

## Editorial

In the natural sciences and industrial arts it never occurs to anyone to try to refute opinions by showing up their author's neurotic constitution. Opinions here are invariably tested by logic and by experiment, no matter what may be their author's neurological type. It should be no otherwise with religious opinions. Their value can only be ascertained by spiritual judgments directly passed upon them, judgments based on our own immediate feeling primarily; and secondarily on what we can ascertain of their experiential relations to our moral needs and to the rest of what we hold as true.

*Immediate luminousness*, in short, *philosophical reasonableness*, and *moral helpfulness* are the only available criteria.

William James

Since assuming editorship of *Zygon* three years ago, I have wrestled conceptually with a basic problem dealt with in our pages: What is the "religion" in religion and science? Several answers suggest themselves. Just as one can speak of the many natural and social sciences making up the science side of the religion and science dialogue, so one might speak of many religious traditions making up the other side. Similarly, as I myself often have done, one can speak of religion as pursuing fundamental questions concerning the meaning of human life and show how these questions can be answered with a general viewpoint about our place in the scheme of things that uses knowledge from the contemporary sciences. Further, one can approach religion in terms of the ways in which religious ideas are established as true and compare these with the methodologies of the various sciences. Finally, one might look at the moral aspect of religion and thereby treat religion as the values side of the fact/value distinction. These approaches are helpful, but none to my mind fully offers a complete description as to what constitutes religion.

A more complete understanding is revealed by following Catherine L. Albanese's description. In the preface to her book, *America: Religions and Religion*, Albanese summarizes three ways of defining religion: substantive, functional, and formal. Substantive definitions, usually favored by theologians and philosophers, focus on the essence of religion and usually speak of religion as the vehicle relating humans to some higher reality. Functional definitions, favored by social scientists, emphasize the effects of religion in the lives of individuals and societies. Formal definitions, employed by historians of religion, point to the structure of religion and regard religion to be present when, regardless of particular viewpoints or results, a certain set of forms or structures is present.

Two of these approaches to religion are apparent in various *Zygon* articles. Some of our articles focus more on the substantive content of religion by examining the validity of particular religious ideas in relation to contemporary scientific thought. Others focus on religion as a type of action relevant to important pursuits of human living, regardless of whether those pursuits are formulated in terms of survival or in terms of some religious understanding of "salvation." It is by employing, at least implicitly, the substantive and functional approaches to religion that *Zygon* articles have produced some excellent in-

sights in the science and religion dialogue. However, it seems to me that we also need to approach religion in terms of a formal definition if we are to gain a truly comprehensive picture as to what can be done in constructively relating religion and science.

What constitutes the formal structure of a religion is, of course, open to discussion. Albanese suggests four elements as a guide to understanding the primary features of any religious tradition. These are the tradition's set of beliefs or "creed," its ritual activity or "cultus," its set of prescriptions and proscriptions for human behavior or its moral "code," and its organizational structure or "community." However, one structure omitted from Albanese's formal understanding of religion is experience, an important feature of both the scientific and religious enterprises. Thus, I would stress that religion in its fullest form involves a system of beliefs, ritual actions, moral actions, and experience embedded in the matrix of a community, even if that community stresses the individualism of the religious enterprise. (An individualistic emphasis, for example, is incorporated into the more philosophical definitions of William James and Alfred North Whitehead, which stress human solitariness.) In light of this I suggest that our task is to analyze, evaluate, and reformulate religious beliefs, rituals, moral codes, experience, and community structure in light of the best scientific understandings available today, and at the same time we should examine, evaluate, and integrate scientific beliefs, practices, attitudes, experience, and even community patterns in relation to a more comprehensive viewpoint that guides scientific activity in the service of human welfare.

This issue of *Zygon* is designed with the formal approach to religion in mind, even though it does not encompass all of religion's structural components. Specifically it attempts to explore the relationships between religious beliefs, experiences, and moral action. (The next issue of *Zygon* will examine ritual in human adaptation.) While no single author intended this kind of exploration, each essay offers some insights into the relationships between these three components in a manner that relates religion to contemporary scientific thinking and also in a way that illustrates some of the concerns expressed in the opening quotation by William James, in his more functional approach to religion. By exploring with psychiatrist Hermann Lenz the outcomes of delusory and mystical experiences on the subsequent course of a person's life, by examining critically with philosopher Richard H. Jones the connections between two types of mystical experience and different religious belief and action systems, and by investigating with ethicist Virginia Held the role of moral experience in confirming moral theory, analogous to that of scientific experience in confirming scientific theory, some new perspectives will be opened up in *Zygon's* ongoing investigation of ways to interrelate constructively the various facets of religion and science, in order to further the well-being of humankind.

K. E. P.