

Aquinas Be Damned: Tension between Nothingness and Suffering

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Abstract : Aquinas has long been revered by the Catholic Church as one of the greatest theologians of all time. His most well-known and widely respected theological work, the Summa Theologica has been referenced by countless members of the clergy in support of arguments for and about the existence of God. It is surprising, then, and important that one component in his ontological arguments seems to contradict a precept upheld by the Catechism, the Catholic Church's comprehensive document detailing their theological positions and laws. In Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas argued that God's eternal existence is both an observable and necessary quality. In the Catechism, the Catholic Church argues that souls in Hell are separated from God, and only souls in Heaven are like him. After introducing research on Philosophical Psychology and the natures of consciousness and pain, this paper comes to the conclusion that in order to reconcile the theology of the Catholic Church at large with that of Thomas Aquinas, one must somehow solve the following problem: if a soul must exist eternally to suffer eternally, it must be like God; and, if a soul is in Hell, it is completely separate from God and not like him at all. Thomas Aquinas deviates at this point from the current theological holdings of the Catholic Church, and this apparent discrepancy must be resolved if the Church hopes to use him going forward as a standard for natural theology.

Keywords : aquinas, catholic catechism, consciousness, philosophical psychology, summa theologica

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