



Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia

By Gaven Kerr

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Gaven Kerr provides the first book-length study of St. Thomas Aquinas's much neglected proof for the existence of *God* in *De Ente et Essentia* Chapter 4. He offers a contemporary presentation, interpretation, and defense of this proof, beginning with an account of the metaphysical principles used by Aquinas and then describing how they are employed within the proof to establish the existence of God. Along the way, Kerr engages contemporary authors who have addressed Aquinas's or similar reasoning.

The proof developed in the *De Ente* is, on Kerr's reading, independent of many of the other proofs in Aquinas's corpus and resistant to the traditional classificatory schemes of proofs of God. By applying a historical and hermeneutical awareness of the philosophical issues presented by Aquinas's thought and evaluating such philosophical issues with analytical precision, Kerr is able to move through the proof and evaluate what Aquinas is saying, and whether what he is saying is true.

By means of an analysis of one of Aquinas's earliest proofs, Kerr highlights a foundational argument that is present throughout the much more commonly studied Thomistic writings, and brings it to bear within the context of analytical philosophy, showing its relevance to the contemporary reader.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Kerr's book is quite excellent and recommendable to all those interested in current debates about the existence of God, and God's relation to the world. Not only does he propose a coherent and consistent interpretation of the proof for the existence of God in Thomas's *De Ente et Essentia*, Kerr also shows that current philosophical discussion has little to offer to refute the argument and its presuppositions. We need more theology like this."--*Reading Religion*

"Reading this book is highly recommended to anyone interested in Aquinas's metaphysics, in his philosophical thought broadly conceived, and also in his theological views."--*The Philosophical Quarterly*

"Kerr's approach is admirable. He examines the central philosophical issues without ever straying too far from the proof itself....This book is an excellent companion to the *De Ente*."--*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

"Aquinas's *De Ente et Essentia* was an early work of Aquinas. But it contains a line of thought that characterizes Aquinas's thinking as a whole. Gaven Kerr has mastered this line of thought and presents it in an extremely clear and judicious way. His book is one that anyone interested in Aquinas or in arguments for the belief that God exists should certainly read."

--Brian Davies, author of *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary*

"In this superb study of an early lapidary 'proof' where Thomas Aquinas argues that only what is being can bestow it on others, Gaven Kerr employs a delightfully uncomplicated style to show the central role this spare assertion plays in Aquinas' metaphysics of creation. Elucidating his unique treatment of *esse* and *essentia* allows Kerr to contrast Aquinas with contemporary and classical alternatives as he faces formidable critics by offering free creation as the key to a tour de force as theological as it is metaphysical."

--David Burrell, C.S.C., Hesburgh Professor emeritus, University of Notre Dame

"This is a really interesting book, thought provoking and refreshing in its strict philosophical approach to Aquinas's ontology in *De Ente et Essentia* and for the defense of his ideas about being and God to a contemporary public of professionals schooled in analytical philosophy."

--R.A. te Velde, Assistant Professor, Department of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Tilburg School of Catholic Theology

"...[A] superbly comprehensive and clear account of this powerful piece of philosophical theology..."
--CHOICE

"The main strengths of Kerr's book are its in-depth analysis of the relevant passages from the *De Ente* and his systematic reconstruction of the precise structure of Aquinas's argument...Kerr's book marks a significant advancement in our understanding of one of Aquinas's lesser-known arguments for the existence of God."--*Religious Studies Review*

About the Author

Gaven Kerr is a husband and father of two, and a lay member of the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans). His work has always been on philosophy generally, notably metaphysics and epistemology, and he specializes in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and the general medieval background to his thought. The main goal of his work is to establish the contemporary significance of Aquinas.

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Saul Robinson:

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