



DOES GOD MAKE SENSE ?

SELECTED READINGS
FROM
RICHARD DAWKINS
AND
THOMAS AQUINAS

Note:

- All quotations of Richard Dawkins are taken from *The God Delusion*, First Mariner Books edition, 2008.
- Paragraph numbers in brackets [] are supplied for ease of reference.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[1] I am not attacking the particular qualities of Yahweh, or Jesus, or Allah, or any other specific god such as Baal, Zeus or Wotan. Instead I shall define the God Hypothesis more defensibly: *there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us.* (p.52)

THOMAS AQUINAS

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q2 A2**

WHETHER IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT GOD EXISTS

[2] Objection 1: It might seem that it is not demonstrable that God exists, since it is an article of faith that God exists. But things which are matters of faith are not demonstrable, because a demonstration would cause one to know, whereas faith is in things not seen ... Therefore it is not demonstrable that God exists.

[3] Objection 3: If it could be demonstrated that God exists, this would be only from his effects. But his effects are not commensurate with him, since he is infinite and effects are finite, and there is no comparison of the finite to the infinite. Therefore, since a cause cannot be demonstrated through an effect not commensurate with it, it seems that it is not possible to demonstrate that God exists.

[4] I respond that one must say there are two kinds of demonstration: one which is by means of the cause [of the truth of the conclusion], and this is called “propter quid” demonstration, and this is by means of things which are simply prior [to the truth of the conclusion]. The other is by means of an effect, and this is called “quia” demonstration, and this type is by means of things which are prior for us—after all, when some effect is more apparent to us than its cause, we proceed from a knowledge of the effect to a knowledge of the cause. Now, from any effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated (if, that is, its effects are more evident to us than the cause itself is) because, since effects depend upon their cause, when an effect is present it is necessary that its cause pre-exist. And so it is possible to demonstrate that God exists by means of effects which are known to us, since his existence is not self-evident to us.

[5] Reply to Objection 1: To the first one must say that the existence of God, and other such things which are able to be known about God by natural reason (as it

says in Romans 1:19) are not articles of faith, but preambles to the articles. For faith in a way presupposes natural knowledge as grace presupposes nature, and as a perfection presupposes a perfectible thing. Nevertheless, nothing prevents someone who does not possess a demonstration (for something that is demonstrable and knowable) from taking it as believable.

[6] Reply to Objection 3: To the third one must say that by means of effects which are not commensurate with their cause it is not possible to obtain a perfect knowledge of that cause. But nonetheless from any effect whatever it can be clearly demonstrated to us that the cause exists, as was explained. And so from the effects of God it can be demonstrated that God exists, although by means of those effects one cannot perfectly know his essence.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[7] I am continually astonished by those theists who, far from having their consciousness raised in the way that I propose, seem to rejoice in natural selection as 'God's way of achieving his creation.' They note that evolution by natural selection would be a very easy and neat way to achieve a world full of life. God wouldn't need to do anything at all! Peter Atkins, in the book just mentioned, takes this line of thought to a sensibly godless conclusion when he postulates a hypothetically lazy God who tries to get away with as little as possible in order to make a universe containing life. Atkins's lazy God is even lazier than the deist God of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: *deus otiosus*—literally God at leisure, unoccupied, unemployed, superfluous, useless. Step by step, Atkins succeeds in reducing the amount of work the lazy God has to do until he finally ends up doing nothing at all: he might as well not bother to exist. (pp.143-4)

[8] I have given up counting the number of times I receive the more or less truculent challenge: 'How do you account for Shakespeare, then?' (Substitute Schubert, Michelangelo, etc. to taste.) The argument will be so familiar, I needn't document it further. But the logic behind it is never spelled out, and the more you think about it the more vacuous you realize it to be. Obviously Beethoven's late quartets are sublime. So are Shakespeare's sonnets. They are sublime if God is there and they are sublime if he isn't. They do not prove the existence of God; they prove the existence of Beethoven and of Shakespeare. (p.110)

THOMAS AQUINAS

Summa Theologiae 1 Q2 A3 Obj.2 & reply

WHETHER GOD EXISTS

[9] Objection 2: It seems that God does not exist, since what can be accomplished by means of fewer principles does not come about through more than those. But it seems that all things which appear in this world can be accomplished by other principles, while supposing that God does not exist, since those things which are natural are explained by a principle, namely nature; and those things which are deliberate are explained by a principle, namely human reason or will. Therefore there is no necessity to posit that God exists.

[10] Reply to Objection 2: To the second one must say that since each nature acts toward a definite end under the direction of a superior agent, it is necessary to explain the things which are brought about by nature also by God as by a first cause. Likewise also it is necessary to explain those things which are done deliberately by a higher cause which is not human reason or will, because these latter are changeable and capable of failure; but one must bring all changeable things and all things able to fail back to some first principle which is unchangeable and necessary through itself, as was shown in the body of this article.

Summa Theologiae 1 Q11 A3 C

WHETHER THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

[11] That there is only one God can be demonstrated ... from the infinity of his perfection. For it was shown earlier that God contains in himself the whole perfection of being. Now if there were many gods, it would be necessary for them to differ. Therefore something would belong to one, but not to the other. And if this were a defect, that one would not be absolutely perfect; but if it were a perfection, then the other of them would be lacking it. Therefore it is impossible that there should be many Gods. Hence the ancient philosophers, too, as if forced by the truth itself, in positing that the first principle was infinite, also posited that there is only one such principle.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[12] All three of these arguments [the first “Three Ways” of Thomas Aquinas] rely upon the idea of a regress and invoke God to terminate it. They make the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to the regress. (p.101)

THOMAS AQUINAS

Summa Contra Gentiles 2.15

THAT GOD IS TO ALL THINGS THE CAUSE OF BEING

[13] Furthermore, everything which has the possibility of existing and of not existing has a cause, since considered in itself it is open to either one. And so it is necessary that there be some other thing which determines it to one of these. And so, since it is not possible to go on infinitely, it is necessary that there be some necessary thing which is the cause of all things having the possibility of existing and of not existing. And though there may be a necessary thing which has a cause of its necessity, it is not possible to go on to infinity in such things, and so it is necessary to arrive at something which is existing necessarily by itself. But there can be only one such being, as was shown in the first book [Ch.42]. And this is God. Therefore it is necessary that everything other than him be reduced to him as to the cause of its being.

Summa Theologiae 1 Q3 A4 C

WHETHER ESSENCE AND EXISTING ARE THE SAME IN GOD?

[14] God not only is his own essence, as was shown [A3], but also his own act of existing, which can be shown in many ways.

[15] First, because whatever is in something which is other than its essence must be caused either by the principles of its essence (as proper accidents following upon the species of the thing, such as the ability to laugh follows upon man and is caused by the essential principles of his species), or by some outside thing, as the heat in the water is caused by the fire. Therefore if the very existence of a thing is other than its essence, it is necessary that the existence of that thing either be caused by something outside it, or by the essential principles of that very thing. But it is impossible that its existence be caused only by the essential principles of the thing,

since no thing is sufficient to be a cause of existence for itself, if it should have a caused existence. Therefore it is necessary that a thing whose existence is other than its essence must have its existence caused by another. But this cannot be said of God, because God is what we call the first productive cause of existing. Therefore it is impossible that in God his act of existing should be one thing, and his essence another.

[16] [Again], because just as that which has fire in it but is not itself fire is fiery by participation, so that which has an act of existing but is not itself an act of existing is a being by participation. But God is his own essence, as was shown [A3]. So if he is not his own act of existing, he will be a being by participation, and not by his essence. Therefore he will not be the first being: which is absurd to say. Therefore God is his own act of existing, and not only his own essence.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[17] Time and again, my theologian friends returned to the point that there had to be a reason why there is something rather than nothing. There must have been a first cause of everything, and we might as well give it the name God. Yes, I said, but it must have been simple, and therefore, whatever else we call it, God is not an appropriate name (unless we very explicitly divest it of all the baggage that the word 'God' carries in the minds of most religious believers). The first cause that we seek must have been the simple basis for a self-bootstrapping crane which eventually raised the world as we know it into its present complex existence. (pp.184-5)

THOMAS AQUINAS

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q3 A7**

WHETHER GOD IS ALTOGETHER SIMPLE?

[18] That God is altogether simple can be shown in many ways.

[19] First by the things said earlier [AA1-6]. For since in God there is no composition of quantitative parts (since he is not a body) [A1], nor a composition of form and matter [A2], nor in him is the nature other than the one having it [A3], nor is his essence other than his act of existing [A4], nor in him is there a composition of a genus and certain differences [A5], nor of a subject and its accidents [A6], it is manifest that God is not composed in any way, but is altogether simple.

[20] Second, because everything composed is secondary to its components, and depends on them. But God is the first being, as was shown earlier [Q2 A3].

[21] Third, because everything composed has a cause, for things which are in themselves diverse from one another do not come together in some one thing except by some cause uniting them. But God does not have a cause, as was shown above, since he is the first productive cause.

[22] Fourth, because in every composite it is necessary for there to be potency and act (which is not in God), since either one of the parts is an actuality with respect to the other, or else all the parts are in potency with respect to the whole.

[23] Fifth, because every composite is something which is not identical with any of its parts. This is especially clear in wholes made of dissimilar parts: for no part of a man is a man, nor is any part of a foot a foot. But in wholes made up of similar parts, although something said of the whole may be said of the part, as a part of the air is air and a part of the water is water, still, something will be said of the whole which is not said of any of the parts—for if the whole of the water is two cubits, no part of it is. So then in any composite there is something which is not itself. But while this may be said of something having a form, namely that it has something in it which is not itself (e.g. in this white thing there is something which does not pertain to the nature of being white), nevertheless in the form itself there is nothing else. And so, since God is a form itself, or rather he is his own act of existing itself, in no way can he be composed.

De Potentia Q3 A5

WHETHER THERE CAN BE SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT CREATED BY GOD?

[24] The ancients progressed in the consideration of the nature of things in accord with the order of human knowledge. And so, since human knowledge, by beginning with sensation, arrives at understanding, the first philosophers were preoccupied with sensible things, and from these arrived at intelligible things bit by bit. And because accidental forms are in themselves sensible, while substantial forms are not, therefore the first philosophers said that all forms are accidents. And because a substance suffices to be a cause of those accidents which are caused by the principles of the substance, so it is that the first philosophers supposed there to be no other cause besides matter, and they said that all things which are seen to come forth in sensible things are caused by it. And so they were forced to posit that there is no cause of matter, and to deny an efficient cause of it entirely.

[25] But later philosophers, at length began to consider substantial forms, though they did not arrive at a knowledge of universals, but instead their whole purpose

concerned specific forms: and so they posited certain agent causes, yet none which conferred being upon things universally, but which changed matter into this or that form, e.g. Mind and Love and Hate, whose actions they made to consist in gathering and separating things. And so according to them, not all beings came forth from an efficient cause, but rather a material was always presupposed to the action of an agent cause.

[26] But still later philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and their followers, arrived at a consideration of universal being itself, and so only they posited a universal cause of things from which all other things came forth into being, as is clear through Augustine (*City of God* Bk.8 Ch.4).

[27] [... And this] can be demonstrated by three arguments.

[28] The first of these is this. It is necessary, if something one is found to be common to many things, that it be caused in them by some one cause. For it cannot be that the common thing belongs to each one just from itself, since each one, by the fact that it is itself, is *distinct* from the others, and diversity of the causes produces diversity [vs. commonality] of the effects. Therefore, since being is found to be common to all things which, as regards that which they are, are distinct, it must be that being is conferred upon them not from themselves, but from some one cause. And this seems to be the argument of Plato, who would say that before every multitude there must be some unity, not only in numbers, but even in the natures of things.

[29] The second argument is that, whenever something is found to be participated by many things in diverse measures, it is necessary that it be conferred upon all those in which it is found imperfectly by that in which it is found most perfectly. For the things which are said in a positive way and with a more and a less get this from a further or closer approach to some one thing. For if it belonged to each of them from itself, there would be no reason why it would be found more perfectly in one than in another—as we see that the fire, which is the utmost in hotness, is the principle of the heat in all the hot things. Now it is necessary to posit one being which is the most perfect and most true being, which is proved from the fact that there is something causing motion but altogether immobile and most perfect, as is proved by the philosophers. So it is necessary that all other less perfect things should receive their being from it. And this is the proof of the Philosopher (*Metaphysics* 2.1).

[30] The third argument is that that which is through another is reduced to that which is through itself as to its cause. And so if there were a heat existing by itself, it would be necessary for it to be the cause of all hot things, which have heat by way of participation. But it is necessary to posit some being which is its own act of being, because there must be some first being which is pure act, in which there is no composition. And so it is necessary that from that one being are all other beings

which are not their own act of being, but instead have their act of being by way of participation. And this is the argument of Avicenna.

[31] So in this way it is both demonstrated by reason, and held by the faith, that all things are created by God.

***Summa Theologiae* 1 A44 A2 C beginning & end**

WHETHER THE PRIMARY MATTER IS CREATED BY GOD?

[32] One must realize that the ancient philosophers bit by bit and step by step came into a knowledge of the truth. At the beginning, being coarser as it were, they thought that there were no beings except sensible bodies. Those among them who admitted change in these did not think about change except with respect to certain accidents, for example with respect to rarity and density there was gathering and separating. And supposing that the very substance of bodies was uncreated, they assigned certain causes to such accidental changes, for example Love and Hate and Mind, and things of that sort. ...

[33] But later were some who arose to the consideration of being as being, and they sought a cause of things not only insofar as they are *these* or *such*, but insofar as they are *beings*. Now that which is a cause of things insofar as they are beings must be a cause of things not only according as they are *such* by certain accidental forms, nor only according as they are *these* by essential forms, but also with respect to everything which belongs the existence of them in any way whatever. And so it is necessary to admit that also the primary matter is created by the universal cause of beings.

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q47 A1**

WHETHER THE MULTITUDE AND DISTINCTION OF THINGS COME FROM GOD?

[34] The distinction of things has been ascribed to many causes. For some attributed it to matter, either alone or together with an agent. Democritus, for instance, and all the ancient natural philosophers, who admitted no cause but matter, attributed it to matter alone; according to which opinion the distinction of things came forth by chance according to the movement of matter. Anaxagoras, however, attributed the distinction and multitude of things to matter together with an agent, positing an intellect distinguishing things by extracting what was at first mixed up in matter.

[35] But this cannot stand, for two reasons. First, because it was shown above that even matter itself was created by God. And so it is necessary also to reduce any distinction which is due to matter to a higher cause. Second, because matter is for the sake of form, not the reverse, and the distinction of things is from their proper forms. Therefore the distinction in things is not on account of matter, but rather conversely created matter is divested of forms so that it might be accommodated to diverse forms.

[36] Now others attributed the distinction of things to secondary agencies, as did Avicenna, who said that God, by understanding himself, produced the First Intelligence, in which, because it was not its own act of being, there befell a composition of potency and actuality, as will be clear later (Q50 A2 Ad3). So, then, this First Intelligence, inasmuch as it understood the First Cause, produced a Second Intelligence, but inasmuch as it understood about itself that it was in potency, produced a heavenly body, which produces motion; and inasmuch as it understood about itself that it has some actuality, it produced the soul of the heaven.

[37] But this cannot stand for two reasons. First because it was shown earlier [Q45 A5] that it belongs to God alone to create. And so things which cannot be caused except by creation are produced by God alone, and such are all things which are not subject to being generated or destroyed. Second because according to this position the totality of things would not come forth from the first agent by intention, but instead by the concurrence of many agent causes. But we say that such a thing has come forth by chance. So then the completion of the universe, which consists in the diversity of things, would be by chance, which is impossible.

[38] And so it is to be said that the distinction and multitude of things is from the intention of the first agent, which is God. For he produced things in being for the sake of communicating his goodness to creatures and representing it through them. And since it could not be sufficiently represented by one creature, he produced many and diverse creatures so that what was lacking in one for representing the divine goodness would be supplied by another. For the goodness which is in God simply and uniformly is found in creatures in many ways and dividedly. So it is that the whole universe more perfectly partakes in and represents the divine goodness than any individual creature. And because the distinction of things is from the divine wisdom, therefore Moses says that things were distinguished by the word of God, which is the conception of his wisdom. And so it is said in Genesis (1:3-4) "God said *Let there be light*, and he divided the light from the darkness."

RICHARD DAWKINS

[39] Intelligent design suffers from exactly the same objection as chance. It is simply not a plausible solution to the riddle of statistical improbability. And the higher the improbability, the more implausible intelligent design becomes. Seen clearly, intelligent design will turn out to be a redoubling of the problem. Once again, this is because the designer himself (/herself/itself) immediately raises the bigger problem of his own origin. Any entity capable of intelligently designing something as improbable as a Dutchman's Pipe (or a universe) would have to be even more improbable than a Dutchman's Pipe. Far from terminating the vicious regress, God aggravates it with a vengeance. (pp.145-6)

[40] In any case, even though genuinely irreducible complexity would wreck Darwin's theory if it were ever found, who is to say that it wouldn't wreck the intelligent design theory as well? Indeed, it already *has* wrecked the intelligent design theory, for, as I keep saying and will say again, however little we know about God, the one thing we can be sure of is that he would have to be very very complex and presumably irreducibly so! (p.151)

[41] A God capable of continuously monitoring and controlling the individual status of every particle in the universe *cannot* be simple. His existence is going to need a mammoth explanation in its own right. (p.178)

THOMAS AQUINAS

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q3 A7 Obj.2 & Reply**

WHETHER GOD IS ALTOGETHER SIMPLE?

[42] Obj.2 It may seem that God is not altogether simple, since everything which is better must be attributed to God. But in things around us composed [complex] things are better than simple ones—for example, compound bodies are better than their elements, and animals are better than their parts. Therefore it cannot be said that God is altogether simple.

[43] Reply: One must say that in things around us composed things are better than simple ones, because the perfection of the goodness of creation is not found in one simple thing, but in many. But the perfection of the divine goodness is found in one simple thing, as will be shown later [Q4 A2 Ad1].

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q4 A2**

WHETHER THE PERFECTIONS OF ALL THINGS ARE IN GOD?

[44] Objection 1: It may seem that the perfections of all things are not in God, since God is simple, as was shown [Q3 A7], whereas the perfections of things are many and diverse. Therefore in God there are not the perfections of all things.

[45] Objection 2: Also, opposites cannot be in the same thing at once. But the perfections of things are opposed to each other: for each species is perfected by its own specific difference, and the differences by which a genus is divided and by which the species are constituted are opposed. Therefore, since opposites cannot be in the same thing at the same time, it seems as though not all perfections of things are in God.

[46] On the contrary, I answer that one must say that the perfections of all things are in God. And so he is called “universally perfect,” because there is not lacking in him any nobility which can be found in any genus, as the Commentator [Averroes] says in commenting on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* [Book 5]. And this can be seen from two things:

[47] First, through the fact that whatever perfection is found in an effect must be found in its productive cause, whether in the same form (if it is a univocal agent, as a man generating a man) or in a superior manner (if it is an equivocal agent, as in the sun are found the likenesses of things which are generated by the power of the sun). For it is plain that the effect pre-exists in the power of the agent cause; but to pre-exist in the power of an agent cause is not to pre-exist in a more imperfect way, but in a more perfect way, while to pre-exist in the potency of the material cause is to pre-exist in a more imperfect way, due to the fact that matter, as such, is imperfect. But an agent, insofar as it is an agent, is perfect. Therefore, since God is the first productive cause of things, it is necessary for the perfections of all things to pre-exist in God in some superior way.

[48] Second, from what was shown earlier, namely that God is being itself subsisting by itself [Q3 A4], from which it is necessary to say that he contains in himself the whole perfection of being. For it is plain that if something hot does not have the whole perfection of the hot, this is because heat is not partaken by it in its perfect form. But if any heat were subsisting by itself, it would not be possible for anything within the power of heat to be lacking to it. And so, since God is being itself subsisting by itself, nothing of the perfection of being can be lacking to him. But all perfections pertain to the perfection of being, since things are perfect precisely because they have being in some particular way. So it follows that no perfection of any thing can be lacking in God.

[49] Replies to Objections 1 & 2: To the first objection one must say that much as the Sun prepossesses in itself in a uniform manner the many and diverse

substances and qualities of sensible things, while being itself one and shining uniformly, so are things which are diverse and opposed in themselves pre-existing in God as one, without detriment to his simplicity. And in the same way the solution to the second objection is clear.

***De Potentia*, Q7 A1 Obj.8 & reply**

WHETHER GOD IS SIMPLE

[50] Objection 8: It might seem that God is not simple, because wherever there is found a multitude of forms, there must be a composition. But in God is found a multitude of forms, as the Commentator [Averroes] says, because all forms are actually in the primary mover, just as they are all potentially in the primary matter. Therefore there is composition in God.

[51] Reply to objection 8: To the eighth objection one must say that the form of the effect is found differently in a natural agent on the one hand, and in an agent acting by art on the other hand.

[52] For in an agent acting by nature, the form of the effect is found insofar as the agent makes the effect like its own nature, since every agent produces its like. And this happens in two ways: (1) Sometimes the effect is perfectly likened to the agent, so that it is made equal to the power of the agent, and then the form of the effect is the same type as that in the agent, as is clear in univocal agents, e.g. when a fire generates another fire; but (2) when the effect is not perfectly likened to the agent, not being made equal to the power of the agent, then the form of the effect is in the agent not according to the same type, but in a superior way, as is clear in equivocal agents, as when the sun produces a fire.

[53] But in agents acting by art, the forms of effects pre-exist in the same type, but not in the same manner of being, since in the effects they have a material being, but in the mind of the artist they have an intelligible being. Now something can be said to be “in the intellect” either because it is that which is understood, or because it is the form by which something is understood—but the forms of an art are “in the mind” of the artist in the sense of being that by which something is understood. For it is from the fact that the artist conceives the form of the artifact that he can produce it in some material.

[54] In either way the forms of things are in God. For although he himself produces things by his understanding, this is not without the action of his nature. When it comes to inferior artifacts, an art acts by virtue of an extraneous natural power which it uses as an instrument, as a potter uses a fire for baking pottery. But the divine art does not use an external nature for its action, but rather by the power of its own nature it produces its effect. Therefore the forms of things are in the divine nature

as in the productive power, although not according to the same type, since no effect can become equal to that power. And so all forms which are multiple in the effects are found there as one; and so in this way no composition comes about there. Likewise many things are in his intellect by one and the same thing which is his essence. But when many things are understood through one thing, this does not bring any composition into the one understanding. And so neither in this way will any composition follow in God.

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q19 A7**

WHETHER THE WILL OF GOD IS CHANGEABLE

[55] I respond that the will of God is altogether unchangeable. But concerning this one must realize that it is one thing for the will to change, and another thing to will the change of certain things. For someone can, while permanently and unchangeably willing the same thing, will that now this should come about, and afterwards the contrary should come about. But only then is the will changed when someone began to will something which before he did not will, or ceased to will what he had willed before. Which cannot happen unless a change be presupposed either on the side of knowledge, or in the disposition of the substance of the willer himself. For since the will is of the good, someone can begin to will something anew in two ways: (1) In one way thus, because a thing begins anew to be good for him—which does not happen without his change, as when cold is coming, it begins to be good to sit by the fire, which was not so before. In another way thus: (2) one may newly *know* that the thing is good for him, when before he was ignorant of this: and for this we seek counsel, so that we might know what is good for us. But it was shown earlier that both the substance of God and his knowledge is altogether unchangeable. And so it is necessary that his will be altogether unchangeable.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[56] Incidentally, it has not escaped the notice of logicians that omniscience and omnipotence are mutually incompatible. If God is omniscient, he must already know how he is going to intervene to change the course of history using his omnipotence. But that means he can't change his mind about his intervention, which means he is not omnipotent. (p.101)

THOMAS AQUINAS

Summa Theologiae 1 Q25 A3

WHETHER GOD IS OMNIPOTENT (i.e. ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS)?

[57] Objection 1: It might seem that God is not omnipotent, since changing and being acted upon are "all things", and yet God is not capable of these, since he is unchangeable, as was said earlier. Therefore he is not omnipotent.

[58] Objection 2: To sin is something. But God is not able to sin, nor to deny himself, as it says in 2 Timothy 2:13. Therefore God is not omnipotent.

[59] I respond that one must say that all commonly confess the omnipotence of God. But the definition of "omnipotence" seems difficult to define. For one can have difficulty about what is included in the distributive term "all" when it is said that God can do "all things". But if one consider the matter rightly, since "ability" is spoken of in regard to possible things, then when God is said to be "able" to do "all things", nothing is rightly meant other than that he can do all *possible* things, and from this is he called "omnipotent."

[60] But "possible" has two meanings, according to the Philosopher [Aristotle], in *Metaphysics* 5. In one sense, it is spoken of in relation to some ability, for instance what is subject to human ability is said to be *possible for man*. But it cannot be said that God is called omnipotent because he can do all the things which are possible for a created nature: because the divine power extends to more things than that. And if it be said that God is omnipotent because he can do all things which are possible for his own power, there will be a circularity in the explanation of his omnipotence—for that would be nothing else than to say that God is "omnipotent" because he can do all the things which he can do. So it remains that God is called "omnipotent" because *he is able to do all possible things absolutely*, which is the other way of speaking of the "possible". Something is said to be possible or impossible absolutely from the relationship of its terms—it is called "possible" if the

predicate does not conflict with the subject, e.g. for Socrates to be sitting; but absolutely “impossible” if the predicate conflicts with the subject, e.g. for a man to be a donkey.

[61] Now one must consider that since every agent produces something like itself, to each productive power there will correspond a “possible” as its proper object, in accord with the nature of the actuality on which the productive power is based. For example, the power to heat is referred, as to its proper object, to being heatable. But the divine being, on which the nature of the divine power is based, is infinite being, not limited to some genus of being, but possessing in itself the whole perfection of being. And so whatever is able to have the nature of being is contained under the “possible” absolutely, with respect to which God is called “omnipotent.”

[62] But nothing is opposed to the nature of being except non-being. Therefore what is in conflict with the idea of the “possible” absolutely (which is subject to the divine omnipotence) is that which implies in itself being and non-being at once. For this is not subject to the divine omnipotence, not on account of a defect in the divine power, but because it cannot have the nature of something producible nor of something possible. Therefore whatever things do not imply a contradiction are contained under the possible things with respect to which God is called “omnipotent.” But those things which do not imply a contradiction are not contained under the divine omnipotence, because they do not have the nature of possible things.

[63] And so it is more appropriately said that that they cannot be done than to say that God cannot do them. Nor is this contrary to the word of the angel saying “No word will be impossible with God.” For that which implies a contradiction cannot be a “word”, because the intellect does not conceive anything.

[64] Reply to Objection 1: Therefore to the first objection one must say that God is called “omnipotent” with respect to productive power, not with respect to passive ability, as was said. And so the fact that he cannot change or be acted upon is not in conflict with omnipotence.

[65] Reply to Objection 2: To the second, one must say that to sin is to fall away from perfect action, and so to be able to sin is to be able to fail in acting, which is in conflict with omnipotence. And on account of this God cannot sin, since he is omnipotent.

RICHARD DAWKINS

[66] Darwinism raises our consciousness in other ways. Evolved organs, elegant and efficient as they often are, also demonstrate revealing flaws—exactly as you’d expect if they have an evolutionary history, and exactly as you would not expect if they were designed. I have discussed examples in other books: the recurrent laryngeal nerve, for one, which betrays its evolutionary history in a massive and wasteful detour on its way to its destination. Many of our human ailments, from lower back pain to hernias, prolapsed uteruses and our susceptibility to sinus infections, result directly from the fact that we now walk upright with a body that was shaped over hundreds of millions of years to walk on all fours. Our consciousness is also raised by the cruelty and wastefulness of natural selection. Predators seem beautifully ‘designed’ to catch prey animals, while the prey animals seem equally beautifully ‘designed’ to escape them. Whose side is God on? (p.161)

THOMAS AQUINAS

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q19 A9**

WHETHER GOD WILLS EVILS?

[67] Since the nature of “good” is the reason why something is desirable, as was said earlier, while the bad is opposed to the good, it is impossible that the bad, as such, should be desired, whether by natural tendency, or by animal desire, or by intellectual desire (which is the will). But a bad thing can be desired in an incidental way, if it is connected to something good. And this is clear in any kind of desire or tendency. For example, a natural agent does not tend toward a deprivation or destruction, but to some positive form, to which the deprivation of another form is connected, or to the production of one thing which entails the destruction of another one. And the lion, too, in killing a stag, aims at feeding itself, to which is connected the death of the other animal. In a similar way, a fornicator aims at pleasure, to which the ugliness of sin is connected.

[68] Now the evil that is connected to a good is just the privation of another good. So what is evil is never desired, not even in an incidental way, unless the good thing to which the evil is attached is desired more than the good which is lost by the evil. Now God wills no good more than his own goodness; yet he wills one particular good more than another particular good. And so God in no way wills the evil of sin, which removes the order to the divine good. But the evil of natural defect, or the evil of punishment, he does will, in willing some good to which such an evil is connected. For example, by willing justice he wills punishment, and by willing to preserve the order of nature he wills that certain things be naturally destroyed.

***Summa Theologiae* 1 Q22 A3**

WHETHER GOD HAS IMMEDIATE PROVIDENCE OVER ALL THINGS

[69] One must say that two things pertain to providence, namely the plan of the order of things provided for some end, and the execution of the order (which is called *governing*). With regard to the first of these, God immediately provides for all things. Because in his intellect he has the type of all things, even of the least ones, and whatever causes he pre-assigned to certain effects, he gave to them the power for producing those effects. And so it is necessary that he had pre-possessed the order of those effects in his plan. With regard to the second, there are some intermediaries of divine providence. Because he governs inferior things by means of superior ones, not on account of a deficiency in his power, but on account of the abundance of his goodness, so that he might communicate also the dignity of causation to creatures.