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Where do Substantial Forms Come From? A Comment on the Theistic Evolution of Mariusz Tabaczek: Response 2

An Explanation

Recently, Mariusz Tabaczek published *Theistic Evolution: A Contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic Perspective*¹—a book which the Author seemed to consider a definitive work on the topic. However, a few months later, he published a paper to present “several minor yet important further clarifications, developments, and answers.”² Even though my adversary’s views keep evolving, I believe I should write a re-

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¹ Mariusz Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution: A Contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

² Even though in the main text Tabaczek speaks of “minor clarifications,” in the footnote he says that his critics “helped [him] clarify some of the fundamental [sic!] assertions [of the book].” Thus, within the lines of evolutionism, it looks like Tabaczek’s views continually evolve so that any serious engagement with his argument seems impossible. See: Mariusz Tabaczek, “A Contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic Perspective on the Evolutionary View of Reality and Theistic Evolution,” *Religions*, 15, no. 5 (2024): 524.



sponse to my confrere in order not to leave an impression of an implicit acceptance of his position and also to help some other scholars realize how non-Thomistic his writing actually is. In this paper, I will resume our conversation where it stopped, that is, at his response to my critique published in Polish in 2020 and then in English in 2024.³ I will comment on the book *Theistic Evolution* in other papers.

The Limits of Science

In his response to my critique, Tabaczek begins by saying that he will concentrate on the theological and philosophical aspects of my paper rather than the scientific ones. In a footnote, he adds that “the only conclusion that may be drawn from [my, Chaberek’s] argumentation is that, although there is a broad consensus as to the theory of evolution among scientists, one can indeed come across scholars who have some objections to it.” (p. 256)⁴ Tabaczek says that he does not attempt to defend the theory of evolution on the grounds of the natural sciences.

I find this attitude quite problematic in the context of our debate, because the only justification to even start his project of the alleged reconciliation of Aristotelian-Thomistic (hereafter A-T) metaphysics

³ Tabaczek’s initial text to which I responded was an “Afterward” to the Polish edition of the book *Thomistic Evolution* (ed. P.G.N. Austriaco). My response was published in English as: Michael Chaberek, “Where Do Substantial Forms Come From? – A Critique of the Theistic Evolution of Mariusz Tabaczek,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 22, no. 1 (2024): 239–54. Tabaczek’s response was published as: Mariusz Tabaczek, “Evolution and Creation—A Response to Michael Chaberek’s Critique of Theistic Evolution,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 22, no. 1 (2024): 255–84.

⁴ Hereafter, for clarity and ease in following the thought process, page numbers in parentheses refer to Tabaczek’s response to my critique: Mariusz Tabaczek, “Evolution and Creation”: 255–84. The paper follows CMOS formatting guidelines in all other respects.

with biological evolution would come from the fact that evolution (understood as biological macroevolution) would have been at least scientifically certain if not proven beyond any doubt.⁵ Although nothing like that has ever been achieved, there are many scientists and no fewer theologians who believe in evolution as a “scientific truth.” In order to understand why it is so, we need to clarify at least two issues:

1. There are different levels of knowledge⁶ which—according to Christian tradition—cannot contradict each other, but still they can bring us to more or less advanced conclusions. A classic example is the temporal beginning of the universe—even though current data strongly support the temporal beginning of the universe, it cannot be proven by science or philosophy. Yet, it can be determined by theology which has greater explanatory power thanks to divine revelation. In this case, theology gives us more knowledge than science and philosophy combined. Analogously, when it comes to the origin of species—assuming that species were created—science cannot give us a positive explanation for how species emerged, because science cannot research the supernatural works of God in the natural order (the same applies to miracles and such). Hence, theistic evolutionists first need to reject the doctrine of the supernatural formation of the universe (*opus formationis*) to believe that science can explain the origin of species. And this is the “original sin” of theistic evolutionists which takes them in the wrong direction at the very outset of their tinkering with Christian doctrines to make them compatible with evolutionism.

⁵ A proven theory may be considered a fact. This takes place when it can be demonstrated “in vivo” or “in vitro.” But all experiments designed to show “evolution” demonstrate only small changes within species (microevolution) while they do not show emergence of completely new forms of life (macroevolution).

⁶ I provide a comment on the division of knowledge into the three basic levels and how they relate to each other in Michal Chaberek, *Knowledge and Evolution: How Theology, Philosophy and Science Converge in the Questions of Origins* (Resource Publications, 2021), 1–57.

2. Tabaczek constantly uses the term “the theory of evolution” as if nothing was wanting in the definition. What does it mean that “there is a broad consensus as to the theory of evolution among scientists”? To put some order in such statements, we need to distinguish two very different things:

(a) One thing is the very general and actually philosophical rather than scientific idea of “universal common descent (or ancestry)” which is often depicted as a “tree of life” —probably the most prominent “icon of evolution.”⁷ By this imagery, evolutionists (whether biologists, philosophers or theologians) want to say that all organisms that live or ever lived on earth are connected through the line of biological generation in a literal sense (i.e., had we traced back the genealogy of any plant, animal or human, we would ultimately get to the one organism which is the LUCA—Last Universal Common Ancestor). Now, it must be stressed that this imagery is commonly held by the vast majority of biologists, but this is not a scientific claim. There is not now, nor has there ever been, nor can there ever be scientific evidence for such a scenario. The reason is that we simply cannot move back in time and see how species emerged. Therefore, “universal common ancestry” cannot be established as a fact compared to the sphericity of the Earth or the movement of the Earth in space. These latter things can be called “facts,” because they can be directly observed in real time. But the emergence of species cannot, and for this reason it can never gain the status of a “fact” in the same sense.

Now, many scientists claim universal common ancestry to be a fact, but this is an unfounded pretense which is mostly carried out to secure this philosophical idea against any serious scientific scrutiny. So,

⁷ I refer here to the concept coined by biologist Jonathan Wells. By “icons of evolution,” Wells means the popular depictions of different more or less distorted biological realities that supposedly “prove” or explain evolution. See: Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (Regnery Publishing, 2000).

Tabaczek could possibly quote many scientists of high stature who believe in the tree of life and who take it as a proven fact, but this does not make it a proven fact. Any critically thinking person should be able to distinguish between a scientific fact and a philosophical postulate. At the very least, a Christian does not need to hold on to scientists' beliefs just because these are beliefs of otherwise successful scientists in their narrow and highly specified fields of science.

(b) Another thing is the “mechanism” of evolution, that is, a natural process (a set of biological laws and phenomena) which supposedly stands for the efficient cause of the emergence of new species (entirely new forms of life).⁸ After Darwin and especially since the 1940s, the neo-Darwinian mechanism of random genetic mutations and natural selection was considered a sufficient explanation for biological macroevolution. However, for the last few decades, this “explanation” for the process of evolution has been abandoned by leading biologists.⁹

⁸ Here we need to note that by “species” we do not mean “biological species” or any variation within taxonomical categories of genus or family. The relevant understanding of species in the debate over evolution is its philosophical meaning as a new kind or a new form of life, such as we see between cats and dogs, horses and turtles, etc. (a level going beyond taxonomic family).

⁹ A breakthrough moment was a closed meeting of the leading biologists in Altenberg, Austria in 2008. In the proceedings published two years later, some foundational principles of neo-Darwinism are challenged (*Evolution: The Extended Synthesis*, edited by M. Pigliucci, G. Müller. MIT Press, 2010). Next, in 2016 there was another high-profile conference organized by the Royal Society in London. World leading experts in evolutionary biology shared their doubts and questions, and proposed alternatives to the neo-Darwinian synthesis. A well-informed article on the event can be found at “Evolution News” website: “Why the Royal Society Meeting Mattered, in a Nutshell,” *Evolution News*, accessed April 9, 2024, https://evolutionnews.org/2016/12/why_the_royal_s/. Even Tabaczek in *Theistic Evolution* (p. 7) recognizes the failure of neo-Darwinism, but this does not deter him from believing in the “broad consensus,” because there are (allegedly) many other explanations for evolution. As Michael Behe fairly comments—there are so many post-Darwinian explanations that evolutionists cannot even list them.

The scientific community is greatly divided on this point, and Tabaczek's belief in the "broad consensus" can only be explained by either ignorance or an ideological bias against accepting reality.

So, where does science stand? The "broad consensus" refers to the imagery of the "tree of life," which—as I said—not only has not been proven but cannot be proven in principle (by the very nature of the issue). But when it comes to things that are able to be proven in principle, such as the mechanism of evolution, there is a great division and disagreement among scientists. Many of them (not just proponents of Intelligent Design, but evolutionists such as Denis Noble and James Shapiro) have been showing the inability of the neo-Darwinian mechanism to produce anything relevant in biology (new functional genes and proteins, new biochemical systems) while others (famously Stephen J. Gould) claimed the incompatibility of the fossil record with biological macroevolution.

Therefore, scientists agree only on the macroevolutionary paradigm, which is a matter of belief rather than science, while they disagree on how evolution is supposed to work. And this very fact should give a pause to Catholic evolutionists—is there any reason to even take on the task of reconciling theology with the beliefs of atheists? I do not think so, and this is why I think that Tabaczek's enterprise fails at the very outset. He (as well as other Catholic evolutionists) never seriously engage with science. They only know the opinions of the vocal majority; they do not understand the obstacles to biological macroevolution; they disregard the evidence; and they ignore the voices of the many respectable scientists who challenge macroevolution.

One example of this attitude of "disregard for reality" is when I pointed out to Tabaczek that genetic mutations do not account for the epigenetic changes that would be indispensable in any evolutionary scenario.¹⁰ From then on, he simply replaced the phrase "genetic muta-

¹⁰ Chaberek, "Where do substantial forms come from?" 252–3.

tions” with “genetic and epigenetic changes” at each instance.¹¹ But the fact that there is no mechanism, not even a hint of a serious proposal of how evolution is supposed to work through epigenetic changes, does not bother him at all. This attitude reminds me of one philosopher who supposedly said: If my theory does not match the facts, so much the worse for the facts. This attitude clearly contradicts Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s approach.

But if there is no consensus about the capacity of the mechanism of evolution to produce new species, how can there be such a broad consensus on the supposed effects of that mechanism in the form of the “tree of life”? To realize why there is this great discrepancy between the *scientific knowledge* and the *beliefs of scientists*, we need to understand one social phenomenon.

It begins with the fact that species either came about through creation, i.e., divine supernatural acts, or they came about through evolution, i.e., some natural processes. These two are the only available options. But these options are available just for theists, because they can say either God created species supernaturally or God guided the natural evolutionary processes while creating species. In contrast, these two options are not available for atheists, because they cannot accept the divine creation of species. Thus, atheists are left with just one option—they must believe in evolution regardless if there is any evidence in support of it, or if there is no evidence in support, or even if there were massive evidence to the contrary.

Now, research in different countries consistently shows that the percentage of atheists in the scientific community exceeds that of the general public. Recent research shows that in the USA 59% of scientists

¹¹ Mariusz Tabaczek, “The Metaphysics of Evolution: From Aquinas’s Interpretation of Augustine’s Concept of *Rationes Seminales* to the Contemporary Thomistic Account of Species Transformism,” *Nova et Vetera*, English edition 18, no. 3 (2020): 967. Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 35, 49.

do not believe in a personal God (vs. only 16% of the general public)¹² which obviously creates the effect that the scientific community on average is more supportive of evolution than the public. But this tendency is stunningly confirmed by a study made on a sample of leading scientists who work in the fields connected directly with evolution (phylogenetics, population biology/genetics, paleontology/paleoecology/paleobiology, systematics). It turns out that 78% consider themselves “pure naturalists” and only 1.3% “full theists.”¹³

What does it tell us about the “broad consensus” which Catholic evolutionists take for granted? “Pure naturalists” have no other option than to believe in evolution. No surprise that they are the people who dominate the departments committed to studying evolution. Thus, a self-propelling machine of evolutionism works: atheists who have no other option than evolution start research on evolution to “prove” evolution, while a believer critical of evolution has no foot there, because no other option than evolution is permissible due to the “fact” that evolution “has been proven.”

Catholic evolutionists notoriously confuse the state of science understood as *evidence and data* with the “consensus of the scientific community” which is merely an argument from authority. But, as I said, the tree of life is a philosophical idea and biologists’ expertise in matters of philosophy should not be taken for granted. Again, Catholic evolutionists (including Tabaczek) have never sufficiently considered the state of scientific evidence, and this is why their tinkering with Catholic doctrines such as creation, biblical interpretation, the origin of man, monogenism, original sin, etc. lacks empirical foundations. It

¹² “Scientists and Belief,” Pew Research Center, accessed April 15, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief>.

¹³ Gregory W. Graffin, William B. Provine, “Evolution, Religion and Free Will,” *American Scientist* 95, no. 4 (2007): 294. <https://www.americanscientist.org/article/evolution-religion-and-free-will>.

stems from a misguided understanding of biological reality, and it consists of giving into the naturalistic paradigm adopted by atheists rather than any serious study of nature.

It is not surprising that Tabaczek does not address the scientific challenge I presented to his major claims about biology. But if science disproves his claims, how can he make science a criterion for his interpretation of metaphysics? His approach obviously contradicts the attitude of Aristotle who begins his philosophy with a thorough understanding of nature, how it works, and what principles guide it.

What is My Adversary Arguing For?

One of the very confused issues in Tabaczek's writing is the very position for which he is advocating. In *Aquinas and Evolution*, I clearly made two claims: "Aquinas's teaching flatly contradicts theistic evolution" and "Aquinas's teaching is compatible with intelligent design." Tabaczek constantly refers to A-T metaphysics, but he draws on Aquinas's theology as well as Aristotle's physics anytime he wants or needs it. So, it is unclear whether he argues for the compatibility of A-T metaphysics with evolution or Aquinas's and Aristotle's doctrines as such.

But even more confused is his claim that Aquinas is compatible with evolution if we "modify Aquinas in four substantial aspects."¹⁴ This formulation is at best a mere tautology, as any idea substantially modified can be reconciled with any other idea. In his response, Tabaczek says that he "does not treat the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in an inflexible and dogmatic manner" (p. 256, p. 262) and that he

¹⁴ Mariusz Tabaczek, "Afterword to the Polish Edition of Thomistic Evolution: A Catholic Approach to Understanding Evolution in the Light of Faith," *Nova et Vetera*, English edition 22, no. 1 (2024): 237.

“unlike [Chaberek] believes that both the argumentation and the language used by Aquinas are not always fully precise, clear, and coherent” (p. 257). Logically, it would follow that Tabaczek believes that Aquinas, at times, is imprecise, unclear and incoherent. But if this is the case, why would he bother with manipulating Aquinas to make him compatible with evolution? It does not seem reasonable to try to match unclear and incoherent doctrines unless one himself is unclear, imprecise or incoherent. In his recent book, Tabaczek goes as far as claiming that his own “Thomistic model” is even better than that of Aquinas’s, because Aquinas’s “antinaturalistic” model falls into dualism (sic!).¹⁵

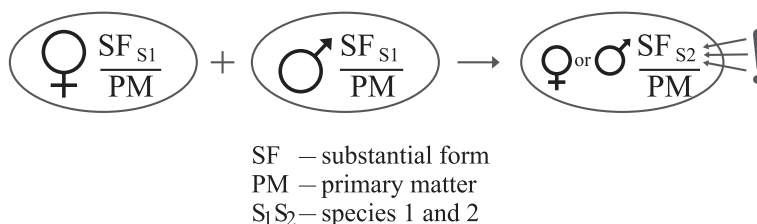
Tabaczek believes that he presents an Aristotelian-Thomistic approach, but because he is not committed to it in an “inflexible and dogmatic manner,” he repeatedly proposes many “modifications” to Aquinas’s and Aristotle’s teachings. So, does he actually present an Aristotelian-Thomistic approach, or something else? Again, it stands on the verge of logic to claim that A-T metaphysics needs to be modified to make it compatible with evolution, while simultaneously claiming that it is compatible with evolution. By these contradictory statements, Tabaczek implicitly confirms what he explicitly denies, namely the fact that Aquinas and evolution do not square.

The Argument

Tabaczek believes that there is no contradiction between the evolutionary origin of species and A-T metaphysics (which I simply call “classical metaphysics”), because in the generation of animals, some new disposition of matter (in the gametes) occur and thus the “last”

¹⁵ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 223, 243.

representative of species “A” gives birth (in natural generation) to the first representative of species “B.” Tabaczek keeps reproducing in his different publications a figure supposedly depicting this process. The figure presents two individuals which—in his view—consist of prime matter and substantial form. By pairing the two in natural generation, an individual of a new species—that is a combination of prime matter and new substantial form—comes about.



In one place, Tabaczek describes this as follows:

This process, highly complex and extended in time, might lead to a precise instant at which the primary matter underlying the egg and the sperm coming from particular female and male organisms of sexually reproducing species S1, at their entering the substantial change in which they join and give an origin to a new organism, is not disposed to be actualized by the “old” substantial form of the species S1, but by a “new” substantial form of the species S2, which is educed from the potentiality of primary matter that underlies them.¹⁶

Before I move on to presenting my response, a brief digression on terminology is needed. Tabaczek uses the term “exemplar” when he

¹⁶ Tabaczek, “The Metaphysics of Evolution,” 967.

means a unit of a species. This term, however, is mistaken, because exemplar refers to the idea in the divine mind (*forma exemplaris*, *exemplar*) which designates form rather than matter while matter is the principle of individuation. And this is why Aquinas never uses the word “exemplar” in Tabaczek’s meaning. Instead, Thomas uses the word “singular” and “individual” (over 2000 times with this meaning). For this reason, I will drop Tabaczek’s incorrect wording and will use Aquinas’s correct terminology.¹⁷

My First Response to the Argument

In my first response,¹⁸ I made several points:

1. I indicated that according to classical metaphysics, changes are either substantial or accidental. In the evolutionary process, all changes are accidental, but the emergence of a new kind of life (new natural species/kind) would require a substantial change as the difference between, say a reptile and a bird, is not just accidental. Since evolutionary changes produce only accidental differences, no matter how long, or for how many generations they accumulate those changes, they would never produce a new substance.

2. I also pointed out Thomistic evolutionists’ error which consists of confusing a substantial form understood as a new species (*substantia secunda*) with the substantial form as existing in an individual, which is an individual form (*substantia prima*). By this confusion, they

¹⁷ In this and other papers, as well as in the book *Theistic Evolution*, Tabaczek employs “exemplar” with the incorrect meaning. But in footnote 35 (p. 267) he seems to recognize the difference between an individual and an exemplar. This fact only adds to the confusing inconsistency in his writing.

¹⁸ Chaberek, “Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?” 239–54.

say that accidental change, such as killing a chicken, produces a substantial change, such as the transition from chicken to chicken meat. But this transition annihilates just the first substance and does nothing to produce a new kind of second substance.

3. I also indicated that accidental changes such as mixing elements, by which we obtain new compounds and elements, are not true examples of accidental changes generating new substances, because in such cases we are not talking about “real substances” but elements, which are—in a way—a negation of substance.

4. I pointed out that what we actually observe in nature is contrary to what Thomistic evolutionists claim. If we take a “real substance,” for instance a living being such as a lizard, and we apply to it a number of accidental changes, we will only change its accidents. But if the number of changes exceeds the capacity of the form, the matter will lose its proportionality with the form and the being will fall apart. This is what we observe in all “evolutionary experiments” as long as the changes (typically genetic mutations) remain within the nature (substance) of a given species, the species changes. Once they exceed it, the organism dies. This is experimental evidence testifying against the imaginations of Thomistic evolutionists simultaneously supporting my metaphysical argument against biological macroevolution and the veracity of classical metaphysics as such.

5. My last point (besides the second part of my paper in which I indicated the scientific problems of Tabaczek’s paper) was that my adversary does not correctly understand the concept of the disposition of matter. He presents it in such a way as if disposition was changing under the form until a new form simply emerges. But he does not explain where the new substantial forms come from. They simply pop up like the rabbit from the magician’s hat.

As I had pointed out, Tabaczek’s “metaphysical account of the evolutionary change” is nothing new in the field. Charles de Koninck pro-

posed it in the 1930s,¹⁹ while Michael Bolin took this argument to its ultimate conclusion in 2013²⁰—long before Tabaczek started publishing.²¹ Bolin, however, introduces some novelty, saying that God directly creates a new form when the proper disposition appears in matter. Thus, Bolin’s concept might be called “materialistic occasionalism” as it forces God to make a new form at every instance when matter reaches new disposition. Still, Bolin’s concept is superior to that of Tabaczek insofar as it (at least) tries to explain where the new forms come from (they are produced directly by God).

In my first response, I provided two quotes from Aquinas to indicate how Thomas understands the disposition of matter:

The difference of form which is due only to the different disposition of matter, causes not a specific but only a numerical difference: for different individuals have different forms, diversified according to the difference of matter. (*S.Th.*, I q. 85 a. 7 arg. 3)

This clearly means that disposition of matter does not produce any new species, but “a numerical difference” which is a difference between one individual of a given species from another individual. Secondly, I quoted this:

¹⁹ Charles De Koninck, “The Cosmos. The Philosophic Point of View,” in: *The Writings of Charles De Koninck*, ed. and transl. by R. McInerny (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), vol. 1, 256–321, 278–83.

²⁰ See: Michael J. Bolin, “*And Man Became a Living Being*: The Genesis of Substantial Form,” A lecture delivered at Wyoming Catholic College, October 25, 2013; <https://sancrucensis.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/and-man-became-a-living-being.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2017).

²¹ Even so, in 2024 Tabaczek keeps presenting this solution as a “groundbreaking” discovery of his own. This attitude might have been justified by ignorance in 2020, but the fact that I pointed it out to him in 2020 and he keeps presenting the case without any recognition of those who actually proposed it long before him suggests something else than ignorance.

Forms are not consequent upon the disposition of matter as their first cause; on the contrary, the reason why matters are disposed in such and such ways is that there might be forms of such and such kinds. Now, it is by their forms that things are distinguished into species. Therefore, it is not in the diversity of matter that the first cause of the distinction of things is to be found. (SCG, lib. 2 cap. 40 n. 3)

This means that species' specific differences are not to be found in dispositions of matter but in the forms of things, which contradicts Tabaczek's proposal.

My Adversary's Response

From the A-T perspective, one would expect a precise answer to the points of my critique. However, as I had noticed a few years earlier in *Aquinas and Evolution*: "Thomists promoting theistic evolution usually spend a lot of time on issues that do not actually address the compatibility of Aquinas and evolution."²² My adversary only confirmed my thesis by filibustering my argument with mostly irrelevant excursus on the definitions of creation in Aquinas or multiple other side issues which are distractions rather than a clarification of his position.

But about five pages into his response we find a surprising twist.²³ Up until his "Afterward," which became the object of my critique,

²² Michael Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution: Why St. Thomas' Teaching on the Origins is Incompatible with Evolutionary Theory* (The Chartwell Press, second edition 2019) 35.

²³ It is not the only twist in Tabaczek's writing. For instance, in his previous texts, he gladly referred to "concurus divinus" as a Thomistic idea opening Aquinas to the evolutionary reinterpretation. However, after I pointed out in my critique that both *con-*

Tabaczek pretty consistently maintained that God creates species through evolution—a phrase used by many theistic evolutionists.²⁴ In response to this, I said that he was confusing creation with generation, and moreover, on such an account, creation would never be completed, which clearly contradicts both the Bible and Aquinas's teaching about the first and second creation (*prima* and *secunda creatio*). Now, according to Tabaczek, a "careful reading" of his previous texts should reveal "the direction" of his writing, which is that the first creation is creation while the second creation is just a natural operation of nature.

Leaving aside the fact that he contradicts Aquinas (without a word of explanation), we should ask, how does his new approach overcome the objection that I raised? Surely, in this new account there is no problem of confusing creation with generation, but Tabaczek resolves one difficulty by falling into the opposite one: if the work of formation (*opus formationis*) is just an ordinary work of nature, then why does the Bible speak about the six days of creation as reflecting some unique divine actions finished once and for all with the creation of man? Aquinas calls it the work of distinction and the work of adornment which together are called the work of formation. In Tabaczek's view, there is no such thing as the work of adornment—creation is limited to the first creation of matter with some basic forms, and the entire work of formation is due to natural secondary causes. But natural secondary causes act until today and will uniformly act throughout the entire history of the universe, so there is no room for the divine Sabbath in Tabaczek's account. This contradicts what is so clearly

cursus divinus and *continua creatio* are alien to Aquinas, Tabaczek dropped these non-Thomistic ideas. Cf. Mariusz Tabaczek, "What Do God and Creatures Really Do in an Evolutionary Change? Divine Concurrence and Transformism from the Thomistic Perspective," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (2019): 445–82, 462–6.

²⁴ Tabaczek, "Afterward," 226. Tabaczek, "What Do God and Creatures Really Do in an Evolutionary Change?" 462–6, 480–1.

revealed in the Bible and expounded by Aquinas. Obviously, this twist in his argument does not help to reconcile his views with Aquinas.

The following fragment (p. 262) reveals the lack of understanding on Tabaczek's part of Aquinas's idea of the formation of the universe. He believes that since the notion of creation in its most proper meaning (as creation out of nothing) does not apply to the second creation (*opus formationis*), there is no creation in the work of formation. Moreover, he still confuses the supernatural formation of the universe with natural changes happening in the natural order.

In response, we need to say that the second creation is indeed creation (and Aquinas calls it so²⁵) but in this case not the entire being is created, but a new form in matter. Thus, matter comes from the first creation while a new form is created out of nothing. Since, however, the form is created in matter, the entire substance (not just the form) begins to exist in the work of formation. Thus—contrary to what Tabaczek says—the work of formation has an aspect of *creatio ex nihilo*, but due to the aspect of the continuation of prime matter, it is properly called the work of formation.

And this is why Tabaczek is mistaken in his following claim (p. 263–4) that the Bible does not speak about the creation of species and the first human body. My adversary says: “A close reading of the Genesis's first creation narrative demonstrates that the term ‘creation’ does not appear in relation to the origin of all species of plants and animals.” (p. 263)

However, a closer reading demonstrates that it actually does. Surely, the Bible employs different words to express the difference

²⁵ Aquinas calls first creation (*prima creatio*) the creation out of nothing in the beginning of time (1) as well as the entire work of creation (2). In both cases, the wording “first creation” finds its counterpart: When it is used as (1), the counterpart is second creation (*secunda creatio*), i.e., the work of formation. When it is used as (2), the counterpart is a “new creation,” i.e., a creation of the order of grace which begins with the Incarnation of Christ.

between what scholastics would later call *creatio ex nihilo* and *formatio*. Nevertheless, contrary to what Tabaczek says, the Hebrew word *bara* does not appear only in the first verse but also in v. 21 (when speaking about the creation of fish, creeping things and birds) and specifically, three times, in v. 27 (when speaking about the creation of man).²⁶ The other words, such as making (*asah*, Gen 1: 7, 11, 12, 16, 25, 26, 31) and forming (*yi'ser*, Gen 2,7) designate the creation of planets, some other animals, and the shaping of man from the earth. Particularly interesting is the use of verbs in Gen 1,26 and 27 when first God speaks about the making of man (*asah*) and then, in the next verse, the text says that God created (*bara*) man. This entirely confirms the scholastic perspective by which formation is also creation (in a true derivative sense); at the same time, this contradicts Tabaczek's view by which the verbs are clearly distinguished into first creation (which, according to him, is the only creative act) and changes (which, according to him, are just natural works of nature that follow the first creation). Tabaczek's perspective is neither Biblical nor Thomistic.²⁷

²⁶ James Sweeney, "bārā' (בָּרָא) ("he-created") in Genesis 1:1," March 18, 2019, accessed March 7, 2024, <https://winebrenner.edu/2019/03/18/insights-bara-%D7%91%D6%BC%D6%B8%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%90-he-created-in-genesis-11/>. Presumably Tabaczek missed the fact that the same word in Hebrew may flex into different forms, still being the same word.

²⁷ In the last paragraph of this section, Tabaczek questions my statement that Aquinas distinguishes between the first and the second creation. But by the end of the paragraph, Tabaczek contradicts himself saying that "Aquinas indeed speaks of the work of creation whereby the earth was adorned with animals and plants" Mariusz Tabaczek, "Evolution and Creation—A Response to Michael Chaberek's Critique of Theistic Evolution," 264.

Augustine's *Rationes Seminales*

Tabaczek begins the next section with the question: "Does the origin of a new species require divine intervention?" To the question thus formulated the answer is obviously "no," because a creation of a new species is not a divine intervention. Tabaczek keeps using this mistaken terminology even though I explained in my critique why neither first nor second creation can be called an intervention.²⁸ As a test for his strong adherence to this incorrect wording, why wouldn't he simply give one example of Aquinas using the word "intervention" with this meaning? He would not find such a usage, because Aquinas (unlike Tabaczek) clearly distinguishes the works of nature from the divine works in the work of creation and formation.

In this section, Tabaczek brings up the idea of *rationes seminales* and the simultaneous creation once provisionally proposed by Augustine. The appeal to Augustine's *rationes seminales* is an all-time classic among theistic evolutionists, so it could not be missing in Tabaczek's response, even though I made no reference to it in my critique. I have provided a thorough answer to evolutionists' mistaken use of this idea in *Aquinas and Evolution*,²⁹ so here I will just make a few comments.

First, in order to understand the meaning of *rationes seminales*, we need to realize the reasons why Augustine comes up with such a strange interpretation even though he strongly believes that the entire creation account should be interpreted literally.³⁰ And it is precisely

²⁸ Chaberek, "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?" 243. Tabaczek, "Evolution and Creation," 259, 264–6. Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 132, 133, 150, 155, 165, 194, 204, 219, 220.

²⁹ Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 104–16.

³⁰ Augustine praises those who would be able to find the completely literal meaning of Genesis. He allows for abandoning it only if one cannot find a literal understanding that would not lead to a blasphemy. "This whole text must first be discussed in terms of

because Augustine followed a strictly literal reading of Genesis that he encountered a problem that seemed insurmountable for him: plants were created on the third day, but on the sixth day there was already the entire garden. Augustine knew that God does not create those things that can be produced naturally, therefore God would not create fully grown trees but only seeds that are necessary for nature to bring about trees. (This principle was later laid out by Aquinas in the formula that “creation does not mingle with the works of nature”). But seeds would not spring into fully grown trees within just three days. Hence a clinch, a dead-end situation. But Augustine, not knowing the natural history of the world (which says that species appeared successively over time in great waves), found a solution to this and some other problems in saying that all creation happened in one moment. Some things however (such as plants and perhaps some animals born of independent eggs) were created in the form of seeds, others (primarily viviparous) in the form of pairs of adults.³¹ So the *seminal reasons* were primarily the seeds of plants created directly by God in the first creation, which then developed into a fully grown garden within the necessary time of a few years or decades.³²

history, and then in terms of prophecy. In terms of history deeds and events are being related, in terms of prophecy future events are being foretold. One should not look with a jaundiced eye, to be sure, on anyone who wants to take everything that is said here absolutely literally, and who can avoid blasphemy in so doing, and present everything as in accordance with Catholic faith; on the contrary one should hold up such a person as an outstanding and wholly admirable understander of the text.” Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, Book II, 2,3. Text after: Saint Augustine, *On Genesis*, transl. E. Hill (New City Press, 2006), 72.

³¹ In one place, Augustine even says that the human species is unique in this sense that while creating other animals God created many initial pairs; upon creating man, however, God decided to create just one pair. This obviously testifies to Augustine’s creationism which contradicts theistic evolution. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XII, 21. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120112.htm>.

³² This is totally in line with what Thomas says: “In these first days God created all things in their origin or causes, and from this work He subsequently rested. Yet after-

It is quite hard to see how this interpretation would bring Augustine any closer to theistic evolution. On the contrary, Augustine's concept of seminal reasons clearly contradicts the three foundational claims of theistic evolution:

- (1) Universal common ancestry (because seminal reasons are distinguished according to their kinds from their inception),
- (2) Natural transformation of species (because seminal reasons persist within their nature and propagate individuals of the same nature),
- (3) The appeal to the lower material causes (such as generation) as a cause of the emergence of species (because seminal reasons come directly from God).

Tabaczek himself emphasizes that Augustine's *rationes seminales* do not actually support theistic evolution, so why does he bring them up in this context? It is just another example of the self-contradictory character of his narration.

Then my adversary says (p. 265) that "St. Thomas follows the intuitions of St. Augustine" (regarding seminal reasons and one-time creation) in the *Summa Theologiae*. This conviction requires a comment.

It is true that Thomas says in one place that he likes Augustine's interpretation more than that of Ambrose (*plus mihi placet*), but does he really follow Augustine in his own account of *Hexameron*? Many authors, including Tabaczek, are confused on this point. In fact, Aquinas follows the Ambrosian interpretative tradition (classic Christian creationism) which is evidenced at least by three facts: (1) his separate treatment of each of the six days of creation, (2) his defense of

wards, by governing His creatures, in the work of propagation, 'He worketh until now.' Now the production of plants from out the earth is a work of propagation, and therefore they were not produced in act on the third day, but in their causes only" (*S.Th.*, I, q. 69, a. 2, corp.).

the distinction of the work of creation into six days, and (3) his consistent appeal to the progression of time in the successive works of creation (which is most strongly confirmed by Aquinas's adoption of the classic scholastic division of the six days into *opus distinctionis* and *opus ornatus*). Especially telling is the second point (2), because it shows how Aquinas struggles to squeeze Augustine's one-time creation into the six days' framework without losing the Biblical division of the work of creation into the six successive days. Thus, even Aquinas's nominal preference of Augustine's tradition does not make him an actual supporter of this tradition, which additionally undermines Tabaczek's already unfounded argument from Augustine's seminal reasons.

The Question of Substance

Next, my adversary considers my account of essentialism, which clashes with the one adopted by him in his proposed solution to evolutionary change. In this section (p. 267–274), the number of confusing and illogical passages goes through the roof, to the extent that it is even hard to address all of them. Here are just two examples:

1. I said that: "One of the fundamental elements of classic metaphysics is the division of being into substance and accidents. In the simplest terms, substance signifies what an entity *is*, whereas accidents indicate its traits, what it *is like*."³³ "Killing a particular chicken does not in any way alter the chicken species. It only causes the loss of a chicken's substantial form, the one existing in this one chicken, the individual form."³⁴ "In the A-T tradition the substantial form of a given species really exists (*in re*) in every individual being."³⁵

³³ Chaberek, "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?" 244.

³⁴ Chaberek, "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?" 246.

³⁵ Chaberek, "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?" 246–7.

Tabaczek responds that “This statement proves that Chaberek fails to understand what moderate realism is, in accordance with which there is no such category as the SF of a species, and one and the same being cannot possess two forms: an individual and a substantial/generic one” (p. 268).

But in the A-T account, one and the same being (a composite) cannot possess two *substantial forms*, but it can possess one substantial form and many accidental forms. Contrary to what Tabaczek says (no definitions in my critique), I said that an individual form is the substantial form as realized in an individual.³⁶ To put it in a different way: an individual consists of a substantial form actualizing this particular matter (*materia designata*), which reduces the substance in potency to the substance in act. By this combination of form and matter, the change of accidents affects the individual form while it does not affect the substantial form virtually present in each individual.³⁷ Thus, contrary to what Tabaczek says, I did not say that there were two forms (individual and substantial) in an individual. Instead, I said that the substantial form (*substantia secunda*) becomes an individual substance (*substantia prima*) when realized in matter, which is the principle of individuation, and as such cannot exist without accidents.

My adversary says: “The mistake that Chaberek makes at this point consists in hypostatizing concepts and attributing to substantial form the characteristics of a universal. In this way, his view converges with

³⁶ Chaberek, “Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?” 246.

³⁷ Aquinas explains: “If we consider the generic or specific nature itself as existing in the singular, thus in a way it is in the nature of a formal principle in regard to the singulars: for the singular is the result of matter, while the idea of species is from the form. But the generic nature is compared to the specific nature rather after the fashion of a material principle, because the generic nature is taken from that which is material in a thing, while the idea of species is taken from that which is formal: thus the notion of animal is taken from the sensitive part, whereas the notion of man is taken from the intellectual part.” (*S.Th.*, I,85,3 ad 4). Cf. *S.Th.*, I-II,63,1, co.

the stance taken by Plato” (p. 269). The problem is that substantial form—contrary to what Tabaczek implies—indeed has “some characteristics of a universal” (though this may not be the best wording). The difference is that for Aristotle universals exist in particulars only, while for Plato they exist in an ideal realm in a way more real than any material being. This Platonic position obviously does not result from my account of substance, which again shows how misrepresentative are the charges filed by my adversary.

Interestingly, at the end of this section, Tabaczek repeats my account: “In the classic version of substantialism, each being possesses numerically one individual SF, which is not, in any way, subject to change over the entire course of a given being’s duration (existence). The only things that can alter are its accidental forms” (p. 270). At last, my adversary got it right!

But if what he says here is true, then how can an evolutionary change (which is accidental) result in the substantial change that would be required to produce a new species? If the individual SF “is not, in any way, subject to change over the entire course of a given being’s duration” then how can a reptile give birth to the first bird or a hominid to the first human? The fact that the new species is supposed to emerge at the moment of conception does not make it any more possible, because the reproductive cells are disposed and—in a way—they carry the substance of the parental organisms (and this is even clearer in asexual reproduction). In my argument, I never claimed that it is one certain organism that is changed into something else, because this is not what evolutionary theory postulates. It is thus clear that when I say accidental change would never change one species into another, I mean those accidental changes that take place in the course of evolution, i.e., these changes that are passed on to posterity in the process of generation.

2. I said in my first critique that according to A-T metaphysics, beings are substances to a different degree. The only substance in the

true sense is God; all other beings are substances through participation. There is a descending hierarchy of substances in which elements and compounds occupy the lowest level to the degree that they cannot be called substances, properly speaking.³⁸

My adversary responds: “[I]n the ontology proposed by Chaberek [there] are two separate classes of material beings: substances and ‘things’ that are not substances” (p. 270). “Chaberek’s ontology lacks the precision ... as well as a clear definition of the status of beings classified as ‘things’ that are not substances. Denying the status of being a substance to elementary particles...” (p. 271). “Therefore, the fact that Chaberek denies some of these beings the status of a substance is arbitrary and unjustified” (p.272). “The limitation introduced by Chaberek, along with his division into substances and ‘things’ that are not substances, again proves to be a division that is arbitrary and devoid of any explanatory reasons” (p. 273).

What we see here is a misrepresentation of my view by reducing it to a form of a false alternative (either elements are substances or not) and then fighting the false alternative. This is a good example of a strawman fallacy by which my opponent debates a view that he created for the sake of his own answer.

Tabaczek also speaks of analogy, to which I had referred to when explaining the status of elements and compounds as substances. My adversary concludes: “Chaberek understands analogy as an instrument allowing him to distinguish a class of beings that is granted the substance status, from the other beings, which he classifies as ‘things’ that are not substances” (p. 273–4). But this is exactly the opposite to what I said—elements can be called substances by analogy, as any other being can be called substance by analogy, so again we see here a misrepresentation combined with fighting a straw man. Interestingly, my adversary immediately says that [unlike what Chaberek says] “each

³⁸ Chaberek, “Where Do Substantial Forms Come From?” 247–8.

material contingent being, according to Aquinas, has the status of substance (or of substance aggregate, in the case of mixtures and artifacts)” (p. 273). Thus, my opponent implies that mixtures and artifacts are not substances but “substance aggregates.” Does it not contradict his main point that “each material contingent being has the status of substance”? Isn’t a mixture or an artifact a “contingent material being”? These self-contradictions result from his clumsy attempts to depict the analogous character of substance which he does not seem to comprehend.

The Notion of Species

In the book *Theistic Evolution*, my adversary has a subsection “A Response to an Objection” which refers directly to my views.³⁹ It is striking therefore that there is no response, (nor even mentioning) of any of the five arguments I had presented against biological macroevolution from the classical metaphysical perspective.⁴⁰ Instead, five out of eight pages of his critique of my views are concerned with the notion of species. The remainder amounts to ad hominem comments,⁴¹ the alleged confusion of methodological and ontological naturalism,⁴²

³⁹ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 169–77.

⁴⁰ To be precise, in another place in the book, the Author refers to one of my arguments by saying that his own account of “evolutionary changes” resolves the problem I had presented. Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 37. In another paper I am going to explain why this is not the case.

⁴¹ For instance, Tabaczek writes: “Another difficulty in Chaberek’s rigid reading of Aquinas that allows little room for any development of his doctrine if this would conflict with literal reading of Thomas’s own position. In his approach, a stiff orthodoxy in the interpretation of Aquinas takes over an open-minded search, etc.” (Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 176). Labeling is typically a sign of lack of argument.

⁴² I clarify what is correct and what is confused in the theistic evolutionists’ argument from the distinction between the two types of naturalism in *Knowledge and Evolution*, 179–80.

and my support for intelligent design. (Alas, the author decides that a response to intelligent design goes beyond the scope of his project).⁴³

In response, first let us think why my adversary would go completely silent to my arguments and use most of his time on definitions, actually, just one definition of species. This attitude suggests that he simply does not know how to respond to my arguments. Any definition of anything can be always challenged because definitions may be formulated and reformulated even without losing their meaning. And this is what actually happens here—Tabaczek employs exactly the same notion of species that I do, but he defines it using different words. Thus he merely offers a distinction without a difference.

In *Aquinas and Evolution*, I explained that the notion of species, which is employed in the debates over evolution, must be defined separately for each level of the debate (science, philosophy and theology) to avoid confusion in the transitions between these levels which are unavoidable when comparing Aquinas with Darwin (or biblical interpretations with evolutionary theories). Thus, I proposed the concept of natural species which I defined at each level and justified the choice of this category.

It is interesting that in his response (p. 274–5), my adversary rejects my definitions because of “metaphysical difficulties,” however, he refuses to “go into the intricacies” of my definition. Nor does he have anything to say about my justification of my definition. But in parentheses he mentions three problems. Let’s look closer to see if these really are problems.

(1) The first charge is that I define species as kind. Well, species and kind are analogous terms, and every species is a kind with specific difference. This should be taken for granted by anyone who has basic knowledge of the topic.

⁴³ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 176.

What is more interesting though is that in *Theistic Evolution*, Tabaczek clearly identifies species as kinds. For instance: “We need to acknowledge that operationally, the ‘species as individuals’ view must treat species as natural kinds”.⁴⁴ “SF defines the metaphysical foundation of a given natural kind” and the effect of evolution is “multiple new natural kinds coming into existence.”⁴⁵ He also says: “The actualizing principles dispose PM ..., enabling thus ... an eduction of particular types of new SSFF (typical of new natural kinds, i.e., new species) from its potentiality.”⁴⁶ So, if considering species as kind is a problem of my view (which I do not think it is) the same problem is found in my adversary’s approach.

(2) The second charge is that I define species as a collective set. This opinion of my adversary can be attributed only to misreading (or not reading) my text. I distinguished *logical species* that could be regarded as a “collective set” (though I do not say that). But this was not the definition of species which I adopted.

(3) The third charge is that I assign the term species (natural species) to two separate taxonomic levels of family and genus. But this is precisely the idea of natural species. As I said: “[Natural species] from the biological perspective these are organisms that belong to one taxonomical group of family or genus.”⁴⁷ So, what is so objectionable in the fact that when I list examples of natural species, I refer to different families and genera? This is entirely consistent with my definition and doing otherwise would be prone to objections. By the way, this critique discloses the nominalistic mindset of my adversary who

⁴⁴ To be precise, in this sentence he quotes approvingly Crawford L. Elder. See: Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 73.

⁴⁵ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 156. Tabaczek uses shortened forms for metaphysical terms: SF – substantial form, PM – prime matter, SSFF – plural form of SF.

⁴⁶ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 85–6.

⁴⁷ Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 25.

does not seem to understand that metaphysical notions are not strictly translatable into biological notions.

Even so, in *Theistic Evolution*, Tabaczek claims that “The main difficulty of Chaberek’s position is its vagueness and idiosyncratic character.”⁴⁸ “Idiosyncratic” is a fancy word that Tabaczek apparently learnt from James Hofmann,⁴⁹ but he does not explain how it refers to my take on species. Instead, he continues: [Chaberek] “inappropriately and unproductively conflates a number of fundamental categories that include: SF, metaphysical species, biological species (and other categories of biological taxonomy), ontologically defined natural kinds, and the biblical notion of created kinds.”⁵⁰ It is interesting that my adversary says I conflate these categories, when in reality I explain my definition of species separately at each level of knowledge. Regrettably, my adversary does not do more than just label my views without actually engaging them.

In *Theistic Evolution*, Tabaczek proposes his own definition:

Species can be defined as a universal category expressed in and abstracted from concrete living beings that are determined by a particular type of essence. The latter is constituted by a specific kind of SF which ... actualizes its correlative metaphysical principle of pure potentiality, that is, PM.⁵¹

My only concern regarding Tabaczek’s approach is that it is entirely based on metaphysical categories which do not automatically translate into biological or theological ones. From his view, some bizarre

⁴⁸ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 171.

⁴⁹ James R. Hofmann, “Some Thomistic Encounters with Evolution,” *Theology and Science* 18, no. 2 (2020): 325–46, 338.

⁵⁰ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 171.

⁵¹ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 81.

conclusions follow, such as, for example, that spiders are equally as remote from humans as apes, because both spiders and apes have different types of essences from human. As I explained in *Aquinas and Evolution*, to have a conversation without confusing different disciplines, we need to connect our definition with the three levels of knowledge so that we keep talking about the same thing when moving between these levels (which is unavoidable in debates over evolution and metaphysics). Unfortunately, this is entirely missing from Tabaczek's account. Any evolutionists (or creationists for that matter) could respond that his alleged solution to evolutionary change is irrelevant because it refers to the philosophical rather than biological (or theological) species. And this is precisely why a number of respectable authors used to refer to the category of natural species which, taken at the philosophical level, is exactly what Tabaczek refers to, but it is readable in theology and science as well. His disregard for that category does not appear to come from any thorough study but seems to flow instead from ideological bias.

In *Aquinas and Evolution*, I defined natural species (at the philosophical level) as including "organisms that share the same nature. In this context 'nature' is defined by Aquinas as 'the essence of a thing as it is ordered to the proper operation'."⁵²

Commenting on this in *Theistic Evolution*, my adversary says: "Chaberek makes a fundamental category mistake. According to the principles of Aristotelian metaphysics ... organisms *cannot share the same substantial form*."⁵³ But in a different place, he says the exact opposite: "Aristotelian metaphysics allows us to argue that all representatives of a species *share a 'common nature' (defined by a substantial form of a particular kind)*."⁵⁴ It is possible that the reason why

⁵² Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 25.

⁵³ Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 174, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Tabaczek, "The Metaphysics of Evolution," 945–72, 964 (emphases added).

Tabaczek contradicts himself at such a fundamental level is that he simply does not comprehend the basic metaphysical notions and their analogous character.

Generation vs. Creation

That my adversary does not understand these basic metaphysical concepts is evidenced in the three closing subsections of his response (p. 275–284). He begins with an awkward attempt to metaphysically describe the process of natural generation. One fundamental misconception presented here (and in his other writings) is that he deems generation a “series of accidental and substantial changes.”⁵⁵ Here is one of the representative parts of his account:

One should note that substantial changes accompanying the begetting of offspring are changes of a special kind. They result in the emergence of new organisms whose SFs are of the same type as SFs of parental organisms. (p. 281)

By using meta-categories such as a “type of SF,” my adversary blurs and hides the problem of the emergence of new substances. He says that in generation there are new substances but of the same type. So, are they new substances or are they the same substances? Is there a substantial difference between them or not? If they are the same, then no new species (in any relevant sense) emerges. Thus, we learn that

⁵⁵ “In the process of reproduction [parents] bring about (‘educer’) from the potentiality of matter the SF proper to the specific biological species to which they belong. This takes place during the process of substantial change, the result of which is the origination of a new living organism.” Tabaczek, “Evolution and Creation,” 276–7. Cf. 280, 283, footnote 73, Cf. Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 191, 196.

generation involves substantial changes, but they are special, because they are not substantial. Tabaczek postulates a “certain modification” of metaphysics to make it compatible with his beliefs about evolution.⁵⁶ It seems that not just classical metaphysics, but classical logic as well requires some modifications to accommodate his revelatory considerations.

To straighten things out, we need to explain that in generation the substance or nature does not change, rather it is passed on to posterity by parents. Thus, there is no substantial change in generation (*substantia secunda*) even though parents produce the individual form (*substantia prima*) in their offspring which is numerically different from the parents. But the numerical difference comes from matter rather than form. No wonder that Tabaczek needs to distort the A-T account of generation because in the evolutionary account, a new substance (*substantia secunda*) needs to be generated by two individuals. But in generation only an individual substance (*substantia prima*) of the same species is produced.⁵⁷ Moreover, parents do not produce the species of their offspring absolutely speaking, but only as much as it is present in each begotten individual. This renders impossible an evolutionary change, because it means that parents not only would need to be the cause of their own nature, but also produce a new nature and thus become the creators of that nature absolutely speaking. Aquinas explains away such scenario:

⁵⁶ “The fact that the parents and their offspring belong to two different species calls for the introduction of a certain modification to the interpretation of classical metaphysics” Mariusz Tabaczek, “Evolution and Creation,” 282.

⁵⁷ “Nature can be considered in two ways: firstly, in general according to the species; secondly, as in the individual. And whereas the form and the common matter belong to a thing's true nature considered in general; individual signate matter and the form individualized by that matter belong to the true nature considered in this particular individual” (*S.Th.*, I, 119,1, co).

[W]hen a horse is generated, the generating horse is indeed the reason why the nature of horse begins to exist in this being, but it is not the essential cause of equinity. For that which is essentially the cause of a certain specific nature, must be the cause of that nature of all the beings that have that species. Since, then, the generating horse has the same nature, it would have to be its own cause, which is impossible. It remains, therefore, that above all those participating in equinity, there must be some universal cause of the whole species... [I]t must be reduced to that which is essentially the cause of that nature, but not to something which participates in that nature in a particular way.⁵⁸

Tabaczek, however, believes that:

In the case of speciation ... parental organisms of a specific generation of species S1, being their offspring's efficient causes, bring about the actualization of matter, or it[s] functioning in a way determined by the SF of a new type, that is, proper to the new species S2. (p. 278)

But my question has been where that “SF of a new type” comes from? For Aquinas, the substantial form of an animal is first educed from matter directly by God in the work of creation and then it is passed on through generation (as explained above—not such that the parents produce this form absolutely but only as much as it exists in the individual). For Tabaczek, it simply “appears” in generation.

Next, my adversary makes a somewhat common error among theistic evolutionists by quoting a couple of fragments from Aquinas

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, c. 10, 58. “[E]ssence’ has to signify something that is common to all natures on account of which various beings fall under the diverse genera and species, as for example humanity is the essence of man, and so on for the rest” (*De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1).

where he speaks about matter tending towards “higher perfection or form” (p. 279–280). Tabaczek simply confuses ontogenesis (in which matter receives new forms within embryonic development) with phylogenesis, which is the idea of new species springing from other species. Obviously, Aquinas’s account of generation does not allow that from, say, an elephant embryo a giraffe could result—which would be the case if Tabaczek were correct.

The remaining three pages never get around to answering my main question. However, Tabaczek writes:

It should be pointed out that one of the fundamental errors in his [Chaberek’s] argumentation consists in reducing speciation to the last of the aforementioned substantial changes, that is, the one which results in the emergence of an organism whose SF differs from the SFs of parental organism (p. 283).

But this charge is inconsistent with his own account. On the previous page, he spoke about the “fact” that [in the evolutionary transition] “the parents and their offspring belong to two different species.” In the account quoted above, he spoke about a “precise instant” when a new species emerges.⁵⁹ Two pages before that he stated:

In the case of speciation, the last substantial change of that type, completing the entire process of interspecies transformation, differs from the others. It results *in the origination of an organism* whose SF is generically different from the SFs of parental organisms (p. 281, emphasis added).

The “entire process” is irrelevant to the main point, because within that process one substance is passed on from parents to posterity and

⁵⁹ See quote in the section “The Argument.”

the individuals differ only accidentally. This means that they are the same species. Hence, the imagined “evolutionary transition” effectively happens in one generation.

The reason why the author falls into these contradictions stems from the logical fallacy that lays at the foundation of the evolutionary vision which requires the simultaneous acceptance of the existence of species and their non-existence. Then this core fallacy radiates into several logical inconsistencies that pervade all evolutionary thinking. I described these problems, and I showed how they are reflected in Darwin’s own words, in *Knowledge and Evolution*.⁶⁰

By the end my adversary’s paper turns into circular repetitions of the same concept:

The arguments provided in the present article indicate that a similar scenario involving changes in the disposition of PM might just as well bring about a substantial change, in which the newly formed substance belongs either to the same natural kind as the efficient cause(s) *or to a different (including a new one) natural kind*, whose individual representatives can be situated on the same or a higher level of metaphysical perfection (p. 284, emphasis added).

This is the ultimate conclusion of the response. Besides the fact that it does not address my question, it also reveals another aspect of Tabaczek’s vision—in generation, anything can be produced by anything. It is not just that in Tabaczek’s account new substantial forms pop up like rabbits from a magician’s hat (which I had indicated in my critique). There is more to it—pretty much anything can pop up in natural generation. The effect of natural generation may be a rabbit from a cat, but it could be a horse or an elephant, or any other “natural kind,” more perfect or not, or it could be the same species as well. This obvi-

⁶⁰ Chaberek, *Knowledge and Evolution*, 96–114.

ously has nothing to do with A-T metaphysics, but I dare to add that it has nothing to do with reality and common sense either.

Conclusion

Tabaczek began his publishing work with an ambitious but quite short-sighted plan of reconciling A-T metaphysics with biological macroevolution. However, he chose this direction when he still did not know much about A-T metaphysics. Over the course of years, it turned out that the more he learns the less possible it becomes to reconcile his evolutionary imageries with the realistic teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas. But instead of changing the direction of his writing, he has decided to double down on rhetoric and keep climbing Mount Improbable. In his earlier papers, he was confident that the “reconciliation” was possible. In the response analyzed above (2020), he already believes that his vision “calls for the introduction of a *certain modification* to the interpretation of classical metaphysics” (p. 282, emphasis added). In *Theistic Evolution* (2024), he randomly bounces within the whole array of possibilities: “There is no place for transformism in Aquinas, just as there was none in Augustine.”⁶¹ “Some adjustments to Aquinas’s theological system” are required to fit it into theistic evolution.⁶² Or “Thomistic philosophy remains open to the theory of evolution”⁶³—just to give a sample.

Over the years, Tabaczek seems to have realized that his intended goal is doomed to fail, but instead of withdrawing from this dead end, he has decided to offer contradictory proposals in the hope that the audience will buy into his “keep the cake and eat it too” strategy while simultaneously disdaining anyone who disagrees with such a narrative.

⁶¹ Mariusz Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 163.

⁶² Mariusz Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 157.

⁶³ Mariusz Tabaczek, *Theistic Evolution*, 176.

Tabaczek's response which I analyzed in this paper was written to address my question concerning the origin of substantial forms in natural generation which allegedly brings about entirely new forms of life (new natural kinds). What is striking though is the fact that my adversary's critique does not pass beyond the level of challenging my definitions of terms, never even addressing the core of my argument. A glaring example is his complete silence regarding two of my citations from Aquinas which directly disprove his thesis.⁶⁴ Tabaczek's "Afterward" (which I responded to) covers thirteen pages. My response covers fifteen pages. His response amounts to twenty-nine pages, almost twice as long as my critique. Altogether my adversary utilized forty-two pages to explain his views, and yet he provides no answer to the otherwise obvious question:

Where does the new substantial form—that is, new plan, new concept, new design (new genetic, epigenetic information, body plan, tissues, organs, systems of organs), new idea of how to realize the phenomenon of life—come from?

In Tabaczek's account, this is all due to accidental changes in matter. But how can matter be disposed to a new substantial form if in generation the parental organisms produce the form of posterity which is of their own kind? This means that in Tabaczek's view the same matter is simultaneously disposed to two different substantial forms—the one passed by the parents and the new one that is supposed to emerge in the generation. This obviously is metaphysical absurdity.

As I have shown in different places, Tabaczek contradicts: (1) Thomistic hylemorphism; (2) The Thomistic account of human origins; (3) The Thomistic account of human generation; (4) The Thomistic account of animal generation; (5) Aquinas's view of creation; (6) Aquinas's Biblical interpretation, and more. So how can his views

⁶⁴ *S.Th.*, I, 85,7,3; *SCG*, lib. 2 cap. 40, n. 3. See above under "My First Response to the Argument."

be called Thomistic? The sheer fact that someone uses words borrowed from the Thomistic system and stamps his papers with the phrase “Aristotelian-Thomistic” does not make his views Aristotelian-Thomistic.

One Dominican friar said once that had he have a choice of attending a “Catholic barber” or a “barber” he would choose the latter suspecting that the first one may try to make up for his incompetence by adding “Catholic” to his title. I am not sure if I totally agree, but to the extent I agree, this metaphor perfectly describes the stance of my adversary—the missing competence in interpreting Thomistic concepts is covered up with labels such as “Aristotelian-Thomistic” (like a chocolate-like product with the label “chocolate” in the communist economy).

And this brings us to another conundrum. How is it possible that Tabaczek gets a pass from other Thomists on such an obvious distortion of Aquinas’s thought? The answer is that an ideology can justify more than we can otherwise imagine. Most Thomists share the foundational beliefs of our post-Christian culture among which the belief in evolution takes a prominent place. Aquinas’s thought, on the contrary, has its roots in classical Christian creationism. But the power of the evolutionary paradigm in our culture is such that even in the context of Thomistic revival, when Thomists experience the clash between Aquinas’s creationism on the one hand and evolutionism on the other, they still choose evolutionism, even at the cost of the obvious distortion of Aquinas. This attitude only confirms my intuition of how intellectually deficient and superficial the “Thomism” of many of the so-called “Thomists” is today.

I’ve planned three responses to Tabaczek: this present one to our direct conversation about the possibility of evolutionary change, another one to his idea of the evolutionary origin of man, and the third one—a response to the core argument in his book *Theistic Evolution*.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The first one of these papers is accepted for publication in the journal *Filozoficzne Aspekty Genezy*. The second one is under review in a Thomistic journal.

Together with my first response, these amount to four extensive answers which make it clear that there are serious errors in his writings and that no one should call Tabaczek's views "Thomistic."



Where do Substantial Forms Come From?

A Comment on the Theistic Evolution of Mariusz Tabaczek:

Response 2

SUMMARY

This paper is a response to Mariusz Tabaczek's critique of Michal Chaberek's previous paper "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From? – A Critique of the Theistic Evolution of Mariusz Tabaczek." It begins with general remarks on the limits of science and the status of evolutionary theory in the biological sciences. Then Tabaczek's main argument for the compatibility of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics with evolution is presented along with a reiteration of the first response by Chaberek. In the following sections, the paper debunks subsequent claims of Tabaczek by showing inconsistencies in his arguments. The conclusion is that Tabaczek not only has not explained how evolutionary transitions in evolution would come about (specifically where the new substantial forms would come from) but that his writing cannot be deemed compatible with the metaphysics adopted by Thomas Aquinas.

Keywords: classical metaphysics, creation, evolution, human origins, theistic evolution, Thomas Aquinas

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