

Philosophy, Lecture, December 20

St. Thomas Aquinas as a representative of ontological dualism

Thomas` dualism = there are two types of being: God and creation
God is infinite, perfect, good, omnipotent,

Theism – Deism – Pantheism

Thomas is a representative of theism

But the structure of the creation is more complicated (the ontological hierarchy of created beings):

Angel (he is composed of essence and existence); but he is a pure intelligence

Man (composed of essence and existence; but also of spirit and body); it is a classic Christian definition of man: man is “conjunction “ of spirit and body.

Animals

Plants

Inanimate matter

Who is GOD. He is an identity of Essence and Existence. That is why He is totally different from all created beings. They are COMPOSED of essence and existence. God is simple.

For this reason we cannot understand Him.

According to Thomas there are two types of theology:

A revelation theology

A natural theology

Thomas offers a classic concept of the relation between faith and reason:

There are such truths which cannot be understood, they can be an object of a faith only, eg. the Trinity of God, or a birth sin.

There are also such truths which can be understood, eg. the existence of God, or fact, that there is only one God

Saint Tertullian: credo quia absurdum (I believe what is absurd)

Saint Augustine: “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”

An ontological argument for the existence of God (Anselm of Canterbury)

1. “It is a conceptual truth (or, so to speak, true by definition) that God is a being than which none greater can be imagined (that is, the greatest possible being that can be imagined).
2. God exists as an idea in the mind.
3. A being that exists as an idea in the mind and in reality is, other things being equal, greater than a being that exists only as an idea in the mind.
4. Thus, if God exists only as an idea in the mind, then we can imagine something that is greater than God (that is, a greatest possible being that does exist).

5. But we cannot imagine something that is greater than God (for it is a contradiction to suppose that we can imagine a being greater than the greatest possible being that can be imagined.)
6. Therefore, God exists”.

[Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/ont-arg/>]

Gaunilo of Marmoutier is the author of the most important criticisms of Anselm's argument.

Thomas: We do not have an adequate image (notion) of God. If we had it, we would be able to infer about his existence from his notion, maybe ... but we do not have it

Cosmological proofs of Saint Thomas (5 ways)

1. We observe some properties or regularities in the world
2. We try to understand them and we realise that they cannot be understood as an element of infinity
3. We infer that there is something beyond our world that can be treated as an necessary explanation of it.

THE SUMMA THEOLOGICA Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province

Part I, Article 3: Whether God exists?

“I answer that, The existence of God can be proved in five ways.

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that **in the world some things are in motion.** Now **whatever is in motion is put in motion by another**, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. **For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality.** But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. **Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect**, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. **Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another.** If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. **But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover;** seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. **Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.**

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find **there is an order of efficient causes.** There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. **Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go**

on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. **Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.**

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

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

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

"Pensees"

"God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.

Do not, then, reprove for error those who have made a choice; for you know nothing about it. "No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice; for again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."

Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.

"That is very fine. Yes, I must wager; but I may perhaps wager too much." Let us see. Since there is an equal risk of gain and of loss, if you had only to gain two lives, instead of one, you might still wager. But if there were three lives to gain, you would have to play (since you are under the necessity of playing), and you would be imprudent, when you are forced to play, not to chance your life to gain three at a game where there is an equal risk of loss and gain. But there is an eternity of life and happiness. And this being so, if there were an infinity of chances, of which one only would be for you, you would still be right in wagering one to win two, and you would act stupidly, being obliged to play, by refusing to stake one life against three at a game in which out of an infinity of chances there is one for you, if there were an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain. But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite."