Aquinas: The Five Ways
Overview I

Review

The five ways

Overview

Second way

Overview

$P_1$

$P_2$

$C_3$

$P_4, P_5$

$P_8$

The result

Overview

First way

Third way

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Overview II

Fifth way
Review

Is it reasonable to believe something that we cannot demonstrate?

- Clifford: no. It is morally wrong for anyone, everywhere, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.
- Malcolm: yes, it is even necessary (systems)
- Aquinas: yes, but not anything

Proving the existence of God:

- Anselm: the ontological argument
- Aquinas: The Five Ways
The Five Ways: Overview

- Five distinct arguments
- Heavily rely on Aristotle
- Unlike Anselm: based on experience
- Analyzing the arguments:
  - What is the observational premise? Is it true?
  - What other principles are used? Are they implicit or explicit?
  - If the argument is successful, what does it prove?
- The 5 Ways:
  1. Argument from change (motion)
  2. Argument from efficient causality (cosmological argument)
  3. Argument from possibility and necessity
  4. Argument from the gradation of beings
  5. Argument from the governance of the world
The Second Way: *ST* I, q.2, a.3

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 Second Way

\[ P_1 \] Everything natural has an efficient cause. [Observ. p.]

\[ P_2 \] The universe is something natural. [Assumption]

\[ \therefore C_3 \] The universe has an efficient cause. [MP: 1,2]

\[ P_4 \] Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself. [Assumption]

\[ P_5 \] No part of a thing can be the efficient cause of the thing. [Assumption]

\[ \therefore C_6 \] The cause of the universe cannot be the universe itself nor anything in the universe. [3,4,5]

\[ \therefore C_7 \] Something exists, which is the cause of the universe, but is not the universe itself nor part of it. [3,6]

\[ P_8 \] We call such a thing God.

\[ \therefore Therefore, God exists. [7,8] \]
\[ P_1 \]: Every thing natural has an efficient cause

- **Cause** = explanation
- **Efficient cause** = identifying the thing through which something came to be

**Does everything in nature have an efficient cause?**
- This is — at least partly — an empirical question; we have never observed things just popping into existence
- Science would say so; we find these causes in nature (e.g., the efficient cause of physical motion, of living things, etc.)
- Even more, science has to assume that everything has a cause: otherwise it would be illegitimate.
$P_2$: The Universe is Something Natural

- This is true by definition
- The universe is just the sum of all natural things and events; and since everything in it is natural, so is the sum.
- If you deny this, then you are saying that the universe is something supernatural; the atheist would deny this.
C₃: The Universe Has an Efficient Cause

- That is, it is meaningful to ask for an explanation of the universe itself.
- The series of efficient causes cannot go on to infinity.
- It is *not* a temporal starting point, not a “first domino”!
  - Aquinas thinks that we cannot rule out by reason that the universe is eternal.
- Even if the universe is eternal, we can ask the question why it exists *at all*.
- Since it is a meaningful question to ask for an explanation of the universe, there must be an answer for it.
$P_4, P_5$: The Efficient Cause of The Thing is Neither the Thing Itself Nor Any Part Of It

- Causes are explanations
- If something causes itself, that just means that there is no explanation for it.
  - E.g.: “What caused the Sun to come into existence?” “It just caused itself; it popped into existence out of nothing.”
- Similarly for parts: the part itself is something that needs explaining
  - E.g.: “What caused the Earth to exist?” “Australia.”
  - We are asking for total causes (= what completely explains the thing)
\( P_1 \) Everything natural has an efficient cause. [Observ. p.]
\( P_2 \) The universe is something natural. [Assumption]
\( \therefore C_3 \) The universe has an efficient cause. [MP: 1,2]
\( P_4 \) Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself.
   [Assumption]
\( P_5 \) No part of a thing can be the efficient cause of the thing. [Assumption]
\( \therefore C_6 \) The cause of the universe cannot be the universe itself nor anything in the universe. [3,4,5]
\( \therefore C_7 \) Something exists, which is the cause of the universe, but is not the universe itself nor part of it. [3,6]
\( P_8 \) We call such a thing God.
\( \therefore \) Therefore, God exists. [7,8]
We Call Such a Thing (The Cause of The Universe) ‘God’

- This is again an empirical question about language
  - So suppose I did not speak English, and asked: “What is the word for that supernatural being that caused the universe to exist?”
  - You would probably immediately know that I am talking about God.
The Second Way

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What If The Argument Is Sound?

- Gives only a very generic idea of God:
  - God is not part of nature (= supernatural)
  - God is the cause of the universe
- We do not get specific items of the Christian faith, such as:
  - God is personal
  - God is loving
  - Trinity
  - Incarnation
- Reminder: Aquinas thinks that we can prove some truths of religion (God exists, and some attributes), but almost nothing specifically Christian — we need to get those by faith.
The Five Ways

1. Argument from change (motion)
2. Argument from efficient causality (cosmological argument)
3. Argument from possibility and necessity
4. Argument from the gradation of beings
5. Argument from the governance of the world
## The Five Ways

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<th>Observation premise</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
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<td><strong>1st</strong></td>
<td>There are things in motion</td>
<td>There exists a first mover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd</strong></td>
<td>Everything natural has an efficient cause</td>
<td>There exists a cause of the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd</strong></td>
<td>Some things are generated and perish</td>
<td>There exists a first necessary being</td>
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<td><strong>4th</strong></td>
<td>Some things are more or less good</td>
<td>There exists something which is maximally good</td>
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<td><strong>5th</strong></td>
<td>Some things act with regularity</td>
<td>There exists an ultimate end of all things</td>
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The First Way: Argument From Motion

- **Motion = change**
- **Observation premise:** some things are in the process of change
- **Assumption 1:** everything that is in motion has a mover
- **Assumption 2:** the series of movers cannot go on to infinity
- Conclusion: there has to be a first mover, and we call this ‘God’.

\[
P_1 \text{ Some things are in motion.} \\
P_2 \text{ Everything that is in motion has been put to motion by a mover.} \\
\therefore C_3 \text{ Some things are movers. [From 1,2]} \\
P_4 \text{ The series of movers cannot go on to infinity.} \\
\therefore \text{ There exists a first mover.}
\]
The Third Way: Argument From Possibility and Necessity

- **Observation premise:** some things are generated / corrupted
- **Assumption 1:** things that are able not to exist, at some point do not exist
- **Assumption 2:** nothing can come from nothing

\[
P_1 \quad \text{Some things are able to exist and not to exist.}
\]
\[
P_2 \quad \text{Things that are able not to exist, at some point do not exist.}
\]
\[
C_3 \quad \text{There was a point when the things that are able not to exist, did not exist. [From 1,2]}
\]
\[
P_4 \quad \text{Nothing can come from nothing.}
\]
\[
C_5 \quad \text{It cannot be the case that everything is able not to exist. [From 3,4]}
\]
\[
\text{There must be a thing that is not able not to exist.}
\]
The Fourth Way: Argument From the Gradation of Beings

- **Observation premise:** things are more or less good / noble / true
- **Assumption 1:** the goodness of things can only be accounted for by something that is perfectly good.
- **Conclusion:** there has to be something that is perfectly good.

\[ P_1 \] Things are more or less good / noble / true.

\[ P_2 \] The goodness of things are brought about by something that is maximally good.

\[ \therefore \] There exists something that is maximally good.
The Fifth Way: Argument From the Governance of the World

- **Observation premise:** some things tend to act uniformly
- **Assumption 1:** uniformity cannot be the result of chance, but must be a result of their acting for an end
- **Assumption 2:** the series of ends cannot go on to infinity
- Conclusion: there has to be ultimate end of all things.

\[ P_1 \] Some things act regularly.
\[ P_2 \] Regularity cannot be a result of chance, but is a result of end-directed activity.
\[ \therefore C_3 \] There are ends (final causes) of things. [From 1,2]
\[ P_4 \] The series of ends (final causes) cannot go on to infinity.
\[ \therefore \] There exists an ultimate end of all things.