Different kinds of scientific demonstrations in Thomas Aquinas

SCG 12.8:

**Demonstration *quia* (detective)** vs. **Demonstration *propter quid* (mathematician)**

Planets do not twinkle (effect) Planets are near (cause)

What does not twinkle is near Near things do not twinkle

Therefore, planets are near (cause) Therefore, planets do not twinkle (effect)

OR: What happened here was a murder. This man is a murderer.

(= not accident, not suicide)

All murders require a murderer. Murderers commit murder.

Therefore, there must be a murderer. Therefore, what happened here must have been murder.

(= What happened here requires a murderer.) (= not accident, not suicide)

Arguments for the existence of an unmoved mover in *Summa Contra Gentiles*

SCG 13.3 1. Some things are moved. (effect)

2. **Everything moved is moved by another.** (3 arguments given for this)

3. Therefore (1+2), some things are moved by another. (cause) / (effect)

4. **The chain of things moved by another requires an unmoved mover.**

(= This other must itself be either moved or unmoved. But **we cannot have an infinite chain of moved movers.**) (3 arguments given for this)

5. Therefore (3+4), there must be some unmoved mover. (cause)

6. BUT maybe the mover is *self*-moved (i.e., nature) and everlasting. (effect)

7. **Self-movers move themselves through desire.**

8. Therefore (5+6+7), even if nature is an everlasting self-mover, it must seek some everlasting, desirable thing, which must be absolutely unmoved. (final cause)

3rd argument (13.33): Efficient cause (that from which the source of motion comes) – your source of motion (which is in you) comes from your parents, theirs from their parents, etc. Can this go back in time without ever reaching a first cause? How could the whole chain have gotten started? [= 2nd way in ST I.Q2.a3]

4th argument (13.34): Comparison seems to presume a highest instance establishing the continuum on which the two can be compared. But things can *be* more or less. So, there must be something that *is* most.

Similarly, how can Politifact designate some things as mostly true, some as half true, and so on? There must be some full truth that establishes the continuum. [= 4th way in ST I.Q2.a3]

5th argument (13.35): Where did the laws of physics come from? Consistent order usually has its source in a mind – but the universe shows consistent order. What is the source of that order? [= 5th way in ST I.Q2.a3]

6th argument (15.5): Some beings (like us) have optional existence; we come to be and pass away. But when we do exist, there must be a cause for that existence. But we already saw that the chain of causes can’t be infinite. So, there must be at least one thing whose being is necessary (not optional). It always is. Maybe there are some necessary beings that are caused by something else (like the truths of mathematics?), but that chain of causes also has to terminate: namely, in a being that is necessary through itself. [= 3rd way in ST I.Q2.a3]

7th argument (16.7): Changing things are at first only *able* to be different; then they change and end up actively different than they were before. But insofar as the thing was initially only *able* to be different, it must have had help becoming actively different, and whatever helped it must already be actively whatever the first thing is becoming. (Think about heating something up. You need something already hot.) This can’t go to infinity; there must be something completely active, without any ability to be different itself but with a lot of ability to change other things. [= 1st way in ST I.Q2.a3]

Possible stances toward the divine (with irreverent descriptions)

**Atheism:** there positively is no god (or: there is one, but I will not obey it); the vast majority of human beings have been and continue to be wrong about what they take to be most important (and what would indeed *be* most important if it were true)

**Versions:**

a) This is a good/great thing (we’re free from illusions!)

b) This is a terrible thing (can I have my illusions back?)

c) Who cares? If I don’t think about things, I’m magically always right

d) Communism – there is no god, says the Party; all praise to the Party, indivisible savior of mankind!

e) Capitalism – there is no god but the invisible hand; all praise to the market, adaptable to all things!

f) Jainism – karma is nothing personal, but it bites

g) Daoism, Buddhism – all is one, when you get right down to it (could you *try* to fit in a little better?)

**Deism:** there *was* a god, but not anymore; everybody gets to be sort of right

**Theism:** there is (or are) a god (or gods); only atheists are fully wrong about the most important things; everyone else is at least partly right

**Versions:**

a) Polytheism – enough gods to go around, but stay on the good side of the powerful ones  
b) Monotheism – there is one god, to whom we are answerable (and good luck with that)  
 Judaism: BUT G-d is a faithful covenant-maker and will redeem (let’s all be faithful)  
 Christianity: BUT God showed up in person to reconcile our relationship (want back in?)  
 Islam: BUT Allah sent his prophet to show the way (so get *on* the way, already)

Egoism: it turns out that because there is a god, I’m always right (surprising, no?)  
c) Pantheism – god is not distinct from the world

EITHER the self-knowing order of the universe, in which we all have our place, is divine; OR *everything* is god, so quit treating spiders like they’re less important than children

d) Dualism – as in *Star Wars*, there are two equal and opposite forces, both of which claim to be right (warning: it may be hard to tell them apart; they don’t actually come with different light-saber colors)

One historical version of this was Manicheanism

**Agnosticism:** it’s awfully hard to say whether there’s a god or what god might be; anybody could be right

**Versions:**

a) we can’t know whether there is a god for x and y reasons (for example, because human talk about God inherently makes no sense)

b) we can’t know because I don’t want to be responsible for learning anything

c) we might be able to know; I don’t right now, but I’m trying to find out

d) we might be able to know; I don’t right now, and I’m not likely to spend any time searching

**Nietzscheanism:** seriously, people, it’s been almost two millennia since anyone proclaimed a really new God. The old ones have been reduced to idols. If we’re really free, let’s make up some new ones!

\*Serious note: what one thinks about proselytizing (trying to convert other people) follows from a) what one believes about the divine, b) how much one cares about other people, and c) how much one cares about being right. The argument does not work the other way around (e.g., proselytizing makes me uncomfortable, so there must not be a god).