INTRODUCTION

I. THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE FIVE WAYS

A. They are not Original to Aquinas

- 1st way: majority of reasoning comes from Aristotle
- 2nd way: if read existentially, then rooted in Avicenna (early 11th century Islamic philosopher).
- 3rd way: some parts rooted in Aristotle (De Caelo), other parts rooted in Averroes (mid to late 12th century Islamic philosopher) and even Moses Maimonides (mid to late 12th century Jewish philosopher).
- 4th way: seems to be meshing of Plato & Aristotle
- 5th way: final causality comes straight from Aristotle

B. Some things are Unique to Aquinas

- E.g., 1st Way: the existential lens of motion, which involves the acquisition of new being.
- E.g., 2nd Way: the existential lens through which he sees dependence on efficient causes for activity presupposing dependence on efficient causes for existence
- E.g., 3rd Way: a meshing together of the various sources that give him the idea of possibility and necessity.
- E.g., 4th Way: Aristotle didn’t use gradations of truth to get to God, but Aquinas does
- E.g., 5th Way: Aristotle didn’t use final causality to arrive at supreme intelligence that directs things to their ends.

C. Five Ways are Summaries that Presuppose Metaphysical Principles

- Aquinas didn’t intend for them to be standalone pieces of reasoning that would convince even the hardnosed skeptic on a first reading.
- They are summaries or lines of argument that one might take in demonstrating God’s existence.
- Must be read within the larger context of Aquinas’s metaphysical system.

D. The Being of the Conclusion is not a Full Blown out Understanding of God
• The divine attributes are present in seed form in the idea of an unmoved mover, uncaused cause, necessary being with necessity per se, maximum unlimited being, and supreme governor of the world.

E. Five Ways are Not the Only the Ways

• E.g., Neo-platonic argument from observed plurality to a primal one (*In I Sent.* d. 2, q. 1, a.1; cf. *De Pot.* III, 5).
• E.g., Augustinian argument from truth (*On the Gospel of St. John*, Prologue).
• E.g., Multiplicity of goodness to first principle that is good (*De Pot.* III, 6).
• E.g., Argument from the indifference to being found in possibles (*SCG* III, 15).
• E.g., The argument from the real distinction of essence and existence in things (*De Ente Et Essentia*).

F. Aquinas Thought that they were Demonstrative

• To the question “Whether it can be demonstrated that God exists?” Aquinas answers in the affirmative: “Hence, the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us” (*ST* I:2:2).
• To the question “Does God exist?” he answers, “That God exists can be proven in five ways” (*ST* I:2:3).
• To the question “I

G. Subject to Different Interpretations

• Generally speaking: Metaphysical or physical.
• Differences on how to interpret each way.
• I choose hybrid of the physical and metaphysical approach and I simply offer what is currently most satisfying to my mind on how to read the arguments as Aquinas presents them.

II. RESOURCES FOR THE FIVE WAYS (for reference)

A. General


McInerny, D.Q. *Natural Theology*. Elmhurst, PA: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2005


**B. Specific**

**The First Way**


**The Second Way**


**The Third Way**


**The Fourth Way**


**The Fifth Way**