

A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysical Proof of God **(with a response to Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*)**

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November 2015

Introduction

Though there are many contemporary proofs of God (such as that of Bernard Lonergan - [click here](#)), this contemporary version of St. Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical proof of God, though difficult for newcomers, is brief and compelling. It proves the existence of a unique unrestricted uncaused reality (existing through itself), which is the Creator of all else that exists.

Readers seeking more extensive explanations of the terms and the proof can make recourse to my book *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy* (Chapters 3&4).

A metaphysical proof always begins by showing the *necessity* of at least one uncaused reality in the whole of reality. Aristotle articulated this well about 2,400 years ago – and its unfailing logic has remained quite similar ever since – with some refinements in logic and terminology. The second premise of the proof shows that an uncaused reality (existing through itself) must be absolutely unrestricted. This proof goes back to the discovery of St. Thomas Aquinas who discovered two major principles of metaphysics:

1. The real distinction between existence and essence.
2. The requirement that existences precede essence.

The third premise is a development from one of the oldest strains of metaphysical thought – from Parmenides – who greatly influenced Plato. Parmenides recognized that being itself (existence itself) must be one and only one. In this proof, we show that the absolutely unrestricted uncaused reality must be one. St Thomas Aquinas recognized this, and was able to deduce the fourth conclusion of the proof – namely that the one unrestricted uncaused reality must be the Creator of all else that exists.

Thus, the proof shows that there must exist one and only one unrestricted uncaused reality which creates everything else – and this reality is referred to as “God.” Though this God (known through reason) is consistent with the God of Jesus Christ, it is not the same as that God. For Christian revelation speaks of the *heart* of God, but the God of metaphysics cannot access that domain – it can only uncover certain *intelligible* characteristics through the process of logical proof – uniqueness, unrestrictedness, existence through itself (uncausedness), absolute simplicity, transtemporality, perfect intellection, and the power to create everything other than itself.

Extensive as this conclusion is, it leaves many questions unanswered. Does this God love us – or is he indifferent to us (as Aristotle and Einstein thought)? Is there a heaven or a hell? Does God inspire us, guide us, and protect us? Does he redeem suffering? Does he have a heart or feel anything? Are we a special creation of God? Reason and science cannot give us the answers to these questions. To know these things, God will have to reveal himself to us – and so we will have to seek not only the evidence of reason, but also that of revelation – specifically, the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹

I.

The Basic Proof

Step 1: *There must be at least one uncaused reality that exists through itself.*²

- If there were not at least one *uncaused* reality in “the whole of reality,” then “the whole of reality” would be constituted by *only* caused realities – that is, realities that require a cause to exist.
- This means that the whole of reality would have to have a real cause *beyond* itself in order to exist (without such a cause, the whole of reality would not exist – there would be nothing in existence).³
- This state of affairs is intrinsically contradictory. How can there be a *real* cause *beyond* the whole of reality, if “the whole of reality” exhausts everything that is real? Obviously there can’t be such a cause.
- Since “a real cause beyond the whole of reality” is intrinsically contradictory and since the whole of reality is not nothing (i.e. something does *in fact* exist), we must conclude that the whole of reality *cannot* be constituted *only* by caused realities (which would collectively require a cause for their existence).
- *Therefore*, there must be at least one *uncaused* reality in the whole of reality. This uncaused reality must exist through itself.

If one denies this conclusion, then one will have to say either that there is nothing in existence (contrary to fact) or that there exists a *real* cause “beyond the whole of reality” (which is an intrinsic contradiction).

Step 2: *An uncaused reality must be unrestricted.*

¹ See Spitzer 2016 *God So Loved the World: Clues to our Transcendent Destiny from the Revelation of Jesus* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press).

² Aristotle first formulated this proof as an “Unmoved Mover” Proof in Book 8 of the *Physics* and Book 12 of the *Metaphysics*. The Proof was later expanded to the “Uncaused Cause” Proof by Thomas Aquinas and there are many versions of it today (see for example Lonergan 1992, *Insight*, Chapter 19). St. Thomas Aquinas discusses this in a variety of different places, but for the most-well known see *Summa Theologica* 1947, Pt. I, Q2, art. 3.

³ It does not matter whether one postulates an infinite number of caused realities in the whole of reality. If the whole of reality (with an *infinite* number of realities) is constituted by *only* caused realities, then the whole of reality will require a *real* cause beyond itself to exist – which is an intrinsic contradiction.

Recall that an uncaused reality exists through itself. Such a reality has one fundamental activity or power – “existence through itself.” The proof that an uncaused reality must be absolutely unrestricted is centered on two fundamental Thomistic discoveries:

1. The real distinction between existence and essence.
2. The requirement that existence precede essence.

The terms “existence” and “essence” have complex meanings in Thomistic metaphysics. For the purposes of this proof, “existence” shall mean “existence through itself” (the fundamental act or power of an uncaused reality). Furthermore, “essence” shall mean “any *restricted* way of existing,” such as the way of existing like an electron, or the way of existing like a proton, or a positron, or a single-celled organism, or a complex organism, etc. Restricted ways of existing include all spatially conditioned ways of existing, because they are not only restricted in kind (i.e. to the way of it existing like an electron), but also in instance (i.e. to a specific instance of the way of *existing* like an electron).

We may now begin the proof:

- “Existence through itself” must exist *prior to* any and all “restricted ways of existing” (e.g. the *way* of existing like a proton or the *way* of existing like an electron, etc.). Why? We can adduce this through two substeps:
 - *Substep #1.* The Real Distinction between Existence and Essence (the real distinction between “existence through itself” and “restricted ways of existing”).⁴

“Existence through itself” is really *distinct* from all restricted ways of existing (e.g. the way of existing like an electron). If “existence through itself” were not really distinct from, say, the way of existing like an electron, then it would be self-identical with it – meaning that existence through itself would be restricted to that particular way of existing, and would not be able to exist in any different or incompatible way. Therefore, the only realities that could exist would be electrons – and this is clearly contrary to fact.

The same holds true for *any* restricted way of existing. If “existence through itself” were self-identical with (i.e. not really distinct from) *any* restricted way of existing, then it would be restricted to that particular way, and would not be able to exist in any different or incompatible way. Hence, the whole of reality would be reduced to that restricted way of existing. Thus, there would

⁴ One of the great (and lasting) insights of St. Thomas Aquinas is the real distinction between existence and essence, but since these terms have a technical and complex use in Thomistic metaphysics, I translated them into terms that I hope are more intuitively intelligible. Though there is not strict equivalence between St. Thomas’ terms and my own, I used terms that I believe will be more intuitively intelligible to readers and express the intention of St. Thomas in this important distinction. I interpreted “existence” (“*esse*”) in St. Thomas’ system as what he called “*ipsum esse*” (“existence itself” – or “existence through itself”), and I interpreted “essence” as “any restricted way of existing” – such as a proton or an electron. These translations validly reflect St. Thomas’ intention, and are sufficient to ground the unrestricted nature of “existence through itself.” See St. Thomas Aquinas 1968. *On Being and Essence*. Trans. by Armand Maurer. Second revised edition. (Toronto, Canada: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies). Chap. 3-4

be no multiplicity of realities.⁵ This is contrary to fact. Therefore “existence through itself” is not self-identical with *any* restricted way of existing – and must be really distinct from all restricted ways of existing.

- *Substep #2* – “Existence precedes essence” – “existence through itself” must exist prior to any restricted way of existing:⁶

Inasmuch as “existence through itself” is really *distinct* from all restricted ways of existing, it must also *exist prior* to those restricted ways of existing. Why? Consider the following:

- Without “existence through itself,” all restricted ways of existing (which cannot exist through themselves because they are really distinct from “existence through itself”) would not exist.
- Therefore, the existence of all restricted ways of existing depend on the *prior* existence of “existence through itself.”

Therefore “existence through itself” must exist prior to all restricted ways of existing⁷ -- and must be beyond them. Therefore, it must be *absolutely unrestricted*.

**Step 3: Unrestricted “existence through itself” must be completely unique
(one and only one)⁸**

The Basic Proof may be set out in three premises:

- (i) If there is to be multiplicity among realities, there must be a difference between those realities.
- (ii) If there is to be differences among realities, at least one of those realities must be restricted.
- (iii) But there can be no restriction in unrestricted “existence through itself.”

Therefore, there must be only one unrestricted “existence through itself.”

Explanation of the Proof:

The first premise is true *a priori*, because if there is no difference of any kind between two realities, they must be the self-same reality. Let us postulate two realities – X₁ and X₂. Now,

⁵ Note that this applies to any spatially conditioned way of existing (e.g. a particular proton which exists at particular places). The above argument is now doubly applicable -- for if a *specific* electron is self-identical with “existence through itself,” then the whole of reality would have to be *that specific electron* — which is obviously contrary to fact.

⁶ This is a second great and lasting insight of St. Thomas’ metaphysics. Once again, I translated “existence” as “existence through itself” and translated “essence” as “any restricted way of existing.” I translated “precedes” as “must exist prior to...” See St. Thomas Aquinas *On Being and Essence*, Chap 4.

⁷ This applies to all spatially conditioned ways of existing, because as noted above, spatially conditioned ways of existing are doubly restricted – restricted in both their way of existing (e.g. like an electron) and also in their instance of existing (i.e. a specific electron). Inasmuch as they are doubly restricted, they are also doubly distinct from “existence through itself.”

⁸ For Aquinas’ proof of this see *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1991, Bk 1. Ch. 42. Par. 3.

let us suppose there is no difference between them – no difference as to space-time point, no difference in power or activity, no difference of qualities or characteristics, no dimensional differentiations – no differences whatsoever. What are they? Obviously, the same reality, and as such “they” are only one.

The second premise is also true *a priori*. Think about it. If there is a difference between say X_1 and X_2 (in order to have a multiplicity of them), then one of them will have to be something or have something or be somewhere or be in some other dimension that the other one is **not**. Let’s suppose that X_1 has something that X_2 does not have. This means that X_2 is restricted or limited because it lacks this quality or characteristic. Similarly, if one postulates that X_1 is something that X_2 is not, then X_2 would again have to be restricted (as manifest by its lack of that “something”). The same would hold true if X_1 were somewhere that X_2 is not, and if X_1 were in another dimension that X_2 is not. In short, every differentiating factor will entail a *restriction* of at least one of the differentiated realities.

The third premise has already been proved in Step (2) above. There can be no restriction in “existence through itself,” because it is absolutely unrestricted.

- Therefore, there cannot be any difference between two hypothetical instances of “existence through itself” (because one of them would have to be restricted, which contradicts the absolute unrestrictedness of existence through itself) -- *modus tollens*.
- Since there can be no difference between two instances of “existence through itself” (without contradiction), there can be no multiplicity of “existence through itself” (because multiplicity requires difference) -- *modus tollens*.
- Therefore, unrestricted “existence through itself” must be absolutely one and only one (unique).

This proof can be illustrated through a simple example. Suppose there are two unrestricted realities. Then one of them would have to have something, or be something, or be somewhere, or be in some other dimension that the other one is *not*. If there were no difference of any kind between the two unrestricted realities – no difference as to power, act, qualities, space-time point, dimension, etc., -- then they would be the *self-same* reality – in other words, “they” would be only *one*.

Now consider the following – if there has to be some difference between the two unrestricted realities (in order for them to be “two”), and that difference requires that one of the “unrestricted” realities *not* have “something,” or *not* be “something,” or *not* be at a particular space-time point, or *not* be in a particular dimension – that the other one is, it would mean that the deficient one is *restricted*. Therefore, every hypothetical *second* unrestricted reality is a contradiction – a “restricted-unrestricted reality” – which is, impossible. Hence, there can only be one *unrestricted reality*.

Step 4: The One Unrestricted Uncaused Reality (“existence through itself”) must be the Ultimate Cause (Creator) of all else that exists.⁹

⁹ For Aquinas’ discussion of this, see *Summa Theologica* 1947, Pt. I, Q. 44, Art. 1.

This is derived from a two-step argument:

Step One

- As shown in step (3) above, there can be only one uncaused reality in the whole of reality.
- Since there can only be one uncaused reality in the whole of reality, then the rest of reality must be caused realities (true by disjunctive syllogism).

Explanation of disjunctive syllogism:

A disjunctive syllogism occurs when the two terms in the syllogism are “contradictories” – complete opposites. For example, reality **X** must be either caused or uncaused – not neither, not both. Again, reality **X** must be either material or immaterial – not neither, not both. It must also be either conditioned or unconditioned – not neither, not both.

Whenever the terms in a syllogism are completely contradictory, then we know all the possibilities are covered and both possibilities cannot co-exist in the same reality in the same respect. For example, with respect to the contradictory syllogism “reality ‘X’ is either caused or uncaused,” there are no other possibilities besides these two options. Therefore, we can say with certainty that one of them must be true (we cannot say “neither is true”). Furthermore, in the same proposition, we know that one of the possibilities must be false, because both contradictories cannot co-exist in the same entity in the same respect.

Now let us return to the second premise. For any given reality “X” in the whole of reality, it must be either caused or uncaused (because all the possibilities are covered). Now if we know that there is only one uncaused reality in the whole of reality (which we have proven in Step 3), then we know -- by disjunctive syllogism -- that every other reality in the whole of reality cannot be uncaused, and if we know that they cannot be uncaused, we know – by disjunctive syllogism – that they must all be *caused* realities.

We may now proceed to our final proof:

- (i) The whole of reality – besides the one uncaused reality – is constituted by caused realities – those requiring a cause in order to exist (proven immediately above).
- (ii) All caused realities must ultimately depend on an uncaused reality for their existence – without this cause, they would be literally nothing (proven in Step One above).

Therefore, the one unrestricted uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause of all other realities in the whole of reality. Such an “ultimate cause” is called a “Creator.”

Therefore, the one unrestricted uncaused reality is the Creator of everything else that exists.

Conclusion to the First Four Steps

There must exist a unique unrestricted uncaused reality which is the Creator of all else that exists. This reality may be called “God,” because it is consistent with the one God of Judeo-Christian revelation.

II.

Clarifications and Response to Objections

The Thomistic proof of God has been criticized for two major reasons – both of which are articulated by Bertrand Russell in his book *Why I am Not a Christian*. Richard Dawkins has more recently added another objection which will be treated in Section IV below. Let us consider Russell’s criticism in his own words:

It is maintained that everything we see in this world has a cause, and as you go back in the chain of causes further and further you must come to a First Cause, and to that First Cause you give the name of God. That argument, I suppose, does not carry very much weight nowadays.... You can see that the argument that there must be a First Cause is one that cannot have any validity. I may say that when I was a young man and was debating these questions very seriously in my mind, I for a long time accepted the argument of the First Cause, until one day, at the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill’s *Autobiography*, and I there found this sentence: “My father taught me that the question ‘Who made me?’ cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question ‘Who made God?’” That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument.¹⁰

There are two objections to the first cause argument mentioned by Russell which reflect two misunderstandings about the Thomistic proof of God that continue to persist today (see for example, the discussion of Dawkins below). First, Russell asserts that all first cause arguments assume the principle of universal causation – “everything must have a cause,” and so such arguments easily fall prey to the objection – “So what caused God?” As we shall see, this is a very poor representation of Aquinas and other metaphysicians – and constitutes nothing more than a strawman argument. The second objection comes in the last sentence of the above citation – “If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument.”

With respect to the first objection, I am not aware of any Thomistic, Aristotelian, or Lonerganian philosopher who formulated or made recourse to such a facile argument. A child could deduce that “if everything requires a cause, then God would require one as well.” So what do traditional and contemporary metaphysicians *really* say?

Thomists use two basic approaches:

1. They prove the impossibility of an infinite subordinated series of causes which *requires* a finite number of causes – and therefore a first cause, or
2. As in the above metaphysical proof, they first establish the necessity of at least one *uncaused reality*.

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell. 1957. *Why I am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. (New York: Simon and Schuster). pp. 6-7.

In the second approach, Thomists do *not* assume that the whole of reality is caused – but *prove* that there must be at least one uncaused reality existing through itself. If such a reality does not exist, then nothing exists – which is contrary to fact.

Let us now consider Russell’s second objection – “If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God...” Can it be that traditional and contemporary metaphysicians were not astute enough to avoid this objection? Consider the proof given above. The *first* step proves the necessity for at least one *uncaused reality*. It does not *assume* that there cannot be other uncaused realities in the world – or *assume* that the only uncaused reality is God. Rather, the *second* and *third* steps *prove* that an *uncaused reality* must be absolutely unrestricted, and that an absolutely unrestricted reality must be completely unique. Therefore, they prove (in the fourth step) that there cannot be any other uncaused realities besides the one unrestricted reality (termed “God” after the fourth step).

Thus, the metaphysical proof does not *assume* that God is the only uncaused reality – it *proves* that an uncaused reality must be unique because it must be unrestricted.

Why is this proof compelling for so many academic metaphysicians? Its conclusions are grounded in reasonable and responsible *a posteriori* and *a priori* evidence. This means that a denial of any of its conclusions will result in a contradiction of fact (*a posteriori* evidence) or an intrinsic contradiction – an impossible state of affairs (*a priori* evidence). I will review each of the conclusions here with a view to showing the *a posteriori* and *a priori* evidence supporting them. If some readers find this repetitious, please skip to Section III below where we will examine three additional implications of this metaphysical proof.

The first step shows that if the whole of reality is composed of only caused realities (even an infinite number of caused realities) then the whole of reality collectively would be a caused reality requiring a cause for its existence. However, no such cause can be real, because it would have to be beyond the whole of reality. Thus without at least one uncaused reality, the whole of reality would be absolutely nothing – which is obviously contrary to fact. Therefore, there must be at least one uncaused reality (existing through itself) in the whole of reality.

The *second* step – the proof that an uncaused reality (existing through itself) must be unrestricted is grounded in two important Thomistic metaphysical discoveries:

1. The real distinction between existence and essence, and
2. The requirement that existence precede essence.

If we interpret “existence” as “existence through itself” (the fundamental act or power of an uncaused reality) and interpret “essence” as “any restricted way of existing” (such as the way of existing like a proton, an electron, a cell, a complex organism, etc.), we can see the *necessity* for these two metaphysical principles.

With respect to the first principle, if “existence through itself” were not really distinct from “any restricted way of existing,” then it would be self-identical with it – thereby restricting

its activity to, say, the way of existing like an electron. Since this restriction would prevent it from acting in any different or incompatible way than that of an electron, the whole of reality would be electrons. The same would apply to any other possible restricted way of existing. Therefore, if “existence through itself” were not really distinct from “any and all restricted ways of existing,” there would be no multiplicity of realities – which is contrary to fact.

The second principle is also necessary – “existence through itself” must exist prior to “any restricted way of existing.” Since “any restricted way of existing” (say, that of an electron) is really distinct from “existence through itself,” that way of existing does not exist through itself – because it is not – that is, it is really distinct from – “existence through itself.” Therefore, every restricted way of existing depends on “existence through itself” for its existence. As such, “existence through itself” must exist prior to *any and all* restricted ways of existing. Inasmuch as it exists prior to all restricted ways of existing, it is absolutely unrestricted. To assert the contrary is intrinsically contradictory.

If the reader is persuaded by the necessity for at least one uncaused reality, the real distinction between existence and essence, and the ontological priority of existence over essence, then it will be very difficult to deny the existence of at least one unrestricted uncaused reality, because the denial of such a reality would entail contradictions of fact or an intrinsic contradiction (*a posterior* or *a priori* evidence, respectively).

If the reader affirms the existence of at least one unrestricted uncaused reality, then the rest of the proof follows easily from two additional metaphysical principles going back to the time of Parmenides (born 515 B.C. -- the father of ontology and logic). The first principle is difficult to deny because it is a virtual tautology – “if there are no differences of any kind between one reality and another, they must be the self-same reality – ‘they’ are not two, but only one.”

The second principle requires slightly more explanation. If there is to be a difference between two realities, then one of the realities will have to have something, be something, be somewhere, or be in another dimension that the other one is *not*. The reality that does *not* have that “something” must be restricted (*a priori*). When this is applied to the possibility of two unrestricted realities, we immediately detect a contradiction. If one of the differentiated realities must be restricted (in order to have a difference), then any second unrestricted reality would have to be intrinsically contradictory – a “restricted-unrestricted reality.” This means that there cannot be any second or third, etc. unrestricted realities – but only one.

When we combine this conclusion with the one reached in the first two steps – “there must be at least one unrestricted reality in the whole of reality,” we must conclude that there must be one *and only one* unrestricted reality in the whole of reality.

If the reader affirms the above reasoning in order to avoid contradictions of fact as well as intrinsic contradictions (impossible states of affairs), then the rest of the proof follows by disjunctive syllogism – a syllogism which has contradictories in its first premise. As noted above, this would take the form of “either A or not A – not neither, not both.” This has several meaningful applications in metaphysics – “either finite or infinite – not neither, not both,” “either

caused or uncaused – not neither, not both,” “either conditioned or unconditioned – not neither, not both,” “either material or immaterial – not neither, not both, etc.” Notice that since one of the options must be true and the other false, we can deduce the truth of one from the falsity of the other, or the falsity of one from the truth of the other. Thus, if something is a caused reality, it is not an uncaused reality; if it is an uncaused reality, then it is not a caused reality; if it is *not* an uncaused reality, then it is a caused reality; and if it is not a caused reality, then it is an uncaused reality.

This has an important application in the above proof of God. If there must be one *and only one* unrestricted reality in the whole of reality, then everything else in the whole of reality cannot be uncaused realities – and therefore must be caused realities – by disjunctive syllogism.

We may now combine this conclusion with the one reached in Step One. Recall from that step that an infinite number of caused realities without an uncaused reality is collectively still a caused reality without a real cause – that is, absolutely nothing. Therefore, *all* caused realities are ultimately dependent on an uncaused reality for their existence. Without an uncaused reality all caused realities would be absolutely nothing. It follows from this, that the one unrestricted uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause of all other realities in the whole of reality – that it must be the Creator of everything else that exists. This is what is meant by the term “God” – therefore God, as defined, exists.

As can be seen, the denial of this conclusion leads to violations of either *a posteriori* or *a priori* evidence. If such violations of evidence are untenable, then God’s existence can be affirmed through rational and empirical evidence.

Let us return for a moment to Russell’s contention that such proofs assume the universality of causation (“everything must have a cause”). As can be seen, this proof makes no such assumption. Indeed it proves from the outset that there must be at least one *uncaused* reality – and it does something more – it *proves* the universality of causality for all realities other than the one unrestricted uncaused reality. Instead of assuming universal causality, it proves the validity and applicability of causality within the whole created world. It is truly regrettable that thinkers like Russell and Dawkins are so focused on demeaning religion and transcendence that they fail to appreciate the truly insightful contributions of St. Thomas Aquinas, and later generations of Thomists.

III. The Simplicity, Transtemporality, and Intelligence of God

The Thomistic metaphysical proof lends itself to a deep understanding of three of the most complex issues in the area of natural theology, metaphysics, and ontology:

1. The nature of metaphysical simplicity,
2. The possibility of transtemporality,
3. The nature of non-physical intelligence.

When these three topics are given a consideration in light of the above Thomistic proof of God, many of the objections of Richard Dawkins and other contemporary atheists disappear, because those objections are grounded in misunderstandings of these three subject areas.

The following three subsections give the proof or why these three characteristics must belong to God (as proven above in Section I) – the unique, unrestricted, uncaused reality which is the Creator of all else that exists.

III.A.

The Simplicity of God

The Unique Unrestricted Uncaused Reality (Existing through Itself) must be Absolutely Simple (the absence of complexity)¹¹

Basic Argument:

1. Complexity entails parts;
 2. Parts entail restriction.
 3. But there can be no restriction in the pure act of existing through itself.
- Therefore, there can be no parts and no complexity in the pure act of existing through itself (*modus tollens*).

Explanation:

The first and second premises are true *a priori*. Anything which is complex must have parts constituting a greater whole. For example, atoms are constituted by protons and electrons; molecules are composed of atoms; cells are composed of molecules; complex organisms are composed of multiple cells and cellular structure, etc. Notice that each of these parts is restricted as to its place, duration, and way of existing. Now if there are parts constituting a greater whole, the parts must be more restricted than the whole (by definition), and therefore the parts must have restrictions as to their time, space, or way of existing. For example, protons must be more restricted in space and way of existing than atoms, and atoms must be more restricted in space and way of existing than molecules, and molecules must be more restricted in space and way of existing than cells, etc.

The proof of the third premise (“there can be no restriction in the pure act of existing through itself”) was given in step (3) above.

Therefore, by *modus tollens*, if there can be no restrictions in the pure act of existing through itself, then there can be no parts in the pure act of existing through itself, and if no parts, then no complexity. It must be absolutely simple.

This stands in direct contrast to Dawkins’ assertion that a Creator must be more complex than what it designs (creates). Dawkins’ confusion arises out of a misunderstanding of “simplicity” in the Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysical models. As a biologist, he associates simplicity with the most basic *part* of physical reality. This is natural enough, because some atomistic physical models incline toward this point of view. However, a cursory reading of St. Thomas Aquinas indicates that he could not have meant “simplicity” in this way – for he was not an atomist and was not familiar with the contemporary scientific perspective.

¹¹ Aquinas articulated this in many different ways and works. A particularly clear one may be found in *Summa Theologica* 1947, Pt. I Q.3, art. 7.

So what did Aquinas mean by simplicity? He meant the “*absence* of intrinsic and extrinsic restrictions or boundaries that would give rise to parts and composites.” He did not apply this understanding of simplicity to the most elemental part of *physical* reality – which would be the *lowest* and least functional ontological level (e.g. an atom in Galileo’s system or a mass point in Newton’s system or a subatomic particle in contemporary models). Rather he *proved* that simplicity must be present in the reality with the *highest* ontological status – the one that enjoys ontological priority over all restricted ways of existing – that is, the unique uncaused reality (existing through itself). When Aquinas proved that an uncaused reality had to be unrestricted, he simultaneously proved that it had to be absolutely simple – as shown in the proof above (there can be no parts in something which has no intrinsic or extrinsic restrictions).

Thus, for Aquinas, simplicity is a mark of a *high* level of being and functionality – and absolute simplicity is the mark of the *highest* level of being and functionality. This stands in direct contrast to physicalist and scientific models of simplicity which see it in precisely the opposite way. In those models, the simplest *elements* have low ontological status while the most complex elements (built up from simple elements) have the highest degree of being and functionality.

Both the Thomistic and scientific views of simplicity are *correct* – in the respective areas to which they apply the concept. Therefore, in the Thomistic model, “simplicity” legitimately indicates the higher levels of ontological status – while in scientific models, complexity indicates the higher levels of ontological status. It all depends on one’s perspective and use of the concept.

As we will see below (Section IV), Dawkins application of “complexity” to God (a supreme designer) is incoherent, because it does not take into account the attributes of God. The first and most fundamental attribute of God is “existence through itself,” which has to be absolutely unrestricted (absolutely simple), unique, and the Creator of everything else. When Dawkins failed to define the attributes of God – beginning with the most fundamental one (“existence through itself”), he failed to see that God could not possibly be the most complex of all realities (as he alleges), but instead the most metaphysically *simple* of all realities. As we shall see, this turns his proof against the probability of God on its head. With a proper understanding of “God” and “simplicity,” one recognizes that God could not be the most complex of all realities – but instead, the least complex of all realities – which by Dawkins’ own criterion makes God the *most* probable reality of all.

III.B

The Transtemporality of God

The One Unrestricted Uncaused Reality (Existing through Itself) is Transtemporal¹²

¹² St. Augustine wrestled with this in Book Eleven of *The Confessions*, coming to the conclusion that God is “an eternal now,” and that he was not before time, because he was not in time (and that there was no time before time) – see particularly Book Eleven, Chapter XIII, paragraph 16. Of course, he meant this *analogously*, because the best any of us can do is a negative judgment – an act of existing which is not subject to a temporal manifold. Aquinas follows Augustine in the timelessness of God (as “eternal now”), and goes further, attempting to explain how such a timeless reality could understand “all time” of created realities that are conditioned by and progressing in time. He uses *analogies* to discuss this (such as seeing the progression of time from on high in a single vision **or** being at the

The proof for this may be found in Step (2) of the basic proof of God given above. Recall that the second step (proving that an uncaused reality must be unrestricted) has two substeps based on two Thomistic metaphysical discoveries:

1. The real distinction between existence and essence,
2. The requirement that existence precede essence.

With respect to the first principle, “existence through itself” must be really distinct from temporal conditioning, because it cannot be restricted to any specific time. If it were, then all other times would not exist – which is clearly contrary to fact.

With respect to the second principle, inasmuch as “existence through itself” is really distinct from any specific time – and temporal conditioning -- it must exist *prior* to temporal conditioning – and therefore prior to time itself.¹³ Why? Since temporal conditioning (arising out of time itself) is really distinct from “existence through itself,” it does not exist through itself, and must therefore depend on the prior existence of “existence through itself.” Thus, “existence through itself” must be prior to time itself.

The idea of a reality being non-temporal or transtemporal is difficult to imagine. But Henri Bergson provides an analogy to help us understand it. If time is a continuum of earlier and later, then it must be held together by something like “elementary memory” or “elementary consciousness,” otherwise all time would be reduced to a dimensionless instant. Why? Because without it, the earlier part of the continuum would pass away as a later part becomes present. In order for time to be more than a dimensionless instant, the earlier part of the continuum must be retained when the later part becomes present. For Bergson, elementary memory or consciousness

center of a circle and observing all equidistant points at once), but we cannot think that he believed these analogies to represent *God's* reality, for they would imply that God's reality is conditioned by space and geometry, and also imply “eternalism” in which the past, present, and future coexist (a theory to which Aquinas did not subscribe). See *Compendium Theologiae* 133; *De Veritate* 11, 12 resp.; and *Summa Theologica* I, Q.10. So we are back to the negative judgment that God is *not* conditioned by time, and that the whole of temporal reality (such as our universe and any other temporal reality beyond it) exists as a single *transtemporal* “thought” in God's unrestricted act of thinking (see Step 7 below). For a contemporary understanding of time and transtemporality (in light of Bergson and others), see Spitzer 2000, pp. 260-276; see also Spitzer 2010(a) pp. 183-196; see also Bergson 1965.

¹³ I consider “time” to be a *real* non-contemporaneous continuum separating two distinct states in the same entity (e.g. the cat alive and *then* the cat dead) as well as in the universe (the same object here and then there). In contrast to time, space is a *contemporaneous* continuum – separating two objects in a unified field at the same time. Without time -- non-contemporaneous separation -- the universe of changing states would be a complete contradiction, because those incompatible states (in a particular reality or in the universe) would have to be simultaneous. Furthermore, a *real* non-contemporaneous continuum necessary to separate the above opposed states cannot be an instant. It must have non-contemporaneous magnitude or distension. In my view, Henri Bergson is correct in contending that a real non-contemporaneous magnitude must have some dimension of elementary memory or elementary consciousness to hold the earlier part of the distended continuum in existence along with the later parts. Without such an elementary memory or consciousness, time would be reduced to an instant – and history would be nothing more than one massive contradiction. This is explained fully in Robert Spitzer 1989, *A Study of the Nature of Objectively Real Time* (Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I.); and also Spitzer 2000 “Definitions of Real Time and Ultimate Reality” in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding* 23:3, pp. 260-267; and also Spitzer 2010 *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI) pp. 183-196.

(in the universe) retains these earlier moments, and as such, is the unifying substrate of the temporal continuum.

This gives rise to an interesting question: can this elementary act of memory or consciousness be a unifying substrate without itself being subject to time (an earlier-later continuum)? There is no reason why this unifying substrate would have to be “inside” the temporal continuum it unifies any more than *my* act of consciousness must be subject to its contents. My consciousness does not have to become square in order to unify four inscribed right angles with equal sides, and it need not be subject to an earlier-later condition when it unifies an ever growing number line. Consciousness is capable of unifying spatial and temporal manifolds without itself being subject to them. To deny this is to reduce a more fundamental reality to a less fundamental one.

In Step (8), it will be shown that the pure unrestricted act of existing through itself is an unrestricted act of mentation (thinking). As such, it need not be subject to the “earlier-later continuum” it unifies. The whole of time can be unified in a timeless reflective act.

We must acknowledge at the outset, that a timeless act of mentation is impossible to visualize because as many philosophers have noted, our experience and imagination are conditioned by space and time. So how can we conceive of something we cannot imagine (picture think)? We can only do this by a kind of *via negativa* – that is by a conceptual process which avoids the temporalizing dimension of the imagination (picture thinking). We will have to avoid trying to “get a picture of it,” and rest content with a negative judgment, namely, that there exists an uncaused reality existing through itself which does *not* exist through a temporal manifold or a spatial manifold, or anything else which is not itself. This pure act of existing must therefore be beyond any universe and any spatio-temporal reality, making it unimaginable. Nothing more can be said without distorting this reality through the conditions of our spatial and temporal imagination.

III.C

The Unrestricted Intelligence of God

The Unique Unrestricted Uncaused Reality (Existing through Itself) is an Unrestricted Act of Thinking¹⁴

The following shows and explains this contention.

What is thinking?

- (i) Thinking (in contrast to imagining or picture thinking) is the grasp of relationships among realities – qualitative relationships, causal relationships, quantitative relationships, logical

¹⁴ Aquinas’ views here are expressed well by Bernard Lonergan in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, Collected Works of Bernard J. F. Lonergan* (Volume II) ed. by Frederick E. Crowe, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press). In Chapters 1-4 of that work, Lonergan shows how Aquinas explains the spiritual nature of self-consciousness and thought in human beings and then proceeds (in Chapter 5) to use this as an analogy of God’s completely simple, unrestricted act of self-consciousness. The spiritual nature of human intellection is also captured by Lonergan’s “notion of being” in Lonergan 1992, *Insight*, pp. 380-381.

relationships, temporal relationships, spatial relationships, and any other intelligible relationship responding to the questions “What?” “Where?” “Why?” “When?” “How?” “How many?” and “How frequently?”

- (ii) The ability to grasp relationships presumes an underlying unity through which the differences among realities can be related. For example, a map can unify diverse geographical locations so that they can be seen *in relation* to one another. A clock provides a unity for different times so that they may be seen in relationship to one another. There must be some underlying unity to bring together causes and effects in causal relationships. The same holds true for “What?” or “How?” or “How many?” etc. We might summarize by saying that thinking is a unifying act that sets differing realities or ideas into relationship with one another. Therefore, thinking goes beyond imagination (picture thinking which is limited to mere identification of individual things). When realities or ideas are set into relationship with one another, we can detect similarities and differences, quantities and causes, relative location and time, and we can even detect relationships among relationships.
- (iii) As noted above, the unique unrestricted uncaused reality (existing through itself) has no spatial, temporal, or other intrinsic restrictions. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent it from being in a perfectly transparent and reflective relationship to itself.

This can be analogically understood by our own act of self-consciousness in which the same act of consciousness is both “experienced” and “experiencer” simultaneously. This does not imply that our thinking has distinct parts, but rather that the one indivisible act of consciousness has *relational* differences “within”¹⁵ itself.

Let us return now to the pure unrestricted act of existing through itself. Inasmuch as it is perfectly self-transparent (because it has no intrinsic spatial, temporal, or other restrictions), it can be perfectly present to itself as “experiencer” and “experienced.” This means it is perfectly self-conscious (in a fundamental unity without parts). The absence of spatial, temporal, and all other restrictions makes the one uncaused reality (existing through itself) perfectly self-transparent, perfectly self-relational, and therefore, perfectly present to itself and perfectly self-conscious.

This completely simple, self-transparent reality can generate the whole domain of restricted intelligibility. Consider the following:

- (i) Embedded in its self-consciousness is an awareness of the *difference* between itself as experiencer and experienced, and so there is not only an awareness of self, but an awareness of relational *differences* within itself. Inasmuch as “self” and “difference” are grasped, so also are all other ideas. The self can grasp not only itself, but what is different from itself – e.g. restriction and change. By grasping “self,” “difference,” “restriction,” and

¹⁵ The term “within” here has no spatial connotation for obvious reasons; it refers only to the relational difference between “experiencing” and “being experienced” in a single act of consciousness.

“change,” it grasps the whole range of finite intelligibility. Plato shows how this is done in his remarkable late dialogue *The Sophist*.¹⁶

- (ii) Notice that this unrestricted act of mentation is not like a brain or anything material or restricted. It is identical with the pure unrestricted act of existing through itself, because the complete absence of restriction in this acting power enables it to be present to itself, and differentiate itself from what it is not – the whole range of restricted intelligibility.

We cannot visualize it or imagine it; we can only *understand* that there must exist the one unrestricted uncaused reality (existing through itself), and that it must be a perfect unity in relation to itself, and therefore perfectly self-conscious and perfectly conscious of everything that could be different from it (the whole domain of restricted intelligibility).

Bernard Lonergan comes to a similar conclusion in his work *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, and calls the unrestricted uncaused reality “an unrestricted act of understanding—understanding itself.”¹⁷ For Lonergan’s proof of this where Lonergan shows that the uncaused reality must be perfectly intelligible, and as such, cannot be material (like a brain) or abstract (like the expression of an idea) or a restricted act of thinking – meaning that it must be an unrestricted act of thinking [Click Here](#).

Inasmuch as the pure unrestricted act of existing through itself is an unrestricted act of thinking, its awareness of all finite intelligibility allows for the creation of finite being.

IV.

A Response to Richard Dawkins

Dawkins’ core argument in *The God Delusion* may be summarized as follows:

1. A designer must always be more complex than what it designs.
 2. Whatever is more complex is more improbable.
- Therefore, a designer must be more improbable than what it designs.¹⁸

There can be little doubt that Dawkins’ second premise (“whatever is more complex is more improbable”) is true, because the more complex a reality is, the more parts there are to order or organize. Since order or organization is more improbable than disorder, it follows that the more parts there are to order, the more improbable the ordering will be.

However, Dawkins’ *first* premise is highly contestable and ignores four Thomistic insights: (1) the necessity for at least one uncaused reality, (2) the real distinction between existence and essence, (3) the requirement that existence precede essence, and (4) the notion of

¹⁶ In *The Sophist*, Plato recognized how the entire domain of restricted intelligibility could be generated and explained through the interrelationship of six fundamental ideas (three diads): Being and nonbeing, sameness and difference, and motion and rest. See Plato 1961(c), pp. 978-1028 (236d-264b).

¹⁷ Lonergan 1992, pp. 657-708.

¹⁸ Dawkins 2008, pp. 157-158.

metaphysical simplicity.¹⁹ He also ignores the explanation of these insights in contemporary Thomists such as Etienne Gilson, Josef Pieper, Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and their followers. These philosophers contend (in conformity with the above metaphysical proof) that an uncaused reality (a Creator and designer) must be *absolutely simple* (a complete absence of complexity) instead of more complex (as Dawkins contends).

In the previous section (Section III.A -- concerned with the simplicity of God), I explained why Dawkins arrived at precisely the opposite conclusion of Aquinas and others – the complexity of God instead of the absolute simplicity of God. Since he did not inquire into the most fundamental reality or the most fundamental state of reality, he did not discover or recognize “existence through itself.” Thus, he had no chance of discovering (either for himself or through reading) the real distinction between existence and essence and the ontological priority of existence over essence. This led to a grand scotosis -- a self-blinding to the absolute unrestrictedness and absolute simplicity of “existence through itself.”

Ironically, if he had made these discoveries, he would not only have recognized the reality of God in the above metaphysical proof, but also in his *own* argument – which is supposed to show the improbability of God. Let us now reconsider Dawkins’ proof – correcting his first premise to reflect Thomistic insights:

1. A designer (God) must be *more simple* than anything it designs.
2. Whatever is more complex is more improbable.

Restated second premise: whatever is more simple is more probable.

Therefore, a designer (God) must be *more probable* than anything it designs.

Indeed, since God (the unique unrestricted uncaused reality) must be *absolutely simple*, he must be the *most* probable reality of all. Thus, Dawkins’ argument serves only to *affirm*—not to deny— the existence of a designer (Creator) if an uncaused reality must be unrestricted, and therefore absolutely simple (as proven above).

Dawkins’ argument reveals another weakness in his philosophical viewpoint – he interprets *thinking* in a *materialistic* way. This may conform to his biological background, but it ignores the nature of thinking (the apprehension of relationships among diverse objects) and self-consciousness (the relationship of the thinker to himself). In a materialistic worldview, one moves from the physical processes of the brain to the definition of thinking – which has the weakness of reducing the nature of thinking to the intrinsic limitations of physical processes. However in a philosophical worldview, one derives the definition of thinking from the conditions necessary to produce abstract thought, self-reflectivity, and syntactical language – and even the

¹⁹ Dawkins makes a perfunctory criticism of Aquinas’ proofs for the existence of God (Dawkins 2008, pp. 100-103) but regrettably does not understand these proofs in any meaningful way. If he had, he would not have constructed a virtual “straw man” version of them, while missing the solution to one of the greatest metaphysical problems – the connection between an uncaused cause, absolute simplicity, and the nature of mentation (thinking).

conditions necessary to grasp unrestricted intelligibility. Instead of restricting the nature of thinking to the limits of physical processes (in the brain), this approach considers the nature of thinking *in itself*. So long as a dynamic system meets the conditions necessary for thinking, it can be a possible source or cause of it. In this view, thinking does not have to come from physical processes, but could come from transphysical processes (e.g. a soul²⁰) or even from completely immaterial unrestricted processes (i.e. an unrestricted act of thinking – such as God).

The advantage of approaching “thinking” from the above philosophical point of view is that it explains five contemporary challenges to the materialistic view:

1. Trans-algorithmic thinking manifest in the creative leaps in mathematical development (Gödel’s Theorem),²¹
2. The presence of innate heuristic notions needed for conceptual ideas and the recognition of syntax (of which humans alone are capable – but not higher primates).²²
3. The capacity for self-reflectivity and “experiencing our experiencing” that appears to be inexplicable by physical processes alone (see David Chalmers’ “Hard Problem of Consciousness”),²³
4. The pure unrestricted desire to know which manifests our tacit recognition of complete intelligibility (Lonergan’s “Notion of Being”),²⁴
5. The requirement that an uncaused reality be perfectly intelligible – and therefore an unrestricted act of thinking (proven by Bernard Lonergan – [Click Here](#)).²⁵

²⁰ By “soul,” I mean “a transphysical dynamic system capable of surviving bodily death, transcendental awareness (i.e. the tacit awareness of perfect truth, love, goodness, beauty, and home) and self-consciousness.” I have written about this extensively in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning: Clues to our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press) Chapters 3 – 6.

²¹ Kurt Gödel, 1931. “Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme I.” In *Monatshefte für Mathematik und Physik* 38, pp. 173-98. I have explained this proof – with updates from Stephen Barr, John Lucas, and Roger Penrose in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 129-133.

²² The deduction of the presence of innate heuristic notions was elucidated by Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant. I have explained these deductions in Spitzer 2016 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 115-116, 129-131, and 241-245. With respect to Noam Chomsky’s syntax test – and its application to higher primates by Herbert Terrace, see Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 104-105 and 131-139. See also Noam Chomsky, 2007, interview by Matt Aames Cucchiaro: “On the Myth of Ape Language.” <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/2007.htm>. See also Herbert Terrace; L.A. Petitto, R.J. Sanders, T.G. Bever. 1979. “Can an Ape Create a Sentence.” In *Science* Vol. 206 (4421): 891–902. <http://petitto.gallaudet.edu/~petitto/archive/Science1979.pdf>.

²³ See David Chalmers, 1995, “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2 (3): pp 200-219.

See also Chalmers, 1997. *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (London: Oxford University Press). I have described this problem with references to other thinkers in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 232-238.

²⁴ See Bernard Lonergan, 1992. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. In *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* 3, edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 380-387. I have described this in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning* pp. 118-132.

²⁵ See Lonergan 1992, *Insight*, pp 692-699.

Any theory or model of thinking that does not respond to the above five challenges to physicalist models is inadequate – and should be reconsidered. Dawkins’ materialist model of thinking (which attributes mentation to the complexes of physical processes in the brain) addresses none of the above challenges. However, the philosophical views elucidated by Thomas Aquinas, Étienne Gilson, and Bernard Lonergan do account for them—and so should be preferred. These models of intelligence are similar to the one articulated above (in Section III.C).

Recall that these models are based on the unrestricted nature and power of the one uncaused reality existing through itself. Since this power has no intrinsic restrictions, it is capable of perfectly transparent relationship to itself (like an act of self-consciousness in which the experiencer and the experienced are one and the same). Notice that there is no difference in *substance* between the experiencer and the experienced – the knower and the known – but only a difference in *relation*. This position was initially set out by Boethius, Augustine, and Aquinas in their treatises on the Trinity. Bernard Lonergan²⁶ and Karl Rahner²⁷ articulate it in more contemporary terms and concepts.

As noted above (in Section III.C), this unrestricted power which is in a perfectly transparent relationship to itself is not only capable of a perfect act of self-reflectivity, but also a perfect act of differentiating itself from every possible way of existing which is not itself (i.e. restricted ways of existing). Thus it can generate from within itself the whole range of finite intelligibility.

In this model of thinking, the one unrestricted power of existing through itself is not limited by physical processes, spatiality, temporality, and other restricted ways of existing. It is capable of unrestricted, perfectly immaterial, perfectly self-conscious thought which addresses the above five challenges to physicalist models of thinking.

A brain or a computer cannot generate a completely self-transparent act of thinking because they are restricted in their activities and operations and in their physical structures and laws including quantum activities, structures, and laws. No amount of complexity of restricted parts will ever be able to generate an unrestricted act of mentation, because in their totality they will always be restricted.²⁸

In *The God Delusion*, Dawkins shows little understanding of how an unrestricted power of existing through itself can be self-transparent, self-relational, self-conscious, and therefore, capable of thinking and creating. He assumes that the more comprehensive the act of thinking, the more complex a reality must be. However, this is true only for materialistic conceptions of

²⁶ Lonergan 1992, Ch. 19

²⁷ Rahner 1994.

²⁸ I develop this position in much more detail in Spitzer 2010 (b) pp. 5-27.

thinking--which are based on assembling restricted “building blocks” or material parts - like those found in brains and computers.

Though non-materialistic views of thinking were developed by ancient and medieval philosophers, the materialistic reductionism (which arose out of some interpretations of natural science) closed the human imagination to this possibility until Gödel’s Theorem and the quantum revolution perforce reopened it.²⁹ Bernard Lonergan and other contemporary philosophers combine the ancient and medieval insight into absolute simplicity with the Gödelian and quantum revolutions, and so their assessment of mind is important for resolving contemporary paradoxes in artificial intelligence and the unexplained creativity of human intelligence.³⁰

²⁹ Gödel’s theorem gave the first modern clue to the non-mechanistic and non-algorithmic dimension of human consciousness (Gödel 1931, pp. 173-198). Later John Lucas (1961 p. 120) and Roger Penrose (1989 and 1994 pp. 7-59) combined this insight with developments in quantum theory. Stephen Barr has an excellent summary of Gödel, quantum theory, and the transphysical dimension of human intelligence (Barr 2003, p. 214ff). A detailed explanation of the contributions of Gödel and quantum theory may be found Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 129-133. See also the explanation of the transphysical notion of thinking in light of Lonergan’s notion of being, quantum theory, and Gödel’s theorem in Spitzer 2010 (b) pp 5-27.

³⁰ See Lonergan’s assessment of “The Notion of Being” in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*: “[T]he notion of being penetrates *all* cognitional contents. It is the supreme heuristic notion. *Prior* to every content, it is the notion of the *to-be-known* through that content. As each content emerges, the ‘to-be-known through that content’ passes without residue into the ‘known through that content.’ Some blank in *universal anticipation* is filled in, not merely to end that element of anticipation, but also to make the filler a part of the anticipated. Hence, *prior* to all answers, the notion of being is the notion of the *totality* to be known through all answers.” (Lonergan 1992, pp. 380-381. Italics mine). A detailed explanation of Lonergan’s notion of being is given in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning*, pp. 118-129.