

## THOMAS AQUINAS

Virtue denotes a certain perfection of a power. Now a thing's perfection is considered chiefly in regard to its end. But the end of power is act. Wherefore power is said to be perfect, according as it is determinate to its act

Thomas defined the four cardinal virtues as prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. The cardinal virtues are natural and revealed in nature, and they are binding on everyone. There are, however, three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These are somewhat supernatural and are distinct from other virtues in their object, namely, God

Faith and reason complement rather than contradict each other, each giving different views of the same Truth.

The human soul is perfected in the body, but does not depend on the body, because part of its nature is spiritual. In this way, the soul differs from other forms, which are only found in matter, and thus depend on matter. The soul, as form of the body, does not depend on matter in this way.

Thomas believed that truth is known through reason (natural revelation) and faith (supernatural revelation). *Supernatural* revelation has its origin in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is made available through the teaching of the prophets

Thomas believed "that for the knowledge of any truth whatsoever man needs divine help, that the intellect may be moved by God to its act." However, he believed that human beings have the natural capacity to know many things without special divine revelation, even though such revelation occurs from time to time

Augustine of Hippo agreed strongly with the conventional wisdom of his time, that Christians should be pacifists philosophically, but that they should use defense as a means of preserving peace in the long run. For example, he routinely argued that pacifism did not prevent the defense of innocents. In essence, the pursuit of peace might require fighting to preserve it in the long-term. Such a war must not be preemptive, but defensive, to restore peace. Thomas Aquinas, centuries later, used the authority of Augustine's arguments in an attempt to define the conditions under which a war could be just. He laid these out in his historic work, *Summa Theologica*:

- First, war must occur for a good and just purpose rather than the pursuit of wealth or power.
- Second, just war must be waged by a properly instituted authority such as the state.
- Third, peace must be a central motive even in the midst of violence

A war is not legitimate or illegitimate simply based on its original motivation: it must comply with a series of additional requirements:

- The response must be commensurate to the evil; more violence than is strictly necessary would be unjust.
- Governing authorities *declare* war, but their decision is not sufficient cause to begin a war. If the *people* oppose a war, then it is illegitimate. The people have a right to depose a government that is waging, or is about to wage, an unjust war.
- Once war has begun, there remain moral limits to action. For example, one may not attack innocents or kill hostages.
- The belligerents must exhaust all options for dialogue and negotiation before undertaking a war; war is only legitimate as a last resort.

Under this doctrine, expansionist wars, wars of pillage, wars to convert infidels or pagans, and wars for glory are all inherently unjust.

Thomas identified the goal of human existence as union and eternal fellowship with God.

The purpose of Christ's Incarnation was to restore human nature by removing "the contamination of sin", which humans cannot do by themselves. "Divine Wisdom judged it fitting that God should become man, so that thus one and the same person would be able both to restore man and to offer satisfaction." Thomas argued in favor of the satisfaction view of atonement; that is, that Jesus Christ died "to satisfy for the whole human race, which was sentenced to die on account of sin."



Thomas believed that the existence of God can be proven. In the *Summa theologiae*, he considered in great detail five arguments for the existence of God, widely known as the Five Ways.

1. Motion: Some things undoubtedly move, though cannot cause their own motion. Since, as Thomas believed, there can be no infinite chain of causes of motion, there must be a First Mover not moved by anything else, and this is what everyone understands by God.
2. Causation: As in the case of motion, nothing can cause itself, and an infinite chain of causation is impossible, so there must be a First Cause, called God.
3. Existence of necessary and the unnecessary: Our experience includes things certainly existing but apparently unnecessary. Not everything can be unnecessary, for then once there was nothing and there would still be nothing. Therefore, we are compelled to suppose something that exists necessarily, having this necessity only from itself; in fact itself the cause for other things to exist.
4. Gradation: If we can notice a gradation in things in the sense that some things are more hot, good, etc., there must be a superlative which is the truest and noblest thing, and so most fully existing. This then, we call God -->note Thomas does not ascribe actual qualities to God Himself.
5. Ordered tendencies of nature: A direction of actions to an end is noticed in all bodies following natural laws. Anything without awareness tends to a goal under the guidance of one who is aware. This we call God --> Note that even when we guide objects, in Thomas' view the source of all our knowledge comes from God as well.

Concerning the nature of God, Thomas was heavily influenced by Aristotle's work and felt the best approach, commonly called the *via negativa*, is to consider what God is not. This led him to propose five statements about the divine qualities:

1. God is simple, without composition of parts, such as body and soul, or matter and form.
2. God is perfect, lacking nothing. That is, God is distinguished from other beings on account of God's complete actuality. Thomas defined God as the '*Ipse Actus Essendi subsistens*,' subsisting act of being.
3. God is infinite. That is, God is not finite in the ways that created beings are physically, intellectually, and emotionally limited. This infinity is to be distinguished from infinity of size and infinity of number.
4. God is immutable, incapable of change on the levels of God's essence and character.
5. God is one, without diversification within God's self. The unity of God is such that God's essence is the same as God's existence. In Thomas's words, "in itself the proposition 'God exists' is necessarily true, for in it subject and predicate are the same."

Thomism recognizes four different species of law, which he defines as "an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated":

1. Eternal law, which is "the type of Divine Wisdom, as directing all actions and movements;"
2. Natural law, "whereby each one knows, and is conscious of, what is good and what is evil," which is the rational being's participation in the eternal law;
3. Human or temporal law, laws made by humans by necessity; and
4. Divine law, which are moral imperatives specifically given through revelation