

Editorial

The papers that appear in this issue comprise another contribution to what has been an ongoing topic of concern for *Zygon* and its readers, the topic popularly referred to as the "is/ought question." This concern is consistent with the attention that this journal has been giving to the discussion of values. Regular readers know well that the editors have expressed the view that the malaise of our time is due in large part to a confusion about values, just as we have suggested that both science and religion play a critical role in discerning the values that can sustain human life and the environing world and in reinforcing and implementing those values. The is/ought question has been on the horizon also in our effort to throw light on the interaction between the pictures of reality that emerge from the sciences and the understanding of reality that the religions set forth. If the scientific pictures can be said to represent the "is," the religious understandings set forth the "ought," and in the effort to relate the two considerable light is thrown on the general problem.

If the authors who appear in *Zygon* were not themselves sensitive to the fact their probings touch on the problem of is/ought, their critics would surely remind them. Two of the most substantial comments published in recent years have lifted up an alleged carelessness or unclarity on the is/ought question as a major criticism of our work: James Gustafson's "Theology Confronts Technology and the Life Sciences," *Commonweal* (June 16, 1978) and Langdon Gilkey's *Religion and the Scientific Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). The articles in this issue may serve as another chapter in the response to such critics.

The origin of this particular set of papers goes back at least to spring 1979, when the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science (CASIRAS) devoted the annual seminar that it sponsors with the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools to the is/ought theme. This theme was chosen partly in response to Gustafson's article, in which he challenges some of the theologians associated with *Zygon* to clarify their positions on the question. That seminar brought to light that one of the chief difficulties in any discussion of how one relates descriptive statements of the "is" to prescriptive statements of the "ought" lies in the inability of many discussants to agree on what constitutes the "is." That seminar also suggested that the differences among the eight major presentations that we heard that quarter were correlated quite clearly to the eight differing opinions concerning the "is" from which prescriptive thinking should proceed!

It was but a short step to the plans for a conference sponsored by the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion. Appreciation should be noted for Rollins College for its willingness to sponsor the conference, to Karl E. Peters for making most of the arrangements for it, to the National Endowment for the Humanities for granting a handsome subsidy (which includes this publication of the papers), to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and the Community Church of New York for making various

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important contributions of services and facilities for the preparation for and actual staging of the conference.

The conference itself took form in two sessions, the first consisting of several scientists who discussed their own research and its implications for the is/ought problem. The papers by Daniel G. Freedman, Solomon H. Katz, and George Edgin Pugh emerged from this session. The second part of the conference focused on a specific issue on which is and ought converge—scientific concepts of survival and the religious idea of salvation. Donald T. Campbell and Ralph Wendell Burhoe made major presentations at this session which unfortunately are not published here. William H. Austin's paper and mine do reflect some of the discussion there, however.

The papers from the first session present clear demonstrations that is and ought, fact and value, cannot be simplistically held apart since the empirical realm that presumably grounds our understanding of the is itself includes such a large component of value judgments embedded within it. The paper by Robert B. Glassman makes this same point, hence its placement in that grouping. The very substantial opinion among many philosophers and scholars in the humanities and social sciences that values cannot rest on any description of what is will be challenged by these papers.

The paper by Ronald de Sousa has been added to this collection as an example of the growing (but almost completely overlooked in many quarters) consensus among philosophers that the strictures that G. E. Moore and David Hume placed on relating description and prescription deserve to be reassessed in a fundamental manner. This paper is a bridge to the second major grouping of articles.

Austin and I address the survival/salvation question, although from markedly different perspectives. Peters also focuses on the question, in another setting, so his paper has been joined to ours. The juxtaposition of the two terms, survival and salvation, will seem incongruous, even offensive, to some readers. These articles are intended to serve as examples of how the juxtaposition may prove to be of constructive value for our thinking.

This collection of papers is certainly not the last that *Zygon* will publish on the question of how is and ought are related. The editors hope that it can make a contribution to the next published word.

P. H.