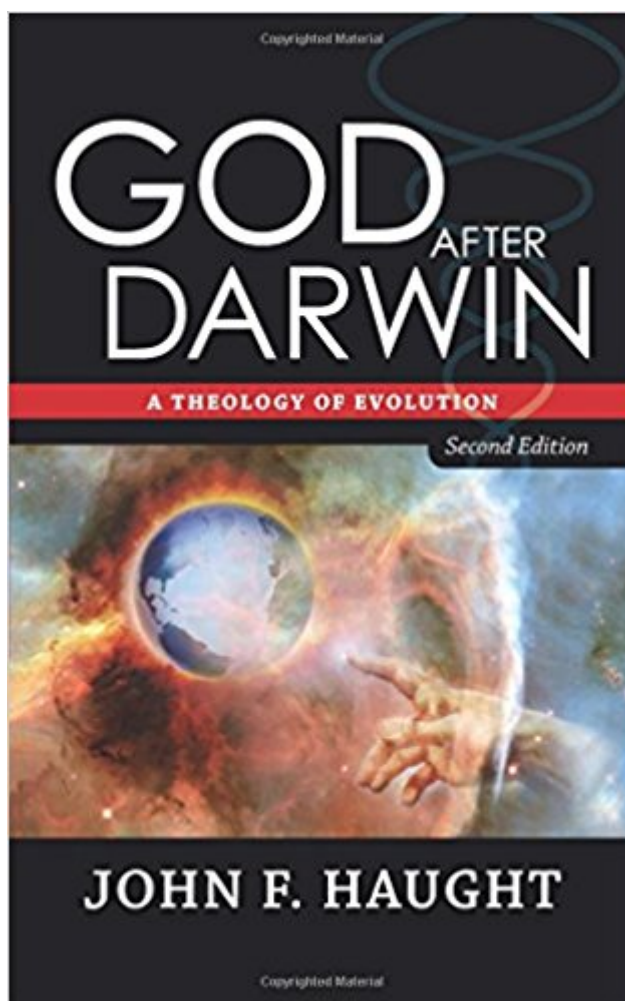


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# God After Darwin: A Theology Of Evolution



## Synopsis

In *God After Darwin*, eminent theologian John F. Haught argues that the ongoing debate between Darwinian evolutionists and Christian apologists is fundamentally misdirected: Both sides persist in focusing on an explanation of underlying design and order in the universe. Haught suggests that what is lacking in both of these competing ideologies is the notion of novelty, a necessary component of evolution and the essence of the unfolding of the divine mystery. He argues that Darwin's disturbing picture of life, instead of being hostile to religion-as scientific skeptics and many believers have thought it to be-actually provides a most fertile setting for mature reflection on the idea of God. Solidly grounded in scholarship, Haught's explanation of the relationship between theology and evolution is both accessible and engaging. The second edition of *God After Darwin* features an entirely new chapter on the ongoing, controversial debate between intelligent design and evolution, including an assessment of Haught's experience as an expert witness in the landmark case of *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* on teaching evolution and intelligent design in schools.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Highly provocative and much more comprehensible and enjoyable reading than anything produced by either Teilhard de Chardin or Whitehead...Highly recommended for philosophers, biologists, theologians, college students, and general readers interested in the interface between metaphysics, science and theology." *Choice*; "As an evolutionary biologist I cannot fail to be excited about Haught's writing." *Church Times* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

John F. Haught is professor at Georgetown University and Director of the Georgetown Center for the Study of Science and Religion. He lives in Arlington, Virginia. John F. Haught is professor at Georgetown University and Director of the Georgetown Center for the Study of Science and Religion. He lives in Arlington, Virginia.

In yet another insillation of his theistic evolution, much taken from Teilhard de Chadin, Haught seeks to show that there is little direct conflict between theism and science. Much like arguments put forth by Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame, Haught describes the true conflict to be between the metaphysical arguments stemming from the polemic positions of evolutionary materialism and intelligent design, both of which attempt to use the field of science to validate their own particular brand of philosophy. Haught proposes instead, that God's complete love for his creation and his self emptying in to that creation, a phenomena the Greeks refer to as Kenosis, allows for processes such as evolution to take root and prosper in a creation full of the promise of fulfillment. This as of yet unfulfilled state of the universe, also allows for the presence of suffering and evil. As put by the Apostle Paul, creation is filled with the groans of labor as it strives toward perfection. Although interesting, I found his argument skirting deism and lacking in explanation of how God might deliver himself totally to his creation yet still able to interact with it as revealed in scripture. Still, it is a worthwhile read and really does point out the flaws in the arguments of both materialism and intelligent design.

After reading a number of John Haught's books, I hoped this one would be a summary of his insights into the ongoing dialogue between Christian theology and current scientific knowledge. I was not disappointed. His ability to clearly communicate his thinking on this important subject invites readers to the dialogue and challenges them to further clarify their own thinking. He achieves these goals through a writing style that does not attack other points of view while clearly stating his own. This book makes a major contribution to a conversation that may be one of the most important ones facing persons of faith today.

John F. Haught has demonstrated that a modern "take" on an ancient and honorable theological pathway, that of natural theology, can assist greatly in thinking about God in an ecological and post-evolutionary world. His book, *God After Darwin*, will not persuade non-believers, but can help those of us who are committed Christians (and people of other faiths, as well) to understand that it is

both possible and necessary to re-image God, from an "All-powerful, Above all God" of coercion, to a future tending and persuasive God of loving promise. Haught makes great use of trends in process theology and cites a number of like-minded theologians such as John Polkinghorne, a current Anglican Scientist-Theologian. This book is an excellent argument for rethinking theology.

Reading John Haught's *God After Darwin*, I found myself drawn to meditate, not so much on biology, as on the theology of history. This is because Haught makes repeated reference to a "metaphysics of the future" as a means not only of accommodating the neo-Darwinian "story" about the world, but in fact, ultimately and coherently explaining that story on theological grounds. (It is an apt transition to make, from biological musings to the philosophy of history, as Haught notes in his endnotes, insofar as the narrative structure of nature is no more or less a construct or reality, respectively, than the scientific formalizations of nature.) In contrast to both a deterministic "metaphysics of the past" (e.g., materialism) and a static metaphysics of *esse* (being) (e.g., dehistoricized dualism-idealism qua escape from material reality), Haught argues that only a metaphysics of the future--a theology of hope--does justice to both the authentic biblical-prophetic vision, and the painful, erratic contingency of the neo-Darwinian story. Instead of seeing God as some static, otiose First Cause in the past, or as some impersonal ground of being behind or beneath every object, Haught argues we must see God as the Absolute Future, as the personal field of alluring potentiality that draws the world from its determined past and chaotic present into ever greater harmony. If the world is a mere sequelae of the past atomic state of affairs, or is simply a tiresome palimpsest veiling a deeper eternal reality, then the world as such is a distraction, a mere afterthought. If however the world is a genuine field of novelty and unheralded beauty, then life takes on greater meaning. As a Thomist I am not entirely onboard with Haught's process, Teilhardian, Whiteheadian, Rahnerian zeal--in particular his offhand disdain for *esse*, since there must BE something which undergoes any process--because I think classical Thomism has tremendously deep resources for situating God as the intimate-immanent cause of the world, which both sustains and propels it in the same way Haught's Absolute Future does (cf. St Thomas' Fifth Way). I also find weak Haught's argument that, whereas an absolutist, presentist metaphysics motivates oppressive uniformity (presumably by rejecting 'elements' that bar a return to a once-perfect past), since it could just as easily be argued--and, if Marxism at play is any indication, be executed--that present elements must be excised as obstacles to attaining the great and happy someday future. A major point on which I do concur with Haught, is his denial that there ever was a pristine past which we have fallen from as historical vagabonds. Instead, he argues, we are born

into a world-condition that ineluctably leads to "fall backward" from our covenanted promise in God. Instead of having fallen down from a pristine Eden, we consistently fall back from, and retreat from, the future as the field of novelty and hope that God promises to us. In this light, Haught says, "Nature is essentially promise." By this he means that only the promised fullness of God's fecund futurity accounts for the genuine novelty in evolution and in the human spirit. Nature is not constituted exclusively by its past or its present but in fact is "faithfully" formed and potentially reformed by the ever-broadening field of the future in which God dwells. Indeed, insofar as the past is gone, and the present is always on its way out, the future is, biblically and phenomenologically, the most real and dynamic mode of temporal existence. Complexity theory and self-organization are indicators of the cosmic *nisus*--and I would say, *telos*--toward ever greater beauty. Insofar as beauty consists in the harmonious balance between disparate elements, even ugly on their own, the Darwinian saga is the canvas on which God allows nature, and mankind within her, to forge its own distinct, integral, free harmony of competing elements. If I begin writing a line of random scribbles on a paper, and then suddenly shift into writing a coherent sentence, two things have happened. First, there has been no break in the physical, causal chain between the scribbling and the sentence. Second, order has emerged in a non-physical, but rather an informational, way. This is, analogously, how God brings order into the world, without imposing an extrinsic, causally disruptive order upon nature. Information is the "void" around which physical matter attains increasing complexity, as a window "forms" around the empty space in the wall. All this is so, because God, as self-emptying, self-restricting love, allows the world to "be" and become in its own properly natural way, and thus kenotically ratifies the metaphysical space in which the Darwinian saga has taken place. Reading all this, I am immediately reminded of Fr. Keefe's great work on the theology of history, *Covenantal Theology*. I think Keefe's work offers Haught a much deeper grounding in the Catholic tradition by showing how the myth of a perfect Eden-cosmos must defer to the truth that creation only exists IN CHRIST. History, that is, in its biological and sociological dimensions, is a theological category. Keefe, like Haught, assaults the millennium-old obsession with a cosmic order apart from God-in-Christ, an order that terminates in either meaningless necessity, or meaningless chaos. For my own part, I would say, analogically speaking, that a trinitarian schema for analyzing history is such: the Father is the past, the source of ultimate origin; the Son is the present, the source of incarnate divine kenosis; and the Spirit is the future, the source of promise on Whom we always wait for more, more both from the Father's eternal wisdom and from the Son's sacramentally immanent solidarity with us as Theandros. Related books of interest would be Haught's earlier book, *The Cosmic Adventure* (available online), D. Bonnette's *Origin of the*

Human Species\_, S. Jaki's \_The Purpose of it All\_, S.C. Morris's \_Life's Solution\_, L. Azar's \_Darwinism and Other Fairy Tales\_, and Æfâ . Gilson's \_From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again\_.

I purchased this book so that I could read the first chapter and then write an essay for a university. The author's main argument is based on the idea that the debate between Darwinian evolutionists and Christian apologists is basically misdirected. He believes that both sides believe in order and design in the universe. The author does not think that evolution as presented by Darwin is hostile to religion. I like to make up my own mind so what I would assume from what I have read is that the subject requires reading and research from more than one book. This book must be only the beginning if one is going to be able to speak intelligently about so involved a subject.

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