

Editorial

With this June 1988 issue I find myself beginning my tenth year as editor of *Zygon*. During the past nine years I have become aware of the complexity and richness of the process of relating science and religion that the founders of the journal chose to call *Zygon*. The word *zygon* was used in ancient Greece to specify, among other things, the yoking of a team of horses, mules, or oxen. A primary English derivative is *zygote*, the result of a union of sperm and egg that is a new form of life. *Zygon*, too, is a new form of life—of cultural life that seeks to unite scientific knowledge with religious and philosophical insights as it explores ways to answer questions such as the meaning and purpose of human life, how to live morally, and how to be whole and happy rather than disintegrated and miserable.

The complexity of *Zygon's* task is illustrated by the variety of articles in this issue of the journal. However, they all can be understood to address a common theme; while this is not explicitly enunciated by the authors themselves, the various essays explore ways in which answers to religious questions such as those above can find credible expression in a scientific age.

In the opening article Ward H. Goodenough approaches religion scientifically. Defining religion functionally in terms of practices that either maintain the individual in a state of positive self-experience or that provide the means of transforming the self from an unhappy to a happy state, Goodenough is able to study both traditional and nontraditional "salvific" practices in American society. Upon reading Goodenough's analysis, it becomes clear that American culture provides numerous mechanisms of self-maintenance, even for those who no longer find the answers provided by traditional religious beliefs and practices credible.

John L. Caughey carries the scientific study of religion one step further by examining how both traditional believers in supernatural realities and secularists engage in fantasy explorations that serve to help maintain a positive sense of self. Caughey argues that, even though the fantasies of secular Americans may be judged to be unreal, from a practical point of view they have the same salutary effects as do the visions of those who believe in the reality of supernatural beings.

Dealing with the issue of religious credibility from quite another direction, Fred W. Hallberg's article on the anthropic principle considers a topic that is quite common in attempts to join religion and science—creation and evolution. Underlying this topic is the issue of intentional design versus chance and necessity as the primary framework for understanding creation. Does the multi-billion year history of the universe proceed according to a nonpersonal set of interactions that some have called chance and necessity, or does this history reflect some kind of intentionality or design, an order to reality or even an orderer of reality that must be postulated to account for human existence and intelligence? For many who are influenced by the mechanistic assumptions arising out of Newtonian science, the idea that the universe in some fundamental sense reflects human consciousness no longer seems credible. Yet, the various forms of the "anthropic principle" advanced by some scientists suggest that those who have relinquished introspectively derived, "personalistic" con-

cepts in speaking about the universe and its origins may need to rethink their understandings of being and the ground of being. Hallberg effectively analyzes, criticizes, and evaluates various versions of the anthropic principle and their implications.

The issue of the credibility of religion in relation to contemporary science often leads to the question of how answers to religious questions are supported as true in a scientific age. Some who attempt to yoke together science and religion believe that the best way to seek constructive dialogue is by dealing with the epistemological problem of how we know what we know. A distinguished theologian, Thomas F. Torrance argues that the beginnings of such a dialogue can take place because both the Christian theological tradition and contemporary science affirm that positive concepts about the fundamental nature of things must have an open, revisable structure. Echoing the discussion of the contingency of the universe and its theological implications in the March 1988 issue of *Zygon*, Torrance argues that the openness in scientific conceptualizing is related to the conclusion that scientific truths and physical laws emerge with the expansion of the universe itself and are hence contingent. Because of contingency scientific inquiry reaches certain boundaries; however, these can be surpassed by a mode of intuitive "listening" (similar to that of the mathematician) for an intelligibility or "Word" that transcends the contingent universe as its ground of being.

In the *Credo* section of this *Zygon* issue, Joseph Schaeffer offers excerpts from an interview with Ervin Laszlo. Laszlo represents a way of being credibly religious in a scientific age by seeking to understand the meaning and purpose of life in terms of general systems theory that offers an evolutionary and ecological picture of a dynamic universe. Within this framework he seeks to unify the various dimensions of reality experienced by humans as physical, biological, social, cultural, and spiritual. While many who philosophically and religiously contemplate the meaning of the anthropic principle see the ground of human meaning and salvation in a reality that transcends the universe, Laszlo offers insights into being religious in terms of the universe itself as a self-creating system.

Finally, I am most pleased to inaugurate a new section of *Zygon* called *Classics*. The purpose of *Classics* is to bring to light the work of individuals and institutions that predate *Zygon* but express the same goals of constructively uniting scientific knowledge and the religious quest for meaning, purpose, moral direction, and human welfare. The reprinting of Paul Carus's "The Work of the Open Court" informs us not only of the thinking of one individual but of the vision of an institution, The Open Court Publishing Company. Founded on a vision similar to *Zygon's* over a century ago, this company has carried on the search for a unifying understanding of the place of the human self and society in the cosmos through numerous books and two significant journals, *The Open Court* and *The Monist*. As I begin my tenth year as editor of a journal that is in its twenty-third year of publication, I find it very encouraging to be a part of a much larger enterprise seeking reconciliation between religion and the sciences. I hope that as you read Carus's essay you also are so encouraged.

Karl E. Peters