

AQUINAS'S WAY TO GOD: THE PROOF IN DE ENTE ET ESSENTIA. By Gaven Kerr, OP.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xxi + 205. Hardcover, \$74.

In *Aquinas's Way to God*, Gaven Kerr offers an interpretation and defense of one of Aquinas's lesser-known arguments for the existence of God, the argument found in his *De Ente et Essentia*. In the *De Ente*, Aquinas argues from the real distinction in some things between their essence (what the thing is) and their existence (that it is), and the impossibility of an infinitely-ascending chain of dependence between such things, to the existence of a self-subsistent being in which there is no distinction between essence and existence. Following Aquinas's argument, Kerr's book is divided into two parts. The first part of the book discusses Aquinas's real distinction between essence and existence, and includes an analysis of the way in which Aquinas argues for the real distinction in the *De Ente*, as well as an overview of Aquinas's views on essence and existence and a comparison of Aquinas's views to some notable contemporary accounts of the same. The second part discusses the proof of God's existence that Aquinas builds from that distinction and includes a defense of Aquinas's claims that an infinitely-ascending chain of dependence between things in which essence and existence are distinct is impossible, and that therefore there must be something in which essence and existence are not distinct, which causes the existence of all other things. 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. Its presentation of contemporary views is a bit too quick, however. Kerr's surveys of contemporary approaches to essence and existence are less than comprehensive and, in some cases, not entirely up-to-date. I think that there is much more that Kerr could have included in these discussions. With that said, Kerr's book marks a significant advancement in our

understanding of one of Aquinas's lesser-known arguments for the existence of God.

While I do think that there is still more work to be done to sell that argument to contemporary audiences, Kerr's analysis is an important step in the right direction.

Jeremy W. Skrzypek

Saint Louis University