

AQUINAS' FIVE WAYS TO ESTABLISH THE EXISTENCE OF GOD		
FAITH: Sacred Doctrine, revealed truths		REASON: Philosophy, truths attainable through natural reason alone
“God is a Trinity”/“God is love”: principles not susceptible to rational demonstration.	“God is a Unity”: a principle that has been revealed AND which can also be demonstrated philosophically.	“God exists”: this comes through revelation or, at least, it's implicit in each instance of revelation. Yet philosophy has tended focus on existence proofs.
Some questions arise about proof, especially regarding the boundaries of each of these domains:		
(1) Are the indemonstrable principles of Sacred Doctrine totally unrelated to reason? (2) Is it irrational to accept them?	(1) Do Sacred Doctrine and the proofs for God's existence conflict? (2) Is sufficient evidence to show that the two are at least consistent?	(1) How far can we go in demonstrating truths about God's existence? (2) Are there valid proofs regarding His nature? (3) Do the proofs we have support the Christian conception of God specifically?
(1) No, reason can articulate, analyze, organize, and even collect evidence in favor of the principles of Sacred Doctrine, though none of this corroboration will ever rise to the level of proof. (2) So it is not irrational to accept Sacred Doctrine; indeed, it is rational to acknowledge that matters pertaining to God's nature are beyond human ken.	(1) There is no conflict between the two. (2) But we don't know in advance every possible rational argument concerning God, so we don't know how much overlap there is. Tentatively we can say that natural reason buttresses theology on the points that it can speak to.	(1) Aquinas teaches that the proofs only touch on God's existence, not His Nature or Essence with the result that (2) no, there cannot be a valid proof touching on His nature, and any proof that purports to do this, Aquinas warns, will ultimately undermine the faith. (3) Consequently, the proofs are the equal property of all theists, specially theism that holds the Divine Nature to be infinite or supremely perfect.
PROOF		
“a priori” or “propter quid”: this is the strong form of proof, which proceeds from principles that arise from grasping the essence of a thing, or alternatively, reasoning from cause to effect. Since we cannot grasp God's essence, we cannot have this type of proof about Him.	“a posteriori” or “quia”: this is a weaker type of proof that proceeds from effect to cause. Given the existence of certain facts or objects (i.e. the effects), we infer that the cause must exist in a certain way so as to give rise to them. All proofs of God's existence are a posteriori.	
THE FIVE WAYS:		
Warning! Aquinas himself indicates his proofs are outlines; I have cut them down to the nub.		
THE 1ST WAY: MOTION → IMMOVABLE MOVER		
Motion is the conversion of potentiality to actuality; nothing is both potential and actual in the same respect and so nothing can move itself. So each movable thing is moved by something else. But the sequence of motion (i.e. the conversion of potentiality to actuality) cannot extend to infinity. Hence, there must be an immobile first mover to initiate the sequence of motion.		Note: Relies on the impossibility of an infinite regress of terms.
Comment: The traditional definition of the soul is “that which is capable of self-motion.” Hence, the proof needs to be refined so as not to deny the efficacy (or actuality) of the soul.		
THE 2ND WAY: CAUSE/EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS → UNCAUSED FIRST CAUSE		
There is a series of efficient causes of things in the world, i.e. there are chains of causes and their effects. If the efficient cause of a thing doesn't exist, then neither does the effect. But the sequence of cause and effect cannot extend back to infinity, otherwise nothing would presently exist in the world. Hence, because things do presently exist, there must be a first efficient cause.		Note: Relies on the impossibility of an infinite regress of terms.
Comment: Aquinas thought that there could have been an infinite chain of efficient causes and effects in time. The point is that the first efficient cause could not be in time, i.e. a purely temporal sequence of cause and effect could not extend back to infinity.		
THE 3RD WAY: EXISTENCE OF CONTINGENT BEINGS → NECESSARY BEING		
We observe that there are contingent beings in nature, i.e. things that <i>do</i> exist, but <i>might not have</i> . There was a time when every contingent being did not exist. Also, contingent beings only begin to exist because of some cause or agent. Now if all beings are contingent, then there was a time when nothing existed. But at that time, there would exist nothing to cause anything to exist. Hence, nothing should exist now. But because things do exist now, there must be some non-contingent, i.e. necessary, being, which is only a cause, not an effect, and which we call “God.”		Note: Relies on the principle of sufficient reason, i.e. that nothing happens without a cause or, alternatively, that everything happens for a reason.
Comment: The proof excludes the possibility that there could have been a contingent being created from eternity. Aquinas, however, admits this possibility in other writings.		
THE 4TH WAY: DEGREES OF PERFECTION → ABSOLUTELY PERFECT BEING		
There are gradations in the degrees of existence in things, i.e. some things are better or more real than others. Yet we can only say that something is better or more real with reference to some “utmost” or “best” case. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all individuals in that genus. Therefore, there must be something that is the cause of the existence, goodness, and every other perfection of all entities, which we call “God.”		Note: Relies on a principle of physics, that the individual possessing the maximum of some property is the cause of that property in every other individual.
Comment: “Cause” here means formal, not efficient cause. The form is what defines a class of things and whereas individuals are imperfect, the form is complete and whole. If we choose efficient cause instead, we will get strange conclusions, such as the notion that the most green of all being is the cause of green in everything else.		
THE 5TH WAY: TELEOLOGY IN NON-INTELLIGENT BODIES → INTELLIGENT DESIGNER		
Some natural bodies work toward some goal, but not by chance. All goal-directed artifacts that lack intelligence are directed by something intelligent. But most natural bodies lack intelligence. Therefore, by analogy, some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end, which we call “God.”		Note: Proof relies on an analogy between the domain of artifacts and natural entities.
Comment: The proof doesn't apply to all objects: human souls direct bodies and of course the angels are intellectual beings that direct their own motions. It is the class of natural beings that are not directly observed to be directed by a finite intelligence that makes the proof go through.		

