

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD DEMONSTRATED.

SECOND ARTICLE.

BY WHAT PROOF DOES THE THEIST DEMONSTRATE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

GOD is the highest object of all knowledge, infinitely above any limited being; and yet the certainty of His existence is the end of all metaphysical inquisitions, the full and last solution of all philosophical questions, the point of rest for all researching minds. It is, however, not so difficult to find Him as He is transcending the perfection of our feeble nature. He is, we are assured (Acts 17, 27; 14, 16), notwithstanding His infinity, not far from each one of us, nor has He left Himself without testimony. Knowing once that His existence is demonstrable, though not *a priori*, yet *a posteriori*, that is from the effects He has wrought in this visible world, we are not at a loss to find for it quite cogent and evident reasons. It will only be necessary, first, to show that this universe is contingent and produced, and then, to infer from the conception of its being effected its dependence on the Absolute and Infinite Being as its cause.

As the Scholastics have pointed out this way of demonstrating God's existence, so they have also furnished us with many arguments of this kind. We shall, above all, give the proofs of S. Thomas, yet for the sake of greater facility somewhat differ from him in their arrangement. Let us begin our argumentation with the analysis of the effects we perceive in the physical order, though we always rise from them to God by metaphysical reasons and principles.

The first proof evinces the existence of God as the first cause from the existence of beings produced.¹ There exists in this world,

¹ S. Thomas S. Theol., p. i., qu. 2, art. 3: "Secunda via est ex ratione causæ efficientis. Invenimus eim in rebus sensibilibus esse ordinem causarum, nec tamen invenitur nec est possibile, quod aliquid sit causa efficiens sui ipsius; quia sic esset prius se ipso, quod est impossibile. Non autem est possibile, quod in causis efficientibus procedatur in infinitum; quia in omnibus causis efficientibus ordinatis primum est causa medii, et medium est causa ultimi, sive media sint plura, sive unum tantum. Remota autem causa, removetur effectus. Ergo si non erit primum in causis efficientibus, non erit ultimum nec medium. Sed si procedatur in infinitum in causis efficientibus, non erit prima causa efficiens, et sic non erit nec effectus ultimus nec causæ efficientes mediæ, quod patet esse falsum. Ergo necesse est ponere causam aliquam efficientem primam, quam omnes Deum nominant."

For the better understanding of S. Thomas, it is to be noticed that by *causæ ordinatæ* such causes are meant as depend on one another. If one depends on the other as to *existence*, they are said *causæ ordinate per accidens*; if one depends on the other as to action or *causality*, they are termed *causæ ordinate per se*. Here evidently

as we most certainly know, a series of things produced in succession, each one depending on that by which it is preceded as on its sufficient cause. But this series of produced things presupposes as its sufficient cause an unproduced being, which, as all things are effected by it, and itself is effected by nothing, is the first efficient cause. Consequently, there exists a first efficient cause, which we call God.

But why can a series of things, of which each subsequent is produced by the preceding one, not have its sufficient cause but in an unproduced being? Everything produced requires a pre-existing cause distinct from itself; for by itself a being cannot be produced, since else, as the efficient cause produces its effect by action, and action presupposes the existence of the agent, it would exist before existing, which is evident self-contradiction. Now, in the series, of which we speak, each being, though it is the cause of the subsequent member, was produced and was first an effect, before it could be an efficient cause; it, consequently requires a pre-existing cause distinct from itself. However long, therefore, the series of produced beings may be, it always demands a further cause, and can never come into existence by itself or by virtue of anything contained within it. For this reason, if we join in one series even all produced beings, sensible and supersensible, the sufficient cause of its existence cannot be but in a being distinct from it, and existing beyond it. But the being existing beyond the series of all produced beings is itself not produced. The series, therefore, of things produced in succession requires as the sufficient cause of its existence, the existence of an unproduced being.

However, it is said that, if the series of produced beings be supposed to be infinite, we cannot arrive at a first cause, and that, consequently, in this supposition, the absurdity of which cannot be evidently shown, the existence of God cannot be inferred from the existence of produced beings. True, by adding effect to effect and cause to cause, we cannot reach the beginning of an infinite succession. Nevertheless, even if there existed an infinite series of produced beings, the possibility of which we shall not discuss at present, it would require an unproduced cause, not one, indeed, that is contained within its members, but one that exists beyond them all; nor could, without such a cause, its existence be ac-

causæ ordinatæ per accidens are meant, since the preceding one gives existence to the subsequent. Again God is sometimes called the first, sometimes the ultimate cause. The first He is in the ontological order, or in the order of being and existence, *in essendo*; because all other beings depend on Him as their cause, whereas, He Himself is not dependent on anything. The ultimate cause He is in the order of our cognition, *in cognoscendo*; because, starting from the visible world and inferring the cause from the effect, He is the last cause we arrive at and rest in.

counted for by any intellect. As this objection of the infinite series will recur nearly in all the following demonstrations, in the same as in a similar form, let us, once for all, solve it at full length.

S. Thomas, as may be seen from the text quoted in the note, refutes it with the following reason: In any series of causes, of which each subsequent one is dependent on the preceding, a first, mediate, and last cause is, of necessity, implied; by the last, that being understood which is preceded, but not followed; by the mediate, that which is both followed and preceded; by the first, that which followed, but not preceded, by another cause. That cause on which the last effect depends is the last; because it is preceded, but not followed by another one. Any cause which, being itself dependent, precedes the last, is a mediate one, because it is preceded by that on which it depends, and followed by that which depends on it. Now, as the last cause presupposes the mediate, so the mediate presupposes the first. For the mediate cause involves in its very conception one by which it is preceded, but which is itself unpreceded. But may not a mediate cause be preceded by one or several mediate ones in succession? No doubt it may, yet so, that before them all it supposes one unpreceded. To see this, let us comprise all mediate causes in one taken collectively. Of what nature will this collective cause be? It must needs be a mediate one too. For the whole has no perfection that was not contained in its constituent parts, it being nothing else but their addition. But in the single mediate cause there is no independence of, but, on the contrary, only dependence on, a preceding cause; hence, also the whole of them is dependent on a cause, not by one single dependence, but by the collective dependence of all its parts. It is by the same principle that a multitude of blind men is blind too, and that a herd of brutes however numerous is also destitute of reason.¹ All the mediate causes, then, being comprised in one, which remains a mediate one, this latter requires beyond itself a cause which cannot be mediate again, and all dependent causes preceding the last, being gathered into one collective cause, which is also dependent, the cause on which the latter depends must be independent. But the cause on which all others depend, and which is

¹ Very appropriately Suarez (*Disp. Metaphys.*, 29, sect. 1, n. 32) remarks: "Si nullus est hominum qui non pendeat et factus sit, ergo tota collectio hominum seu tota species humana pendeat et facta est; ergo necesse est, ut pendeat et facta sit ab alia causa superiori non contenta intra speciem hominam; ergo etiamsi fingatur, seriem hominum procedentium inter se esse infinitam intra suam speciem, nihilominus sumpta tota collectione, necesse est habere causam superiorem. Atque ita progrediendo, vel ab uno individuo ad aliud, vel ab una specie facta ad aliam factam, tandem erit necessario sistendum in re non facta."

itself independent, which precedes all mediate causes, and is itself not mediate, is the first and unpreceded cause. In any such series of causes, therefore, a first cause is implied, on which the mediate is dependent, as the last is dependent on the mediate. An important conclusion may be drawn from this. Since on the first cause the mediate and through it all the following effects depend, and since it is impossible that anything dependent can be, the cause on which it depends not being; it is evident that, if there is no first cause, neither a mediate nor a last cause, nor in general, any effect at all can be. From this reason the absurdity of any infinite series of causes, of which one is dependent on the other, without a first and independent cause, is quite apparent; for by eliminating the first cause we not only disown what is essentially implied in the series, but are compelled to deny even the reality of all causes and all effects.

To apply this reasoning to the efficient causes existing in this world, all of them, whether taken collectively or singly, are produced, and, consequently, either last or mediate efficient causes. If they are last causes, they depend on the mediate; if mediate ones, on the first efficient cause, which being itself independent and unproduced, has produced them all, either mediately or immediately. The atheists, therefore, trying to arrange the efficient causes in an infinite series, in order to avoid a first and unproduced cause, undermine the reality of this world, of which they are certain by the testimony of their senses, and destroy the very existence of mundane causes, the duration of which they admit to be infinite.

The impossibility of an infinite series unconnected with a first cause, is shown also by a shorter and more mathematical proof. In every series of causes and effects there must be as many causes as there are effects, each effect requiring its cause. But a first cause being excluded, in an infinite series of that kind, the number of effects must exceed that of the causes. For the number of the causes does not comprise the last effect, whereas the number of effects includes this, and, besides, all the causes of the whole series; because none of them being unproduced, they all are effected. The effects, therefore, exceeding the causes in number by one, the absurdity of such a series is palpable.

It would be of very little avail to the atheists to suppose that the efficient causes existing in this universe, whether finite or infinite in number, produce one another mutually, the first for instance the second, the second the third, the third the first. For then again the absurdity should be admitted that a being could act before

existing, and could, through the medium of its own effect, produce itself.

It being thus proved that the produced causes presuppose an unproduced one, let us now by the second proof infer the existence of God as the necessary being from the existence of contingent beings. We must, however, in advance explain the notions of the necessary and the contingent.¹ Contingent is what so exists that its non-existence also is possible; necessary, on the contrary, is what so exists that its non-existence is impossible. These definitions may be taken in a wider or stricter sense, as possibility is understood differently. For possibility is either intrinsic or extrinsic, metaphysical or physical. Intrinsically or metaphysically that is possible, the component parts of which do not contradict one another and, consequently, constitute a conceivable object; extrinsically or physically that is possible which is proportioned to a certain power, whether active or passive. Likewise something is said to be intrinsically or extrinsically impossible, as either its components are contradicting one another, or as it does not lie within the reach of a certain active or passive power. Now, those beings which by their very constitution have no passive power or liability to be destroyed, on account of their simplicity, we call incorruptible; whilst those are termed corruptible which by their very nature have the passive power or liability to be destroyed on account of their composition. If, then, by possibility or impossibility of non-existence that is understood which is extrinsic, the incorruptible may be called necessary, and the corruptible, contingent. However, so these terms are taken in a wider sense. For strictly contingent is what so exists that its non-existence is conceivable or implies no contradiction in its conception, which may be said also of incorruptible things; and strictly necessary is what so exists that its non-existence is not even conceivable, because inconsistent with its essential attributes. Necessity or contingency in this stricter sense must be attributed to a being, inasmuch as the sufficient reason of existence is contained either in its own essence or in a cause extrinsic to it. For what has the sufficient reason of its existence in its own essence cannot be thought not to exist; because it cannot by itself once pass from non-existence to existence or from existence to non-existence, as its essence always equally contains its existence; nor can it be annihilated by another being, as it is with regard to its existence quite independent. On the contrary, what has no sufficient reason of existence by itself can be conceived not to exist, or not to be produced by its efficient cause. From this another difference between the incorruptible and the

¹ Suarez, *Disp. Metaphys.*, 28, sect. 1, n. 8-13; J. Kleutgen, *S. J.*, *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, II. Band, n. 918.

strictly necessary may be understood. As the incorruptible has in its nature no liability to destruction, if it once exists; but does not require to have the existence of its nature by itself: it is not the last cause of its own necessity; whilst what is strictly or metaphysically necessary, since it is self-existent, has the last sufficient reason of its necessity in itself. Wherefore, the necessity of the one is dependent and hypothetical, that of the other independent and absolute.

The remarks premised, let us see how S. Thomas from the existence of the contingent demonstrates the existence of a necessary being.¹ We perceive in nature things which originate by generation and perish by corruption, and are, consequently, contingent. But what is such cannot always exist, since its duration is limited by generation on the one and corruption on the other side; and for this reason once, that is to say, before its generation, it did not exist at all. If now all things that exist were generated and corruptible, there would have been a moment when nothing at all existed. For however many such generated beings may be supposed to exist, there was before each one of them, and hence also before the whole of them, an instant of non-existence. But in this supposition even now nothing would be in existence, because what is not existing cannot come into existence but by something that exists. Hence, as the existence of contingent, or of generated and corruptible beings is certain and unquestionable, the existence of a necessary being also is certain and undeniable.

Here, however, a serious objection is made. S. Thomas, with other eminent philosophers, admitted the possibility of creation and, consequently, also of generation from eternity; which being supposed, it is not necessary that before the series of generated beings there was a moment of non-existence. We might deny this inference of eternal generation from eternal creation, as S. Thomas himself denies it in the *Summa Theologica* (p. i., qu. 46,

¹ S. Theol., p. i., qu. 2, art. 3: Tertia via est sumpta est possibili et necessario, quæ salis est:

“Invenimus enim in rebus quædam, quæ sunt possible esse et non esse; cum quædam inveniantur generari et corrumpi et per consequens possible esse et non esse. Impossibile est autem omnia, quæ sunt talia, semper esse, quia quod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est. Si igitur omnia possible sunt non esse, aliquando nihil fuit in rebus. Sed si hoc est verum, etiam nunc nihil esset, quia quod non est, non incipit esse nisi per aliquid, quod est. Si igitur nihil fuit ens, impossibile fuit, quod aliquid inciperet esse, et sic modo nihil esset, quod patet esse falsum. Non ergo omnia entia sunt possible, sed oportet aliquid esse necessarium in rebus. Omne autem necessarium vel habet causam suæ necessitatis aliunde, vel non habet. Non est autem possibile, quod procedatur in infinitum in necessariis, quæ habent causam suæ necessitatis, sicut nec in causis efficientibus, ut probatum est (in isto art). Ergo necesse est ponere aliquid, quod sit per se necessarium non habens causam necessitatis aliunde, sed quod est causa necessitatis aliis; quod omnes dicunt Deum.”

art. 2 ad 8), and we might maintain that in this very place (S. Theol., p. i., qu. 2, art. 3), he shows the impossibility of generated beings to exist without a beginning in time, although he adopts the opposite opinion in others of his works. Yet let us solve the difficulty without touching this controversy. Could even generable or contingent beings have succeeded one another from eternity, nevertheless each one of them, and hence also their whole collection, though infinite in number, would have been brought into existence from non-existence. But nothing can come into existence by itself. If, therefore, a non-contingent being did not exist, even now nothing at all would exist. As, however, many contingent beings most certainly exist, we arrive again at the conclusion that besides the contingent something necessary must exist.

The question now arises, by what kind of necessity that being exists which exists besides the contingent. Is it hypothetically or absolutely necessary? Does it bear the sufficient reason of its existence and thus also of its necessity in its own essence, or has it received existence and with it also necessity from another being? If we admit it to be of absolute necessity, an absolutely necessary being exists. If it is of hypothetical necessity, then, just on account of its dependency, it presupposes beyond itself another necessary being existing. This holds good not only with regard to one hypothetically necessary being, but also with regard to the whole of them, however many they may be; because in a collection that perfection cannot be found which is in no way contained in its constituent parts. The existence, therefore, of all the necessary beings that are dependent as to their necessity, preresquires the existence of a necessary being which, being distinct from them, is no more dependent, but independent as to its necessity and hence must be necessary by itself. Consequently, there exists an absolutely necessary being, which has the sufficient reason of its necessity, that is of its necessary existence in its own essence, and is the cause of the necessity of the incorruptible, and of the perishable existence of the corruptible.

By this way we have risen from the corruptible, which strikes the senses, to the incorruptible, which is simple and immaterial, and from this to God, the absolutely necessary being, as the cause of all necessary and contingent existence. We may, however, from this world also immediately infer the existence of the absolutely necessary being, directly considering its not being determined to existence by its own nature, and not regarding its corruptibility. For of those beings which do not exist by themselves both each single one and the whole collection require at last to be determined to existence by a being which has the sufficient reason of existing in its own essence.

As from the produced the unproduced, and from the contingent the necessary, so also from the existence of the finite the existence of the infinite is inferred. This we set forth as the third proof for the existence of God. It starts from the different degrees of perfection in which the beings of this universe are found to be, if contrasted with one another. But here we speak of pure perfections, to wit, of those which do not imply a limitation in their very conception. These again, as they are here considered, are of two kinds. They either by their different degrees constitute the different essences of beings, as, for instance, life, cognition, intelligence; or they are the common attributes of beings also of divers essences, yet exist in them in different degrees, as truth, goodness, wisdom, power, beauty. Both these kinds of perfection are comprised in being, the most universal of all conceptions.

If, then, we compare plant, brute, and man, life is in the brute more perfect than in the plant, and in man more perfect than in the brute; likewise cognition is more perfect in a rational than in a merely sensitive being.¹ Wisdom exists in a higher degree in the man than in the boy, and again in a higher degree in the learned than in the unlearned. The power of the intellect and the will is of a higher order than that of matter, and beings endowed with life are more accomplished in beauty than the inanimate. Thus perfection exists in the world in many degrees, beginning with matter as the lowest, from there rising to rational nature, and there again continually increasing. But the ascending degrees of perfection suppose one that is the highest, both in the physical and in the metaphysical order. For since whatever exists is determinate, the physical order—that is, the order of things existing—must actually contain so many and no more beings, so many and no more degrees of perfection, and hence one above which there is not another one. In the metaphysical order we can conceive in any kind of pure perfection a being which possesses the same in its fulness and without any limitation; and again above this another one more perfect cannot be. Thus we have in either order some-

¹ S. Theol., p. i., qu. 2, art. 3. "Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus, qui in rebus inveniuntur. Invenitur enim in rebus aliquid magis et minus bonum et verum et nobile, et sic de aliis hujusmodi. Sed magis et minus dicuntur de diversis secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid, quod maxime est; sicut magis calidum est, quod magis appropinquat maxime calido. Est igitur aliquid, quod est verissimum et optimum et nobilissimum et per consequens maxime ens. Nam quæ sunt maxime vera, sunt maxime entia, ut dicitur 3. *Metaphys.* (text 4). Quod autem dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium, quæ sunt illius generis, sicut ignis, qui est maxime calidus, est causa omnium calidorum, ut in eodem libro dicitur (text. eodem). Ergo est aliquid, quod omnibus entibus est causa esse et bonitatis et cuiuslibet perfectionis; et hoc dicimus Deum." See also S. Theol., p. i., qu. 44, art. i.; S. c. gent. lib. ii., cap. 15; J. Kleutgen, S. J., *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, II. Band, n. 982-986.

thing most true, good, beautiful, powerful, perfect in life, cognition, intelligence; and as all perfections are realities, also a supreme, most perfect being. Yet whether or not that which is the highest in the metaphysical order exists also in the physical order, and constitutes its supreme degree, cannot be inferred from our argumentation thus far developed; it will, however, presently be understood from the inquiry we are now to make into the sufficient reason of the existence of beings differing in their degrees of perfection.

No being having an inferior or limited degree of perfection can be self-existent. For what exists by the very essence of a pure perfection cannot be limited, but must needs be infinite, because, essence and existence being in it the selfsame thing, whatever is comprised in the essence of such a perfection is realized in its existence. Hence it has not only a part or some degree, but the fulness of this perfection. Thus the true, the living, the beautiful that exists by itself is truth, life, beauty, without any restriction. This philosophical tenet, that the self-existent is infinite, and that, on the contrary, the finite cannot be self-existent, may be illustrated from another point of view. Since the existent is determinate as to its being, the self-existent must have a certain and definite degree of perfection by virtue of its own essence, this being the sufficient reason of its existence. But the degree of perfection, to which a being is determined by its very essence, is absolutely necessary to it, so that a lower or a higher degree would be even metaphysically impossible in it, and repugnant to its conception. Now the finite, on the one hand, does by no means with absolute necessity exclude a higher degree of perfection, at least within the range of its species, but rather must be conceived to be indefinitely perfectible; it, therefore, cannot exist, by virtue of its own essence. The self-existent, on the other hand, is not such as to exclude with absolute necessity the possession of infinite perfection, but, on the contrary, must be conceived as capable of it. For as infinite perfection is metaphysically or intrinsically possible, because it involves no contradiction in its concept; and as dependence on an efficient cause is an imperfection, and independence or self-existence a pure perfection, because implying no negation: it is evident that infinity in perfection can and must be possible only in the self-existent. This, therefore, must in reality be endowed with infinite perfection.

Since, then, all the beings that have a lower degree of perfection cannot be self-existent, and must, consequently, have been produced, they have come into existence by the infinite, in which all their reality is contained eminently. So the highest in any kind of pure perfection is the cause of existence and the source of being for all

the lower ; and what is the highest in perfection in the metaphysical or ideal order—the infinite—exists also as the highest in the physical or real order.

But may it not be objected that, if this be so, we must either admit as many infinite beings as there are pure perfections, or grant one to be produced by the other, which both imply evident contradiction ? Neither one nor the other inference is legitimate. Being, as it was already remarked, comprises all essences and all attributes, and, therefore, infinite being implies all infinite perfections, as conversedly every infinite perfection must be conceived to be infinite in its being. There exists, for this reason, only one infinite being, which is the cause of all finite beings that exist, in whatever degree and in whatever order of perfection. That this infinite being is to be called God nobody will deny, because no other conception expresses the Divinity so fully, and distinguishes it so well from any other nature as infinity in being.

This proof for the existence of God is handled with particular delight both in antiquity by Plato and Aristotle, and in the Christian era by St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas, and many other scholastics. Plato, however, with his school, has misrepresented it, by supposing that in any order of a perfection conceivable by a universal notion, in any species and genus, the highest and most perfect was the cause of the lower. Many grave errors followed from this false admission. Nevertheless Plato's leading idea was undoubtedly true ; his fault was that he did not distinguish between pure and mixed perfections, saying of them both indiscriminately what had to be said of the pure perfection alone.¹

Thus far we have demonstrated God to be the first cause, the unproduced, self-existent being, absolutely necessary as to His existence, and infinite in His perfections, the proofs for this truth being furnished by the very essence of the things of this visible world. Let us now prove Him to exist as the absolutely immutable being from the mutability of the universe, thus regarding rather His attributes than His essence, and starting also from the accidental qualities of the finite. This fourth proof, we are about to give, was in the ancient schools proposed in the following terms : "*From the things moved a mover unmoved is to be inferred.*" Some explanations are necessary for the understanding of this proposition.

The ancients took motion : first, for any kind of operation ; secondly, for any actuation of a passive power, whether successive or instantaneous ; thirdly, for the successive actuation of a passive power alone. This last was motion in the strictest sense, under which the change of position in space ranges itself as a particular

¹ S. Theol., p. i., qu. 6, art. 4.

species. Hence, to move a being is nothing else but to turn its passive power into act, or in other words, as the act means a perfection, and the passive power the capacity of receiving it, to move a being is to confer upon it a perfection which it did not possess before, but was capable of possessing. An instantaneous motion or actuation is the conferring of a complete act or perfection, which at once fills the capacity of a subject; a successive motion or actuation is the conferring of an incomplete act or perfection, which partly actuates the capacity of the subject, partly lets it unactuated, so that the entire actuation of the same is achieved only by a series of such incomplete acts conferred.¹ Yet thus we used motion actively; taken passively motion is identical with mutation, or the reception of a perfection; and hence an unmovable being is one that cannot undergo a change nor acquire a new perfection. The unmovable in this sense is also called a pure act, because it is perfection free from any receptivity; which freedom is necessarily founded on its independence and its fulness; for what is dependent and imperfect is of necessity also receptive. The demonstration, therefore, by which the ancients deduced the existence of the unmovable from the existence of the movable is the inference of the existence of the immutable from the existence of the mutable. Having besides remarked that here motion is taken for any actuation of a passive power, instantaneous as well as successive, we now set forth the argument itself.

There are things in this universe which change, or which are reduced from passive power to act, because they begin to be endowed with perfection which they did not possess before, but had only the power of possessing.² This is quite evident from their

¹ The Scholastics defined motion according to Aristotle: *Actus entis in potentia ut in potentia*, that is, such an act of the passive power of a being as leaves the power still potential or unactuated. This definition may be taken in a twofold sense. By the act which exists already in a passive power, and yet lets it unactuated, we may understand either *an inferior degree of a perfection*, still to be followed by a higher of the same species, or the *reception itself* of a perfection. In the first case, motion is taken for the successive actuation of a passive power; in the second, for any actuation of a passive power, successive and instantaneous. Suarez, Disp. Metaphys., 49, sec. 1, n. 9, 10.

² S. Theol. p. i., qu. 2, art. 3. "Prima autem et manifestior via est, quæ sumitur ex parte motus. Certum est enim et sensu constat, aliqua moveri in mundo. Omne autem, quod movetur, ab alio movetur; nihil enim movetur nisi secundum quod est in potentia ad illud, ad quod movetur; movet autem aliquid secundum quod est actu; *movere enim nihil aliud est, quam educere aliquid de potentia in actum*. De potentia autem nihil potest reduci in actum nisi per aliquod ens in actu; sicut calidum in actu, ut ignis, facit lignum, quod est calidum in potentia, esse actu calidum et per hoc movet et alterat ipsum. Omne ergo, quod movetur, oportet ab alio moveri. Si ergo id, a quo movetur, moveatur, oportet et ipsum ab alio moveri, et illud ab alio. Hic autem non est procedere in infinitum, quia sic non esset aliquod primum movens, et per consequens nec aliud movens, quia moventia secunda non movent nisi per hoc, quod sunt

successive actions ; for a new activity both requires in the agent, and effects in the subject acted on, a new perfection. But whatever is reduced from passive power to act is actuated by another being. This axiom is the main support of the whole demonstration and needs a careful examination, particularly as it is sometimes doubted of. We must, therefore, closely examine into the nature of passive power and its actuation. As passive power is the capacity or receptivity of a perfection, it always implies in its subject the lack of a certain perfection, whilst, on the contrary, actuation supposes in the cause which achieves it the real possession of the same perfection. For as to actuate something is to confer on it a perfection, and as nothing can confer that which it does not really contain, the actuating cause must already possess what the subject to be actuated is to receive. But the same thing cannot at once lack and possess one and the selfsame perfection, and, therefore, we must infer that the subject reduced from passive power to act is not the entirely sufficient cause of its actuation, but must needs be actuated from outside.

However, though this be true with regard to brute matter, it seems to be false with regard to living beings in general, the nature of which according to the Scholastics consists in self-motion, and to rational beings in particular, which determine themselves to action by their free will. To solve this difficulty, let it be well understood, that we did not say that the actuated subject cannot concur to its own actuation, but only that it is not the entire sufficient cause of the same. Living beings, in reality, have the faculty of producing acts in themselves and even of determining themselves with freedom ; but if there is a succession in their vital acts, their vital faculties are in themselves incomplete, and hence must, before they can bring forth their effect, be accomplished by the influence of an exterior cause. Many examples of daily experience confirm this assertion. Why does a plant not grow in winter, yet grows in spring, passing thus from potential to actual growth ? No doubt, on account of the influence of the temperature on its organs. Or why does it not grow in this, but grows when transplanted in that other soil ? Because the one furnishes it with suitable food, the other not. Again, why can we see certain objects only under certain circumstances ? Because they act on our eyes only in certain places and at certain times. Likewise, our intellect and our will

mota a primo movente, sit baculus non movet nisi per hoc, quod est motus a manu. Ergo necesse est devenire ad aliquid primum movens, quod a nullo movetur, et hoc omnes intelligent Deum."

See also Sum. c. Gent., lib. i., cp. 13 ; Sylvester Maurus, S. J., *Questiones Philosophicæ*, lib. iv., *Quæstio Physico.-Metaphys.-viii.* ; J. Kleutgen, S. J., *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, II. Band., n. 912-917.

cannot produce new acts by themselves and quite independently, but must be determined or moved by the object thought of or desired. If we imagine a spirit independent, in all its acts, of any exterior object, containing in itself all truth conceivable and all goodness worthy of desire, we cannot conceive in it a change of thoughts or volitions. Thus just the objection taken from the living beings rather proves than upsets the principle laid down, "whatever subject is changed or reduced from passive power to act is changed or actuated by an outside cause;" not as if it could not by itself also concur to its actuation, but because, not being the entirely sufficient cause of the same, it must, in order to effect it, be accomplished from outside. Indeed, the accession of a new perfection to a subject is not conceivable, if this latter is supposed to be the sole and entire cause of it. For in this supposition the perfection would be in the subject, already before having accrued to it, since every cause must precontain the reality of its own effect.

If, then, whatever is changed or reduced to act, is changed or actuated by an exterior cause, the question is to be answered: "Whence had the cause actuating the mutable beings of this universe, the perfection by which it was completely enabled to actuate others?" It may have received such perfection from another being, and thus also have been reduced to act. In fact, in this nature we see changeable beings successively act on, and change, one another. So again we have a successive series of dependent actuating causes, since each subsequent one has received from the preceding the perfection necessary to actuate another one. But in such a series, be it even supposed to be infinite, there is of necessity a last, mediate, and first actuating cause implied, of which the mediate is so actuated by the first, as the last is by the mediate, and of which, consequently, neither the mediate nor the last can actuate anything, the first not preceding and being in act. For that which has produced the last actuation is the last cause; that which has actuated either the last or any other cause after having been itself also actuated from outside is a mediate cause. Each mediate cause by its very conception requires another cause by which it is preceded and actuated. But what each mediate cause essentially prerequisites on account of its intrinsic dependence, also the whole of them prerequisites. Hence they altogether presuppose an actuating cause existing beyond them and distinct from them; and this cannot be again actuated from outside, but has the perfection necessary to actuate others from itself. All the changes, therefore, or actuations of passive powers we perceive in this universe suppose a first actuating cause, which is the source of all perfections received by the beings changed or reduced to act, yet is itself endowed with them by its own essence, without any change or influence from an ex-

terior cause. It must, for this reason, as to its perfection be absolute, independent, self-existent, and necessary, and hence it is perfection itself free from any receptivity, a pure act. This absolute being, the first cause and source of all perfections received, we call God.

Before leaving this argument, it will not be useless to adjust a difference which seems to exist between Plato's and Aristotle's reasoning. Plato requires as the first mover of all one that moves himself; Aristotle, on the contrary, maintaining the principle that what is moved is moved from outside, infers a mover unmoved. In spite of these different terms they use there is, in reality, no opposition between them. Plato takes motion in its widest sense for any operation, also for intellection and volition, but supposes the first mover to be self-active and independent of any exterior cause. From what was said above it is evident he thus excludes from the first mover any kind of change. Aristotle by motion understands change or reduction from passive power to act, and hence teaches the first mover to be unchanging; yet, as the production of a change is, no doubt, an action, he also has to admit him to be self-active. Both Plato and Aristotle, therefore, arrived at the very same conclusion, either of them proving the chief attributes of the first cause, independent self-activity and immutability, though one of them speaks of self-activity explicitly and of immutability implicitly, the other, on the contrary, of immutability explicitly and of self-activity implicitly.

By the demonstration from the instability of the universe God was simply proved to exist as the absolute and immutable being; but neither the nature of His perfections nor the way of His acting on the mutable was made known. This will be obtained only by more particularly regarding the changes produced in this world. We therefore take the fifth proof for the existence of God from the order of the universe. For this order is, on the one hand, produced by reducing the passive power of material beings to act, and, on the other hand, supposes in its author intellect and free will. The argument is generally worded in the following terms: "From the order of this universe the existence of a highly intelligent Orderer is to be inferred."

That order exists in the universe nobody can deny. Are not in the minerals the atoms joined to one another in regular proportion? Are not all organic bodies, in general, governed by constant laws in their formation, as well as their activity? If we call our attention to the organic bodies, we find in them a great variety of organs, each one fitted for a certain vital function, and all of them united to one harmonious whole. The same form of organism regularly recurs in all individuals of the same species and in

all those which are generated by them. Centuries of study and observation have verified this unity and harmony of organic life, and bring it daily more to our cognizance. But if each particular being of this world is worthy of our admiration, the whole of them is much more so. The heavenly bodies, being put in motion, though each one follows its own direction, yet altogether constitute one great system, never disturbed, never getting into confusion. On earth the several bodies by mutual attraction increase in size, or form new substances, always according to the same laws. What is still more astonishing, all the numberless molecules of brute matter so combine with one another as to subserve the living beings and to furnish them with all the necessary means of their subsistence; and the system of the heavenly bodies is so built up and set in motion as always to foster or to renew organic life. A similar subordination we observe among the living beings themselves; for not only is one plant subservient to the other, and the lower species of animals to the higher, but also the whole mineral realm is subordinate to the vegetable, the vegetable to the animal, and the animal to man. This earth, indeed, is man's dwelling-place, adapted to his needs, and fitted to promote his well-being. In each single man, again, the lower faculties are subject to the higher, to the intellect and will, which tend to infinite truth and goodness; and all men together naturally incline to society, in order to help one another in the pursuit of happiness. Though the organic realm is continually dying in a great many individuals, yet it is always reviving in as many others, in the same form, and according to the same laws, so as to lose none of its species, and to render the death of those which perish beneficial to those which survive. Through a long series of centuries, this course of death and generation is going on with always the same uniformity.

It must, moreover, be borne in mind that this perfect order and unity is closely connected with the nature of things itself. The fitness, for instance, of the several organs for certain vital functions, their mutual dependence and combination into one living body, constitute the very nature of plants, animals, and their faculties. Again, that the organic beings of a higher order are in need of those of a lower order, and that these latter just answer their wants, entirely results from the essential constitution of both one and the other; that the molecules of matter always combine according to certain laws, and that they form bodies of certain active and passive qualities of a certain rarity and density, lies in the nature of their forces. To the organic beings the fitness for ever propagating their species is natural. In the system of inorganic bodies motion is as surely regulated and counterbalanced as in the

most artificial mechanism we can imagine. Its permanency, therefore, and unity has its cause in modifications, unchangeably like laws, impressed on matter. From this we conclude that this universe, by the very nature of its beings, its forces, its structure, combines to unity; that constant order with necessity follows its constitution, and is the object of the tendency of all its powers.

Now, whence this inborn impulse of the universe to order? From four different causes it has been derived by philosophers: from the nature of brute matter itself; from chance; from a higher power acting on matter with blind necessity; from a free and intelligent being. From the nature of brute matter it does not spring. The actual order of the universe implies a certain distance of the several bodies; a certain direction of their motion; certain combinations of their molecules and forces; for all this being changed, the present order also will be changed, or even entirely destroyed. But matter is first, owing to its inertia, quite indifferent to motion or to rest. It is as capable of one as of the other, and if once in rest it can by no means pass, by itself, to motion, and if in motion it cannot, by itself, come to rest. Secondly, matter is indifferent to any direction of motion, combinations of molecules, position in space, and distance between its parts. It follows therefore that matter itself is also indifferent to order or to confusion; to this or to that order; it follows that it could not put itself into action and effect by itself either the actual or any other possible order. Nor will it avail to object, that one molecule of matter may determine the other to action. Since, as I have said, all molecules are inert and inactive by themselves, none can exert any power on the other. Each one needs, before it can act, to be aroused from its inertia, and none is able to arouse others, all and every one of them being inert. Something, therefore, must, from outside, have given matter the impulse to that order which now exists in the universe.

Many atheists of ancient and modern times say that this something is chance. But what is chance? It may be taken in a two-fold sense. It means either the absence of any cause at all, or a cause not intrinsically directed to the effect it produces. Chance, taken in the first sense, is an absurdity. Nothing that is in itself inert and indifferent can be determined to action, to motion, to order, without the agency of a cause. A sufficient cause is for any effect of absolute necessity. Hence, if order resulted from chance, chance must be taken for a cause which is not intrinsically directed to the effect it produces. So, in fact, finite causes, both free and necessary, sometimes act. If two friends, without knowing of each other, go to the same city, they meet there, though their journey was not intended for such an effect. If a hurricane transfers a

house just where the proprietor likes to have it, this is effected, though the violence of the storm is not in itself fitted to comply with man's wishes. Such happenings are called chances, and it is evident that to the effect then produced, the cause was directed, not by itself, but only by the particular coincidence of exterior circumstances. Were, therefore, the impulse to order given to the universe by chance, a cause distinct from matter would, by acting on this nature, have combined its forces to a system without being proportioned in itself to unity and harmony in its effects. Is this possible in reality? Let us suppose that the different determinations worked on matter, by which order was put in all organic and inorganic beings, were effected by different actions either of the same or of several causes. In this case, all these countless actions would evidently not have been fit to bring forth harmony in so wide a universe, but after having been themselves reduced to unity, and thus intrinsically directed to order in their effects. For it is a well-grounded axiom that what happens by chance, and without being aimed at by the agent, occurs seldom, and only by exception, and that, on the contrary, what lies in the tendency of a power recurs regularly. Indeed, the effect to which a cause is in itself directed, must always be brought forth, unless it be impeded from outside; the effect, on the contrary, which does not result from the bent of the cause, but from the particular coincidence of circumstances, cannot happen but in rare instances. The actions, then, which have determined matter, being numberless and yet concurring constantly, uniformly, and everywhere, in putting harmony in this immense system of the world, cannot have agreed among themselves by chance, but must have been directed to order in their effects by their own intrinsic unity. Let us, therefore, rather suppose that one single action of one cause has impressed such determinations on matter, as constitute its tendency to the actual order of the universe. Might we then conceive that this one action has effected order by chance? Such an action would contain all the perfections of the many actions spoken of above, in an eminent degree, since they all would be reduced in it to perfect simplicity. But the many particular actions could not produce the order of the universe, unless united and directed to it, and this unity of them, and conjoint direction to order, is undoubtedly a very great perfection of theirs. Hence, also, this one action, which is supposed to have determined matter, must have been proportioned to order by its very nature and in an eminent degree.

To advance another reason for the impossibility to produce order by chance, every perfection of an effect brought forth must be precontained in its cause. But the order of the universe is a stupendous perfection; the highest accomplishment of things put in

existence, as wide and lasting as the world itself. Shall we then think that this great perfection was not contained in the nature or the tendency of a cause; that it was effected, no efficient cause being in itself proportioned to it; that to this widely extended unity in such a multitude of effects answers no unity in its cause; that this universal agreement of all the parts of the world has resulted from no universal principle? The absurdity of such an admission is apparent as soon as we apply it to works of art. For instance, to a clock, or to a palace, to a picture, to a book. The very harmony and unity of many parts, we are convinced, presupposes a particular perfection in the cause, just proportioned to this quality of the effect. For this reason, no sensible man will ever attribute such works to chance.

If, then, the cause, putting harmony in this material world, did not act by chance, but tended to order by its very activity and its intrinsic direction, how was it determined to such a tendency? Since we inquire into the last sufficient reason of this determination, it is to be understood that here we consider that principle of order which is determined by itself, and not from outside. But a being may be self-determined in a twofold way, either with necessity, if the determination springs from its self-existent nature, or with freedom, if it springs from its free will. From the nature of the cause which has acted on matter the determination to put the present order in the universe cannot have sprung. Two principles concerning this point are most certain. First, there are numberless orders realizable, whether we consider the absolute and metaphysical possibility, or the passive power and capacity of matter, and out of this countless orders possible, the actual is neither absolutely or relatively to the capacity of matter the most perfect. Secondly, whatever is ultimately determined to produce order by its own self-existent nature, is determined to produce the most perfect order, for any perfection of a being that results from its self-existent essence is infinite, as it was shown above, and no determination to produce order is infinitely perfect, unless it tends to the most perfect order. It is, therefore, not possible that the cause which has given this universe the impulse to order was determined to do so by its own nature, and hence, with necessity; but out of the many orders possible it must have determined itself to one with free choice. But the cause which determines itself with freedom is endowed with intellect and free will. The ultimate cause, therefore, of the actual order of the universe is not blind necessity, but an intelligent and free agent.

Another consideration will still more illustrate this conclusion. The supreme cause of order cannot be of the same nature as this universe, since in the one the tendency to order is produced, in the

other it must be unproduced. Order, therefore, was not brought forth in the world by generation or by communication of nature. But how can a higher being produce an effect quite different from itself in its essential perfections? How can a superior power, out of all the possible orders, determine matter to that order which at present exists in it? How can it so direct the material forces, so form the constitution of the organic beings, and so move the heavenly bodies, that every deviation is precluded, every confusion or collision avoided, and the course of the whole nature made constant and uniform throughout so many centuries? It is not sufficient that the entity of the effect be eminently contained in the higher perfection of the cause; no, also the very form of it must pre-exist in the cause. The cause tends by its action to the particular nature of the effect, and has for the special end of its activity the production of a certain form in the subject acted on; it must, to work order, direct the natures or forces which it shapes or modifies to certain and determinate effects; it must have present in their very peculiarity, both the deviations to be avoided, and the many systems to one of which it determines itself.¹ But as to their reality, and in their peculiarities, all these things cannot pre-exist in the cause of order, not only because this is of a higher nature, but also because the particular forms of all these effects to be obtained or prevented, and of all these orders to be realized, or not to be realized, are contrary to one another, and, hence, exclude one another from the same subject. If, however, as to their reality, their forms cannot pre-exist in the cause of order, there remains nothing else but that they are contained in it ideally; that is, that their ideas exist in the same, and direct its actions as models and rules. It is, no doubt, for this reason that we ascribe all artificial works of order to rational beings, and would, by no means, think a house, or a statue, or an engine, to have another cause than one endowed with intellect.²

If we now reflect on the perfection of the order we perceive in this wide universe; on its unchangeable regularity; on the simplicity of its laws; on the astonishing harmony of things, so different

¹ S. Theol., p. I, qu. 15, art. 1.

² The proof for the existence of God from the order of the universe S. Thomas gives in the following terms: "Quinta via sumitur ex gubernatione rerum. Videmus enim, quod aliqua, quæ cognitione carent, scilicet corpora naturalia, operantur propter finem; quod apparet ex hoc, quod semper aut frequentius eodem modo operantur, ut consequantur id, quod est optimum. Unde patet, quod non ex casu, sed ex intentione perveniunt ad finem. Ea autem, quæ non habent cognitionem, non tendunt in finem nisi directa ab aliquo cognoscente et intelligente, sicut sagitta a sagittante. Ergo est aliquid intelligens, a quo omnes res naturales ordinantur ad finem; et hoc dicimus Deum."—S. Theol., p. I, qu. 2, art. 3.

See also, J. Kleutgen, S. J., *Philosophie der Vorzeit*, II Band, n. 752, 921.

in their nature ; on the numberless multitude of complications that had to be avoided, of motions and combinations that had to be calculated ; we cannot but highly admire the greatness of the intellect which conceived, and the power which put in reality, such a system. We cannot but call this intellect and power divine, and thus acknowledge that from the order of the universe the existence of God, as the most wise Orderer, is evidently to be inferred, and that from the greatness and the beauty of the world, the eminent perfection of the Divinity is clearly made known.

By this proof, the idea of God we have acquired by the preceding demonstrations has become much more perfect. We obtain by it some faint conception of the infinite perfection of the first, self-existent cause, of the vastness of its sovereign power, of the extension of its knowledge, and the depth of its wisdom. Thus we know that God, being the fulness of all perfection, of all truth, and all goodness, with absolute simplicity, has put order in all His works at the imitation of His own unity ; and to some degree we understand how all the perfections which the finite beings receive by their changes, flow as from their ultimate and unchangeable source from Him, who, by his intellect, contemplates in His own nature the archetype of this universe, and by His will expresses it in the creation, moved by the love of His own infinite essence.

NOTE.—The reader will kindly excuse the following misprints in our first article on the "Existence of God :"

In the quotations of S. Thomas, instead of "q," read "qu," and instead of "F," read "7 ;" thus, for instance, instead of "S. Th., p. I, q. 85, art. 1," read "S. Th., p. I, qu. 85, art. 1," and instead of "q, F. 6, art. 1," read "qu. 76, art. 1."

Page 98, in the footnote, line 19th, for "individualiter existens," read "individualiter existentem."

Page 106, in the footnote, line 11th, for "Mgr. Huguin, before being promoted to the Episcopal See of Baguez," read "Mgr. Hugonin, before being promoted to the Episcopal See of Bayeux."

Page 110, line 27th, for "a priori," read "a posteriori."

Page 103, line 21st, a clause has been omitted ; read "First we heard them say that what is contingent has being and existence, not by itself, but by God, and hence is also not intelligible but in God, since the being of an object is also its intelligibility."—J. MING, S. J.