# A Proof from Motion [or: A Proof from Change]

The First Way of Thomas Aquinas

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### Prefatory

✤ Let us say that:

Sknows p = df (i) p is true; (ii) S believes p; (iii) S is justified in believing p.

In short let us say that:

\*  $K =_{df} JTB$ 

Although questions might be asked about all elements of this definition, one main battleground concerns the nature of *justification*.

## Two Types of Justification

\* A core epistemic distinction: *a prior*i and *a posteriori* 

- \* S has *a priori* knowledge that *p iff* S knows *p* by reason or conceptual resources alone.
  - If S knows *p a priori*, then sense perception plays no *justificatory* role in her knowing *p*.
    - \* Typical examples: logic, mathematics, necessary truths more generally
- \* S has a *posteriori* knowledge that *p* iff S knows *p* by appeal to sense perception.
  - If S knows *p* a posteriori, then sense perception plays an ineliminable *justificatory* role in her knowing *p*.
    - Typical examples: quotidian claims about what is immediately present to sense perception (e.g. 'The lights are on.); data observed in many scientific experiments; historical claims; contingent truths generally

### Three Important Observations

- \* This distinction is *exhaustive* and *exclusive*:
  - \* (i) every instance of justification is either a priori or a posteriori;
  - (ii) if an instance of justification is *a priori*, then it is not *a posteriori*, and if an instance of justification is *a posteriori*, then it is not *a priori*.
- \* This is a point about justification—and not genesis.
- ✤ It is natural to think that:
  - If p is justified a priori, then p is necessary
  - \* if *p* is justified *a posteriori*, then *p* is contingent

#### An A Posteriori Proof from Aquinas An Argument from Motion

(1) Something is in motion.

(2) Everything that is moved is moved by another.

(3) Hence, that which is in motion is moved by another.

(4) This mover is itself either (a) moved by another, or (b) not moved by another.

(5) If (4b), there exists an unmoved mover.

(6) If (4a), then (a) we proceed to infinity, or (b) we arrive at an unmoved mover.

(7) We cannot proceed to infinity.

(8) Therefore, if either (4a) or (4b), there exists an unmoved mover.

(9) Therefore, there exists an unmoved mover.

'This everyone calls God.'

### One Point of Strategy

- Aquinas is fully aware that a proof of the existence of an unmoved mover is not a proof of the existence the God he worships.
- \* He conceives of his proof as a two-part strategy:
  - First part: he seeks to prove the existence of a necessarily existing unmoved mover—a first cause.
  - Second part: he seeks to prove that given this being's necessity, it is possible to derive all of the attributes of the Christian God.
    - These may be divided into the *impersonal* attributes (simple, immaterial, wholly actual...)...
    - \* . . .and the personal attributes (omniscient, omni-benevolent, living, loving . . . )
- ✤ Here we encounter only the first part of his strategy.

### One Point of Terminology

\* The word 'moves' can be used transitively or intransitively.

- Transitive: 'Marcia moved her rook one square to the right, crushing her opponent by putting him into checkmate.'
- Intransitive: 'For a hefty man, he moves uncommonly well on the dance floor—elegantly even.'

 PM uses the word 'moves' transitively, which we designate thus: moves<sub>T</sub>.

### On Behalf of (PM-2)

(1) Nothing can be in both potentiality and actuality in the same respect.

(2) Everything being moved is in potentiality with respect to motion.

(3) Everything moving<sub>T</sub> is in actuality with respect to motion.

(4) Therefore, with respect to the same motion, nothing is both being moved and moving<sub>T</sub>.

(5) Therefore, nothing moves itself.

(6) Therefore, everything that is moved is moved by another.

### On Behalf of (PM-7)

(1) In an ordered sequence of motion, if a first mover is removed, then no other mover is moved. (That is, if *a* moves *b* and *b* moves *c*, then if *a* did not move, *c* would not move.)

(2) If the causal sequence of motion resulting in the motion we now perceive were infinite, there would be no first motion.

(3) If there were no first motion, what we now perceive to be in motion would not be in motion.

(4) What we now perceive to be in motion is in motion.

(5) Hence, the causal sequence of motion resulting in the motion we now perceive is not infinite.