

**EVOLUTION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**  
**(Review of Johan De Smedt's and Helen De Cruz's book**  
**“The Challenge of Evolution to Religion” –**  
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The author of the review analyzes the book that focuses on three challenges of evolution to religion: teleology, origin of a human being, and the evolution of religion itself. De Smedt and Helen De Cruz show how these tensions arise and offer potential responses for religion. Individual religions can meet these challenges, if some of their metaphysical assumptions are adapted or abandoned.

**Key words:** *theism, teleology, evolution, science, religion.*

**ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ТА РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ ДОСВІД**

**(Рецензія на книжку Йогана Смедта та Гелени де Круз “Еволюція кидає виклик релігії”.**  
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Прорецензовано книжку, автори якої аналізують виклики, котрі постають перед релігією в контексті еволюційної теорії. Смедт і де Круз показують, як виникають ці випробування, які вкорінені у сферах метафізики, проблеми походження життя на Землі та, зрештою, виникнення самої релігії. Зокрема порівнюють докази існування Бога і створення світу у викладі середньовічних (Августин, А. Кентерберійський) та сучасних (Е. Плантінга, Є. Лейбовіц) мислителів і вказують на сьогоденній потребі їхнього перегляду. Автори вбачають необхідність нових спроб переосмислення інтерпретацій відношення “еволюції та теїзму”. Де Смедт і Де Круз пропонують виділити три підходи до узгодження еволюції та телеології. Перша позиція, відповідно до якої світ є стохастичним, бо людина його сприймає таким, друга – світ стохастичний, бо це є справжня його риса і його створив таким Бог, і третя – світ одночасно є стохастичним і непізнаваний, навіть для Бога. Вони вважають, що в межах окремих релігій можуть бути дані відповіді на ці виклики, якщо деякі з їхніх метафізичних припущень будуть адаптовані або переглянуті, перед усім ті, що визначають уявлення про творення і страдання у світі, пізнаваності світу і природи релігійної віри.

**Ключові слова:** *теїзм, телеологія, еволюція, наука, релігія.*

The authors of the book consider that religion and evolutionary theory. They see evolution as a process of theism are facing the challenges, which come from the life creation, including the evolution of a human being

and the evolution of religion itself. The authors argue that science and religion have common metaphysical roots. They emphasize that science tries to get rid of it, but religion does not. These two set the best example of the destruction of the theological argument in science. Firstly, miracles are not compatible with the laws of nature, because they violate the physical laws. So, deism cannot be considered as an acceptable idea to compromise science and religion. Secondly, in Adam and Eve's fall, regression from the completeness of knowledge to its mosaic distortion is considered as a consequence of imperfection and inability to achieve the wholeness of a human cognition. De Smedt and De Cruz ask us: Was there an actual fall of a man? This question empirically is rather perverted than controversial. The first example should be accepted as an obvious one, but the second example needs further analysis. It is known that contemporary theologians and religious philosophers reject the literal interpretation of the Bible's texts. They all agree with the statement that the Holy Scriptures' interpretation should have exegetical and hermeneutic nature. Another thing that should be considered was its historical, ideological, and literary context when it was written. That's why the second example doesn't seem like a problematical one for contemporary religion and theism. Nevertheless, it is not hard to see that the authors know how these problems are solved in theology. The book emphasizes that starting from the XIX century, the science strived to avoid the impact of theism and theological argument, tried to be more professional, ideologically neutral. Those tendencies are understandable, considering the continual influence of religion and deism upon science. The authors suggest that religion and theism are not the biggest threats for science, but religious dogmatism is a threat. Furthermore, religious dogmatism is not so much a big threat to science as it is for scientific fallibilism. They point out that religious dogmatism is not the only threat. Any kind of dogmatism is potentially dangerous for scientific fallibilism. A well-known fact is that Karl Popper formulated a principle of fallibilism in science. He did that in order to avoid much formalized principle of scientism.

Analyzing the interaction between science and religion, the authors come to the obvious conclusion that the full separation of these areas is impossible. Theologians and philosophers will always refer to the scientific facts, and some individual scientists will try to explain the nature of values. Italian psychoanalyst Luigi Zoja writes: "The liturgy of Catholicism even allows for its own enrichment through the acceptance of new and additional saints. This forward-looking gaze and this openness to things to come are expressed by the prefix *pro-*, both in Greek and in Latin. This need for new revelations, or for new truths that require to be

constructed, created a series of attitudes that prepared the road for scientific research and that finally found their coronation in the modern "cult" of such research" [Zoja 1995: 118].

Nowadays, in Smedt and Cruz's opinion, the theory of evolution represents the same challenge to religion as it did Copernicus heliocentric system in the past. It gives the answers to the same questions as religion does. Both of them do that with the projection into the future, even though they have different purposes. Since the theory of evolution also explores the origin and the fate of humanity, it will probably challenge religious ideas. The authors make an accent on the three potential challenges to religion and theism: "The first is metaphysical. Religious worldviews tend to presuppose a teleological understanding of the origins of living things, including human beings. Still, contemporary evolutionary theory (at least, in a standard sense, as we will qualify later on) understands evolution as no teleological. The second challenge focuses on human origins: religious and scientific accounts of human origins are not aligned, at least not in a straightforward sense. The third challenge concerns the evolutionary origins of religion itself. Evolutionary explanations of religion, including religious practices and beliefs, may cast doubt on their justification" [Smedt, Cruz 2020: 7]. The authors consider their task to outline the answers to these theological challenges. They point out that any attempt to explain the problem of compatibility of theism, theology, and evolution has own price. On the one hand, this point doesn't benefit theism and religion. Still, on the other hand, it is possible to assume that it is a sign of fallibilism, clarification of knowledge.

The authors consider the theological argument as the essence of a theistic idea about life's creation and development. In the book, they analyze the deep roots of theological occurrence. They believe that theology doesn't originate from theism. It has a simpler origin, which is reflected in the term suggested by the authors – *intuitive theology*. This suggestion is substantiated by specific empirically confirmed examples from cognitive sciences. The authors argue that human beings tend to interpret strange events with the help of theology. This tendency is natural for humans. The more people know, the less they are inclined to refer to theology. The authors consider theology as a sign of a simpler worldview. So, the evolution of knowledge means the decline of a theological worldview. Unintentionally, the authors explain the roots of religion, theism, and teleology as natural, archaic, and primitive; even though they criticize the attempts to create any connection between the children's ideas about the world and theism. The authors

believe that theology has a more complicated form in theism. In other words, teleology doesn't appear as a consequence of the unconscious desire of the undeveloped mind to explain incomprehensible things through supernatural causes. Analyzing nascence and penetration of teleological argument into biology, the authors explain its admissibility in microevolution and inadmissibility in macroevolution. In macroevolution, teleology is not acceptable because, in this case, it will have global cosmological meaning and supernatural causes. In microevolution, it can be explained as a necessity to adapt to the challenges of the environment. Also, the authors criticize the attempt of some modern philosophers to create non-theistic teleology. This kind of theology replaces God with a certain concept of natural design. According to non-theistic teleology, nature strives for maximal optimization, but empirical data deny it. That's why this coordination between macroevolution and teleology also doesn't seem possible.

In chapter two, the authors admit that the modern scientific understanding of evolution doesn't fully eliminate teleological explanation about the existence of life and humans. Smedt and Cruz suggest highlighting three possible ways to harmonize evolution and teleology. The first belief consists of the idea that the world is stochastic because humans perceive it that way. The second belief says that the world is stochastic because it is its original feature and God's creation. The third one consists of the idea that even for God, the world is simultaneously stochastic and unknown. Due to the contemporary level of knowledge, the second model seems more compatible with theism because God's intervention is considered a particular action. He interferes in certain conditions. For example, if the person follows specific rules, has a specific lifestyle, is a saint, etc. In any other case, there is a universal providence. God doesn't interfere in these cases. This idea simultaneously solves two problems: on the one hand, coincidence and spontaneity have a place to be in the world. On the other hand, it explains the existence of evil and suffering in the world.

This idea has an obvious contrast with the first one. The first one has certain signs of negative teleological explanation. The world's existence isn't teleological, but the direction of the evolutionary process before the human's occurrence is defined and controlled by God. In particular, this idea was common for Augustine in the Middle Ages and Alvin Plantinga in nowadays. The authors point out that the model of stochastic but unknown, the unpredictable world looks like a challenge for the theistic idea. However, some researchers don't consider it a threat to theism. In the

chapter dedicated to the analysis of these ideas and models, the authors demonstrate that theism isn't homogeneous as well. Anselm of Canterbury's theistic views contradict the modern discoveries in Biology. In the inconsistent and unpredictable world, it is impossible to imagine the Lord, who would create such an uncontrolled reality. In other words, it's impossible to predict unpredictable. However, the element of freedom and creativity doesn't destroy theism but provokes the occurrence of its new type. It is possible to assume that there isn't a different form of theism, but the variability of its interpretations. The authors use the idea of biologist Stuart Kauffman as an example. He assumes that God is a human's creation with the purpose to sacralize the space in which a human being exists. In contrast, the authors use the idea of the Jewish theologian Yeshayahu Leibowitz. He denies the possibility to understand God or His plan. The Jewish theologian called any suggestions about this topic as metaphysical speculations. Leibowitz argues that we must consider the field of science and the field of religion separately. Religion doesn't operate with the knowledge. It doesn't strive to find true knowledge about reality. Religion is valuable for the practice of individual believers. Divine providence doesn't have a universal and unidirectional nature. It works in every specific case.

The authors' analysis of ideas or models concerning the relations between the stochastic world and God doesn't demonstrate theism's weakness. They show the necessity of new attempts to rethink the interpretation of relation between "evolution and theism". Smedt and Cruz warn that new interpretations can provoke the need to revise classical ideas about God and His impact upon the world. There are more contradictions, when we try to find out about the relations between a human being's original sin and evolutionary development. To do that, the authors dedicated the third chapter of their book. They summarize that empirical evidence used by the defenders of doctrines of the original sin can't be considered convincingly. It means that this evidence cannot be interpreted according to theism; even if the interpretation of the man's fall suggested by Augustine is taken into consideration [Augustine 1955: 176].

In the book's fourth chapter, the authors refer to the cognitive science of religion (CSR). They point out that the idea of religion's development is not a new thing. However, interdisciplinarity is a common for contemporary researches of religion's origin. It allows combining the different data from different fields of empirical researches: neuroscience, history of religion, religious studies, and cultural studies. CSR naturalize religious faith, recognize it as natural. Smedt and Cruz argue that this theory has

serious advantages, because it tries to explain the reason why people are religious. Most of CSR's researches assume that religion has an adaptive function. It works in the natural environment as well as in the social one. The authors think that the results of CSR researches are another challenge to theism and religion.

In general, "The Challenge of Evolution to Religion" reveals the necessity to change theological interpretation about the creation of life and a human's origin on Earth. However, the authors think that evolution's challenges are dangerous to religion. Religious philosophers react to scientific discoveries in different fields of biology. They suggest distinguishing the theory of evolution and evolutionism. The authors didn't refer to this problem in their book. Even though CSR operates with the facts to create a hypothesis about the evolutionary origin of religion, it should be taken into consideration that it can also have theistic interpretation [Newberg, D'Aquili, Rause 2002].

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