

Editorial

I see our task today as similar to that of those who labored some two thousand years ago—following such leaders as Isaiah, the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Jesus, and Muhammad—to update our interpretation of the wisdom that a sovereign nature has selected and accumulated in the great world religions so as to adapt it for significance in our radically new context in a world of science and technology. I see the increasingly universally accepted language and imagery of the sciences about human nature, its place in the scheme of things, and the role of religion in human evolution, as now capable . . . of providing each of the major religious traditions with the means to interpret and understand itself in harmonious relation with the reality pictures of science and with one another. I see this as leading to the revitalization of religious faith, with an increasingly rational and scientific interpretation, a faith rebinding us to shared goals and mutual caring that enhance life's fulfillment under the requirements and opportunities for humans set by the reality system that is our common creator and sustainer.

Ralph Wendell Burhoe

Zygon is halfway to the twenty-first century: having begun publication in 1966, our journal is completing its seventeenth volume; another seventeen years of publication will see *Zygon* entering the third millennium of the common era. Keeping this and the above vision from the closing words of Ralph Wendell Burhoe's Templeton Prize address in mind, I invite you to reflect briefly on the increasing pluralism in the world today, with the resulting loss of coherence within societies, and on how *Zygon* and its community of inquirers is seeking to address this situation. I am convinced that we, the members of the *Zygon* community, are involved in an enterprise vital to the continuance and advancement of life on earth; therefore, we should do all we can to further the growth into the twenty-first century of what *Zygon* represents.

Until a few centuries ago most societies (ranging from tribal cultures to empires) were able to maintain themselves with the aid of coherent systems of beliefs, rituals, and moral practices, conceived to be based on the originating traditions of the society. Even though they interacted with each other in warfare and trade, and even though there were periods of breakdown and revitalization, still these societies maintained a relatively high degree of stability and cohesiveness over relatively long periods of time.

However, with the rise of modern science and technology during the last few hundred years there has been an increasing growth of pluralism, marking a new epoch in the human situation. As a result of scientifically based communication and transportation technologies people are becoming increasingly conscious of the diversity of cultures that have evolved on our planet. Further, the modern sciences themselves have given us new knowledge about human nature and the universe in which we live; this knowledge often has challenged traditional ideas and, insofar as these ideas were related to understandings of human destiny and purpose, scientific knowledge has called into question traditional conceptions of the meaning of human life. Thus, we who

are living in a scientifically oriented culture are caught in the pluralism resulting from the association of the more traditional with the more modern, scientifically based ways of thinking and acting. Also, whereas once most of the knowledge about humans and our world could be encompassed in an integrated manner in the minds of many individuals, within the last few centuries we have seen in our Western civilization the continual birth and growth of an increasing number of specialized disciplines. While these disciplines (partly because of their specialized and focused nature) have provided us with some of our most important, new insights, they also have led to a breakdown of a coherent framework within which human beings can see and act out their place in the scheme of things. The rise of specialized academic and research disciplines and the resulting technologies that have created new businesses have thus increased both our intellectual fragmentation and the fragmentation of our social structure.

Even though our modern sciences and technologies have been major contributors to the growth of pluralism and the breakdown of coherence, they also may provide the basis for forging a new synthesis of understanding and practice for human beings around the world. Assuming that the scientific disciplines, in spite of their various special methodologies and procedures of inquiry, share common assumptions and represent a common spirit and also assuming that the various sciences, using rational thought and carefully controlled observation, will be able to move increasingly toward a common understanding of things, then there should emerge throughout all the world's societies a new common understanding of both human nature and the world in which we live. It is this new understanding from the sciences with which the various cultures and religious traditions will have to come to terms. And as they do so, hopefully without losing all their distinctiveness, human societies should be able to move toward a new worldwide community in which many individual and cultural differences are respected, because there is still a common conception of the meaning and purpose of life and of the general directions for human living consistent with such meaning and purpose.

Zygon in its own way represents a prototype of this emerging world community as it seeks to forge a new coherent understanding concerning, in Reinhold Niebuhr's terms, "the nature and destiny of man" that is consistent with the growing body of contemporary scientific knowledge. Many articles in *Zygon* explore ways in which particular, confirmed scientific theories shed light on human nature and on the cosmos in which we live and then draw out the implications of these for human meaning and morals. Other articles, such as those contained in this issue, focus on how the methodologies of the sciences and of religious inquiry may or may not be brought together. *Zygon* continuously vibrates between specific ideas of science and religion and their implications for human living on the one hand and the ways in which those ideas and practices are generated and supported on the other.

The latter, methodological questions were the focus of the 1981 Star Island conference on "Truth in Science and Religion," sponsored by the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science. Chaired by Jeannette Hopkins, Director of Wesleyan University Press, and Philip Hefner, professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, this conference generated the papers for this *Zygon* issue. The opening article exemplifies the problem of pluralism in terms of the notion of universes of discourse. For several years Bruce B. Wavell has researched the nature of the English language, including the specialized languages of different disciplines as well as that of everyday, commonsense reasoning. Wavell argues that there is a clear

distinction between scientific and religious universes of discourse, each with its own criteria and ways of validation. As one reads this article, one is led to the recognition that the problem presented by C. P. Snow regarding the scientific and literary cultures is even more serious than Snow himself imagined. It may well be that the cultural, evolutionary development of a variety of disciplines in Western civilization over the last two hundred years has become ingrained in the language itself, so that when someone such as Wavell studies the nature of the language, he is led to the recognition that we now possess a pluralism of universes of discourse.

While recognizing some major differences between science and religion, Richard Schlegel sees more possibility for constructive interaction between scientific and religious thinking. Both basic attitudes he outlines—one suggesting that science, as it encompasses more and more human experience, reinforces and modifies religious truth with its own knowledge and the other that science needs to be complemented in terms of first beliefs and principles with other kinds of truth—suggest a greater coherence between scientific and religious truth than Wavell implies.

Eugene G. d'Aquili carries the notion of pluralism into his analysis of the senses of reality, arguing there are nine theoretical and eight actual primary senses of reality, ranging from that involved in scientific inquiry to that of the mystic. However, he does find some common ground for this epistemological pluralism insofar as he presents a neural-physiological model that accounts for all states and also insofar as he suggests their possible adaptive significance from an evolutionary perspective.

Karl E. Peters carries the evolutionary perspective even further when he proposes an evolutionary theory of knowledge that suggests a continuity not only between scientific and religious inquiry but also between the conceptual, behavioral, and experiential knowledge of humans and the behavioral and experiential knowledge of other animals. However, even though he argues that the processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge can be understood in terms of a unifying Darwinian model, he also recognizes Wavell's different universes of discourse when he suggests that fundamental theological statements in the contemporary age need to satisfy criteria that have evolved in both the scientific and religious universes of discourse.

Thus this set of papers, which presents some interesting ideas on the theme of truth and reality, wrestles with the problem of achieving some kind of coherence in a pluralistic age, a coherence which nevertheless recognizes legitimate differences between the various spheres of culture designated by the general terms "science" and "religion." We might say that in a pluralistic age these papers in particular and the papers in *Zygon* in general are trying to rebuild a new community of mind. This is not a simple *unity* of thought but a *com-unity*—a comprehensive system of understanding that recognizes the variety of lines of inquiry in the contemporary scene.

Yet, *Zygon* is concerned with more than just a community of ideas. It also is concerned with a community of persons, some of whose ideas are reflected in the pages of this journal and others who as readers are stimulated to further thought as they read *Zygon* articles. As the editor of *Zygon*, my own conception of our enterprise is of an invisible college. This invisible college is actually a community of people who are seeking together in spirit, but for the most part independently of one another physically, to bring together the disparate elements of an emerging world culture into the kind of com-unity that will give humankind a new sense of life's meaning and purpose in a scientific age.

Because *Zygon* represents not only this most important mission but also a community of people engaged in tasks fulfilling this mission, I, the editorial

office, and the Joint Publication Board—with the help of the offices of the Provost and the Vice President for Development at Rollins College—have become actively involved in insuring the continuance of our enterprise into the twenty-first century. As readers of *Zygon* you are by now well acquainted with our major fund raising effort. Many of you have made significant financial contributions to continue *Zygon's* work into the future. Your support in this effort is reflected in this issue's inauguration of our patron's page, which lists those members of the *Zygon* community who so far have made contributions toward establishing a sounder financial base for the journal. As editor I invite those of you who have not yet contributed to join in both the short-term and long-term funding of *Zygon*, either through direct contributions and pledges or through long-term deferred giving, planned to take advantage of tax benefits. The Rollins Development Office has specially trained people who can help advise on this planning. If you wish further information about the possibilities of supporting our journal, please write us at the editorial office.

As Ralph Wendell Burhoe has envisioned in the closing words of his Templeton Prize address, published in his recent book *Toward a Scientific Theology*, we are participating in a major transformation in the history of the world. From many quarters people are seeking a revitalized understanding of the meaning and purpose of life consistent with the findings of modern science. *Zygon* is at the forefront of a movement seeking to form a new intellectual community in a pluralistic age and attempting thereby to bring people together into a global society bound "to shared goals and mutual caring that enhance life's fulfillment under the requirements and opportunities for humans set by the reality system that is our common creator and sustainer."

K. E. P.