritain puts it, “Plants and animals, stars and atoms are subject to the universal rhythm of destruction and production; all forms our eyes perceive are perishable; they can cease to be.”¹⁵² Everyone at some point encounters this in our everyday lives to some degree or another. We experience corruption even if it is as simple as breaking a favorite toy as a child or as traumatic as weathering the loss of a loved one. The passing away of things in the world is a common encounter.

¹⁵⁰ *QDP* q5, a3.

¹⁵¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 463.

¹⁵² Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 25.

There are two principles at work in the third way, the essence/existence distinction and the connection between matter and potency. Aquinas's use of the language of possibility in the first movement indicates that Aquinas is interested in material causes since the perishability inherent in the matter-form contrarities leads to corruption.¹⁵³ Harold Johnson writes, "the 'generation' and 'corruption' to which the premises refer, is always of material things, and their contingency arises precisely from their matter."¹⁵⁴ As an additional factor, the essence/existence composition of necessary beings whose being is extrinsic can also be considered in terms of material cause, broadly construed. A broad sense of material cause is the idea that any divisible subject can be considered material to the extent that the parts making up the subject can be considered intelligible matter.¹⁵⁵ Aquinas writes that "the parts are material causes of the whole...,"¹⁵⁶ and that "Intelligible matter is involved when we assume something divisible, whether in numbers or in continuous quantities."¹⁵⁷ The parts of a mathematical structure, such as a triangle, can be considered the matter of the triangle that necessarily drives any syllogistic demonstration regarding the triangle. While Aquinas does not explicitly apply this to the essence/existence structure of separated substances, such an application is not at odds with the principles that he lays out in the *PA*. Separated substances can be considered as intelligible matter to the extent that they can be viewed as intelligible matter in the mereological analysis of essence and existence.¹⁵⁸ Since even separated substances have an essence/existence distinction, it seems that they can be treated as matter as well as the common material beings in the first movement of the demonstration.

¹⁵³ *QDP* q5, a3.

¹⁵⁴ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 140.

¹⁵⁵ *In PA* II, lec. 9.

¹⁵⁶ *In PA* II, lec. 5.

¹⁵⁷ *In PA* II, lec. 9. See Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁸ De Haan notes that in Aquinas and Avicenna there is a distinction between essence and existence as parts of a whole. De Haan, "A Mereological Construal of the Notions Being and Thing," 357-60.

Craig disputes the importance of the essence/existence distinction in the third way as crucial for the starting point of the demonstration.¹⁵⁹ Since Aquinas does not define possibility and necessity in terms of the essence/existence distinction, he thinks that the starting point does not involve this distinction. Craig thinks that a metaphysical interpretation ignores the second movement of the argument and thus he considers the point of departure in purely physical terms.¹⁶⁰ While it is correct that Aquinas begins with physical, sensory creatures, it is not clear that this precludes an important metaphysical element to the third way. Aquinas does not explicitly invoke the essence/existence distinction, but it seems that this distinction is nonetheless at the heart of both movements of the third way. The implicit reason why material objects corrupt is that they do not contain in themselves the principle of their existence. The possibility inherent in the materiality of hylomorphic beings overcomes the immaterial necessity provided by their form. The distinction is also present in the second movement of the demonstration in that created necessary beings do not have being as an inherent part of their existence. This necessity of being must be provided from outside and is not part of the essence of necessary beings.

C.J. Martin disputes the idea that the third way relates to material causality. Even some of those who advocate for a link between the third way and material causality admit that it is a weak link.¹⁶¹ Martin is well aware that the language of generation and corruption in [1a] implies materiality.¹⁶² He interprets the first movement of the demonstration as establishing that the world itself is a type of necessary being, and "That matter should turn out to be everlasting as

¹⁵⁹ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 183.

¹⁶⁰ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 183.

¹⁶¹ For instance, Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 139.

¹⁶² C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 164-5.

well is no more than an extra.”¹⁶³ The world as a whole and all it contains is not only matter, for it is also form. Since form does not corrupt, it also can be called a type of necessary being.¹⁶⁴ Since the argument involves beings of all sorts, including those who are not composed of matter, then Martin thinks that the demonstration is not principally concerned with material causality.

The argument that separated substances can be viewed as intelligible matter and the mereological considerations that both movements of the third way deal with material causality in some sense addresses Martin’s objection, but it is not the only consideration when connecting the third way to material causality. It is not necessary to prove that the entire third way relates to material causality in both parts; only that the principle starting point in the first movement relates to matter. Assuming that Martin is correct that the first movement of the demonstration leads to an eternal world, this need not preclude connecting the third way to material causality. The important aspect of the argument is the sensory data directly linked to materiality rather than the conclusion of either movement of the demonstration. God cannot be the same as matter in the same way that God can be the unmoved mover or uncaused cause. God cannot be ‘unmattered matter’ for Aquinas makes it clear as part of the DDS that God does not enter into composition with the created order.¹⁶⁵ In an important divergence from Aristotle, God cannot *be* the first material cause, and instead must be the creator of the first principle of materiality, or prime matter.¹⁶⁶

There is a good reason from a philosophical and historical basis to think that the first movement of the third way takes as its subject the first principle of materiality, or prime matter. As already noted, Aquinas was deeply indebted to previous influential thinkers of his era in

¹⁶³ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 164.

¹⁶⁴ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 164-5.

¹⁶⁵ *ST I*, q3, a8.

¹⁶⁶ *ST I*, q44, a2.

developing the third way. Craig notes that an important difference between Aquinas and Maimonides is that Maimonides references the whole class of material things while Aquinas drops the reference to an entire class.¹⁶⁷ This difference can be explained through reference to Avicenna's project to prove the finitude of the four causes as part of a demonstration of the existence of God.¹⁶⁸ Avicenna argues for the finitude of each of the four causal series and then unites the four through a demonstration of God as first efficient cause. De Haan notes that the five ways seem to follow this basic program found historically in Avicenna.¹⁶⁹ As already seen in the first and second ways, Aquinas is looking for the first principle of causality in each causal series. "For St. Thomas, all hylomorphic substances are composed with prime matter, and because of this composition with the first intrinsic material cause all physical beings have the potentiality to corrupt."¹⁷⁰ The point of departure in the third way leads not simply to a variety of material beings, but to prime matter in itself as the first intrinsic material cause responsible for the commonly observed sense data. Of course, prime matter as pure potency holds no actuality apart from the form and accidents that make up an existing material being.¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, even united with form as individual beings and having no existence outside of this relationship with form, prime matter is one of two intrinsic causal principles of every material being. If one posited an eternal world, since beings in the world are continually losing their forms, the eternality of such a world would not be based on form but on prime matter.¹⁷² If prime matter is eternal, then it must obtain the necessity of eternal existence from outside of itself, since by definition it does not contain any actuality.

¹⁶⁷ Craig, *The Cosmological Argument*, 188. Craig notes that Aquinas seems to be analyzing matter itself rather than the class of material things.

¹⁶⁸ De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 146.

¹⁶⁹ De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 147.

¹⁷⁰ De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 151.

¹⁷¹ Feser, *Aquinas*, 97. See also Chapter 2.

¹⁷² Feser, *Aquinas*, 97.

After establishing that he is considering the first principle of materiality in [1] and [1a], Aquinas then engages in the first of two infinite regress arguments. Aquinas is arguing for an adequate explanation for the generation and corruption found in things, which would be the first material principle or prime matter. The infinite regress argument here involves a temporal or accidental causal series rather than a hierarchical causal series. The reason is simply that prime matter as pure potency is a single thing rather than a principle exhibited by a number of things all engaged in the same causal activity. There cannot be a hierarchy of prime matter simply because there is only one prime matter. The only causal series available to a discussion of the first material principle would, therefore, be an accidental causal series. As discussed in Chapter 2, Aquinas thinks that an infinite regress is possible in an accidental causal series. This generates difficulty with this first causal regress argument since it is not consistent with regress arguments previously examined.

An accidental causal regress can operate in the first movement of the third way if an emphasis is placed on finding the principle behind why an infinite accidental causal regress is possible. Element [2] taken with [1] to [1a] shows that Aquinas is acknowledging that the material beings subject to generation and corruption do not contain within themselves their own principle of existence. The contingency here is a radical contingency admitting absolutely no principle of being or necessity in the series.¹⁷³ Matter taken as one thing would not hold its own principle of existence. Without an intrinsic principle of existence, like the beings who generate and corrupt, matter itself would not be able to maintain existence over time. Many commentators note that Aquinas is following Maimonides in using the starting point common to his

¹⁷³ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 25.

interlocutors even though he thinks that the world was created in time.¹⁷⁴ Matter cannot sustain itself alone through time. Given an infinite amount of time, at some point, there would be a failure of generation leaving nothing left. Maritain writes that “It is then impossible that there *always* was being, for that for which there is *no necessity* cannot have been *always*. It is inevitable then that at a certain moment nothing would have existed.”¹⁷⁵ Radical contingency admitting no necessity whatsoever thus fails to be self-sustaining, as Aquinas notes in [2e] and concludes in [3] that there must be some sort of necessary existent providing a principle of existence. This is consistent with Aquinas’s point in his treatise *De aeternitate mundi* that an eternally existent world is possible but must nonetheless rely on God as first principle of existence.¹⁷⁶

The second movement begins where the first ends and maintains a starting point around the principle of materiality. It seems that Aquinas does not think that the first movement of the third way necessarily ends in God, but only in “something the existence of which is necessary.”¹⁷⁷ Since the third way begins with qualities for which matter is the first principle, it seems reasonable that it ends with an explanation related to matter. In this case, the “something” referred to in [3] could be prime matter as the necessary existent. Aquinas cannot end with necessary prime matter because prime matter cannot be God. It also could be something else. Aquinas seems to realize that all the first movement can conclude is something that does not cease to be.

¹⁷⁴ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 85; Copleston, *Aquinas*, 125; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 465.

¹⁷⁵ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 25.

¹⁷⁶ DAM.

¹⁷⁷ ST I, q2, a3.

Aquinas takes this necessary existent from the first movement and works through a second causal regress argument to arrive at necessary being. He notes in [4] that eternally existing things have the necessity of their existence as an internal principle or exterior. Prime matter considered in itself does not hold necessity as an intrinsic principle. If it did, then it would be God since God alone holds existence as a self-sufficient principle. Aquinas refers the reader back to the second way in arguing for God as the efficient cause of necessity in prime matter. This stage of the demonstration would entail a second causal regress argument. Instead of an argument against an accidental temporal regress, he invokes the hierarchical causal series. Through the argument against regress in a hierarchical causal series, he establishes that there must be a being who holds self-sufficient necessary being that is shared with other necessary beings. Arguing for the finitude of each causal series is consistent with the historical model wherein Avicenna demonstrates that God is the first efficient cause of material causality,¹⁷⁸ and with Aquinas's statement that prime matter is co-created with beings (*ens*) since creation includes all that belongs to beings (*ens*). As Aquinas writes the cause is "not only according as they are such by accidental forms, but also according to all that belongs to their being at all in any way. And thus, it is necessary to say that also primary matter is created by the universal cause of things."¹⁷⁹ The appropriate source of the being of prime matter is something that holds its own necessity as an intrinsic principle. This necessity is the self-sufficient necessity of existence sufficient to explain the hypothetical eternity of prime matter.

Aquinas identifies this necessary being who holds the necessity of being as a self-sufficient principle with God in [5]. Aquinas can make this identification based the doctrine of creation and the tradition of equating being itself with God. Only God holds an identification of

¹⁷⁸ De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 147.

¹⁷⁹ *ST I*, q44, a2.

essence and existence such that only God's essence is to be. According to the doctrine of creation, all that exists is created by God. Substantial forms and all that belongs to those forms are created by God, and this includes prime matter. Aquinas writes that

[W]hatever is the cause of things considered as beings, must be the cause of things, not only according as they are such by accidental forms, nor according as they are these by substantial forms, but according to all that belongs to their being at all in any way. And thus it is necessary to say that also primary matter is created by the universal cause of things.¹⁸⁰

The cause of things must be self-subsistent being or have subsistent necessary being. A necessary being who contains being in a self-subsistent manner is not like any material being. Such a being would not be subject to either generation or corruption. The necessary being would also be unlike any necessary being who does not contain self-sufficient being. Eternal beings who do not hold their own principle of existence receive existence from an exterior source. The necessary being is unlike any being in existence, whether eternally created or purely contingent. The necessary being as the source of being is being in the most eminent way, sharing that being with all others. Identifying necessary being as most eminent being matches the criteria for predicating God of the necessary being. Of course, this predication does not exhaust the attributes of God, but this is sufficient to make an appropriate predication based on the doctrine that God's essence is to exist.

Objections to the Third Way

This section will look at four objections to the third way from Kenny, Michael Martin, Mackie, and Rowe. The first objection is that Aquinas is engaging in the quantifier shift fallacy

¹⁸⁰ *ST I*, q44, a2.

or the fallacy of composition. The quantifier shift accusation is a rather common objection to not only the third way but the second as well and is explained in detail by Kenny. The second objection is to element [2] from Kenny and Mackie questioning that everything contingent passes away or otherwise cannot continue. The third objection is from Mackie challenging the principle that nothing comes from nothing, implicit in elements [2d] and [2e]. The objection is buttressed by a contention from Martin that contemporary cosmology may cast doubt on the premise. Finally, there is the argument of Kenny and others that the necessary being at the end of the third way could be everlasting matter.

Kenny accuses Aquinas of a quantifier shift fallacy, or a similar quantifier-modal shift fallacy, between [2] and [2a].¹⁸¹ Kenny claims that this step fallaciously moves “between a quantifier and a modal operator.”¹⁸² The accusation is that it is fallacious to argue that just because every individual thing in the universe can possibly pass away that the universe as a whole can pass away. In other words, what applies to every individual in a group does not necessarily apply to the group as a whole. Kenny gives an informal example of this fallacy: “In a fair contest, each competitor has the possibility of winning the whole first prize; it is not possible for every competitor to win the whole first prize.”¹⁸³ Another example would be arguing that because every graduate student has an advisor, then there must be one advisor who advises every graduate student. The contention here is that the step from [2] to [2a] simply does not follow. Without this step, the first movement of the third way stalls and cannot lead to the conclusion that Aquinas is attempting to reach.

¹⁸¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 63-4.

¹⁸² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 64.

¹⁸³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 64.

Kenny invokes a possible defense from Geach in an effort at fairness and then attacks this defense as yet containing another quantifier-shift fallacy.¹⁸⁴ Geach's defense is that Aquinas has in mind the common matter tying together the before and after of substantial change. The plausibility of this defense derives from the presupposition of matter in generation and corruption. Kenny writes that "If A turns into B and is not just replaced by B then there must be something in common to both A and B, and this is precisely what is meant by matter's being presupposed by generation and corruption."¹⁸⁵ For example, a carpenter cuts down a tree to make a table. There is matter in common between the tree and table even though the tree has been corrupted. If the table is then burned, then it is corrupted, but the matter now takes on the form of ash. Kenny criticizes this as another quantifier-shift fallacy in that if every change has a common element between terms, it does not follow that there is one single common element to every change.¹⁸⁶ Kenny states that Aquinas has not proved his point, even though there are alternative perspectives, ancient and modern, that advocate for a conservation of matter. He thinks that it is entirely possible that the universe consists entirely of contingent beings and yet it is everlasting, and Aquinas has failed to prove that this possibility is impossible.¹⁸⁷

Many friendly commentators on the five ways are well aware of the accusation of the quantifier-shift/composition fallacy and are able to argue against this objection.¹⁸⁸ C.J.F. Martin and Velecky are useful in explaining why Geach's response can initially defeat the claim of a quantifier-shift fallacy.¹⁸⁹ It is possible for an argument to hold both an invalid and valid form at the same time. If a valid form is possible, then the argument is valid on the basis of the valid

¹⁸⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 64-5.

¹⁸⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 65.

¹⁸⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 65.

¹⁸⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 65-6. Mackie agrees on this point, see Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 89.

¹⁸⁸ Davis, *God, Reason & Theistic Proofs*, 74-5; Feser, *Aquinas*, 93-8; C.F.J. Martin, *Aquinas*, 161-4; Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 84-7.

¹⁸⁹ Martin, *Aquinas*, 161-2.

form even though an invalid form is also present. Velecky points out that it is possible to simultaneously refer to both particulars and a universal, such as a particular as representative of an entire class.¹⁹⁰ For example, “When we say ‘All men are mortal,’ we mean both that each of us is mortal and that every one of us without exception is equally situated and so we all have the same status.”¹⁹¹ In this case, if Aquinas is referring to the contingency of all matter considered in itself as the material causal principle, then there is no quantifier shift from particulars to a universal. There is only one subject and no shift in quantity. If Aquinas has this single universal principle in mind, then there is no quantifier shift from particular to universal. Velecky that with Aquinas “For him to identify correctly the reason why this particular at some time or other is not is to identify at the same time the reason why every member of the same group should likewise be so characterized in the relevant respect.”¹⁹² The particulars are the finite instantiation of the universal material causal principle. At this stage of the argument, the material causal principle holds the same sort of possibility toward corruption as the finite particulars that are instantiations of the principle.

A further factor is the context of the argument such that the context can turn an apparent quantifier shift fallacy into a true and valid statement.¹⁹³ For instance, the example given above of a quantifier shift involving graduate students and advisors would be true in the context of a single small program with only one advisor. The context, in this case, is the Aristotelian notion of possibility. The possibility that Aquinas has in mind is that of hylomorphic beings where there is an intrinsic tendency to corruption due to matter-form composition.¹⁹⁴ The contrariness of

¹⁹⁰ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 84-5.

¹⁹¹ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 85.

¹⁹² Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 85. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹³ Martin, *Aquinas*, 161-2.

¹⁹⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 92.

matter and form is such that there is a natural tendency of matter to lose form, which is to decay or corrupt. There is an inherent metaphysical instability in all matter-form composition. “They have no potency or potential for changeless, indefinite existence; hence they cannot exist indefinitely.”¹⁹⁵ Each matter-form composite will go out of existence as a matter of fact.

While Aquinas thinks that an infinite temporal series is logically possible, the first movement of the third way argues against the metaphysical possibility of such a series. As mentioned, Aquinas does not have an issue with an infinite accidental series of material beings persisting through an infinite amount of time.¹⁹⁶ Such a series is not logically impossible but requires some metaphysical necessity to keep such an infinite temporal series intact, such as Aquinas argues in *De aeternitate mundi*. Aquinas’s claim in the third way is that without an additional principle of existence to counteract corruption of material things, then such a logically possible series would not be metaphysically possible given an infinite amount of time.

Kenny questions whether this is also a type of quantifier-shift fallacy, and wonders if it could be possible for everything to corrupt, but not all at once.¹⁹⁷ In contrast to Kenny’s analysis, the sense of possibility here is an inherent metaphysical possibility that will occur given sufficient time.¹⁹⁸ Since it is inherently possible that all things in existence would pass away at once given enough time, then given infinite time, the nature of matter/form composition would have inherently exerted itself in the corruption of every matter-form being. Far from another quantifier-shift, the outcome is a necessity given the medieval context of the nature of material possibility.

¹⁹⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 92.

¹⁹⁶ Feser, *Aquinas*, 94.

¹⁹⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Feser, *Aquinas*, 94.

Kenny and Mackie both question the possibility that all things may cease to exist. Kenny brings up the prospect that there might be some manner in which the first movement ends with the universe itself.¹⁹⁹ He thinks that it may be the case that in a universe of contingent beings, the overlap in material being is such that it is not the case that everything passes away at one and the same time. In other words, Kenny thinks it possible “that many contingent things might make one necessary being” and Aquinas has not proved otherwise.²⁰⁰ Mackie does not seem to think that Kenny’s contention is correct, writing that “if each thing were impermanent, it would be the most improbably good luck if the overlapping sequence kept up through infinite time.”²⁰¹ In order for there to be permanence, there must be some “*permanent* stock of material” sustaining all contingent things in existence such that everything does not cease existing at once.²⁰² Mackie seems to think that this point is at least as much of a defeater of the third way as Kenny’s comment. Feser says that Aquinas would actually be quite happy with Mackie’s interpretation of [3].²⁰³ The first movement may end with prime matter as the first principle of material causality. The fact that there must be some sort of ‘necessary’ persistent matter sets up the second movement of the third way. Since the first principle of material causality inherently contains and communicates the possibility of corruption to all material beings, it does not seem that it would contain inherent necessity.²⁰⁴ The persistent being of the material causal principle must come from outside the principle, which is what the second movement is meant to demonstrate.

Mackie’s final critique of the first movement of the third way is to deny the principle that nothing comes from nothing in [2c], but his analysis falls short. If it turns out that something can

¹⁹⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 65-6.

²⁰⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 65.

²⁰¹ Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 89.

²⁰² Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 89.

²⁰³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 95.

²⁰⁴ Feser, “Existential Inertia and the Five Ways,” 247-8.

come from nothing, then if all impermanent things cease to exist it would still be possible for existence to be reasserted from nothing.²⁰⁵ Mackie appeals to Hume's contention that since we can conceive of the uncaused generation of something, then we need some sort of proof that this is not the case. Mackie thinks that there is some plausibility to the concept that nothing comes from nothing based on experience, nevertheless, he concludes that Aquinas has not provided adequate proof of the principle.²⁰⁶ Mackie's acknowledgment that the concept is based on experience allows that Aquinas's realist position would refute Mackie's critique. The plausibility of our experience is a sufficient basis for the principle that nothing comes from nothing and it is up to Mackie to provide evidence to the contrary. In addition, Kenny notes that Hume falls into a quantifier-shift fallacy arguing from no cause for particular beginnings to no cause for existence itself.²⁰⁷

Michael Martin takes up the critique of the principle that nothing can come to be uncaused with an appeal to contemporary physics. Martin does not give specific theories, since it is beyond the scope of his book, but he does suggest that "recently proposed cosmological theories suggest that the universe may indeed have been generated from nothing."²⁰⁸ A full exposition is outside of this work as well, but it would nonetheless be prudent to briefly summarize a possible contemporary theory that would back up Martin's contention. This theory would be Quentin Smith's proposed uncaused beginning to the finite universe.²⁰⁹ Smith accepts the majority opinion of cosmologists of the big bang model of the universe, which entails that the universe began about 10-15 billion years ago. The standard big bang cosmology that originated

²⁰⁵ Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 89.

²⁰⁶ Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 89.

²⁰⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 67.

²⁰⁸ Martin, *Atheism*, 100.

²⁰⁹ Quentin Smith, "The Uncaused Beginning of the Universe," in *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, by William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 108-40.

with Einstein's theories and finalized by Hawking and Penrose requires that the initial condition of the universe would have been a singularity. In contemporary cosmology, this would be a single point of infinite density. Smith sees the beginning of the universe as an explosion out of this initial condition that eventually evolves into the universe as we know it.²¹⁰ The source of the original singularity could be quantum vacuum fluctuations. "A vacuum fluctuation is an uncaused emergence of energy out of empty space that is governed by the uncertainty relation..."²¹¹ Vacuum fluctuations are particles arising out of the energy inherent in space-time. Smith's theory would posit that the initial singularity occurred uncaused out of a background space and then exploded into the big bang at the beginning of the universe as we know it.

A Thomist may contend with Smith's proposal by noting that Smith is equivocating on the terms 'uncaused' and 'nothing' compared to Aquinas's meaning of these terms. Aquinas held to the four Aristotelian causes. For Aquinas, a truly uncaused event would be one for which there is no efficient, formal, material, or final cause. It is not entirely clear that this is the case with vacuum fluctuations. At best, vacuum fluctuations have no overt efficient cause, leaving open the question of the other three causes. One could argue that they would constitute an Aristotelian final cause to the extent that vacuum fluctuations arise with regularity through the laws of physics. An Aristotelian interpretation would put vacuum fluctuations on par with every other regularity in nature for which we do not posit special causes other than that regularity. Probably the most damaging point to make against Smith, as Craig notes in his response to Smith, is simply that a pre-existing 'space' containing whatever rules and energy needed to give rise to the initial singularity is not 'nothing.'²¹² Smith's theory assumes some sort of pre-existing matter or

²¹⁰ Smith, "The Uncaused Beginning of the Universe," 115-19.

²¹¹ Smith, "The Uncaused Beginning of the Universe," 127.

²¹² William Lane Craig, "The Caused Beginning of the Universe," in *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, by William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 155-7.

energy that just exists as it is on its own. The universe would come from something, and so the principle that nothing comes from nothing or that there must be existent being to bring into existence another being is not refuted.

The final point made by Kenny and Mackie is that there is no reason to believe that the necessary being at the end of the third way is God, for it could be some sort of everlasting self-sufficient matter.²¹³ Kenny suggests that since the first movement of the third way invokes the material cause, then the end point could relatedly support matter that contains a self-sufficient principle of existence.²¹⁴ Kenny sees naturally necessary matter as a possibility that can only be addressed by switching the argument into Leibnizian terms. He thinks that such a move would support Kant's critique that cosmological arguments are ultimately parasitic upon the ontological argument. Mackie suggests that some sort of permanent stock of matter as a brute fact existing without cause or appeal to any principle of reason would satisfy the end result of the third way.²¹⁵ He agrees that an appeal to Leibniz would not 'save' the third way from critique.

The reason Aquinas names the necessary being as God is not because he has arrived at a full concept of the Christian God. Certainly, some sort of matter that contains its own self-sufficient principle of existence and shares that principle with all that exists could fit the description of 'necessary being.' This conclusion would be problematic in Aquinas's terms because prime matter is pure potentiality with no actuality. The end point may also fit the description of Spinoza's God as the necessary substance coextensive with all that is. The fact that the 'necessary being' of the third way is possibly compatible with atheistic or pantheistic philosophies does not detract from the fact that it is overtly compatible with Christian theology.

²¹³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 68-9; Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 91.

²¹⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 69.

²¹⁵ Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, 91.

Aquinas is arguing that there must be a source for the first principle of matter, and the source of this matter must be self-contained being. Aquinas writes that “it is necessary to say that also primary matter is created by the universal cause of things.”²¹⁶ Matter must be created, it cannot hold its own self-existent principle for the Christian tradition because then it would be God, but God is affirmed as immaterial, does not enter into composition with anything, and cannot hold the sort of personal attributes traditionally assigned to God. The Christian theological tradition holds precedence for interpreting God as self-existent being, and this is sufficient for Aquinas to predicate God as the necessary being at the end of the third way.

²¹⁶ *ST I*, q44, a2.

Chapter Five: The Fourth and Fifth Ways

The fourth and fifth ways both hold the same general structure as the first three yet differ in their starting points, which are less obvious to contemporary readers. The fourth way is particularly baffling to modern readers. Linwood Urban writes that “None of the Five Ways has provoked more diverse reactions than the fourth.”¹ The reason for the diverse reactions is that the demonstration leans in a Platonic direction yet adheres to the same Aristotelian syllogistic structure as all the five ways. Aquinas’s thought is the culmination of an inherited synthesis of Plato and Aristotle. Aquinas develops Neoplatonic metaphysical elements according to his metaphysical system that gives primacy to being. The fifth way is better studied than the fourth but often conflated with later teleological arguments that are significantly different. The misidentification of the fifth way the 18th Century argument of Paley is due to some similarities in language that can lead contemporary readers astray. Careful attention to Aquinas’s meaning according to the context of his work is particularly crucial to avoid confusion in both demonstrations.

The reconstructive task begun in the previous chapter will continue in this chapter with the fourth and fifth ways. As before, each will start with a reproduction of the text that includes numbering, then proceed with reconstructing each way and answering objections. As in the previous chapter, Anthony Kenny dominates the objections, since his critique is highly influential.

The Fourth Way: The Demonstration from Grades of Being

The fourth way is probably the single most controversial and difficult to interpret of the five ways. C.F.J. Martin admits to not understanding the fourth way or how it constitutes an

¹ Linwood Urban, “Understanding St. Thomas’s Fourth Way,” in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1984), 281-95, 281.

argument for God's existence.² Feser and Copleston both note that the medieval metaphysical context of the fourth way makes it difficult for contemporary minds to grasp.³ The metaphysical notions in the fourth way work best situated within a Platonic epistemology in which being is immediately grasped by the intellect or as a logical deductive argument beginning from the meaning of qualitative predicates; however, these options go against Aquinas's stated Aristotelian epistemology and paradigm for demonstrating the existence of God. Aquinas proceeds with the fourth way as follows:

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. [1] Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. [1a] But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble their different ways something which is the maximum, [1b] as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; [1c] so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; [1d] for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph.* ii. [2] Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; [2a] as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. [2b] Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; [3] and this we call God.⁴

A successful reconstruction would need to show how the fourth way fits with Aquinas's system as a fact-demonstration working from qualitative transcendental predicates of finite being

² Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 171.

³ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 125-6; Feser, *Aquinas*, 100. Unlike the other four ways, Copleston makes no effort to make the fourth way intelligible for today.

⁴ *ST I*, q2, a3.

to absolute being that is identified with God. This task is further aided by Gilson's principle for interpretation "that its nature should be conceived as similar to that of the preceding ways unless some compelling reason appears to attribute to it another one."⁵ In other words, the interpretation of the fourth way should be governed by similarities to the other ways. In this case, the fourth way holds a two-movement structure similar to the third way, with the first movement ending with a maximum quality and the second movement identifying God as the cause.⁶ Gregory Doolan notes that "Although the Fourth Way makes no mention of either exemplar or efficient causality, it is clear from the text that both modes of causality are implicitly present."⁷ The similarities in the second movement of the fourth way and the second movement of the third way justifies an efficient causality interpretation for the second movement of the fourth way. These similarities are particularly apparent from the standpoint that exemplar causality implies efficient causality since the maker exercises efficient causal action according to the exemplar form.

The aspect of the fourth way that is most notable and challenging to grasp is its reliance on the metaphysical notion of the convertibility of transcendentals. The transcendental qualities (such as truth, goodness, nobility, beauty) each hold being as their subject and consider transcendental qualities as modes of being according to particular notions.⁸ They are convertible with being from the point of holding the same subject, that of the being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*). As already noted, the transcendentals differ according to notion as each adds presents a mode of being without adding to being itself.⁹ The transcendentals are modes of being derived from either

⁵ Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1960), 75.

⁶ Feser notes this structure, see Feser, *Aquinas*, 108-9; Doolan, *Aquinas on Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 70-6; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 477-9.

⁷ Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 73.

⁸ James F. Anderson, editor, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), 44-7.

⁹ See chapter 2.

ways of being (*esse*) or a common relation to other beings (*ens*). Aquinas uses the term substance as an example of a way of being. Modes of being can be the result of every being itself or a relation to something else. The two modes can express an affirmative or negative notion of being. True and good add the notion of relation to being as they each add a relational notion common to all beings and one negates division in a given being.

Truth adds the relational mode of a thing to the intellect and goodness adds the relational mode of a thing to the appetitive power. The degree of truth is the degree to which the idea of a thing is present in the intellect. Truth refers primarily to the intellect of God and secondarily to human beings. What is true is true by virtue of conformity to the intellect of God and secondarily true for human beings to the degree that it conforms to the human intellect.¹⁰ For instance, if I perceive a mouse, the existence of the mouse is true by virtue of the correspondence of the mouse between the world and my mind. The ultimate truth of the mouse derives from the correspondence of the mouse and the mind of God. In this case the being (*ens*) of the mouse exists according to the mode of truth. If I hallucinate a mouse, then there is no correspondence between a mouse in the world and my mind or the world and God's mind, and therefore no truth to the mouse since it does not exist according to the mode of truth.

Goodness adds a rational relation of being to the appetitive power according to the mode of being as inherently desirable, which is cornerstone to the convertibility of transcendentals.¹¹

Aquinas writes that

from the fact that existing itself chiefly has the nature of being desirable, and so we perceive that everything by nature desires to conserve its existing and avoids things

¹⁰ *QDV*, q1, a1.

¹¹ *ST I*, q5, a1.

destructive of its existing and avoids things destructive of its existing and resists them as far as possible. Therefore, existing itself, insofar as it is desirable, is good.¹²

It is better to exist than to not exist. Being is prior to goodness in apprehension for things must exist before they can be apprehended as good.¹³ The matter-form composition of hylomorphic beings predisposes them toward corruption. Since goodness and being are convertible, a being (*ens*) is good to the degree that it holds complete being according to its exemplar form. Thus, the degrees in the fourth way are ontological degrees of being as being comes in degrees according to the completeness or perfection of a given being.¹⁴ If I perceive a mouse, I know that it is a good mouse in the sense that the mouse exists. This is so even if the mouse is eating my food. The mouse desires existence as a good and dodges cats and traps in an effort to maintain its existence. If I see a mouse that is sickly or missing a limb, then I know that the mouse is lacking a good of mouseness that makes it good to a lesser degree than a healthy mouse or four-footed mouse. All the same, the ontological reality of the mouse supersedes my perception of the mouse. Any empirical data about the mouse, such as color or smell, are not the qualities that Aquinas has in mind in the fourth way. Aquinas has the ontological existence of the mouse in view.

Thomas Aquinas gives an illuminating discussion of evil as a lack of goodness in his *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*. We perceive something as evil when we perceive a grade of goodness that falls short of perfection. Aquinas writes that “Now it is in this that evil consists, namely, in the fact that a thing fails in goodness.”¹⁵ That we apprehend evil and that evil is a lack

¹² *QDM* q1, a1, *ad.* 1.

¹³ *ST I*, q5, a3.

¹⁴ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 471-2. See Chapter 2 for the other transcendentals, beauty and one.

¹⁵ *ST I*, q 48, a 2.

of goodness helps establish grades of goodness as apparent to the senses, especially since evil also comes in degrees by formal deprivation of good.¹⁶ There is a distinction in privations of the goodness of existence between a privation of existing and process privation; both are evils as privations of what should be. “There are two kinds of privation: one, indeed, that consists in the privation of existing (e.g., death and blindness), and one that consists in the process inducing privation (e.g., sickness, which is a process inducing death, and ophthalmia, which is a process inducing blindness.”¹⁷ Evil is the absence of a quality that a given being should have in an ontological sense by nature of the being’s form. In other words, the ontological status of evil as imperfection is what Aquinas has in view. He does not see blindness as an empirical description of an individual but as an ontological imperfection in the proper form. Aquinas sees evil as an ontological absence of being when viewed in the mode of imperfect being, and goodness as the presence of being in the mode of the ontological presence of a perfection.

As with the other ways, the fourth way is a fact-demonstration beginning with an effect that is apparent to the senses. In this case, the effect is the gradation of certain qualities found in the world, such as goodness, truth, and nobility in [1]. Many commentators note that the gradation in question derives from the transcendental convertibility of being as apprehended and understood through Aquinas’s moderate realism.¹⁸ The grades of being are present as a mode of being in finite beings as an exemplar of absolute being containing the transcendentals absolutely.¹⁹ Things must exist in order to be apprehended as being according to the mode of

¹⁶ *QDM* q1, a1, *ad.* 13. Aquinas does not make this direct link in the fourth way, but it is consistent with his thought and helps establish this disputed point among contemporary philosophers.

¹⁷ *QDM* q1, a1, *ad.* 2.

¹⁸ Feser, *Aquinas*, 105-6; Copleston, *Aquinas*, 125; Donceel, *Natural Theology*, 44-5; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 66-7; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 71-2; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 471-2; C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 173.

¹⁹ Feser, *Aquinas*, 102-3; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 68-79; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 474; Linwood Urban, “Understanding St. Thomas’s Fourth Way,” in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), 283-5.

true, good, and noble, each of which adds a different modal notion to being. Each of these transcendental modes of being require a source of being that holds being as an intrinsic principle from which the being of individual beings derives. The quiddity of beings is apprehended through the sensible species and united with the mind. The degree to which the existence of these beings matches the ideal quiddity in the mind of God is the degree to which they are true, good, or noble. That we sense degrees of each quality is most apparent when we sense evil since evil is a privation or negation of being understood as goodness.²⁰ If we sense something in the world as evil, then we sense the gradation of being. Knowing that there is a lack of being implies the existence of a source from which the lack derives.

Sensible species are abstracted to obtain an intelligible form. The form is universalized and compared through composition and division to previously understood universal forms for the same species. A thing can then be said to be more or less good according to how closely the apprehended individual form matches with the previously understood universal form. This is where Aquinas's demonstration is taking him in [1a]. The lack of goodness apparent to the senses is apprehended as a lack precisely because there is a standard by which the intellect grasps goodness. There is a real apprehension of modal grades of being based on a universal abstraction of an ideal that is itself based on what is encountered by the senses in the real world. The real world as apprehended does not contain in itself the principle for its own goodness, truth, and nobility. The ontology of the world as encountered by the senses does not contain its own formal principle of existence. If it did, then there would be no degrees of existence for everything would have its own self-contained perfection. The things sensed in the world, therefore, obtain the formal principle of their existence from outside of themselves.

²⁰ *ST I*, q48, a1.

The formal principle of existence accounts for the existence of individual things as individuals, and though the formal principle is interior to a given being it originates from outside that being. This existential principle is what Aquinas invokes in [1b] and [1c] that qualities derive from that which holds them in the highest degree.²¹ Aquinas justifies this step in the argument by the principle of causality that every effect contains within itself a similitude to its cause. Aquinas views this as a self-evident principle, along the lines of the law of non-contradiction. It is apparent in the world, and it is difficult to make sense of reality if we deny it. The causal principle justifies the principle of the maximum. Any being that holds a property through the casual action of another must derive that property from something that holds it as an intrinsic principle.²² An effect cannot transcend the cause, and so the cause must prepossess the principle of the effect to a greater degree than the effect.

The causal power of each being is by virtue of the being's form. The interior principle of being through a given being's form grants that being its proper causal efficacy. Urban writes that "By being actual, the agent has realized some form, and it is by virtue of the form which has been actualized in it, that the agent is able to produce or generate effects."²³ The series of causes and effects lead up a hierarchy of being to that which holds being absolutely.²⁴ Feser writes that "We see here a hierarchy in the order of being that dovetails with the hierarchy from prime matter through purely material things, human beings, and angels, up to God as Pure Act..."²⁵ In this hierarchy of being, each member shares in being to some degree from that which contains being absolutely. It is fair to assume in light of Gilson's principle of interpretation that the causal

²¹ See Urban, "Understanding St. Thomas's Fourth Way," 281, and Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 472-3.

²² Urban, "Understanding St. Thomas's Fourth Way," 287.

²³ Urban, "Understanding St. Thomas's Fourth Way," 285.

²⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 106; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 471; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 74.

²⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 106.

hierarchy in question is a *per se* or essential hierarchical order. Each member of the hierarchy shares itself with another member to grant causal efficacy through form. No single member of the hierarchy holds its own principle of existence or formal principle of causality. Wippel suggests that even though Aquinas does not argue against infinite regress in participated being, “this should be done if one is to view the fourth way as an argument based on participation and if one wishes to justify that argument within Thomas’s metaphysics.”²⁶ The entire hierarchical order is in need of a first principle granting causal efficacy to the entire order. In this fourth way the hierarchical order is articulated in terms of grades of being related to form.

That there is a maximum of being in the modes of goodness, truth, and nobility from which all such qualities flow out through all of existence is evidence of an exemplar that contains these qualities absolutely. The grades that Aquinas has in view are inherently ontological in nature rather than empirical. The maximum is not an empirical maximum but an ontological maximum restricted to the transcendental qualities of being. This maximum subsistent being is capable of sharing the transcendental qualities of being because of its self-subsistence. The exemplar of all other transcendental qualities found in finite beings is where Aquinas lands in [1c] and [1d] wherein finite beings hold goodness, truth, and nobility by participation in the exemplar which is utmost being itself and thus also the maximum of the transcendental qualities of being. As Doolan describes, “All other beings, by contrast, are good, true, noble, and so forth only because they approach or imitate this maximal being. Thus, the *maxime ens* that Thomas describes appears to be an exemplar cause of the degrees of perfection found in limited beings.”²⁷ The exemplar cause is the idea in the mind of God according to which God causes the specific forms of finite beings. Aquinas uses the metaphor of the image in the mind of an artist to

²⁶ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 478.

²⁷ Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 68.

describe exemplar causality. Since finite beings are created according to the exemplar image, the exemplar is the first principle of a given finite beings substantial form and so is the causal principle of form. God cannot be the formal causal principle since then God would enter into composition with finite beings, which is denied as part of the DDS.

Since the exemplar cause cannot itself be the intrinsic formal principle of finite being, in [2] Aquinas begins to establish the exemplar cause as the efficient cause of transcendental qualities of truth, goodness, and nobility. Aquinas makes an implicit reference in [2] to efficient causality as he begins the second stage of the fourth way. The principle of consistent interpretation from Gilson would entail treating the fourth way in the same manner as the third way. Aquinas's participation is a participatory causal dependence. Finite substantial forms are efficiently caused in mirror image of the ultimate exemplar form.²⁸ The maximum established at the end of the first movement causally grants being to finite beings according to the form found in the exemplar maximum. The exemplar provides the likeness between the source of being and limited beings. Self-existent being contains the image of all limited beings as the source of their likeness. The created order of limited being participates in the exemplar in the mirror likeness between the exemplar and limited beings through efficient causality

Aquinas uses the example of fire or heat being derived from ultimate heat to produce lesser degrees of heat in [1b] and [2a] as a metaphysical metaphor. Fire is an appropriate Dionysian metaphor for the activity of self-sufficient being.²⁹ The example of fire and heat can lead contemporary readers astray. It is not an empirical argument from medieval physics, but an

²⁸ Many interpreters note that Aquinas is connecting the exemplar cause to finite being through efficient causality. See Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 74-5; Feser, *Aquinas*, 108; Urban, "Understanding St. Thomas's Fourth Way," 288-9; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 477-8.

²⁹ See chp. 15 of Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Celestial Hierarchy*. See also Pseudo-Dionysius's *Letter to Titus the Hierarch*.

ontological example.³⁰ The maximum heat, as a metaphor for maximal being, provides all degrees of heat as this subsequent heat participates in the maximal heat. Fire and heat are examples that are better suited to the human mode of understanding than simply writing in the abstract about being. The example aims at how individual beings (*ens*) participate in maximal being (*esse*) in a similar manner to how heat participates in fire.

Aquinas ends the fourth way by identifying as God the maximum self-subsistent being that is the exemplar cause of modal degrees of being in [2b] and [3]. The doctrine of creation specifically identifies the exemplar form with God as providing all of creation with its determinate forms.³¹ The fourth way explicitly identifies the transcendental qualities of being in their modes of truth, goodness, and nobility. These qualities begin with finite beings and move on to their maximal state as transcendental being. The analogical component of this naming is clearer in the fourth way than in the other ways. The initial mode of predication is based on sense perception and abstraction resulting in the judgment that beings hold transcendental qualities in various degrees. In working up the hierarchy of being, the abstraction becomes removed from the original sense perception. The qualities of truth, goodness, and nobility refer to limited being in a different way than to maximal being. The maximum being is the highest most eminent being holding the transcendental qualities in the highest manner. All finite being is a mere image of the most eminent exemplar. In addition, as already seen, the transcendental qualities are signified of God more appropriately than other names.³² Aquinas is thus justified in predicating God of the source of being, goodness, and nobility in creation.

³⁰ Feser, *Aquinas*, 104-5; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 472-3.

³¹ *ST I*, 44, a3.

³² *ST I*, q13, a2 & a6.

Objections to the Fourth Way

This section will review four objections to the fourth way, mostly gleaned from Kenny. First, there are difficulties in understanding the grades of being in a fourth way, especially in light of Aquinas's example of heat. Kenny questions whether goodness can be arranged on a scale similar to that of heat, C.F.J. Martin doubts the need for a maximum for qualities, and Dawkins ridicules the idea of maximum qualities.³³ Second, there is the question of why the maximum goodness must be God rather than some maximally good non-divine being.³⁴ Third, Kenny takes issue with the response to the second objection, which is that God is God's existence.³⁵ This objection is of particular importance because it is crucial not just to the fourth way, but to all five ways and the DDS. Finally, Kenny objects that God as shared maximal being is equivalent to a Platonic form and falls to the same critiques.³⁶ This final objection builds on Kenny's previous objections and is his main contention against the fourth way.

Kenny acknowledges that the starting point of the fourth way in [1] is an unexceptional observation of reality, and he doubts whether the observed variety in goodness can be arranged on a scale similar to that of heat.³⁷ He assumes for the sake of argument that goodness is an objective quality. Even if this is so, he argues that the types of goodness found in the world do not hold the same uniformity as heat. It is easy to quantify heat as a quality and express heat on an objective scale. The differences in the goodness of different beings or activities make even objective goodness difficult to quantify. Kenny points out that a being may be good in one way but not so good in another, "Something may, for instance, be a good F and a bad G (as a man

³³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 80-1; C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 176-7; Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 79.

³⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 81.

³⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 90-2.

³⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 95.

³⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 80-1.

may be a good cricketer and a bad husband); and it is not obvious how we can settle whether good Fs are better or worse, in an unqualified sense, than good Gs (is a good hippopotamus better or worse than a good sunset?)”³⁸ The differences in beings and activities make them inherently difficult to grade on a uniform objective scale, such as the differences between a good bicyclist or good swimmer, a good cricket or good spider, and so forth. There does not seem to be an adequate way to grade beings with vastly divergent qualities, which casts doubt on the intelligibility of such a scale. Further, there is some doubt whether a maximum quality from which such grades share their quality is intelligible. Aquinas’s example of heat leads some critics to interpret Aquinas as stating that any quality derives from a maximum of that quality. Dawkins reads Aquinas as referring to any accidental quality, which allows him to ridicule Aquinas by applying the principle of maximum to the quality of stinkiness. The result is the absurdity that stinkiness would be derived from a maximally stinky being.³⁹

CFJ Martin interprets the fourth way in terms of the transcendentals of being and Plato’s theory of forms.⁴⁰ He admits that the perfections in question are about ideas in the mind of God. Martin falters when it comes to how the idea relates to reality, writing that “it is hard to see how the existence of an idea of the most can explain the real existence of the more and the less. Indeed, it is hard to see how the existence of any kind of idea can explain the real existence of anything at all.”⁴¹ Martin’s example is of beauty, which is a transcendental quality of being not mentioned explicitly in the fourth way. He imagines a group of lecturers at a university who are all more or less good looking.⁴² In such a case, there could be a lecturer who is ugliest and one

³⁸ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 80.

³⁹ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 79.

⁴⁰ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 171-7.

⁴¹ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 176.

⁴² C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 176.

who is best looking. Any gradation would have a most and least, but a 'most' is not necessary for the existence of grades. Martin writes that he sees "no reason whatsoever why the existence of the *de facto* most should *cause* or *explain* the existence of the more and the less."⁴³ He does not think that the existence of an idea is sufficient to explain the existence of anything and so does not think that a gradation of more and less causally depends on the idea of a most.

The critiques by Kenny, Dawkins, and Martin assume a Platonic formal causality not present and do not pay sufficient attention to the transcendentals of being and participation of finite beings in God as exemplar form. Kenny's critique assumes that the judgment of goodness on a scale is a judgment of one being as better than another. Instead, the qualities at issue in the fourth way are transcendental qualities applied to individual beings. Feser points out that "Aquinas is not in fact trying to argue in the Fourth Way that everything we observe to exist in degrees (including heat, smelliness, sweetness, etc.) must be traceable to some single maximum standard of perfection."⁴⁴ The example of fire is an analogical illustration; it is not a principle example as some suppose. The fire that Aquinas uses is a self-subsistent fire analogous to self-subsistent being. Only self-subsistent fire can share its heat with objects in the way that Aquinas uses the illustration. The fire example is not fire as we understand fire. It is fire beyond fire. Likewise, the goodness in question is not goodness compared among species of being. Instead, it is goodness as a modal degree of being compared to the ideal or exemplar for a given species. A being is good insofar as it exists. The closer its being comes to the complete idea of the ideal existence of that species then the closer it comes to perfect goodness. The exemplar is the representative idea for a species residing in the mind of God as creator. The comparison is therefore not across species as Kenny assumes, but between an individual being of a given species and the

⁴³ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 176.

⁴⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 104.

idea of the species. There is, therefore, no difficulty in determining goodness across widely differing beings. The degree of goodness is not a comparison between a cricket and a spider or a husband and a bicyclist. A cricket is a good cricket to the extent that exists in conformity with the exemplar form of a cricket, and the same with each example. The degree of goodness is the degree of being held by a cricket as a cricket, a spider as a spider, a husband as a husband, a bicyclist as a bicyclist, and so forth.

Dawkins's critique makes the mistake of assuming that the transcendental qualities of being are empirical accidental qualities leading to a maximal accidental quality. All non-transcendental qualities are accidental qualities and are not what Aquinas has in mind. Since the qualities involved in the fourth way are the transcendental qualities of being, the maximum is maximal self-subsistent being rather than the empirical maximum of a given non-transcendental quality. In other words, the argument is fundamentally ontological rather than empirical. Dawkins overtly mistakes Aquinas to be referring to empirical accidental qualities, such as stinkiness, but Aquinas does not have such qualities in mind. Dawkins's critique therefore completely misses the mark by critiquing an argument that Aquinas is not making. The qualities in question can only be the transcendental modes of being and not any given accidental quality.

Martin's confusion regarding participation in the fourth way is the result of his neglect of the efficient cause reference in the second movement. Martin acknowledges that Aquinas has the transcendentals of being in mind and holds a better assessment of the fourth way than Dawkins or Kenny, but he does not apply the transcendentals accurately. Martin takes his beautiful lecturers as beautiful in an accidental manner in that they share in some quality of beauty to a degree relative to each other. He fails to consider that the lecturers must first be in order to be judged beautiful and are beautiful to the degree that their existence matches the perfect exemplar

in the mind of God. The maximum of beauty is also the maximum of being. The maximum of being is necessary to impart being on the lecturers who may then be deemed beautiful insofar as they exist. The being of the lecturers is efficiently caused according to the exemplar idea of human beauty. Martin's confusion is because he misses the relation between exemplary and efficient cause in the fourth way. The qualities references in the fourth way are not caused immediately by the exemplar idea in the mind of God but by efficient causal the action of God according to the idea or exemplar.

Kenny casts doubt on Aquinas's connection of the maximal good with God though he resolves the issue and attacks the resolution.⁴⁵ Kenny begins by wondering if the maximal should be understood as purely an ideal or as something actual.⁴⁶ He thinks that if the maximal is an ideal, then this is plausibly associated with God. Even though it is plausible, like Martin, he does not see how an idea can be causally efficacious. Kenny wonders why an actual existing maximal in a particular species would need to be God rather than simply a maximally good human being.⁴⁷ Since God is not a thing, then a maximal thing would be some species of thing rather than God. After setting up the difficulty, Kenny proposes a solution. According to Kenny, Aquinas makes a Platonic move applied to *ens* or existence, which is intrinsic to God's nature such that God is existence. Kenny recognizes that the qualities are transcendental qualities of being. Kenny writes of Aquinas that "The thing, he says, which is truest and best and noblest is, by consequence, the most being of things."⁴⁸ Kenny then notes that God is existence, "that God is subsistent *esse*, that his essence is his *esse*, and (ch. VI) that he is pure *esse* to which no

⁴⁵ It is a rather common claim among critics of the five ways to claim that the final attribution of God at the end of each is invalid. Even though Kenny raises an issue that he addresses, it is nonetheless an important point.

⁴⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 81.

⁴⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 81.

⁴⁸ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 82.

addition can be made.”⁴⁹ Since God is God’s existence, and the goodness at issue is a transcendental of being, then it is proper to identify the maximal goodness with God.

Kenny continues his critique by arguing against the idea that God is God’s existence, for if this concept fails, then the previous critique that the maximum cannot be God stands. Kenny begins by comparing Aquinas’s work on the distinction between form and existence in *De ente et essentia* to the contemporary analytic notion of an existential quantifier.⁵⁰ It is possible to understand what something is without knowing if it exists. For example, one can know what a human is or what a phoenix is without knowing if either exists. This example shows that essence and existence are two separate things. In terms of contemporary logic, this might be equivalent to the existential quantifier. Kenny analyzes the possibility that Aquinas’s view of existence is a precursor to the existential quantifier and concludes that this not the case.⁵¹ Kenny recognizes that for Aquinas being is “a very general, very fundamental predicate which is part of the nature of everything,”⁵² and is related to general predicates similarly to how generalities are related to specifics. His argument leads Kenny to conclude that being is a common attribute possessed by any actual thing. He writes that “‘To be,’ so understood, seems to be the thinnest possible of predicate; to be, so understood, is to have that attribute which is common to mice and men, dust and angels.”⁵³ Kenny claims that it is due to the ‘thinness’ of the predicate ‘being’ in Aquinas that prevents being from constituting the essence of any subject, such as God.

Kenny admits that Aquinas applies *esse* to God in a different mode than to any mere thing.⁵⁴ Any given thing that exists does so precisely as something, while God simply exists

⁴⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 82.

⁵⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 82.

⁵¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 82-90.

⁵² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 91.

⁵³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 91.

⁵⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 94.

without a predicate as any thing. Kenny does not see this as valid, writing that “God isn't anything of any kind, he just is. But this is surely complete nonsense. For the only meaning that attaches to a formula such as God IS F is that if you substitute a genuine predicate for the dummy letter F, you will get a meaningful sentence.”⁵⁵ Kenny thinks that any meaningful existence statement must have a predicate, or, in other words, everything exists as something, and nothing exists without existing as something.

Kenny's critique holds a number of critical errors that interfere with his conclusion, including treatment of existence as univocal and misinterpretation of what Aquinas means when he writes that ‘God is God's existence.’ Feser points out that Kenny approaches Aquinas anachronistically in that Kenny seems to expect Aquinas to comply with post-Fregean logic.⁵⁶ Accordingly, Kenny makes the mistake of treating existence as univocal between God and things. God does not exist in the same way that finite beings exist. An analysis of how existence is predicated of the things we encounter in the world, therefore, has no bearing on how existence is predicated of God. Lubor Velecky writes that Kenny's analysis “is a mistake since ‘God’ is not the name of some entity in this world and the attribution of existence to God is not just glue attaching a predicate to a subject.”⁵⁷ Kenny's error is in his evaluation of Aquinas without taking the analogy of being into consideration and in expecting Aquinas to be sensitive to issues that developed centuries later. Since being applies to God differently than it applies to things, Aquinas can make an identity statement about God and being. Since the rules of naming God are different than the rules of naming things, an identity statement that God is being does not violate the naming logic that applies to ordinary things in the world.

⁵⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 94.

⁵⁶ Feser, *Aquinas*, 57-9.

⁵⁷ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae*, 88.

Kenny's ultimate critique is that the fourth way depends on Platonic participation and falls to the same critiques as Plato's theory of forms.⁵⁸ Kenny sees this as a corollary to the previous point that God is existence, specifically that God is *ipsum esse subsistens*. The principle example is that of heat, with the idea of heat being the truest and hottest heat that all other qualities of heat participate. Kenny sees Aquinas's example of heat and fire in the fourth way as evidence of Platonic participation. Of course, the fourth way differs in that instead of a quality such as heat, being is the idea in which all things participate, and that participation is in God. Kenny appeals to the DDS, noting that Aquinas demonstrates that God has no accidents because God is God's *esse*. Kenny connects this to the end of the fourth way, writing that "What all men call 'God,' on this account, is the Platonic idea of Being."⁵⁹ This conclusion ties back to the beginning of his chapter on the fourth way in which he expounds Plato's theory of forms as background and claims that Aquinas holds "a Platonism at the second remove,"⁶⁰ or a "vestigial Platonism."⁶¹ Kenny does not think that anything more is required in defeating the fourth way than to prove that there is a Platonic element present. He sees the various unidentified critiques of Plato's theory over the intervening centuries to be sufficient grounds to dismiss the fourth way over the Platonic element.

While the fourth way certainly does contain more Platonism than any other of the five ways, it falls far short of being a 'pure' Platonism and therefore more is required to defeat the fourth way than simply identifying the Platonic influence. Aquinas's metaphysics is a Platonic-Aristotelian synthesis inherited from both the Christian tradition (i.e., through Boethius) and the Arabic/Islamic/Jewish tradition (i.e., through Avicenna, Averroes, and Maimonides). The

⁵⁸ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 94-5.

⁵⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 94-5.

⁶⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 78.

⁶¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 79.

inheritance is not straightforward, and the critiques of Plato's theory of forms has prompted many thinkers over the centuries to attempt to address them. Feser points out that a Platonic reading of the fourth way poses many problems, some of which Kenny does not write about.⁶² The theory of participation at work in the fourth way is not Platonic participation but a version that is harmonized with Aristotle. This is especially the case since Aquinas rejects the Platonic notion that the ideas are separated substances.⁶³ Participation in Aquinas is not some sort of simple formal causality that explains the qualities in question. It is a participation through an efficient cause according to an exemplar form in the mind of God that is consistent with the notion of God as creator. This participation in being is not a one-time act at creation, but a continual creative act of preservation of being in each moment joining lower beings with higher beings.⁶⁴ The result is a metaphysical continuity of being as ontological entities are hierarchically ordered in the cosmos from least complete beings to more complete beings, from rocks to plants, to animals, to humans, to angels.⁶⁵ This hierarchy of being leads to self-subsistent being identified with God who holds being in a way that is analogical to being as predicated of any finite being. Aquinas's participation is a far cry from Platonic participation. Due to Kenny's lack of a specific critique of Platonic participation, it is sufficient as a rebuttal to point out that Aquinas was aware of Plato's difficulties and his theory takes those weaknesses into account as part of his solution.

The fourth way begins as a fact-demonstration from the observation that beings in the world are more or less good, noble, and true. Through the convertibility of transcendentals, this

⁶² Feser, *Aquinas*, 103-4.

⁶³ Urban, "Understanding St. Thomas's Fourth Way," 289.

⁶⁴ Feser, "Existential Inertia and the Five Ways," 237-267; see also Cornelio Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation," in *Selected Works of Cornelio Fabro, Vol. 1: Selected Articles on Metaphysics and Participation*, ed. Nathaniel Dreyer, (Chillum, MD: IVE Press, 2016, Kindle Edition), section VI, loc. 1818.

⁶⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 106-9.

is the same as saying that beings are more or less perfect or complete in being. The degrees of more or less being point toward self-sufficient being as providing the formal principle of finite beings. The self-sufficient being would be identified with God who holds the exemplar form of all creation as part of God's being by virtue of God's role as creator. All creation participates in God and receives form through God's efficient causal activity according to the proper exemplar form. A correct understanding of these points is sufficient to rebut critiques by Kenny and Dawkins as well as resolve the confusion of Martin.

The Fifth Way: The Demonstration from the Governance of the World

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. [1] We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and [1a] this is evident in their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. [1b] Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. [2] Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end unless it is directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; [2a] as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. [3] Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; [4] and this being we call God.⁶⁶

Like the fourth way, the fifth is easily misunderstood, but for different reasons. The language used in the fifth way calls to mind contemporary arguments from design, and the language of the intelligent design movement in particular.⁶⁷ This is especially the case due to references to things achieving their end 'designedly,' and to 'intelligence' found in the

⁶⁶ *ST I*, q2, a3.

⁶⁷ Feser, CFJ Martin, and Wippel all point this out. See Feser, *Aquinas*, 110-2; CFJ Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 180-3; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 480.

translation above. Richard Dawkins sees these references alone as justification to refrain from explaining the fifth way at all and refer the reader to a later chapter on contemporary design arguments.⁶⁸ Contemporary design arguments differ from the fifth way in that contemporary arguments are probabilistic while the fifth way is not, and the fifth way focuses on final causality while contemporary arguments do not. The contemporary view began in the 18th century with William Paley, who wrote about inferring design from biological systems. He inferred that integrated biological systems work together similarly to how a watch works and therefore there must be a designer for biological systems in the same way that a watch requires a designer. In contrast, Aquinas's fifth way works from perceived regularity and purpose in nature and the need for sustained ordering to establish and preserve that regularity. The fact that the concept of a final cause is out of favor today is likely the single biggest reason why the fifth way is misunderstood. As Martin puts it, "One of the things that has happened between Aquinas and ourselves has been the growth of a general disbelief in explanation in terms of what things are for."⁶⁹ In addition to the fact that design arguments do not employ final causality, there are other fundamental differences between the fifth way and design arguments, as Feser notes.⁷⁰ Design arguments are probabilistic, while the fifth way moves according to Aristotelian logic to a deductive conclusion based on the premises. Classic and contemporary design arguments are primarily epistemological, while the fifth way is first and foremost metaphysical. These differences establish the fifth way as something other than a 'design' argument as understood today. As a result, it is easy for contemporary readers to read design arguments into the fifth way.

⁶⁸ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 79.

⁶⁹ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 180.

⁷⁰ Feser, *Aquinas*, 111-2.

The fifth way focuses on final causality in nature, which pertains to the regularity, purpose, and ordering of beings. The idea of final causality solves the problem of how heterogeneous beings made of disparate elements can function both in themselves and with each other in an orderly manner.⁷¹ Aquinas argues in the *SCG* that “Contrary and discordant things cannot, always or for the most part, be parts of one order except under someone’s government, which enables all and each to tend to a definite end.”⁷² The final cause can be thought of both as the ordering principle by which a great diversity of causal agents are ordered according to the proper objects of their causal activity, and the reason why something unintelligent acts in a consistent manner. The action of non-cognitive entities is most immediately observed in biological systems, such as plants, that grow from seed or embryo toward a predetermined mature state.⁷³ Any motion or change, in general, is from a beginning state to an end state in a goal-directed manner. The potency of a given being can be actualized in many ways involving each causal principle.⁷⁴ The material principle provides the potency associated with matter, the formal principle provides the structural elements in a given being, and the efficient principle reduces a given being’s potency to actuality toward a given goal, purpose, or end.

Aquinas demonstrates in the fifth way that every agent acts for an end, which is also known as the principle of finality.⁷⁵ There are many sources in Aquinas’s writing that support the principle of finality. Aquinas considers any tendency to a particular end state as an intended end

⁷¹ Etienne Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution*, trans. John Lyon, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2009, 1984), 8-9, 12.

⁷² *SCG* I, cap. 13, [35].

⁷³ Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, 19.

⁷⁴ James Rooney, OP, “Reconsidering the Place of Teleological Arguments for the Existence of God in the Light of the ID/Evolution Controversy,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 83., 2010, 227-40; p. 229.

⁷⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 23; Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 36; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 481-2.

of action, regardless of whether the causal agent has cognition or volition.⁷⁶ As Aquinas describes it, “This intending is nothing other than the natural inclination to something.”⁷⁷ That toward which a given agent tends is a determinate principle governing an agent’s acts toward what is suitable for the agent.⁷⁸ The agent will not act without a principle to prompt action. The final cause is intrinsic to a given being. Every being acts according to and through its nature. The principle of action. As Hoffman writes, “an agent can do something in particular only if it is determined to one particular thing as opposed to some other particular thing.”⁷⁹ The determinate principle that guides an agent in its tendency toward action is the final cause, which itself is present in form. This guidance is the source of a regular tendency toward a particular action and therefore a principle behind the efficient causal action of the agent in its tending toward a particular act. Other beings can act extrinsically to support a given being in its movement toward an intrinsic final cause.⁸⁰ An example is that the sun, water, and minerals support the final cause of a seed’s development into a tree. The seed contains the intrinsic final cause of becoming a tree while receiving the extrinsic causality inherent in its environment in support of its final cause. The fact that the final cause guides the agent in its efficient causal action makes the final cause a higher cause or the cause of causes that sets all other causes into motion.⁸¹

The fact-demonstration in the fifth way begins in [1] with this observation that things fit together in an orderly fashion such that they regularly act or operate toward a goal or end. J.F. Donceel importantly notes that this is a restricted starting point in the sense that the claim is not

⁷⁶ *DPN*, c.3.

⁷⁷ *DPN*, c.3.

⁷⁸ *In Phy.* II, lec. 10.

⁷⁹ Paul Hoffman, “Does Efficient Causation Presuppose Final Causation? Aquinas vs. Early Modern Mechanism,” in *Metaphysics and the Good: Themes from the Philosophy of Robert Merrihew Adams*, Ed. by Samuel Newlands and Larry M. Jorgensen, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 296.

⁸⁰ Rooney, “Reconsidering the Place of Teleological Arguments...,” 232-3.

⁸¹ *In Phy.* II, Lec. 5; *DPN*, c.3.

that the whole has some sort of perfect harmony but that we see regularity in nature.⁸² In other words, final causality does not preclude chaotic elements. The fifth way explains the presence of hierarchically ordered causes and holds its own hierarchical organization.⁸³ Everything in the universe is related in some manner to everything else in the universe, and this relation is orderly, regular, and dependent. As Maritain writes, “Whether one considers the actions that they exert upon one another or the general movement of their history, things are thus seen to be engaged in a system of regular relations and oriented in a stably defined direction.”⁸⁴ Each ordered being is not causally indifferent but acts causally on other beings according to their natures to move beings from potency to actuality. Regularity and order are found among a wide range of beings with differing and sometimes oppositional natures.⁸⁵ It is the cooperative order among such disparate beings that counts here as remarkable.

Aquinas’s example of governance in [1a] is that natural things consistently act in the same way and this regularity offers good results. There is an intrinsic principle as part of the form of all beings directing beings in their act of being. Everything cooperates to produce and maintain cosmic order.⁸⁶ Regularity in natural beings is, of course, the regularity of the laws of nature.⁸⁷ Maritain notes that “it is a fact that the activities of all these beings follow regular courses, which are translated into the laws that our science establishes, and which give rise to recurrences of constant periodicity.”⁸⁸ The laws of nature intrinsically govern the behavior of all beings the known universe, preserving them in being and guiding them from potency to actuality. For instance, the four fundamental laws of nature were derived by scientists by observing

⁸² Donceel, *Natural Theology*, 46.

⁸³ C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 186.

⁸⁴ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 32.

⁸⁵ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 92-3.

⁸⁶ Copleston, *Aquinas*, 126.

⁸⁷ Donceel, *Natural Theology*, 47; Feser, *Aquinas*, 115; Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 31.

⁸⁸ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 31.

regularities in nature. Newton derived the laws of gravity by observing the regularity with which two material objects are drawn together. Such different objects as a star, a planet, an asteroid, and a space capsule all observe this regular power in such a way that all we can see operates together in a predictable way. We can even use the regularity of this law to assist space capsules in reaching their destinations throughout the solar system. Of course, there are many regularities among natural beings, and these regularities can be explained by the various laws of nature.

In [1b] Aquinas takes the regularity observed in nature as plain justification that it is a result of purpose rather than chance. Aquinas did not necessarily think of chance the same way that we do today. An example from Boethius illustrates Aquinas's thinking quite well.⁸⁹ Imagine a case in which a farmer tilling her field happens to overturn buried pirate treasure. It was never the farmer's intention to find treasure, nor was it the intention of the pirate to have it found. Neither the pirate nor the farmer had any intention for the farmer to find the treasure. Their intentions and tendencies lay in other directions, namely to farm and to secure treasure. The chance encounter that resulted in the farmer finding the treasure was the product of each individual following their own ends, but with an unintended outcome. This is an accidental joining of two events rather than an event as the result of a particular causal disposition. Thus, Aquinas defines chance or fortune as "a *per accidens* cause in those things which come to be in a few instances according to what is proposed for the sake of an end."⁹⁰ Chance relies on the underlying regularities already present in beings acting on final causality.⁹¹ Given this definition, it is easy to see why chance cannot explain the regularity and order found in things; chance itself cannot explain order and regularity since chance presupposes what is to be explained. This view

⁸⁹ Feser, *Aquinas*, 113; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 483.

⁹⁰ *In Phys.*, II, lec. 8.

⁹¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 483.

also entails that all events need not be attributed to an ordering principle.⁹² There are some things that are due to chance, and this does not negate final causality or the fifth way since chance is built upon ordering principles.

The ordering principle that creates the tendency in each being to operate in a consistent manner cannot be the result of chance; instead, it must be an immanent attribute of the formal nature of a given being.⁹³ Beings act in accordance with powers determined by their form. Since form determines action, then a regular tendency to act in a certain orderly way must be imbued immanent to the form of a given being. Aquinas writes that “The end is prior according to reason [*ratio*], but posterior in existence; the converse is true of the agent.”⁹⁴ The final cause is known in the mind of an intelligent agent prior to the existence of effect, while the agent exists prior to the effect. Anything that acts must exist in order to be in act and act in accordance with its form.⁹⁵ Any inclination to action would exist immanent to the form since the form regulates action. The final cause as an inclination to action would be intrinsic to the very being (*esse*) of beings (*ens*).⁹⁶

That the final cause is intrinsic to beings can be observed in the case of rational creatures who act according to their will or rational appetite.⁹⁷ The intention of the will immanent to the mind of the intellectual agent causes the agent to efficiently act in bringing about an effect. Things that do not possess intellect also possess a directing principle through their nature, which is the natural appetite. The illustration in [2a] of the archer shooting the arrow shows that arrows will move as directed by the archer even though the arrow possesses no intellect. The arrow itself

⁹² Feser, *Aquinas*, 114.

⁹³ *ST I*, q5, a5. See also Feser, *Aquinas*, 118; Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 36; C.F.J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas*, 190; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 484-5.

⁹⁴ *In Phys.*, II, lec. 5.

⁹⁵ *ST I*, q5, a5.

⁹⁶ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 485.

⁹⁷ *ST I-II*, q1, a2. See also Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 484-5.

cannot move as directed without an intelligence guiding it. Natural objects tend toward an end in their regular, orderly behavior in a similar way to how the arrow moves through an ordering principle.⁹⁸ Like the rational being, the natural object holds an intrinsic directing principle. The fact that non-rational beings are unaware of their end does not negate the immanent principle directing them toward their end.⁹⁹ The consequence is that non-rational beings or objects cannot direct themselves the way that rational beings are self-directed but can be directed by rational beings.

The association of goal-directedness with intelligence allows Aquinas to use [2] and [2a] to conclude in [3] that there is an intelligence governing all things toward their proper end. We find that nothing moves in an orderly and regular manner unless it is directed by some intelligence. Non-rational agents act with the regularity of intention, yet they do not have the rationality in themselves to explain their intentional behavior. Aquinas writes that “those things that lack reason tend to an end, by natural inclination, as being moved by another and not by themselves.”¹⁰⁰ The final cause is the end result of motion, which is a reduction of potency to actuality. The end directing the tendencies of non-rational beings or objects must derive from an external intelligence. Further, each object in its particular causal regularity is directed toward a particular end, and this end must be established by a universal governor. There must be a terminus to the sequence of government. As Aquinas illustrates, “thus the governor of a city, who intends the common good, moves, by his command, all the particular departments of the city.”¹⁰¹ It is reasonable to posit that such a series of governors necessarily ends with an ultimate governor for the same reason that the previously discussed hierarchical causal series does. The

⁹⁸ *ST I-II*, q1, a2.

⁹⁹ *ST I-II*, q1, a2.

¹⁰⁰ *ST I-II*, q1, a2.

¹⁰¹ *ST I-II*, q1, a2, *ad. 3*.

particular ends to which each object is ordered extend to the universal good as all goods participate in the universal good. Therefore, the governing end is the Divine Will as the universal good on the convertibility of transcendentals.

Aquinas's exposition on creation connects final causality, goodness, existence, and Divine Being. He begins his demonstration that God is the final cause with the maxim that every agent acts for an end.¹⁰² The being transmitting an attribute and the being receiving that attribute both intend the same outcome, which is to acquire goodness and perfection. This perfection and goodness is that of being, which is communicated to all creatures. Aquinas writes that "All things desire God as their end, when they desire some good thing, whether this desire be intellectual or sensible, or natural, i.e., without knowledge; because nothing is good and desirable except forasmuch as it participates in the likeness of God."¹⁰³ The final cause is God as provider of the goodness of being that all beings desire to acquire for themselves. On the convertibility of transcendentals, God as ultimate goodness is also self-subsistent being, which is most properly predicated of God as 'He Who Is.'

The fifth way ends with a self-subsistent source of being. As Feser notes, the final cause is immanent to the form of a given being.¹⁰⁴ The form as formal cause along with the material cause is conjoined in the act of existence as a given substance. Feser writes that "for a contingent thing to be real, its essence must be conjoined to an act of existence."¹⁰⁵ The ultimate cause of existence must be outside of a given existing being. The source of being must, therefore, have an essence that is identical to its existence in order to adequately serve as a source of being. The cause of inherent ordering immanent to the very being of beings thus must also have an identical

¹⁰² *STI*, q44, a4.

¹⁰³ *STI*, q44, a4, *ad.* 3.

¹⁰⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 118.

¹⁰⁵ Feser, *Aquinas*, 118.

essence and existence. Furthermore, if the final cause were not pure act, then it would be a composite being of act and potency. A composite being would be in potency toward an end and thus could not serve as an ultimate final cause, which would result in regress. There must be one single ultimate final cause whose essence is to exist or who is pure act with no potency to avoid regress.

Final causality appears in nature according to a hierarchical arrangement of beings moving from potency to act. Rooney argues for a hierarchical organization of final causes culminating in “a ‘prime’ final cause in the order of extrinsic final causality.”¹⁰⁶ Beings have intrinsic final causes, such as the acorn containing the potency to become an actual oak tree. The perfecting principle found in the form of the acorn is its final cause and relies on other beings with their own final causes to achieve its perfection as an actual oak tree. The acorn does not act alone to become the oak tree since it also requires sun, water, air, and nutrient-rich soil. Acorns are merely a good example; the same ontological dependence in the realm of final causality pertains to all finite beings. The intrinsic final cause guides beings to their perfection and requires the assistance of exterior beings who act according to their final causes. Beings reach the perfection of their final cause through movement from potency to actuality, as Rooney writes, “the achievement of the end is nothing other than the actualization of potency in the entity.”¹⁰⁷ Final causality is the end or goal of motion from potency to actuality in a given being. As Aquinas establishes in the first way, nothing can be moved from potency to act except through something already in act. Thus, by the demonstration in the first way, there cannot be an infinite regress in hierarchical extrinsic final causes. There must be an ultimate final cause whose

¹⁰⁶ Rooney, “Reconsidering the Place of Teleological Arguments...,” 232-5.

¹⁰⁷ Rooney, “Reconsidering the Place of Teleological Arguments...,” 234.

nature is pure self-subsistent actuality. With this in mind, the fifth way ends in [4] with the same classical conception of God as the other four ways.

Objections to the Fifth Way

As with the other four ways, Anthony Kenny levels a critique of the fifth way that includes the already familiar claim of a quantifier shift fallacy. He understands the premises of the fifth way better than some critics, such as Dawkins, in that he realizes that the fifth way is about regularities in nature that do not have to do with biological systems. Kenny writes that Aquinas “means the lifeless elements, and perhaps the plants and heavenly bodies.”¹⁰⁸ Later he reaffirms this understanding in a discussion of the regularity of heating and cooling.¹⁰⁹ Kenny is skeptical of the principle of finality, the idea that every agent acts for an end, and so posits a “more modest statement of the fifth way” based on non-intelligent biological entities.¹¹⁰ This biological emphasis leads to a discussion through contemporary terrain that seems to end in an impasse.¹¹¹ Unlike the impasse in contemporary theory, Kenny thinks that Aquinas can be easily framed as obviously fallacious using Aquinas’s example from spiders and birds. The idea is that non-rational animals are acting in a regular manner and there is no need to look for a directing intelligence from outside to explain their behavior; their apparently intelligent acts are sufficient to attribute directing intelligence internal to these creatures without an outside source.¹¹² Finally, Kenny argues that whatever ‘intelligence’ is behind final causality invalidly stretches the term ‘intelligence’ beyond reason.¹¹³ This section will, therefore, begin by looking at Kenny's accusation of a quantifier shift fallacy in the fifth way, move on to his critique of the principle of

¹⁰⁸ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 96-7.

¹⁰⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 100-1.

¹¹⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103.

¹¹¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103-18.

¹¹² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 118-19.

¹¹³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 119-20.

finality, the ‘easy’ refutation of Aquinas from the spiders and swallows example, and finally deal with the accusation that the ‘intelligence’ behind the fifth way defies the notion of intelligence.

Kenny yet again accuses Aquinas of committing the quantifier shift fallacy in the fifth way in Aquinas’s move from [1] and [1a] to [3]. Kenny’s critique is that Aquinas is invalidly moving from individual agents moved toward their own good end to conclude that there is one intelligence directing every agent.¹¹⁴ Kenny thinks that it is most plausible to interpret the fifth way as stating that individual things act for their own individual good rather than acting for the sake of the good of the universe as a whole. Since each thing acts for its own individual end, Kenny claims that the movement has a structure of going from a statement about individuals to a statement about the whole group. It would be like arguing that since every brick of a building weighs one pound, the entire building weighs one pound.

Kenny’s quantifier shift accusation can be addressed effectively through the convertibility of the transcendentals of being. The claim is that the jump from individuals moved toward their own good to the entire universe being moved toward a universal good. The Latin is “*ut consequantur id quod est optimum*,” which is translated as “so as to obtain the best result.”¹¹⁵ The Latin *optimum* is the adjectival form of *bonus* or good, indicating that every individual is directed to their own individual good. On the metaphysical theory that all goods are good by participation in the ultimate good, the individual good is related to the universal good by participation. Maritain points out that no agent would act if it were not for some good.¹¹⁶ The ultimate ordering of the universe is such that “The common good of the universe is better than the immediate good or end of any whatsoever of its parts.”¹¹⁷ Every part of the universe would

¹¹⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 97.

¹¹⁵ *ST I*, q2, a3.

¹¹⁶ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 36.

be oriented toward a goodness that is generally beneficial to all of nature, namely the continued existence of all that is. This common good would be oriented toward an ultimate goodness that is not directed to a higher goodness for causal regress reasons. A goodness that is not reliant on any further goodness as an end would necessarily be subsistent goodness itself. The ultimate good would be causally efficacious in bringing about all lesser goods through participation.

The result is a generally harmonious whole, which does not mean that every part is necessarily in harmony with every other part. The tendency of existing things toward the good of existence also means that there are secondary final causes that assist beings toward their end. An acorn receives assistance toward its final cause of becoming an oak tree through the action of soil, rain, and sun. The interdependence of all things produces an interdependent whole in which beings assist other being in continued existence. This does not mean that everything in the natural world always operates smoothly and harmoniously. Aquinas notes that error can appear in the natural world in the same way that an artist can make an error, “The same thing also happens in natural things in which monsters are, as it were, the errors of nature acting for the sake of something insofar as the correct operation of nature is deficient.”¹¹⁸ Error can occur in nature causing a deficiency in being and order.¹¹⁹ Aquinas defines evil a privation of being, of something that should be there but is not, such as blindness. The error and deficiency of being is part of the corruptibility of the universe and a requirement for the perfection of the universe allowing all grades of goodness to be realized.¹²⁰ The whole is good and providentially ordered but not in every part.¹²¹ Aquinas writes that “the whole itself, which is the universe of creatures, is all better and more perfect if some things in it can fail in goodness, and do sometimes fail, God

¹¹⁸ *In Phy.* Book II, lec. 14.

¹¹⁹ *ST I*, 48, a1.

¹²⁰ *ST I*, 48, a2.

¹²¹ *ST I*, 48, a2, ad. 3.

not preventing thing.”¹²² The corruptible nature of the universe means that it can fail and there can be error and deficiency of being. Since creatures are non-beings in themselves as they lack an intrinsic principle of being (*esse*), creatures are dependent on an external source of existence (*esse*). Thus, the continued existence of contingent beings (*ens*) marks the victory of being (*esse*) over non-being.

Aquinas does not commit a quantifier shift since there is a relation between the two terms under consideration. Through the hierarchical causal participation, all finite goods that serve as goals for action among agents are related to the ultimate subsistent good through participation. Further, each individual good can be considered to share in the ultimate subsistent Good through participation. Kenny’s accusation of a quantifier shift fails because the terms are causally related such that the individual goal is related to the ultimate goal. Instead of being a quantifier shift fallacy such as ‘each brick is one pound, therefore the building is one pound,’ Aquinas is making an argument more like ‘the painter painted each brick red; therefore, the entire building is red.’ The same goodness that makes every individual end good makes the entire hierarchical order of ends good.

Kenny levels a critique that cannot be easily dismissed on the underlying principle of the fifth way that every agent acts for some good or the principle of finality. Kenny attacks five arguments for the principle that every agent acts for an end derived from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.¹²³ He summarizes the five arguments as “one from the determinacy of action, one from the impossibility of acting for ever, one from the likeness between cause and effect, one from faults in nature, and one from the non-fortuitous production of good.”¹²⁴ Velecky raises two

¹²² *ST I*, 48, a2, ad. 3.

¹²³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 98-100.

¹²⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 99-100.

points in an attempt to dismiss Kenny, and his efforts, while illuminating, fall short of refuting Kenny. First, Velecky argues that an imperfection in one book does not necessarily apply to an argument in another. In other words, as Velecky puts it, “it is hard to see why any faults (even if they were proven) in book A should automatically discredit what is said in book B.”¹²⁵ Velecky’s second point is that since Aquinas does not explicitly invoke this principle in the fifth way, Kenny’s critique does not apply. While these are good points raised by Velecky, it also seems that they fall somewhat short for two reasons. First, it does seem that Aquinas assumes that all agents act for an end in the fifth way, and it is hard to consider the fifth way valid if this assumption is not granted. Second, it is valid to unpack the five ways in light of Aquinas’s many other writings in order to better understand a particular point, which is a common methodology employed by contemporary Thomists.

It is not necessary to refute Kenny’s critique of all five justifying arguments for the principle that all agents act for an end, for if even one of Aquinas’s arguments survives Kenny’s attack, then there is good reason to think that the principle is valid. Aquinas’s argument from determinacy of action seems to have a frequent appearance in his works, such as in the *De principiis naturae*, the commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, and the commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, as well as the *Summa contra gentiles*. Since the argument from determinacy seems to be Aquinas’s primary justification for the principle of finality, Kenny’s critique of this argument needs to be addressed. If the primary argument is shown to be valid, addressing Kenny’s critiques of the other arguments is unnecessary.

Kenny relies on Aquinas’s exposition in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* as justification for the principle of finality.¹²⁶ As Kenny notes, Aquinas’s definition of ‘end’ is crucial, “we call that

¹²⁵ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae*, 93-4.

¹²⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 98.

toward which the inclination of the agent tends the end.”¹²⁷ Aquinas sees the intended end as driving the agent even if the agent does not reach the end, such as a doctor who fails to make a patient well or a runner who fails to finish a race. Aquinas uses the archer/arrow analogy in the *SCG*, as he does in the fifth way. The archer in aiming for the target sets the end point for the arrow, and the arrow then has the target as its end.¹²⁸ The arrow has a definite end even though it does not have conscious intention like the archer. As the arrow has a definite end, so also does every agent whether or not the agent is conscious. Aquinas further clarifies the argument by invoking the causal principle that like causes like, and therefore the end is commensurate with the operative power of the agent. Aquinas gives the examples of hot objects heating and cold objects cooling. The agent has abilities or powers that enable it to reach a definite end and dictate the end proper to a given agent. Further, an action can terminate in the action itself, such as the act of understanding or sensing, or can end in making something, such as health or a building. Kenny writes “In either case—in all cases, in fact—the agent in acting tends towards (*intendat*) an end.”¹²⁹ Aquinas sees this as adequate to establish that any agent acting with an inclination toward a definite end intends this end ahead of the action.

Kenny critiques Aquinas's two types of acts, those that can be an end in themselves and acts that produce an outcome.¹³⁰ Kenny acknowledges that Aquinas has the regular activity of non-cognitive objects in mind, specifically “the paradigm he has in mind is hot bodies heating, cold bodies cooling, wet bodies wetting and dry bodies drying.”¹³¹ These are examples of acts that are ends in themselves. In the example of water freezing, the frozen state is being aimed,

¹²⁷ *SCG* III, cap. 2, [2].

¹²⁸ *SCG* III, cap. 2, [2].

¹²⁹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 98.

¹³⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 100-1.

¹³¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 100.

“but this amounts to saying that water freezes because it freezes.”¹³² Kenny then compares voluntary human actions against those of natural agents. Unlike a human agent, a natural agent does not act according to will, but because of a natural tendency.¹³³ Kenny thinks that it is invalid to posit ‘intend’ as a form of ‘wanting’ to non-cognitive objects, that a natural tendency in the object is sufficient explanation for the regular behavior of objects. Kenny writes that “In the case of natural agents, ‘A ϕ d as an end in itself’ collapses into ‘A ϕ d because A has a natural tendency to ϕ ’ as it does not in the case of intellectual agents. So much for the case where the act is an end in itself.”¹³⁴ He sees this appeal to natural tendency as enough to refute the idea that natural objects act for an end.

Kenny further critiques Aquinas from a linguistic standpoint. He notes that acts that bring about a product as a state of affairs rely on verbs oriented toward the end result, “e.g. to open the door is to bring it about that the door is open, to kill someone is to bring it about that he is dead.”¹³⁵ There are other verbs that describe acts in terms of the beginning state, such as “‘fall off,’ ‘run away from,’” and still others that do not reference either state, such as “‘wipe,’ ‘run,’ ‘fall,’ ‘move.’”¹³⁶ These linguistic considerations lead Kenny to the conclusion that Aquinas’s argument relies on a confusion between classes of verbs. He accuses Aquinas of confusing natural tendencies “specified by certain ends” with tendencies “for the sake of certain ends.”¹³⁷ Kenny seems to think that this confusion is sufficient to refute Aquinas, that only acting for the ‘sake of certain ends’ counts as goal-directed causality while natural tendencies ‘specified by certain ends’ do not count. In other words, only minds can intend a goal while non-mental beings

¹³² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 100.

¹³³ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 101.

¹³⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 101.

¹³⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 101.

¹³⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 101.

¹³⁷ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 101.

can only act from a specified tendency, which does not count as final causality. If correct, Kenny's critique would significantly undermine the underlying assumption in the fifth way that all things act for an end in [1].

Kenny's criticism misunderstands Aquinas's definition of final causality and the steps in the fifth way. Aquinas holds 'intend' and 'tendency' as the same, as he writes in the *DPN* "This intending is nothing other than the natural inclination to something."¹³⁸ The intending is not the intentional willing aspect of the Latin *intentio*, but the striving and stretching aspect. Aquinas clarifies this in the *ST*, writing that "Intention, as the very word denotes, signifies, 'to tend to something.' Now both the action of the mover and the movement of the thing moved, tend to something."¹³⁹ The 'intend' that Kenny views as 'wanting' actually refers to the tendency. Thus, the problem being addressed in the fifth way is to explain the presence of this natural tendency as the principle of ordering or governance in nature. Kenny's claim that a natural tendency is a sufficient explanation for said tendency's presence is to simply ignore the argument in the fifth way. Kenny seems to assume that natural tendencies exist without need of further explanation, while Aquinas moves to produce an explanation and support for natural tendencies. Aquinas draws on the similarity between how non-cognitive objects behave and are ordered with how intelligent creatures order the world around themselves to posit an ordering intelligence. Kenny thinks that Aquinas is guilty of a gross confusion in terms, but it seems that Kenny has simply missed the point that Aquinas is trying to make.

After critiquing the idea that all agents act for an end, Kenny moves on with a complex argument that Aquinas's fifth way is self-refuting.¹⁴⁰ Kenny thinks that he has successfully

¹³⁸ *DPN*, c.3. *et hoc intendere nihil aliud erat quam habere naturalem inclinationem ad aliquid.*

¹³⁹ *ST* I-II, q12, a1. See also Hoffman, "Does Efficient Causation Presuppose Final Causation?", 296.

¹⁴⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103-114.

shown that the arguments for all agents acting for an end are invalid.¹⁴¹ He thinks that a weaker version of the argument may have merit and should be tested, that “the more modest statement of the Fifth Way, that some things which lack consciousness act for the sake of an end seems acceptable as a premise if supported by the other examples drawn from the behavior of living things.”¹⁴² He tests this biological version in which the unconscious agents are moving toward an end are all biological non-cognitive beings, such as lower animals. Kenny thinks that whether the teleological behavior in animals can be reduced to mechanistic tendencies is a philosophically interesting question.¹⁴³ Kenny notes that for Aquinas there can be a mechanistic system of living organisms that is determined by the larger system as a whole in its finalities.¹⁴⁴

After exploring contemporary arguments in light of Aquinas, Kenny’s next comment is that “Aquinas’s own version of the argument, however, can be more briefly dealt with. For he seems to have sawn off the branch he was sitting on...”¹⁴⁵ According to Kenny, Aquinas’s failed argument begins with using the activities of spiders and swallows as an example.¹⁴⁶ Aquinas observed that spiders and swallows regularly make structures that are beneficial to each species. Since neither is intelligent, then the principle that derives their action must come from elsewhere. Aquinas’s conclusion is that “because they always act in the same way, it is clear that they do not act by intellect, but by nature.”¹⁴⁷ Kenny takes this as an admission on Aquinas’s part that the regular activity of spiders and swallows does not require a final cause as a deliberated end. He thinks that if regular behavior of this sort requires intelligence, then there is no good reason why

¹⁴¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103.

¹⁴² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103.

¹⁴³ He engages two contemporary authors before bringing the argument back to Aquinas. Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 103-118.

¹⁴⁴ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 114.

¹⁴⁵ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 118.

¹⁴⁶ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 118-19. Kenny cites *In Phys*, II, 259.

¹⁴⁷ *In Phys*, II, *lec.* 13, 259. Cited by Kenny, *Aquinas*, 119.

this intelligence cannot be provided by the spiders and swallows themselves rather than from an outside intelligence. According to Kenny, Aquinas simply gives no reason why we cannot consider animals sufficiently intelligent to regulate their own behavior without recourse to another intelligence.

Kenny's critique of Aquinas misses the point by ignoring important aspects of Aquinas's argument.¹⁴⁸ In the example from spiders and sparrows, Aquinas is giving five demonstrations that nature acts for an end. These are similar but different from the ones Kenny already addressed from the *SCG*. Contrary to Kenny's assertion, in this particular argument using spiders and sparrows Aquinas does give a 'good reason' for us to believe that the creatures under question do not have an individual deliberative intelligence. Aquinas observes that spiders make their webs in exactly the same way every time. This in itself is sufficient proof that they act without intelligence, because intelligent builders vary their design based on conscious deliberation while non-cognitive animals do not. Aquinas points out that "not every builder makes a house in the same way, because the artisan judges the form of the thing built and can vary it."¹⁴⁹ Intelligent creatures engage in similar activities for a similar reason but the variety in intellectual processes and artistic judgment means that each of the creations is unique. In contrast, the structures built by spiders and sparrows do not vary in their extreme similarity from individual to individual. In other words, the mechanical similarity in action across individuals in a species shows that the activity in question is part of their nature rather than derived from intelligence. There may be some intelligence in these creatures, but the sheer similarity in

¹⁴⁸ Velecky has his reply to Kenny, but it seems insufficient. See Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae*, 94.

¹⁴⁹ *In Phys II, lec. 13, 259.*

behavior shows that the behavior does not derive from their own intelligence. Aquinas offers this as the proof that Kenny asks for, that such creatures are not acting under their own intelligence.

Kenny's final critique is that it is difficult to conceive of the type of intelligence invoked in the fifth way.¹⁵⁰ He thinks that it is "much easier to conceive of an intelligence incarnate in the body that exhibits the purposive behaviour than it is to conceive of a discarnate controlling intelligence."¹⁵¹ It is easy to see how human beings can manipulate the world to achieve certain ends and direct purposeful action. Kenny likens a disembodied intelligence to the idea of psychokinesis in humans, the idea that someone can project their will to manipulate the world at a distance. Especially difficult for psychokinesis is how the will can have a causal influence on the world without recourse to bodily action. Kenny thinks that the intelligence appealed to in the fifth way poses an even more serious problem than even that of psychokinesis. Kenny writes that "The concept of intelligence has to be extended very much further if we are to speak of an intelligence whose normal mode of operation is not bodily at all, and whose field of operation is the whole of heaven and earth."¹⁵² Kenny's final critique amounts to the observation that the intelligence in the fifth way is entirely different from any sort of intelligence that we human beings are familiar with. He thinks that the incomprehensibility of such an intelligence counts as a defeater for the fifth way.

Far from being a defeater of the fifth way, an incomprehensible God is a crucial notion in Aquinas's theological tradition. The question after the five ways addresses the doctrine of divine simplicity. The third article of the third question establishes that God is entirely simple with no composition whatsoever.¹⁵³ The doctrine of divine simplicity is the keystone of Aquinas's

¹⁵⁰ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 119-20.

¹⁵¹ Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 119.

¹⁵² Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 120.

¹⁵³ *ST I*, q3, a1.

negative theology. Divine simplicity builds on the five ways to elucidate what we can know about God from examining what God is not. The five ways establish that God is pure act with no potentiality, which is to say that God is absolute. An absolute God lies proportionally outside of the conceptual ability of human beings who must use concepts derived from the finite world in cognition. The lack of proportionality results in the incomprehensibility of God, which is not to say that human beings can know nothing of God. As Eleonore Stump points out, “in the course of showing what God is not, Aquinas relies heavily on positive claims about God.”¹⁵⁴

Specifically, we can know something of God through God’s effects, which is the principle driving all of the five ways. The fifth way focuses on identifying God as the cause of order and the regular operation of objects in the universe. Considering divine simplicity and the difficulty in comprehending God, it should come as no surprise that the intelligence in the fifth way lays outside of human experience or comprehension. Contrary to counting against the fifth way, one should expect an alien conception of intelligence. God as absolute holds absolute intelligence, which is proportionally outside of human understanding, but this does not mean that human beings cannot understand that intelligence as causally efficacious in the realm of order.

Aquinas’s methodology in the five ways for demonstrating whether God exists takes an incomprehensible God into account. Indeed, the employment of the fact-demonstration method by Aquinas in each of the five ways shows that Aquinas is taking the sheer difference between God and human beings into account. When an effect is more known than a cause, such as creation more known than God, then one can build a fact-demonstration using the effect in place a definition.¹⁵⁵ The fifth way should be expected to move from the known effect of intelligible

¹⁵⁴ Stump, Eleonore, “God’s Simplicity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, edited by Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 136.

¹⁵⁵ ST I, q2, a2, *ad. 2.*

final causes to an incomprehensible intelligence as the first principle of all order and purpose.

The very difference that Kenny has observed is, therefore, driving the method of demonstration in the fifth way. Far from establishing a valid criticism of the fifth way, Kenny has instead simply observed one of Aquinas's theological commitments at work. That Kenny does not share this commitment or find Aquinas's God conceivable does not invalidate the fifth way or any of the five ways.

Chapter Six: The Function of the Five Ways in the *ST*

Are the five ways primarily, or solely, a means into the intelligibility of the term ‘God’ or are they primarily, or solely, proofs of the existence of God? This chapter will work to answer this question by tying together the preceding chapters to argue that the five ways serve a dual purpose to provide intelligibility to the term ‘God’ and demonstrate that an intelligible world requires a first principle. The first section will analyze the common structure of the five ways. It will move beyond the fact-demonstration syllogistic structure that is well documented to show that the five ways are primarily metaphysical in orientation. The second section will examine the five ways as causal demonstrations. The third section will examine the construction of contemporary theistic proofs and compare the five ways to contemporary proofs. This section will look at work on theistic proofs by Stephen T. Davis and Richard Swinburne, and then examine arguments about the nature of the five ways from James Higgens, Fergus Kerr, Rudi Te Velde, and Lubor Velecky. The final section constitutes some concluding remarks.

Epistemic and Metaphysical Commonalities in the Five Ways

It is well known that the five ways follow the epistemic structure laid out in the *PA* as fact-demonstration.¹ This section will start with this common element that begins with the empirical facts of effects in need of causal explanation. Aquinas’s commitment to the incomprehensibility of God necessitates his use of the fact-demonstration method. This method relies on both the principle of causality and the elimination of infinite regress to yield results. Each of the five ways hold a metaphysical orientation in that they each turn on the existential dependence of finite beings. This is seen in the connection between the five ways and Aquinas’s

¹ Since it is well known that the five ways are curated from other sources and adapted to Aquinas’s unique contributions to metaphysics, this section will not comment on the sources of the five ways. For instance, see Edward Sillem, *Ways of Thinking About God*, 56-9,

metaphysical principles through which Aquinas shows that each causal series is causally dependent on an uncaused cause outside of the series. The common outcome of each is that existentially dependent beings require self-subsistent being, which is equated with God.

The two difficulties presented in the articles immediately ahead of the five ways are whether or not God's existence is self-evident and whether a demonstration of God's existence is possible.² That God exists is self-evident from the standpoint that God's essence is existence, which is the self-evidence derived from the presence of the predicate within the nature or definition of the subject.³ Examples include defining a triangle as a three-sided figure or claiming that human beings are animals. Unlike the examples given, human beings do not know the nature of God and therefore are unable to define 'God.' This is not to say that humanity is bereft of knowledge of God, but that the knowledge we do have is only a general and confused understanding of God.⁴ Aquinas uses the example that "just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching."⁵ The five ways have in common this assumption that the meaning of the term 'God' is not intuitive. The definition of the middle term, 'God,' is unknown, and this spurs Aquinas to use the fact-demonstration method as the only method available when the middle term is undefined.

In all five ways, Aquinas works through the fact-demonstration method without knowing the essence of 'God,' since this method does not rely on the essence or definition of 'God' as a middle term.⁶ A fact-demonstration relies on the principle of causality that effects hold some similarity to the cause, working from effects to cause based on the principle of causality. The

² See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of question 2, articles 1 and 2.

³ *STI*, q2, a1.

⁴ *STI*, q2, a1, ad. 1.

⁵ *STI*, q2, a1, ad. 1.

⁶ *STI*, q2, a1 & a2. See also Chapter3.

reliance on the principle of causality is a key common element to all five ways.⁷ Since there is no deep understanding of the middle term, the fact-demonstration method does not result in a metaphysically deep analysis; however, it does allow Aquinas to develop a preliminary definition of ‘God’ that can be used in later why-demonstrations. The emphasis on an effect as the starting point gives each of the five ways an initial point of departure from finite being that is naturally accessible for human cognition. The principle of causality allows the fact-demonstration method to yield its results. Aquinas can then examine different observable attributes of finite being and work toward the cause sufficient to explain the particular mode, or aspect, of finite existence that constitutes the starting point. As the effects used in the fact-demonstration method are all observable effects, the method can be rightly classified as empirical in nature, as is often noted in the secondary literature.⁸

The structure of each of the five ways is the same even as they each begin with a different mode or aspect of finite being. Each mode of finite being is an effect that stands in as a definition of God in the fact-definition method. Aquinas works from the effects according to the principle of causality to move from finite beings to self-subsistent being as sufficient cause of the being of finite beings. The first way begins with the entire order of motion or change in general as an effect. The second way begins with the hierarchy of efficient causes as an effect generating the being of beings. The third way begins with the existence of finite beings that do not hold their own intrinsic existence as an effect. The fourth way begins with transcendental qualities of being as an effect. The fifth way begins with the regularity found in nature due as part of the existence and operation of finite beings as an effect. Each of these effects requires a first principle of being

⁷ Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 76; Garrigou-Lagrange, 135; Donceel, 49.

⁸ Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 76; Velecky, 55; Copleston, 130; Donceel, 48; Garrigou-Lagrange, 136.

that is not inherently contained within the effect and thus requires a sufficient existential exterior cause.

The five ways all rely on the idea that infinite causal regress is impossible in the realm of hierarchical causes.⁹ A hierarchical cause is one that presently causally operates in preserving the existence of a given finite being. This contrasts with an accidental cause, which is a cause responsible for some change in a finite being, but is not causal for continued existence, although it can accommodate the initial moment of existence. Aquinas admits that it is possible to have an infinite causal regress in an accidental causal series but denies this in a hierarchical causal series. An example of an accidental causal series is a series of human descendants. Each descendant is produced into existence by an ancestor, but the ancestor does not continue to support the existence of the descendant. There may be a few ancestors alive at the time of the youngest descendant, but the entire ancestral chain does not exist simultaneously since existence is not an intrinsic quality passed along in the causal series. Since an accidental causal series does not result in an actual infinite multitude, it is possible for the accidental series to exist as an actual infinite temporal sequence. In contrast, the hierarchical causal series is one in which an effect relies on multiple current causes to preserve the existence of the effect. An example is a stone moved by a stick moved by a hand.¹⁰ The hierarchical series has to terminate with a source of current being; otherwise, there would be an actual infinite multitude of beings. The hierarchical series is that the series itself does not contain its own principle of existence and operation. Thus, a hierarchical series of efficient causes does not itself contain either the principle by which the series exists or by which the series is able to operate as a series of efficient causes. Since each of the five ways connects to the first principle for hierarchical causal structures, and hierarchical

⁹ Velecky, 56; Donceel, 48; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 76.

¹⁰ *ST I*, q46, a2, ad. 7.

causality is causal activity related to continued existence in the present moment, the five ways pertain to the existential dependence of all being on subsistent being in each moment.

The concept of hierarchical regress is common to all five ways. Aquinas eliminates the possibility of hierarchical causal regress overtly in the first three ways and implicitly in the fourth and fifth ways.¹¹ The first and second ways contain overt arguments against infinite hierarchical regress. The third way contains two movements with different arguments regarding causal regress. The first movement argues in light of accidental causal regress in time. Since an accidental causal series does not contain its own principle of existence, it cannot be maintained in infinite temporal extension. An accidental causal series is theoretically possible but must itself be maintained by a hierarchical first cause in each moment, which is an oblique connection with hierarchical causality. The second movement of the third way overtly invokes an argument against infinite hierarchical causation in the cause of necessity for necessary beings.

The fourth way does not explicitly argue against an infinite hierarchical causal series; however, the hierarchical series is present, and the argument against an infinite series can be considered implied along with efficient causality in the second movement of the fourth way. The presence of a hierarchical series is apparent from the very mention of grades of being.¹² The presence of efficient cause appears where Aquinas writes that “the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus.”¹³ The second way establishes that efficient causality relies on the hierarchical series of efficient causes, which cannot go to infinity. The principle of consistent interpretation for the fourth way entails that the efficient cause mentioned in the fourth way is also part of a hierarchical series and cannot to go infinity. The fifth way also does not hold an

¹¹ See chapters 4 and 5.

¹² Feser, *Aquinas*, 106; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 471; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 74.

¹³ *ST I*, q2, a3.

explicit argument against an infinite hierarchical causal series, yet the hierarchical series and argument against the infinite are likewise present. As an argument from the causal universal order, the fifth way can be construed as explaining the very ordering of any hierarchically ordered causal series. The order and regular causal operation of causal powers among finite beings is the hallmark of hierarchical ordering. That the hierarchical causal order requires an ultimate governor entails that any given hierarchical causal order cannot contain its own principle of order or being and must obtain that being from the external source of ordered being. Thus, the entire fifth way can be construed as an argument entailing that any given hierarchical causal order cannot go on for infinity.

Each of the five ways identifies a principle of being that is not intrinsic to a given causal series, thus requiring a source of being from outside of the causal series under consideration. Each of the five effects under consideration in the five ways is an effect related to the being of finite beings. Each hierarchical causal series under consideration does not contain within itself the principle of its own causal operation sufficient to sustain the being of the causal series. Therefore, each of the five ways ends by identifying the cause of the effect under consideration as self-subsistent being. The hierarchical series of movers must obtain its principle of existence from outside the series, which is the unmoved mover or self-subsistent actuality with no potency. The hierarchical series of efficient causes must have an external principle of being that is itself uncaused or self-subsistent being. The hierarchical series of contingent beings must obtain its principle of being not just from a necessary being but from a necessary being whose necessary existence is self-subsistent. The hierarchical series of grades of the transcendental qualities of being does not itself contain the ultimate principle from which the grades of being in the series derive their likeness. The grades of being must have as their source self-subsistent being for

which the grades are a likeness. Finally, the very ordered existence of hierarchical causes as the ordering of things toward their proper ends requires an extrinsic principle by which they are ordered. This intrinsic principle must itself be subsistent good to which all is ordered as to an end, which on the convertibility of transcendentals is also subsistent being itself.¹⁴

The intrinsic principle of being behind each of the five ways is part of their common metaphysical and existential orientation toward demonstrating the cause and preservation of existence among finite beings in every moment. The preservation of finite being in existence in the present is helpfully labeled by Edward Feser as the Doctrine of Divine Conservation.¹⁵ Each of the five ways demonstrates the existential conservation of finite being through different metaphysical principles from effect to cause. The conclusion of a metaphysical/existential reading of the five ways turns on key metaphysical principles, such as hierarchical causality, the essence/existence distinction, the act/potency distinction, and the matter/form distinction.¹⁶ Hierarchical causality by its very hierarchical nature establishes that the temporal location of each of the five ways is the present moment. The first way depends on the act/potency distinction demonstrating from the movement of potency to actuality that there must be a first principle of actuality by which this very distinction operates.¹⁷ The second way depends on the essence/existence distinction demonstrating from finite beings composed of essence and existence to that which is being itself. The third way depends on the matter/form distinction as it demonstrates through the material contingency of finite beings to necessary being in the first movement. The material principle is involved in the second movement from the sense that the

¹⁴ Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1995), pp. 30-2.

¹⁵ Edward Feser, "Existential Inertia and the Five Ways," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 85, No. 2, April 2011, 237-67; 239.

¹⁶ Gilson emphasizes the essence/existence distinction. See Gilson, "The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas," 82, as does Owens, 138-40.

¹⁷ Edward Feser, "Existential Inertia and the Five Ways," 240.

essence/existence structure of necessary beings is the intelligible matter when considered mereologically.¹⁸ The fourth way relies on the essence/existence and matter/form distinctions, demonstrating that the formal transcendental qualities of being exist in finite beings by participation in a perfect exemplar form, which is perfect self-subsistent being. The fifth way likewise depends on the essence/existence and matter/form distinctions, demonstrating that the goal directness inherent in the essences of finite beings as conjoined with matter and given actuality requires an ordering toward the ultimate transcendental good that grants being and orders finite being to itself, which must be self-subsistent being. The common metaphysical orientation of the five ways leads each way to ground principles of the effect under consideration in self-subsistent being, which Aquinas identifies as God in the conclusion to each. The identification of God with self-subsistent being is the formal constitution of the divine nature from which he later derives the divine attributes.¹⁹

This review of the common elements of the five ways shows that while Aquinas has formatted them according to Aristotelian logic, they are primarily metaphysical in their orientation with an emphasis on the cause of existence of finite beings. The point of each of the five ways is that the cause of the existence of finite beings is self-subsistent being. Aquinas identifies self-subsistent being as God. This existential/metaphysical emphasis is critical for understanding the manner in which the five ways are demonstrations.

The Five Ways as Causal Demonstrations

Considering the systematic thought of Aquinas, it is likely quite reasonable to abstain from skepticism on the issue and look for an organizing principle behind the five ways. Since there does seem to be evidence for a logical structure to the five ways, the issue at hand is to

¹⁸ *In PA II*, lec. 9. See Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Garrigou-Lagrange, 160-1; Velecky, 59-60.

argue for a structure based on the four causes. There is no dispute among interpreters that the five ways are causal arguments; rather, the dispute is whether the four causes are the organizing principle behind the five ways.²⁰ The conclusion of each of the five ways holds that self-subsistent being is the only adequate causal explanation for each effect under consideration allows Aquinas to predicate God as the ultimate cause for each way. It seems that the five ways are a systematic examination of causality leading to a first principle for change in general and in each causal series that ultimate consists of self-subsistent being. This would connect directly to the doctrine of creation, with creation framed as the causal emanation of being with self-subsistent being providing the existential principle sustaining each of the four casual orders. The connection to creation leads credence to the ending point of each of the five ways naming the self-subsistent being as ‘God.’ It is the connection with creation and the conclusions of each way with a God who is self-subsistent existence that allows the five ways to name ‘God.’

The five ways operate as demonstrations according to two modes, which are the mode of predication and the mode of epistemic demonstration. The mode of predication allows the five ways to yield a nominal definition of God that Aquinas then uses later in the *ST* as part of further demonstration. The mode of epistemic demonstration does not prove the full Christian God, but only the need for a cause of being in each causal order. The causal view of the five ways allows them to fit into Aquinas’s doctrine of creation, and the connection of creation and causality is key to interpreting the five ways as a mode of predication. Since the ultimate cause in each of the five ways is self-subsistent being, the five ways can then be framed as a preambular way to think about God from natural theology that coheres with the doctrine of creation. At the same time, the five ways move epistemologically from finite beings to self-subsistent being. Due to their widely

²⁰ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 136.

recognized epistemic aspect, the five ways hold some validity as demonstrations from metaphysical principles to the existence of God, while holding a preeminent preambular role in predicating God for the purpose of further theological dialectic.

Aside from the common individual structural elements of the five ways, they exhibit a structure when taken together. In addition to the individual value and validity of each of the five ways as a stand-alone demonstration, when viewed together as a unit they can be interpreted as a systematic examination of change in general and the four causes that are involved in change. Yet, the connection between the five ways and the four causes is not universally recognized amongst important commentators on Aquinas. John Wippel is skeptical of any attempt to find a logical structure to the five ways and writes of the four causes theory that “Such attempts strike me as being forced.”²¹ It is generally acknowledged that the greatest difficulty comes in making the connection between the five ways and material causality.²² In addition, there are alternative propositions regarding the organizing principle of the five ways. Mark Johnson and Fr. Lawrence Dewan both think that the organizing principle behind the five ways derives from Aristotle’s metaphysics rather than from the four causes.²³ They both have important considerations of how the five ways treat the act/potency distinction that must be addressed.

It does seem generally consistent with the thought of Aquinas that the five ways would have some structure. Dewan points out that Aquinas is presenting the *ST* in an order best suited to learning the material and so we should expect to find such order.²⁴ Harold Johnson points out the textual evidence for a unifying theme to the five ways through a comparison between

²¹ Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 498.

²² Harold Johnson, 139; Wippel, 499.

²³ Mark Johnson, “Why Five Ways?”, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 65, 1991, 107-21; Lawrence Dewan, *The Downside Review*, vol. 92, issue 306, (Jan., 1974), pp. 1-18.

²⁴ Dewan, 1-2.

demonstrations for God's existence in the *ST* and the *SCG*.²⁵ Aquinas elucidates four demonstrations in the *SCG* that are elaborated to differing degrees and comparable to the first, second, fourth, and fifth ways. In contrast, the demonstrations in the *ST* are tighter and more symmetrical with the precise numerical labeling. Further, the beginning of the *SCG* states that these are ways that thinkers *have* proved God exists, while the *ST* Aquinas uses the language that God *can* be proved in five ways. Harold Johnson writes that "in a philosopher as systematic as St. Thomas, the explicit assertion that these possible ways come to five suggests that we have here something more than a random collection of arguments that he happens to have encountered or devised, and to have regarded as being valid."²⁶ With this data in mind, it does seem that there is indeed a logical structure to the five ways.

Daniel De Haan makes a compelling historical case that Aquinas was following Avicenna in connecting the five way to the four causes, although he leaves the first way unaddressed.²⁷ There was a common goal among Aquinas and other thinkers of the era, such as Avicenna and Averroes, who wished to connect the aitiological, ontological, and theological studies of being.²⁸ De Haan's thesis is that Aquinas was following Avicenna's lead in this instance, which is bolstered by the well-known fact that Avicenna held a positive influence on Aquinas in many areas, especially in Aquinas's development of the essence/existence distinction.²⁹ Avicenna used Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to argue for the finitude of each of the four causal series at the beginning

²⁵ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 135.

²⁶ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 135.

²⁷ Daniel De Haan, "Why the Five Ways? Aquinas's Avicennian Insight into the Problem of Unity in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and *Sacra Doctrina*," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 86, 2013, 141-58.

²⁸ De Haan, "Why the Five Ways?," 142-4.

²⁹ This fact is generally recognized along with the fact that Aquinas regularly criticized Averroes and Avicenna. He writes that "However much has passed from Avicenna and his group into St. Thomas Aquinas, he rarely cites them except to criticize them." See Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, Chapter 1.

of his own demonstration for God's existence.³⁰ Avicenna's argument was that each casual series required a termination in the first cause. The finite nature of each causal order requires the efficient casual activity of a creator, which Avicenna identifies as God. De Haan points to Aquinas's development of the second through fifth ways as parallel to Avicenna's argument.³¹ The parallel seems applicable since, as elucidated in chapters four and five, the third, fourth, and fifth ways connect not merely to material, exemplar, and final causality, respectively, but also to efficient causality. The second movements of the third and fourth ways appeal to efficient causality as part of their conclusions, and in the implication in the fifth way is that the end toward which things are directed must be the result of efficient causal activity.

In addition to the historical contextual argument of De Haan, Harold Johnson gives an argument connecting the five ways and four causes from the texts of Aquinas.³² Johnson begins by suggesting that the term 'cause' has been skewed through Hume to mean solely efficient causality "seeing no connection other than spatio-temporal contiguity between 'cause' and 'effect.'"³³ He, therefore, advocates that a better term to describe Aquinas's five ways is 'condition.' Johnson frames the five ways as describing the necessary conditions required for the existence of the effects we encounter in our experience of the world. The existence of every existing thing is conditioned by efficient, formal/exemplar, material, and final causes. Each of these conditions can be traced back to an origin point sufficient for the existence of such conditions, namely a conditioning agent who is not conditioned. Every existing thing, or

³⁰ De Haan, "Why Five Ways?," 146-7.

³¹ De Haan, "Why Five Ways?," 147.

³² Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes." In *Studies in medieval culture*, 3, 135-144. Kalamazoo, MI: The Medieval Institute of Western Michigan Univ, 1970.

³³ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 136.

creature, is therefore dependent on the unconditioned conditioner. Each effect derives its concrete being from self-sufficient being.

According to Johnson, the key that links the five ways to the four causes is Aquinas's treatise on creation in the *ST*.³⁴ Aquinas affirms that "God is the efficient, the exemplar, and the final cause of all things, and since primary matter is from him, it follows that the first principle of all things is one in reality."³⁵ The five ways establish creaturely dependence on an unconditioned and self-sufficient source of being for the various causes that condition the being of creatures. Each way ends with describing the self-sufficient source of being in the result as "God." Such a predication is proper considering that God is self-sufficient being and that Christian theology affirms God as creator of each causal hierarchy.³⁶ Rudi Te Velde concurs, noting that "Thomas reasons from creatures to God as their cause, and from God to everything else as being created by God."³⁷ Human beings know the cause through the effect and the effect through the cause such that one is not intelligible without the other. Rather than being circular, knowledge of cause and effect has the character of a dialectic that can only be known from within the circle. As Te Velde writes, "One cannot understand the effect as effect except from the cause, while the knowledge of the cause depends on the effect."³⁸ It is an understanding of being that mediates knowledge of cause and effect, and the five ways provide a philosophical understanding of being that mediates God as cause and creation as effect; neither is intelligible without the other.

Having established that the five ways comport with the doctrine of creation as creatures depend on an exterior source of being, Harold Johnson moves on to connect each way

³⁴ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 137.

³⁵ *ST I*, q44, a4, *ad. 4*.

³⁶ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 137.

³⁷ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 132.

³⁸ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 132.

specifically to its corresponding causal series, except for the first way.³⁹ The second and fifth ways indisputably involve efficient and final causation. Since there is no real controversy over these two ways and their correspondence to efficient and final causation, Johnson has no real need to make a case for them. The second way overtly works from efficient causality, and the fifth way invokes final causality though its argument from “the governance of the world.”⁴⁰ The third and fourth ways require greater explanation to connect them to material and formal causality, respectively.

Johnson argues that the fourth way connects to formal causality through the transcendental perfections of being.⁴¹ The exemplar form contains all the perfections of being proper to each created being. The transcendental perfections are the comparative qualities of “good, true, novel, and the like.”⁴² Created beings have greater and lesser transcendental perfections to the degree to which they are actual in comparison to their respected exemplar forms. It is the actuality of things that connect to their form, as Johnson writes, “a thing is ‘actual’ in proportion as it possesses ‘form.’”⁴³ Any given created being holds its transcendental attributes by virtue of its form, since any given finite being holds its being in different degrees of perfection, or completeness, according to its degree of actuality in comparison to its form. The perfections of all things are in God as exemplar and have actuality to the degree in which they participate in God as the ground of being, and therefore God is the source of being in terms of formal causality.

³⁹ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 137.

⁴⁰ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 137.

⁴¹ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 138.

⁴² Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 138.

⁴³ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 138.

Johnson next turns his attention to the third way, which he admits is the most problematic for his thesis since he must connect it to material causality.⁴⁴ The other ways are able to conclude with God as the primal source of being as related to the cause. Aquinas is perfectly comfortable claiming that God is the first efficient cause, exemplar cause, or final cause. Any attempt to do the same with material causality runs the risk of equating God with material cause or prime matter, which would equate the traditionally immaterial God with matter. Indeed, Aquinas specifically eliminates the possibility of God as composed of matter and form in the second article of question three, which pertains to divine simplicity,⁴⁵ where he makes his case by invoking the arguments and conclusions of several of the five ways.⁴⁶

Johnson is keenly aware of these issues and argues that the third way is connected to material causality through Aquinas's understanding of the key term, 'necessity.'⁴⁷ The term 'necessity' should not be considered according to either contemporary modal logic or in terms of the ontological argument. Johnson points out that in the third way necessity should be taken "as involves some pre-existents as necessary conditions of encountered existents."⁴⁸ Every materially existing thing that we encounter is composed of matter that exists prior to said existing thing. The first movement of the third way relies explicitly on generation and corruption, which is related to materiality through the principle that material things are generated from previously existing material things. Aquinas affirms the connection of materiality and the possibility of nonexistence in the *QDP* wherein he explicitly notes that only material beings have the possibility of nonexistence as inherent within their very nature.⁴⁹ He, therefore, frames the

⁴⁴ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 139.

⁴⁵ *ST I*, q3, a2.

⁴⁶ See chapter 1.

⁴⁷ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 140.

⁴⁸ Harold Johnson, "The Five Ways and the Four Causes," 140.

⁴⁹ *QDP* q5, a3. The passage is quoted in chapter 3.

first movement of the third way as proving that the pre-existing matter relies on something outside of itself for its existence. This something at this stage could potentially be prime matter. The second movement of the third way demonstrates that this material principle derives its principle of existence from an external source. The eternal existence of matter would require an intrinsic principle for its sustained existence, and the second movement of the third way disproves this possibility. Aquinas is able to connect God as the source of matter without equating God with matter.⁵⁰

The first way poses its own difficulties for connecting the five ways to the four causes in that it seems unnecessary for Aquinas to exposit five ways when it seems that he only really needs four in order to make his point. As Johnson puts it, “if it really is possible to assign each of the other *viae* to considerations arising from each of the four causes, should there be a fifth, and seemingly superfluous, way?”⁵¹ Johnson offers two explanations of why the first way both comes first and fits within the five ways/four causes schema. The first way engages causality in a more general mode than the other four ways. The first way demonstrates from any change such that it is not specific to any particular causal series. The connection of the first way with change in general allows it to work as a general demonstration encompassing the remaining four ways. Since the first way is from any reduction of potency to actuality, the first way does not concern itself with the cause of a given act/potency reduction. The subsequent ways can, therefore, be four demonstrations of the causes of motion. The first way is also where Aquinas introduces the important principle in the five ways that what exists must be conditioned in its existence by that which itself is unconditioned.⁵² In other words, the reduction of potency to actuality must come

⁵⁰ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 140. See chapter three for an extended discussion about connecting the third way to material causality that includes engagement with critics.

⁵¹ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 141.

⁵² Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 141.

about through the action of that which already holds the actuality in question. Second, the first way sets up the origin of the being of created beings as outside of the order of created beings. Johnson writes that the first way establishes that “God stands related to all causal orders primarily as their maker and mover.”⁵³ Far from superfluous, the first way establishes the principles by which the remaining four ways move to their conclusions while maintaining the important theological distinction between God and the created world.

The use of the causal principle in the five ways connects to the nature of God in their conclusions through Aquinas’s doctrine of analogical predication,⁵⁴ and theologically through the doctrine of creation.⁵⁵ The first moment of analogical predication is naming through causality or “*per causalitatem*.”⁵⁶ The causal attribution necessarily precedes the subsequent steps of negation and eminence. Aquinas makes it clear that this initial attribution applies to God non-metaphorically in that God is the cause of the quality that we see in creatures and the quality in question, such as goodness, exists in God on a higher level than in creatures.⁵⁷ In the case of the five ways, the attribute properly applied to God is that of existence, which God holds self-sufficiently rather than dependently. This connects theologically to God as creator since creation is the act of bringing all of creation into being, including each causal series upon which all of creation relies in each moment. Aquinas explicitly affirms that the existence of all things is through participation in God, who is subsistent being.⁵⁸ Each causal series through which creatures have existence owes its existence to participation in God. Thus, God is the efficient cause, cause of prime matter, exemplar cause, and final cause of all of creation, giving being to

⁵³ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 141.

⁵⁴ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 144.

⁵⁵ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 63.

⁵⁶ Harold Johnson, “The Five Ways and the Four Causes,” 144

⁵⁷ *ST I*, q13, a6.

⁵⁸ *ST I*, q44, a1.

all aspects of their being.⁵⁹ Each of the five ways can properly name God as cause through analogy because God is creator and source of being. Causality is properly attributed to God as creator.

Lawrence Dewan takes issue with the idea that the five ways are organized according to the four causes.⁶⁰ He considers the four causes schema as outlined by Kenny and decides that it falls short in its account of the fourth way and in difficulties in causally distinguishing the second and fifth ways. Dewan claims that the reference to goodness in the fourth way pertains to final causality rather than formal/exemplar causality. He takes it as given that goodness pertains to final causality and that this is sufficient to invalidate connecting the fourth way with exemplar causality. Dewan also sees little causal distinction between the first efficient cause in the second way and the governor or agent of the fifth way since the governing agent acts through efficient causality.⁶¹ Dewan cites *ST I*, q19, a4 wherein Aquinas demonstrates that an agent necessarily acts based upon an end and “how essential to a vision of order of agents is a grasp of them as realizing in divers ways the business of pursuing ends.”⁶² The argument is that since an agent always operates in terms of an end, then final causality is implicit in the second way and efficient causal activity is implicit in the fifth way.

After arguing that the four causes schema fails, Dewan puts forth an alternate based on the description of being found in the ninth book Aquinas’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.⁶³ Dewan writes that “There Aristotle presents the doctrine of being, understanding by ‘being’ that which is distinguished according to actuality and potentiality.”⁶⁴ Dewan aptly

⁵⁹ *ST I*, q44, a1, a2, a3, a4.

⁶⁰ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 10-11.

⁶¹ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 10-11.

⁶² Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 11.

⁶³ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 11.

⁶⁴ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 11.

describes how Aquinas sets out the intelligibility of being, beginning with two realizations that are understood according to different proportions, actuality and operation, and moving to a third realization, which is being imperfectly.⁶⁵ Dewan notes that after laying out the three realizations of being, Aquinas engages in a comparison of actuality, operation, and being imperfectly before engaging in a discussion of grades of being in terms of priority, goodness, and truth.⁶⁶ Dewan finds the order of Aquinas's discussion of being a compelling match for the five ways, writing that "this is closer to the order of the first four ways than would happen by chance."⁶⁷ Thus, according to Dewan, the first way starts from being imperfectly, the second from operation, the third from substantial being or act, and the fourth according to degrees of truth and nobility as grades of being. Dewan claims that the first three ways are based on modes of being as presented in their order of intelligibility and the fourth way sums up being in terms of properties.⁶⁸ For Dewan, the fifth way constitutes a second unit.⁶⁹ Dewan proposes that the first four ways provide the groundwork for the first part of the *ST* while the fifth way provides the groundwork for the second and third parts.

Dewan's arguments against the fourth way fitting into the causal schema falls short because it fails to account for the presence of the starting point from grades of goodness.⁷⁰ His argument against the fourth way does not take into consideration the link between goodness and being in the doctrine of the transcendentals of being. Dewan is correct that goodness is linked to final causality and that this is associated with the fifth way in the casual schema for the five ways. The final cause operates by drawing creatures to the goodness of the final cause; however,

⁶⁵ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 12-13. See also Mark F. Johnson, "Why Five Ways?," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. 65, 1991, 107-21.

⁶⁶ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 14.

⁶⁷ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 14.

⁶⁸ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 16.

⁶⁹ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 17.

⁷⁰ Dewan, "The Number and Order of St Thomas's Five Ways," 10-11.

this does not negate the connection between the fourth way and exemplar causality. Aquinas connects being and goodness in several places, which is a good case for the transcendentals of being rather than final causality as the key to the fourth way.⁷¹ The fourth way seeks to understand the cause of the grades of goodness in created beings. Furthermore, goodness is not the only attribute in view in the fourth way. Aquinas writes that “Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like.”⁷² Dewan’s critique does not account for the presence of the other transcendental attributes, such as truth and nobility. It is difficult to see how truth and nobility fit with final causality and the demonstration in the fourth way cannot necessarily be reduced to simply goodness as the starting point. The link between goodness and being as well as the presence of transcendental attributes besides being strongly implies an argument from exemplar causality that fits with the causal schema.

Dewan’s criticism of the causal schema regarding the second and fifth ways is not sufficiently robust to negate application of the causal schema.⁷³ Dewan rightly notes the connection between efficient causality and final causality. No efficient causal agent acts without some sort of final cause. Similarly, final causality does not hold much causal efficacy if no efficient causal agent ever acts in light of a final cause. Yet, it is difficult to see how this accurate observation negates application of the causal schema to the second and fifth ways. The second way begins with efficient causality as an effect and traces it back to an uncaused cause. The addition of a premise between [1] and [2] that specifically lays out the operation of efficient causes in light of final causes would not alter the demonstration. In other words, we could add a hypothetical premise [1a] stating that “Each efficient cause operates in light of a final cause,”

⁷¹ See *ST I*, q5, a1. See also *In BDH*, Chp. 1.

⁷² *ST I*, q2, a3.

⁷³ Dewan, “The Number and Order of St Thomas’s Five Ways,” 11.

without compromising the validity of the second way as a demonstration from efficient cause. Similarly, adding a premise to the fifth way that specifically identifies the relation between final causality and efficient causality would not significantly alter the fifth way. Aquinas holds that every efficient causal agent acts in light of an efficient cause and this principle of finality should be read into the fifth way. This does not negate the fifth way, since the fifth way is endeavoring to demonstrate the first principle of the order of final causality. To conflate the fifth way with the second leaves the existence of final causality unexplained.

In addition to arguments from De Haan and Harold Johnson, the causal schema for the five ways is bolstered by passages from Aquinas's commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Posterior Analytics*. Knowledge of causes is necessary in order to have knowledge of truth, as Aquinas writes, "We have knowledge of truth only when we know a cause"⁷⁴ in the *Metaphysics* and "a demonstration is a syllogism causing scientific knowledge. Therefore, the middle term in a demonstration is a cause"⁷⁵ in the *Posterior Analytics*. To have true knowledge of a subject, one must know the cause of the subject. The five ways can thus be construed as an investigation into the causal intelligibility of the created world. From this standpoint, the world is understood only when the ultimate cause of the world is located, which is particularly important since all that exists participates in being. He writes that understanding the cause of being is important "because everything that is composite in nature and participates in being must ultimately have as its causes those things which have existence by their very essence."⁷⁶ Aquinas then draws demonstrations that understand the world as an effect in each causal hierarchy that ultimately relies upon a first cause.⁷⁷ Even though the demonstrations in the *Metaphysics* are decidedly

⁷⁴ *In Meta* II, lec. 2.

⁷⁵ *In PA* II, lec. 9.

⁷⁶ *In Meta* II, lec. 2.

⁷⁷ *In Meta* II, lec. 3 and 4.

different from those in the five ways, their presence strongly indicates the necessity of an ultimate cause for the intelligibility of the world. Aquinas's doctrine of the convertibility of truth and being bolsters this fact, as he writes that "a thing's being is the cause of any true judgment which the mind makes about a thing..."⁷⁸ Since truth and being are linked, the cause of being is the cause of the truth and being of the world. It makes sense that Aquinas would begin a primarily theological work by demonstrating that the world is unintelligible without an ultimate cause for each hierarchical order that can rightly be labeled as "God."

The reason for the importance of the connection between the five ways and the four causes is that causality is the point where the philosophical demonstration meets the theological understanding of God. Aquinas sets out that what it means for God to be creator is that God is creator of each hierarchical causal series.⁷⁹ Creation is an inherently causal activity. Aquinas writes that "we must consider not only the emanation of a particular being from a particular agent but also the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God; and this emanation we designate by the name of creation."⁸⁰ The five ways identify an ultimate cause of each hierarchical causal series without which the world is not intelligible since Aquinas affirms that true knowledge entails knowledge of causes. Furthermore, the ultimate cause must itself be uncaused by holding its own principle of existence through its essence. The Christian doctrine of creation clearly identifies God as creator, which means that God is creator of each hierarchical series. The five ways can then be used to identify the creator God as being uncaused and having Her existence through her essence as self-subsistent being. Aquinas then uses the five ways to

⁷⁸ *In Meta* II, lec. 2.

⁷⁹ *ST*, I, q44, a1-a4.

⁸⁰ *ST* I, q45, a1/

identify attributes of God in later questions without ever claiming to exhaustively define God's essence.

To conclude, the five ways as philosophical demonstrations work to prove through metaphysics that the existence of the world depends upon a self-sufficient source of being outside the world. They each begin with an attribute ascribed to each hierarchical causal series observed in the world and work to an ultimate uncaused cause for each. This allows the five ways to function as a connection between what the human mind can grasp by its own limited power and the theological conception of the Christian creator God without comprehending the essence of God. The theological function of the five ways comes through the fact that each way shows how the unaided human mind can conceive, describe, and speak of God in a limited fashion that coheres with Christian theology. Aquinas leans on the five ways throughout the *ST* to make additional demonstrations, such as those in Question 3. It is the nature of the five ways as a bridge between philosophy and theology that allows them to make theological concepts more intelligible to the human mind while maintaining the traditional mystery associated with God. The five ways are therefore a route for the human mind to take that makes God intelligible while also demonstrating the reliance of the world on an ultimate uncaused cause. They are preambles to faith in the sense that they lay the groundwork to talk and think about God and matters of faith *and* preambles in the sense that they open up human reason to the necessity of ultimate being.

Are the Five Ways Proofs?

This section will look at Aquinas and contemporary thinkers to determine whether or not Aquinas understood the five ways as proofs in the sense currently understood by contemporary philosophers. The analysis will begin by examining the writings of contemporary philosophers of

religion about theistic proofs in general and the five ways in particular, namely Stephen T. Davis, Richard Swinburne, and Joseph Buijs. The next step will be to critically analyze select arguments that Aquinas did not intend the five ways as theistic proofs, such as those of James Higgins, Fergus Kerr, Rudi Te Velde, and Lubor Velecky.

Davis lays out the principles of contemporary deductive theistic proofs, beginning with a basic definition that “A theistic proof is an attempt to prove, by argument, that God exists.”⁸¹ Of course, as Davis notes, this definition holds terms that require definition. He defines the deductive theistic proof as a logical argument that is sound, formally and informally valid, and relies on premises that “are known to be more plausible than their denials.”⁸² It is not necessary for the premises to be proven or even provable, simply that they are more plausible or acceptable than their denials. Davis admits that not everyone agrees that certain premises may be more plausible than their denials, either out of ignorance or disagreement.⁸³ Premises such as the proposition that all things have a reason for existence or that the universe resembles a watch are particularly open to dispute. Those who disagree with the premises of a given theistic proof would not find that particular proof to be compelling. Davis also points out assumptions behind theistic proofs that he considers to be basic axioms along the lines described by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*,⁸⁴ such as the principle that it is possible to be clear about the meaning of “God,” a realist notion of truth, that truth can be found, and the meta-presupposition that the world is an organized cosmos. Davis notes that theistic proofs require that some common understanding of the notion of “God” is available for discussion. Otherwise, no one would understand the result of

⁸¹ Stephen T. Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, Reason and Religion, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

⁸² Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, 8.

⁸³ Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, 7.

⁸⁴ Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, 8-9.

a theistic proof. Since theistic proofs are an attempt to derive true statements about ultimate reality, such proofs assume that there is a discoverable real external world. What is real corresponds in some sense to what is actual. Finally, theistic proofs assume that there is order in the universe such that human beings are capable of discerning and understanding the structure of the universe.

Aquinas's five ways meet Davis's criteria for contemporary deductive theistic proofs. For centuries, readers of the five ways have noted the strict Aristotelian logic that Aquinas used in their formulation. Thus, the formal validity of the five ways is not an issue. There have been claims that the five ways hold various informal fallacies, such as the quantifier shift fallacy; however, these claims are due to a misunderstanding of the metaphysical context and terms of the five ways, as treated in chapters 4 and 5 of this work. Furthermore, the opening premises of the five ways are plausible when fully understood against their medieval metaphysical background. Davis does not argue that premises must be universally plausible for "there may be premises that some people know to be more plausible than their denials and others don't."⁸⁵ Hypothetically, if the premises of the five ways turn out to only be plausible to medieval thinkers, this fact does not negate their value as theistic proofs. Aquinas certainly holds the assumptions outlined by Davis, with one important nuance. It is quite well known that Aquinas believes the universe to be an organized cosmos, that truth is discoverable, and that Aquinas holds the realist correspondence theory of truth.⁸⁶ It is important to note that Davis's assumption that "an ability to get clear on what is meant by the term 'God'"⁸⁷ does not rule out Aquinas's commitment to analogical predication and Divine Mystery. Davis's point is simply that a radical

⁸⁵ Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, 7.

⁸⁶ See chapters 2 and 3 of this work.

⁸⁷ Davis, *God, Reason, and Theistic Proofs*, 8.

view of the incomprehensibility of God cannot begin a theistic proof. Aquinas affirms both the incomprehensibility of God in the Divine essence and possibility of making positive propositions about God through analogy and the mode of causality.

The five ways meet Davis's criteria for a contemporary deductive theistic proof, yet there are some important nuances to consider that differentiate them from many contemporary theistic proofs. Aquinas differentiates between two types of deductive logic, which are "*demonstrationes propter quid*," or *why*-demonstration, and "*demonstrationes quia*," or *fact*-demonstration.⁸⁸ Both are valid in Aristotelian logic with *fact*-demonstration as the proper type of demonstration to move from an unknown cause to a known effect, such as what we see in the five ways. The causal reasoning inherent to the *fact*-demonstration moves from the facts of our experience in the world to the universal proposition that there is a universal cause for the existence the facts of experience. The distinction between *why*-demonstration and *fact*-demonstration is not one that contemporary philosophers tend to recognize. While reasoning by analogy and from cause to effect is recognized today, contemporary philosophers generally do not see these types of arguments as sufficient to provide the certainty inherent in syllogistic deductive logic. As discussed in chapter 3 of this work, the *fact*-demonstration is not meant to impart the same level of knowledge as the *why*-demonstration. The main function of the *fact*-demonstration is to provide the definition needed for the middle term in subsequent *why*-demonstrations. From this standpoint, the *fact*-demonstration is a type of deductive logic that yields less certain results than standard deductive logic without resorting to probability.

The results of each of the five ways work in a cognitively humble manner to connect a given effect in the world to a transcendental source sufficient to account for the being of the

⁸⁸ *ST* I, q2, a2.

effect. Aquinas believes that the world exists through hierarchical causal chains and these causal chains do not contain their own principle of existence. The *fact*-demonstration method relies on these principles which allow each of the five ways to conclude that there must be a self-subsistent source of being while respecting the proper limits of human knowing. Aquinas makes this move without resorting to making the argument merely probable, which is what Swinburne does using the Bayesian probability equation. As Joseph Buijs writes of *fact*-demonstration, “the conclusion of a demonstration of this kind, though necessarily true, is nevertheless cognitively limited.”⁸⁹ Each of the five ways ends with the cognitively limited conclusion of a first mover, first cause, self-sufficiently necessary being, cause of perfections, and director toward ends. Each of these conclusions falls considerably short of the full range of traditional attributes for the Christian God. An understanding of Christian theology and Aquinas’s theory of divine attribution is needed to make the final step from the conclusion to “God.” Aquinas uses the five way to build additional demonstrations for the attributes of God.

Richard Swinburne finds it necessary to reframe cosmological arguments as inductive rather than deductive.⁹⁰ Swinburne argues that a valid deductive cosmological argument for the existence of God would entail a contradiction in the premises that prevents a coherent, valid argument in favor of atheism.⁹¹ In other words, there must be some obvious contradiction between the existence of a complex universe and the non-existence of God such that God is the only possible deductively valid conclusion. Swinburne thinks that “Atheism does seem to be a supposition consistent with the existence of a complex physical universe, such as our universe.”⁹² Since he has ruled out the validity of a deductive cosmological argument, Swinburne

⁸⁹ Joseph A. Buijs, “On Misrepresenting the Thomistic Five Ways,” *Sophia*, (2009), 48: 15-34, p. 19.

⁹⁰ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, 1991, 2004), 136-52.

⁹¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 136-7.

⁹² Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 137.

is concerned with reframing Leibniz's version of the cosmological as an inductive argument.⁹³ The inductive method of Swinburne is a completely different method from the *fact-*demonstration method of Aquinas. It would be alien to Aquinas to think that he had deduced a probable uncaused cause mover rather than a necessary self-sufficient cause of being.

It is entirely possible that both Davis and Swinburne are correct regarding the five ways. Davis is correct that the five ways, and cosmological arguments in general, are valid deductive arguments. Swinburne is correct that the contrary of an argument must contain a contradiction for a valid deductive argument. The factor missing from Swinburne's analysis is the background of Aquinas's metaphysical system. Specifically, the principles that everything that exists must have a source for its continued existence, that all beings exist through participation in common being, and the principle of causality that all effects are similar in some sense to their cause. Once a reader accepts Aquinas's principles, then it becomes apparent that the contrary of each of the five ways poses a fatal contradiction in the metaphysical realm of existence. A self-subsistent source of existence is required to maintain the universe in the present moment. A cosmos that does not contain its own source of existence cannot exist without an exterior source of existence. Each of the five ways are a valid demonstration as understood in Aquinas's metaphysical and epistemological contexts, and each results in an epistemically limited conclusion.

The form and the validity of the five ways together strongly point toward categorizing them as theistic proofs according to the criteria proposed by Davis. The *fact-*demonstration method and metaphysics employed by Aquinas differentiates them enough from contemporary theistic proofs such that contemporary philosophers can misunderstand them, which is not sufficient on its own to conclude that the five ways are not theistic proofs. It is difficult to see

⁹³ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 137.

how the five ways fail to meet Davis's criteria; however, if Aquinas never meant them as proofs, then they could provide valid inspiration for contemporary philosophers without being theistic proofs in their original context.

James Higgins, Fergus Kerr, and Rudi te Velde claim that in the context of the *ST*, the scripture cited in the *sed contra* provides the primary response to the question 'an Deus sit?', which means that the five ways are not arguments or demonstrations so much as elaborations on the meaning of scripture.⁹⁴ Higgins makes the most cogent and sustained claim of the three as part of his project of restoring Aquinas's pedagogy. Higgins begins by citing the Prologue to the *Summa Theologiae*,

Because the Master of Catholic Truth ought not only teach the proficient, but also to instruct beginners (according to the Apostle: As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat—(1 Cor. III, 1, 2)—we purpose in this book to treat of whatever belongs to the Christian Religion, in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners.⁹⁵

It is Higgins's contention that contemporary readers too often draw attention to the beginners and lose sight of Aquinas's mention of the proficient. Higgins claims that the beginner is an abstract audience rather than a 'real' audience and stresses the fact that Aquinas is addressing the manner of instruction rather than the matter presented. Higgins writes that "What St. Thomas is trying to avoid, he then says (mentioning no names, of course), is the confusion often generated by writers posing too many pointless questions, putting them in the wrong order, or making

⁹⁴ James Higgins, "St. Thomas's Pedagogy – Ignored, Rediscovered, and Applied," *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 50, Issue 4, (Jul. 2009), 603-19; Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 69-70; Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 39.

⁹⁵ *ST*, Prologue

useless repetitions.”⁹⁶ Aquinas has designed and rigorously held to a six-part structure meant to make the difficult material accessible to beginners: a question, good arguments for the wrong answer, a strong argument that rebuts all previous questions (the *sed contra*), a summary statement of the *sed contra*, the body of the article, and specific replies to objections. On Higgins’s manner of reading of *the Summa Theologiae*, the *sed contra* is the main point of any given question and body of the article elaborates on the *sed contra*.⁹⁷ Higgins then applies this way of reading the *ST* to the five ways and concludes Aquinas did not mean them to be taken as philosophical proofs.⁹⁸ The first, foremost, and deciding answer to the question ‘*An Deus sit?*’ is that God says “*ego sum qui sum,*” or “I am who I am.”⁹⁹ Higgins claims that therefore the five ways are an exercise inviting the reader to contemplate “*ego sum qui sum,*” or, as Kerr puts it, “The truth proposition ‘God exists’ has been divinely revealed—and now we may look for ways to demonstrate or manifest it, ways in which to probe or test it.”¹⁰⁰ Belief in God as revealed in Christian scripture comes first, and the five ways follow after as a way to assist the human mind with the intelligibility of the proposition “God exists.”

Higgins, Kerr, and te Velde are undoubtedly correct that Aquinas thought that each source cited in a given *sed contra* is an authoritative and definitive answer to the question posed; however, it is not clear that this in itself is sufficient to substantiate a claim that the five ways are solely a contemplative exercise. Yet, it is entirely possible that they are correct, and that Aquinas meant the five ways as theistic proofs from philosophy to bolster faith claims and provide a demonstration that non-Christians would find acceptable. If so, then the five ways would

⁹⁶ Higgins, “Aquinas’s Pedagogy,” 604.

⁹⁷ Higgins, “Aquinas’s Pedagogy,” 603-5.

⁹⁸ Higgins, “Aquinas’s Pedagogy,” 605-13.

⁹⁹ *ST I*, q2, a3, *Sed Contra*.

¹⁰⁰ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 69.

constitute more than merely a contemplative exercise building on scripture; they would be arguments in themselves supporting Aquinas's main point in addition to scripture.

Higgins and Kerr both address the possibility that the *send contra* is the primary answer to the five ways without negating their value as theistic proofs.¹⁰¹ The two bolster their arguments by citing Aquinas's claims that an individual cannot hold the same proposition on both faith and reason.¹⁰² Kerr cites the distinction made by Aquinas, following Augustine, that there is a difference between believing in God and believing that God exists (*credere Deo* versus *credere Deum*).¹⁰³ Aquinas writes that one must believe in God in concert with the act of faith in order to believe that God exists since Aristotle points out that defective knowledge of simple things is not knowledge.¹⁰⁴ From this, Kerr makes the point that a pagan affirmation of God's existence does not mean the same thing as a believer's affirmation; the act of faith is a necessary condition. It is notable that Kerr does not conclude that Aquinas did not mean the five ways as theistic proofs. As Kerr argues elsewhere, this does not negate the philosophical aspect of the five ways so much as to indicate that the gap between Aquinas and Karl Barth is smaller than traditionally interpreted since the five ways are imbued with faith and theology.¹⁰⁵ Higgins goes further than Kerr, writing that this is "An unmistakably clear indication of how St. Thomas himself viewed the Five Ways..."¹⁰⁶ Higgins finds it definitive that Aquinas does not refer back to the five ways as part of his later discussion of whether the seen can be an object of faith and whether an object of faith can also be an object of science.¹⁰⁷ Aquinas writes that "The reasons

¹⁰¹ Higgins, "Aquinas's Pedagogy," 613. Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67-8; Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67-8.

¹⁰² Higgins, "Aquinas's Pedagogy," 613. Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67-8.

¹⁰³ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67.

¹⁰⁴ *ST II-II*, q2, a2, *ad. 3*.

¹⁰⁵ Fergus Kerr, "Theology in philosophy: Revisiting the Five Ways," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 50, (2001), 115-130.

¹⁰⁶ Higgins, "Aquinas's Pedagogy," 613.

¹⁰⁷ *ST II-II*, q1, a4 and a5.

employed by holy men to prove things that are of faith, are not demonstrations; they are either persuasive arguments showing that what is proposed to our faith is not impossible, or else they are proofs drawn from the principles of faith...¹⁰⁸ Higgins holds this up as evidence that Aquinas did not consider the five ways as theistic proofs.

As noted in chapter one of this work, Daniel De Haan has a reply to this particular objection.¹⁰⁹ He notes that there are two answers to the question of whether or not belief in God must be held on faith rather than demonstrative arguments. One interpretive paradigm claims that one can both rationally know that God exists and have faith that God exists, while the other claims that rational knowledge and faith are exclusive, it must be one or the other.¹¹⁰ De Haan labels these positions Rationalist Thomists (RT) and Fideist Thomists (FT).

The two positions have their respective arguments. The FT position relies on two points related to grace and the proper theological understanding of faith, while the RT position relies on the law of non-contradiction. First, the FT position notes that grace perfects reason such that what one knows through reason is then perfected in faith.¹¹¹ Second, the preambles of faith do not belong primarily to philosophy but to theology under the paradigm of faith seeking understanding. Since theology is the governing paradigm, the FT position claims that one can have both faith and scientific knowledge since the faith comes first and then the understanding of faith. The RT camp argues that it is a violation of the law of non-contradiction to assent to the same proposition through both faith and reason. One can only assent to a proposition in only one of several modes of assent. As De Haan puts it, “Thomas does not deny that there can be faith

¹⁰⁸ *ST* II-II, q1, a5, *ad. 2*.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge of God’s Existence in St. Thomas,” in *Faith, Hope, and Love: Thomas Aquinas on Living by the Theological Virtues*, edited by H. Goris, L. Hendriks, and H.J.M. Schoot, (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 137-60.

¹¹⁰ De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 137-43.

¹¹¹ De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 142-51

and rational knowledge of the same doctrine; rather, Thomas asks that we distinguish the two different ways of assenting to this doctrine, namely, by faith and reason.”¹¹² This leads the FT position to an answer to the RT objection. FT distinguishes between ‘God Exists’ as a philosophical statement and theological statement since believers mean far more by the term than any philosopher.¹¹³ One can assent to the philosophical proposition ‘God Exists’ by either faith or reason, but the theological proposition ‘God Exists’ can only be assented to by faith, since it necessarily includes articles of faith that are intrinsically beyond the reach of philosophical inquiry.

De Haan harmonizes the two positions by moderating the claims of each while respecting their arguments.¹¹⁴ He modifies the FT position that one can assent to ‘God Exists’ by both faith and reason by stating that this is only to the extent that the philosophical version under the preambles can be assented under reason while the full theological understanding that ‘God Exists,’ which includes implicitly the revealed truth of the articles of faith, can only be assented by faith. De Haan modifies the RT position into a statement that one cannot simultaneously assent to the philosophical proposition ‘God Exists’ under the preambles through both faith and reason. This means that one can assent to the ‘God Exists’ of the preambles by either faith or reason, and assent to the theological notion that ‘God Exists’ through faith. The permutations of these options satisfy both FT and RT paradigms.

The FT-RT distinction and De Haan’s analysis allow a response to Higgens and Kerr. Under both positions, one can interpret the five ways as theistic proofs insofar as the God thereby proved coheres in some sense with the God of faith. Under this paradigm, the five ways

¹¹² De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 152.

¹¹³ De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 153-6.

¹¹⁴ De Haan, “Harmonizing Faith and Knowledge...,” 159-60.

‘prove’ the necessity of a self-subsistent creator of some sort, which does not capture the fullness of the Trinitarian God revealed in Christian scripture. God’s essence is incomprehensible such that the term ‘creator,’ while an accurate attribute in the Christian tradition does not constitute the essence of God. One can then believe the five ways as theistic proofs falling short of the God of faith while also believing in the God of faith.

Rudi Te Velde and Lubor Velecky both reference Aquinas’s affirmation of the incomprehensibility of the essence of God as a reason why the five ways cannot be theistic proofs, for it makes no sense to be able to prove what is inherently incomprehensible.¹¹⁵ Velecky summarizes the argument aptly writing that Aquinas “was not going to process God’s existence because he thought that neither he nor anyone else on earth could ever know what that is; what you don’t know you cannot prove either.”¹¹⁶ Te Velde points out that this is indeed the case when it comes to making a strict deductive syllogistic demonstration because we do not know the meaning of the term “God.”¹¹⁷ As previously discussed, the proper mode of demonstration in the five ways is the *fact*-demonstration method. The point of Velecky and Te Velde is that the *fact*-demonstration method demonstrates the meaning of the term ‘God’ rather than the existence of God. Velecky supports this by noting that Aquinas uses *Deum esse* in Question two, which means God exists, rather than *Dei esse*, which means God’s existence.¹¹⁸ For Velecky and Te Velde, the goal of Question two is not to provide a theistic proof but to demonstrate the meaning of the term “God exists,” and the form of demonstration used in the five ways is an appropriate mode of demonstration for the task.

¹¹⁵ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 56-67; Kerr, “Theology in Philosophy,” 115-9; Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 42-7; and Lubor Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae 1a 2, 3*, (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Pub. House, 1994), 42-44.

¹¹⁶ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 47.

¹¹⁷ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 43.

¹¹⁸ Velecky, *Aquinas’ Five Arguments*, 36.

Kerr acknowledges the argument made by Velecky and Te Velde as he argues that Aquinas's position is mid-way between fideism and rationalism.¹¹⁹ The fact-demonstration method connects to the doctrine of God as creator, and the incomprehensibility of God's essence connects to the doctrine of divine simplicity, making the five ways thoroughly situated in theology. The theological context of the five ways indicates that Aquinas's "philosophy is always already religious; natural reason is always already engaged in metaphysical, ethical and indeed scientific investigations..."¹²⁰ Aquinas has a multifaceted view of how God can be understood: God the creator, God the Lord who is worshipped, and God the Trinity.¹²¹ Of these, the philosophers have proved God the creator even though this is not the same God as God the Lord or God the Trinity. Aquinas thought that God could be demonstrated because the philosophers of old had done so.¹²² Considering the wide range of sources and influences upon Aquinas, Kerr argues that Aquinas's multiple meanings of the term "God" was an effort to do justice to Christian theology in a multi-faith context.¹²³ Far from discrediting the five ways, the fact that they take the incomprehensibility of God into account allows Aquinas to protect an apophatic view of God common to his Christian, Jewish, and Islamic sources.¹²⁴ Kerr writes that "From the start, the 'theistic proofs' are the first lesson in Thomas's negative theology. Far from being an exercise in rationalistic apologetics, the purpose of arguing for God's existence is to protect God's transcendence."¹²⁵ God cannot be known directly by human beings due to an incommensurate relationship between cause and effect. The five ways nevertheless provide a definition of God that is not based cataphatic deductive pre-theological philosophy. Instead, the

¹¹⁹ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 52-72.

¹²⁰ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 66.

¹²¹ Kerr, "Theology in philosophy," 126.

¹²² Kerr, "Philosophy in Theology," 128.

¹²³ Kerr, "Philosophy in Theology," 129.

¹²⁴ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 58-60.

¹²⁵ Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 58.

five ways provide a definition of God based on the logical necessity for a ground of being as existential cause of the world. Aquinas's definition of God through the five ways is only recognized as a valid definition for God because of its coherence with the Christian theological concepts of creation and divine simplicity.

The definitional aspect of the five ways is noted by Velecky and Te Velde who both emphasize that the five ways do not establish the Christian God revealed in scripture and their function is solely to provide a definitional starting point that provides the ground for the treatise on God that follows.¹²⁶ Since God's essence is incomprehensible, Aquinas must establish the intelligibility of the subject matter, God, in order to move forward in his theological work.¹²⁷ The unknown essence of God requires Aquinas to search for a middle term or definition through the *fact*-demonstration method. Velecky writes that "One of the difficulties envisaged by Aquinas is that there can be no middle term explaining why one wants to say 'God is.'"¹²⁸ Velecky cites a number of different passages in the *ST* and *SCG* supporting Aquinas's view that the term 'God' requires definition.¹²⁹ The five ways function to provide an intelligible starting point by defining 'God' as a cause using effects. The transcendental causal action of God is the common point among religions allowing a member of one religion to declare an idol 'God' and a member of another to claim that the same idol is not 'God.'¹³⁰ Te Velde writes that

For Thomas, the intelligibility of human speech and thought about God has its source in the (metaphysical) experience of the world as having its ultimate ground in something else, a transcendent principle which must be characterized formally in the threefold

¹²⁶ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 59-63 and 111; Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 37-47.

¹²⁷ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 41-3.

¹²⁸ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 44.

¹²⁹ Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments*, 47.

¹³⁰ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 46.

manner ‘by way of eminence, causality, and negation.’¹³¹

The five ways function by calling on the common experience of causal dependence in order to provide a basic definition that may be accepted by many different religions. The five ways are also thoroughly situated in Aquinas’s Christian theology allowing him to connect the definition of ‘God’ to connect to the Christian God through the concept of creation, thus allowing for the intelligibility of the term ‘God.’ For Te Velde, this definitional aspect is the primary function of the five ways while their conclusions as philosophical proofs at best prove the dependence of existence on an external cause rather than the Christian God.¹³² For Velecky, Aquinas only meant the five ways to provide a definition for the term ‘God,’ and he never meant them as proofs, and Velecky sees Aquinas’s many passages noting the need to define ‘God’ as sufficient justification for his view.

Conclusion

Te Velde and Velecky seem to be correct that the five ways provide a definitional function for the term ‘God’ in the *Summa Theologiae*, yet it does not seem that the five ways ‘merely’ or ‘only’ fill this role. The *fact*-demonstration method explicitly provides definition for an unknown middle term, and since God’s essence or definition is incomprehensible, this is the only method of demonstration available to Aquinas under Aristotelian logic. Furthermore, it does seem necessary for Aquinas to provide some sort of middle term in order to complete the project set forth for the treatise on the One God in the *Summa Theologiae*, especially for the initial section expounding on the divine essence. Aquinas must have a middle term to use in subsequent questions in order for those demonstrations to come to valid conclusions. While this definitional aspect of the five ways is their primary theological function, it does not seem to be their only

¹³¹ Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 46.

¹³² Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 46-7.

function. Comparing the five ways to Davis's criteria for theistic proofs show that they have a valid structure as theistic proofs. The proofs each resolve to one of five first principles of existence that Aquinas then labels as God. Exactly how Aquinas is able to label each of these principles as God does not become apparent until after taking into consideration doctrines of Divine Simplicity and creation, as well as analogical predication. None of these are overtly displayed as part of the five ways although they are implicitly present. The five ways do work to prove that natural principles alone are not sufficient to explain the existence of the world, as Robert Fogelin notes regarding the third way, "it is an effort to show that the very existence of a natural contingent world is inexplicable on the basis of natural principles alone."¹³³ Of course, if the existence of the natural world is inexplicable on natural principles alone, then some principle outside of the natural world must be involved in order to adequately explain the existence of the natural world. In other words, the natural world is unintelligible without an external source for its existence. The five ways effectively argue against a purely naturalistic world, although there could be some sort of demi-urge or creative force at work in the world other than the God of Christianity. Aquinas knows that although he labels the results of the five ways as God, this is not enough to fully describe the God of Christianity. He later expounds on the preliminary definition provided by the five ways in the following questions to develop divine simplicity and other attributes. Aquinas leaves a great deal of room for faith by constructing demonstrations that disprove the sufficiency of natural principles to explain existence without producing the God of revelation through purely natural philosophy. The five ways provide a way to access the intelligibility of the proposition "God exists," an example of how to talk about God, and demonstrate the necessity of principles beyond those of the natural world to explain the existence

¹³³ Robert Fogelin, "A Reading of Aquinas's Five Ways," in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, no. 4, Oct., 1990, p. 312.

of the world. True to his Aristotelian training, Aquinas has charted a dialectical middle way between the extremes of rationalistic proofs and a purely linguistic exercise. Nothing less should be expected of such a complex and sophisticated thinker as Thomas Aquinas.

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