

God After Darwin

6. Evolution and Divine Action

September 3, 2006
9 to 9:50 am in the Parlor
All are welcome!

St. John in the Wilderness

God Our Father,
open our eyes to see your hand at work
in the splendor of creation,
in the beauty of human life.

Touched by your hand our world is holy.
Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us,
to share your blessings with our brothers
and sisters,
and to experience the joy of life in your
presence.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

- *Every Day We Praise You*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., p. 136

J o h n F. H a u g h t



God After Darwin

A Theology of Evolution

**God After
Darwin. A
Theology of
Evolution.** John
F. Haught,
Westview Press,
2000. ISBN 0-
8133-3878-6
(Chapter 9)

Background image on the
PowerPoint slides is
taken from the cover art
of *God After Darwin*

John F. Haught
**Responses to
101 Questions
on God and
Evolution**



**Responses to
101 Questions
on God and
Evolution.**

John F. Haught,
Paulist Press,
2001. ISBN 0-
8091-3989-8



John F. Haught is the Landegger Distinguished Professor of Theology at Georgetown University, and Director of the Georgetown Center for the Study of Science and Religion.

Photos captured from the on-line interview with Dr. Haught at: <http://MeaningOfLife.tv>

The background is a collage of three distinct images. At the top, a DNA double helix is rendered in a light blue and green color scheme. In the bottom left corner, a close-up of a human hand is visible, with fingers slightly spread. On the right side, there is a bouquet of flowers, including purple and pink blooms, tied with a white ribbon. The overall background color is a dark, muted blue.

Review

Review

What Evolution Tells Us

✚ The modern theory of evolution (= the “**neo-Darwinian Synthesis**”) says that the great diversity of life can be *naturally* explained by the combination of **chance, law, and deep time**:

- 1. **Chance**: accidental, chance events or contingencies:
 - a genetic mutation that lead to new characteristics in an organism
 - a natural disaster that changes the environment that an organism must adapt to
- 2. **Law**: the deterministic laws of **natural selection** (nature “selects” as survivors organism who best adapt to the environment; all others perish), chemistry, and physics
- 3. **Deep Time**: enormous depths of time

Review

What Evolution Tells Us

✚ Evolution tells us human beings are the result of billions of years of a meandering, haphazard process of “**natural selection**,” a journey marked by untold pain and suffering, loss, waste, and in the end, extinction for most species.

- More than 99% of all species born in the crucible of evolution have died out under the relentless jackboot of natural selection.

Review

Why Might God Create In Such a Way?

- ⊕ Why might God choose to create in such a way?
- ⊕ Why might God create a world characterized by the meandering, wasteful, painful path of evolution?

Review

Why Might God Create In Such a Way?

✝ We suggested that the answer lies in a fundamental, eternal characteristic of God: God is **self-emptying (=kenosis) suffering love.**

Review

God's Self-Emptying Love

- ✝ Love needs an “Other” that is not oneself to love. Without an “Other” who is *independent* of oneself, love cannot be actualized.
- ✝ God's **self-emptying, self-giving love** is manifest in:
 - allowing creation to come into being **independent** of God's self – to be “Other” than God – and
 - endowing that creation with the ability to **evolve** = to be “**self-creative and self-ordering**”
- ✝ Such a universe is really the only kind of universe that could be the product of love – for love desires the **independence** and spontaneity of the “Other.”

Review

God Comes to Us From the Future

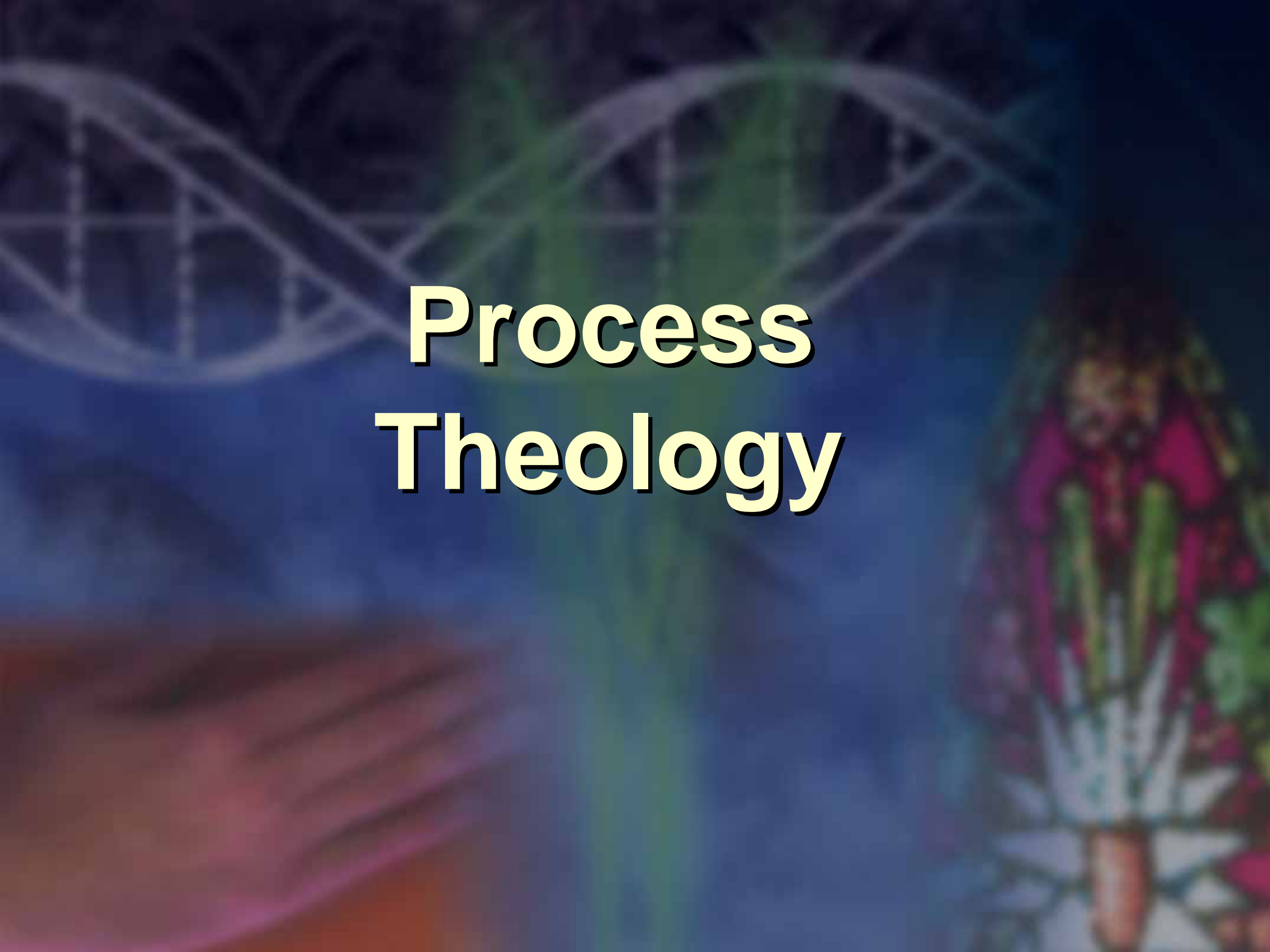
- ✚ As the world evolves, self-creates, self-orders itself, God comes:
 - from the “future,”
 - from “the sphere of the not-yet,” of “not-yet-being,”
 - from the “realm of possibility and potentiality,”
 - from “that which might come / is to come”
- ✚ and God sustains the world continually at:
 - the cusp of where the future meets the present,
 - the threshold between “not-yet” and “now”
- ✚ where God offers to Creation possibilities, “novelty” = novel informational patterns and orderings,
- ✚ and God lures, persuades, but does not force Creation towards God’s vision of Creation’s fulfillment and completion.
- ✚ God is, in other words, the “Power of the Future,” more Omega than Alpha

Review

Today

✝ Today we will look more deeply into how God might be able to act in this independent, self-creating, self-ordering world that God has created

- How is God able to “lure” or “persuade” the universe towards God’s vision of the universe’s fulfillment and completion?

The background is a composite image. On the left, a DNA double helix is visible in shades of blue and green. In the center, a hand is shown holding a plant with green leaves and a brown stem. On the right, there is a stained glass window with various colors including red, green, and blue. The overall background is a mix of these colors.

Process Theology

Process Theology

Alfred North Whitehead

- ✚ Many of the ideas we have been discussing over the past several weeks come from “process theology”
- ✚ “Process theology,” reflections upon God and nature based on the “process philosophy” proposed by 20th English philosopher Alfred North Whitehead.
- ✚ Alfred North Whitehead was born in 1861; died in 1947

Process Theology

Alfred North Whitehead

- ✦ 1880: Whitehead entered Cambridge University and studied mathematics
- ✦ 1884: elected to a fellowship at Cambridge
- ✦ 1910: moved to the University of London
- ✦ 1924: accepted a chair in philosophy at Harvard University, where he remained until he retired in 1937

Process Theology

Alfred North Whitehead

† 1910 to 1913: wrote, with his most important student, **Bertrand Russell**, the 3 volume work *Principia Mathematica*. He then began to turn his attention to philosophy

† His most important and influential book was *Process and Reality*, published in 1929

Process Theology

Nature and God

- ⊕ All of nature is in the **process** of becoming
- ⊕ This “**restlessness**” of nature requires an explanation just as much as the **order** of nature requires an explanation
- ⊕ What is the **source** of the **novelty** that is always emerging at each moment of this world’s becoming?

Process Theology

Nature and God

- ✚ Whitehead: God is the ultimate source of both nature's **order** and **novelty**
- ✚ At every instant, God influences and “lures” the universe by offering it **new possibilities for becoming** (“novelty”)
- ✚ Evolution and change occurs because God is interested in “**adventure**”, not in preserving a status quo
 - “**Adventure:**” the cosmic aim towards more intense beauty
 - “**beauty:**” a harmony of contrasts

Process Theology

Nature and God

‡ Events that do not fit our sense of order, which we term “random,” are signs of the universe’s becoming, signs of the universe opening itself up to novelty = new forms of order

Process Theology

God's Power

- ✚ God's power in luring the universe with new possibilities for becoming is a **persuasive power**, not a coercive power.
- God does not “force” the universe into any particular design
 - God loves the universe, wants the universe to be independent, “Other” than God, and a ‘persuasive’ power is the only power compatible with love

Process Theology

God's Power

- ✚ God power as “persuasive power” is *not* a diminishment of God's **omnipotence**.
- If power is defined as “the capacity to influence,” than a persuasive power is much more potent than any coercive power
 - A universe created and maintained by coercive power would just be a puppet, an appendage of God
 - Whereas, a universe allowed to independently respond to God's persuasive power is, in the end, a much more substantial and wondrous thing, filled with a much greater intensity of being

Process Theology

God's Power

- ✚ Because God's Power is persuasive rather than coercive, the universe may not always respond to God's persuasion
 - especially when it reached the human phase of the universe's unfolding
- ✚ The risk of "evil" is thus present, and even intensified when human freedom emerged in the universe.

Process Theology

God's Intimacy With Creation

- ✚ God is intimately present at every moment of the world's becoming, and every moment of the universe's evolution is eternally preserved in God's feeling and memory.
- ✚ God experiences, suffers, remembers *forever everything* that occurs in the unfolding of the universe
 - God thus not only creates and sustains the universe, but also God also “saves” and “redeems” the universe from absolute perishing
- ✚ Nothing in creation happens outside of God's love and compassionate feeling

Process Theology

Evil and Sin

‡ There are two kinds of “evil” and “sin” in an evolving universe in the process of becoming:

- The **evil of disorder**
 - Suffering, war, famine, death
- The **evil of monotony**
 - The clinging to trivial forms of order, refusing to be open to what is new, fresh, renewing



Panexperientialism or Panpsychism

Panexperientialism

‡ So how is God able to “lure” or “persuade” the universe to accept new possibilities of becoming?

Panexperientialism

† Alfred North Whitehead made the controversial suggestion that what we variously call:

- “subjectivity,”
- “inner sense,”
- “mind”
- “capacity to experience”
- “interiority”

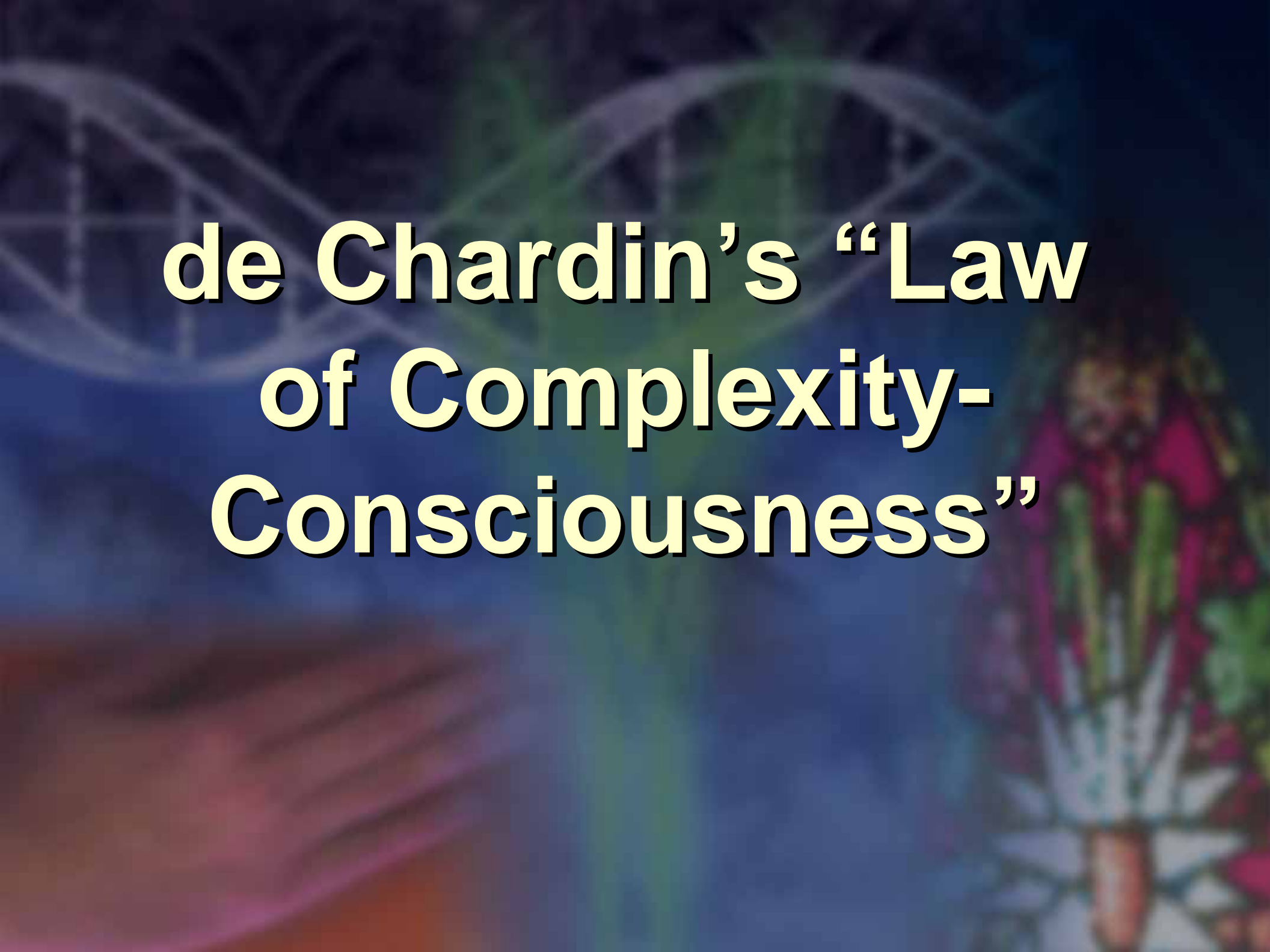
is present to some degree in every constituent, every entity of the cosmos, even inanimate particles of matter.

Panexperientialism

- ✚ *That is:* there is some measure of “feeling,” of “subjectivity” in every entity, that gives each entity a real capacity to “experience” the lure of God.
 - This capacity, in its most highly developed, most intense form found in human beings, is what we call our consciousness = our self-awareness = our subjectivity = our inner sense of ourselves.
- ✚ This suggestion of Whitehead that every constituent of the nature possesses some degree, however primitive, of “subjectivity” is called **panexperientialism** or **panpsychist**.

Panexperientialism

‡ The built-in, often almost negligible, but real capacity to “experience” the lure of God is what allows the natural world to evolve towards God’s vision of the world’s fulfillment and completion



**de Chardin's "Law
of Complexity-
Consciousness"**

Complexity-Consciousness

- ✠ Teilhard de Chardin (b. 1881, d. 1955), the Jesuit biologist and theologian, proposed a similar but slightly different explanation for how God is able to “lure” or persuade creation in its process of evolution.
- ✠ Whitehead had suggested that *every atomic particular* of reality had built into it a primitive subjectivity, a capacity to “feel” God’s lure, and respond to it
- ✠ de Chardin suggested that subjectivity (“withinness”) was a property of ordered collections of atomic particulars

Complexity-Consciousness

✚ The greater the physical complexity of the structure of atomic particulars, the greater the degree and sophistication of its property of “subjectivity” or “withinness”

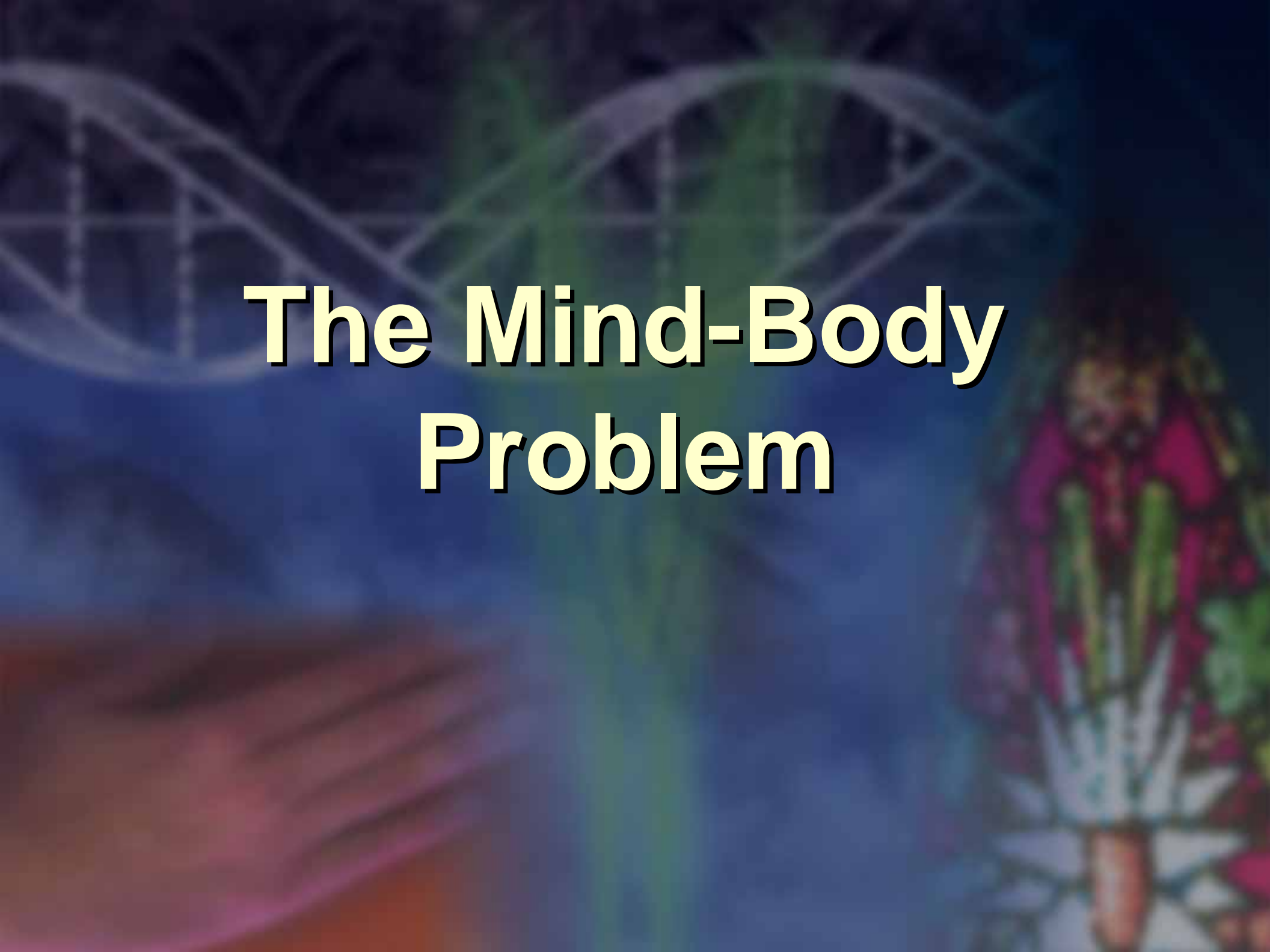
- In the enormous physical complexity of life, the degree of subjectivity or “withinness” became so intense that “consciousness” or “mind” emerged
 - 1. Sphere of Matter (**Geosphere**)
 - 2. Sphere of Life (**Biosphere**)
 - 3. Sphere of “Mind” (**Noosphere**)

Complexity-Consciousness

† de Chardin's "**Law of Complexity-Consciousness**" = consciousness has grown in direct proportion to the increase in organized physical complexity

Complexity-Consciousness

- ✚ The property of “withinness,” the capacity to “feel” the lure of God, is what allows the natural world to evolve towards God’s vision of the world’s fulfillment and completion, towards “God-Omega.”
- ✚ This capacity to respond to God is greatest in the most physically complex entities in which “withinness,” “subjectivity” has grown into “consciousness” and “mind” (“The Noosphere”)

The background is a composite image. On the left, a DNA double helix is visible in shades of blue and green. In the center, a hand is shown holding a bouquet of flowers, with the hand and flowers appearing in a reddish-pink hue. On the right, a globe is partially visible, showing continents in green and oceans in blue. The overall background is a dark, textured blue.

The Mind-Body Problem

The Mind-Body Problem

‡ Both Whitehead's and de Chardin's concept that there is some degree of "subjectivity," or "withinness" even within inanimate matter, a "subjectivity" that becomes "conscious self-awareness" = "mind" when it is highly intense, helps address the "mind-body" problem.

The Mind-Body Problem

- ⊕ Mind, mentality, subjectivity, consciousness, a sense of inner experience – is an *objective* aspect of reality
- ⊕ However, science typically ignores subjectivity, consciousness, mind ... because it is not readily accessible to measurement and objectification

The Mind-Body Problem

✚ A traditional religious response is **dualism**:

- Mind / Consciousness = a property of the “Soul” or “Spirit,” a “supernatural” immortal entity
- Body = the perishable, physical housing for the “Soul”

The Mind-Body Problem

- ✦ Whitehead's and de Chardin suggestion that subjectivity / withinness (= mind, consciousness, in its most intense manifestations) is something actively present in everything, inanimate as well as animate matter, removes the need for "dualism"
- ✦ Human Beings are **psychosomatic unities**, and our inner sense of ourselves, our self-awareness, our consciousness, our "minds," is the intense manifestation of the "subjectivity" or "withinness" that is present in everything, even inanimate collections of matter.