



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

Does God Exist? Aquinas' "Second Way."

Moving on from Aquinas' First Way from last week, we can now take a look at the Second Way. This is the argument from efficient causality. That is just a fancy way of saying that we are dealing with cause and effect. We begin by noting that there are obviously things in the world which are caused. This argument is remarkably similar to the argument from motion, but examining it from the aspect of things that exist instead of things that change or move. So, following the same logic from last week, we can see that because there are things in the world that exist, there must be something that put these things into existence since they cannot be responsible for their own existence. If you were responsible for your own existence, then that means you existed before you existed, which is absurd. So there must have been a cause prior to you. For instance, you were caused by your parents, and your parents were caused by their parents, and their parents were caused by their parents, and so on. But this process cannot regress to infinity because then there would be no first cause, and without a first cause there would be no effect.

I like to think of causality by using an analogy of a clock. Inside of a clock you have a motor and a series of cog wheels to move the hands of the clock. The motor is responsible for the effect of the cog wheels turning, and the previous cog wheel is responsible for the effect of the movement of all subsequent cog wheels. But there is a simultaneity here because without the motor, no effect will occur and the hands will never ultimately move. You could think of God as the motor. He essentially is not only is responsible for our existence as the First Cause of everything that exists, he also holds us all in existence with cause and effect being simultaneous like in the clock. If the motor stops, everything else stops. Notice the difference between that analogy and a person throwing a ball. If a person throws a ball, this order of causality is different because if the thrower ceased to exist immediately after throwing the ball, it would still move throughout the air and reach its destination. So the person's existence is not essential for the effect to continue. But for the clock, the motor is. The clock analogy is the way Aquinas speaks of God as the First Cause. God is responsible for our existence **and** our continued existence. This is an often overlooked part of the argument. It ends with a similar conclusion from the First Way: the existence in the world needs to be explained by an ultimate cause which is altogether uncaused and necessarily responsible for all things in existence, and this First Cause we call, God. Once again, if you would like to engage this on a much deeper level, please join our **weekly Summa study beginning on Friday, August 25!**

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