

### III. What and Why? Things and Causes

- A. Thomas and Aristotle
  - Aristotle "lost" and "found" through Islamic commentators – but seemed in irreconcilable conflicts with essential beliefs
  - Aristotle's division of philosophy:
    - Theoretical: Metaphysics, Mathematics, Natural Ph, Logic
    - Practical: Politics, Economics, Ethics
  - Three major clashes with Christian creed:
    - Individual immortality of the soul (vs. unity of intellect)
    - Eternity of the world (vs. creation in time)
    - Divine Providence in Salvation History (vs. "God thinking himself")

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- Aquinas analyzed not only Aristotle's conclusions but his train of logical argumentation and the observations it is based upon, as well as the actual texts (not just reports) – only this could demonstrate where philosophy errs, or falls short (and so for other thinkers, especially seen explicitly in the *Summa Theologiae*)
- Aquinas found in Aristotelian philosophy a logical and robust framework to ground a Christian theological explanation of creation, a sacramental view of reality, the Incarnation, the Resurrection of the Body, immortality, natural law, and virtue ethics – departing from and correcting the Philosopher where necessary

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- Discussion:
  - 1) Can you create a statement or claim that cannot be contradicted logically?
  - 2) What is your reaction when the Internet goes down when you are using your devices?
  - 3) Atheists deny, agnostics doubt, the existence of God. Can you prove that there is a God?

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- *De Ente et Essentia*: being (of varying meanings), substance, accidents, cause, change; only God's essence *is* existence (YHWH: I Am)
- The Four Causes: *Why?*
  - **Material** (what a thing is made of) – prime matter as concept only (vs. the “*stultissime*” idea of David of Dinant)
  - **Formal** (what makes the matter a particular kind of thing in itself, potentially modified by *accidents*)
  - **Efficient** (what agent makes it come to be)
  - **Final** (the end, goal, aim, purpose) – “every agent acts for an end” – these can be “nested” as proximate and ultimate

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- Take a few moments to list the attributes or qualities of God ...




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- **The Existence of God (ST I, 2)**
  - Art. 1: Is God's existence self-evident? (*in se* and through effects)
  - Art. 2: Can God's existence be demonstrated? (*a priori*, by the **definition**; and *a posteriori*, through effects)
  - Art. 3: Does God exist?
    - 1) The Unmoved Mover (from motion)
    - 2) The Uncaused Cause (from causality)
    - 3) Necessity and Contingency (from generation and corruption)
    - 4) Gradation of Beings (from greater and lesser)
    - 5) Order of the World (from purposeful activity)
  - *note also I, 22 – evil as privation of good, not a being in itself; and SCG, III, 10 – that recognizing evil implies we know some good, and thus a perfect Good, which is God*

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• What can we know of God through reason? (ST, I, 3-26; SCG, I, 15-102)

- God is simple
- God has no physical, bodily component
- God is impassible (does not suffer, has no passions)
- God is perfect (Pure Act)
- God is pure Goodness (*evil is a privation of the good a being is intended to have*)
- God is infinite
- God is omnipresent (every place is in God is more accurate than God is in every place)
- God is immutable

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- God is eternal
- God is One

• God causes all things – necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently

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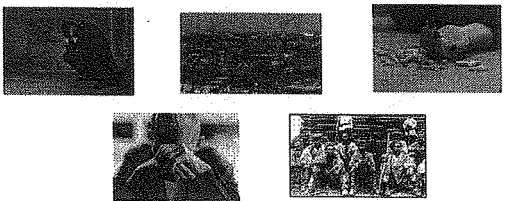
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- Discussion:
- If God is all-powerful and all-good, why does evil exist?



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- Aquinas: evil as the privation of good that ought to be present
  - Natural evils
  - Moral evils
- "All agents act for an end," and for humans, that end is happiness ...
- We are free and thus not bound to a single path to fulfillment/happiness
- However, we always choose under the appearance of the good – what we think will make us happy – although we may be mistaken about what is truly good

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- What we know of God from reason ... and from revelation
  - Trinity
  - Incarnation
  - Redemption
  - Resurrection and Deification ...



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