A Study on the Argument of God’s Existence of Duns Scotus

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I. Introduction

There have been two traditional streams in the arguments of God’s existence in the philosophy of religion: ontological argument and cosmological argument. Ontological argument infers existence of God from the concepts, orders of thought, and logical orders. This argument hypothesizes the independent ground (A Priori—something absolute like god) which is prior to experience. After it examines the conception and the inner logical consistence on that ground, it infers existence from them. This argument, however, is

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1) I. Kant used the words ‘ontological’ and ‘cosmological’ for the first time when he indicated the limitations of Anselmus’ & Aquinas’ arguments and tried to prepare a new method to argue God’s existence.
facing some critique that a priori argument lacks actuality and coherence in the argument itself, however, because it focuses on the analysis of the conceptions and presuppositions transcending the concrete reality. The ontological argument was put forward by Anselmus Cantaberiensis (1033–1109) and has been denounced and affirmed in various ways by Anselmus’ contemporary Gaunilon, R. Descartes (1596–1650), G.W. Leibnitz (1646–1716), I. Kant (1724–1804), B. Russel (1872–1970), K. Barth (1886–1968), and so on. In the twentieth century, philosopher of analysis N. Malcolm (1911–) raised again this argument strongly, and opened the way for the Fideism of L. Wittgenstein (1889–1951).  

On the other hand, cosmological argument deduces the absolute and necessary being from the routine world. Trying to find the purpose, the meaning, and the law of cause and effect out of the fact that this world exists, this argument proves that God exists as the cause of all things. However, the question whether cosmological argument without a priori hypothesis can be possible still remains unresolved. Cosmological argument that stresses the empirical aspects (A Posteriori) was systematized by T. Aquinas (1224–1274), was confirmed and was negated by Aquinas’ contemporary S. Brabantius (1235–1282), Leibnitz, Kant, etc. F. Copleston (1907–) and A. Kenny elaborated this form of argument in the twentieth century.  

From the two basic arguments above mentioned, various forms of argument have been developed. But, most of the argument forms


since Kant up to 1950s did not analyze the original texts; in detail, rather, they took the partial phrases from them, and made wrong and biased understandings on them.  

*New Essays in Philosophical Theology* which was coedited by A. Flew and A. Macintyre in 1955, however, serves as a momentum to correct such former attitudes of study.  

Since then, philosophers of religions, who pursue the objective and philosophical studies, prefer to consider much of the original procedure and insight of the arguments than to judge which arguments explain the God’s existence better and which arguments have more usefulness. In these contexts, many scholars discussed Anselmus' and Aquinas’ arguments on their own analysis of their original texts, which have been regarded as representatives for the ontological and cosmological arguments respectively. Anselmus’ argument has been criticized for its lack of consistence and actuality and its emphasis on the unreasonable logical leap which neglects the reality. Against Aquinas, it was argued that he had overvalued empirical sources, and disregarded a priori presupposition of the necessary being and the first being. In addition, Aquinas did not give the concrete explanation about his concept of God. I think, however, Anselmus’ discussion confirmed that philosophy of religion has no choice but to have a priori presupposition, and Aquinas’ argument indicated that the argument of God’s existence should be presented with connection to reality.

In this article, I take the recent methods in philosophy of religions which has been elaborated after Flew and Macintyre, and analyze both Anselmus' and Aquinas’ arguments. Then, I prove


through the case of J. D. Scotus’ argument, that if their proof forms are critiquely combined, the more consistent and inclusive proof forms (and acceptable to the modern scholars) on God’s existence can be made. Unfolding these arguments, I will see whether each argument can develop their arguments on the basis of logical objectivity, not on the basis of confessional positions.

J. D. Scotus, who belonged to the Anselmus’ philosophical lines and Franciscan tradition, tried to prove God’s existence in his major texts, *Opus Oxoniene*, and *Tractatus De Primo Principio*. Scotus Combined the predecessor’s argument forms and correcting his argument forms three times for eight years, and made out a systematic forms of explanation. Despite the analytical and delicate form of his argument, Scotus’ form of argument has been neglected. With Scotus’ canonization  in 1965, his thought, effort, and his writings began to be reevaluated newly. I think, Scotus’ argument deserves to be reevaluated and appreciated when we consider Scotus’ relatively strong activity between 1277  (interdictum on inculcating and discussion about Aquinas’ basic propositions which had introduced Averroism into the western medieval christendom*) and 1325 (Aquinas’ position and thought were reinstated).

Analyzing Scotus’ treatises, I try to inquire into following themes. I read out accurately Anselmus’ and Aquinas’ original texts. Because those texts have been understood fragmentarily and

7) Canonization is the formal religious ritual that chooses & proclaims a man who is worth being revered publicly as a saint, and put the man on the roll. When a man is canonized, all kinds of materials—documents of his life, myths, his writings, etc) concerning him are arranged & published. Therefore, canonization is important ritual to know the major thought of a man.

8) Grant explained the academic backgrounds(religions, thoughts, sciences, etc) of the 13th century around Paris. E. Grant, *Physical Science in the Middle* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1971), pp.41-63.

expeditiously up to now, such work is quite worth doing in interpretative aspects. And doing so, I show the contents and limitations of his arguments concretely. These will be the basis to start the study of Scotus. Secondly, I show Scotus got rid of inconsistencies and inadequacies shown in Anselmus’ and Aquinas’. Lastly, I will show that Scotus’ argument still has limitations. I believe, when we admit the limitations which the theory has, it makes us more modest academically and deal the problems more objectively.

The main sources of this thesis are as follows. At chapter 2, for Anselmus’ argument, I will use his main text *Proslogium*, and S. D. Deane’s, M. J. Charlesworht’s, Gregory Schufreider’s interpretations. For Aquinas’ argument, *Summa Theologiae*, and A. Kenny’s and M. T. Clark’s interpretations will be used. For Scotus’ arguments at chapter 3, I will use *Philosophical Writing* edited by A. Wolter (based on Scotus’ main text *Opus Oxonience* (Oxford Lectures), *Tractatus de Primo Principio*, and various interpretations of A. Wolter.

II. The Arguments of Anselmus and of Aquinas on God’s Existence

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the basic structures and contents of the Anselmus’ and Aquinas’ arguments, and to point out their significances and limitations.

1. Anselmus’ Ontological Argument

a) Analysis of the Argument

Modern philosophers of religions agreed that the main body of Anselmus’ ontological argument is chapter 2 and chapter 3 in *Proslogion* complements the contents of chapter 2. They have been
called the first argument and the second argument respectively.

Anselmus regarded the definition and the conception of God as an outline of chapter 2 in Proslogion, which was the framework of the ontological argument. In chapter 2, Anselmus mainly discussed the definition of God. Trying to rationally understand the definition of God, Anselmus defined God as “Aliquod quo maius nihil cogitari potest”.

In order to complement his essential argument, he examined the actuality of God which God has in “intellectu” and in “re”. He asserted that “Aliquod quo maius nihil cogitari potest” cannot exist only in human mind. If it exists only in mind, the greater thing cannot exist in reality. Such assertion is concerned about “esse” which God has basically. This argument can be developed as follows. The first premise is that “is that which exists in actuality bigger than that which exists in thinking?” The second premise is that “is that which exists both “in intellectu” and “in re” bigger than that which exists only in thinking?”. Anselmus' position is, of course, that that which exists both “in intellectu” and “in re” is bigger than that which exists only in thinking. But, I think, he may have thought what exists in thinking is bigger than what exists in actuality.

From the two great premises mentioned above, Anselmus induced one small premise that “what can be understood by that concept exists”. Anselmus regarded “esse” as a property that God

10) To know the crux of Anselmus’ argument is important. In Philosophy of Religion (pp.15–16), Hick deals the question of actuality more minutely than the definition of God. But, I think, we must focus on the conception of God Anselmus had in mind. In my opinion, we may use the question of actuality to complement the definition of God.
11) To Anselmus, here, “maius” means “greater” or “better”.
could have. Even though many philosophers after Descartes discussed seriously that "if 'esse' can be a property?", Anselmus did not deal with that problem in detail.

Influenced by the understanding of God in medieval Christian culture and by his theological presuppositions that God who exists actually should exist both in thinking and in reality, Anselmus accepted the small premise as natural one.¹⁴

Argument in chapter 3 follows a syllogism at chapter 2 in Prologion. Here, he added a new idea that God is necessary being¹⁵: "nec cogitari possit non esse". This conclusion can go further as follows. "If it is possible to think that 'nec cogitari possit non esse' cannot exist, 'nec cogitari possit non esse' is not the same thing, so it contradicts itself".¹⁶ This kind of explanation can confirm to the argument in chapter 2, and suggest that God is that which is impossible to think that God is nonexistent, and that God exists necessarily.¹⁷ Being a necessary being, God cannot have 'being' and 'non-being', 'perfection and non-perfection', and 'possibility and impossibility' simultaneously. Therefore, God as a necessary Being should be a Being that cannot be thought not to exist, and this existence necessarily has "Esse". This can be summed up in a syllogism: "God is a Being that cannot be thought not to exist. Such Being exists. A Being that can't be thought not to exist necessarily exists".¹⁸

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14) "...deus est aliqoud nihil maius cogitari possit......quid est...deus est et in intellectu et in re...".

15) Until 1960, chapter 2 & 3 have been accepted complementarily. But, N. Malcolm claimed that chapter 2 & 3 should be divided. Furthermore, Malcolm stated that the argument at chapter 3 was a true form of argument. N. Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments", The Philosophical Review, Vol. LXIX, No.1(Jan. 1960), pp.41–62.

16) "Quare si id quo maius nequit cogitari, potest cogitari non esse: id ipsum quo maius cogitari nequit, non est id quo maius cogitari nequit: quod convenire non potest".

17) N. Malcolm understood the definition on God of Anselmus as the conception "Logically possible, logically impossible" & he re-developed.

18) "...deus est quod non possit cogitari non esse...hoc(deus) est...quod non
b) Significances and Limitations

Anselmus’ argument shown in *Proslogion*, the first example of the ontological arguments, offers the fundamental stream and the skeleton of the ontological arguments. His medieval presupposition that the analysis and the induction of the conceptions vouch for actuality is an examplar of the ontological arguments.

This shows that any argument for God’s existence needs a priori presupposition and hypotheses. Anselmus basically believed presuppositions which had been accepted as a kind of faith at that age, that was, after man believed God, he could understand, and even the fool could not help admitting God’s existence.

Next, we should think of the meaning of that age. With other philosophers, Scotus shared the general belief that the absolute and necessary being should exist. Unlike the Fraciscan’ traditions which Scotus belonged to, however, he asserted that he should resolve those problems logically and rationally by the tool of ‘reason’.

At that time, reason was regarded as unsuitable for belief. Anselmus opened a new way by using ‘reason’. While those rational arguments were sometimes clumsy, Anselmus was a forerunner who used reason as a useful tool to develop a method of argument on God’s existence.

Notwithstanding his commitment, with the influx of Aristotles’ philosophy, Scotus faced severe criticism. First, the criticism on the definition and conception of God were raised. His theory on the definition of God couldn’t be used rationally with ease. In spite of his assertions on God, I think, this argument is still a confession that people use when they worship to their gods. And believers of other religions or non-Christians cannot accept his propositions of argument. For argument of chapters in *Proslogion*, the definition of God as what cannot exist cannot be thought” was not developed any longer.

possit cogitari non esse est.....”.

Secondly, the criticism falls on the transition from possibility to actuality from which the predicative ‘esse’ comes. This criticism was raised by Kant and Russel. By Kant, in the clause ‘God exists’, ‘exists’ is a predicative grammatically, but this cannot add and assure some additional ideas to the subject. This predicative supposes some answers for the subject and make the subject narrated and described. While Anselmus thought of existence as a necessary property that necessary God has, Kant and Russel thought that existence cannot make the subject perfect.

Next criticism is that it is not easy to assure some conceptions showing an actual example which is estranged from the mind. The difference between the nature understood by conception and the nature understood in our routine life is so great that we cannot support the definition of Anselmus. Though we can draw reality and definition by conception, we cannot make any example, and furthermore we can go further denying the definition of that subject. The criticism concerning the predicative ‘exist’ only reflect the basic stream of the medieval philosophy.

Lastly, Anselmus is criticized for his argument’s lack of actuality and concretion. Sometimes, his argument has been criticized for a lot of empty logic and worthless wordplay. It was revealed recently by the study of Deane and Charlesworth that those criticisms had come from the inaccurate knowledge about Anselmus’ argument.

2. Aquinas’ Cosmological Argument


a) Analysis of the Argument

The first argument is to find the first mover (Primum Mutum) from the moving (Motus). Everything in the world is in the process of moving and change. Everything in the process of moving and change is being changed by other things not by itself. This other thing, if itself is in the process of change, is changed by other thing, and the process continues. But without the first cause, no other secondary causes can be made, and infinite retroaction in the process of change is impossible. Thus the first cause which is not changed in every change should exist, and we call it God. It seeks a unmoved mover from the changes of things, and this tries to understand the change of things from the point of changing. Aquinas thought the first of his five forms of cosmological argument as most clear one.

The second argument is to find the first cause among changeable reality. Everything in the world is caused to exist. Everything which exists can have an efficient cause in itself or outside. Nothing can be an efficient cause of itself. But without the first efficient cause, secondary cause of the final cause could not exist, and the existing could not be explained. Furthermore, the process that pursues the efficient causes through other things could not be infinite, and people can call it God. Aquinas tries to understand change from the point of mover. He starts from the fact that things exist, and he tries to find a cause that cannot cause other change except itself.

The third argument which seeks the necessary being from the changeable contingency is the most representative argument. According to Aquinas, generation and extinguishment happens among the contingent beings. But everything cannot be contingent being, and the necessary being should be here. This necessary

being can be supposed to be made by other things or by itself. But the natural things cannot be made by themselves. Therefore, the necessary being that can be a cause of everything that exists, and that existence coincide with nature, and that cannot have any other cause except itself, should exist, and we can call it God. The third form of argument that seeks Aseity is discussed by most scholars today.  

b) Significances and Limitations

Aquinas' arguments offers the basic characteristics and frameworks for the cosmological argument of Thomists. First, Aquinas' argument is the empirical approaches based on reality. His approach starts from realistic character. It differs from Anselmus' approach. Aquinas' attitude contains the explanation of cosmos that is changed by following cause and effect with that order. Especially, Aquinas stressed the concrete and actual worlds, and brought forth 'esse, existence' which had been underestimated before. Existence was thought as 'the act of being of a particular essence'. In developing this theory, he used the power of reason, and tried to do rational analysis.

Moreover, Aquinas showed clearly the change of the worldview and cognizance of the thirteenth century medieval western Christendom, through his argument. The thirteenth century medieval society had been changed dramatically, and Aquinas showed this change through his debate.

But some questions have been raised against Aquinas' argument. The first is the question of an infinity of causes. To solve this problem, Aquinas used 'reductio ad absurditum'. If the first cause

27) Anselmus & Aquinas approached to God by using the method of natural theology. But, while Anselmus used this approach for analyzing the definition of God at the fundamental stages, Aquinas developed the rational & logical deduction skilfully through his philosophical argument. It is noticeable that Aquinas used the rational analysis in persuading God by relating with reality.
and the absolutely necessary being do not exist, mediate cause or existence cannot exist. The cause which made the world reality does not exist, and the contingent beings cannot exist. But existence exists in the world, and the theory mentioned above is unsuitable, because Aquinas did not approach the infinite reduction in the series of horizontal retroaction.

Aquinas did not mean an infinity in a series of horizontal lines in which father gave birth to son, and grandfather gave birth to father. He denied the infinity in a series of vertical lines in 'lines essentially ordered', not in the order of ontological dependence. In fact, Aquinas needed an ontological explanation. And this type of explanation has been discussed later by Thomists. But, a lot of counter-evidences have been raised against Thomists' on impossibility of an infinity of causes. Some critiques claimed that 'vertical retroaction' had no difference with 'horizontal retroaction', and that all things do not happen following these causes.

The second problem that Aquinas' confronts is about the ontological dependence on the transcendental cause. This is related with the question on the impossibility of infinity of causes. This means that we should presuppose the ontological proposition on the transcendental cause to presuppose the First Being and an absolutely necessary Being. Aquinas criticized Anselmus' argument as a speculation and empty argument that is not based upon actuality. But, dealing the first mover and the final cause, Aquinas developed his argument by pursuing the speculative and philosophical system of idea. In particular, the third form in Aquinas' cosmological arguments, the most representative form of cosmological arguments, which is based upon necessity and 'Aseity' that is passing over contingents and accidentals, cannot be an empirical and actual form of argument. His presupposing the

30) F. Copleston, "Comments on Thomas' Five Ways", p.51.
necessary beings such as planets, angels, and gods shows that Aquinas had roots in scholarcism. This shows that Aquinas still depends on a priori proposition consciously or unconsciously, even though he tried to construct a new cognizance system. The earlier and later Thomists could not deviate the fundamental framework of Aquinas. When considering these, I think if Aquinas accepted the basic principles of Anselmus' argument, the more persuasive and consistent form of argument could have been possible.

The third problem is that the concrete mentioning on the ultimate existence of God is inefficient. Unlike Anselmus and Scotus, Aquinas did not deal with the property or nature of God. He concluded that "we call God something that we deduced thisaway or thataway." This frame of argument has difficulty in having an inner consistency and comprehensive system of explanation. Furthermore, whether the God who was deduced that way is the same God as Christians' is still questionable.

Lastly, the question in what way Aquinas contributed in the history of cosmological arguments after Aristotle has been asked from the negative perspective. This critique is related with above-mentioned criticism. In fact, the basic skeleton of Aquinas' three arguments is found in physics and metaphysics of Aristotles. Thereafter, Ibn Sina(980-1037), Ibn Rushd(1126-1198), and Judaic philosopher Moses Maimonides(1135-1204) deepened this kind of argument. Therefore, many people insist that it is difficult to find the independent and extraordinary contribution of Aquinas. The fact that Aquinas' argument is regarded as the paragon of cosmological arguments could not have been possible without his position and his book's popularity in catholics.31

31) F. Copleston & A. Kenny agreed to this basically.
III. Analysis of Scotus' Treatise

Reading out accurately Anselmus' and Aquinas' original texts would be is precious work in its interpretative aspects, because they have been read fragmentarily and expediently by many scholars.

1. Central Structure

Scotus' argument starts from "Does the one exist which is actually infinite among beings", and ends with "in the realms of beings actually exists a being which has a triple primacy (de triplici primitate), and this being is infinite. Therefore the infinite being actually exists. We call this infinite being God".

First, I scheme the main structure to give a comprehensive understanding. And then I would analyze the main issues and arguments.


33) P. W., p.35, "utrum in entibus sit aliquid existens actu infinitum...". 'Infinitum' & 'infinite' are important for Scotus.

34) P. W., p.76, "aliquod ens tripliciter primum in entibus existit in actu et illud tripliciter primum est infinitum; ergo aliquod infinitum ens existit in actu...possibiliem haberl a nobis de Deo".

35) This analysis is based on Ordinatio which is called Oxford commentary on the sentences of Peter Lombard. Ordinatio shows the overall philosophy of Scotus. For my study, I took "De Esse Dei" that Wolter had edited. The complementary materials for "De Esse Dei" is A Treatise on God as First Principle (J. D. Scotus, trans. & ed. by Allan B. Wolter, Chicago: Fraciscan Herald Press, 1982, pp.42-71).
2. God's Accidental Properties

By infering the Infinite(God) from the empirical existences of creatures and humankinds, Scotus developed article I of “De Esse Dei” in which he dealt with the relative properties of God. He made the presupposed standards of the causality(cause) and the preeminence(eminence), and devided the causality into a thing which sought an efficient cause(efficient cause) and a thing which tried to find a final cause(final cause). Scotus tried to prove "which is simply first according to efficience, which is simply first in the order of ends, and which is simply first by reason of preeminence," and showed that these triple primacies belonged to one nature (una natura).

Scotus' article I is devided into as follows, a) a triple primacy exists, b) these three primacies are interrelated, c) these three primacies belong to one natura".

36) P. W., p.38.
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a) A triple primacy

Scotus tried to find three primacies. The processes of pursuing the primacy are similar with each other. He explained relatively minutely the process of pursuing of the primacy of the efficient cause.

The process that pursues the primacy of the efficient cause is divided into three stages. At the first stage, among beings, there are something which includes no imperfection and which simply exists first. That being which exists actually can be or cannot be the first. If that being is not the first, it can retroact further to find the first efficient cause through infinity of causes. But we can suppose the first efficient cause which is earlier than anything else and which has not anything but itself. And an infinite retroaction in finding the primacy of the first efficient cause is impossible. 39

To explain this impossibility of infinity in causes, Scotus introduced “causes essentially ordered (causae essentialiter ordinatae)” and “causes accidentally ordered (causae accidentaliter ordinatae)” 40. Here, causes essentially ordered differ from causes accidentally ordered in three respects. Firstly, in “causes essentially ordered”, the secondary cause depends on the first cause in the act of causation (in quantum causa), while in “causes accidentally ordered”, the secondary cause depends on the first to get its existence. 41

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37) One nature which belongs to the relative property is the infinite to which God pertains.

38) Even though Scotus divided his argument into three stages, when we admit the importance of “order accidental caused” & “order essential caused”, we can separate the part in which Scotus explained ‘impossibility of an infinity of causes’ independently. To divide Scotus’ argument into four stages seems to provide a better understanding, I think.

39) P.W., p.39, “...infinitas autem impossibilis est in ascendendo...”

40) P.W., p.40. Here, “order essentially caused” is the same as “causae per se”, and “order accidentally caused” means “causae per accidens”. For Scotus’ further explanation, see J.D. Sotus, A Treatise on God as First Principle, pp.2-39.

41) P.W., pp.30-41.
Secondly, we can think of the difference from the nature and order of efficient cause. In "causes essentially ordered", the higher cause is more perfect (perfection) than the lower one, but in "causes accidentally ordered", there is no difference in perfection between them. Because no cause depends on the cause which has the same by nature in actualizing the efficient cause. Thirdly, "causes essentially ordered" should be acted with every other causes simultaneously to get particular results. But, in "causes accidentally ordered", no cause depends upon other things for the act of the efficient cause, and it is different from "causes essentially ordered" because it provides successive cause only.

Based upon this understanding, Scotus induced three conclusions about impossibility of infinity in pursuing the efficient cause. According to Scotus, an infinity of "causes essentially ordered" is impossible. To show this, Scotus proved that the essential and first efficient cause should exist outside a series of causes. In this process, he developed out five arguments including the first proof in which he discussed the nature of cause. Secondly, it is impossible to find "causes accidentally ordered" without "causes essentially ordered" which is basis of "causes accidentally ordered". "Causes accidentally ordered" exist not simultaneously but successively, and that process of existence is impossible without infinity of some nature on which every part of "causes accidentally ordered" depends. "Causes essentially ordered" must have an end so that successive and infinite beings can exist. Thirdly, he induced the conclusion that infinity of causes is still impossible even though "causes essentially ordered" do not exist. Something that can be produced incessantly in "causes accidentally ordered" depends upon the cause which is outside itself. But if it does not have the efficient cause, itself can be a cause even in "causes accidentally ordered". Considering this process, Scotus concluded that infinity of causes which produces something cannot exist.

42) P. W., pp. 41-42.
At second stage, Scotus argued that what is simply first among beings which can make acts cannot be caused by itself. What is simply first without being caused can have neither efficient and final cause nor physical and formal cause. According to Scotus, the inner and essential cause can act only by outer cause. But, at last stage—the primacy—, it cannot suppose any outer cause except itself. Scotus thought that the outer cause is more essential and perfect than the inner cause, and that self-efficiencies and combinations of the inner cause could depend upon the outer cause. But no other outer cause can exist except the primacy, the first cause cannot have a cause which transcends itself.

At third stage, "what simply exists first actually, and the nature of the existence actually can make those laws of cause and effect possible". From this, we can think of two questions. One is whether the existence of the First Being is possible, and the other is whether such existence can exist. This question is related with the first and the second stages in explaining the first efficient cause. If something which is simply first and which cannot be caused to exist, its existence itself cannot get from others and should exist "per se". The fact that it gets the existence of the first efficient cause from other things except per se can contradict former two explantions. In fact, it is possible to exist for the thing which stands first in the order of causality. Secondly, Scotus asserted that such being exists actually. Scotus leaped from the possible being to an actual being which exists actually. If such a being cannot exist actually, it is impossible for such being to exist, because anything which can not exist cannot make any other things exist. And, to make anything which do not exist exist is

43) P. W., p.46. “primum effectivum est in actu existens, et aliqua natura vere existens actualiter sic est effectiva”.

44) Scotus’ system of thought that the phenomenal is the possible, and the possible existence reflects the medieval mentality. Especially, Scotus got influenced by St. Victor. A lot of disputation has been raised about whether we should see Scotus’ opinion as a priori or a posteriori.
self-contradiction. It is far more self-contradictive for the most perfect being and the First Being to lack "existence".

The system of explanation in the primacy of the efficient cause is used in explaining the primacy of the final cause and the primacy of the preeminence. Scotus' explanation is as follows. Firstly, an end(finitivum) is simply ultimate. Secondly, this ultimate end can be caused in no way. Thirdly, the being which can be a ultimate end actually exists, and this primacy pertains to some actually existing nature.

In explaining the primacy of preeminence, Scotus used the same method. Firstly, an eminent nature(natura eminence) is simply first in perfection. Second, the supreme nature(suprema natura) cannot be caused. Lastly, the supreme nature actually exists.

b) Interrelation of the three primacies.

Scotus showed that three primacies exists simply first, and proved that these three primacies were interrelated. He induced two conclusions. One is that the first efficient cause is the ultimate cause. To prove this, Scotus started from the proposition that all causes acted for the sake of an end, and ended in that the ultimate efficient cause acted for the sake of a ultimate end. When we try to find the fundamental and deep origin from which every cause comes, we can see the first efficient cause. On the contrary, when we try to discover the ultimate end, we can meet the first ultimate end. But ultimate efficient cause and the first ultimate end differ in direction, but they are similar with each other in nature. The first efficient cause does not act for the sake of anything else but per se, it becomes itself the final end. Therefore, the first efficient cause is the ultimate end and one Infinite(una infinitivum).

The second conclusion Scotus induced is that the first efficient cause is the first preeminence. Scotus started from the proposition that "the first efficient cause is not an univocal(univocum) cause with reference to the other efficient causes but rather an equivocal(aequivocum) cause. Therefore, such a cause is more
excellent and nobler than it is." So, it is natural consequence that the first efficient cause should be more noble and excellent than any other act or result. According to Scotus, the first efficient cause is the most excellent natura (eminentissimum natura).

c) Unity of the divine nature.

In this section, he developed the thought that three primacies belong to one nature. Scotus started from the proposition that "there is only one first efficient cause according to essence (esse quidditatem) and nature (natura), so the first efficient cause necessarily exists." The efficient cause which is first among the three primacies of itself necessarily exists. And it does not have any other cause but itself.

Scotus induced some conclusions. Firstly, two necessary natures cannot exist simultaneously. Secondly, first efficient causes which differ from each cannot exist in one universe. Lastly, two ultimate ends cannot exist at the same time. From such arguments, Scotus asserted that the first efficient cause, the first final cause, and the first preeminence are not different, but they belong to the one and the same nature.

3. God’s Absolute Properties

Scotus tried to prove that "the triple primacy is infinite, and the Infinite which means God exists." It is important to caution that, unlike article I that starts from the concrete and empirical world and try to seek the triple primacy, article II emphasized a priori part which analyzes the conception and idea of the Infinite.

45) P. W., p. 49. "...quia primum efficiens non est univocum respectu aliarum naturum effectuaram, sed aequipucum. Ergo eminentius et nobilius eis".
46) "Esse Quidditativum" means "Whatness". This is induced from 'actual reality' and the object of our experience. And this is intelligible entity that reveals the nature of object and characteristics of a universal concept based upon reality. But, this doesn’t present the concrete things.
47) P. W., p. 52.
Scotus' argument on the absolute properties of God can be understood by reviewing the logical implication about the relative properties of God which seemed to have no reference in the world and belong to the property of the Infinite. Above all, doing a preliminary inquiry on the intelligence (intelligens) and will (volence) which are the basis for the Infinite (Ens infinitivum), Scotus argued four absolute properties of the Infinite.

a) Intellectual and will

Scotus suggested four preliminary propositions which are related to intellectual and will.49 The first efficient cause which understand infinite individual things and natures has intellectual and will. From the arguments, Scotus showed that the first efficient cause itself is a cause of all things and exists earlier than anything else. Every individual being aims at one end which they depend on and love.50 In reverse, the First Being has the knowledge of every individual being. Scotus devided this process into three steps. First, every natural agent (agens naturale) acts for an end, and this agent depends upon a certain being, and it knows its intention and it is guided by that being.

Secondly, the first efficient cause acts for the sake of an end. Lastly, some results can be caused by chance.51 Based upon the proposition that all beings aim at a ultimate end, Scotus claimed the earliest and most independent agent which is outside the physical world has knowledge to understand comprehensively individual beings with intelligence and will.

The second preliminary is that the self-knowledge and self-will that is not accidental in the nature of First Being would coincide with the nature of First Being. According to Scotus, the law of cause and effect in ultimate end precedes all things, and the

48) The change like this can be a ground that Scotus combined Anselmus'.
49) P. W., pp.52–62.
50) P. W., p.53.
51) P. W., p.53.
ultimate end moves the first efficient cause by making it loved.

The third preliminary proposition is that knowledge and will of other things in First Being that precedes itself are the same as the nature of First Being. Shown through the analysis on the conception of the first efficient cause, it is natural that the first efficient cause should have knowledge and will of things that would be. Furthermore, this is the nature of the first efficient cause. This knowledge is the essential one that the Infinite would have of the accidental relationship of intellect and will. This knowledge have multi-facets and multi-meaningfulness, and this multi-facets and multi-meaningfulness should be infinite. Therefore, knowledge and will of the first efficient cause are essential and infinite.

The last preliminary proposition is that First Being precedes the nature of individual things in nature and has the differential and essential knowledge of all intelligible things. It is clear that the most preeminent and the first efficient cause has this kind of knowledge. And this can be understood easily through the explanation of Scotus.

Four preliminary propositions mentioned above are continued from article 1 and the basis for the article 2.

b) Proof of First Being’s Infinity

Scotus regarded the Infinite (ens infinitum) as the most prominent idea that men can have of God, and he thinks that idea can best express God’s existence. According to Scotus, the Infinite rise above all limited beings in that it transcends all modes, limitations, and properties. Furthermore, the Infinite is not only a simple property that God can has, it reveals the inner modes of God. Scotus proved the infinite of First Being by using the infinite power, the infinite knowledge, the infinite goodness, and the infinite perfection. The first two were done by the conception of the efficient cause, the third by the conception of end, and the fourth by the conception of preeminence.51
The first way that proves the infinite of First Being by using the conception of the efficient cause shows that a triple primacy, becomes the first efficient cause over all other beings and has the infinite power (potentiam infinitam). To explain this, Scotus adopted the first unmoved-mover of Aristotle. The unmoved-mover of Aristotle is the cause of the constantly moving world. This conception of Aristotle was not suitable for the meaning of creation and the revelation in Christianity which Scotus has. But Scotus did not destroy that conception, rather tried to reconstruct metaphysically. 50 Thinking that Aristotle overemphasized the process and duration of endless movements, Scotus stressed the character and the infinite power as the moving-mover that the first efficient cause has. To bring about the endless movements and continuity of causes, the first efficient cause should have the infinite power, and this power must exist by itself and be absolutely independent. To explain better the infinite power, Scotus presupposed one being (in case of Scotus, it means the Infinite) that has the most perfection as high stage as possible in both inner infinity (infinitas intensiva) and outer infinity (infinitas extensiva). And he understood that this being had the power to bring about the endless results at one time. According to Scotus, the first efficient cause that has this power is infinite. At the same time, this infinite power exists by itself and makes the efficient cause which is independent in the law of cause and effect possible.

The second way that proves the infinite of First Being by using the conception of the efficient cause claims that a First Being has the infinite intellect (intelligens infinitam) over all individual results and agents. The number of results and agents that the first efficient cause should know is countless. At the same time, the earlier being in the cause and effect should have broader and deeper knowledge over all others. Because the number which is

50) P. W., pp.62-75.
53) F. Copleston, 「중세철학사」, pp.653-656.
brought about is endless, the first efficient cause that should icover
is endless. Therefore, "we can say safely that First Being as the
efficient cause that should know all results of others except itself is
infinite." 54

The third way that proves the infinity of First Being by using
the conception of the end reveals that First Being is the infinite
goodness (bonum infinitam). This comes from the desire that "our
will aims at infinite goodness which is the ultimate end". Our will
that reveals well such end aims at the greater, the more perfect
thing that transcends all limited things. And it has a natural
inclination to love the ultimate and infinite goodness. But this
infinite goodness that the will intend can be possible, as we saw in
case of the first efficient cause, and the infinite goodness can
satisfy natural enthusiasm of men perfectly. This logic can be
adopted to the "intellect" which aims at the infinite goodness.

The last way that proves the infinite of First Being by using the
conception of preeminence shows that First Being is infinite. This
can be done by analyzing the ontological and logical implications
which the most perfect being has. As we have seen, First Being
wanted to be eminent in all areas, but contingent being cannot be
so. Therefore, the preeminence must be infinite. The conception of
infinite does not contradict with the conception of existence. And
this conception of infinite which means the central property of God
can be possible, if it contradicts in itself. Therefore, that possible
preeminence can exist. Here, if the Infinite can be possible, it is
based upon the proposition that it is greater than any intelligible
contingent beings. The point that Scotus are concerned about
continuously is the compatibility of 'infinite' and 'existence'. The
conception of 'existence' is the simplest conception that cannot be
explained better, and 'infinite' can be comprehended through the
contingent. If incompatibility of 'existence' and 'infinite' cannot be
proved, this cannot include the contradiction. And as it does not

54) P. W., pp.68-70.
include contradiction, 'infinite' can have 'existence'. And the object of his research is that existence and the intellect that Scotus based for the infinity of God cannot show any contradiction and they depend upon the Infinite as the most perfect object which satisfies the enthusiasm of the intellect. Considering these, Scotus reviewed Anselmus' ontological argument persuasively that "God's existence as a being which has no contradiction".

IV. Possibility of Critical Combination in Scotus' Argument

1. Anselmus' Argument and Scotus' Argument

Though the medieval society had entered the establishment-period of scholasticism, which stressed the experience of the mankind and rational thinking, Scotus was still under the influence of Anselmus. The fact that Scotus belonged to the Franciscan order which includes Anselmus and Bonaventura shows well the corelation of Scotus and Anselmus. While Scotus had been influenced by T. Aquinas and Aristotle, he always had the hope that he would develop Anselmus' argument fully and inclusively. With such hope, Scotus studied the Proslogion very positively and made Anslemus' argument regain legitimacy, even at the time when anything which was grounded on reality seemed to be worthless at all. Scotus' argument on God in his masterpieces Opus Oxoniense and De Primo Principio has been called as the thirteenth century edition of Proslogion.

56) B. M. Bonanse, Man & his approach to God in John Duns Scotus, p.173.
Instead of criticizing systematically and developing anti-argument about Anselmus’ ontological argument, Scotus respected Anselmus’ argument, and changed some basic ideas of Anselmus’ and accepted them. We could confirm that by two direct mentions which were found in Scotus’ article. First, for the question whether it is immediately self-evident to us that the infinite exists, Scotus presented an affirmative statement that ‘such being exists’ by using the logic of “Pro and Contra”. Secondly, Scotus checked Anselmus’ when he dealt the fourth infinite perfection while discussing “the infinite of the first being”.

Sharing mental similarity and consciousness with Anselmus, Scotus accepted his basic definitions and frameworks. In fact, he received it, but changed it a little. Agreeing to the definition of God “Alicuod quo maius nihil cogitari potest”, Scotus regarded it as similar with his definition- “Ens Infinitivum”. Scotus newly defined God as the being that has no contradiction in itself. And he asserted that if it is possible to be understood without contradiction, God is the being that the greater being cannot be thought without contradiction.

Understanding God as the “Infinite”, Scotus focuses on the predicative ‘is infinite’ that the being what can be thought without contradiction can have. This position differs from Anselmus’. From these explanations, Scotus shared the basic starting point with Anselmus, but they deviated in developing the cognizance. So, Scotus regarded the definition of the subject-God- as a priori, and he endowed a limit by saying that it can be possible when objects are the bodies of spirituals such as angels or gods. The definition

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59) Medieval scholars used this method to assure their arguments. They inquired of the question that was intended to get an affirmative answer, and rasied a lot of negative opinions. And then, answering those questions for the negative opinions, they gave answers to the questions.
60) In fact, this is not so clear to Scotus. The burden Scotus felt about Anselmus’ argument may prevent Scotus from developing his argument well.
of God can be proved and broadened by analyzing and understanding of the predicative—'is infinite'.

The predicative 'is infinite' can be cognized by the finite world of our routine, but this cognition is not absurd, and can be known gradually by human reason. And he claimed that this should be understood as something transcending the existence and other limitations, not by the explanation which is based upon the clear proposition and actuality. At an article 1 of "De Esse Dei", he discussed God that can be a ground for the predicative and cannot have contradiction.

Next, we can compare the procedure from possibility to exitence. Anselmus tried to resolve the question of logical coherence by the necessary definition of God. Philosophers of religions, in general, J. Hick, in particular, thought that "God is necessary being" at chapter 3 in Prologion which covers logical lack which had been revealed at chapter 2 in Prologion. From these situations, Scotus induced the system of explanation that "it is so obvious to us that God can be thought without contradiction, and that kind of God cannot exist only in possibility. For it contradicts the presupposition that he set up himself. Therefore, God who can be thought without contradiction should exist in possibility and in reality."

2. Aquinas' Argument and Scotus' Argument

We have some difficulties in comparing Aquinas' with Scotus'. First, their mutual relationship and influence has scarcely been studied. Though that age was more crucial than any other period in medieval age, detailed research of their communication and interdependence has not been done. Secondly, even if we admit that Aquinas has influenced on Scotus' argument, it is still difficult to compare their arguments when we think their background. This

61) P. W., p. 73.
difficulty arises from the fact Aquinas did not develop his explanation to make a inclusive and independent form of argument on God’s existence. Aquinas did not want to argue what every philosopher and theologian could agree. Scotus had different attitude, he studied for eight years to make a fine and systematic form of argument. Considering their arguments, we can clearly compare those arguments.

Firstly, both of them emphasized the empirical facts, and they had similar forms of argument which in transmitting from effect to cause, from cause to the first being and absolute cause. Article 1 of Scotus’ argument especially, follows in itself Aquinas’ cosmological pattern. These discussions are the empirical forms of arguments that try to find cause in phenomena, to find an absolute or ultimate cause as the system of explanation on existence, nature and realm.

Secondly, we can find their similarity at two basic priciples—sufficient reason and intelligibility of being— in the process of pursuing of the first principle. They shared this metaphysical proposition, sufficient reason and intelligibility of being. Sufficient reason is that anything outside the first principle cannot be a cause for itself, and intelligibility of being is that the infinity of causes is impossible. And they even neither doubted nor denied the ontological clarity of the first being and God’s existence.60

Thirdly, we can find similarity in the process of finding out a cause from causes.60 Both of them tried to interpret ‘impossibility of the infinite retroaction of causes’ as “the pursuit of the cause in a series of vertical lines”. In particular, Scotus developed and discussed this problem intensively by developing “order accidentally caused” and “order absolutely caused”.

In spite of these similarities, Scotus tried to overcome the limits

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62) It is difficult to clarify this problem. Whether we should regard this as an ontological proposition or as a particular metaphysics of Middle Ages is the problem to be solved.

of Aquinas’ argument. We can find their differences in two aspects: external structure and inner structure.

First, while Aquinas’ three separated arguments have their own independent purposes, Scotus’ three methods of the first part are like three blades of one propella that second and third propellas gyrating and without having superiority or inferiority, take places of the first propella’s position.⁶⁴ Scotus’ process of research on the first cause at his first part argument associates with the first three cosmological arguments of Aquinas. And his pursuit of the first cause of end pertains to the fifth argument, teleological argument, and the pursuit of preeminence is based on Aquinas’ fourth argument, perfection.⁶⁵

More crucial difference can be found at the point that Scotus is passing over from the first part, which deals with the Aquinas’ cosmological form of argument, to the second part, which uses analysis and definitions.

Thirdly, those questions how he can understand the second part of Scotus’ argument and how Scotus can evaluate the “Ratio Anselmi” can be raised. Before the study of Wolter, the second part of “De Esse Dei” was regarded as only philosophical speculations or discussions, and ignored. It was not accepted as a crucial point of Scotus’ argument, and Scotus’ claim that God’s existence can be completed through the analysis of his name and property. But I believe that the second of Scotus’ argument should not be ignored and if we reexamine the second part and reconstruct it, we can get a new perspective of the God’s existence.

Developing the first being’s excellence as the fourth method to prove the first being’s infinite, Scotus examined Anselmus’ argument. Taking advantage of Anselmus’ definition of God for his own proof of the Infinite, Scotus evaluated Anselmus’ argument as the only persuasive argument. But if we consider Scotus’ argument

⁶⁵ B. M. Bonansea, Man & his approach to God in J. D. Scotus, p.167.
as a whole. I think, it is not sufficient to underestimate Anselmus' ontological discussions and its influences as only 'persuasive'. As I have shown that the second part of "De Esse Dei" is a necessary part for Scotus' argument, Anselmus' influences which is footsteps of the second part is fundamental and consistent. Considering those facts, I would like to propose the main theory that Scotus' argument dealt with the Aquinas' cosmological argument and accepted partly Anselmus' proof should be changed into the theory that he developed newly Anselmus' arguments and then critically combined it with Aquinas' theory and mentality.

Next, even though Aquinas and Scotus agreed to use the sufficient reason and the principle of intelligibility in the pursuit of the first principle, they showed different attitudes to the introduction and conclusion. Aquinas began his argument with an empirical facts and ended in facts. But, Scotus started from the possibility, proceed to possibility of the First Being, and ended in the actuality of the being. Drawing some principles from the facts and experiences, Scotus tried to analyze the transition from possibility to actuality through his particular scientific dialect of possibility and actuality. And this attitude appears well at the article 2.

The difference in the introduction and conclusion applying the law of cause and effect stems from their philosophical and religious backgrounds concerning essence and existence. So, it is unreasonable to judge whether Scotus is an essentialist or an existentialist at the time when this standard could not be used. Nevertheless, Aquinas understood "existence" as "an act of existing" and "an essential act of existing of the particular nature". And Scotus emphasized "essential content" more than "an act of existing", and he defined the pursuit of the existence as the pursuit of "Whatness(Esse Quidditativum)".65

65. Transition from possibility to actuality was new then to Aristotelian. Modern philosophers of religion claimed that this rather belongs to the ontological proposition of Anselmus.
3. Possibility of Critical Combination in Scotus' Argument

Scotus' argument of God's existence starts from two presuppositions that the reasonable argument should have both theoretical system of explanation and empirical system of explanation. Therefore, he tried to develop the best form of argument that human reason can establish on the basis of experience in life. In doing so, instead of receiving Anselmus' and Aquinas' arguments uncritically, Scotus pointed out some limitations they have, combined critically their arguments, and tried to make most systematic and inclusive form of argument.

To confront against the critiques that Anselmus' argument is unrealistic and Anselmus overlooked the predicative 'exist', Scotus accepted the basic frame of Aquinas' and developed his argument in the article I. So, Scotus pursued a triple primacy with which we can deduce from our daily experience. But, doing so, Scotus did not accepted Aquinas' three individual cosmological forms of arguments. Adopting the fundamentam intention of Aquinas, Scotus presented a particular form of argument that includes the five cosmological forms of arguments which Aquinas discussed in the introduction of *Summa Theologiae*. And in article 1, Scotus emphasized the predicative 'exist' which Anselmus overlooked. Scotus changed a little Anselmus' definition of God into "the Infinite that has no contradiction in itself". This new definition of God is the bases of article 2. In particular, based upon the intellect and will that were the fundamental presuppositions at Middle Ages, Scotus discussed four properties the Infinite has.

Dealing with an infinity of causes at article 1, Scotus agreed with Aquinas in that the question of the infinity of causes is basically the question on a series of horizontal lines, not on as series of vertical lines. But going further and using "order essentially caused" and "order accidentally caused", Scotus tried to

67) See footnote No. 53.
solve the question of the infinity of causes on the basis of "order essentially caused". Discussing the impossibility of the infinity of causes and presupposition of the necessary being in article 1, Scotus did not argue the ontological dependence on the transcendental cause and existence. But applying the law of cause and effect into article 1, Scotus accepted naturally Anselmus' epistemological presupposition on the transition from the possibility to existence.

Argument in article 2 shows clearly how deeply Scotus had been influenced by Anselmus'. His definition of God, explanation of four preliminary propositions, and arguments of intellect and will reveals Anselmus' influence definitely. This discussions in article 2 consist of the main character of the ontological form of argument. Even though Scotus mentions Anselmus' influence very weakly and shortly at the last part of his argument as 'only persuasive', actually he got strongly influenced by it, I think.

V. Conclusion

In the preceding discussion, I showed that though Scotus tried to get a better consistence and coherence, his argument still has some limitations. The specialists of Scotus including Wolter tried to point out only merits and positive aspects of Scotus' argument, but they ignored some weak points of his argument. In this context, the following critiques of mine are worth mentioning.

Firstly, we can raise some critiques about the strucure of Scotus' argument. Scotus divided his argument into two parts. After he combined both of them, Scotus thought the combined argument was the most systematic and inclusive argument. He asserted that two part could not be considered separately. But, just as Aquinas' three arguments are independent and separated arguments, Scotus' argument can be regarded as independent one. Scotus' first part

68) P. W., pp.73-74.
can be thought as a paragon of the cosmological form of arguments, and his second part can be a model of the ontological form of arguments.

Secondly, the process of transition from possibility to existence in the first part of Scotus’ argument, where he discussed the law of cause and effect, raised a lot of questions. Scotus explained persuasively ‘impossibility of infinite retroaction’ which was a subject of criticism to Aquinas by using “order accidentally caused” and “order essentially caused”, both of which were based upon the conception of “Esse Quidditativum”. But, his uncritical approval of the presupposition that what can be thought in thought can exist in reality— that is, transition from possibility to existence—is still faced with criticism. Furthermore, it is unclear whether these facts shown in article 1 was to emphasize the metaphysical presuppositions, or whether Scotus who was situated in the turning point from the medieval scholasticism to the modern system of thought represents the medieval philosophical facets.

Thirdly, the following questions should be answered: how we can understand article II in Scotus’ argument and how Scotus evaluated “Ratio Anselmi”. Before Wolter studied Scotus’ articles on a full scale, many philosophers of religions regarded the second part of “De Esse Dei” as only philosophical speculations and did not accept as an essential part. The second part of his argument was ignored frequently also by the Scotus’ attitude that God’s existence should be deduced from the actual experiences and immediate relationships. But, I think that the second part is the essential part of Scotus’ argument on God’s existence, so that it should not be ignored. Moreover I would like to argue that it will provide a new perspective if we review the second part of “De Esse Dei” and redevelope it anew.

Scotus examined Anselmus’ argument which he argued the excellence of the First Being as the fourth method to prove the Infinite of the First Being. He used Anselmus’ idea of God in his argument of the Infinite, and then he evaluated Anselmus’
argument as "sic suadetur". If we consider the whole range of Scotus' argument, however, I think, it is unreasonable to underestimate the influence of the ontological debates and fundamental mentality of Anselmus. I insist that Anselmus' influences, which provide the ground-steps for the second part, were fundamental and consistent because the second part of the Scotus' article was essential for the argument of God's existence. We should not underestimate Anselmus' influence on Scotus. From these considerations, I insist that the traditional view that Scotus took Aquinas' cosmological form of argument as a main body and accepted Anselmus' ontological form of argument as a complementary argument should be changed into the theory that Scotus unfolded Anselmus' major argument anew and combined it with Aquinas' argument critically.

Lastly, considering the philosophical turning points passing over from Aquinas to William of Ockham, we can raise some questions. Aquinas combined and reconciled reason and revelation, which were the great themes of the medieval philosophy. But, this combination started to break with the influx of nominalism. Scotus' definition of God (God as the Infinite, a triple property) revealed the influence of nominalism. Considering that philosophical position at that time, I conclude, Scotus' definition of God, of course, lacks actuality.