

Evolutionary Theodicy

with Denis Edwards, “Christopher Southgate’s Compound Theodicy: Parallel Searchings”; Ted Peters, “Extinction, Natural Evil, and the Cosmic Cross”; Robert John Russell, “Southgate’s Compound Only-Way Evolutionary Theodicy: Deep Appreciation and Further Directions”; Bethany Sollereeder, “Exploring Old and New Paths in Theodicy”; Holmes Rolston, III, “Redeeming a Cruciform Nature”; Ernst M. Conradie, “On Social Evil and Natural Evil: In Conversation with Christopher Southgate”; Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp, “Evolution, Contingency, and Christology”; John F. Haught, “Faith and Compassion in an Unfinished Universe”; Celia Deane-Drummond, “Perceiving Natural Evil through the Lens of Divine Glory? A Conversation with Christopher Southgate”; Nicola Hoggard Creegan, “Theodicy: A Response to Christopher Southgate”; and Neil Messer, “Evolution and Theodicy: How (Not) to Do Science and Theology.”

PERCEIVING NATURAL EVIL THROUGH THE LENS OF DIVINE GLORY? A CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTOPHER SOUTHGATE

by Celia Deane-Drummond

Abstract. Finding a way to come to terms with the disvalues in the evolutionary world is a particular challenge in the light of Neo-Darwinian theories. In this article I trace the shift in Christopher Southgate’s work from a focus on theodicy to a theologian of glory. I am critical of his rejection of the tradition of the Fall, his incorporation of disvalues into the work of divine Glory, and the specific theological weight given to scientific content. I offer a critique of Holmes Rolston III’s approach to the valuation of nature that I believe has influenced Southgate’s theology. Constructively, I offer an alternative that seeks to recover an understanding of the origin of evil and the Adamic event that draws on the work of Paul Ricoeur. I also draw on the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold for an alternative philosophical approach to evolution which opens up a space for a recovery of the concepts of creaturely Sophia and shadow Sophia in the work of Sergius Bulgakov.

Keywords: creaturely Sophia; glory; natural evil; Paul Ricoeur; Holmes Rolston, III; shadow Sophia; Christopher Southgate; theodicy

Celia Deane-Drummond is Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for Theology, Science, and Human Flourishing at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, USA; e-mail: celia.deane-drummond.1@nd.edu.

Christopher Southgate is one of the few scientifically trained theologians who have spent time considering difficult questions about natural evil and the implications of evolutionary disvalues. I share a common scholarly journey in natural science then theology, and have had many constructive and fruitful exchanges with Southgate over the years, so I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for his scholarly contributions. *The Groaning of Creation* has become a standard text (Southgate 2008). Here I am going to concentrate on engagement with his subsequent work, including his discussion of divine glory, as this shows more clearly the implications of his approach (Southgate 2014a, 2014b, 2015). I am sympathetic to his poetic instincts as a spiritual or even mystical dimension that is sometimes lost in more constructive approaches.

Unlike Southgate, I argue for retention of the basic idea of the Adamic Fall, but not in the manner that presumes a literal paradisiacal state, inspired by the work of Paul Ricoeur (1967). I challenge the standard philosophy of Neo-Darwinism, presumed in Southgate's method, by reference to the work of Tim Ingold (1990, 2007, 2018). As classical Neo-Darwinism forms a key backdrop to Southgate's theological project, I hope to show how an alternative and more theologically satisfying position can begin to be elaborated. Drawing on some hints in the work of Russian philosopher and priest Sergius Bulgakov (2004), I develop the concept of creaturely Sophia and shadow Sophia as an alternative way of reading values/disvalues in the natural world in a way that is distinguished from, rather than incorporated into, Divine Sophia.

GOD'S WILD AND VIOLENT CREATION?

Southgate as biologist is fascinated by the way living things intersect with each other in order to survive and, as a keen observer, admires the sheer "stunning" skill of a peregrine involved in killing a pigeon and the collective mob activity of a pair of peregrines killing a buzzard (Southgate 2015, 245–46). If the first example, for him, showed admirable skill, the second showed that cooperation "is always itself a form of disguised competition" (Southgate 2015, 246). Southgate has squarely faced how to match violence in the natural world with belief in a good God. He rejects traditional Christian narratives of the Fall as being no longer credible in the light of what is known about evolutionary chronology. The Neo-Darwinian paradigm of evolution by natural selection and nature "red in tooth and claw" is, therefore, the basic framing that filters out incompatible concepts, though resurrection is a noted exception. The question, though, is not just whether the concept of the cosmic Fall is believable or not, but whether the narrative of the Fall describes something more profound about the human condition that cannot readily be dispensed with by empirical claims working with very different metaphysical starting points (Deane-Drummond 2017).¹

Southgate correctly resists attributing everything that we do not like about the world to Satanic forces.² Perhaps the core basis for his position is neatly summarized in his following observation: “the very evolutionary processes that make lions the violent, flesh-ripping creatures are the same processes that made them the strong majestic creatures to which humans have always looked as symbols of power and majesty” (Southgate 2015, 246). The next step in his argument is that if such violent processes are necessary in evolutionary terms for good things to arise, then “the only way a God of love could have created a world of complex and feeling creatures—a world, moreover, capable of being redeemed by love—was by a process to which suffering was intrinsic” (Southgate 2015, 247).

Does this position make God somehow *responsible* for the suffering and violence in the world? Neil Messer believes that it does, and instead incorporates a version of Karl Barth’s understanding of the *nihil*, nothingness, drawing on the Christian tradition of the possibility of *creatio ex nihilo*, to help account for creaturely disvalues (Messer 2009). While he admits that, biologically speaking, violent and destructive processes serve to generate natural diversity, citing Barth, “the violence of the evolutionary struggle for existence ‘does not correspond with the true and original creative will of God, and that it therefore stands under a caveat’” (Messer 2014, 131). Southgate’s objection is that this fails to absorb evolutionary science. So, he opines, how can what God wills be “split off” from what God does not will, and, if we follow Messer’s nothingness argument, precisely “*which* properties of the natural world can be assigned to the operation of resistance to God”? (Southgate 2015, 247). For Southgate this is an important “test,” because a *privatio bono* approach to natural evil (that he detects behind Barth) “defaults to a vague assertion that the world is not all that it should be, an assertion lacking all explanatory power” (Southgate 2015, 247).

Southgate’s charge that Messer’s Barthianism “leads him away from a willingness to learn from science about the way things really are” is ironic given Messer’s scientific background, and it misunderstands important philosophical distinctions between theological and scientific approaches to natural evil. Southgate wants to use a Neo-Darwinian paradigm as a blueprint to shape his theological position, even while pressing beyond that in poetic threads. For Southgate, a philosophically informed position relies on logical coherence for theodicy that is indebted to analytical traditions that resemble scientific logic. One objection to theodicies in general is that God is envisaged as too like human agents using a moral cost-benefit calculus. Another objection is that justifying violence in the world by making God responsible might enhance human violence (Messer 2018). Southgate concludes that logically these cancel each other out; the first reduces God to a human agent whereas the second encourages human hubris in the name of acting like God. Yet, such ideas are not necessarily considered simultaneously, and it is not clear what amounts to

“a solidly constructed” distinction between God and humanity as his proposed way forward. Further, why does Jesus model ethics, as if that is very different from what God as Creator might do? Southgate embarks on his next bold theological move to associate the work that God has done in creating that Darwinian world with divine glory.

FINDING DIVINE GLORY IN A SUFFERING CREATION?

My purpose in this section is not to analyze all Southgate’s arguments on divine glory, many of which engage with Biblical texts, but to focus more specifically on the relationship between that glory and disvalues in the world. That divine glory is not just about beauty, understood as a positive aesthetic sense, prompts the thought that it “encompasses also pain and suffering, degradation and death” (Southgate 2014b, 785). But what precisely might this mean? For Southgate glory provides an important way of speaking about the ambiguity of the created world as viewed from observations of science and, it seems, “of human experience under God” where that experience includes our suffering and that of Christ on the cross. Southgate rules out some ways of perceiving God through contemplation of the natural world, through a form of deism or naïve pantheism. The second is a form of Platonism favored by David Bentley Hart (2003) where the material world reflects in some way a more perfect transcendental of glory. Southgate wavers a bit here on the basis that for him it leans too far towards a Manichean rejection of the material world and seems counter to incarnation theology. I am less convinced that this tradition can be rejected *in toto*.

His third alternative, that the material world can be semiotic of divine reality is, I think, an important and interesting perspective. Divine glory is, accordingly, a sign or series of signs that point towards an unknowable reality, and also calls for a human response (Southgate 2015, 787). The glory of God is not a character or attribute of God, but “a sign of the Godness of God” (Southgate 2015, 788). Glory is also about how that becomes communicated to creatures, expressed ultimately in the Passion, and drawing on John’s Gospel, so glory “may be associated with all those elements that make the Passion of Christ so profound and disturbing for us—abandonment, pain, silence, innocent suffering stretched to its extremes” (Southgate 2015, 788). The crucial issue is God’s “involvement in disvalues and suffering” (Southgate 2015, 788), but the question then becomes, in what manner, precisely, is that involvement understood? Drawing on Giorgio Agamben’s work on Maimonides, Southgate concedes that divine glory does not just have a semiotic function, but is also an ontological reference to God’s essence, such that it can “roam along an axis of meaning between equation with the divine reality and disclosure of that reality” (Southgate 2015, 289). Which comes first, theophany or ontology is a decision related

to theological predispositions; for Karl Barth, God's self-disclosure as glory is primary. Glory, for Southgate, is also "in those operations that are full of suffering, and may seem to us to lack beauty" most properly because it is the place where "the reality of God's nature as creator is reflected" (Southgate 2015, 296). Southgate concludes that "God is deeply implicated in the violence and suffering as well as the beauty and loveliness of the world" (Southgate 2015, 798). It is true that Christ's beauty is also that of the Crucified one, but does that mean, in the way that Southgate implies, that this also rests on a Darwinian understanding of the importance of suffering and violence in the natural world *as such*? It seems that it does, for "The deep reality of the creativity of God is seen in the bluebell and the hummingbird, and also in the hunting patterns of orcas and hyenas, and even in the parasitic strategies of the anopheles mosquito, despite the hideous creaturely suffering that these can cause" (Southgate 2015, 798). Like Holmes Rolston, III, Southgate wants to celebrate this natural proclivity, though, for Wesley Wildman, belief in a benevolent God is no longer possible. I have some sympathy with the strong objections by David Bentley Hart and Neil Messer that God is made the metaphysical ground for violence. After all, it is difficult to admire the skill and cunning, for example, in sophisticated killing machines used throughout human history, even if participation in such efforts seemed "natural" to those involved, either through brainwashing or other forms of social manipulation; yet somehow in the natural world as such that then becomes endorsed as integral to God's action. Evil is always a sordid mixture of good and evil. Southgate honestly faces this critique, but then admits: "I am not entirely clear that any theology of creation *ex nihilo* can escape this charge. If God is the ground of all existence, God is the ground of what creaturely existence can do" (Southgate 2015, 799). For Southgate, such a charge is not avoided by "refuge in mysterious counter forces that God is not able to resist" (Southgate 2015, 799).

I believe that there are indeed more convincing alternatives that avoid the abhorrent conclusion that God is the ultimate source of such violence. Further, if we follow Southgate's line of argument this implies that Christ's death on the cross was in a perverse sense willed by God, redemption joined with the Darwinian story of creation through glory, so *gloria mundi*, *gloria crucis* and *gloria in excelsis* are part of what he terms a "trptych of glory" (Southgate 2015, 800). It is the protological glory read through a suffering creation that is the most radical aspect of his position, for it is not clear to me on what basis a transformed state can be expected where "creatures that appear victims in the first story know flourishing in the third." Such consequential reasoning to make suffering more palatable needs to be approached "with the utmost caution" (Southgate 2015, 800). The basis for the claim seems to rest on the Resurrection narrative but, as Southgate is ready to admit, this is the great exception

to the regularities of natural processes that Southgate is so keen to honor (Southgate 2015, 799). Softening such a view of the harshness of the created process with the claim that God, under the inspiration of the Crucified one, also suffers with those who are suffering seems at best paradoxical, at worst illogical, for why would a God who is the ground of such suffering energy, one that seems of a different character from God the Son, the self-emptying, crucified and suffering one, also come to the aid of individual victims?

Southgate acknowledges in earlier work that God is a suffering God on the cross (Southgate 2008, 56–59). He is also clear about the different states that living things can find themselves in, from being fulfilled; on the way to being fulfilled; frustrated; perhaps self-transcending (Southgate 2008, 64–65). Frustration is a “necessary cost of selving” (Southgate 2008, 65). Southgate imagines in his earlier work that it amounts to a lament handed over to the Father by the Spirit (Southgate 2008, 65). However, by the time we reach his work on divine glory he has become bolder; suffering now elicits not so much a cry of lament but, even though in a highly ambiguous way, also provides a pointer to the glory of God. So, commenting on the horrific Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, there are aspects of this devastating process that he is still able to admire. So he reflects “That the tsunami had a force, equivalent to ten thousand hydrogen bombs, is testament, in a deeply difficult way, to the glory of God in creation” (Southgate 2015, 799). For him, it is crucially important to admit to “the way things really are,” and accept that God is integral to that perceived reality, even if it very regrettably caused either directly or indirectly “the deaths of some 250,000 human beings” (Southgate 2015, 799).

The seeming harshness of such an approach is countered by Southgate’s poetical turn in deep contemplation of the natural world. Using Gerard Manley Hopkins’s ideas of *inscape* and *instress* he invites a deeper understanding of the meaning of “the realities of the creation” (Southgate 2015, 802). It is through poetry that Southgate invites reflection on God’s love for each creature, and in turn the creature returns a song of praise. Southgate presses for a holistic understanding, so “the whole divine element in the inscapes of every created entity or event constitutes glory: an utterly reliable array of signs of the divine nature”; hence, even the tsunami “contained elements of divine glory” (Southgate 2015, 802).³ I have reason to doubt that Hopkins intended his idea of *inscape* to be tied to science in the way that Southgate develops his thought. While there are scholarly debates about the meaning of *inscape*, I am more in favor of an interpretation that resonates with Hopkins’s Jesuit background, hence, Christological and Ignatian rather than simply philosophical, and only analogous to science in as much as both involve paying attention to the world around us.⁴ Commenting on a young child on the slopes of Mount Kenya infected by the anopheles mosquito, *Plasmodium falciparens* and its intricate life cycle leads

Southgate to regret the suffering that this mosquito causes for that child, while at the same time allowing him to admire the “evolved ingenuity” of this organism as an aspect of divine glory (Southgate 2015, 804). And, not wanting to split apart the God of creation from the God of redemption, he comes back to a consequentialist argument, but reframes it as a necessary restraint to God’s power; that a world evolving through natural selection where there is suffering is the only world in which values represented by complex and diverse life could come about. The second restraint on God is the necessity that Jesus had to endure degrading execution in order to release God’s redemptive purposes in the world. I prefer to view both of these constraints as *inevitable* rather than *necessary*, inevitable because of the presence of evil, violence, and sin in the world, rather than because God is directly and intimately responsible.

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

One of the immediate questions that comes to mind in reading Southgate’s provocative and genuinely honest position is that his flat rejection of the original sin means that he has to come to some other way of trying to understand the origin of evil in the world. Southgate’s main claim is that theology has to come to terms with “doing without a fall from paradise” (Southgate 2008, 28). I believe he is quite correct to resist any direct “causal” relationship between human sin and suffering in the natural world. While resisting the language of a historical fall, he is prepared to see the way that humans “snatch” at resources, “admiring their own image and ingenuity at the expense of truly working to understand the nonhuman world, as an index of our ‘fallenness’” (Southgate 2008, 100). Southgate translates the idea of the Fall into a weaker refusal to accept God’s offer of self-transcendence and life. “It is an account of the tendency in human nature to grasp at more than is freely given, to seek to elevate our status beyond what is appropriate and helpful, to seek to be ‘as Gods’” (Southgate 2008, 102). I certainly agree that this is an important part of what the Fall implies. Like Southgate, I also agree that trying to force the sin of an original pair as responsible for all the ills and sufferings of the world prior to humankind does not make much sense. Augustinian original sin requires a serious overhaul in order to be meaningful in a world where tracing human origins back to a single, original pair does not square with current understanding of genetics, quite apart from the chronological issues involved. Like Southgate I agree that there are more than two choices, either to accept the historical doctrine, or reject the doctrine *in toto*. However, the logic of Southgate’s view does not seem to prevent a rejection of the validity of the Fall, as it seems to serve little explanatory role in relation to evil in the world. A collective understanding of sin also makes rather better sense of what is known about early human evolution (Deane-Drummond 2017). The Fall

was not so much a fall “upwards” in maturity, but a fall away from what might have been possible under God. To that extent I agree with the general direction of Southgate’s thought. There are a number of modifications to his view that I believe are important: first, in affirming a sense of historicity (though not in a single couple) and second, in allowing for a closer relationship between what happens in the pre-human world and the human world, and third, giving a more robust account of the origin of sin. The idea that the Fall casts its shadow back into the deeper evolutionary past (Deane-Drummond 2008) is not intended to imply some kind of literal retroactive event, but that tendencies towards sin are also in pre-human life. Just as agency is latent in the world prior to the emergence of full-blown human freedom, so, tendencies towards viciousness are present in animal communities even prior to the kind of deliberative cruelty that is such a distinctive characteristic of our kind (Deane-Drummond 2014). While sin, properly so called, amounts to a self-conscious turning away from God, some awareness of God prior to that implies prior religious consciousness.

Like Southgate, Holmes Rolston, III recognizes the importance of taking account of what looks to us as the horribly cruel side of what happens during evolution, or disvalue, although he probes how far our valuation of evolutionary processes come from our particular biases (Rolston 1992, 252). It is the creative and prolific, even pro-life side of the evolutionary process that catches his eye as representing goodness, and that is an aspect that Southgate is drawn to as well. When Southgate reflects on predation, parasitism, and selfishness, he does this in a way that brings out the positive attributes even of those creatures that seem initially repulsive to human perceptions. The difference between Southgate and Rolston is that Southgate is prepared to credit such positive aspects to divine glory in a way that Rolston is not. So, where do disvalues originate? It seems that for Rolston, as for Southgate, disvalues are intricately bound up in a single package deal with values. The natural world never translates to moral imperatives; for Rolston this amounts to “a category mistake” (Rolston 1992, 258). Rather than thinking of evolutionary processes as blind or tinkering, or even indifferent they are remarkably sophisticated and regulated, and have the ability to produce incredible diversity and complexity (Rolston 1992, 267). He takes each disvalue in turn, including waste, struggle, suffering, and even death, and reads them through a different lens, one in which that very struggle is part of an overall beneficial systematic process. His ecosystem value minimizes individual losses for the sake of the system; even species loss is not deemed tragic, because the loss of species has overall “meant more birth than death” (Rolston 1992, 275). Contemplating natural history in its death means “tragedy is the shadow of prolific creativity” (Rolston 1992, 275). For Rolston, it seems, natural evil of any depth is illusory, for, “if I came to realize that this rising out of the misty seas involves a long struggle

of life renewed in the midst of its perpetual perishing, I might fall to my knees in praise" (Rolston 1992, 276).

But is Rolston right? Certainly, Southgate is less prepared than Rolston to give ecosystemic value the last word, but in some respects Southgate's evacuation of the Fall amounts to a religious interpretation following Rolston. This is ironical, perhaps, given that the very purpose of evolutionary theodicy is to find a way to interpret that raw and even horrendous suffering in the natural world. Mass species extinctions made possible by human intervention are of a different order altogether than those disappearances over the massive scale during evolutionary history. In this sense, all creation groans because of the ecological sins that humans have committed, rather than what a nonhuman nature might inflict on itself.

This takes us back again to the meaning of sin and the origin of evil, neither of which are dealt with satisfactorily by Rolston or Southgate. Paul Ricoeur is worth exploring because his phenomenological approach and use of symbol resonates with Southgate's own attraction to signification as a way to connect material and spiritual realities. Ricoeur understands symbolism as the cosmic, the oneiric, and the poetic. Cosmic realities form the basis of symbols, but as symbolism moved from defilement, to sin, to guilt there was a gradual movement away from its cosmic ground (Ricoeur 1967, 10–11). Southgate's work is cosmic and poetic, while the oneiric perhaps surfaces in his speculative theology. The difference, however, is that for Ricoeur symbols are analogical to experiences, so that defilement is an analogue of stain; sin an analogue of deviation; guilt an analogue of accusation (Ricoeur 1967, 18). Southgate resists analogy because of "realities" found in evolutionary and natural history. I believe this is mistaken, not least because scientific accounts are value-laden, and without a robust account of the origin of sin the holiness of God, which was so crucial in the history of understanding the symbolism of evil, is compromised.

For Ricoeur, when symbols develop narrations they become myths, such that they are "articulated in a time and space that cannot be coordinated with the time and space of history and geography" (Ricoeur 1967, 18). For example, "exile is a primary symbol of human alienation, but the history of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise is a mythical . . . bringing into play of fabulous personages, places, times and episodes" (Ricoeur 1967, 18). The experience of exile is a symbol of alienation that leads to a fanciful history. For Ricoeur the concept of defilement has become "irrational" for the modern mind (Ricoeur 1967, 27). The distinction Ricoeur makes between defilement and sin is that consciousness of sin is made possible through a covenant relationship (*berit*) with God (Ricoeur 1967, 50–51). Sin is religious before it is ethical, a "violation of a personal bond" before "the transgression of an abstract rule" (Ricoeur 1967, 52). Prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah pushed the idea of sin much further

by announcing the wrath of God directed towards those who violated the covenant and acted in ways contrary to the moral demand of God's justice and righteousness (Ricoeur 1967, 54). This "infinite demand" then "creates an unfathomable distance" between God and humanity (Ricoeur 1967, 55). The radical demand for righteousness and justice is a summons to an inner conversion of the wicked heart (Ricoeur 1967, 56).

The Fall brings to mind the important insight "that evil is not symmetrical with the good, wickedness is not something that replaces the goodness of a man; it is the staining, the darkening, the disfiguring of an innocence, a light, and a beauty that remain. However radical evil may be, it cannot be as primordial as goodness" (Ricoeur 1967, 156). Ricoeur, like Southgate, is troubled by the language of the Fall as not strictly Biblically correct, but at the same time he insists, unlike Southgate, and correctly in my view, that the Adamic myth says something fundamental about the need to separate the *radical* origin of evil from the *primordial* origin of the goodness of things (Ricoeur 1967, 233). The Adamic myth narrates the passage from human innocence to peccability; that is, the inclination to do evil is something that happened. This is not literal history, but points to something more profound. Hence, its rejection on the basis that it does not square with evolutionary history does not make sense (cf. Deane-Drummond 2017). The Adamic myth provides a way of dealing with the paradox that as God is a holy God, that reveals sin in humanity, but insofar as God is also author of creation, the appearance of evil needs to be separated from that of creation. But when discussing the root of sin, and the representation of the serpent in the Adamic myth, Ricoeur does not just confine the action of the serpent to an existential sense of the exteriority of temptation, but admits "there is thus a side of our world that confronts us as chaos and that is symbolized by the chthonic animal" (Ricoeur 1967, 258).

LOOKING BEYOND DARWIN

Southgate has taken account of new initiatives in evolutionary biology that focus on cooperation and is largely correct to surmise that such a focus does not necessarily remove the basic Neo-Darwinian competitive agenda. One of the subtleties of the extended evolutionary synthesis theory, which does present a genuine alternative to the standard evolutionary paradigm, is that it presents a much more dynamic and interactive niche construction model of evolutionary history (Deane-Drummond 2018). The implications of this shift are worked out in Tim Ingold's work, who, I believe anticipated the development of this newer theory (Ingold 1990, 2007).

Referring to standard evolutionary psychology's reduction of biology to genetic endowment as a top-down movement and "a theory of genetic determinism," Ingold presses for a reconsideration of Lamarck's attention to the bottom-up movement of the inanimate–animate boundary through

postulation of a vital force (Ingold 1990, 211). Historically, the choice was between an inanimate mechanistic science that was not particularly biological and vitalistic biology that was not particularly scientific. Darwin never rejected the inheritance of acquired characteristics; rather, it was August Weismann who made sure that heritability was confined to the germplasm (Ingold 1990, 212). The development of modern genetics formed the conceptual basis for “the complete separation of ontogeny from phylogeny” (Ingold 1990, 213). Ingold openly challenges Richard Dawkins’s naïve view that Darwinian theory explains life. He believes that if priority is given to understanding the *range* of organismal forms, then what evolutionary biologists sometimes call “proximate” causes take primacy over genes, and evolution is more like “an exploration over time of the transformative potentials of a total generative system” (Ingold 1990, 214).

The essentialist model of genotype plus phenotype misses out on the physiological processes that constitute life itself, so in Ingold’s definition life is “a name for what is going on in the generative field within which organic forms are located and ‘held in place’” (Ingold 1990, 215). It is worth noting that he rejects vitalism, the view that life is inserted into matter, but insists that *organisms are “in life” rather than the other way round* (Ingold 1990, 215, italics mine). In Darwinian theory, organisms are events revealed as beings that express a preformed project that is then subject to external selective circumstances. From Ingold’s alternative starting point, organisms should be viewed as an embodiment of a *life process*, with a past, present and future, so *a movement through time*. Life progressively builds and grows its own emergent structures, rather than being inanimate beings set in motion. The relational order in which everything is enfolded into everything else is an implicate order of self-organization in which each part enfolds the whole, rather than an explicate order existing in its own space, closed off from other parts. Organic forms emergent as bounded entities are then constituted through perpetual interchange with their environment (Ingold 1990, 216). That means that both organisms and their environments emerge together, rather than one being primary. Ingold believes that our perception of evolution needs to change so that it is viewed as more like a *verb*, rather than a *noun* (Ingold 2017, 71–87). A further development is his idea of evolution as wisdom in a minor key, one that is unnoticed, but critically important (Ingold 2018).⁵

SHADOW SOPHIA

As an alternative to Southgate’s position, I take the theological concept of shadow Sophia from hints in the work of Russian sophiologist Sergius Bulgakov. One of the most important aspects of shadow Sophia that differs systematically from Southgate’s understanding of divine Glory, is that

it accompanies *creaturely Sophia*, not Divine Sophia. Divine Sophia is the divine world, eternal and uncreated, in which God lives in the Holy Trinity. Creaturely Sophia is expressed through persons being united in participation with the Christ as Divine-humanity. Creaturely Sophia is in the image of Divine Sophia, thus showing up a Platonic root of Bulgakov's writing that is a crucial aspect of his thought (Bulgakov 2004, 189). In a manner that is somewhat analogous to the Barthian notion of the *nihil*, Bulgakov speculates that there is nothing in creation that does not belong to Sophia except nothing itself, which is also the beginning of creation. Creaturely Sophia is important as "the objective principle of divine being, by and in which God the Father not only reveals himself in divine being but also creates the world" (Bulgakov 2004, 191). Creaturely Sophia as the *revelation* of the second and third hypostases (i.e., the Son and the Spirit) participates in the creation of the world and is expressed through the "let there be" in the book of Genesis. It is the Holy Spirit as the spirit of God moving on the waters that leads to an action in creation expressive of reality, life, beauty, and glory, which corresponds with a revelation in creaturely Sophia. So "the first action of the Holy Spirit is that in the void of nothing reality arises (*in ouk on* there appears *me on*)" (Bulgakov 2004, 192) and it is in the generative power of life on Earth that we find "the ideas of creation actualized by the life-giving force" (Bulgakov 2004, 193). Bulgakov acknowledges the preliminary manifestation on Earth of the glory of creation in the planting of paradise that he suggests anticipates the future glory of a transfigured Earth that is to come. But the action of the Son and Spirit are disguised through a process of kenosis under the hypostasis of the Father, like three flames lit in a row, with only the I of the Father being visible (Bulgakov 2004, 195). For Bulgakov what gives life its being comes from the Spirit, who is "a hearing and perceiving silence in which the Word born from all eternity is born again for creation," "the natural energy of the world," and the "life of the vegetative and animal world after their kind" (Bulgakov 2004, 199). This pantheism is possible because instead of identifying God with the world, the presence of God in the world is mediated through creaturely Sophia. The creaturely nothing, which Bulgakov occasionally refers to as shadow Sophia, "receives its own force of being by a creative act of God" (Bulgakov 2004, 201). So, to cite in full:

This *me on* rages as the elemental power of creation, as "seething chaos," Achamoth, "the dark face of Sophia." If it is not illuminated, this dark face can even become an opposition to the light, darkness in the process of being actualized, anti-Sophia, the "minus of being." That is why the life of creation is not only an idyll, the blossoming of being, but also the "struggle for existence," the struggle between life and death. *Nothing* is conquered but not convinced by life, the chaotic element is restrained but not tamed; and the "contradiction" (Heraclitus) or "war" (also Heraclitus) is the law of

being, not only in the life of individuals and nations, but in the impersonal or pre-personal element. (Bulgakov 2004, 201–02)

A little later in the same text Bulgakov is prepared to associate chaos with the demonic, so “the chaos seething under the crust of being is capable of becoming demonic” (Bulgakov 2004, 206). The work of the Holy Spirit is, in Bulgakov, under the sign of kenosis which is held back, while at the same time the positive “power of being and life, which is also the power of beauty” in spite of passive and active resistance (Bulgakov 2004, 207). The life of the natural world has an inevitable “dual character,” yet it is “orphaned” because humanity has fallen away from God in sin (Bulgakov 2004, 207).

While he repeatedly associates the work of the Holy Spirit with a life force in the created world, he recognizes that this life arises in a struggle for existence. So, “each positive form of being is opposed by an anti-form, as it were, a grimace of being, the phantasms of Achamoth; each effort of life is counteracted by an impotence; each attainment of being corresponds to a particular tension, not only in the spiritual world, but in its own way, in the natural world as well” (Bulgakov 2004, 209). Such effort requires inspiration, and that inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding how the Fall impacts on the created world is interesting in Bulgakov, since he clearly does not think that all negativity in the natural world simply appeared in chronological sequence. Instead, Adam “had the possibility of participating in the divine life,” but instead of “living by the divine nature” which would have allowed the world to have been transformed through its sophianization, he stopped being a “god-man” and became instead a “natural man” (Bulgakov 2008, 146). This led the natural world to turn “to him not her sophianic but her creaturely face, the face of the ‘fallen’ or ‘dark’ Sophia, this image of nonbeing (i.e. of materiality) in an illegitimate, abnormal, distorted state, the state of the earth accursed because of man together with all creatures, groaning together with the one who subjected it (see Rom. 8 20–22)” (Bulgakov 2008, 146). Bulgakov speaks of creaturely Sophia as directed at heaven, and future glory, while the other side of nature is a “nocturnal, ‘dark face,’ the face of the fallen Sophia” (Bulgakov 2008, 153). Here he attributes the idea of fallen Sophia to V. V. Zenkovsky, who draws on gnostic speculation about Wisdom (Zenkovsky [1953]2014, 849). While this shows one of the key risks of Bulgakov’s sophianic speculation, he manages to avoid this by his repeated affirmation of the goodness of the created, material world, and his insistence that the Holy Spirit is the author of all life.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Space does not permit a full discussion of the implications of Southgate’s shift from a theodicy of nature to a theology of glory. Southgate’s devotion

to scientific rigor alongside poetic and theological imagination is important. I have traced the most recent shift in his thinking from a focus on reasoned arguments to allow faith in the God of Christianity alongside belief in God as creator in terms of evolutionary processes to understanding those same evolutionary processes under the lens of Divine Glory. Disvalue in the world cannot be attributed to the Fall of humanity. The “only way” that God can create “selves” through a non-interventionist process is that which works through an evolutionary process that necessitates horrendous suffering, pain, and death. I challenge the idea of the only way, not least because it seems to confuse what we observe with how God acts in that world. I prefer the terminology of inevitable over necessity, as it shows suffering is bound to arise. However, that does not mean that it has to be so in an *absolute* sense, even if we cannot in our limited imagination configure this otherwise. If we did not adhere to this view, then transformation of this world into the next would seem impossible, unless suffering, predation, and pain still continue into the next life. Southgate refuses to resort to the comfort of a far-flung future, and instead insists that we revise our understanding of what the Godness of God really means. Glory, in this vein, is not so much the glory of the crucified one who, given a holy God, has died to take away our sins, but glory of a God who can generate life in the midst of death, and where even that death is integral to that life-giving process.

I believe that one of the constructive mistakes that Southgate’s thesis rests upon is a misplaced concreteness for classical Neo-Darwinian science in theology. While, as a scientist, I also welcome scientific engagement, newer evolutionary theories that stress the interconnectedness of all life and energy of life are more compatible with theological reflection. I have suggested three alternatives to Southgate’s position that also develop in conversation with his ideas. The first is a more robust understanding of the origin of evil and sin, drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur. He is significant, not least because he writes as a philosopher, rather than a theologian. He shows, in a way that is convincing, that the long history of defilement, guilt, and sin show up the Adamic myth as an important step in the history of speculation about evil. If we cut out the origin of evil as distinct from the origin of creation, we are left with an ambiguous God whose death on the cross could just as easily be viewed as an expression of a vengeful God. The Creator God seems to pull in a different direction from the vulnerable and self-emptying Redeemer. The second alternative that I offer seeks to push Darwinian theory beyond neo-Darwinism. Drawing on Tim Ingold’s imaginative anthropological work, I show how his challenge to neo-Darwinian philosophy opens up an alternative philosophy of life that at least makes theological speculation about life, interconnectedness, and life processes intelligible in the light of modern science. Evolutionary theory, rather than being some kind of solid “reality” to which theology has

to bend, in practice is still under development in a way that challenges the basic philosophical presuppositions of a strict Neo-Darwinian view. The more fluid account that focuses on entanglement and process in Ingold's position is, arguably, more in line with aspects of Southgate's theological position, yet its introduction would challenge his adherence to a type of scientific essentialism that seems to crop up in the name of achieving adequate contact with "reality."

Third, theological speculation about where evil in the created world as such might have arisen draws on the sophiological imagination of Sergius Bulgakov. While I recognize that his neo-Platonic leanings may be distasteful for some, I suggest that he represents an important alternative, and offers an imaginative approach that goes beyond a simple appeal to the *Nihil* as in Neo-Barthian speculation. Shadow Sophia bears some resemblance to theories of evil as privation of the good, except that it also entails the possibility of becoming demonic. Such a trend need not be taken to imply a literal Satanic *persona*, rather, it is the personification of evil and a way of imagining the full weight of negative forces at work in the world that I am persuaded are counter to rather than in alignment with God's creative goodness and work of the Spirit in the world. That does not mean to imply any kind of dualism, since that is safeguarded by the distinction between Divine and creaturely Sophia.

NOTES

1. Southgate claims that I argue for shadow Sophia seemingly "without a definite fall event" (Southgate 2015, 246) and in a way that approaches the issue of theodicy through a form of mystery (Southgate 2014, 106). Unfortunately this is not my position as I hope to clarify further in this article.

2. Southgate rejects Michael Lloyd's view that evil was introduced prior to the Fall by rebellious angels; the idea that God's purposes are thwarted by dualistic forces does not seem credible (Lloyd 1998).

3. Such elements include those forces that have made the planet, God's faithfulness to those processes, God's compassion for victims, God's presence among those who worship, and the capacity of animals to sense something awry ahead of the event and so escape.

4. Space does not permit a full discussion of this topic. For excellent and alternative reviews of the meaning of inscape compare Cotter (1972) with Ward (2001).

5. The idea of minor is not intended to suggest unimportance, but rather, a process that is more likely to be overlooked. This latest work is more conciliatory towards traditional Neo-Darwinian models compared with his earlier writing.

REFERENCES

- Bulgakov, Sergius. 2004. *The Comforter*. Translated by Boris Jokim. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- . 2008. *The Lamb of God*. Translated by Boris Jokim. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- Cotter, James Finn. 1972. *Inscape: The Christology and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. 2008. "Shadow Sophia in Christological Perspective: The Evolution of Sin and the Redemption of Nature." *Theology and Science* 6(1):13–32.

- . 2014. *The Wisdom of the Liminal: Evolution and Other Animals in Human Becoming*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- . 2017. "In Adam All Die? Questions at the Boundary of Niche Construction, Community Evolution, and Original Sin." In *Evolution and the Fall*, edited by William T. Cavanaugh and James K.A. Smith, 23–47. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- . 2018. "Evolution: A Theology of Niche Construction for the 21st Century." In *Theology and Ecology across the Disciplines: On Care for Our Common Home*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and Rebecca Artinian Kaiser. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Hart, David Bentley. 2003. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- Ingold, Tim. 1990. "An Anthropologist Looks at Biology." *Man* 25:208–29.
- . 2007. "The Trouble with 'Evolutionary Biology'." *Anthropology Today* 23(2):13–17.
- . 2017. "'To Human' Is a Verb." In *Verbs, Bones and Brains: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Nature*, edited by Agustín Fuentes and Aku Visala, 71–87. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- . 2018. "Wisdom in the Minor Key." In *The Deep Evolution of Wisdom*, edited by Agustín Fuentes and Celia Deane-Drummond (Notre Dame, IN: Center for Theology, Science and Human Flourishing). Online publication www.nd.edu/ctshf, in preparation.
- Lloyd, M. 1998. "The Humanity of Fallenness." In *Grace and Truth in a Secular Age*, edited by Timothy Bradshaw, 66–82. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- Messer, Neil. 2009. "Natural Evil after Darwin." In *Theology after Darwin*, edited by R. J. Berry and Michael S. Northcott, 139–54. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster.
- . 2014. "Sin and Salvation." In *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, edited by Michael Northcott and Peter M. Scott, 124–40. London, UK: Routledge.
- . 2018. "Evolution, Suffering and Ethics: A Response to Christopher Southgate." In *Handbook of Religion and Animal Protection*, edited by Andrew Linzey and Claire Linzey. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1967. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Translated by Emerson Buchanan. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Rolston, Holmes, III. 1992. "Disvalues in Nature." *The Monist* 75(2):250–78.
- Southgate, Christopher. 2008. *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- . 2014a. "Does God's Care Make Any Difference? Theological Reflection on the Suffering of God's Creatures." In *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology*, edited by Ernst Conradie, Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond, and Denis Edwards, 157–76. London, UK: T & T Clark/Bloomsbury.
- . 2014b. "Divine Glory in a Darwinian World." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 49:784–807.
- . 2015. "God's Creation Wild and Violent, and Our Care for Other Animals." *Perspectives in Science and Christian Faith*, 67(4):245–52.
- Ward, Bernadette. 2001. *World as Word: Philosophical Theology in Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Zenkovsky, V. V. [1953]2014. *A History of Russian Philosophy*, Vol. 2. Translated by George L. Cline. London, UK: Routledge.