

St. Thomas and Metaphysical Hierarchy: Some Observations¹

LAWRENCE DEWAN, O.P.
Dominican University College
Ottawa, Canada

THE ORIGINAL stimulus for this essay stems from the present-day evolution/design debates. From the viewpoint of St. Thomas's metaphysics the two contentions—namely, that the variety of kinds of living things can be explained in terms of random mutations, and that the same phenomenon must be explained as a work of mind—are entirely compatible. On the one hand Thomas argues in the Fifth Way (and in many parallel or at least similar texts) that natural bodies which lack knowledge act for an end, and can do so only through intelligent direction.² On the other hand, he insists that accidental influences of one thing on another occur in physical reality: but such accidental influence itself is entirely under the direction of the divine mind; what is truly accidental in relation to secondary causes is designed as viewed in the light of the highest cause.

This picture is well presented in two articles, side by side, late in the *Summa theologiae*, part 1. In question 115 Thomas is speaking of the causal activity of bodies upon bodies, giving special attention to the celestial bodies as influential, with a universal mode of causality, on generable and corruptible bodies. The question's last article asks whether the celestial

¹ Abbreviations: *ST* is *Summa theologiae*, Editio altera emendata (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1953); *CM* is *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis commentaria*, ed. M.-R. Cathala (Turin: Marietti, 1935); *ScG* is *Summa contra Gentiles*, that is, *Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu 'Summa contra Gentiles'*, ed. Pera et al. (Rome/Turin: Marietti, 1961). All translations herein are my own unless otherwise indicated.

² *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3 (ed. Ottawa, 14b36–49). Cf. my paper "St. Thomas's 'Fifth Way' Revisited," in *Universitas* (Taipei) 31, no. 3 (March, 2004): 47–67.

bodies impose necessity on those things which are subject to their action, and, in reply, Thomas recalls Aristotle's refutation of thoroughgoing necessitation in nature. The argument of the ancient adversary is that everything that occurs has a cause, and that if the cause is posited, the effect occurs necessarily. Aristotle replies, first, that there are causes which can be prevented from bringing about their effects. However, this point is seen as inadequate by itself, since such prevention might be said to arise of necessity from some cause. Hence, Aristotle goes on to say that everything which is naturally coherent (*est per se*) has a cause, but that which is as a mere happening (*est per accidens*) does not have a cause; the latter sort of thing is not truly "a being" since it is not truly "something one": "the white" has a cause, and "the musical" has a cause, but "the white musical" has no cause. Thomas applies this to the cosmic picture in what might be a script for something like the extinction of the dinosaurs (fire from the sky happening to fall on something particularly combustible).³

The very next question, 116, in its very first article, inquires about the existence of fate. Given that some things happen by chance or luck, it is nevertheless seen that what is chance at the level of lower causes can be design at the level of the higher cause: the example is that of two servants sent by their master for different reasons to the same place; for the servants, considering the particular missions they have, their meeting each other is fortuitous, but the master may well have intended the meeting. Some philosophers rejected the origin of chance events in a higher cause, and so denied altogether the existence of fate: this, as Thomas says, is a rejection of divine providence. Other philosophers held that the higher cause of accidental events, whether in sub-human things or in humans, was the celestial bodies: this is what they meant by "fate."

Thomas briefly sets aside this latter view as related to human beings, because their free will cannot be directly overcome by corporeal causes. However, he also rejects the view as regards all physical "mere happening." Such events are not truly beings or unities, as was said in the previous question, whereas the causality of the celestial bodies is an action of natural bodies, an action which terminates at something truly one. Thomas's example here of such a chance event, while obviously human, is meant to cover all mere happenings: no natural cause can bring it about that, intending to dig a grave, one finds a treasure.

Thomas concludes that all chance events, whether in mere natural things or in human affairs, are traceable to a preordaining cause, namely, divine providence. As he says:

³ ST I, q. 115, a. 6. For Aristotle, cf. *Metaphysics* 6.3 (1027a31).

Nothing prevents that which is by mere encounter [*per accidens*] to be taken as one by some mind; otherwise the intellect could not form such a proposition as this: “The person digging the grave finds a treasure.” And just as the intellect can envisage this, so also it can bring it about: as, for example, if someone who knows where a treasure is hidden sends a workman ignorant of this to dig a grave in the very place.⁴

Here, Thomas’s argument concludes that it is especially the divine intellect which should be seen as causing the things that happen by chance or luck. He does not rule out a role for other intellects below the divine for the case of sub-human chance events, but in the properly human domain, the domain of willing agency, it is *only* God who has the power to move the will.

What I would like to highlight is Thomas’s teaching that both of the doctrines involved in the design/evolution debates, the tracing of random events to a designing cause and the tracing of all telic⁵ order to mind, pertain to the conception of God as cause of being as being.

Take first the issue of the *per accidens*, the haphazard. Thomas’s fullest presentation is in *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis commentaria* 6, where the very existence of the *per accidens* is questioned by an imagined adversary. Aristotle has just set aside from his theological philosophy⁶ the study of being by coincidence (*to on . . . to kata sumbebékos*).⁷ Does not this position of Aristotle’s, in that it *acknowledges the existence of mere haphazard*, destroy the doctrine of providence? Does not “providence” suggest that everything happens of necessity? After all, divine providence cannot fail. Thomas defends Aristotle and the existence of the *per accidens* as follows:

[1219] But one must know that on the same cause depend the effect and all those [items] which are essential accidents [*per se accidentia*] of that effect. For example, just as man is [caused] by nature, so also are all his essential accidents, such as capability of laughter, and susceptibility to mental discipline. But if some cause does not make *man*, unqualifiedly, but [makes] man *such*, it will not belong to it to constitute those things which are the essential accidents of man, but merely to take advantage of them. For example, the ruler [*politicus*] makes a man a good citizen [*civilem*]; still, he does not make him to be susceptible to discipline of the mind; rather, he makes use of that property of [man] in order to make of him a good citizen.

⁴ ST I, q. 116, a. 1 (691b38–47).

⁵ I invented this word some few years ago, but now see, by Google and Wikipedia, that I was probably not the first to do so.

⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 6.1 (1026a19).

⁷ Ibid., 6.2 (in its entirety).

[1220] But, as has been said, *being inasmuch as it is being* [*ens in quantum ens est*] has as cause God himself; hence, just as to the divine providence being itself [*ipsum ens*] is submitted, so also are all the accidents of being as being, among which are the necessary and the contingent. Therefore, to divine providence it pertains, not merely to make this being, but that it give to it contingency or necessity. . . .⁸

Thomas goes on to make the point that no other cause gives to its effects the modes of necessity and contingency; this is proper to *the cause of being as being*.

It is inasmuch as the contingent causes, that is, the causes which produce their effects for the most part, sometimes fail to produce the effect that what rarely happens happens. It is haphazard as compared to the proximate cause, the contingent cause.⁹ It is not haphazard as compared to the universal provider. Thus, as Thomas says:

[N]othing prevents some things being fortuitous or haphazard taken in comparison to the proximate causes, not, nevertheless, in comparison to divine providence: for, so taken, “nothing occurs by chance in the universe,” as Augustine says in the book, *On Eighty-three Questions*.¹⁰

In the proper context of the design/evolution debate the second point I mentioned is the intellectual origin of the telic. In the Fifth Way presentation this is simply asserted, along with the example of the arrow and the archer. In some texts an argument is made for it.¹¹ I am going to note here *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 1, as to whether all things have an appetite for the good. My interest in this text is not so much for the argument that mind is needed for direction, as for the point that for such inclination in

⁸ CM 6.3 (1218–1220).

⁹ Cf. CM 6.2 (1182–1183). For more on this position of Thomas, see my essay “Thomas Aquinas and Being as a Nature,” *Acta Philosophica* 12 (2003): 123–35.

¹⁰ ST I, q. 116, a. 1, ad 2: “nihil prohibet aliqua esse fortuita vel casualia per comparisonem ad causas proximas, non tamen per comparisonem ad divinam providentiam, sic enim ‘nihil temere fit in mundo,’ ut Augustinus dicit in libro *Octoginta trium quaest.* . . .” Cf. CM 6.3 (1216): “Relinquitur igitur quod omnia, quae hic fiunt, prout ad primam causam divinam referuntur, inveniuntur ordinata et non per accidens existere; licet per comparisonem ad alias causas per accidens esse inveniuntur. Et propter hoc secundum fidem catholicam dicitur, quod ‘nihil fit temere sive fortuito in mundo,’ et quod omnia subduntur divinae providentiae. Aristoteles autem hic loquitur de contingentibus quae hic fiunt, in ordine ad causas particulares, sicut per eius exemplum apparet.”

¹¹ Cf. for example *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, where in the course of showing that God cannot be such as to act by natural necessity Thomas shows the necessarily dependent nature of what so acts.

a thing to be *natural* it is necessary that a *form* be conferred on the thing. Thus we read:

But this [namely, one thing directing another to an end] occurs in two ways: for sometimes that which is directed to the end is merely impelled and moved [*impellitur et movetur*] by the director, without [its] obtaining from the director any *form*, through which such direction or inclination [*directio vel inclinatio*] would *befit* the thing; and such inclination is *violent*, the way the arrow is “inclined” by the archer towards a definite target. But sometimes that which is directed or inclined towards an end acquires from the one directing or moving [it] some *form* through which such inclination is befitting for it; hence, that inclination will be *natural*, as having a natural principle: as he who gave the stone heaviness inclined it to this, that it would be borne naturally downward, in which way *the one generating* is the mover for light and heavy things, according to the Philosopher in *Physics* 8 (256a1).¹²

This second way for a thing to be moved by another to an end is now attributed to all natural things:

And in this way, all natural things are inclined towards those things which suit them, [such natural things thus] having in themselves some *principle* of their own inclination, by reason of which their inclination is natural, so that in a way *they themselves go* [*ipsa vadant*] and are not merely led [*ducantur*] to the due ends [*fines debitos*]; for the objects of violence [*violenta*] are merely led, because they co-operate not at all with the mover, whereas natural things even go [*vadunt*] towards the ends, inasmuch as they co-operate with the one inclining and directing, by virtue of a principle inserted within them.¹³

The reason I note this is that it relates the telic in things to the *form* of the thing.¹⁴ I believe that this focus on form is essential as providing a sound foundation for a doctrine of natural teleology.¹⁵

¹² *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 1, Leonine lines 152–68, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, qq. 21–29, in *Opera Omnia*, t. 22/3 (Rome: Editori di san Tommaso, 1976).

¹³ *Ibid.*, Leonine lines 169–78 (emphasis added).

¹⁴ Cf. *ST I*, q. 80, a. 1 (495b28–29): “quamlibet formam sequitur aliqua inclinatio [some inclination accompanies every form].”

¹⁵ Cf. Etienne Gilson, *D'Aristote à Darwin et retour* (Paris: Vrin, 1971), 33–34: “Aristotle found finality in nature so evident that he asked himself how his predecessors could have failed to see, and even worse, denied its presence there. Their error was explained, in his eyes, because they erred concerning the notions of essence and substance [*Parts of Animals* 1.1]. The subsequent history of philosophy should confirm the accuracy of his diagnosis because as long as the Aristotelian notion of substance as unity of a matter and a form survived, that of finality remained

Thus I come to the point I wish to stress. The doctrine of the origin of species is a doctrine of divine causality of being as being. This is a metaphysical prerequisite for any sound evolutionism. I would call attention here to chapters 39–45 of Book II of the *Summa contra Gentiles* II, on the first cause of *distinction* among things, that is, the origin of formal variety. The order of discussion is as follows: [39] Is chance the cause? [40] Is matter the cause? [41] Is a contrariety between agents the cause? [42] Is an order of agents the cause? [43] Did God create matter but some angel give diverse forms to things? [44] Is a diversity as to merit and demerit the origin of the distinction among things? [45] What is truly the first cause of the distinction among things? This entire discussion is the first thing Thomas undertakes after presenting the mode of production called “creation” (chapters 6–38).¹⁶

Now, out of all this I am only going to note here two arguments from chapter 43. There Thomas, arguing against the idea that God creates matter but some angel accounts for forms, says in one argument:

Just as being is first among effects, just so does it correspond to the first cause as [its] proper effect. *But being is through form and not through matter.* Therefore, *the first causality of forms* is most of all to be attributed to the first cause.¹⁷

That is, the doctrine of God as origin of forms has its foundation in the doctrine of God as cause of being as such. To see this, one must appreciate the role of form as principle of being.

undisputed, but as soon as in the seventeenth century Bacon and Descartes [p. 34] denied the notion of substantial form (form that constitutes a substance by its union with a matter), that of final cause became inconceivable. Indeed, substance as defined by its form is the end of generation. What remained, once the form was excluded, was the extended matter, or rather extension itself, which is the object of geometry and is susceptible only to purely mechanical modifications. Descartes submitted to mechanism the entire domain of living beings, including the human body. The celebrated Cartesian theory of “animal machines,” which rightly astonished La Fontaine, illustrates this point perfectly.” My translation. There is a complete English translation: *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution*, trans. John Lyon (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

¹⁶ Cf. ScG II, c. 5, which gives the plan of book 2.

¹⁷ ScG II, c. 43 (par. 8; ed. Pera, 1200): “Adhuc. Sicut esse est primum in effectibus, ita respondet primae causae ut proprius effectus. Esse autem est per *formam*, et non per materiam. Prima igitur causalitas formarum maxime est primae causae attribuenda.”

And again, in the same chapter, Thomas says:

Since every agent acts [producing] something like itself, from that thing the effect acquires the form relative to which [thing] it acquires likeness by virtue of the form: for example, the house which is in matter [acquires form] from the art which is the form of the house in the soul. But all things are rendered like God who is pure act, inasmuch as they have forms through which they are rendered in act: and inasmuch as they have appetite for forms, they are said to have appetite for the divine likeness. Therefore, it is absurd to say that the formation of things pertains to something other than God, the creator of all.¹⁸

Here also, it is an appreciation of form as principle of being that must nourish our thought. Form is primarily substantial form, best appreciated by us in living things, that is, the forms called “souls.”¹⁹ We are speaking of the principle of *unity* manifested both in the individual as a self-assertive thing, nourishing and defending itself, and in that individual as the representative of a species, reproducing the kind. It is a principle of perpetuity in the theatre of radical change.²⁰

Whereas with design and teleology the interest is in complexity and order, focus on form highlights oneness, though of course oneness

¹⁸ Ibid. (par. 8, ed. Pera, 2001): “Amplius. Cum omne agens agat sibi simile, ab illo acquirit effectus formam cui per formam acquisitam similatur: sicut domus in materia ab arte, quae est species domus in anima. Sed omnia simulantur deo qui est actus purus, in quantum habent formas, per quas fiunt in actu: et in quantum formas appetunt, divinam similitudinem appetere dicuntur. Absurdum est igitur dicere quod rerum formatio ad alium pertineat quam ad creatorem omnium deum.”

¹⁹ Thomas, in *Sentencia libri De anima*, Leonine ed., t. 45/1, (Rome/Paris: Commissio Leonina/Vrin, 1984), 2.7 (lines 176–81)], concerning Aristotle at *De anima* 2.4 (415a13), paraphrases as follows: “that is the cause of something in the role . . . of *form*, which is the cause of being [*causa essendi*], for *through the form* each thing is in act [*est actu*]; but the soul is the cause of being for living things, for through the soul they live; and living itself [*ipsum uiuere*] is their being [*esse*]; therefore, the soul is the cause of living things in the role of *form*” (emphasis added).

²⁰ Cf. *ST* I–II, q. 85, a. 6, on form as principle of being (in the context of the question: is death natural?). Cf. also *ST* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 3: “natura reflectitur in seipsam non solum quantum ad id quod est ei singulare, sed multo magis quantum ad commune, inclinatur enim unumquodque ad conservandum non solum suum individuum, sed etiam suam speciem. Et multo magis habet naturalem inclinationem unumquodque in id quod est bonum universale simpliciter”; “nature is turned back towards itself not only as regards that which is singular to it, but much more as regards that which is common: for each thing is inclined to the conserving not only of its own individual self, but also of its own species. And much more does each thing have a natural inclination towards that which is the unqualifiedly universal good.”

exhibiting itself in the theatre of natural change.²¹ The difference in perspective relates to the primacy of being over goodness in the mind's grasp of reality.²² In this regard I would recall some remarks by Jacques Maritain at the very beginning of his book *Court traité de l'existence et de l'existant*. He is criticizing Descartes's conception of God as a sort of pure liberty, having no essence. God is thus seen as quite arbitrarily fabricating the eternal truths. We read:

No doubt he [Descartes] spoke more than ever of the divine essence, to the point of seeing in it something like the efficient cause of the existence of God. But this essence becomes so absolutely impenetrable—save inasmuch as its mere idea suffices to assure us that God exists—that it is no more, so to speak, than the dazzle of the mere existence of God, conceived as an act of pure will. Ultimately one would have a divine existence without a *nature*. And since that is unthinkable, thought slips to the more or less ambiguous substitute furnished by the idea of a pure Action, a pure Efficiency or a pure Liberty, superior to the whole order of intelligence and intelligibility, that would posit itself without reason, by its sole “power,” and that would create arbitrarily the intelligibles and the essences as well as the ideas that are the portraits of them in our minds. That is precisely why the God of Descartes is a Will perfectly exempt from every order of Wisdom (a position which St. Thomas regarded as blasphemy), why this God excludes from his action *every kind of finality*, why he creates the eternal truths as purely contingent items, which do not depend at all on his immutable Essence whose intelligence would *see* immutably the possible participations, but rather on his simple Will, why he could have brought it about that the

²¹ Cf. for example CM 8.5.8: “Deinde, cum dicit ‘quaecumque vero,’ solvit praedictam dubitationem quantum ad ea quae sunt omnino a materia separata; dicens, quod quaecumque non habent materiam intelligibilem, ut mathematica, nec sensibilem, ut naturalia, sicut sunt substantiae separatae, statim unumquodque eorum est unum aliquid. *In his enim quae habent materiam, non statim unumquodque est unum, sed unitas eorum est ex hoc quod unitas advenit materiae.* Sed si aliquid sit quod sit *forma tantum, statim est unum*; quia non est in eo ponere aliquid quocumque ordine, prius quam expectet *unitatem a forma.*” “Then, when [Aristotle] says: ‘But whatever . . .,’ he solves the aforementioned problem as regards those things which are altogether separate from matter; saying that whatever things do not have intelligible matter, as do mathematics, nor sensible [matter], as do natural objects, such as are the separate substances, each of such things is immediately something one. *For in those things which have matter, each one is not immediately something one, but rather their oneness is from this, that oneness comes to the matter.* However, if there is something which is *form alone*, it is immediately one, because there is not in it something in any order having priority to its having *oneness from form.*” (Emphasis added.) And cf. further texts in Appendix below.

²² Cf. ST I, q. 5, a. 2.

mountains had no valleys, that the circle was square, and that contradictions were true at once, and why the whole order of human morality is, in his view, affected with the same radical contingency and depends on a pure decree without reason, the just and the unjust only being so in accordance with the good pleasure of his Sovereign Existence and the motiveless choice by which the divine Subject decides to exercise his creative liberty.²³

What interests me in this is the contrary position, namely that God does not *fabricate* the divine ideas, as though he were a mechanic; he rather *sees* the infinity of possible finite imitations of the divine being.²⁴ The essence or nature or form of a creature is such an imitation which he has decided to use as principle of an actual being. Form just is participation in divine actuality.²⁵

All of this should be insisted on prior to any physics or biology of the appearance of species.

Thusfar I have looked at Thomas's conclusions. There remains "the way up," that is, the philosophical work of presenting things as effects in the order of being, and so as requiring as a God a cause of being as being. I have in mind especially Thomas's Fourth Way as sketching the hierarchical vision of being as being. This is a hierarchy in terms of the priority of act over potency, priority as to nobility, as to intelligibility, and as to goodness.²⁶

²³ Jacques Maritain, *Court traité de l'existence et de l'existant* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947), 14–15; my italics and translation.

²⁴ Cf. *ST* I, q. 15, a. 2; q. 14, a. 12; and q. 14, a. 6 (97b43–98a3): "Propria enim natura uniuscuiusque consistit, secundum quod per aliquem modum divinam perfectionem participat. Non autem deus perfecte seipsum cognosceret, nisi cognosceret quomodocumque participabilis est ab aliis sua perfectio, nec etiam ipsam naturam essendi perfecte sciret, nisi cognosceret omnes modos essendi. Unde manifestum est quod deus cognoscit omnes res propria cognitione, secundum quod ab aliis distinguuntur." "The proper nature of each thing whatsoever is to be found inasmuch as it participates in the divine perfection in some measure. Now God would not know himself perfectly did he not know the extent to which his own perfection is participable by others, nor would he perfectly know the nature of being if he did not know all the apportionments of being. Hence, it is evident that God knows all things by proper knowledge, according as they are distinguished from each other."

²⁵ Cf. my *St. Thomas and Form as Something Divine in Things* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2007).

²⁶ Notice that the very division of being by act and potency is a division according to the "more" and the "less," as can be gathered from Thomas, *De substantiis separatis*. See *De substantiis separatis*, c. 7, lines 47–52 (*Opera Omnia*, t. 40 [Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969]): "Manifestum est autem quod cum ens per potentiam et actum dividatur, quod actus est potentia perfectior et *magis habet de ratione essendi*; non enim

Many years ago I showed, to my own satisfaction at least, how the first four Ways of the five are based on the doctrine of the modes of being as act, and the properties of being as act, presented by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 9.²⁷ While act and potency are first presented by him as found in one thing, Aristotle, as Thomas reads him, goes on to present the contrast between imperishable substance and perishable substance as an even clearer case of the priority of act over potency.²⁸ However, the imperishable substance he has in mind is that of the celestial bodies. So also, in *Metaphysics* 2.1, Aristotle presents the hierarchy of being by moving from the perishable to the celestial bodies and then to their causes.²⁹ Thus Thomas, commenting upon this, speaks of the principles of the celestial bodies:

[T]he principles of those things which are always, viz. of the celestial bodies, must necessarily be truest. And this for two reasons. Firstly, they are not sometimes true and sometimes not; and by this they transcend in truth generable and corruptible things, which sometimes are and sometimes are not. Secondly, because nothing is a cause relative to them, but they are the cause of being for the others; and by this they transcend in truth and entity [*in veritate et entitate*] the celestial bodies: which though they are incorruptible nevertheless have a cause, not only as regards their being moved, as some have opined, but also as regards their being, as here the Philosopher expressly says.³⁰

And this discussion is background for the Fourth Way (which twice refers to it explicitly). Since the ontology of the celestial bodies has been discovered to be nothing like what Aristotle and Thomas envisaged, it is necessary to ask what remains of the sort of metaphysical picture they proposed.

In the just quoted passage from Thomas's paraphrase the celestial bodies are the only caused ingenerable things envisaged. We know from other texts that Thomas credited Aristotle with a doctrine of *created* sepa-

simpliciter esse dicimus quod est in potentia, sed solum quod est actu.” “It is evident that, since that-which-is is divided by potency and act, act is more perfect than potency and has *more of the intelligible character of being*: for we do not say ‘is,’ unqualifiedly, of that which is in potency, but rather of that which is in act” (emphasis added).] While all five Ways to God (*ST* I, q. 2, a. 3) are metaphysical, the fourth is primary in this regard. All reduce to the priority of act over potency, and so to the *magis* and *minus* as regards the *ratio essendi*, explicitly presented in the Fourth Way.

²⁷ Cf. my essay “The Number and Order of St. Thomas’s Five Ways,” *Downside Review* 92 (1974): 1–18.

²⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8 (1050b6ff.) and Thomas, *CM* 9.9 (1867–71).

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 2.1 (993b19–31).

³⁰ *CM* 2.2 (295).

rate substances.³¹ One might well ask whether even without the celestial bodies one would still have a metaphysical hierarchy that would include *causes* between the creator and generable and corruptible things.³² In that regard I recall a text from one of Thomas's replies to Friar Bassiano of Lodi, the Lector of Venice. The question was this: "Whether some people have judged that it has infallibly been proved that angels are movers of the celestial bodies?"

Thomas answers:

To the fourth, I say that the books of the philosophers abound in such proofs that they think are demonstrations; it seems to me, also, that it can be demonstratively proved that the celestial bodies are moved by *some* intellect, *whether by God immediately or through the mediation of angels*. But that he moves them through the mediation of angels is something that accords more with the order of things which Dionysius asserts as infallible, viz. that lower things are administered by God through intermediaries, speaking of the usual course of things.³³

Thus, Thomas is notably cautious in this matter, though he is obviously an enthusiastic supporter of the view that the angels have such a role. How such a role could still be given them when the Aristotelian celestial bodies are eliminated is not a simple question.³⁴

Nevertheless, in Thomas's metaphysics there is still the doctrine of the incorruptibility of the human soul. It can very well help fill out the hierarchy of nobility, goodness, truth, and being, which constitutes the starting-point of the Fourth Way, leading to a cause of being as being.³⁵ Such a cause can quite well account for both the variety of intelligible forms in things and the role of random mutation in their appearance.

Appendix for Note 21

I here add a few texts on being, unity, and form (emphasis added). *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 3 (Leonine lines 54–63):

³¹ Cf. *De substantiis separatis*, c. 3, Leonine lines 7–21, and my paper "Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 50 (1994): 363–87.

³² Here I am not speaking of creative causality, of course, since only God can create (ST I, q. 45, a. 5), but of some causal role relative to the world of generation and corruption (such a role as could be relevant for a doctrine of evolution not strictly through random mutation).

³³ *Responsiones ad lectorem Venetum de articulis* XXX, ad 4.

³⁴ Cf. ST I, q. 110, aa. 2 and 3, where Thomas explains the role of the angel as one of working through the celestial body by moving it.

³⁵ Cf. my essay "St. Thomas, the Fourth Way, and Creation," *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 371–78.

Et sic bonum praesupponit verum, verum autem praesupponit unum, cum veri ratio ex apprehensione intellectus perficiatur; *unumquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum; qui enim non intelligit unum, nihil intelligit*, ut dicit Philosophus in *Metaph.* 4. Unde istorum nominum transcendentium talis est ordo, si secundum se considerentur, quod post ens est unum, deinde verum post unum, et deinde post verum bonum.

Cf. also CM 4.7 (615) (that is, par. 5) (concerning Aristotle, 4.4 [1006b10]):

Si autem nomen non significat finitas rationes, sed infinitas, manifestum est quod nulla erit ratio sive disputatio. *Quod sic patet. Quod enim non significat unum, nihil significat.* Et hoc sic probatur. Nomina significant intellectus. Si igitur nihil intelligitur, nihil significatur. *Sed si non intelligitur unum, nihil intelligitur; quia oportet quod qui intelligit AB ALIIS DISTINGUAT.* Ergo si non significat unum, non significat. Sed si nomina non significant, tolletur disputatio, et quae est secundum veritatem et quae est ad hominem. Ergo patet quod si nomina infinita significant, non erit ratio sive disputatio. Sed si contingit intelligere unum, imponatur ei nomen, et sic teneatur quod nomen significet aliquid.

And cf. *De Substantiis Separatis*, c. 6 (Leonine lines 88–96):

Tollit demum, et ut finaliter concludam, praedicta positio [sc. of Gebirol] etiam *philosophiae primae principia*, auferens *unitatem* a singulis rebus, et per consequens veram *entitatem* simul et *rerum diversitatem*. Si enim alicui existenti in actu superveniat alius actus, non erit totum unum per se, sed solum per accidens; eo quod duo actus vel formae secundum se diversae sunt, conveniunt autem solum in subiecto.

N·V