



Evolution and Theology, or Theology of Evolution in the USA

Stanisław Obirek

American Studies Center
University of Warsaw
s.obirek@uw.edu.pl

Abstract

The impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on religious thinking is beyond dispute. Darwin published his most important work on general biological evolution (*On the Origins of Species*) in 1859, and in 1871 he applied this theory to the origin of man (*The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*). From the beginning, most Christian churches rejected Darwin's view, but most scientists accepted it as the most convincing explanation of the mechanisms of life. A new chapter in this controversy was opened by Richard Dawkins in 2006 with the publication of *The God Delusion*, in which he not only vigorously defended Darwin's theory but also rejected any religious dimension of biological reality. An interesting alternative to Dawkins's theory was elaborated by John F. Haught in his trilogy: *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (2000); *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and The Drama of Life* (2010); and *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe* (2015), in which he elaborated a theology of evolution where-in he reconciled the theory of evolution with Christian-Catholic theology. The aim of this essay is to ask to what extent this attempt is successful.

Keywords: evolution, theology, teaching of Catholic Church, new atheism, dialogue between science and faith

Słowa kluczowe: ewolucja, teologia, nauczanie Kościoła katolickiego, nowy ateizm, dialog nauki i wiary

A few introductory remarks

The relationship between evolution and theology is a case study of a larger problem regarding the relationship between science and religion, or, rather, between science and faith. Some scientists and theologians think that these two fields of human activities are completely distinct. For many, though, the answer is more complicated, and

they do not share this radical position. In his recent book *Anatomia konfliktu. Między nowym ateizmem a teologią nauki* [Anatomy of Conflict. Between New Atheism and Theology of Science], Tadeusz Pabjan devised acronyms to describe three different positions elaborated in recent years: NOMA – *Non-Overlapping Magisteria*, proposed by Stephen Jay Gould; POMA – *Partially Overlapping Magisteria*, proposed by Francis S. Collins; and NOCMA – *Non-Conflicting Magisteria*, proposed by Józef Życiński.¹ These positions are an attempt to overcome the continual conflict between faith and science. It is a matter of fact that each approach has many good arguments for its respective position, but surprisingly, the opponents rarely read each other. This probably explains the fact that, as Francis S. Collins stated: “Evolution has been the source of great discomfort in the religious community over the past 150 years and that resistance shows no signs of lessening.”² But some scholars try to overcome this gap in their theological reflection, indicating the changing cultural and religious context.³ John F. Haught’s books are a good example of a theologian who read almost everything on evolution and took an interesting approach to examining the problems connected with the mutual relationship between science and faith. This is why I chose him as a guide in my research.

In this paper, I will try to present the reasons for which some theologians reject evolution and the arguments of the new atheists who use evolution to reject the existence of God. Both views are important for understanding the growing polarisation of ideological fundamentalism.⁴ It is also important to realise that the Catholic Church was not contributing to a satisfactory degree to eliminating the mutual distrust between science and religion.⁵ This distrust brought a tension which is hard to overcome. I agree with Leszek Kołakowski’s contention that both faith and atheism are relevant for the development of culture.⁶ I would add the condition that both views are willing, on the one hand, to recognise the limits of their own position, and on the other, to see the positive aspects of their opponent’s perspective. John F. Haught presented exactly this view in his “theology of evolution,” as a means to overcome the conflict. The problem lies in the fact that Haught’s argument is convincing only for those who believe in God, and not for atheists. It seems to me that a careful analysis of different positions demonstrates that it is impossible to find a theoretical solution for the existing polarisation. Nevertheless, knowledge of the ideological background

¹ T. Pabjan, *Anatomia konfliktu. Między nowym ateizmem a teologią nauki*, Kraków 2016, pp. 43–46.

² F.S. Collins, *The Language of God. A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, New York 2006, p. 141.

³ R. Haught, *Following Jesus in a Scientific Age* [in:] R. Haught, *Spiritual and Religious. Explorations for Seekers*, New York 2016, pp. 69–83. The best overview of the debate can be found in: W.B. Drees, *Religion and Science in Context. A Guide to the Debate*, London 2010.

⁴ R.D. Putnam, D.E. Campbell, *American Grace. How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, New York 2010.

⁵ C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA 2007.

⁶ L. Kołakowski, *Wiara dobra, niewiara dobra* [in:] *Co nas łączy? Dialog z niewierzącymi*, introduction L. Kołakowski, Kraków 2002, p. 13 (reprint: L. Kołakowski, *Wiara dobra, niewiara dobra* [in:] L. Kołakowski, *Czy Pan Bóg jest szczęśliwy i inne pytania*, selection and arrangement Z. Mentzel, Kraków 2009, pp. 71–77).

of the participants in this *sui generis* war of culture gives us an interesting insight into the pluralistic situation of the modern world.⁷ Also, it is important to scrutinise the authentic attempts to overcome an existing variety of ideological positions. A good example was the debate between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger in 2004 in Munich. In this debate, Habermas introduced the term “post-secularism” as a way to create a dialogical space for secular and religious positions.⁸ Another example of a successful rapprochement of two different positions is the long interview which Richard Dawkins conducted with the Jesuit and astronomer George Coyne for BBC television as part of the programme *The Genius of Charles Darwin*.⁹ In his autobiography, Dawkins considered this conversation as not only a very positive experience, but a constructive one too.¹⁰

The most ambitious project to reconcile science and faith was undertaken in 1991 by two institutions – the Vatican Observatory in Rome and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, USA. In October that year, 21 scholars of cross-disciplinary expertise in different disciplines met for the first time for a discussion about the scientific implications of their debate for their respective disciplines. More meetings took place in the next years, and after each one conference proceedings were published. Six volumes are so far available. The goal of these publications was to demonstrate that both science and faith can learn from each other. Robert John Russell, one of the editors, wrote in the introduction to the first volume:

The overarching goal of these conferences is twofold: to contribute to constructive theological research as it engages current research in the natural sciences and to investigate the philosophical and theological elements in ongoing theoretical research in the natural sciences.¹¹

The same methodological approach was also followed in the next volumes. The second was dedicated to the problem of chaos and complexity, the third to evolutionary and molecular biology, the fourth to neuroscience and the person, the fifth to quantum mechanics, and the last to scientific perspectives of divine action.¹² Perhaps it is worth mentioning that before these conferences were dedicated to a specific

⁷ P.L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity. Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*, Berlin 2014.

⁸ J. Habermas, J. Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, San Francisco 2006.

⁹ This interview is available on YouTube, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L15e2sNZsU> [access: 16.04.2017].

¹⁰ R. Dawkins, *Brief Candle in the Dark: My Life in Science*, London 2015.

¹¹ R.J. Russell, Introduction [in:] *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, C.J. Isham (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1993, p. 12.

¹² *Chaos and Complexity. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, A. Peacocke (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1995; *Evolutionary and Molecular Biology. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, F.J. Ayala (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1998; *Neuroscience and the Person. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, T.C. Meyering, M.A. Arbib (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1999; *Quantum Mechanics. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, R.J. Russell, P. Clayton, K. Wegter-McNelly, J. Polkinghorne (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 2001; *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action. Twenty Years of Challenge and Progress*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, W.R. Stoeger (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 2007.

topic, the first attempt to reconcile science and faith was made as early as 1987. The same group of scientists organised a conference on to more general subjects: physics, philosophy and theology. After this conference too, a volume of the conference proceedings was published.¹³ What is important in all these initiatives is the authors' openness to corrections. George V. Coyne, who for many years was the director of Specola Vatican and also the driving force behind all these initiatives, aptly indicated the experience of enjoyment: "On behalf of my fellow editors and the contributors we offer this volume in the spirit of enjoyable exploration, undertaken seriously."¹⁴ It is also important that Pope John Paul II wrote a special letter to the participants of the conference in which he expressed his confidence that science and theology could and should collaborate fruitfully:

Only a dynamic relationship between theology and science can reveal those limits which support the integrity of either discipline, so that theology does not profess a pseudo-science and science does not become an unconscious theology. Our knowledge of each other can lead us to be more authentically ourselves.¹⁵

From the many interesting essays in this volume, I would like to draw attention to Russell's article dedicated to "Quantum Physics in Philosophical and Theological Perspective," which shows how science can creatively shape theological reflection. Here is just a short description of his method:

My method here will be to use philosophy as a bridge between physics and theology, in particular, focusing on philosophy of nature informed by quantum physics and addressing questions both to metaphorical and systematic theology. (...) it is particularly relevant that theologians now engage with scientists and philosophers of science in understanding the radical changes occurring in contemporary natural science and discover the effects these changes can have on our own theological agenda.¹⁶

I believe that the main inspiration for the dialogical approach can be found in the writings of the following thinkers: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was able to reconcile his scientific competence in palaeontology with his Christian faith¹⁷; Bernard Lonergan, who elaborated a new theological method successfully combining science and religious reflection¹⁸; Walter Ong, who created a new paradigm for theological concepts taking into consideration the transformation of human communication¹⁹; Karl Rahner, who reconciled the old scholastic theology with existential philosophy,

¹³ *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, G.V. Coyne (eds.), Vatican-Berkeley 1988.

¹⁴ G.V. Coyne, *Preface* [in:] *Physics, Philosophy and Theology...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁵ https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19880601_padre-coyne.html [access: 16.04.2017].

¹⁶ R.J. Russell, *Quantum Physics in Philosophical and Theological Perspective* [in:] *Physics, Philosophy and Theology...*, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

¹⁷ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, New York 1975.

¹⁸ B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York 1972.

¹⁹ *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, T.J. Farrell, P.A. Soukup (eds.), New Jersey 2002.

making anthropology and not Christology the centre of his theological thinking²⁰; and Michel de Certeau, who switched the attention of theological reflections from religious practices towards daily life.²¹ Each of them contributed to my comprehension of conflicts as a real opportunity for a deeper understanding of reality. Perhaps it is coincidental, but all of them were Jesuits, as well as not only enjoying large recognition in their own religious community, but also being sharply criticised by the Church authorities.

I have another list of authors who are important for the promoters of the new atheism and who are also inspiring for me: David Hume, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. All of them purified my understanding of religion and faith. Perhaps the most important is the young Karl Marx's short essay written in 1844, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in which the famous definition of religion as the "opium of the people" appeared. If we read the entire sentence carefully, its sense is not unequivocally negative: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people."²² As we know from the representatives of theology of liberation, dialogue with Marx's philosophy is not only possible, but also fruitful.²³

1. The reasons for Catholic theology's rejection of evolution

The impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on religious thinking is beyond dispute. Darwin published his most important work *On the Origins of Species* in 1859, and in 1871 he applied this theory to the origin of man (*The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*). Darwin himself was reluctant to speak about the theological consequences of his theory. From the beginning, most Christian churches rejected Darwin's view, but most scientists accepted it as the most convincing explanation of life's mechanisms. The most important reason for this rejection was the apparent contradiction between this theory and the literary interpretation of the biblical myth of creation. John Haught underlines the general disdain of the official Catholic doctrine towards evolution in particular, and modernity in general: "From the last third of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, Catholic officials and theologians expressed various degrees of hostility to Darwin's theory of evolution. 'Darwinism' seemed inseparable from 'naturalism,' 'materialism,' 'rationalism,' 'socialism,' and other creeds taken to be atheistic."²⁴

²⁰ K. Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, New York 1987.

²¹ M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley 1988. Cf. also S. Obirek, *The Founding Rupture. From Strong to Weak Identity* [in:] *Some Renaissance/Early Modern Topoi in the Twenty First Century*, K. Kujawińska-Courtney, G. Zinkiewicz (eds.), Łódź 2015, pp. 55–70.

²² K. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844) [in:] *Marx on Religion*, J. Raines (ed.), Philadelphia 2002, p. 171.

²³ G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, New York 1973.

²⁴ J.F. Haught, *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe*, New York 2015, p. 29.

This negative attitude of the Catholic Church not only created an atmosphere of hostility between science and theology, but also encouraged some scholars to write directly against religious arrogance. In fact, some of them are called “New Atheists” because of using scientific arguments, taken especially from evolutionary biology and cosmology, against religion and the theological interpretations of reality. There are also some scholars who preserved their religious conviction, for example Theodosius Dobzhansky and his student Francisco J. Ayala, who wrote *Darwin’s Gift to Science and Religion* as an answer to Dennett’s *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*. In Ayala’s case, it is also important to underline that he respects the autonomy of both aspects of human activity.²⁵ A good example of a theological response to the previously mentioned distrustful attitude of the Catholic Church is Elizabeth Johnson’s book *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, which “explores this subject [the nascent field of ecological theology] by conducting a dialogue between Charles Darwin’s account of the origin of species and the Christian story of the ineffable God of mercy and love recounted in the Nicene creed.”²⁶ I mention this book also because Johnson is a leading American theologian who successfully entered a constructive dialogue with modern culture, and particularly with feminist thought. In *Ask the Beasts* she did the same with scientific challenges. For Johnson, love of the natural world is an intrinsic element of faith in God. Haught’s reaction was as follows: “After reading and meditating on this marvelous book you may never recite the Nicene Creed the same way again.”²⁷ In fact, Johnson’s approach is a good example of a new reconciliation between theology and science, because she is taking the basic text of Christian tradition, namely the Nicene Creed, into serious consideration, and confronting it with Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. Although for many it may be inconceivable, in Johnson’s book the result is promising. From both texts, the reader can discover the presence of a loving God.

2. Evolution used as an argument against the existence of God

A new chapter in this controversy was opened by Richard Dawkins in 2006 with the publication of *The God Delusion*, in which he not only vigorously defended Darwin’s theory but also rejected any religious dimension of biological reality.²⁸ In fact, Dawkins claims that an intelligent reader of his book will abandon religious superstition: “If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down.”²⁹ Among other New Atheists to hold a similar approach is Daniel

²⁵ F.J. Ayala, *Darwin’s Gift to Science and Religion*, Washington 2007.

²⁶ E. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, London 2014, p. 15.

²⁷ J.F. Haught, “*Ask the Beasts*”, by Elizabeth Johnson, a review, “The Christian Century”, April 15, 2014, <https://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2014-04/ask-beasts-elizabeth-johnson> [access: 19.01.2018].

²⁸ R. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London 2006.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

Dennett, who considers Darwin's theory as a threat to religious conviction.³⁰ Usually, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens are closely associated with these two scientists, but they do not deal directly with the problem of evolution and its impact on religion.

I am convinced that without the hostile attitude of the Catholic Church towards Darwin's theory, the appearance of the new atheism would hardly have been possible.³¹ The essence of their argument states that any religion is something irrational, which is not only unable to accept scientific discoveries but also "poisons everything"³² (politics, education, society, media etc.). The second reason to reject religion is its claim for the absolute truth. All this makes any dialogue with religion impossible, creates an atmosphere of constant confrontation, and produce inevitable polarisation of the society. Even in the titles of their books, Dawkins and Dennett announced their respective ideological programmes. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea. Evolution and the Meaning of Life* by Dennett demonstrated how destructive the idea of the origins of species and of natural selection was for theological thinking. It seems that there is no place for a Creator if "nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution."³³ Dawkins's objective is even more radical. In the preface to *The God Delusion*, he wrote that he hoped to find many open-minded readers who: "need only a little encouragement to break free of the vice of religion altogether."³⁴ These two books and many others showed clearly and convincingly the limits of traditional theology on the one hand, but on the other hand, they also opened new perspectives for the re-definition of theology. According to Dawkins, during the process of socialisation all religions close the minds of their respective adherents to historical facts concerning the harms done to other religions in the name of their God. For him, history is full of evidence that religious education is responsible for religious wars. For Dennett, more important are the limits of theological language, which, according to him, is unable to assimilate the scientific challenge of the theory of evolution. How is it possible to reconcile the biblical myth of creation of man with scientific data? These questions, if taking seriously by theologians, could bring a new perspective for their field of reflections.

3. A good theology, or how the enemy became an ally³⁵

An interesting alternative view to those of Dawkins and Dennett was elaborated by John F. Haught in his trilogy: *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (2000),

³⁰ D. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea. Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London 1995.

³¹ A similar approach can be found in M.J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, New Haven 1987.

³² C. Hitchens, *God Is Not Great. How Religion Poisons Everything*, New York 2007.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 148, quotation by Dobzhansky.

³⁴ R. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁵ I am referring here to Francisco Ayala's statement that "that evolution is not the enemy of religion but, rather, its friend," in: F.J. Ayala, *Am I a Monkey? Six Big Questions about Evolution*, Baltimore 2010, p. 83.

Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and The Drama of Life (2010), and *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe* (2015). In these three books, he articulated a theology of evolution wherein he reconciled the theory of evolution with Catholic theology. In the first volume, Haught convincingly demonstrated that evolution is not only acceptable from a theological point of view, but constitutes a real opportunity to deepen our understanding of God and his presence in the world: “Darwin has gifted us with an account of life whose depth, beauty, and pathos – when seen in the context of the larger cosmic epic of evolution – expose us afresh to raw reality of the sacred and to a resoundingly meaningful universe.”³⁶ In other words, it is not only possible, but even necessary to accept evolution if one wants to understand the presence of God in the living world. In this sense, evolution inspires a new way of theologising which Haught names “evolutionary theology.” As he stated: “Evolutionary theology claims that the story of life, even in its neo-Darwinian presentation, provides essential concepts for thinking about God and God’s relation to nature and humanity.”³⁷

In his second book, Haught acknowledged that Darwin was not a fervent believer, but also underlined that the author of *On the Origins of Species* “was never an atheist.”³⁸ But precisely because of the theological differences between Catholic theology and Darwin’s view of religion, dialogue between them can take place. It is obvious that after Darwin, theology cannot be the same as before because the theory of evolution has radically changed not only our understanding of the living world but also the way of thinking about God. In fact, Haught’s book is, as he presents it, “an invitation to Charles Darwin and his disciples to join in a conversation with contemporary Christian theology on the question of what evolution means to our understanding of God and what we take to be God’s creation.”³⁹ In the course of this conversation, not only the main ideas of Darwin are discussed, but also the contemporary debate in the USA on intelligent design theory and its presence in education, and also Dennett’s and Dawkins’ views. But what is most important is a reshaping of basic theological concepts in the light of evolution.

I agree with Haught’s claim that “theology has everything to gain and nothing to lose by inviting Darwin to the theological table.”⁴⁰ This fact can also be observed in Haught’s book published in 2015, upon which I will now concentrate. I will not take into consideration his most recent book, published after this paper was written.⁴¹ I must admit that *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe* is, for me, a perfect illustration of how evolution has changed from being an enemy to being an ally of Catholic theology. Haught not only demonstrates that the conflict was misleading, but shows how profound and stimulatory evolution could

³⁶ J.F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Boulder, Colorado 2000, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁸ J.F. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*, Louisville 2010, p. XI.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ J.F. Haught, *The New Cosmic Story: Inside Our Awakening Universe*, New Haven 2017.

be for religious thinking. First, evolution accelerated the departure from the old and anachronistic way of thinking about religion and Christianity. Haught writes:

What I propose as a conceptual setting for Catholic theology in the age of science is a deliberate shift from a still implicitly Platonic and medieval metaphysics of participation to a more biblically inspired and scientifically up-to-date metaphysics of anticipation.⁴²

Haught's theological inspirations are Teilhard de Chardin, Lonergan, and Rahner. At the same time, however, Haught underlines that it is hardly possible to find support among the Church's authorities. As he states: "The theological mind-set of most Catholic bishops remains largely untouched by science except for issues relating to human fertility."⁴³ This fact also explains why, despite theological efforts, most Catholics still consider evolution to be the enemy *par excellence*.

In his book *Anatomy of Conflict*, mentioned at the beginning of these reflections, Pabjan indicates one model of interpretation of the relationship between science and theology as the most convincing. He calls it the non-interventionist model (in Polish: *model nieinterwencyjonistyczny*).⁴⁴ Pabjan does not mention who elaborated this model, however, and it is hard to say who the first to coin this definition was. In Haught's books one can find an illustration of this model and its application. Just one example:

God acts presently with respect of evolution and the cosmic process by creating (and becoming incarnated in) the narrative loom on which an indeterminate and still-unfinished cosmic drama continues to be woven. The idea that God directly and simply engineers creation is inconsistent, I believe, not only with science but also with the revelatory image of God in Christian faith.⁴⁵

I am not sure how popular this way of thinking is among Catholic theologians, but it shows that between Darwin's theory and modern Catholic theology there might be complete harmony. A good example of this new approach could be seen in Denis Edwards's reflection on divine activity *How God Acts. Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action*, in which some of Haught's propositions expressed in *God After Darwin* are considered as obvious.⁴⁶ Also, the traditional understanding of providence could be translated into evolutionary theory, in the same way as Haught did with the notion of God. But to do this, theology should use different categories: "It is only after our ideas of providence have been transfigured by the notion of God as self-giving and promising love that Catholic theology will be in a position favorable to the linking of the idea of providence to the fact of evolution."⁴⁷ A good and solid theological reflection regarding scientific data is helpful in the right understanding of its main subject, namely, God. That is, it "wants science to push natural explanations,

⁴² J.F. Haught, *Resting on the Future...*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

⁴⁴ T. Pabjan, *Anatomia konfliktu...*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁴⁵ J.F. Haught, *Resting on the Future...*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ D. Edwards, *How God Acts. Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action*, Minneapolis 2010, p. 164.

⁴⁷ J.F. Haught, *Resting on the Future...*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

including those of evolutionary biology and the cognitive sciences, as far as they can possibly take us in our exploration of natural phenomena.”⁴⁸ The last element of the theological system elaborated by John Haught which drew my attention is his admiration of “the specter of transhumanism.” We are in fact confronted with a new challenge of posthumanism, which is seen mostly as a threat to theological thinking. Instead, Haught sees in it a new chance: “I believe that theology must approach the specter of transhumanism with the reverence of a sacramental vision, but at the same time, with an anticipatory instinct to enhance rather than diminish the vitality, subjectivity, and creativity to which our universe has already labored so long to give birth.”⁴⁹ Also in this approach towards transhumanism I see a positive influence of Darwinian thought on Catholic theology.

Conclusion

If Charles Darwin himself said that he “deserves to be called a Theist,”⁵⁰ he probably would have enjoyed modern theologians’ attempt to discover the theological dimension of his theory. But given his own complicated relationship with the institutional Christianity of his native England, and his fears over how evolution would be received by the Church’s authority, he would probably also have enjoyed the fervent attacks of the new atheists, very much against modern religious bigotry. It seems to me that the critical evaluation of today’s theology and religious rituals is more than justified. John F. Haught’s careful and critical reception of the new atheists is a good example of a fruitful dialogue. Furthermore, the title of Arthur Peacocke’s book *Evolution: The Disguised Friend of Faith* seems to grasp the current attitude of theology toward evolution.⁵¹ A similar approach could be seen in many books by Willem B. Drees, who even goes one step further and proposes a *naturalistic theism* or *religious naturalism* as a way to approach problems connected with the relationship between science and theology:

Science shows us that reality has integrity and coherence. All phenomena in the world are intelligible as natural phenomena. Thus, *naturalism* as a view of reality seems a plausible interpretation of the world understood scientifically. (...) Modern science and cosmology thus allow for a form of theism that respects the naturalistic tenor of science, a *naturalistic theism*. However, appreciation of the integrity, coherence and creativity of reality might also be articulated as *religious naturalism*, ascribing religious significance to the natural.⁵²

It could be a great help for mutual understanding if Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and others were to confront their ideological views with those of modern

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 171.

⁵⁰ K.R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God. A Scientist’s Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*, New York 1999, p. 287.

⁵¹ A.R. Peacocke, *Evolution: The Disguised Friend of Faith*, Philadelphia–London 2004.

⁵² W.B. Drees, *Religion and Science in Context...*, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

theologians. One of the possible reasons why New Atheists are reluctant to do this might be that they are familiar only with the views of fundamentalist theologians, who are unable to enter into a real dialogue with contemporary science.

References

- An Ong Reader. Challenges for Further Inquiry*, T.J. Farrell, P.A. Soukup (eds.), New Jersey 2002.
- Ayala F.J., *Am I a Monkey? Six Big Questions about Evolution*, Baltimore 2010.
- Ayala F.J., *Darwin's Gift to Science and Religion*, Washington 2007.
- Berger P.L., *The Many Altars of Modernity. Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*, Berlin 2014.
- Buckley M.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, New Haven 1987.
- Chaos and Complexity. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, A. Peacocke (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1995.
- Collins F.S., *The Language of God. A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, New York 2006.
- Coyne G.V., *Preface* [in:] *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, G.V. Coyne (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1988, pp. 11–14.
- Dawkins R., *Brief Candle in the Dark: My Life in Science*, London 2015.
- Dawkins R., *The God Delusion*, London 2006.
- Dawkins R., *The Interview with George Coyne*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L15e2sNZsU> [access: 16.04.2017].
- De Certeau M., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley 1988.
- Dennett D., *Darwin's Dangerous Idea. Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London 1995.
- Drees W.B., *Religion and Science in Context. A Guide to the Debate*, London 2010.
- Edwards D., *How God Acts. Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action*, Minneapolis 2010.
- Evolutionary and Molecular Biology. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, F.J. Ayala (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1998.
- Gutiérrez G., *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, New York 1973.
- Habermas J., Ratzinger J., *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, San Francisco 2006.
- Haight R., *Following Jesus in a Scientific Age* [in:] R. Haight, *Spiritual and Religious. Explorations for Seekers*, New York 2016, pp. 69–83.
- Haight J.F., “Ask the Beasts”, by Elizabeth Johnson, a review, “The Christian Century”, April 15, 2014, <https://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2014-04/ask-beasts-elizabeth-johnson> [access: 19.01.2018].
- Haight J.F., *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Boulder, Colorado 2000.
- Haight J.F., *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*, Louisville 2010.
- Haight J.F., *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe*, New York 2015.
- Haight J.F., *The New Cosmic Story: Inside Our Awakening Universe*, New Haven 2017.
- Hitchens C., *God Is Not Great. How Religion Poisons Everything*, New York 2007.
- John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness John Paul II to Reverend George V. Coyne, S.J. Director of the Vatican Observatory*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19880601_padre-coyne.html [access: 16.04.2017].
- Johnson E., *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, London 2014.
- Kołąkowski L., *Wiara dobra, niewiara dobra* [in:] *Co nas łączy? Dialog z niewierzącymi*, introduction L. Kołąkowski, Kraków 2002, pp. 9–13 (reprint: Kołąkowski L., *Wiara dobra, niewiara dobra* [in:] L. Kołąkowski, *Czy Pan Bóg jest szczęśliwy i inne pytania*, selection and arrangement Zbigniew Mentzel, Kraków 2009, pp. 71–77).

- Lorengan B., *Method in Theology*, New York 1972.
- Marx K., *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844) [in:] *Marx on Religion*, J. Rainer (ed.), Philadelphia 2002, pp. 170–182.
- Miller K.R., *Finding Darwin's God. A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*, New York 1999.
- Neuroscience and the Person. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Actions*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, T.C. Meyering, M.A. Arbib (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1999.
- Obirek S., *The Founding Rupture. From Strong to Weak Identity* [in:] *Some Renaissance/Early Modern Topoi in the Twenty First Century*, K. Kujawińska-Courtney, G. Zinkiewicz (eds.), Łódź 2015, pp. 55–70.
- Pabjan T., *Anatomia konfliktu. Między nowym ateizmem a teologią nauki*, Kraków 2016.
- Peacocke A.R., *Evolution: The Disguised Friend of Faith*, Philadelphia–London 2004.
- Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, G.V. Coyne (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1988.
- Putnam R.D., Campbell D.E., *American Grace. How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, New York 2010.
- Quantum Mechanics. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, R.J. Russell, P. Clayton, K. Wegter-McNelly, J. Polkinghorne (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 2001.
- Rahner K., *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, New York 1987.
- Russell R.J., *Introduction* [in:] *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, C.J. Isham (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1993, pp. 1–32.
- Russell R.J., *Quantum Physics in Philosophical and Theological Perspective* [in:] *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, R.J. Russell, W.R. Stoeger, G.V. Coyne (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 1988, pp. 1–32.
- Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action. Twenty Years of Challenge and Progress*, R.J. Russell, N. Murphy, W.R. Stoeger (eds.), Vatican–Berkeley 2007.
- Taylor C., *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA 2007.
- Teilhard de Chardin P., *The Phenomenon of Man*, New York 1975.