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### **When Thomists Abandon Thomas**

I am thankful to John Lyon for reading my book *Aquinas and Evolution* with attention and providing interesting feedback (review, June). I hasten to clarify some issues, especially for those who haven't had a chance to read the book itself.

First, we need to keep in mind who says what in this debate. My main claim is that Aquinas's philosophy/theology is incompatible with — in fact, it flatly excludes — the Darwinian idea of species having emerged by a continuous natural process of transformation. I even say it doesn't matter, in light of Aquinas, whether the process is guided by an intellect or entirely blind, as most Darwinists believe. It does not follow, however, that one needs to abandon a modern scientific theory for Aquinas. My point is that one cannot hold on to both simultaneously.

Although I think Aquinas was indeed closer to the truth, I can imagine (and understand) a philosopher or scientist abandoning Aquinas's metaphysics for the sake of Darwinian metaphysics. I disagree, though, with those Thomists who twist and stretch the teachings of Thomas in all directions in order to prove an alleged compatibility that is simply not there.

Second, if I say that the timeline of creative events is nonessential for Aquinas's concept of the origin of species, I do not mean that it is completely irrelevant for him, let alone that it is irrelevant in light of our current knowledge. As I show in my book, Aquinas leaned on Augustine's concept of onetime creation with all species appearing simultaneously, but this has been excluded by modern science. We know that species appeared over eons of time. So I don't think the timeline is irrelevant for a modern scholar, should he work toward some modern concept of the origin of species. (By the way, I thoroughly explain in my book what I mean by species, and that is something different from biological species as understood by modern biology.)

Third, Aquinas never uses the word intervention when speaking about the creative activity of God. As I explain in my book, intervention applies to the change of the regular (natural) course of events in the universe, but creation begins those events. Creation, therefore, is not an intervention. This confusion may explain why so many scholars today, not just atheists but even Christians, feel like a cat that is about to plunge into water whenever they think of special creation.

The bottom line is that Thomists should either admit that they abandon Thomas when they believe in the evolutionary origin of species, or they need to rethink biological evolutionary theories. A lot of good science has been done recently by proponents of intelligent design. This makes room for remaining at peace with both Aquinas and modern science.

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