

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

The First Way of Thomas Aquinas

Prefatory

- * Let us say that:
 - * S knows 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 priori* 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 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) (6a) is impossible.
- (8) Therefore, if either (4a) or (4b), there exists an unmoved mover.
- (9) Therefore, there exists an unmoved mover.

‘This all men call God.’

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_T .

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_T is in actuality with respect to motion.
- (4) Therefore, with respect to the same motion, nothing is both being moved and moving_T.
- (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) Hence, the causal sequence of motion resulting in the motion we now perceive is not infinite.