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The Existence, Nature and Attributes of God: A Preliminary Exploration

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Abstract: The concept of God came into existence when human beings began to use language, because through language they started to communicate about the things which they have not seen. Though people have not seen God face to face still God exists in this universe. Here we have three prominent people who have tried to elucidate the existence of with their proofs. To certify that the proved God is the real God, there are the attributes of god both in relation to God Himself and in relation to Hid creatures. Apart from the attributes of God we have also the nature of God which once again ascertain that there is God. The truth is God exists whether we see Him or we don't perceive him with our eyes. So this article reflects on the existence of God first, followed by His Nature and Attributes, as preliminary ways to understand God.

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Introduction

God is a problem both for a savant and for a servant. It is the problem reconciles the existence of God with the existence of sufferings. It is the task of a philosophy to systematically and scientifically study the complexity of the issue in view of bringing about a viable solution. In this paper I delve into the understanding of God – His existence, nature, and attributes. In other words, this paper is concerned with approaching God in terms the arguments for His existence, His Nature and Attributes. They are key to approach God both philosophically and theological.

Existence of God

a. Arguments of St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure

St. Augustine: Proof from Within Thought: The central point is that of mind's understanding of changeless and necessary truths, not mine or yours but a truth in itself. It is superior to the mind. Mind does not create it but recognizes it. God is the common ground of eternal truths as sense knowledge is grounded on body. If it is inferior to the mind, the mind could change it or amend it. If it is equal to the mind it is changeable because mind is changeable. Truth should be superior to the mind. Eternal truths should be founded on being. When we reflect the ground of all truth we are able to understand the immutability of God. So God

is the ground of eternal and necessary truth (Bernardino, 1979).

St. Augustine's argument in favor of God's existence through the presence of eternal truths in us goes like this: there are eternal truths present in the human mind. But the human mind, being contingent and mutable, is not a sufficient reason for these truths. Therefore, God exists, and He is the sufficient reason for these truths (Bernardino, 1979).

b. St. Bonaventure: He was principally interested in the soul's relation to God. The imperfection of finite and contingent things demands and proves the existence of absolute perfection, God. The idea of imperfection presupposes the idea of perfection which brings the soul to a clear awareness of what is already known to it. God's existence can be known through creatures and it can be done through cause and effect (Secondo, 1961).

- If there is *ens ab alio* (a being from another) there must exist *ens non ab alio* (a being not from another) because nothing can bring in to a state of being, hence there must be a First Being which is Self-existent.
- Possible being that is being which can exist and cannot exist by itself), there must be *ens necessarium* (Necessary being that is being which has no possibility of non-existence).
- If there is *ens* in potential, there must *ens in actu*. There must be *actus purus* a Being which is Pure Act without any potentiality that is God.
- If there is *ens mutabile* (changeable being), there must be *ens immutabile* (unchangeable being) because motion has as its principle an unmoved being and exists for the sake of unmoved being, which is its final cause (Secondo, 1961).

b. Arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas

- From that which is moved to the mover: It is certain and evident to the senses that in the world some things move. Nothing can move itself. What is moved must be moved by something else. There can't be an infinite series of movers. So, there must be a first mover, a mover that isn't itself moved by another. The first mover is God, the unmoved mover (Aquinas, 1920).
- From dependent cause to independent cause: Cause and effect are apparent in the universe. Some things are caused: anything caused is caused by another, and there can't be an infinite series. So there must be a first cause (efficient Cause) a cause that isn't itself caused by another: God, the first cause (Aquinas, 1920).
- From Contingency in being to Necessary: Some beings come into existence and perish. They are contingent and not necessary beings; if they were necessary, they would always have existed and would neither come into being nor pass away. Therefore there must exist a necessary being, because of which reason contingent beings come into existence. This necessary Being is God; a necessary being is one the existence of which is necessary. If everything were impermanent, eventually everything would cease to be. Therefore, there must be at least one thing that must, necessarily, exist (one non-contingent thing): God, the Necessary Being (Aquinas, 1920).
- From the grades of being: The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. That is, among beings there are some more and some less good, true and noble. But these degrees or grades (more and less) are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways which is the maximum. Ex: a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest. Therefore, there is which is truest, best, noblest and consequently which is most being. So, the maximum in any genus is the cause of that entire genus. Ex: the fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore,

there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness and every other perfection, and this we call God (Aquinas, 1920).

- From the governance of things: The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack knowledge, act for an end to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not accidentally but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it is directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. In other words, as an arrow reaches its target because it is directed by an archer, what lacks intelligence achieves goals by being directed by something intelligence. Therefore, some intelligent being exists by whom all-natural things are directed to their end, and this being we call God (Aquinas, 1920).

Nature of God

a. Spirituality

God has no real composition. He has no integral parts because he is not a material being but a Pure Spirit. He has no essential parts because he is Pure Spirit and his essence is Pure Form without matter. He has no metaphysical parts because his essence does not receive existence but his essence is his existence and they are identical. He has no accidents because he is the Most Perfect Being and cannot be perfected. He is substance only (Kofoid, 1849).

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b. Simplicity

A composite being is a being which is actually undivided but is —potentially divisible into parts. Ex: Man, divisible into body and soul, a rod, divisible into integral parts. A simple being is a being which is actually undivided and also indivisible into parts. It can be relatively simple or absolutely simple. A relatively simple being is a being which excludes composition of one kind but includes composition of another kind. Ex: Human soul it excludes integral parts or essential parts but has metaphysical parts, namely essence and existence; substance and accidents (thinking, willing etc.) (Rea, 2020). An absolutely simple being is a being which excludes composition of any kind. Ex: God alone is absolutely simple. Simplicity - Negatively is a perfection by which a being is without parts (Owen, 1965). Simplicity - Positively is a perfection by which a being is identical with all that is in it. God alone has absolute simplicity because he alone is without parts of any kind. In him alone, his essence, existence, and all his perfection are identical with himself. All are absolutely one being. God is absolutely simple because He is without composition of any kind (Rea, 2020).

Attributes of God

a. Attributes in Relation to God Himself

Infinite: Infinite absolutely (simplicity) is to be perfect without limit in every way. God alone is infinite absolutely. Infinite relatively is to be perfect without limit in a particular order only and not in every order. Angel is infinite in the order of essence since its form is not received and limited by matter. But it is not infinite in the order of existence or of being since its existence is received and limited by its essence (Owen, 1965). i) Extensively infinite

means that he has all the perfections possible and does not lack any perfection. He is not in potency for any perfection. Intensively. ii) Infinite means that every perfection in him is unlimited and is to an infinite degree. He is not in potency for a further degree of perfection (Hamilton, 1873).

Immutable: Immutable is opposite of mutable. In Latin *mutare* means to change. So Immutable means unchangeable or changeless. i) God is immutable because he is *Actus purus*: Every change implies that the changeable being has potency to acquire perfection or to lose the perfection already possessed. Ex: Cold water has potency to become hot water and vice versa. No change possible without potency. But God is without any potency for anything whatever. So he is absolutely immutable (Owen, 1965). ii) God is immutable because he is absolutely simple: In every change the common subject of change loses something and gains something else either substantially or accidentally. This implies that a changeable being is a composite being. But God is absolutely simple. So he is absolutely immutable (Weinandy, 2000).

Eternal: The eternal nature of God may be understood in terms of duration and time.

a) Duration: Duration is endurance or perseverance of a being in existence. Duration implies not only existence but also continuity in existence.

b) Time: Time is the successive duration of a material being which is changeable both substantially and accidentally. It has a beginning and an end.

c) Eternity: Eternity is the duration of the infinite being that is absolutely immutable. Eternity has no beginning or end. It has no succession, no past or future. It is a perpetual now. Classical

definition of eternity by Boethius eternity is the perfect possession of interminable life totally and all at once (Owen, 1965).

b. Attributes in Relation to Creatures

God Is Immense: Immensity is God's power to be present everywhere and in all things without any limitation or restriction. It also means that he is immeasurable because he transcends every kind of measurability applicable to finite beings. Immensity is an absolutely pure perfection. God has it. So he is immense. An absolutely pure perfection completely excludes all limitation in its very concept. It can never be found in creatures. A material body has circumscriptive presence (local presence). A finite spirit, human soul, angel, has definitive presence that is in its sphere of operation. They are measurable. Immensity means immeasurable and full perfection. Such things are not found in creatures. No perfection can be absent in God (Gilson, 2019).

Omnipresence: Omnipresence is God's actual presence everywhere in all things of creation. It is relative attribute of God. It is also called as repletion presence (Latin *repletus* = filled). God fills everything in creation. It is also called ubiquity (Latin unique = everywhere) the attribute of being wholly and perfectly present in every part of creation (Borcbert, 2017).

Omniscience: God's knowledge is infinite extensively and intensively. Knowledge is pure perfection. Every perfection must be in him formally every perfection in him is also infinite or unlimited. So knowledge in God must be unlimited both extensively and intensively. It means that he knows everything knowable without exception and perfectly, through and through. Stone and plant cannot

know because they cannot take in the representation or the forms of other objects; they cannot have intentional union with other objects. The irrational animal can, in sense knowledge, take in the form of the singular and concrete object. Man can have universal and abstract concepts. He can have self-reflection. He can know that he knows. From this we conclude that knowledge is more perfect in extent and in depth as the grade of the being is higher and higher. God is the highest being. Hence his knowledge must be without limitation of any kind in extent and depth (Owen, 1965).

In man's knowledge, primary object is that which is known first and in itself, immediately, by a faculty. Secondary object is that which is known moderately in and through the primary object. Ex: Color is the primary object for the eye. God has no faculty and is without any potency (Hirst, 1967). So the terms primary and secondary objects are applied to him only analogically and not univocally. In God he is only one act of knowing of the primary and secondary objects without distinction. God's knowledge is identical with himself. The primary object of God's knowledge is himself or the divine essence. The secondary objects are all finite knowable beings other than he himself divine essence is the ultimate foundation of all objects (Owen, 1965).

Omnipotence: Omnipotence is the property of being all-powerful; it is one of the traditional divine attributes in Western conceptions of God. This notion of an all-powerful being is often claimed to be incoherent because a being that has the power to do anything would, for instance, have the power to draw a round square (Hinton, 2007).

Conclusion

Ontological, cosmological and teleological proofs are the chief ones advanced for the existence of God by the great philosopher – theologians such as St. Augustine, St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Augustine says that God must exist because he is the sufficient reason for the eternal truths present in human mind. For St. Bonaventure the imperfection of finite and contingent things demands the existence of the absolute perfection, namely God – the perfection of self – existence, necessary existence, pure act, end of all existence. St. Thomas Aquinas argues that God must exist as the first mover, the first cause, the necessary being, the highest perfection and in the final cause. God is spiritual and simple in nature. In relation to himself God is infinite, immutable, eternal and in relation to creatures, he is immense, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

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