

P. Weingartner, *God's existence. Can it be proven? A logical commentary on the five ways of Thomas Aquinas*, Ontos, Frankfurt 2010. Pp. 116.

Thinking of the problem of God's existence, most formal logicians are primarily interested in analysing and discussing St. Anselm's ontological proof. Many books and articles have been written about this topic over the years and almost all the most important 20th-century analytic philosophers have expressed their own opinion about its validity. On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas' five ways have not been much discussed. It seems to me that the reason for this fact lies in an internal difficulty in Aquinas' ways. In fact, they rest on some empirical facts about the existence and the structure of *the* world (and of *only one* world), which can be challenged by many scientists. From the point of view of modern sciences, for example, it is difficult to find out a teleological order in the universe. I do not want to claim that modern science is *against* God's existence: this claim is too rough to be accepted and it is ultimately wrong. I only want to point out that we cannot accept the most well-known scientists' opinions in favour of or against God's existence without any logical, metaphysical and theological reflection. Scientific knowledge can be one of the sources of discussion about God, but it is not the only and supreme authority in this field of investigation.

Paul Weingartner's logical commentary on Aquinas' five ways provides philosophers, theologians and logicians with an interesting and accurate logical analysis of these arguments. The book is divided into two main parts: the first one is concerned with some methodological aspects of the discussion, while the second one is dedicated to the logical analysis of the five ways. In both cases, Thomas Aquinas' texts are the point of departure of Weingartner's commentary. The author aims to show that Aquinas' arguments can be formalized with the aid of modern logic and that they can be discussed from a non-dogmatic point of view. This last remark will surprise those who consider Aquinas' metaphysics a bad and unsuccessful attempt to defend Christian revelation from the assaults of human reason, as well as those who consider Aquinas' philosophical method and conclusions the ultimate and insuperable truth in philosophy. Aquinas' theses can be interpreted, corrected and criticized, as well as any philosophical truth.

The first part of Weingartner's book is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, the author answers to the question whether the existence of God is self-evident *quoad se* and *quoad nos*. Self-evident propositions are those propositions in which «the predicate is included in the essence of the subject» (p. 9). However, the inclusion can be interpreted in two different ways: extensional inclusion and

intensional inclusion. The extensional inclusion is the inclusion of the species in the genus and it can be read as a set theoretical inclusion: the species is extensionally included in the genus, if and only if every member of the species is a member of the genus too. On the other hand, the intensional inclusion is the inclusion of all the common characteristics of the genus in the common characteristics of the species: the species is intensionally included in the genus, if and only if, for every characteristic, the species is extensionally included in that characteristic if the genus is extensionally included in the same characteristic. Therefore, considering two things *a* and *b*, *a* is extensionally included in *b*, if and only if *b* is intensionally included in *a*. The author remarks: «a proposition containing the subject term S and the predicate term P and having the form S (extensionally) includes P is self-evident if and only if P (intensionally) includes S» (p. 14). Can the proposition «God exists» be interpreted in such a way? According to the author, it can. From the point of view of formal logic, this proposition is equivalent to: for every *x*, if *x* is identical with G (God), then *x* EX (exists) (i); G is extensionally included in EX (existence) (ii); EX is intensionally included in G (iii). However, there are two other premises to be added to this proposition: the notion of existence includes the notion of uniqueness, therefore there is «at least and at most» one God; God's essence is identical with God's existence, therefore the notion of existence is included in the notion of God.

In any case, we have to investigate the property of existence. According to the Russellian view, existence is not a property of individuals. In fact, when we claim that *a* exists (*a* can be replaced by some proper name), we claim that there is at least and at most something with certain characteristics (for example, the characteristic of «being the First Mover»), which are uniquely instantiated by *a*. The proper name is replaced by a definite description of the thing. Therefore unique existence is not a property of an individual, but it is a property of a property or of a set of properties. For example, «there exists at least and at most something which is the First Mover» is equivalent to «there is exactly one thing (*a*) for which, for every *x*, *x* has the property of 'being the First Mover', if and only if *x* is identical with *a*». At least according to Aquinas, the individual which exists and uniquely has the property of «being the First Mover» can be then identified with God in a nominal definition. Nevertheless, if Weingartner claims that the notion of existence is intensionally included in the notion of God because God's existence is included in God's essence, the author has to clarify whether God's essence is logically expressed by an individual constant or by a property or a set of properties. If the first case is true, God's existence is one of God's first-order properties and Weingartner's conclusions (ii) and (iii) are not valid, because they are grounded on relationships between properties and because G is not a property. If the second case is true, we can only demonstrate by (i) that, for every *x*, if *x* is identical with the property G (the property of «being God»), then this property G has the second-order property EX (existence). Maybe this second case is the most correct interpretation of Weingartner's reading. Yet in the Russellian view the term «God» is expressed by an individual constant: *this* thing, which has the property of «being the First Mover», is identical with *a* (God). If God's essence is expressed by the property of «being God», while «God» is

a proper name expressed by an individual constant, then we have to establish a relationship between God as an individual and God's essence as a property. This question is connected with one more radical question: is «God» a proper name or a common name, which stands for the property of «being God»? In reply to this difficulty, we can say that G and EX cannot be interpreted in terms of individuals and properties. Yet two other problems will remain: what are the subject and the predicate of a definition, namely the species and the genus? Can we really give these two different interpretations to «God» and «existence»?

However, following Aquinas, Weingartner concludes that God's existence is self-evident *quoad se*, but it is not self-evident *quoad nos*. In fact, human beings, in their life, cannot know God's essence. Thus it is not self-evident *quoad nos* that existence is intensionally included in God's essence (iii), because we do not know all the characteristics of God's essence. Knowing that God's essence is identical with His existence, we can think of existence as intensionally included in God's essence, but we cannot give reason to this inclusion. In this chapter, Weingartner also analyses Aquinas' commentary on St. Anselm's ontological proof. The second chapter of the first part is really interesting and important, because it is concerned with some general aspects of Aquinas' five ways. In particular, the readers should pay attention to four main theses: God's existence can only be demonstrated *a posteriori*, with the aid of a method similar to the one used by sciences (a); we do not need a real definition of God to demonstrate His existence (b); God, who is the cause of the world, is outside the world (c); God is a necessary condition for the existence of every being and of every event in the world, as well as for the existence of the world as a whole, but not a sufficient one (d). The thesis (a) is supported by a description of Aquinas' method: this method is grounded on the existence of contingent facts, which are the observable effects of some unknown and unobservable, but existent cause. In particular, there are two different kinds of empirical premises to be explained: empirical facts «about the events and the states of this world (universe) and empirical facts about its laws», as well as «the empirical fact that the world (universe) as a whole exists» (p. 37). The scientific method is similar to this *a posteriori* method, although there are two important differences between them: Aquinas' method allows to think of the empirical fact of the existence of the world as a whole too, while scientific explanations are only concerned with the empirical events as parts of the existent world; Aquinas' method considers the cause of this world transcendent (it needs not to belong to this world), while the scientific method only accepts causes as parts of this world.

Therefore, according to Aquinas, God, as the cause of the world, is outside the world (c). Weingartner discusses the possibility of a universe which contains the cause of its own existence and he does not accept this hypothesis, while it is not possible to establish if we live in an everlasting world or not. Yet the everlastingness and the self-causation of the world are two different questions, which are not strictly connected: our world could be everlasting, without being self-causating. According to thesis (b), we can accept a nominal definition of God, based on His effects, to prove His existence. We do not need to know and we cannot know God's essence, while we can know, for example, that there is a «First Mover»

which needs to be identified with God. However, the cause of the world (God) is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the existence of the world as a whole and of the world's beings and events (d). In particular, God is a necessary condition because, if the effect exists (the world and its beings and events), then the cause exists ( $E \rightarrow C$ ), as well as, if the cause does not exist, then the effect does not exist ( $\sim C \rightarrow \sim E$ ). God is not defined as a sufficient condition, because Aquinas wants to preserve the action of the *causae secundae*. In fact, given that a sufficient condition is expressed by  $C \rightarrow E$ , if God were the sufficient condition for the existence of everything, God's existence and God's action would be the only causes of every effect. This remark is useful for God's «advocates» too, when they try to solve the contradiction between the existence of a good and omnipotent God, on the one hand, and the existence of evil, on the other hand.

The second part of the book is concerned with the formal demonstration and with the discussion of some aspects of each of Aquinas' ways. I cannot analyse all the proofs, but Weingartner's reconstructions seem clear. In the formalization of the Second and of the Third way, Weingartner uses the predicate «exists» both as a first-order and as a second-order predicate («there is a  $x$ , such that  $x$  is God»). I think it would be better to choose between them. However, the discussion of the Five Ways is concerned with some interesting premises and conclusions of Aquinas' metaphysics: the predicate «*movetur*» (whether this predicate is a one-place or a two-place predicate) and the notion of First Mover (First way); the irreflexivity and the transitivity of causal relations, as well as the impossibility of infinite regress (Second way); the notion of necessity and the relation between necessity and time (Third way); the connection between perfection and being (Fourth way); the possibility of non-intelligent beings' acting for an end (Fifth way). At the end of this part, Weingartner also discusses the problem of uniqueness in the conclusions of each way. In particular, I want to focus on the problem of infinite regress and on Aquinas' notion of necessity.

Aquinas thinks that the universe is finite in its age and in the number of the material parts which compose it. According to the *Doctor Angelicus*, there is no actual infinite in nature. Weingartner's defence of Aquinas' thesis is supported by some scientific claims. Yet I think that there is one interesting metaphysical reason to deny the possibility of infinite regress: if two things stand in some causal relation, they need to exist as two different things. If we accept the notion of an actual infinite composition in nature, everything will be composed by parts, which will be divided into other smaller parts, *et sic ad infinitum*. Each part will not be *one single part* and there will be no room for a causal relation between different single parts. The defender of infinite actuality will need to provide adequate criteria of identity for material parts composed by infinite smaller parts.

Concerning the notion of necessity, it seems that Aquinas accepts Aristotelian necessity: something is necessary, if and only if it is immutable. This notion is strictly connected with the notion of time and it is quite different from the notion of necessity involved in the modern semantics of possible worlds. However, it also seems that Aquinas accepts the notion of contingent facts which will never be realised. What is the metaphysical nature of these facts? Are they mind-dependent

concepts of states of affairs? Or are they possible facts, as parts of non-actual possible worlds? Or are they real facts, as parts of actual worlds different from our world? The discussion is far from finished.

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