The Complexity of a Simple God:
Aquinas' Response to Richard Dawkins

MATTHEW MORRIS
2nd Year, PhD Ecology and Evolution
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Abstract: Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* is a recent popular attack on theism. Rather than rely on empirical evidence, Dawkins attempts to disprove the existence of all supernatural entities through a philosophical argument: anything complex enough to create an organism must itself have been designed. The validity of this argument rests on Dawkins' use of Thomas Aquinas' First Way. This paper will explore Aquinas' First Way and the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity in order to better assess Dawkins' argument.

"A designer God cannot be used to explain organized complexity because any God capable of designing anything would have to be complex enough to demand the same kind of explanation in his own right."[1] This is the main thesis of Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, and Dawkins uses it to disprove the existence of "God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented."[2] This paper will show, through the writings of Thomas Aquinas (ca 1225-1274), that both Dawkins' argument from infinite regress and his definition of God are based on a misunderstanding of Aquinas' First Way. This paper has three objectives: first, to examine Dawkins' characterization of Aquinas' argument for the existence of God;[3] second, to explore how Aquinas' definition of God relates to his First Way; and finally, to address what this understanding of Aquinas means for Dawkins' main thesis.

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[1] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: First Mariner Books, 2006), 136.
[2] Ibid, 57.
[3] Throughout this paper, capital-G "God" will be used, despite its lack of gender or religious neutrality. This God will furthermore be denoted by "He". This is done to represent the particular theistic understanding that Aquinas defends and that Dawkins challenges and is not intended to suggest a theological position on the part of the author.

In *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), Dawkins used his insights into evolutionary biology to show how complex features could evolve through evolution by natural selection. Prior to Darwin, people such as William Paley could argue that adaptation necessitated a Designer. After Darwin, one could be an "intellectually fulfilled atheist"[4] because a rational natural alternative to special creation had been formulated. We are not, Dawkins argued, the product of random chance or Intelligent Design, but rather the product of random mutations coupled with non-random selection. His lucid explanation of natural selection provided a compelling argument against Creationist teachings. However, it did not address belief in God itself. Many Christians could affirm with Dawkins the reality of natural selection, while still believing in a Designer of the evolutionary process. Dawkins challenged these Christians in *The God Delusion* (2006). For Dawkins, the delusion was not solely Creationism; it was the belief in any God at all:

> 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. This
> book will advocate an alternative view: any creative intelligence of
> sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence
> only as the end product of an extended process of gradual
> evolution.[5]

The success or failure of this ambitious effort hinged on the validity of his main thesis:[6] God, if He exists, must be complex, because only a complexity can produce complex things. But this produces an infinite regress from which there is no rescue. For if complex things require a

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[4] Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1986), 6.

[5] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 52 [italics removed].

[6] Given the broad scope of *The God Delusion* and the number of independent arguments Dawkins makes, it would be difficult to pinpoint Dawkins' main argument if not for Dawkins himself, who repeatedly presents the argument from God's Designer as the most important and persuasive argument in the work. See, for instance, pages 52, 61, 101, 136, 138, and the entirety of chapter 4. This paper will focus on this central thesis and will not assess Dawkins' other claims. To get a sense of the scope of the book, chapter two, entitled "The God Hypothesis", outlines Dawkins' definition of God, riffs on the excesses of tax laws surrounding polytheism and monotheism, argues that the Christian Trinitarian God and the Catholic system are essentially polytheistic, goes into detail about how the founding fathers were likely atheists if not deists, critiques Stephen Jay Gould's model for science-faith relations, and describes the failures of experiments on prayer. Dawkins clearly did not intend to provide only one argument against the existence of God.

Designer, who designed God? Dawkins' reasons for disbelief in God go deeper than this argument would suggest—he also rejected God on empirical grounds, citing the lack of scientific evidence. However, Dawkins clearly felt that the argument from infinite regress was more compelling than simply reaffirming scientific observations. Dawkins felt that he had a convincing argument, in part because his argument from infinite regress subverted a classic Christian evidence for God.

"Before proceeding with my main reason for actively disbelieving in God's existence, I have a responsibility to dispose of the positive arguments for belief that have been offered through history."[7] Dawkins begins chapter three by dismantling the "proofs" for God's existence, pre-emptively answering objections to his later proof against the existence of God. The first proofs he examines are those of Thomas Aquinas' Five Ways: the argument of the Unmoved Mover, the argument of the First Cause, and the arguments from contingency, degree, and teleology. Dawkins summarily dismisses all of them in four paragraphs and concludes that they "don't prove anything, and are easily—though I hesitate to say so given his eminence—exposed as vacuous."[8] The implication is that, if these ancient proofs are vacuous, then how much more so is any belief in God? However, Dawkins' insistence that these Five Ways were intended to be proofs in the first place is questionable.

Aquinas' Five Ways were written within the context of his ten articles on the nature and extent of sacred doctrine. Only a fraction of theology, Aquinas wrote, could be developed through reason alone and only after extensive effort.[9] God communicated all theological truths through special revelation so that even the unlearned could come to understand God's saving

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[7] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 99.
[8] Ibid, 100.
[9] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica, Volume I*, Transl. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Revised by Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), 1.1, 3.

ways.[10] Precisely because the fool can say in his heart, "there is no God",[11] God had to reveal

himself through scripture and be understood through faith. Faith, then, is the cornerstone for

Aquinas' arguments. Indeed, those who could not understand the Five Ways could still accept

God through faith[12]—rational arguments for God's existence were not necessary for a Christian

religion founded on special revelation. The Five Ways themselves were not meant to prove

God's existence *a priori* as much as they were to show the coherence of belief in God.[13] They

relied on natural revelation to "prove" God, but such proof was only as good as one's faith that

the world itself was a revelation. Aquinas explains, "As other sciences do not argue in proof of

their principles but argue from their principles to demonstrate other truths in these sciences, so

this doctrine does not argue in proof of its principles, which are the articles of faith, but from

them it goes on to prove something else, as the Apostle from the resurrection of Christ argues in

proof of the general resurrection."[14] Aquinas could argue that God *is* existence, but this "proof"

presupposed faith in a God who could not be proved.[15] It is no surprise that Dawkins would find

these "proofs" vacuous.

Why provide arguments for God's existence at all? Aquinas accepted on faith that the

God of Christian monotheism exists. However, he argued that the truth of the phrase "God

exists" is not self-evident to all people.[16] A phrase is only self-evident when "its predicate is

included in the notion of the subject."[17] If all people know the subject, and they know that the

predicate is contained within the subject by definition of who the subject is, then the statement is

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[10] Ibid, 1.1, 3.
[11] Ibid, 2.1, 11, quoting Psalm 52:1.
[12] Ibid, 2.2, 12.
[13] Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 26.
[14] Aquinas, 1.8, 8.
[15] Ibid, 1.8, 8. "But if our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning."
[16] Ibid, 2.1, 11.
[17] Ibid, 2.1, 11.

self-evident. "Man is an animal" is self-evident because the predicate (animal) is contained within the definition of the subject (human).[18] Similarly, "God exists" is self-evident in itself, since God is His own existence. However, many people do not know God, so they cannot know that existence is contained within God. Only those who have come to know God intimately—those who have rigorously studied scripture through faith—can see the self-evidence of "God exists." It becomes the responsibility of the learned to teach others about who God is. They can do this by asking people to accept "God exists" on faith alone or they can produce rational arguments based on what can be known by all: the effects of the Creator, that is, the natural world. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas presented arguments for God's existence that were based on natural observations so that the unlearned could learn the self-evidence of God's existence. That is, they could learn that God *is* His existence, that God is completely and perfectly simple.

Aquinas' First Way was based on the observation of change in the natural world. Aquinas wrote, "It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in this world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another….But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover….Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover which is moved by no other. And this everyone understands to be God."[19] This argument has been generally misunderstood to mean that, in order to avoid an infinite regress, you must logically have a First Cause of change which is itself unchanged: the Unmoved Mover, or God.[20] This is how Dawkins viewed the argument, leading him to summarily dismiss it by showing that seemingly infinite regresses can have natural terminators. As an example, Dawkins pointed out

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[18] Ibid, 2.1, 11.
[19] Ibid, 2.3, 13.
[20] Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, eds, "Introduction," *Summa Theologiae, Questions on God*, by Thomas Aquinas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xii.

that if one cuts a block of gold in half, and continues to cut it in half, one could logically expect

such division to continue forever. But it does not: the division ends after the last two gold atoms

have been divided.[21] There is a natural terminator to the apparently infinite regress of cutting

gold in half and this terminator does not require the existence of God.[22] The problem with this

reasoning is that Aquinas did not believe that all series logically required a first cause. Indeed,

Aquinas differentiated between two forms of causal series. The causal series not described by

Dawkins was the one on which Aquinas based his First Way.

Aquinas distinguished series that are ordered *per se* from series that are ordered *per*

accidens.[23] In a *per accidens* series, each member in the series is causally independent of every

other member. Adam and Eve begat Seth, Seth and his wife begat Enosh, but none of them were

compelled to do so simply because they existed. Adam and Eve could only be said to cause

Enosh insofar as Seth chose to have a child.[24] For Aquinas, there was no logical reason why

such series could not extend backwards forever[25]—Adam could have had parents and

grandparents extending back to infinity.[26] *Per se* series, on the other hand, are demanded by

logic to have a first cause. A *per se* series has the following attributes: all causes in the series act

simultaneously, the action of each cause in the series is caused by the cause of what precedes it,

with the exception of the first cause, and all causes in the series "act together to produce the final

effect."[27] All members of the series work at once, making an infinite regress impossible.

Aquinas provided an example of a *per se* series: a hand causes a stick to move which in turn

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[21] The atom, of course, could be broken down into constituent parts, but the moment you divide the number of protons in half you have something other than gold.
[22] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 102.
[23] These distinctions were developed by Aristotle and are used by Aquinas in several writings. For a description of the texts, see Davies and Leftow.
[24] Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 99-100.
[25] Davies and Leftow, xii.
[26] Kretzmann, 100.
[27] Davies and Leftow, xiii.

causes a stone to move.[28] The hand causes the stick to move in order to cause the stone to move.

However, the hand and the stick both move simultaneously, and are therefore both responsible

for the movement of the stone.[29] This is distinguished from Dawkins' *per accidens* infinite

regress in which the size of the gold at time *t* is causally independent of the size of the gold at *t-*

1. However, there is a *per se* series hidden in Dawkins' example: the *action* of cutting the gold

is a *per se* series. The gold is cut by the knife, which is moved by the hand, which is moved by

the mind (or for Aquinas, the soul), and the entire system acts simultaneously to produce the

effect. Without a first uncaused cause, everything would be an instrument, with no unchanging

cause using the instruments.[30] Aquinas' reasoning had nothing to do with avoiding the pitfalls of

an infinite regress. Indeed, "it is not that there must be a first cause because there cannot be an

infinite series, but that there cannot be an infinite series because there must be a first cause."[31]

Without a first cause, there would be no system and thus no change.

Dawkins' rejection of Aquinas' First Way is therefore based, at least in part, on a

misrepresentation of Aquinas' argument. But Dawkins does include a helpful counter-argument:

there is no reason why the First Cause should be divine.[32] Perhaps there are *per se* series that

end at a natural terminator. The cutter of the gold seems like a logical natural terminator of the

gold-cutting *per se* series. But for Aquinas, all instruments must, by definition, be in constant

change.[33] A human is in change. Even if the human is acting freely to cut the gold, the decision

to cut the gold "must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will,

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[28] In Aquinas, 2.3, 13 the system is merely a stick and a hand. The hand-stick-stone and genealogical examples are found in Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1924), 1.2.38.
[29] Davies and Leftow, xiii.
[30] Ibid, xv.
[31] Ibid, xiv.
[32] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 102.
[33] Davies and Leftow, xv.

since these can change and fail."[34] Dawkins, for his part, does not voice opposition to locating

all causes in the First Cause. Instead, Dawkins argues that, even if all causes must ultimately

find themselves in a First Cause, this Cause does not have to be anything like Aquinas' God.

Dawkins regards it as "more parsimonious to conjure up, say, a 'big bang singularity,' or some

other physical concept as yet unknown. Calling it God is at best unhelpful and at worst

perniciously misleading."[35] Norman Kretzmann, an Aquinas supporter, somewhat agrees and

calls the First Cause "Alpha," some identity that could be divine or natural.[36] However, Aquinas

recognized this failing. He ended the First Way by declaring that everyone[37] understood through

faith that this argument was pointing to God.[38] But through reflection on the nature of Alpha,

one could come to realize that no other name suited Alpha but God.[39] By failing to engage in

this discussion, Dawkins pre-emptively dismissed Aquinas' First Way and ran into the mistake

of giving God a definition that Aquinas would have considered absurd.

"When the existence of a thing has been ascertained there remains the further question of

the manner of its existence, in order that we may know what it is."[40] Aquinas began by asking

what God (or Alpha) could or could not be and his answers were heavily rooted in his Five

Ways. For instance, Aquinas concluded that God has no body because, first, "no body is in

motion unless it be put in motion…Now it has already been proved that God is the First Mover

unmoved. Therefore it is clear that God is not a body."[41] Secondly, God could not be a body

because God is pure actuality. Bodies exist in the physical world and, as such, have dimensions

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[34] Aquinas, 2.3, 14.
[35] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 101-102
[36] Kretzmann, 112.
[37] That is, theology students.
[38] Aquinas, 2.3, 13.
[39] Ibid, 3.1-3.8, 14-20.
[40] Ibid, 3.0, 14.
[41] Ibid, 3.1, 14.

which make them divisible. Anything divisible, however, has potentiality (the capacity for

change); the First Cause could have no such potentiality, and therefore could not have a body.[42]

Similarly, God could not consist of matter or form,[43] nor could God be a composite.

Something that is composite contains potentiality in that its parts are only united if they first have

the capacity to be unified. Therefore, God could not be divisible into parts.[44] For similar

reasons, God could not have spatial or temporal parts and hence must be both unchanging and

eternal (outside time).[45] God must also be identical with His nature.[46] Individual humans are not

identical to their nature, for human nature is universal but humans consist of particulars.[47]   For

instance, Aquinas may have brown hair and Dawkins may have gray, but hair colour is a

particular that belongs to *this* individual human and not to human nature itself. However, for

things which do not have form or matter (i.e. God), there are no individual particulars, as

particulars imply both complexity and change.[48] For similar reasons, God could not be

composed of existence. Material things have the properties of being something and of existing,[49]

but since an immaterial God lacks material particulars, He must be identical with His existence.[50]

God could not be categorized by genus/differentia[51] and could not contain substance/accidents as

there is nothing intrinsic to God that could be added or taken away.[52] In short, the First Cause

must, by its very nature, be completely simple.

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[42] Ibid, 3.1, 14.
[43] Ibid, 3.2, 15.
[44] Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, transl. Edward Bullough (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, 1937), 101; Aquinas, 3.7, 19.
[45] Eleanore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 96.
[46] William Vallicella, "Divine Simplicity" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006), www.science.uva.nl/~seop/entries/divine-simplicity
[47] Aquinas, 3.3, 16.
[48] Ibid, 3.3, 16.
[49] Stump, 97.
[50] Aquinas, 3.4, 17.
[51] Ibid, 3.5, 17-18.
[52] Ibid, 3.6, 18; Stump, 111.

The Doctrine of Divine Simplicity (DDS) has further interesting ramifications for

Aquinas' definition of God. God, as First Cause, cannot himself change, cannot be composed of

a body, cannot have composite parts, and must be simple. But God must also be omnipresent. If

He were not, then He would be present in one place and absent in another, making Him finite

and not completely simple. And if He is not completely simple, then He cannot be the First

Cause. So, God is omnipresent, meaning that His essence is wholly in every place, just as the

essence of the colour whiteness exists wholly and completely in every bit of white.[53] God is not

omnipresent in the traditional sense of physical location because the divine presence cannot be

physically situated anywhere.[54]   God is also, for example, perfect in that everything else is

potential compared to Him and the perfection of everything pre-exists in Him perfectly.[55]

Further, God is good in that goodness is what all things desire and everything desires the

perfection of their efficient cause.[56] However, omnipresence and perfection and goodness all

suggest a complexity of parts within God, not a simplicity.

According to Aquinas, we need to realize that God is identical with both His nature (He

is existence) and whatever properties are attributed to Him. He is not good by participating in

goodness, but by being good.[57] Thus, God *is* omniscience, God *is* justice, God *is* love and God *is*

anything else which can be attributed to him.[58] Furthermore, this multiplicity of attributes must

be an illusion; they must all really be the same thing. God's goodness is equivalent to His

omnipotence or to His love. All of these characteristics are not separate but are simply different

ways of looking at the same thing.[59] Alvin Plantinga sees here one strong objection to DDS: to

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[53] Aquinas, 8.2, 36.
[54] Brian Davies, *Aquinas* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 86.
[55] Aquinas 4.1-4.2, 20-22.
[56] Ibid, 6.1, 28.
[57] Vallicella.
[58] Aquinas, 20.1, 120-121.
[59] Stump, 100.

identify God with abstract properties is to define God as being abstract. Since an abstraction cannot be a Being, DDS robs God of any efficacious power.[60] Such a challenge presumes that individuals and their properties are ontologically distinct, which Aquinas and other DDS defenders rejected.[61] Aquinas held that properties were not abstractions separated from the individual, but were instead material constituents of the individual. God, being immaterial, is not constituted of any material particulars, allowing him to be identical to his attributes without becoming an abstraction.[62] This raises some further interesting questions. How could God, who is outside of time, cause anything to occur in time? As Stump points out, if God speaks at time t to Cain, at time $t-1$ God's speaking to Cain is a potentiality which is actualized at time t.[63] This contradicts God being complete actuality. Furthermore, all of God's actions must be identical: killing Pharaoh's firstborn son must be the same action as convincing Cain not to kill Abel.[64] These apparent contradictions could be explained by realizing that "God wills himself and other things in one act of will."[65] Thus, God's one atemporal act accounts for everything we see, just as the act of turning on a fan causes the blades to spin, air molecules to move, paper to blow off a

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[60] Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press), 47. See also Vallicella. Dawkins wrote, "[A] God who is capable of sending intelligible signals to millions of people simultaneously, cannot be, whatever else he might be, simple. Such bandwidth! God may not have a brain made of neurones, or a CPU made of silicon, but if he has the powers attributed to him he must have something far more elaborately and non-randomly constructed than the largest brain or the largest computer we know." (Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 184). Although Dawkins is really arguing, facetiously, that God must have something brain-like because we attribute to him actions that are only performed on Earth by things with brains or silicon chips, one can see here a trace of Plantinga's objection: how can anything be identical to its powers and be capable of doing anything at all? Dawkins was very close to expressing another argument against DDS when discussing Aquinas, pointing out that omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible. But he failed to see the implications for DDS, instead quoting a pithy rhyme about whether God will have the omnipotence to change his future mind (Dawkins, *The God Delusion,* 101).
[61] Valicella.
[62] This reading of Aquinas was first made by Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Divine Simplicity," in *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion*, J. Tomberlin (ed.) (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1991), 531-552. Vallicella concludes that this position "is not entirely clear, but is not obviously incoherent."
[63] Stump, 98.
[64] Ibid, 98.
[65] Ibid, 99.

table, room temperature to cool, and sweat to evaporate.[66] There are other objections to DDS, but they do not as yet seem to be insurmountable.[67] However, Aquinas did not provide DDS as an effort to prove God's existence. Rather, DDS was for Aquinas the logical extension of his Five Ways, which in turn were based on observations that were believed on faith to be natural revelations from God. Aquinas developed DDS as part of his effort to show that faith in God is internally coherent and, so long as faith is one's starting point, perfectly reasonable.

Dawkins attempted to engage with Aquinas but profoundly misunderstood him. Indeed, Aquinas, by acknowledging the importance of faith, opened the door for an easy rebuttal from Dawkins. Dawkins could have simply stated that belief in God rests on faith alone and lacks a shred of empirical evidence. In fact, Dawkins does state this,[68] but he does not present this as his central thesis. Instead, he tries to subvert Aquinas' argument by showing that it is not internally consistent after all. Dawkins' argument has three components. First, seemingly-infinite regresses have natural terminators, so any philosophy that requires God to rescue us from infinite regressions is mistaken. We have already seen how Dawkins incorrectly founded this argument on a *per accidens* instead of a *per se* series. Second, Dawkins surmised that not only do we not need God to rescue us from infinite regresses, but God himself creates an all new and entirely unnecessary infinite regress, from which He cannot rescue us. Third, the only way to rescue ourselves from this infinite regress is to deny the existence of God. We need not fear this as the universe, life, morality and so on can be explained without need for a Designer. Thus Dawkins

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[66] Ibid, 99.

[67] See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for some examples and their possible rebuttals. For instance, DDS entails God's complete transcendence, which poses problems for any theology in which God and creatures share attributes. See also Stump, 92-130, and Alexander Pruss, *On Three Problems of Divine Simplicity*.

[68] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 70, 72-73: "the view that I shall defend is very different: agnosticism about the existence of God belongs firmly in the temporary or TAP [Temporary Agnosticism in Practice] category. Either he exists or he doesn't. It is a scientific question…I shall suggest that the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis like any other. Even if it is hard to test in practice, it belongs in the same TAP or temporary agnosticism box as the controversies over the Permian and Cretaceous extinctions."

attempts to upend Aquinas' argument by showing that the only infinite regress in Aquinas' Five

Ways is found in the statement "God exists."

"Who made God?"[69] This is the central question of Dawkins' *The God Delusion*.

According to Dawkins, we humans see complexity in the natural world. The complexity we see

in the artificial world (like a watch) we know has a designer (us); therefore the complexity in the

natural world also requires a Designer. However, the designer of artificial products (us) must be

complex enough to design something; therefore, the Designer of the natural world must also be

complex. Yet anything complex, as already stated, requires a designer, so God requires a

Designer himself, *ad infinitum*.[70] Christian theologians, argued Dawkins, tell us that God has no

Designer. If a complex God requires no Designer, then complexity in the natural world requires

no Designer. Evolution is a natural process that explains the complexity of the natural world

without the need for a supernatural cause. The probability for the existence of an Intelligent

Designer was very high when complexity required a supernatural explanation, but with the

discovery of biological evolution it is now practically zero.[71]

Dawkins' argument that divine complexity leads to an infinite regress relies on the

reader's acceptance of a complex God, but ignores the possibility of a simple God. Aquinas

would likely agree with Dawkins to an extent – any non-simple God would not be complete

actuality, and its potentiality would require an explanation in its own right. Any non-simple God

would not deserve the title of God at all. Furthermore, Dawkins' inference from the complexity

of human designers to the complexity of the divine Designer is problematic from a Thomist

perspective. Aquinas judged it to be correct when people "say that a statue is like a man, but not

conversely; so also a creature can be spoken of as in some sort like God, but not that God is like

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[69] Ibid, 136.
[70] Ibid, 136. "God presents an infinite regress from which he cannot help us to escape."
[71] Ibid, 188-189.

a creature."[72] This is because God is the cause, human designers are the effect; humans belong

to a genus, while God is "that which is outside genus, and…the principle of all genera."[73]

Furthermore, Aquinas held that God's work was different from human work. Human design

requires objects that already exist, while God designed the objects which humans use to create.[74]

Dawkins was therefore making a categorical mistake when he inferred a complex God from

human complexity. But how can complexity arise from a simple God at all? Aquinas believed

that the moment God caused something to exist, that effect, even if it was the simplest of all

effects, was more complex than the Cause. Aquinas wrote, "It is of the very notion of a thing

caused to be in some sort of composite, because at least its being differs from its essence."[75]

Since the Cause which produces the effect is identical with His existence and His essence, any

creation must be more complex than its Creator.

Dawkins, despite his argument, did not really believe that complexity begets complexity.

He presented evolution by natural selection as a simple alternative to the special creation of

complex adaptations. Evolution, in turn, arose through some natural mechanism like the Big

Bang or the multiverse. Since, for Dawkins, apparent infinite regresses in fact end in natural

terminators, Dawkins did not feel compelled to explore the origins of the Big Bang or the

multiverse. Only a complex God required explanation; only a complex God led to an infinite

regress. It seems that Dawkins actually agreed with Aquinas on one point: simplicity is the key

to avoiding infinite regress. By defining God as a complexity, this left no alternative but a

simple, naturalistic Alpha.

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[72] Aquinas, 4.3, 23.
[73] Ibid, 4.3, 23.
[74] Davies, 72.
[75] Aquinas, 3.7, 19.

It is worth asking why Dawkins defined God as complex. Creationists had updated Aquinas' teleological argument by observing that the complexity of the natural world was similar to the complexity of the artificial world, and therefore required a similar explanation from design.[76] Dawkins quite cleverly used this argument against them. If the artificial world is complex, and was designed by even more complex humans, then the natural world's complexity must be explained by a complex God. This is an interesting and important criticism of the Creationist use of analogy. However, Dawkins does not admit that his argument deals only with Creationism. Instead, he confuses Creationism with theism in general – he seems to think that by refuting the one he has refuted the other.   This leaves him in no better of a position than in *The Blind Watchmaker* – Creationism is compellingly refuted, while belief in God remains untouched.

Dawkins' central argument required him to define God as a complexity, without providing significant justifications for such a definition. Although Aquinas' simple God may be subject to internal weaknesses, Dawkins seems unaware of them. He boldly claims that his book disproves "God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented,"[77] but by defining God so narrowly, as a complexity, he provided an argument that no reader of Aquinas could take seriously. Aquinas believed in a simple God, a God without any sort of division or parts or complexity, a God whose existence is made known through faith by observing the *per se* series of this world. A proper rebuttal of theism cannot ignore the possibility of Aquinas' simple God.

Acknowledgements

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[76] For the source of this argument, see William Paley, *Natural Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[77] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 57.

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