

failed to see that the philosopher cannot prove contingent events in nature; such issues do not belong to philosophy. On the other hand, some scientists held materialistic views of the universe unacceptable to sound philosophy simply because they believed that science is all-embracing. This confusion was brought about because the scientists believed themselves to be philosophers, just as philosophers assumed that they could judge any and all affirmations of science.

Unfortunately Thomistic philosophy has been associated with these confusions for too long a time. Some philosophers have even suggested that Thomism is outdated and consequently inadequate to solve our modern problems.⁶⁷ On the contrary if Thomism is understood in all its implications I am sure that it can always be the guiding principle of human thought.

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COMMENT ON FR. DUFAULT'S PAPER

I am deeply honored to be asked to comment on this fine paper by Fr. Dufault. The honor is greater because this is one of the genuinely Thomistic papers given. We have learned to expect this kind of fidelity from Fr. Dufault. It is certainly refreshing to hear a problem, and one which is as important in contemporary thought as is the problem of evolution, discussed from a strictly Thomistic point of view. Too often we hear papers on this subject which go on *ad nauseam* about accidental questions and trivial distinctions to the extent that either there is no time left to speak about the problem itself or the audience has become so bored that the solution offered is lost to them.

Fr. Dufault has come directly to grips with the problem in his paper. With the principles of matter finality and efficient causality he has placed the problem in its philosophical perspective. The brevity of his analysis can be excused by the exigence of a paper of this nature. The principles are there and can be elaborated in the discussion to follow.

⁶⁷ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1950, p. 573.

Many in the audience no doubt, will count it a fault in the paper that there has been no mention of that modern so-called "key to the understanding of St. Thomas", namely the distinction between the existentialism of St. Thomas and the essentialistic or "quidditative" viewpoint of Aristotle. As a matter of fact Fr. Dufault writes as if the philosophical doctrines of Aristotle and St. Thomas formed an integral unity.

There are others, probably, who will want to take issue with the paper on the question of equivocal causality. This notion, according to many philosophers today, is as obsolete as the doctrine of the four elements or the Ptolemaic conception of the cosmos. But I shall leave such criticisms to others better qualified in these matters.

My own criticism of the paper may appear picayune and carping. In his introduction and in the summary published in *New Scholasticism* Fr. Dufault stated that he would try "to determine whether evolution is a scientific fact." This he has not done. I would not make a point of this if I did not feel that this idea which Fr. Dufault must have had in mind when composing this paper had not led him to make several statements which are either erroneous or at least ambiguous.

In his paper he says " (The) starting point (of the philosopher of nature) is not the precise information gathered through technical research but rather the more universal concepts of motion, principles of motion, causality, time, matter, finality, etc. On the basis of these fundamental notions he may try to account for individual phenomena and concrete beings, yet the philosopher must realize that the means at his disposal are inadequate since the contingency implied in all natural beings is an impediment to philosophical demonstration." Again he says that the "proper mode of demonstration (in the philosophy of nature) is hypothetical necessity." He returns to this near the end of his paper where he says: "The philosopher's conclusion is always hypothetical."

In the first place the philosopher of nature cannot try to account for "individual phenomena and concrete beings." This is very definitely the field of the experimental sciences. Philosophy of nature, as a strictly demonstrative science must use principles which are necessary. I feel that here Fr. Dufault has con-

fused, or at least not sufficiently explained, the mode of concretion in the various degrees of abstraction; especially those in metaphysics and the philosophy of nature. In every science we must go from what we know to what we do not know and this means, as St. Thomas says in the first book of the commentary on the Physics, that our knowledge goes from the universal to the particular. In the philosophy of nature this means that we start with very general notions and proceed towards the particular existing things in nature. In metaphysics, on the other hand, we start from notions of sensible things and according to the order of concretion arrive at the knowledge of separate substances. Now, while it is true that in metaphysics we have a more strict demonstration and thus a more necessary conclusion, it does not follow that our conclusions in the philosophy of nature are "hypothetical" in the ordinary meaning of that term. Fr. Dufault, I am certain, is aware of this because he himself says near the end of his paper that "This explanation of evolution is an integral part of Thomistic philosophy and constitutes a true demonstration . . ."

In the discussion I should like to have Fr. Dufault elaborate somewhat on this notion of hypothetical necessity both in the demonstration proper to the philosophy of nature and in the generation of natural things. In this connection he could also explain the way in which a proof in the philosophy of nature will show how evolution is "possible".

In his discussion of the appetite of matter I feel that the question, especially in its relation to the problem of evolution, could have been clarified with a distinction between the twofold appetite which matter has namely the appetite of matter considered in itself as the potency for any form and the appetite of matter as forming a principle in the universe here and now created. Possibly we can have some discussion on this point.

These then are the comments I would make on this paper. As I said in the beginning, they can only seem minor and trivial when compared with the excellent piece of work that Fr. Dufault has done. Again I wish to express my appreciation for having been given the opportunity to comment on this paper.

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