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St. Thomas Aquinas

Words count: 958

In our world, certain contradictions occur to demonstrate their incompatibilities with one another. Take for instance, cats fight with dog, or oil does not mix water. In the school of thought, there are also disputes between theology and philosophy. The knowledge of these two areas is clearly different from each other. However, the question is can these two notions be combined and used together. The answer is yes, as Thomas Aquinas has initiated that both areas of philosophy can be integrated to enhance individuals' religious beliefs. Through his five ways of proving the existence of god, it has encouraged the development of human's thoughts into various aspects by changing their beliefs.

St. Thomas Aquinas is an Italian theologian in the Middle Ages, from 5th to 15th centuries.¹ He is not only a theologian, but also a philosopher and a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. He was born on 28 January, 1225. St. Thomas is the one who penned a lot of great writings which helped eliminate conflicts and encourage cooperation among different thoughts. The most famous literature written by him is *Summa Theologiae*, the history of philosophy in nature.² Even though, he passed

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Middle Ages" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 6 September 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages>

² Thomas, Aquinas, Saint/ Gilby, Thomas (Editor). *Summa Theologiae: 1a. 1: Volume 1 Christian Theology*. 2006. p.1-3

away on 7 March, 1274 at the age of 49, his belief and teaching have been passed on in later decades.

As mentioned in the first paragraph, theology and philosophy may be difficult to unite. The meaning of theology is the study about faith and belief especially in the field of religion.³ Meanwhile, philosophy is the study about all knowledge and facts through the use of logic and reason to prove or doubt.⁴ During that time, people strongly believed that these two types of knowledge were irreconcilable because of the theory of the double truth.⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas rejected it and came up with the new theory that changed what people believe. He applied philosophy to prove the existence of God by dividing it into five subtopics.

The first proof is the argument of motion. The idea is quite simple. It starts with Aristotle's principle, which states that everything is in motion and requires something to make it move.⁶ It leads us to the first move caused by whom St Thomas believed was God. This is truly reasonable.

The next proof is the argument of causation. This concept is similar to the first one which also occurs in a chain movement. However, this proof is about the relationship between cause and effect. For instance, A is the effect of B, B is the effect of C and so on. It is noticeable that there must be the first cause in order for the chain

³ eHow website. "What does the word "Theology" mean?" *eHow, Discover The Expert in You*. 6 September 2012. < http://www.ehow.com/about_5106781_word-theology-mean.html#page=0 >

⁴ CERC website. "Why study Philosophy and Theology?" *Catholic Education Resource Center*. 9 September 2012. < <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/education/ed0392.htm> >

⁵ Biography website. "St Thomas Aquinas biography" *Bio True Story*. 9 September 2012. < <http://www.biography.com/people/st-thomas-aquinas-9187231> >

⁶ Reginald E. Allen. *Greek Philosophy : Thales to Aristotle*. 1991. p.151

to happen. Therefore, St. Thomas stated that the first cause is God because God is the creator of all things.

Moreover, the third proof describes the argument of contingency. There are two states for every object in the world which are "existence and non-existence".⁷ Due to nature, everything is contingent, so at one point nothing would exist which is definitely false. There must be something which is not contingent. Hence, God is the answer.

The forth proof is the argument of objects which come in various levels of degree. The idea begins with more or less perfection of the object.⁸ For instance, there are different degrees in goodness; good, great, and excellent. In order to measure the degree, it must be something at pinnacle so that we can compare the difference. That thing is called God.

The last proof explains the argument of design. St. Thomas implied that there are patterns and objectives in every object.⁹ Take for example, water, its purpose is for human, animal, and plant to use and drink. Thus, there must be someone who rules the world systematically and place responsibilities in objects. That person is God because he is the creator.

From the previous paragraphs, it is worth to say that St. Thomas is one of the influential philosophers and theologian. He can develop the thought of people through his theory. As we all know that people in the medieval age tend to believe strongly in

⁷ Wikipedia contributors. "Quinque viae" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 11 September 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quinque_viae#Summary>

⁸ Mark Blaug. *St. Thomas Aquinas*. 1991. p.97

⁹ Omnis Fvrtam Reciperamvs website. "St. Thomas Aquinas' Quinque Viae" *Omnis Fvrtam Reciperamvs*. 11 September 2012. < <http://jman1986.tripod.com/proof.html>>

religion without using logic, they often thought or see things from one perspective. The five proofs can fix this problem by showing reasonable evidence about God. Hence, they would recognize and accept logical understandings. In addition to this, the theory also works vice versa. It benefits people who trust in logic only. It can provide a lot of advantages for them because religion can teach them about morals and make them become a better person.

In conclusion, the five proofs may not be the only example of combining the two areas of thought, theology and philosophy. However, it teaches people to be cautious to believe in something that cannot be touched or seen. Therefore, people need to think carefully and use logical your common sense to make a decision in life. Otherwise, wrong beliefs and understanding can lead to negative results and misconception of the truth.