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Guidance for Doting and Peeping Thomists[1]

A Review Essay of *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*

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Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide. By Edward Feser. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009. 216 pages. $14.95.

Over the past several decades we have witnessed a renaissance of interest in the philosophical and theological work of Thomas Aquinas. But not only that, there has arisen, especially among Evangelical Protestants, a greater appreciation for the philosophical issues that drove Aquinas's understanding of the human person, the natural law, the nature of God, and general revelation. These Evangelicals include Norman L. Geisler, Winfried Corduan, J. P. Moreland, R. C. Sproul, and W. David Beck. Geisler, in fact, is the author of *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*,[2] and the teacher of many Evangelical seminarians and scholars who were intellectually and spiritually formed by Aquinas via Geisler. Even among those philosophers who do not consider themselves Thomists—for example, William Lane Craig, Douglas Groothius—they have, for the most part, developed a Thomistic posture on the relationship between faith, reason, and Christian belief.

Abstract: This essay is a review of Edward Feser's *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*. In the first part, the author summarizes the book's five chapters, drawing attention to Feser's application of Aquinas's thought to contemporary philosophical problems. Part 2 is dedicated to Feser's Thomistic analysis of Intelligent Design (ID). The author explains Feser's case and why Aquinas's "Fifth Way," which is often labeled a "design argument," depends on a philosophy of nature that ID's methods implicitly reject.

1. The term "Peeping Thomist" comes from the subtitle of a book by Ralph McInerny, *A First Glance at St. Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). As I far as I know, I coined the term "Doting Thomist." I had the privilege to serve with Ralph on the faculty at the University of Notre Dame (2008–2009) the year before he died (29 January 2010). This was a man overflowing with wit, wisdom, and love. We will miss him dearly.

2. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).

Because many of these peeping and doting Thomists have received their formal philosophical and theological training in academic departments that are analytic (for philosophers) and Protestant (for theologians and biblical scholars), there is a tendency to read Aquinas through the lenses of the concepts and issues that dominate these respective approaches. So, for example, when a metaphysician grapples with Aquinas's essentialism, she may read him to mean something like the essentialism of Hillary Putnam or Saul Kripke.[3] A philosophical theologian, on the other hand, may read Aquinas's Fifth Way (of the famous "Five Ways" to prove God's existence) as a precursor or early version of what is called "Intelligent Design" (ID). In both cases, each would be reading Aquinas wrongly. This is because Aquinas approaches philosophy and theology with a much different set of assumptions and categories that have not been shaped (or misshapen) by the rise of modern philosophy that has, whether for good or for ill, set the agenda for contemporary philosophy and theology.

For this reason, Edward Feser's *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* is a breath of fresh air as an introduction to the work of the Angelic Doctor. Although there are some fine introductions to Aquinas's thought (for example, Etienne Gilson's *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*[4]), none of them offers an understanding of Aquinas that adequately interacts with contemporary analytic philosophy and its theological equivalents. Feser is uniquely qualified for the task: he has training in analytic philosophy (PhD, Univer-

3. Writes Feser:

> From an Aristotelian-Thomistic point of view, the possible worlds analysis of essence has things backwards: we need to know what the essence of a thing is first, before we can know what it would be like in various possible worlds; talk of possible worlds, if legitimate at all, must get explained in terms of essence, not essence in terms of possible worlds. Furthermore, the possible worlds analysis obliterates an important distinction much emphasized in Aristotelian essentialism. Consider Socrates' rationality and his ability to learn languages (to borrow an example from Christopher Shields). Socrates has these in every possible world in which he exists at all, and thus, the contemporary essentialist concludes, both features are essential to him. But from the Aristotelian point of view, Socrates' ability to learn languages, though one of his necessary features—for him to lose it would entail that he ceases to exist—is nevertheless not as basic to him as his rationality is. The reason is that his ability to learn languages derives from his rationality; its necessity, though real, is therefore a derived necessity. It is only those features of a thing that are not derived in this way that can, from the Aristotelian point of view, count as part of the essence of a thing. Those features deriving from the essence, such as Socrates' ability to learn languages, are instead referred to as "properties," since they are proper or necessary to a thing in a way that its purely contingent features (like Socrates' being in Athens or having been a soldier) are not. ("Property" thus has a different connotation in Aristotelian metaphysics than it does among contemporary philosophers, who use it instead as more or less synonymous with what Aquinas would instead call an "accident," viz. that which exists only as an attribute of a substance, as e.g. redness exists only in red things.) (25–6)

4. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. Shook, CSB (1956; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964).

sity of California–Santa Barbara), a deep and wide reading of Aquinas and his interpreters, as well as a stellar publication record on the leading issues in contemporary analytic philosophy across several subfields (for example, mind-body problem, political liberalism, applied ethics).

When I first began writing this review essay, I thought that I could summarize each section of the book while drawing the reader's attention to specific points in it that I thought the readership of *Philosophia Christi* would have a special interest. Because Feser is one of many Thomist critics of ID, and because many readers of *Philosophia Christi* are either sympathizers or advocates of ID, it was clear to me soon after I began writing this essay that I had to deal with the issue of Aquinas and ID in a separate section. So, this review essay is divided into two parts: Feser on Aquinas, and Aquinas and Intelligent Design.

Feser on Aquinas

This book consists of five chapters: (1) St. Thomas, (2) Metaphysics, (3) Natural Theology, (4) Psychology, and (5) Ethics. In chapter 1 Feser provides an overview of Aquinas's life, works, and influences. If one is looking for a biography of Aquinas, one should read G. K. Chesterton's classic.[5] But for a brief summary, Feser's chapter does the trick. It is in the next four chapters that we get the nuts and bolts of Aquinas's philosophy.

Chapter 2 concerns Aquinas's metaphysics. Feser does yeoman's work in offering a clear and concise presentation of what can be very difficult to understand for the beginner. He warns the reader that it is a mistake to read Aquinas as if he were a modern or contemporary philosopher, since much of his metaphysical thought has been rejected by modernism (though, as Feser argues, for less than good reasons). We should, counsels Feser, read Aquinas's metaphysics on its own terms and not allow our modern prejudices (that we naively think are "obviously true") to lead us to believe something about Aquinas that he never thought or entertained. Because Aquinas's natural theology, psychology, and ethics depend on his metaphysics, chapter 2 is the most important chapter in the book. And Feser makes it worth your while. He carefully and clearly covers act/potency, hylomorphism, the four causes (efficient, material, final, and formal), existence/essence, and the transcendentals.

Natural theology is the concern of chapter 3. Feser offers a thorough introduction to both Aquinas's Five Ways as well as Aquinas's understanding of the divine attributes. Concerning the former, he reminds us that they are summaries, should not be taken as complete arguments for God's existence, and should not be isolated from Aquinas's larger body of work. Remember, the *Summa Theologica* in which the Five Ways first appear "was meant as a

5. G. K. Chesteron, *Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox* (1933; New York: Doubleday, 1956).

textbook for beginners in theology who were already Christian believers, not an advanced work in apologetics intended to convince skeptics" (63). Feser also notes that "the Five Ways themselves are merely short statements of arguments that would already have been well known to the readers of Aquinas's day, and presented at greater length and with greater precision elsewhere" (63). In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, for example, Aquinas, "gives two much more detailed versions of the proof from motion, along with versions of the proof from causality, the grades of perfection, and finality" (63). This is why Feser is noticeably disappointed with Richard Dawkins's incompetent presentation of Aquinas's Five Ways in Dawkins's *The God Delusion* (63–4).[6] As I have already noted, Feser's understanding of the Fifth Way, which is often referred to as Aquinas's argument from design, will be taken up below.

In chapter 4, Feser introduces the reader to Aquinas's psychology, covering these subjects: the soul, intellect and will, immateriality and immortality, and hylomorphic dualism. This chapter covers issues in epistemology and philosophical anthropology with which most Christian philosophers are familiar. However, Feser, with the assistance of Aquinas, offers a fresh look at some of the problems that contemporary analytic philosophers face in these two subfields. Take, for example, the interaction problem, often employed against Cartesian dualists who maintain that a human being consists of two substances: a material body and an immaterial mind. It goes like this: because matter and mind are completely different sorts of things—different "substances" if you will—that have nothing in common (matter has extension, can be measured and so forth; whereas mind has no extension, cannot be measured and so forth), how can they interact with each other, as in the case of the apparently willing agent who lifts his arm or writes an essay?

The problem arises, writes Feser, because the Cartesian dualist, like the mind-body physicalist, accepts a mechanistic view of nature, that it consists only of efficient and material causes plus (if you're a dualist) or minus (if you're a physicalist) the human mind. So, the mind—this immaterial substance—becomes a kind of inexplicable anomaly in an otherwise coherent metaphysical narrative.

Although the Thomist view is not without its problems, Feser writes that it avoids the interaction problem precisely because it rejects the mechanistic philosophy of nature that gave us the problem to begin with. Feser explains that this mechanistic view makes the "false assumption that the relationship between soul and body is to be conceived of as an instance of efficient causation between two complete substances" (166). In contrast, Aquinas maintains (following Aristotle) that nature consists of efficient, material, formal, and final causes. And these causes work in concert in the commencement and development of all living organisms. So, for Aquinas, the soul is the form of the matter of which the body consists, and that soul provides to the whole

6. Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2007).

person an intrinsic ordering, including a hierarchy of potentialities and powers whose perfections and proper use may lead to human flourishing. These powers include spiritual and mental ones, both of which are immaterial. Because the Thomist philosophy of nature includes formal and final causes, something like "intentionality" does not seem like an anomaly as it does for a mechanistic view. This is because "intentionality," for the Thomist, is not an efficient cause (or the effect of an efficient cause) for which we need to find a place in the vast material machine we call the universe. Intentionality is the exercise of a mental power that beings with human souls possess by nature. Just as meaning cannot be separated from the form of the ink we see on paper and we call "letters," for the Thomist, intentionality is not at all anomalous in a universe teeming with material organisms that necessarily require formal and final causes. Because spiritual and mental powers are intrinsic (either in potency or in actuality) to a human being's form and finality, there is no interaction problem for the Thomist, just as there is no interaction problem between the physicality of the ink-published words and the meaning they communicate by virtue of their shape and order (that is, their "form").

Thus, for the Thomist, there are immaterial and material aspects to the human being, though he or she is only one substance, not two. A substance, according to Aquinas, is an individual being, a unified whole, that has properties and parts and is itself not the property or part of another being (or substance). In the words of my late professor, W. Norris Clark, SJ, the human substance "has the aptitude to exist in itself and not as a part of any other being" and "is the unifying center of all the various attributes and properties that belong to it at any one moment."[7]

In chapter 5, Feser deals with Aquinas's ethics, covering three areas: the good, natural law, and religion and morality. Although brief, in this chapter Feser brings to our attention aspects of Aquinas's thought that will interest many Christians outside the Catholic Church. For example, there are many Evangelical Protestants,[8] who though parting ways with Aquinas on ecclesiastical and sacramental questions, embrace the spirit of his natural law reasoning. These thinkers will find Feser's brief overview of the differing natural law schools of thought extremely informative. What will surprise many of them is that some of the most well-known natural law thinkers with whom they are most familiar, such as the "new natural lawyers" (for example, Robert P. George, Germain Grisez, and John Finnis), "try to reinterpret

7. W. Norris Clarke, SJ, *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 105.

8. See, e.g., Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas*, 163–75; J. Daryl Charles, "Protestants and Natural Law," *First Things*, December 2006, 33–8; Michael Bauman, *Pilgrim Theology: Taking the Path of Theological Discovery* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 203–8; David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Acton Institute, 2006); Alan F. Johnson, "Is There Biblical Warrant for Natural Law Theory?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 185–99.

Aquinas's ethics in a way that divorces it from his now highly controversial essentialism" (174).

Aquinas and Intelligent Design

In the world of Evangelical Protestantism, some enthusiastic supporters of natural theology (for example, Groothius[9]) have gravitated to the ID movement because they see in it a persuasive case against philosophical naturalism. The way they see it, some of what comes out of modern philosophy (David Hume being the main antagonist) and the rise of neo-Darwinian science are defeaters to belief in God, since both undermine a potent version of "the argument from design" that was once embraced by Enlightenment theists such as William Paley (1743–1835). But ID has changed all that, for it shows, according to its proponents, that natural processes, such as Darwinian natural selection, cannot account for biological entities that exhibit specified or irreducible complexity.[10] These entities require an intelligent designer to account for them. So, after Darwin and before the ascendancy of ID, one had no warrant to believe that teleology is present *in* nature.[11]

9. See Douglas R. Groothius and James F. Sennett, eds., *A Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Humean Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005); Douglas R. Groothius, "Intelligent Design and the State University: Accepting the Challenge," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 60 (2008): 233–9.

10. Dembski writes:

> Science works with available evidence, not with vague promises of future evidence. Our best evidence points to the specified complexity (and therefore design) of the bacterial flagellum. It is therefore incumbent on the scientific community to admit, at least provisionally, that the bacterial flagellum is designed. Nor should opponents of intelligent design comfort themselves with any misplaced notion that the intelligent design movement is and will be powered solely by the bacterial flagellum. Assertibility comes in degrees, corresponding to the strength of the evidence that justifies a claim. That the bacterial flagellum exhibits specified complexity is highly assertible—this despite the logical impossibility of ruling out the infinity of possible indirect Darwinian pathways that might give rise to it. Yet for other systems, like enzymes that exhibit extreme functional sensitivity, there could be compelling grounds for ruling out such indirect Darwinian pathways as well. The assertibility for the specified complexity of such systems could therefore prove stronger still.
>
> The evidence for intelligent design in biology is thus destined to grow even stronger. There's only one way evolutionary biology can defeat intelligent design, and that is by in fact solving the problem that it claimed all along to have solved but in fact never did—to account for the emerge of multipart, tightly integrated complex biological systems (many of which displace irreducible and minimal complexity) apart from teleology or design. (William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 114–15)

11. One may, of course, have warrant to believe in God on other grounds. But, according to this narrative, Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolution is a defeater to the sort of argument that moves from present teleology in nature to the existence of God.

In William A. Dembski's narrative of the history of the design argument, he pretty much concedes this. He states that "with the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century, design arguments took a mechanical turn. The mechanical philosophy that was prevalent at the birth of modern science viewed the world as an assemblage of material particles interacting by mechanical forces. Within this view, design was construed as externally imposed on preexisting inert matter." He goes on to show how this view made possible Paley's natural theology including his famous Watchmaker Argument. However, writes Dembski, Charles Darwin, with the publication of *Origin of Species*, "delivered the design argument its biggest blow," though that did not spell the end of design arguments. Instead of "finding specific instances of design within the universe," design arguments focused "on determining whether and in what way the universe as a whole was designed." But, fortunately, all was not lost. According to Dembski, "[d]esign theorists see advances in the biological and information sciences as *putting design back in the saddle* and enabling it to out-explain Darwinism, thus making design rather than natural selection currently the best explanation of biological complexity."[12]

Even though some attribute an ID-approach to Aquinas,[13] Feser argues that the attribution is mistaken and reveals a misunderstanding of what Aquinas was trying accomplish in his Fifth Way.[14] For Aquinas, the design or purpose *of* nature refers to the interrelationship of "all things" in the universe, including scientific laws and all inanimate and animate things and their powers, which have their own natures that direct them to certain ends. And they are all kept in existence by the God Who brought the universe into being *ex nihilo*. Thus, writes Feser, "Aquinas . . . takes the Fifth Way to entail the existence of nothing less than the God of classical theism, who sustains the order of the world here and now and at any moment at which it exists" (111). That is, "Aquinas's argument is intended as a metaphysical demonstration" and not as a "quasi-scientific empirical hypothesis" that claims to offer a probable and provisionary answer, which is precisely what the ID advocates claim of their view (111). As Dembski writes, ID "depends

12. Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 66, 67, 68, 69, 288 (emphasis added).

13. Martha Nussbaum, e.g., makes this mistake in her book, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 322.

14. Writes Aquinas:

> The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God. (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.2, a.3)

on advances in probability theory, computer science, molecular biology, the philosophy of science and the concept of information—to name but a few."[15] Thus, without the assistance of these advances, belief in design in nature is imperiled. For this reason, according to Stephen Meyer, ID must exclusively bear the burden to ward off philosophical materialism.[16] Or, as Dembski puts it: "Naturalism is the disease. Intelligent design is the cure."[17]

As Feser suggests, this posture does to Christian metaphysics what some prominent analytic philosophers are suggesting every branch of philosophy should have done to it: naturalize it.[18] As Brian Leiter puts it, the first half of the twentieth century's "linguistic turn . . . has either been supplanted or supplemented by the naturalistic turn, in which traditional philosophical problems are thought be insoluble by the *a priori*, armchair methods of the

15. Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 37, 37n11.

16. Writes Meyer:

> For almost 150 years many scientists have insisted that "chance and necessity"—happenstance and law—jointly suffice to explain the origin of life on earth. We now find, however, that orthodox evolutionary thinking—with its reliance upon these twin pillars of materialistic thought—has failed to explain the specificity and complexity of the cell. Even so, many scientists insist that to consider another possibility would constitute a departure from science, from reason itself.
>
> Yet ordinary reason, and much scientific reasoning that passes under the scrutiny of materialist sanction, not only recognizes but requires us to recognize the causal activity of intelligent agents. The sculptures of Michelangelo, the software of the Microsoft corporation, the inscribed steles of Assyrian kings—each bespeaks the prior action of an intelligent agent. Indeed, everywhere in our high-tech environment we observe complex events, artifacts, and systems that impel our minds to recognize the activity of other minds—minds that communicate, plan, and design. But to detect the presence of mind, to detect the activity of intelligence in the echo of its effects, requires a mode of reasoning—indeed, a form of knowledge—the existence of which science, or at least official biology, has long excluded. Yet recent developments in the information sciences and within biology itself now imply the need to rehabilitate this lost way of knowing. As we do so, we may find that we have also restored some of the intellectual underpinning of traditional Western metaphysics and theistic belief. (Stephen C. Meyer, "DNA and Other Designs," *First Things*, April 2000, 38)

17. William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*: *The Bridge between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 120.

18. Writes Feser:

> Paley's argument was roughly this. Like some human artifacts, the universe is extremely complex and orderly; and while it is theoretically possible that this complexity and order was the result of impersonal natural processes, it is far more likely that is the work of an intelligent designer. Paley's favorite examples of complexity and order are living things and their various organs. His successors in the 'Intelligent Design' movement, though they attempt to formulate their position with greater mathematical rigor than Paley did, have followed him in this emphasis, focusing as they do on the purported 'irreducible complexity' of various biological structures. Critics of the design argument respond that this is 'God of the gaps' reasoning of the sort that is constantly vulnerable to being overthrown by the latest scientific research, which may well reveal (as it has in the past) that what seems at first glance to be irreducibly complex can be accounted for in terms of more simple, and impersonal, natural processes. (110–11)

philosopher, and to require, instead, embedding in (or replacement by) suitable empirical theories."[19] And this naturalistic turn requires a particular approach to metaphysics that is informed by an empiricist epistemology found in modern science. Leiter writes: "Philosophical understanding, in short, must be the same as scientific understanding: it must employ the same methods of understanding that the sciences deploy with good effect elsewhere."[20] Although ID advocates reject methodological naturalism (MN) in science when it comes to excluding ID conclusions *a priori*,[21] they in fact emulate the methodological posture of their opponents when it comes to embracing the "naturalistic turn." That is, when it comes to doing philosophy, Dembski and Leiter are two peas in a pod. The only difference is that Dembski thinks he has evidence for design whereas Leiter disagrees. But they are both operating under the aegis of the "naturalistic turn." This is why ID advocates claim they are no less "scientific" than their critics, except that each comes to different conclusions. As Dembski puts it: ID "takes a long-standing philosophical intuition and cashes it out as a scientific research program."[22]

ID advocates are, of course, foes of naturalism, and Feser is not suggesting otherwise. What he is suggesting, however, is that they want to use the naturalist's own methodological assumptions against naturalism, but in doing so concede so much to naturalism that they end up with a radically distorted theology and a dubious metaphysics.

This is why Feser argues that ID's scientific research program, like Paley's natural theology or philosophy's naturalistic turn, takes for granted "a mechanistic view of nature" that "denies that purpose or teleology is *immanent* or *inherent* in nature" (115).[23] Aquinas, according to Feser, rejects this view because it seemed to him that "every *agent* has a final cause; that is to say, that everything that serves as an efficient cause 'points to' or is 'directed at' some specific effect or range of effects as its natural end" (114). This is why, for the Thomist, chance and law—the two explanations that Dembski

19. Brian Leiter, "Naturalism and Naturalized Jurisprudence," in *Analyzing Law: New Essays in Legal Theory*, ed. Brian Bix (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 79.

20. Ibid., 83.

21. According to Dembski, *methodological naturalism* is "the view that science must be restricted solely to undirected natural processes . . ." (*Intelligent Design*, 119).

22. Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 37.

23. This charge is often misunderstood by ID advocates who claim to be Thomists or who assert that they believe that teleology is immanent or inherent in nature. What I am saying is that ID *as a scientific research program*—the "cure" for "naturalism" and "the bridge between science and theology" as Dembski has put it (*Intelligent Design*, 119, front cover)—seems to embrace the naturalistic turn, whose methodological constraints *deny* that teleology is immanent or inherent in nature. Given science's epistemological privilege in our culture, and given the rejection of traditional metaphysics by the many philosophers who embrace the naturalistic turn, it is not clear what sort of "bridge" to theology or "cure" for naturalism ID can possibly provide that does not seem to some of us to give away the store.

must eliminate in order to detect design in natural objects[24]—are not defeaters to teleology in nature. For chance and law—the natural processes themselves—reveal the final causality immanent and inherent in nature. Feser explains:

> This is why it is silly to ask (as is sometimes done) "What is the purpose of a mountain range?" or "What is the purpose of the asteroid?" as if such questions must be an embarrassment to the Aristotelian. Aquinas would be happy to allow that such things might turn out to serve no "purpose," in the sense of being accidental byproducts of convergent natural processes (plate tectonics or volcanism in the former case, say, and collisions between larger celestial bodies in the latter). He would insist, however, and quite plausibly, that such natural processes embody patterns of efficient causation that are themselves intelligible only in terms of final causation. And precisely for that reason, to the extent that biological processes like evolution manifest causal regularities, they if anything only *support* the Fifth Way rather than undermine it. For as with mountains, asteroids, and the like, even if it should turn out that animal species are the accidental products of various convergent impersonal natural processes, the existence of those evolutionary processes themselves would require explanation in terms of final causes. (114–15)[25]

Thus, for the Thomist, Darwinian mechanisms and pathways, as well as scientific laws and other natural processes, no more count against the existence and necessity of God (or even final or formal causality) than does the account of my conception by the natural processes of human reproduction count against the claim that God is Creator of the universe.[26] This is because the Fifth Way, like each of the other Five Ways, is not an argument from some inexplicable facts in the universe to the existence of God, as if the Divine were a hypothesis provisionally embraced until further evidence turns up.[27] Rather, according to Aquinas, the universe is a radically contingent be-

24. Writes Dembski: "For many in the natural sciences, design, as the action of an intelligent agent, is not a fundamental creative force in nature. Rather, blind natural forces, characterized by chance and necessity, are thought sufficient to all nature's creating" (*The Design Revolution*, 78).

25. Dallas Willard holds a similar view. See his *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 113–14.

26. Writes Aquinas:

> [T]he same effect is not attributed to a natural cause and to divine power in such a way that it is partly done by God, and partly by the natural agent; rather, it is wholly done by both, according to a different way, just as the same effect is wholly attributed to the instrument and also wholly to the principal agent. (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, bk. 3, chap. 70.8, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, http://www.op-stjoseph.org/Students/study/thomas/ContraGentiles3a.htm)

27. Writes Dembski: "For many in the natural sciences, design, as the action of an intelligent agent, is not a fundamental creative force in nature. Rather, blind natural forces, characterized by chance and necessity, are thought sufficient to all nature's creating" (*The Design Revolution*, 78).

ing requiring a Necessary Being, God, for its genesis as well as its continued existence including the development and order (*telos*) within it. But if one embraces the naturalistic turn, which assumes a methodological stance that excludes immanent final causality as empirically detectable because it eludes the strictures of modern science,[28] then ID and naturalism seem like the only two philosophically attractive options.[29] The Thomist, as Feser ably argues (36–51, 110–20), rejects this as a false choice.[30]

28. Feser would say that final causes are in general empirically detectable. E.g., we know empirically what the causal tendencies of various inorganic substances are, we know empirically what the functions of biological organs are, etc. Rather, the problem, according to Feser, is that naturalists, empiricists, et al. have a deficient understanding both of what counts as "empirical" and of how to detect it.

29. Feser is not suggesting that final causality should be included in scientific theories, as ID advocates claim should be done with their views. Rather, Thomism, like atheistic materialism, is a philosophical point of view. In this sense, Feser is following Etienne Gilson, who writes:

> [F]inalists . . . are constrained by the evidence of facts which in the tradition and through the example of Aristotle they desire to make intelligible. As far as I know, they do not claim anymore that "scientific" evidence is on their side; the scientific description of ontogenesis and phylogenesis remains identically what it is without the need of going back to the first, transscientific principles of mechanism or finalism. Natural science neither destroys final causality nor establishes it. These two principles belong to the philosophy of the science of nature, to that which we have called its "wisdom." What scientists, as scientists, can do to help clarify the problem of natural teleology is not to busy themselves with it. They are the most qualified of all to keep philosophizing about it, if they so desire; but it is then necessary that they agree to philosophize . . . .Finalist philosophies [like ID] are responsible to themselves; they do not involve themselves with science at all, and science, as such, has no cause to concern itself with them. (Etienne Gilson, *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), 15–16, 133)

30. See Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas on Creation: Writings on the "Sentence" of Peter Lombard 2.1.1*, trans. Stephen E. Baldner and William E. Carroll (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997); Francis J. Beckwith, "How to Be An Anti-Intelligent Design Advocate," *University of St. Thomas Journal of Law & Public Policy* 4 (2009–2010): 35–65; Joseph A. Bujis, "On Misrepresenting the Thomistic Five Ways," *Sophia* 48 (2009): 15–34; William E. Carroll, "At the Mercy of Chance? Evolution and the Catholic Tradition," *Revue des Questions Scientifiques* 177 (2006): 179–204; William E. Carroll, "Creation, Evolution, and Thomas Aquinas," *Revue des Questions Scientifiques* 171 (2000): 319–47; Thomas Crean, OP, *God Is No Delusion: A Refutation of Richard Dawkins* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007); Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine, 2008), 74–119; Marie I. George, "On Attempts to Salvage Paley's Argument from Design," in *Science, Philosophy, and Theology*, ed. John O'Callaghan (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine, 2004); Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*; Brad S. Gregory, "Science v. Religion? The Insights and Oversights of the 'New Atheists,'" *Logos* vol. 12, no. 4 (2009): 63–99; Ric Machuga, *In Defense of the Soul: What It Means to Be Human* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002); Sr. Damien Marie Savino, FSE, "Atheistic Science: The Only Option?" *Logos* vol. 12, no. 4 (2009): 56–73; Thomas W. Tkacz, "Thomas Aquinas vs. the Intelligent Designers: What Is God's Finger Doing in My Pre-Biotic Soup?" in *Intelligent Design: Real Science or Religion in Disguise?* ed. Robert Baird and Stuart Rosenbaum (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2007), 275–82.