



Science and Religion in Search of Cosmic Purpose

John F. Haught

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Many scientists today think of the universe as essentially purposeless. Likewise, modern and postmodern philosophers have often been suspicious of any religious claims that the natural world embodies an eternal meaning or teleology. Not all scientific thinkers subscribe to this cosmic pessimism, however, and some would even argue that contemporary knowledge is consistent with a religious sense of cosmic purpose.

This stimulating book offers candid reflections on the question of cosmic purpose written both by prominent scientists and by scholars representing the world's religious traditions. Examining the issue from a wide variety of perspectives, this is the only current book to deal with cosmic purpose from an interreligious and interdisciplinary perspective.

Here scientists such as physicist Andrei Linde and biologist Francisco Ayala come face to face with Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hindu philosopher Anindita Niyogi Balslev, and others. They examine such perplexing issues as the possible existence of multiple universes and the implications of seemingly purposive features in life. The contributions address the question of whether a religiously-based notion of a purposeful cosmos is consistent with the latest scientific understanding of nature, and whether theology can affirm the presence of divine action without contradicting science.

These essays will challenge readers to ponder their own place in the cosmos as they seek to interpret the visions of the world's great spiritual traditions in the light of natural science.

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