

Prolegomena to Any “Metaphysics of the Future”: A Critical Appraisal of John Haught’s Evolutionary Theology

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This article examines John Haught’s proposal for a “metaphysics of the future” within his program for an evolutionary theology. After offering an overview of Haught’s metaphysics and its roots in process thought, it argues that Haught’s account undermines his larger goal of dialogue between science and religion by making all knowledge of reality dependent on a prior and explicitly religious experience. This critique is brought into greater relief through a comparison with the thought of Bernard Lonergan, whose epistemology and metaphysics Haught has engaged numerous times throughout his career. The final section suggests one way of reframing Haught’s project that avoids these serious issues without jettisoning his important core insights.

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THROUGH his decades of scholarship and service, John Haught has been one of the strongest proponents of reimagining theological discussions in light of a thoroughly evolutionary framework. Recognizing the transformative potential of Haught’s work, Elizabeth Johnson has lauded his view of “the living world itself as a reality of enormous promise,” asserting that “no one has developed this argument with more intellectual rigor and eloquence than John Haught.”¹ Throughout Haught’s many works, his repeated call to a more evolutionary and ecological worldview has been framed around what he

¹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 253.

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terms a "metaphysics of the future." Haught marks this new metaphysical project out against the metaphysics of the past and present, which correspond to the naturalist materialism of the "new atheists" and the conception of a static universe typical of most of theological history, respectively. Only a metaphysics of the future, he argues, can move theology and science into a horizon broad enough to accommodate the richness of both disciplines in their evolutionary and eschatological character.

This article proposes to examine critically the meaning and impact of Haught's metaphysical program by arguing that, contrary to his intention, a metaphysics of the future may well hinder dialogue between religion and science in that it makes metaphysics dependent on experiences of special revelation and a faithful apprehension of what is to be. Haught argues that this metaphysics is necessary for developing an attentiveness to the reality of the inbreaking, eschatological character of a world marked by emergence and, in a special way, by the emergence of interiority in human subjects. While recognizing the value of many elements of Haught's project and of his goals, however, this article argues that Haught's metaphysics of the future and its particular use of process thought contradicts the very meaning of metaphysics and creates more problems than it solves.

The first section reconstructs Haught's account of his metaphysics of the future, drawing predominantly on his 1999 work *God after Darwin*. Following this, the second section draws from one of Haught's most formative influences, Bernard Lonergan, to raise a series of objections to Haught's metaphysics, first arguing that it erects new barriers to interdisciplinary dialogue and then exploring some of problematic elements that seem to influence Haught's larger framework. Finally, the third section suggests a possible reframing of Haught's project in terms of a stronger adherence to Lonergan's critical realist metaphysics and an accompanying emphasis on "psychic conversion," as developed by Robert Doran.

A Metaphysics of the Future

Though a metaphysics of the future remains a prominent element in Haught's most recent work, *The New Cosmic Story*,² the earliest and most complete account of it can be found in his much earlier book, *God after Darwin*. Here, Haught couches his metaphysical program within a larger reorientation of theological reflection within an evolutionary worldview:

² John F. Haught, *The New Cosmic Story: Inside Our Awakening Universe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), esp. 58–64, 88, 163, and 199.

Any thoughts we may have about God after the life and work of Charles Darwin (1809–1882) can hardly remain the same as before. Evolutionary science has dramatically changed our understanding of the world, and so any sense we may have of a God who creates and cares for this world must take into account what Darwin and his followers have told us about it.³

The challenge, as Haught sees it, is that “traditional natural theology” is ill-equipped to address the harsh realities of suffering, death, and extinction that drive the “contingency and turmoil in the life process” at the heart of evolution.⁴ A radical rethinking of the whole of theology is therefore needed to address these challenges through a new and deeper engagement with evolutionary science.

Surveying the contemporary dialogue between theology and science, Haught identifies three extant relational models: opposition, separatism, and engagement.⁵ Haught dismisses the first two models fairly quickly. Adherents to the first approach—including both fundamentalist believers in intelligent design and atheistic materialists—would see Haught’s rapprochement between theology and science in an evolutionary theology as “an egregious compromise” and so have already closed themselves off to the possibility of the larger conversation.⁶ The second group, the separatists, fare a bit better, arguing that both fields have their own proper domains of inquiry. They favor conflict avoidance through a mutual forfeit of metaphysically normative claims in regard to the other. Haught argues, however, that separatists are insufficiently dialectical to foster truly meaningful engagement between theology and science, resulting instead in a problematic construction of silos.⁷ This leaves the model of engagement, then, which is uniquely capable of providing an account of the shared space of all true knowledge specifically because it ventures into a unitive account of metaphysics.

Haught defines metaphysics generally as “the term philosophers use to refer to the general vision of reality that one holds to be true.”⁸ Although Haught recognizes the existence of alternative models, he advocates for a process approach to both the developing world and to the God who creates it: “When the idea of divine creativity is tempered by accounts of God’s vulnerability, and when nature itself is viewed as promise rather than

³ John F. Haught, *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), ix.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27–47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

simply as design or order, the evidence of evolutionary biology appears not only consonant with faith, but lends new depth to it as well."⁹ For Haught, process thought evokes an anticipatory mindset that sees real consonance between a developing God and a developing world, thereby bringing scientific and religious expectations closer together. Moreover, Haught argues that, from a theological standpoint, the resulting vision of God more closely approximates the kind of just, humble, and compassionate God described by Christianity:¹⁰

A persuasive God [like that described by process theology] is much more powerful than a hypothetical deity who magically forces things to correspond immediately to the divine intentions.... [A] world given lease to become more and more autonomous ... has much more integrity and value than any conceivable world determined in every respect by an external "divine designer."¹¹

God allows the universe an active role in its own co-creation because the particularities of creation are not determined from the outset according to a preexisting divine blueprint. The divine impetus on creation shifts from *vis a tergo* to *vis a fronte* as humanity is drawn into the inbreaking future by God's loving but noncompulsory action. In this way, Haught argues, process thought provides a compelling account of the real effectiveness of human freedom as ensured by God, even to the point of God being affected by contingent events in the created order.

On the basis of these purported strengths, Haught recommends a process-influenced "metaphysical framework centered around the biblical picture of 'the humility of God.'"¹² He argues that Christian theological history has too often missed the fundamental Trinitarian insight that "the crucifixion of Jesus [is] an inner dimension of God's experience rather than something external to the deity," and, as a result, has made "the image of Caesar rather than that of the humble shepherd of Nazareth ... the regnant model of God."¹³ Haught argues that the "best of our theologies"—a group including Bonhoeffer, Schillebeeckx, and Moltmann—have moved to supplant "the

⁹ *Ibid.*, x.

¹⁰ The extension of this worldview to other world religions is not ruled out in *God after Darwin*, but it is not until the recent publication of *The New Cosmic Story* that his scope has more intentionally and explicitly included a focus on the multiple traditions that emerged during Karl Jaspers' axial age. For Haught's own account of this, see especially *The New Cosmic Story*, pages 6–25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

specter of an invulnerable, immobile, and essentially non-relational God that seems so antithetical to the world's evolutionary becoming and self-creativity."¹⁴ Having spent years engaged with anti-theist polemicists such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, Haught argues that many other Christian apologists ignore the more developmental models stemming from process thought and instead focus on "the question of how to reconcile God's 'power' and 'intelligence' with the autonomous, random, and impersonal features of nature's evolution."¹⁵ Conversely, Haught argues, in embracing the process approach, Christian apologists could forego these false problematics entirely.

Haught further develops his suggested reorientation of metaphysics in conversation with the work of Teilhard de Chardin. Though Haught recognizes the scientific and philosophical critiques raised against Teilhard's approach, he argues that Teilhard's account of a "divine power of attraction ... was never intended to be taken as a strictly scientific explanation."¹⁶ Rather, Teilhard was pointing toward a different conception of metaphysics itself, which he sometimes referred to as a "metaphysics of *unire*."¹⁷ For Haught, Teilhard clarifies the need for something new in theology in the present evolutionary age, even as it recalls insights that lie at the root of the whole Christian tradition:

Evolution ... seems to require a divine source of being that resides not in a timeless present located somewhere "up above," but in the future, essentially "up ahead," as the goal of the world still in the making. The term "God" in this revised metaphysics must once again mean for us, as it did for many of our Biblical forebears, the transcendent future horizon that draws an entire universe, and not just human history, toward an unfathomable fulfillment yet to be realized.¹⁸

For Haught, Teilhard's vision entails a response to present needs through a retrieval of what has been lost or obscured in the history of theology. Thus, in line with Teilhard's metaphysics of *unire*, Haught sees his own metaphysics of the future as a step toward freeing Jerusalem from the adulterating influence of Athens.

Haught also stresses the important role that a metaphysics of the future must play in regard to the sciences: "[There is a] need to place the results of all scientific discovery within at least some general understanding of the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 56.

¹⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹⁷ Ibid., 91.

¹⁸ Ibid.

nature of reality ... [which] is the task of metaphysics, some version of which we all carry with us, whether we are aware of it or not."¹⁹ Given the necessity of (at least an implicit) metaphysics undergirding any truth claims, Haught argues that a metaphysics of the future best accounts for the developmental character of the universe as described by contemporary astrophysics, evolutionary biology, and genetics. He admits that "to the empirical eye and within the self-limiting scope of purely scientific 'explanation,' the whole idea of God will rightly be considered superfluous."²⁰ Still, even if the idea of God is not immediately applicable in the sciences, Haught suggests that the metaphysics of the future finds other direct applications in properly scientific discussions.

In particular, Haught points to the scientific notion of "information" that appears to be built into the unfolding world order: "Though it is not physically separate, information is logically distinguishable from mass and energy. Information is quietly resident in nature, and in spite of being nonenergetic and nonmassive, it powerfully patterns subordinate natural elements and routines into hierarchically distinct domains."²¹ Information in the world sets the conditions for higher emergences "by comprehensively integrating particulars (atoms, molecules, cells, bits, and bytes) into coherent wholes."²² Haught emphasizes that this information as "real" must:

[reside] in some other logical space than that of the atomic and historical particulars that natural science appeals to in its modern ideal of explanation ... [and is] a *metaphysical* necessity. For in order for anything to be actual at all it must have at least some degree of form, order, or pattern. Otherwise a thing would be indefinite, and whatever is indefinite is no-thing.²³

Haught argues that his metaphysics provides a "place" for the existence of intelligible, higher-order phenomena as constituent elements of the "real world" and not as mere idealist projections, thereby providing scientists with a framework for engaging theologians on common metaphysical ground as both look forward to the ongoing emergence of a dynamic world.

Having described the benefits of his own metaphysics of the future, Haught then distinguishes his account from two opposing metaphysical models. The first, the metaphysics of the present/presence, is composed of the remnants of the "Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical concepts"

¹⁹ Ibid., 58.

²⁰ Ibid., 59.

²¹ Ibid., 74.

²² Ibid., 79.

²³ Ibid., 80.

that—despite the positive example set by the forward-looking theologies of Moltmann, Rahner, Pannenberg, and Ted Peters—still determine many contemporary theologies and spiritualities that are “ruled by a metaphysics of the ‘eternal present.’”²⁴ In all such theologies, Haught argues, “the natural world is the always deficient reflection of—if not a perverse deviation from—a primordial reflection of ‘being’ that exists forever in a fixed realm generally pictured as ‘above’ creation, untouched by time.”²⁵ Turning, then, to his second metaphysical opponent, Haught critiques the metaphysics of the past for “[locating] the source and substance of life’s diversity in the purely physical determinism that, allegedly, has led, step by fateful step, out of the dead causal past to the present state of living nature in all its profusion and complexity.”²⁶ Haught attributes this metaphysics to naturalist materialists, who describe the universe as fundamentally lifeless, meaningless, and valueless matter that only accidentally (and ultimately inconsequentially) yields life and intelligence.²⁷

By contrast, Haught argues that a metaphysics of the future evinces a view of the whole cosmos as caught up in the perpetually inbreaking future through its orientation toward the greater emergence of life and interiority. Unlike the metaphysics of the present or past, Haught contends that his approach avoids defining things and persons either by reference to static and abstract natures in an (allegedly) Platonic and Aristotelian manner or by a reductionist and scientific accounting of mere material and efficient causality in the Cartesian *res extensa*. Rather, they are understood according to their freedom in a developing world with respect to some future completion that “according to the biblical vision of reality’s promise ... is the most real (though obviously not presently actualized) of all the dimensions of time.”²⁸ Haught defends his assertion of the ontological preeminence of future realities on the grounds not only that they “always shows up even after every present moment has slipped into the past, but ultimately because [the reality of the future] is the realm from which God comes to renew the world.”²⁹

²⁴ Ibid., 91.

²⁵ Ibid., 92.

²⁶ Ibid., 93.

²⁷ John F. Haught, *Is Nature Enough?: Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60–63.

²⁸ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 127.

²⁹ Ibid. Haught argues for this view of God’s action breaking in from the future throughout the chapter, but in this paragraph, he cites the particular influence of Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 259–95.

Haught then suggests a series of further theological conclusions that follow from his proposed metaphysical vision. He rejects the story of Edenic exile and argues that the stain of sin is a mark of incompleteness in ongoing creation.³⁰ He asserts that the abolition of Eden implies that "the age of expiation is over and done with, once and for all."³¹ He explores the process intuitions about the possible subjectivity of prebiotic matter,³² arguing against the mere scientific account that "contingency + law + the immensity of space and time = evolution," because, Haught argues, "the sheer immensity of time and space cannot be a cause of anything."³³ Drawing all of these strands together, Haught concludes the book by arguing that "the varying degrees of value or meaning that we attach to the distinct 'levels' of nature ... reside not so much in their being sacramental representations of a God totally outside of time—still less in their being dim reminders of a lost plenitude—but in their being *anticipations* of an excellence yet to be actualized."³⁴ Only a metaphysics of the future can reorient human subjectivity to be receptive of the hyper-real future breaking into our midst.

Although almost twenty years have passed since its first publication, *God after Darwin* gives a clear picture of the metaphysical convictions that stand at the core of Haught's theological program as it has developed over the intervening years. Some elements of his focus have shifted—such as his increasing appreciation for cosmic narrative and drama and his more recent emphasis on interreligious dialogue—but the metaphysics of the future has remained vital to his articulation of this project.³⁵ Moreover, *God after Darwin* has proved to be something of an enduring classic in the study of science and religion. It was updated and reprinted in 2007, and its enduring pedagogical value has ensured its continued place on course syllabi in both undergraduate

³⁰ Ibid., 148. Haught provides a more nuanced account of this claim in *Is Nature Enough?*, pages 171–72: "It is entirely appropriate to keep telling the old stories about the origin and end of suffering, but that our religion and theology should not recite them any longer as though Darwin never lived and evolution never happened. Evolutionary biology clearly requires the widening of theological reflection so as to take into account the enormous breadth and depth of nonhuman pain and the unfinished character of the universe. Even if theology is a reasonable alternative to naturalism it must not be seen as an alternative to good science."

³¹ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 149.

³² Ibid., 186.

³³ Ibid., 190.

³⁴ Ibid., 214.

³⁵ See, for instance, John F. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 143; Haught, *The New Cosmic Story*, 58–64, 88, 163, 199.

and graduate seminars. Given this ongoing influence of Haught's work and the enduring importance of bridging the conversational gap between theology and science today, it seems that a critical evaluation of Haught's metaphysical proposal is both needed and timely.

Prolegomena

Like the famous prolegomena to which the title of this article alludes, the primary point of this intervention is not so much to challenge the terms and relations of some particular metaphysical principle as it is to challenge the very way that Haught conceives of metaphysics as a discipline. Kant criticized the tradition of baroque German metaphysics practiced by Christian Wolff and others for obfuscating reality through their unwarranted invocation of an artificial conceptual overlay. As a result, Kant argued, these accounts of metaphysics concealed both the operations and the results of the activity of human knowing. Similarly, recalling Kant's critique of the decadent and artificial accounts of metaphysics in his own time, this article challenges Haught's advocacy for a metaphysics of the future on the grounds that it retards the self-appropriation of the actual structure of one's knowing and undermines real interdisciplinary dialogue. In contrast to Kant's *Prolegomena*, however, the point here is not to disqualify all metaphysics rooted in experiential knowledge. Rather, following Bernard Lonergan, this article affirms that metaphysics, properly understood, is nothing more or less than the affirmation of the reality of human acts of intelligence in correspondence with an essentially intelligible world, which, I will argue, rules out the adoption of any metaphysics of the future in the sense described by Haught.

Lonergan is an especially appropriate interlocutor in this critique both for his acuity in historical and contemporary metaphysical questions and because he is one of Haught's most prominent dialogue partners. In fact, Haught's first major book, *Religion and Self-Acceptance*, builds on Lonergan's epistemology to a critique of the truncated metaphysics of reductionist scientists.³⁶ Moreover, only one year before the republication of *God after Darwin*, Haught published *Is Nature Enough?*, in which he extolls the central importance of Lonergan's thought for contradicting the reductionist viewpoint of naturalist materialists. There, over the course of several chapters, Haught details Lonergan's account of cognitional theory and epistemology to demonstrate that all acts of knowing are constituted by the same dynamic operations: experience, understanding, and judgment. Primarily on this

³⁶ John F. Haught, *Religion and Self-Acceptance: A Study of the Relationship between Belief in God and the Desire to Know* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980).

basis, Haught critiques the inability of naturalist materialists to account for the existence and operation of the human mind and the way in which the mind's intelligence is isomorphic with the fully intelligible universe. Haught suggests that this error contributes centrally to their morbid and reductionist metaphysics of the past. It is rather surprising, then, when, without any comment therein, Haught's own account of metaphysics directly and problematically contradicts Lonergan's metaphysical framework. Although the point of this article is not to offer an exposition of Lonergan's metaphysics, the centrality of Lonergan's position to the critique of Haught's offered in the following makes at least a cursory presentation of the former's thought necessary.³⁷

Lonergan's metaphysics grew in part from his early apprenticeship with Aquinas' writings, which he came to know intimately while writing his dissertation on the evolving understanding of operative grace in both human conversion and moral perseverance in the *Corpus Thomisticum*.³⁸ Focusing in large part on questions of grace, human freedom, and divine efficacy, Lonergan recognized an enduring achievement in Aquinas' speculative synthesis, especially as pertains to the relation of divine to human causality and the ordering of nature to supernature. God creates time and space but also the possibility of possible existence(s) other than God's own necessary existence. For Lonergan, precisely because God is not part of the causal world, God makes past, present, and future possibilities possible, and thus the doctrine of creation is better understood as relational and ongoing rather than as static and protological; this differs markedly from Haught's reading of classical metaphysics. Nevertheless, although Lonergan would likely take issue with Haught's indiscriminate critique of classical metaphysics, his own work reflects a congeniality with two of Haught's requirements for contemporary metaphysics; namely, Lonergan insists that metaphysics must (1) take seriously human interiority through a turn to the subject and (2) describe and explain the interplay of necessity and contingency in dynamic world processes.

In relation to the first, Lonergan saw that if metaphysics would offer a description of reality, it must first attend to the meaning of "reality," which

³⁷ Lonergan's account of metaphysics can be found in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5th ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), esp. 411–617.

³⁸ The dissertation was later rewritten and released in serialized articles in *Theological Studies*; all of these articles and the original dissertation text have been published together in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

entails a relationship between human beings as knowers and the world as knowable. Therefore, metaphysics must primarily attend to the spontaneous operations of human minds as they (more or less skillfully) operate in the world, and then articulate the hitherto only latent metaphysical foundations presumed therein. Even if one rejects metaphysics or professes a counterpositional metaphysics, Lonergan argues that all people are naturally oriented by an unrestricted desire to know truth.³⁹ From sensory experiences and the experiences of one's own consciousness, questions for meaning and understanding spontaneously emerge: "What is that? What does it mean?" When these questions are met with a possible answer, the question "Is it really so?" spontaneously moves the person from understanding to judgment as they seek to determine the adequacy of their insight into the concrete situation. This whole, dynamic process of knowing—experience, understanding, judgment—is rooted in the humanly innate sense that the world is intelligible and real. This native sense and the spontaneous operations that flow from it are the basis of what Lonergan calls a latent metaphysics.

The passage from an implicit to an explicit metaphysics involves moving from this phenomenological self-appropriation of the acts of knowing, to the affirmation of the result of this process as knowledge, to a recognition of reality itself as constituted by its verifiable intelligibility. The further practice of this metaphysics entails addressing the counterpositions and biases that prevent one from adequately attending to the world in its multiple intelligibilities. Lonergan defines formal and explicit metaphysics as "the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being," where proportionate being is defined as "whatever is to be known by human experience, intelligent grasp, and reasonable affirmation."⁴⁰ These investigations are invariably the work of a community of persons, and, thus, all progress toward more adequate answers is verified intersubjectively. Still, though this process corrects any errors regarding

³⁹ For Lonergan's account of positions and counterpositions, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 413: "[Any account of cognitional theory, epistemology, or metaphysics] will be a basic position (1) if the real is the concrete universe of being and not a subdivision of the 'already out there now'; (2) if the subject becomes known when it affirms itself intelligently and reasonably and so is not known yet in any prior 'existential' state; and (3) if objectivity is conceived as a consequence of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, and not as a property of vital anticipation, extroversion, and satisfaction. On the other hand, it will be a basic counterposition if it contradicts one or more of the basic positions." Put more simply, a metaphysics—latent or explicated—may be deemed counterpositional if it ignores the link between a thing's being and its intelligibility or if it obscures the complementary and isomorphic relationship that obtains between human beings as knowers of reality and of reality as intelligible.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 416.

human perception of reality, it does so on the basis of the self-appropriation of acts of knowing that are open to all people:

It underlies all other departments, for its principles are neither terms nor propositions, neither concepts nor judgments, but the detached and disinterested desire to know and its unfolding in the empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness of the self-affirming subject.⁴¹

In each realm of human activity, all people have recourse to the same metaphysics, for "all departments spring from a common source and seek a common compatibility and coherence."⁴² Although not all these fields make explicit reference to the metaphysics that latently underlies their trust in the real as they investigate the world, all disciplines that seek truth rely on it.

Lonergan addresses Haught's second requirement for contemporary metaphysics in relation to the rise of a dynamic, evolutionary worldview through his account of emergent probability.⁴³ Wary of the inadequacy of mechanist determinism, Lonergan describes the world as having an irreducibly statistical component. All cosmic history is regulated by the interplay of classical and statistical regularities. Although classical laws give us an account of the regular and systematically predictable processes that occur in nature under the right conditions, the frequency with which these conditions actually obtain is a matter of statistical reality. Lonergan argues that statistics are not stopgaps awaiting the advent of better mathematics or computing power. Reality is statistical because each nonsystematic divergence from a statistical norm stands in causal interrelation with those probability schemes of other probable events. Moreover, new and more complex statistical possibilities are everywhere blossoming as the occurrence of some possible but unlikely event may meet the necessary conditions for the emergence of some even more remote possibility.

This chain of further emergences in our world order eventually gives rise to two other components of reality. First, with the emergence of life, there is introduced genetic intelligibility, which involves the self-correcting processes of the evolutionary order as it continually suggests new solutions to the dynamic problem of living in various environs. Second, with the emergence of intelligent life, there arises what Lonergan calls dialectical intelligibility, which recognizes the possibility of a being acting on the basis of understanding and love, as well as the inexplicable but all too frequent instances in which they choose against this. With the emergence of these two irreducibly new

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 126–62.

intelligibilities, Lonergan moves from an account of emergent probability into what he calls generalized emergent probability. Although the emergence of life and of intelligence depend on classical and statistical laws, they also represent realities that are no longer wholly explainable on that basis. In fact, they have the possibility to effect downward causation on lower-order phenomena, as seen, for instance, when cell life regulates and promotes the interactions of various chemical reactions that, prior to the emergence of life, depended on the long odds of chance.

In both this account of the emergently probable world order and in his making explicit the isomorphic linkages between human intelligence and the real (and, therefore, intelligible) world, Lonergan articulates a powerful metaphysical foundation for ongoing, interdisciplinary conversations. He builds his metaphysics on the strengths of the larger theological and philosophical tradition, carefully interpreted and transposed, while also recognizing the places where real work is needed to answer questions that were beyond the premodern horizon. Furthermore, Lonergan grounds the whole account of metaphysics on a universally available and phenomenologically verifiable examination of the acts of cognition that all people spontaneously perform. Lonergan's metaphysics does not ask people to buy into an imaginative construct, but, instead, it identifies the way in which all human beings in their native wonder constantly make judgments about the real and—when thinking deliberately, honestly, and in conversation with others—are capable of distinguishing between reality and unreality.

Despite Haught's evident familiarity with Lonergan's thought, Haught's metaphysics does not begin with such a careful appeal to the operation of human minds in their search for truth across various and differing disciplines. Rather, his metaphysics is predicated on the notion that what is most real is that which has not yet come into being. In this sense, it can only be known through "the *experience* that people have of something that to them is overwhelmingly and incontestably real, namely, what might be called metaphorically the 'power of the future.'"⁴⁴ Haught argues that this experiential prerequisite is of an "irreducibly religious origin,"⁴⁵ and, as a result, asserts that he is "compelled, in a way, to resist the invitation to clarify ... [because this] almost always means—at least in academic circles—to situate it in terms of either the classical metaphysics of *esse* or, in a more modern vein, the metaphysics of the past that hovers over scientific materialism ... [and thus to risk] having its very heart cut out of it."⁴⁶ Despite presenting his

⁴⁴ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 95.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

proposed metaphysics as a framework for dialogue with the sciences, at precisely the point where religion is invited to give its own account of reality, Haught declares the bedrock of his view to be incommunicable.

One possible interpretation of Haught's requirement for an "experience ... of the power of the future" is that, in order to grasp and confess a metaphysics of the future, one needs to logically assent to the reasonableness of the existence of God, which in turn opens up new levels of possible questioning about the ultimate origin and destination of the world. This would be roughly similar to what David Tracy has called "limit-situations," which bring people into contact with the borders of their horizon and may, potentially, raise questions in relation to general revelation.⁴⁷ Although this interpretation would yield a defensible philosophical position, however, Haught rejects this more natural-theological approach in a number of places in the book, favoring instead a theology of Abrahamic promise. Moreover, if Haught did embrace this interpretation, it would seem to undermine the radicality with which he sets his project apart from prior metaphysical accounts. Rather, the move from Tracy's broadly available limit experiences toward what Haught describes seems to involve a shift from the unthematic to the thematic, apparently via special revelation. Haught's insistence on some form of prior religious experience doesn't necessarily mean the special revelation of the Bible or the Incarnation, but it would certainly involve an experience of something that is disproportionate to the excellences of merely human knowing, thereby making reason dependent on faith and undermining the very dialogue between theology and science that Haught aims to promote.

Haught seems to recognize that there is some problem with this apparent subordination of all knowledge of reality to a faith experience, but he quickly glosses over it, arguing that scientists don't need this metaphysics for their investigations. In fact, he argues, even those who do accept it may need to table his (presumably still normative) metaphysics in the course of their work:

It is necessary for science, working within the boundaries of the scientific method, to leave out any such reference (to the dimension of the future), since including such a reference to the future would implausibly attribute efficient causation to events that have not yet occurred. Nevertheless, I would argue that the inability on the part of science itself to entertain a metaphysics of the future is a consequence of the abstract nature of scientific work. In saying that science is abstract I do not mean that science does

⁴⁷ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 91–119.

not deal with concrete reality, but rather that each science must leave out broad bands of nature's actual complexity in order to say anything clearly at all.⁴⁸

Although Haught argues that scientists must prescind from metaphysics in their investigations, Lonergan clarifies that metaphysics is precisely an account of reality as intelligible in relation to intelligent beings operating in diverse disciplines but always according to the same processes. Thus, although it is true that the abstract nature of the sciences constantly involves bracketing the data of other fields of inquiry, it is quite different for a physicist to bracket the data of biology or anthropology than for her to bracket the universally accessible structure of reality. If she could, then reaching scientific "truth" would depend on a bracketing of the very structure of truth. Scientific work, however, has the real potential of bringing its practitioners into deeper and closer contact with truth and beauty to which metaphysics ought to orient them.⁴⁹ The prefix "meta" in the word "metaphysics" does not intend a discipline wholly apart from or other than investigations in the physical world; on the contrary, it is "meta" in that it underlies and unites all investigations in all fields in the unity of truth. A clear understanding of metaphysics ought to make for better scientists, insofar as it encourages an awareness and attention to one's own processes of knowing and to the spontaneous emergence of ever-new questions.

In comparison with Lonergan's clarifications on the meaning of metaphysics, Haught's position is strangely open to the existence of private realities that one can opt in or out of according to one's needs, tastes, and dispositions, which is odd given his earlier rejection of the separatist model of dialogue. Despite this problem, Haught maintains that a metaphysics of the future is the only viable metaphysical solution because, in his view, both the metaphysics of the past and the metaphysics of the present are ultimately characterized by "their shared inclination to shut out the disturbing arrival of genuinely new possibilities."⁵⁰ He argues that only a metaphysics of the future, "conceptually difficult though it may be, can suitably accommodate both the data of evolutionary biology and the extravagant claims of biblical

⁴⁸ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 95.

⁴⁹ This point is conveyed with startling clarity in Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 40–44, where she describes how Darwin's account of his scientific investigations reveal him to have been a "beholder" in relation to the beauty and intricacy of the created world in such a way that he serves as a model of ecological (and perhaps even sacramental) awareness for Christians.

⁵⁰ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 99.

religion about how a promising God relates to the world."⁵¹ Given that Haught's metaphysics proposes to achieve those goals at the expense of a shared account of reality between persons in diverse fields, however, it seems not to provide a metaphysics at all.

It is in precisely this sense that this article challenges the notion of a "metaphysics of the future." If dialogue between theology and science—or between theology and any discipline or person at all—is to be possible, it cannot be based on a dialogical model of capitulation.⁵² No field can set such exclusionary preconditions to the possibility of knowing reality. On the contrary, theological engagement with metaphysics is valuable precisely because it clarifies both the specific claims of Christianity and their reasonableness in relation to other realms of human knowledge. It is for this reason that Lonergan begins his own explication of metaphysics by encouraging the reader to attend to their own conscious and intentional operations in acts of understanding and judgment, and only then, on the basis of that which can be affirmed by all, proceeds in the end of the book to make a case for the reasonableness of God's existence.⁵³

It seems to me that part of the reason Haught is so insistent on framing his project according to a metaphysical solution despite these serious issues has to do with his overly bleak characterization of the other available options. If, as he asserts, there exist only the reductionist metaphysics of the past and the arid and abstract metaphysics of the eternal present, then it might indeed seem like there needs to be some *tertium quid* of the kind for which Haught advocates. This, however, is a false dilemma. Not all scientists subscribe to a metaphysics of the past as described by Haught. In line with the previous account of Lonergan's metaphysics, scientists can and sometimes do recognize the limits of their investigation in relation to the larger structure of reality and avoid reductionism and determinism. The ability of a scientist to avoid these stunted viewpoints does not depend on their belief in a particular religious teleology, but, rather, on his or her recognition that the answers provided by investigations, like all answers, are only meaningful in relation to the scope of the originating questions and methodologies. Although Haught acknowledges that not all scientists succumb to reductive tendencies, he bars their specifically

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵² For a critique of the model of capitulation in ecumenical dialogue, see George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 16–17.

⁵³ For Lonergan's argument for the reasonableness of God's existence, see chapter 19 of *Insight*, 657–708, especially 680–99.

scientific knowing from the metaphysical conversation rather than building on their own experience as knowers.

Similarly, although some theologians and theological schools have subscribed to the excesses and outright errors of decadent metaphysics, this is not to say that all or even most did or do. Although Haught acknowledges that some scientists avoid the metaphysics of the past, however, he seems somewhat less willing to admit the existence of positive examples of classical metaphysical theologies that avoid his sweeping characterization as “metaphysics of the eternal present.” Haught’s choice of this particular phrase provides some insight into the source and the scope of his criticism here; the phrase a “metaphysics of the eternal present” echoes most famously Heidegger’s similarly comprehensive critique of the Western tradition in his masterwork *Being and Time*, as well as the continued development of this critique in the deconstructive philosophy of Derrida and others. The charge carried in this well-worn phrase imputes all of philosophy and theology (or at least the Western renditions) as having been marked by the tendency to derive the essence of all particulars in abstraction from both their unique variations from a normative standard (accidents) and from the data of their relations as constituted by their larger context. It also recalls the critique that the history of Western theology is a history of onto-theologies, or the projection of statements about “beings” and the world they inhabit onto God, who is understood as a “necessary being.”

Although Heidegger’s critique has been massively important in theology over the last hundred years, however, the uncritical application of this sweeping critique to the entire Western tradition has not gone unchecked. Rather, in full knowledge of the dangers of projecting world particulars and the constraints of human reality onto God, historical theologians have tested the major texts of the Christian tradition against these contemporary critiques in order to bring forward readings of their works that avoid this error. In many quarters, the static, top-down, subsumptionist readings of Thomas’ works that characterized the now much maligned baroque metaphysics have been replaced with a renewed appreciation for Thomas’ respect for the mystery of divine otherness.⁵⁴ Moreover, some of Thomas’ strongest critics have subsequently recognized the validity of these new interpretations, as seen, for instance, in the

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Robert Barron, *Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master*, Crossroad Spiritual Legacy Series (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 296–315; Fran O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 22–61; Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004).

republication of *God without Being*, in which Jean-Luc Marion concedes that his own earlier critique of Thomas as an onto-theologian was at least partially in error.⁵⁵ Similar retrievals have also vindicated Bonaventure's theology.⁵⁶ In fact, for many contemporary theologians concerned with the demands of ecotheology and evolution, Bonaventure represents a uniquely powerful resource within the tradition.⁵⁷

Although Haught does not rehearse the particulars of this critique or its philosophical roots, his use of the phrase and his acceptance of its summary judgment against the adequacy of the whole Western metaphysical tradition is repeated across numerous works. Thus, in addition to the broad critique of the metaphysics of presence articulated in *God after Darwin*, in his later work *The New Cosmic Story*, thinkers as diverse as "Plato, Augustine, Averroes, Maimonides, Aquinas, and Bonaventure, along with contemporary perennialists such as Huston Smith and Seyyed Hossein Nasr" are all lumped together in what Haught characterizes in the category as useful but ultimately inadequate "analogical theologies"—as distinct from Haught's preferred category, "anticipatory theologies."⁵⁸ Haught asserts the alleged inability of all of these thinkers to address the contemporary challenges of evolutionary theology as further arguments for embracing a metaphysics of the future as grounded on a process approach.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear that the process approach for which Haught advocates evades the critiques that he and others level against its competitors. For instance, it posits a metaphysics that fails to take adequate account of the dialectical intelligibility of the world order as demonstrated by Haught's dismissal of original sin and, more generally, his tendency to think of many kinds of sin as merely inadequate development. Whereas Lonergan's metaphysics recognizes the importance of inverse insights, or insights into the unintelligibility of something in the world, as in the surd of

⁵⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, "Thomas Aquinas and Onto-Theo-Logy," in *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, 2nd ed., Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 199–236.

⁵⁶ For one notable example, see Zachary Hayes, *The Gift of Being: A Theology of Creation*, New Theology Studies, vol. 10 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001). See also the account of hylomorphism described in the chapter on Bonaventure's theology of creation in Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings*, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2018), 54–66, esp. 57–60.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*, Ecology and Justice (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 101–10; Ilia Delio, "Bonaventure's Metaphysics of the Good," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999), 228–46; Kenan Osborne, "Our Relational World Today: Exploring the Wisdom of St. Bonaventure," *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 511–39.

⁵⁸ Haught, *The New Cosmic Story*, 62.

sin, Haught is more inclined to place sin in the process of unfolding world order. As a result, Haught's account allows redemption to collapse fully into the creative order with almost no mention of the cross.

A further weakness in Haught's process approach pertains to its vulnerability to the very Heideggerean critique that Haught invokes against traditional accounts. Although a great many thinkers outside of the circles of process theology already accept and promote a developmental or process view of the world, Haught and others are committed to extending this into a process account of God. This move from process world to process God seems to interpret the onto-theo-logical critique as implying that theologians have merely projected the wrong metaphysics onto God; as a way of addressing that error, it projects a process metaphysics onto God instead. As a result, it misses the corrective applied to problematic accounts of traditional metaphysics through a greater stress on the principle of difference that lies at the heart of the analogical approach to theology.⁵⁹

This tendency to project metaphysics back onto God appears in a number of places in Haught's writings. For instance, in *God after Darwin*, he argues that "in spite of this century's reacquaintance with biblical eschatology and a God who relates to the world primarily in the mode of promise, Christianity's conversion to the metaphysics of the future implicit in its foundations is still far from complete. This, I think, is the main reason why evolution does not have 'its own God.'"⁶⁰ For Haught, God is so intimately tied to creation that the two cannot be thought apart. This is evident in statements in later works as well:

As Teilhard and others have already suggested, there is no possible alternative, theologically speaking, to an unfinished initial creation.... Why? Because if a creator, in the beginning, made a perfectly finished, fully completed world, such a world would not be distinct from its maker. It would not be other than God. If the world were created perfectly in the beginning, then this world would be nothing more than an extension of God's own being, an appendage to a dictatorial deity. It would not be a world at all.⁶¹

This assertion of the necessity of the world's imperfection as a condition of its being separate from God is, in relation to the larger theological tradition, puzzling. For instance, angels have always been understood as perfect according

⁵⁹ The classical definition of this principle comes from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215: "between Creator and creature, there is always a greater difference than likeness" (DH 806), in *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 269.

⁶⁰ Haught, *God after Darwin*, 91.

⁶¹ Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, 189.

to their nature and as unconditioned by space and time, yet the doctrine of creation makes clear that, as created, they are other than God.⁶² This same doctrine of creation asserts that everything that God created was good, and yet none of it is identified with God. Creation is not the splitting off of something new and lesser than a perfectly good God-being, but begins with the creation of created-being (*ens commune*) itself such that anything at all may be said to "exist" in the way human beings experience and understand existence.⁶³ Haught does not, however, seem to maintain these distinctions adequately, and, as a result, he stresses the need to construct a metaphysics from the viewpoint of an eschatological future.

In summary, this article offers three prolegomena to Haught's metaphysics of the future. First, metaphysics mediates all different kinds of human knowing in relation to one another, and, therefore, it cannot require a prior faith claim or experience without undermining both its own purpose and the possibility of dialogue. Second, no metaphysical program can succeed without a more adequately developed reading of metaphysical approaches available in the history of theology and their subsequent developments in recent history. What is needed is not a rejection of these models, but a rereading of them from within a clearer understanding of metaphysics and its goal. This might yield the further possibility of transposing their insights from their own context into the demands of our own. Third and finally, although there is a need for a renewal of metaphysics in relation to the challenges occasioned by evolutionary insights, there is no warrant for projecting the features of any subsequent metaphysical account onto the God who created this world.

The Move toward Psychic Conversion

Although, in the preceding analysis, I have sought to demonstrate why a metaphysics of the future such as that suggested by Haught is problematic, I do not believe this needs to undermine Haught's larger project completely. As noted in the introduction to this article, his work has inspired a great many theologians, including many who do not accept his metaphysics. Moreover, Haught is correct both in his assessment of the need for a metaphysical solution to many of the problems in the debates around science and religion and in his insistence that theology commit itself to a more evolutionary account of

⁶² ST I, Q. 50–64, esp. 50, 62. Although Aquinas notes that angels still require grace to reach their supernatural end, the beatific contemplation of God, they are perfect according to their natures and, in this regard, unchanging.

⁶³ This is the sort of being that Aquinas understands to be the only proper term of metaphysics, as explained in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, preface, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1961), 1–2.

God's action in the world. And although this article suggests that the account of metaphysics that needs to be advanced against those counterpositions is one more in line with the critical metaphysics of Bernard Lonergan, Haught's work points to another crucial aspect of conversion badly needed today, namely, psychic conversion.

Psychic conversion refers to the ways in which human subjectivity and receptivity are shaped by the images and feelings that constitute the sensitive flow of consciousness in the psyche. In relation to Haught's project, psychic conversion provides an additional framework for talking about how the narratives, rituals, and symbols of the Abrahamic faiths can shape the openness of persons to the emergent newness of both evolution and eschatology through the ongoing conversion of their horizons. This is not to say that narrative truth is concerned only with image or metaphor; all human conversions—psychic, intellectual, moral, and religious—are caught up in the narrative reality of human life. Rather, this section suggests how reframing some aspects of Haught's project in terms of psychic conversion offers one way of carrying his valuable insights forward without falling into the approach ruled out by the preceding prolegomena.

Though the notion of psychic conversion has been most thoroughly developed by Robert Doran, its roots lie in *Method in Theology*, where Lonergan outlined three other types of conversion.⁶⁴ Intellectual conversion pertains to the appropriation of one's own acts of knowing as real but as conditioned by the limits of one's historical situation. Moral conversion describes the always incomplete movement in a person toward choosing in accord with carefully discerned values over personal satisfactions. Finally, religious conversion refers to the possibility that, through grace, a person may fall unrestrictedly in love with God such that their whole horizon and subjectivity is transformed by that love. Building on Lonergan's work, Doran describes the psyche as the neural manifold that integrates the "sensitive flow of consciousness itself, the polyphony or, as the case may be, the cacophony, of our sensations, memories, images, emotions, conations, associations, bodily movements, and spontaneous intersubjective responses."⁶⁵ Although the intellectual, moral, and spiritual operations of human beings are not reducible to the activity of this sensitive psyche, they are regulated by the psyche because it supplies the materials for their operation. In this sense, it

⁶⁴ Although religious conversion would also be relevant here, for reasons of space I focus on psychic conversion, which accords with Haught's emphasis on narrative and symbol in his work.

⁶⁵ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 46.

is proper to say that the psyche has a vertical finality with respect to the higher manifolds because it makes them possible, but, at the same time, is also liberated beyond mere sensation by the higher manifolds such that it shares in human knowledge, value, and love.

Furthermore, like these higher operations, Doran argues, the psyche is itself subject to both progress and decline and therefore stands in need of healing and conversion: "Psychic conversion is a transformation of the psychic component of what Freud calls 'the censor' from a repressive to a constructive agency in a person's development."⁶⁶ In regard to correcting the repressive tendency of the censor, psychic conversion entails identifying and correcting what Jung called "negative complexes," such that persons are able to consciously and conscientiously encounter their own feelings, images, assumptions, and so forth without being overcome by repression and outright bias.⁶⁷ Beyond this corrective function, Doran argues that the constructive function of psychic conversion pertains to the ways that the psyche can and does provide the images and feelings necessary for still higher and more complex apprehensions of truth, goodness, and beauty in the world. However much the psyche is caught up in the higher operation of human life, psychic conversion is not a matter of a cognitional, moral, or religious shift per se because the intellectual recognition of psychic disturbance is only the first step in addressing the issue. Doran argues, "The point of psychic conversion, as far as self-appropriation is concerned, is that it allows access to one's own symbolic system, and through that system to one's affective habits and one's spontaneous apprehension of possible values."⁶⁸ By granting some degree of access to these symbolic systems, it becomes possible to see how breakdowns in the symbolic order—which include breakdowns in the narratives of self and world in which people spontaneously locate themselves—are related to breakdowns in all other aspects of human life.

This account of how symbols and narratives orient human experiences of meaning and values in the world may provide an important insight into the enduring value of Haught's project. Although I have argued against Haught's characterization of his project in terms of a metaphysics of the future, Haught correctly identifies how the process of self-narration affects our view of the world. Shifting part of Haught's focus from conversion of the intellect toward psyche clarifies his insight into how the Abrahamic narrative can promote additional insights into the goodness, truth, and beauty of

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

the world. It also preserves the important distinction between general and special revelation by showing how the narrational and symbolic character of revelation goes beyond the truth available in natural philosophy, despite the real value of the latter.

The shift toward psychic conversion would seem to resonate with the larger trajectory of Haught's project since *God after Darwin* as well. In Haught's 2006 work, *Is Nature Enough?*, he moves from the world of scientific meaning toward an identification of five categories of meaning (affectivity, intersubjectivity, narrativity, beauty, and theory), arguing that science attends to only one of these (theory). Religion operates first and most naturally in the first four categories, as well as its "elemental language will be symbol, metaphor, and analogy."⁶⁹ Haught still argues in this book that the metaphysics that is concomitant with the theoretical understandings of contemporary scientists must be challenged in order to alter our view of the cosmos, but he also places more emphasis on the importance of how humans tell the story of the cosmos. Thus, at the end of the book, he summarizes his argument as follows:

My point is simply that the later—and—more of nature, as the present reflection on critical intelligence has already shown, cannot be fully understood by telling the scientific story of how it arose out of the earlier—and—simpler.⁷⁰

Haught's move toward narrative is even more pronounced in his 2010 book, *Making Sense of Evolution*, where he argues that theology has to find a way to tell its own story of salvation history as part of the larger drama of the unfolding of the created world:

Evolution means that life has the character not only of design, diversity, and descent, but also of drama.... A Christian theology of evolution locates this Drama within the very heart of God. The becoming of the universe, including the emergence and evolution of life, are woven everlastingly into the kingdom of heaven.... Understood theologically, what is really going on in evolution is that the whole of creation, as anticipated by the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, is being transformed into the bodily abode of God. It is not in the design, diversity, and descent, but in the transformative drama of life, that theology finally makes its deepest contact with Darwin's science.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, 54.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷¹ Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 53.

Haught argues that what is most needed is a greater move toward a worldview in which "[s]tories, not static structures, are the main vehicles of meaning."⁷² To understand what is happening in the universe, "you need to condition your mind to look from the past toward what is still emerging up ahead, in the future ... [which] requires that you go beyond science and assume a stance of anticipation, though without in any way contradicting scientific analysis. It may require that you put on the virtue of hope."⁷³ The world cannot be explained without an openness to the narrative unfolding of the universe toward a greater beauty in the fullness of time.⁷⁴

This narrative emphasis is equally prominent in his most recent book, *The New Cosmic Story*, as the very title suggests. Critiquing the developing field of "Big History," Haught argues that what is most lacking from these attempts at a comprehensive narrative of the unfolding of the whole cosmos and the human drama is a "story of emerging interiority."⁷⁵ Haught appeals to all religious traditions to join the "common battle against cosmic pessimism" that characterizes so many scientific accounts of a meaningless and mindless universe destined for wholesale cosmic death, either from unchecked cosmic expansion or sudden cosmic contraction.⁷⁶ To clarify his preferred approach as distinct from other problematic hermeneutical strategies, he describes three fundamental orientations in relation to the cosmic story: archaeonomic, analogical, and anticipatory.⁷⁷ He describes the archaeonomic approach, which maps to his metaphysics of the past, as "a contemporary comprehensive metaphysics—a whole set of beliefs—that considers analytical or archaeological scientific inquiry the only right way to understand present phenomena."⁷⁸ The analogical approach, linked with a metaphysics of an eternal present, "looks upon the perishable things in nature as, at best, imperfect representations or analogies of eternal and invisible originals existing beyond the empirically available world...."⁷⁹ Haught's favored approach, the anticipatory, matches up with his metaphysics of the future and "allows that more—being or fuller—being can emerge in time.... Unlike archaeonomy and analogy, the "way of anticipation" wagers that something significant is working itself out in the universe now as in the past. It reads the cosmic story both scientifically and religiously, from outside and inside

⁷² Ibid., 78.

⁷³ Ibid., 80.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 100–03.

⁷⁵ Haught, *The New Cosmic Story*, 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 34.

simultaneously.”⁸⁰ As these passages indicate, Haught still thinks about these three approaches in relation to his prior metaphysical triad. Still, one cannot fail to notice his transposition of these metaphysical models into hermeneutic strategies for engaging the “story” and “drama” of the universe and thereby reshaping people’s spontaneous affectivity against the pessimism of naturalist materialist accounts.

It would be misleading to say that Haught’s growing emphasis on narrative, story, and drama has supplanted his tendency to frame his arguments in terms of intellectual conversion and an orientation toward a primarily future reality and metaphysics. As the rest of *The New Cosmic Story* attests, Haught sees this newest book as being in full continuity with his call for a metaphysics of the future. It should also be emphasized, here, that this reframing is not meant to suggest that all of Haught’s insights pertain only to psychic conversion, and it is certainly not to suggest that all narrative truth is limited to operating on the psyche. To the contrary, we are born into narrated worlds, and we learn and repeat these cultural, familial, and personal stories in ways that become self-revealing and self-constitutive; this applies to all the different aspects of conversion: psychic, intellectual, moral, and religious. By reframing Haught’s project in terms of (1) a critical metaphysics that is more in line with Lonergan’s approach and (2) a greater emphasis on narrative, drama, symbol, and metaphor in relation to psychic conversion, however, it then becomes possible to avoid the serious problems that inhere in Haught’s account of a metaphysics of the future.

Although there are likely many ways to refashion Haught’s project, this brief account indicates the enduring value of Haught’s important work for the project of fostering an evolutionarily and ecologically conversant theology.

Conclusion

Haught’s work on advancing an evolutionary worldview in theology has born much fruit over the years. Haught has modeled the importance of dialoguing with modern science without losing sight of the role of narrative and symbol in human knowing, and he has challenged the overreach of scientific accounts in their bid to monopolize meaning. Haught’s theology reveals the prehuman world to be the first cocreator with God, the world itself to be constituted by intelligibility, and the world order to be shot through with a dynamic potential for ongoing growth, development, and vitality. Equally important, Haught has demonstrated that part of reclaiming the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

richness of meaning and value involves a serious engagement with metaphysics. There is an enduring need to get the metaphysics right, and Haught is prophetic in grasping that central importance. Although this article has argued against his approach to metaphysics, it has also argued that this need not invalidate his larger project and its importance.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to present a more complete account of what I propose constitutes the needed metaphysical correction, I have suggested that Lonergan's thought provides a more accurate and adequate account of reality. I have highlighted his insistence that metaphysics centers on the individual and communal affirmation of our own dynamic process of knowing and the subsequent commitment to live in the light of that knowledge, which is available to all minds in their orientation toward the full intelligibility of the whole of creation. To make that light inherently dependent on special revelation obscures the role and the reality of natural knowledge, which is a perhaps especially troubling move in a theology that advocates for a renewed attention to the goodness of creation as it is unfolding in our midst. Rather, a more adequate metaphysics must recognize the natural brilliance of human minds as they seek to know all knowledge and values, even as it recognizes the need for God's healing grace in response to the dehumanizing effects of sin and the yet unknown possibilities of our more complete divinization in the unfolding kingdom of God.