St. Thomas Aquinas Essay, Research Paper

What is the Best Way to Prove God? A Comparison of St.

Thomas Aquinas St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the greatest

theologians that has ever been. He recognized that there

were some people who doubted the existence of God because,

to them, logic did not allow for or explain God’s existence. Being a

devout Christian, he naturally believed in God, but he wanted to

prove God’s existence to those who could not accept things on

faith alone. As a result, we have five proofs of the existence of

God by St. Thomas Aquinas, all of which are based on logic and

observation of nature. One of his proofs is based on the idea of

a first mover and another is based on the idea that intelligence

is necessary to direct non-intelligent objects. I believe that

this fifth argument is better that the first. St. Thomas

Aquinas’ first argument tries to prove that there must be a

first mover. He calls this first mover God. He proves this by

saying that whatever is in motion must have been put in motion

by something else. He then defines one type of motion as the

reduction of something from potentiality to actuality, and says

that nothing can make this movement except by something that

is already in actuality in the same respect as the first object is

in potentiality. He goes on to say that no thing can be both

actual and potential in respect to the same aspect and, thus,

that nothing can be both moved and mover. In this, he means

that nothing can move itself. Therefore, if something is in

motion, it must have been put in motion by something else, which

must have been put in motion by yet another thing, and so on.

However, this cannot go on to infinity, as St. Thomas Aquinas

explains, because there would never have been a fist mover and,

thus, no subsequent movers. This leads to the conclusion that

there is a first mover, and this first mover is what is called

God. His fifth argument is actually much more simple. Just by

observing the world, we see the non-intelligent things always

act toward an end. (It is this observation of the universe that

is the basis for the sciences, especially the science of physics.)

We also see that non-intelligent things cannot move toward

their end unless directed by an intelligent being. As an example,

St. Thomas Aquinas uses an arrow. An arrow will not achieve its

purpose (that of reaching its mark) unless directed to do so by

an archer. Obviously, humans are the intelligent beings that

direct the small objects of our world, but there must be a

greater intelligence that directs the larger bodies of the

universe, such as the stars and the planets, since we obviously

have no control over them. This higher intelligence is what we

call God. These two arguments approach the problem of proving

God’s existence in two completely different ways. One goes the

route of saying there must be something that started

everything, and the other says there must be something that

controls the things that are here, even if “it” did not create

them. Both of these arguments seem, at first, to be good and

valid in their separate approaches. However, the first on does

have one major flaw as I see it. St. Thomas Aquinas says that

the line of movers cannot go on to infinity, which common sense

would tell you to be true. He thus establishes the arbitrary

endpoint of God. The problem I see is that this argument could

always be tested to be false by asking the question, “What

Moved God?” St. Thomas Aquinas would probably answer that

nothing mover God because God has always existed. I personally

believe this to be true, but, to prove his first argument, St.

Thomas Aquinas must accompany it by another argument that

proves God has existed forever. Then, God would not need to

have been moved since He would have always been. This would

make for a kind of circular flaw in logic or paradox, in that he

could not prove God existed until he proved God has existed

forever, and he obviously cannot prove that God has existed

forever until he proves that God exists at all. Because of this, I

do not believe God can be proved by means of St. Thomas

Aquinas’ first argument or by any similar means. In St. Thomas

Aquinas’ fifth argument, however, I do not see any flaws in

logic and I do not thing it needs to rely on any other arguments

to be valid. Just by observing the universe, we have found that

it operates according to certain rules or laws. However, it

seems very unlikely that these laws just appeared out of

nowhere, that they emerged with the creation of the universe.

According to currently accepted scientific theory, the universe

started with the big bang. This theory also states that, if

anything existed before the big bang, we cannot predict what it

was like because physical laws did not govern the universe at

that time. So, it seems, physical laws must have just appeared as

a result of the big bang. Science, which traditionally tries to

explain the universe without the “crutch” or involvement of

God, cannot and could never explain why these laws exist in the

first place. The only explanation I can see is that God has put

them there to govern the universe. This is the same argument

St. Thomas Aquinas uses, and it seems to be completely self-

supporting and free of any flaws in logic. For these reasons, I

believe this argument to be better than the first argument.

Proving the existence of God is a worthwhile task. If someone

did come up with a complete, foolproof argument for the

existence of God, the people of the world would have no choice

but to believe in His existence. However, even though St.

Thomas Aquinas makes a worthy effort, I believe that such a

task is not possible through logic and reasoning alone. There is

an element of faith that must be present for people to believe,

and if that element is not there, no matter how foolproof an

argument seems to be, there will always be those who do not

believe. In his fifth argument, St/ Thomas Aquinas makes as

close to foolproof argument that I believe anyone could make,

and, for me, it does prove God’s existence. However, if that

element of faith is not there, I do not think you can completely

prove God’s existence to everyone.