

A Time to Deepen Beauty

From the Conference Minister from June 24, 2020 Coconut Wireless

I am a fan of Catholic theologian John Haught. His work in theologies of evolution gives insights into the ways of God's work in the world that remain unnoticed by historical theological approaches. For example, Haught believes the purpose of creation is beauty. Of course, this is hinted at in the opening verses of the Genesis where God reflects on creation and pronounces it "good," and ultimately, "very good."

Haught develops an exciting notion of how beauty emerges through the dynamics of God's creative processes which lead to ever more intense experiences of the beautiful. Haught believes emerging beauty is the outplay of novelty and order, or things new and things established.

For me, Haught's theory of beauty and the purpose of creation speaks to this time of warping we are experiencing due to COVID-19, Black Lives Matter protests, and the continuing movement of the U.S. culture away from organized religion. In Haught's theory we need not be put off by this warping. This is the process by which more intense beauty emerges, and in this emerging novelty and order, gives way for that which transcends them both.

Whenever God proclaims that God is doing a new thing, usually we are not ready. The new thing introduces the novelty which wrestles with our order—or at least our perception of order. Yet, it is precisely the introduction of the new things by God which provides the impetus for emergent beauty. Haught reminds us that this process is never about us, and at the same time is always about us. That is, the process is natural to God's order of creation and will continue to unfold regardless of our readiness for it. At the same time, we are a part of the emerging beauty, and we are transformed in its coming.

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