

Editorial

A major interest of *Zygon* and of organizations that publish our journal is biocultural evolution. Biocultural evolution focuses on the evolution of humanity in the context of the earth's environment and the laws of nature. It regards humans as composed of two heritages acting in symbiosis. One is the genetic heritage of the species; the other is the plurality of cultural heritages that have evolved on our planet. The brain or central nervous system is programmed by these two heritages. Genes provide recipes for brain structure and electrochemical functioning. Cultures provide languages with which we think, moral principles and values that help guide our behavior, and social institutions that transmit languages and values from one generation to the next and provide the context for our living.

The term *biocultural evolution* refers to the interaction between the genetic and cultural heritages that constitute human beings. At times, the pages of *Zygon* focus on the biological side of what makes us human. At other times we focus on culture. However, the interaction of the two—within individuals, in societies, and in the evolution of humanity as a whole—is the point where *Zygon* tries to make a distinctive contribution as it seeks to yoke together knowledge from the natural and social sciences with the wisdom of humanity's religious and moral traditions.

This issue of our journal focuses on a recent development in Western culture that is reshaping the way we understand ourselves, the way we think religiously, and even the way we do our science. That development is the growing awareness of the possibilities of masculine gender bias in human institutions. Many think this bias affects the way Western religion has done theological reflection. And many also think it has an influence on the kind of scientific research that is done and how that research is carried out. If such bias exists, it is even possible that it affects how we understand our own genetic heritage and its consequences for who and what we are; it may also influence the values of our culture and how we think morally.

Recognizing the importance of this issue of gender bias in the context of its ongoing interest in biocultural evolution, one of the publishers of *Zygon*, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, has conducted symposia at the American Association for the Advancement of Science as well as a week-long conference in the summer of 1987 on Star Island, New Hampshire, chaired by

Marjorie Hall Davis and Philip Hefner. Some of the papers in this issue have grown out of the Star Island conference. Others have been submitted independently by the authors to *Zygon*, and one paper is being reprinted from a book that resulted from the 1987 Nobel Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College, "The Evolution of Sex."

The majority of papers in this issue of *Zygon* only begin to explore the issue of gender in religion and science. As we continue to seek to publish work on human evolution in relation to the evolution of the cosmos, as we continue to attempt to build bridges between the various sciences and religious outlooks on our planet, there is no doubt the issue of gender bias will require further exploration.

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