

THOMAS AQUINAS

FROM *Summa Theologica*

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) was a Dominican theologian, university professor, and author of the Summa Theologica, the most influential theological work of the Middle Ages. Theology was a new term devised to define the recent academic subject of applying the tools of reason to religious truths. This confidence in human ability to understand a reasonable universe working according to God's logical plans and laws is central to the values of medieval humanism. In these sections of the Summa Theologica, Thomas analyzes proofs of God's existence and the meaning of humanity's creation. This translation, faithful to the content of the original, rearranges for a modern audience a very formal style of scholastic argument.

From *St. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica*, edited by Timothy S. McDermott (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1989), pp. 12–13, 144–49.

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There Is a God. There are Five Ways of Proving There is a God:

The first and most obvious way is based on change. We see things changing. Now anything changing is being changed by something else. (For things changing are on the way to realization, whereas things causing change are already realized: they are realizing something else's potential, and for that they must themselves be real. The actual heat of a fire causes wood, already able to be hot,

to become actually hot, and so causes change in the wood. Now the actually hot cannot at the same time be potentially hot, but only potentially cold. So what changes cannot as such be causing the change, but must be being changed by something else.) This something else, if itself changing, is being changed by yet another thing; and this last by another. Now we must stop somewhere, otherwise there will be no first cause of the change, and, as a result, no subsequent causes. (Only when acted upon by a first cause do intermediate causes produce a change; if a hand does not move the stick, the stick will not move anything else.) We arrive

then at some first cause of change not itself being changed by anything, and this is what everybody understands by *God*.

The second way is based on the very notion of cause. In the observable world causes derive their causality from other causes; we never observe, nor ever could, something causing itself, for this would mean it preceded itself, and this is not possible. But the deriving of causality must stop somewhere; for in the series of causes an earlier member causes an intermediate and the intermediate a last (whether the intermediate be one or many). Now eliminate a cause and you also eliminate its effects: you cannot have a last cause, nor an intermediate one, unless you have a first. Given no stop in the series of causes, no first cause, there will be no intermediate causes and no last effect; which contradicts observation. So one is forced to suppose some first cause, to which everyone gives the name *God*.

The third way is based on what need not be and on what must be, and runs as follows. Some of the things we come across can be but need not be, for we find them springing up and dying away, thus sometimes in being and sometimes not. Now everything cannot be like this, for a thing that need not be, once was not; and if everything need not be, once upon a time there was nothing. But if that were true there would be nothing even now, because something that does not exist can only be brought into being by something already existing. If nothing was in being nothing could be brought into being, and nothing would be in being now, which contradicts observation. Not everything therefore is the sort of thing that need not be; some things must be, and these may or may not owe this necessity to something else. But just as a series of causes must have a stop, so also a series of things which must be and owe this to other things. One is forced to suppose something which must be, and owes this to nothing outside itself; indeed it itself is the cause that other things must be.

The fourth way is based on the gradation observed in things. Some things are better, truer, more ex-

cellent than others. Such comparative terms describe varying degrees of approximation to a superlative; for example, things are hotter and hotter the nearer they approach what is hottest. Something therefore is the truest and best and most excellent of things, and hence the most fully in being; for Aristotle says that the truest things are the things most fully in being. Now *when many things possess some property in common, the one most fully possessing it causes it in the others: fire, as Aristotle says, the hottest of all things, causes all other things to be hot*. Something therefore causes in all other things their being, their goodness, and whatever other perfection they have. And this is what we call *God*.

The fifth way is based on the guidedness of nature. Goal-directed behaviour is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness. Their behaviour hardly ever varies and practically always turns out well, showing that they truly tend to goals and do not merely hit them by accident. But nothing lacking awareness can tend to a goal except it be directed by someone with awareness and understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call *God*.

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The Genesis of Man

God formed man from the slime of the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Only what possesses existence and is subject of its own existence—substance—properly exists; all supervening properties exist not as themselves possessing existence but as forms under which a substance exists. Whiteness's existence is really the existence of something as white. This is true of all non-subsistent forms; so, properly speaking, it is not such forms but the things of which they are forms that come into existence. The soul however is a subsistent form and can properly be said both to exist and to come into existence. But since it does not come from pre-existent matter

only bodies do that) it must come by a new creation. Only God can create. All secondary agents presuppose material provided by a primary agent, which they then transform. Since the human soul does not come into existence by transformation of pre-existent matter, it must be produced by God's immediate creation. The soul however is only part of man, and naturally perfect only when united to its body, so it was fittingly created in its body, not before it. If it was a natural species of thing the soul would be a sort of angel; but by nature it is the form of a body, the formal element in an animal. Forms in matter are caused by forms in matter, when composite material things generate one another. The only immaterial thing that can produce something material without needing previous material is God; he alone can create new matter. So Adam's body was formed by God immediately, there being no preceding human body that could generate a body of like species to itself. Because the senses are mainly concentrated in the face, other animals have faces close to the ground to look for food and provender; but men have raised faces so that their senses, especially the finest and most discriminating sense of sight, may experience sense-objects in every direction of heaven and earth. Man's upright carriage also releases his hands for various useful purposes. And since he does not have to use his mouth for gathering food, it is not oblong and hard as in other animals but adapted for speech, the special work of reason. So man's upright carriage is not like that of the plants, for they have their roots (which are their mouths) in the earth.

It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help that is like himself. The help God makes for man is not for any sort of work (for there other men would be more help than a woman) but for producing children. In plants, which have no nobler function in life than propagation, the active and passive abilities to propagate are joined at all times. In the higher animals however there is more to life than that, so the active male and passive female partners mate only at certain times, constituting the sort of unity a plant is always. Aristotle called the female *a male manqué*. The particular nature of the active male seed intends

to produce a perfect likeness of itself, and when females are conceived this is due to weak seed, or unsuitable material, or external influences like the dampness of the south wind. But this is because nature as a whole intends women; and in this sense they are not *manqué* but intended by God, the author of nature as a whole. The type of subordination in which servants are managed in their master's interests came in after sin; but the subordination seen in households or cities, where management is for the benefit of the subordinates themselves, would have obtained even without sin. And such is the natural inequality and subordination of women to men, who are by nature more reasonable and discerning. [Some say God should not have produced Eve to be an occasion of sin for Adam, but] if God removed from the world everything which man has made an excuse for sin, the world would be a poor place. What is a general good must not be sacrificed because of some particular abuse, especially since God is powerful enough to turn any evil to good account. Forming Eve from Adam's rib signified companionship, not domination (so not from his head) nor yet subjection (so not from his feet); and it also symbolized the establishment of the church by the sacraments of blood and water flowing from the side of Christ sleeping on the cross.

Let us make man after our own image and likeness.

An image not only resembles, it expresses: however like each other two eggs may be, one does not express the other and is not its image. But the resemblance man bears God derives from God as from an original, so scripture describes man as made to God's image; where the preposition *to* signifies approach to something at a distance, the original in this case being infinitely distant from the image. An image must also resemble its original in species, or in some attribute like shape peculiar to that species, where likeness in species means likeness down to the last thing differentiating the species. Things in general resemble God in existing, some things also in being alive, and some finally in intellectual discernment: the closest likeness to God in creation. Properly speaking then, only creatures with intellect are made to God's image. And the point at which

such creatures most closely resemble God is when they imitate his self-understanding and love. So there are three levels to the imaging of God by man: the very nature of mind gives to all men a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; grace adds to some men an actual if imperfect understanding and love of God; and the glory of heaven brings this to perfection. The principal constituent of God's image in man, mind, is found in both male and female human beings; which is why Genesis says *To God's image he created him (namely, mankind); male and female he created them.* A secondary image of God as beginning and end of creation is however to be found only in male man, the beginning and end of woman: and this is what made St Paul say that *the man is the image and glory of God, and the woman the glory of man, for Adam was not from Eve but Eve from Adam, and Adam was not for Eve, but Eve for Adam.*

That man is made in the image of God's nature implies that all three persons of God are represented in him. In other creatures, and in other parts of man than his mind, there is not the same image or likeness in species to God, but only the sort of trace that all causes leave even in effects unlike in species. Thus we talk of tracks left by animals as traces, fires leave traces of themselves in ashes, and armies traces in the ravaged countryside. An image of the uncreated Trinity can be found in creatures with reason, who utter a word in their minds, and in whose wills a love issues, so representing God in species. In other creatures there is no such word-source or word or love; but a trace of the fact that source, word and love exist in its maker. For a creature's shaping and conditioning indicate that it *comes from* somewhere; its specific form indicates its maker's *word* as a house's shape indicates its architect's idea; and its functional order indicates its maker's *love* as a house's uses indicate what its architect willed. A first image of the Trinity in our minds is found in our activities of thinking out and formulating an inner word from the information we have, and then bursting out from this in a love. But since such activities exist implicitly in their sources [memory, understanding and will], a secondary

image of the Trinity exists in our powers and dispositions to act. The kind of word and love we have in our heart varies according to what it is we are conceiving and loving: stone or horse. So God's image is to be found in the conceiving of a word that expresses what we know of God and a love flowing from that; in other words, in the soul attending directly to God. Though the mind can also attend indirectly to God (as to an object seen in a mirror) when, as Augustine says, it remembers and understands and loves itself, and perceives there a trinity: not God indeed, but an image of God; and then moves through that to God.

God made man right. No one can wilfully turn away from happiness, for man wants happiness by nature. So no one seeing God for what he is can wilfully turn his back on God. Plainly then, since Adam sinned, he had not seen God for what he is. The disembodied state of the soul after death differs from its present embodied state in being unnatural; but Adam's state of innocence and man's state after sin differ as integrated and disintegrated states of a soul which has preserved its natural way of existence unimpaired. In the state of innocence, just as now, man's soul was adapted to controlling and perfecting and giving life to his body, but in so fully integrated a way that his body was completely at the service of his soul without hindrance. And since the way of understanding appropriate to a soul that must control and perfect the body's animal life is by recourse to sense-experience, this was also Adam's way of understanding. The things that were made in the beginning were made not only to be themselves but to start other things existing, and that is why they were produced in a state of perfection. Adam was created mature in body, capable of immediate procreation, and mature in soul, capable of immediate education and instruction of others. So he knew all that men normally have to learn, everything implicit in the first self-evident premises, all natural knowledge: *he gave all animals their names.* And since controlling his own and other people's lives also involved knowing life as destined to a goal beyond nature, Adam needed to

know the supernatural things required to direct life in that state of innocence, just as nowadays we need the faith. But Adam did not know other things not naturally knowable but not required for directing life: such as men's thoughts, or the indeterminate future, or details like the number of pebbles in some river.

The integrated state of Adam in which his reason was submissive to God, his lower powers to his reason, and his body to his soul, seems to imply that he possessed God's grace from the start; for this is an integration not written into man's nature, otherwise it would have remained after sin. The primary submissiveness of Adam's reason to God must have been more than natural, and therefore due to a gift of grace; for effects cannot be more potent than their cause. In us feeling is partly but not wholly subject to reason: sometimes our feelings pre-empt and hamper reasoned assessment, whilst at other times they presuppose it. In the state of innocence the lower appetites were completely subject to reason, and all feelings presupposed reasoned assessment. Virtues are what dispose our reason towards God and our lower powers towards the standards set by reason; so the very rightness of man's first state required him to possess all virtue. Some virtues, like charity and justice, contain no implication of imperfection, and others, like faith and hope, imply imperfections which were compatible with Adam's state (not yet seeing God and not in full enjoyment of him); so these existed in Adam without qualification, both the dispositions and the acts that proceed from them. But virtues like repentance and compassion that imply imperfections incompatible with Adam's state could only exist inactively, as dispositions to act when required, in the way Aristotle says shame exists in an earnest man.

Let him rule the fishes of the sea and the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. In nature the less perfect serve the more perfect: plants feed on the earth, animals on plants, and men on both plants and animals. Moreover, the instincts of animals to behave in certain particular ways is a sort of sharing in man's universal practical sense which

can reason out all behaviour. So the subordination of animals to man is natural. To think wild and aggressive animals were originally peaceable, not only to men but also to other animals, is quite irrational. How could man by sinning change the nature of animals from vegetarian to carnivorous? Hostility between animals is natural, but it no more made them insubordinate to man than it makes them insubordinate to God and his providence now. Man would have been an instrument of that providence then, just as he is now with domesticated animals, giving his tame hawks hens to eat. Instinctively geese follow a leader and bees obey a queen: all animals share by nature in the practical sense we have by reason. And at that time all animals would have obeyed man of their own accord, as the ones he has domesticated do today. Man was master of other things to the measure that he was master of himself. He shares reason with the angels, sense-powers with other animals, natural vital powers with plants, and the body itself with all non-living things. Reason is master, not subject (so man never had mastery over angels); feelings of aggression and desire man masters to some extent by reason's command (and so in the state of innocence he could command animals); but his own body and vital forces man masters not by command but by use (and so in the state of innocence he could not command plants and non-living things to change their behaviour, but would have had no trouble using their behaviour for his purposes). Of course, disparities existed in that first state: disparities first of all in sex and age, but also in moral and intellectual proficiency (men being free to work to different extents at doing and willing and knowing things), and again in physical strength (since this is influenced by food and climate and the stars one is born under). But none of this would have implied natural defect or sin. Free men exist for their own ends, as Aristotle says; whereas slaves serve others. Such slavery can't exist without suffering: everyone values his own good, and does not willingly cede it exclusively to another. But men can be subordinate to one another and yet remain free, if the good being served is their own

or a common good. Such subordination would have existed in the state of innocence, since man is by nature a social animal, and people living a social life need some single authority to look to their common good. If some men are more knowledgeable and just than others the right thing is to use that to the others' benefit.

Death entered the world through sin. Before sin then, man must have been immortal. Not because he was immaterial like angels, or made of a kind of matter that cannot lose its form like the stars of heaven, nor because of some inherent disposition preserving him from his natural mortality like the glorified in heaven, but because God gave his soul supernatural ability to preserve his body from decay as long as it itself remained submissive to God. In the state of innocence man preserved his body from external injury by his own wits, helped by God's providence which so cared for him that nothing dangerous took him by surprise. As Augustine says *Adam was provided with food against hunger, with drink against thirst, and with the tree of life against the ravages of old age.* But the tree of life couldn't be the sole source of immortality. For one thing the tree of life couldn't give the soul its ability to preserve the body from injury; and for another, the potency of any material thing is finite and the effects of the tree of life would wear off in time, after which man would either move on to a life in the spirit or need another dose.

Increase and multiply and fill the earth. Unless there had been reproduction in the state of innocence to propagate the human race, man would have urgently needed to sin, seeing it would have brought such good. For among corruptible things, in which only the species lasts for ever, nature's main aim is the good of the species and its reproduction. Only among incorruptible substances is nature interested in individuals. So man needed to reproduce for the sake of his perishable body; though as regards his imperishable soul man needed nature (or better the author of nature, who alone creates human souls) to be interested in a multitude of individuals for their own sakes. So in the state of innocence reproduction was needed

not for conservation of the species but for multiplication of individuals. In the present state of things, when owners multiply, property must be divided up, since, as Aristotle says, common property breeds discord. But in the state of innocence men's wills would have been well enough disposed for them to use their common property in a manner suited to each without danger of discord; as we indeed often see good men doing nowadays.

Some early theologians seeing intercourse blemished by lust in our present state, thought reproduction would have happened without intercourse in the state of innocence. But this is unreasonable. It is in man's nature, like that of other animals, both before and after sin, to reproduce by intercourse, and nature has provided him with the organs needed for the purpose. In our present state the natural mating of male and female is somewhat disfigured by unbalanced desire, but this would not have happened in the state of innocence where the lower powers obeyed reason. Because animals lack reason, people sometimes say that men become like animals during intercourse, when reason is unable to balance the pleasure and heat of desire. But in the state of innocence nothing would have escaped reason in that way. Yet the pleasure would not have been any less; in fact it would have been greater given the greater purity of nature and sensitivity of body men then had. Rule by reason requires not that the pleasure should be less, but that the desire for it should be within reasonable bounds. Men who eat moderately can take as much pleasure in their food as gluttons do, but their desire doesn't wallow in the pleasure. In the state of innocence there would have been no great esteem for sexual abstinence, which we esteem nowadays not because it reduces fruitfulness but because it tempers lust.

Things beyond nature only faith can teach, and for faith we need authority. So, without God's authority, we can only assert what is in the nature of things. Now scripture tells us God created man right, so that his limbs, for example, would obey his properly ordered will. But a properly ordered will tends only to the behaviour appropriate to one's age. So newly-born infants would only have had power to move their limbs appropriately to

their age, sucking the breast and so on. Weakness of seed or unsuitable material are not the only causes of females being conceived, but also external circumstances such as the direction of the wind or an idea in the mind. And this would have been particularly likely in the state of innocence, when the body was more subordinate to the mind, so that the sex of the child could have been decided by the parent. The integrated state in which man was created was a state of our nature, not deriving from the natural constitution of man, but from a gift of God given to human nature as a whole. We know this because its opposite, inherited sin, attaches to nature as a whole and passes from parent to child. When authority is silent we can only believe what accords with nature. Now men naturally learn by sense-experience, so those born in a state of innocence would also have acquired their knowledge over a period of time by discovery and instruction, though without the difficulties we have. And, as infants, they would no more have had mature use of their reason than they had of their bodily limbs.

People who locate Paradise at the equator do so because they think the evenness of day and night produces a temperate climate there, never too cold and never too hot. Aristotle however expressly says that the region is so hot that it is uninhabitable; and this seems more likely, seeing that even countries where the sun never passes directly overhead have excessively hot climates from mere proximity to the sun. In any case we believe Paradise to be situated in the most temperate locality, whether that be on the equator or elsewhere.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What ideas tie together Thomas's five ways of proving there is a God?
2. How does Thomas see the natural relationship between men and women?
3. For Thomas, what is humanity's proper place in nature? Why?