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Review of Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology

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doctrines, and the Buddhist imagery of motherhood, with a feminist ethics of care, and she hastily addresses notions of “struggle,” “rights,” and “opportunities.” Ohnuma suggests that “modern feminism’s struggle with the ‘impossibility of motherhood’ is really not so different from a similar struggle among premodern Indian Buddhist monastics” (205) in its negotiation of women’s identity and difference.

One may balk at some of the assumptions implicit in Ohnuma’s work—e.g., her constant references to what “*the Buddhist tradition*” (e.g., 9, 34–35, 50–51, 66–68, 170, 212; emphasis added) did or did not intend to do (despite explicitly stating that she does not mean “that ‘the Buddhist tradition’ was some kind of omniscient author” [69]), her omission of the image of Cundī as the bodhi-sattva-mother, her misconstrual of certain narratives, her reliance on dichotomous oppositions that fly in the face of more-nuanced Buddhist teachings of dependent origination (*pratītya samputpāda*) and skillful means (*upāya*), and her unquestioning use of Freudian psychological categories. Nevertheless, Ohnuma’s book introduces some compelling arguments about how maternal imagery may be presented in a wide array of Buddhist texts, and it should be considered recommended reading for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students in the fields of Buddhism and women’s and gender studies.

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Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology.
By Alister E. McGrath. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 320 pages. \$34.95.

Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology, by Alister E. McGrath, is an expanded version of the author’s 2009 Hulsean Lectures at the University of Cambridge marking the 200th anniversary of Darwin’s birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. The twin aims of the book are “to identify the forms of natural theology that emerged in England over the period 1690–1850 and how these were affected by the advent of Darwin’s theory,” and “to explore and assess twenty-first-century reflections on the relation of evolutionary thought and natural theology” (xiii). The book thus has both historical and contemporary foci, with the former intended to inform the latter.

Part I is entitled, “Conceptual Clarifications: On the meaning of terms.” Chapter 1, “Natural Theology: A Deeper Structure to the Natural World,” explores the multiple meanings of the term “natural theology.” According to McGrath, “natural theology” extends beyond the attempt to prove God’s existence on the basis of purely rational arguments (a common but overly narrow construal of the term) to the more expansive notion that “there exists some link between the world we observe and another transcendent realm” (12). While

exploring a range of different historically significant meanings of “natural theology,” McGrath emphasizes that “there is no single narrative of natural theology within the Christian tradition” but rather that “natural theology” is an inherently “polyvalent term”: “what we observe is a complex, shifting set of approaches, adapted to the envisaged contexts and audiences for any specific natural theology” (17). This understanding of “natural theology” provides a broad canvas on which to explore interactions between evolutionary thought and Christian theology in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2, “Darwinism: A Narrative of Evolution,” begins by problematizing the notion of “Darwinism” itself. Given the development of evolutionary theorizing since Darwin, does it still make sense to call modern evolutionary biology “Darwinism”? McGrath expresses doubt while nonetheless defending the self-conscious use of the term in the title of his book. Too often, he thinks, “Darwinism” is shorthand for a totalizing worldview (associated with true believers like Richard Dawkins) rather than a strictly scientific approach to understanding living things.

Part II is entitled, “Historical Exposition: Darwin and the English natural theology tradition.” In Chapter 3, “English Natural Theology of the Augustan Age, 1690–1745,” McGrath traces the emergence of a distinctive English form of natural theology serving primarily apologetic ends. Isaac Newton is perhaps the most important inspiration for the English tradition of “physico-theology” emphasizing the order and regularity of nature, although later appeals to natural “contrivances” (i.e., living things) eventually became seen as indisputable evidence of a divine designer, this emphasis evident in the variously authored Boyle Lectures of 1692–1732.

Chapter 4, “A Popular Classic; William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802),” is an examination of perhaps the best-known work of English natural theology—thanks in part to the self-confessed influence it had on a young Charles Darwin. In McGrath’s opinion, “Paley’s *Natural Theology* has every right to be considered a classic work” (86), despite its lack of serious engagement with David Hume’s much earlier critique of natural theology. Nonetheless, as McGrath demonstrates, Paley’s work was continuous with the tradition he inherited, and marks a high-water point of sorts for its comprehensiveness and ingenious use of analogies (of which the most famous by far is analogy between the watch and the watchmaker, on the one hand, and the world and its divine Designer, on the other. Probably, no other argument in natural theology has had so lasting and extensive an influence, continuing down to the present day.

Chapter 5, “Beyond Paley: Shifts in English Natural Theology, 1802–1852,” begins by noting that it is often assumed that the natural theology regnant when Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) was essentially undeveloped since Paley. In fact, natural theology continued to develop in the period 1802–59. For one thing, geology came into its own during this period, and with it came a significantly altered view of the age of the natural world. Another source of dissatisfaction with Paley’s approach came from increased philosophical attention to the logic of inductive inference, evidence, testimony, and proof, by William

Whewell (1794–1866), as well as by developments in English legal thinking. McGrath shows how the developments in natural theology during this period provided the context within which Darwin's work was received.

Early in Chapter 6, "Charles Darwin, Natural Selection, and Natural Theology," the author announces his intention not to document the development of Darwin's theory, which many others have done elsewhere, but instead to "identify the core elements of Darwin's ideas . . . and assess their importance for the forms of natural theology that were regnant in England around this time" (146). According to McGrath, Darwin was deeply indebted both to the style and to the imagery of Paley's work. Furthermore, "Darwin . . . had no quarrel with the idea of God, or even with the notion of God as creator. His dispute was specifically with the doctrine of special creation—namely, that God created individual species adapted to specific environments within an essentially static natural order" (157). Paley's specific version of teleology may have been undermined by Darwin's work, but a "wider teleology" (to use T. H. Huxley's phrase) that could be associated with a God who works through natural processes could, for those interested in advancing natural theology, take its place.

Part III, entitled "Contemporary Discussion: Darwinism and natural theology," shifts to assessing the present-day implications of Darwin's theory for natural theology. Chapter 7, "A Wider Teleology: Design, Evolution, and Natural Theology," begins by considering teleology, both on a cosmic scale and especially in the context of organic evolution. Teleology is clearly not the same as design, which implies a conscious agent responsible for directional change. Far from rendering obsolete any notion of natural teleology, Darwin's theory permitted it to be reconceptualized and given a scientific explanation. Trickier notions to deal with are those of chance and contingency, but McGrath cites authors as diverse as St. Thomas Aquinas and Simon Conway Morris in support of the ultimate compatibility of chance and teleology. Although it is not possible to prove the existence of a designer from mere observations of the natural world, such a claim can perhaps be the conclusion of a cogent "inference to the best explanation." The outstanding problem for any such inference, however, is (as it has always been) the problem of suffering. In a sense, Darwin's theory greatly increased the scope if not the nature of this problem by encouraging consideration of the suffering of nonhumans over unimaginable eons of time. Without attempting a theodicy, the author nonetheless is sympathetic to the idea that a solution to this problem ultimately can be found within the resources offered by a Trinitarian ontology.

Chapter 8, "The Concept of Creation: Reflections and Reconsiderations," discusses a range of viewpoints concerning the doctrine of creation as it has emerged within the Christian tradition, first independently of science, and then in response to scientific developments. The key development was a shift from thinking of creation as a static event to one in which creation is an ongoing process—prefigured long ago in St. Augustine's notion of "seminal reasons." Within a contemporary evolutionary view, the concept of "emergent creation" becomes centrally important. An ongoing problem is that of developing models

for how God might causally interact with the world through processes described by recent scientific advances. McGrath thinks that such approaches are to be applauded, while recognizing their limitations.

Chapter 9, “Universal Darwinism: Natural Theology as an Evolutionary Outcome?,” examines the question of whether the desire to engage in natural theology itself can be given an evolutionary explanation. McGrath interprets such a project as an application of the idea of “Universal Darwinism,” i.e., the idea that Darwinian principles are characterized by “substrate neutrality” and hence can be applied to any subject matter. He is sharply critical of this approach because cultural evolution is more “Lamarckian” (signifying “the volitional acquisition of characteristics”) rather than a *purely* Darwinian process of random variation and selection.

In Part IV, consisting of a final concluding chapter entitled, “The Prospects for Natural Theology,” the author concludes that rather than sounding the death knell for natural theology, evolutionary thought has given it a new lease on life by liberating it from the straightjacket of the classic natural theological tradition associated with Paley. Yet at the same time, “a Christian natural theology holds that the true meaning of nature is indeed capable of being unlocked; but this requires us to use a hermeneutical key that nature itself cannot provide” (290), suggesting that evolutionary thought and natural theology can and indeed must work together help to illuminate our experience of the world.

The writing in *Darwinism and the Divine* is clear, elegant, and well informed throughout, is distinguished by a balanced and nonpolemical style, and is a pleasure to read. Every chapter in this rich volume includes extensive endnotes guiding the reader to further study. Addressed to a general readership, the book seldom delves very deeply into the many important issues it discusses, but because the author is equally conversant in the history of science, contemporary science, and theology, this volume should be of interest especially to a diverse nonscholarly audience. In short, this book is highly recommended.

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Śrīpāl Rās. Edited by Premal Kapadia. Harshadray Private Ltd, 2011. 1120 pages. \$231.15.

The legend of Śrīpāl Rās is a much loved devotional tale within the Jain community. Its association with the powerful Siddhachakra Yantra also makes it a popular tool of transformation. The tale has been published widely, but none with the majesty and dedication (nay, devotion) of the recent publication by Mumbai-based Jain philanthropist and editor of the volume, Premal Kapadia.