



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

Does God Exist? Aquinas' "Third Way."

Moving on from Aquinas' Second Way from last week, we can now take a look at the Third Way. This is the argument from contingent being. You may ask what a contingent being is. A contingent being according to Aquinas is essentially anything that exists in the universe that does not **have** to exist. In other words, anything that does not have a need to exist **in itself** or what Aquinas calls *per se*. This is not in reference to things that have a necessary purpose. For instance, if that were the case, one could say that the sun is necessary for any life on earth. This would not be necessary in the absolute sense, but in a relative sense. Aquinas considers contingent being as things that can possibly **not** exist. The way he explains this is by saying that things clearly come into existence through what he calls *generation* and either can or does go out of existence through what he calls *corruption*. The logic behind this is that if something comes into existence, this means it is obviously possible for it **not** to exist if it did in fact, not exist at some point in time. So, if it did not exist at some point in time, it couldn't have brought itself into existence on its own, because that would be absurd. Therefore, there must have been another being which is not contingent, but necessary. A being that has always existed and is existence itself.

This necessary being is itself uncaused because it is the ultimate cause of everything. As we remember from the first two arguments that we covered over the past couple weeks, everything must come back to a first explanation for everything, and that first explanation must be the absolute first because it cannot go backwards infinitely, or else nothing would have had a beginning in the first place. There must be a necessary being by which all other existing things owe their existence, who cannot possibly **not** exist or else nothing else would exist to begin with. Again, take away a cause and the effect disappears. This necessary being, we call God.

If you would like to engage this on a deeper level, please join our **weekly Summa study every Friday @ 6pm in the Religious Ed Center.**