

“The Discovery of the Being of Metaphysics: Is Metaphysics Parasitic on Physics?”

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With the publication this year of books like Stephen Hawking’s *The Grand Design* and Robert J. Spitzer’s *New Proofs for the Existence of God*, the question of whether natural science is required to demonstrate (or can in fact contribute anything to demonstrating) the existence of God is highlighted once again and in a very vivid manner.

Spitzer’s five “new proofs” may be seen as reformulations of the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas. While he does not present them as such, they nevertheless may be seen to amount to ways that strengthen various premises and arguments of St. Thomas’ causal analyses of being. This becomes clear when Spitzer’s project is seen in light of Thomas Joseph White’s exegesis of St. Thomas’s natural theology in his recent book *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity*.

Yet White disagrees with the “River Forest” approach from natural science to metaphysics favored by Benedict Ashley in *The Way toward Wisdom*, and for which Spitzer’s book seems to indirectly furnish fresh arguments. This paper therefore suggests a response to White’s reservations on the basis of Scott MacDonald’s analysis of the full integrity of the First Way as ultimately “parasitic” upon a missing part of the proof.

What the First Way may lack is perhaps best seen by considering the controversy over whether the *Summa Theologiae*’s Third Way (a temporal argument apparently “predicated on the impossibility of eternal matter”) is a different and weaker argument than “the argument from the contingent existence of material things” in the *Compendium of Theology* (I, 6) and the *Summa contra Gentiles* (I, 15).

This paper thus presents a response to the approaches of Spitzer, White, and Ashley by presenting an integrated model of how they each may be seen as helping us appreciate the Five Ways in relation to a causal analysis of substance and accidents, act and potency. Its thesis is that the path from the First to the Third Way is the discovery of separated being by metaphysics, a discovery that is parasitic upon physics.