

## *Editorial*

Multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives are of the essence of this journal's enterprise. Our very name, *Zygon*, bespeaks the multidisciplinary dimension, since it means "to yoke" two or more approaches to truth, the approach of religion and those of the sciences. That yoking is not possible at all unless the interdisciplinary comes into play as mutually enriching conversation and learning across the boundaries of these approaches.

Since academics are trained traditionally (fortunately, this tradition is undergoing significant change in many universities and graduate schools) to work exclusively within their established disciplines, and since that style has been so productive of knowledge, it is not an easy matter to engage in the conversation across disciplinary fences. It is even more difficult to do genuine research across those fences. Indeed, there is no consensus even on how to define such research. The social scientist Victor Ferkiss gave an eloquent, if impatient, expression of these difficulties in his 1969 book, *Technological Man* (New York: George Braziller). He spoke of living in an era when academic specialization rendered

any kind of interdisciplinary study centered on normative concerns open to reproach from many quarters—from those whose self-imposed limitations have been abandoned and those whose territory has been invaded. . . . But if one takes the task of the social scientist seriously, one must go where the problems are, and if one acts as a human being as well as a scientist, one must go where the relevant problems are. The result is a book that, because it is about everything, can be definitive about nothing, but one hopes it may help set readers on the track of the real issues facing humankind today (viii).

E. O. Wilson speaks in more conceptual terms in the context of his "sandwich" view of the various sciences coexisting in the relationship of discipline and antidiscipline. In the article that follows in these pages, he writes: "A tense creative interplay is inevitable, because the devotees of adjacent levels of organization are committed to different methodologies when they focus on the upper level."

In each of the ninety-nine issues of *Zygon* that have appeared since its founding (the sharp-eyed reader will remember that we published an extra Twentieth Anniversary issue in 1985), the conversation between disciplines has been pursued, and the tensions that Ferkiss and Wilson describe have confronted many of our readers and authors. That will continue. In this issue, we focus directly upon the methodological dimension of the multi- and interdisciplinary

enterprise that we are engaged in. The discussants themselves come to the issues from a variety of disciplines, and they span the continuum from young scholar still in doctoral studies through the stages of experience to the senior scholar whose decades of accomplishment are internationally recognized and acclaimed.

Three article-length discussions set the tone for reflection. E. O. Wilson's piece steps outside his strictly entomological research to philosophize about the relationships of the disciplines, and he contributes the sandwich view that I have just alluded to. Robert Segal, who is trained as a religious studies scholar, with particular work in the social sciences, defends the thesis that those sciences not only enrich our understanding of religion, but do not threaten it with reductionism. From sociology, Philip Gorski, bringing together influences from both Germany and the United States, proposes an alternative sandwich view, suggesting that the social sciences mediate between religion and the natural sciences. Commenting upon their articles are Nancey Murphy, who works both as a philosopher of science and as a theologian, and Kenneth Vaux, a theologian who has devoted his career to working on ethics and values study within the context of medical schools. Murphy endorses a modified Wilsonian view that puts the social sciences into the antidiscipline relationship to theology, whereas Vaux, not to be outdone rhetorically, pictures a dethroned theology as Queen bee (not Queen as in older times), gad-flying among the disciplines and offering "ethical homing direction." We introduce two new sections with this issue. "Biography" brings the first of four installments of David Breed's intellectual biography of this journal's founder, Ralph Wendell Burhoe. (Breed himself has worked in the physical sciences, the social sciences, philosophy, and theology.) Burhoe could not be better placed than in the midst of this issue's discussion of methodology. James Huchingson introduces "Endnotes," which focuses this time on the scientist-engineers whom we commonly call "astronauts," as they move into what Ferkiss called thinking as whole human beings about their experiences in space.

This editor suspects that the methodological reflections in this issue are by no means the end of this conversation in our pages. We welcome the response of readers.

—Philip Hefner