

Editorial

No issue is more urgent for those of us who attempt to understand ourselves as human beings in the light of scientific knowledge than the relationship between naturalistic descriptions of physics, chemistry, and biology on the one hand, and the realities of mind and spirit on the other. To be sure, we are thoroughly convinced that whatever we are as humans has taken shape through the evolutionary interactions of the natural stuff which the natural sciences focus upon, but we are equally insistent that mind and spirit are real and also determinative for our lives as creatures of nature. As yet, however, the sciences are far from explaining fully to us just how these two dimensions of our nature are related.

Even though they were not selected for their adumbration of a common theme, and even though each is to be appreciated for its own distinctive insights and arguments, I find the first three articles in this issue of *Zygon* (Davaney, Polkinghorne, and Sperry) very helpful for the ways in which they wrestle with the relationship of nature and spirit/mind. None of these authors will settle for a dualistic interpretation of this relationship, even though all acknowledge that their probes are tentative and far from exhausting the complexities and ambiguities of the relationship. The fields of inquiry represented by these three authors are so different that the common focus they offer is all the more striking. John Polkinghorne sets out, within his field of physics, to reject a “god of the gaps,” even as he insists that a certain theory of gaps or openesses is unavoidable. R. W. Sperry shows characteristic courage in insisting on the reality and causal power of mind and spirit, from the point of view of his lifetime of research on the brain. He also differentiates himself, however, from certain “New Age” tenets and in the process provides an unusually helpful analysis for those of us who are often uncertain about the scientific reliability of the thinkers that are subsumed under a “New Age” label. Both Polkinghorne and Sperry find it useful to speak of what the latter calls “bottom-up” and “top-down” causation—concepts that seem to crop up more and more in discussions of brain-mind and nature-spirit.

Sheila Greeve Davaney devotes her attention to the work of two theologian/philosophers who are presently concentrating their attention on questions of how concepts of God and other theological concerns emerge from within the context of nature and are informed by that context. Both she and Sperry introduce questions of ethics into their discussions, since it is impossible for human beings to consider nature fully without raising issues of values and ethics.

We introduce in this issue a new occasional series, “Update,” whose purpose is to survey an entire field from the point of view of its usefulness for *Zygon*’s enterprise of integrating religion and science. Robert Potter initiates the series with reflections upon the philosophy of medicine. We welcome readers’ suggestions for future topics in this new series.

Kevin Sharpe contributes a response to Helmut Reich’s proposals

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concerning the concept of complementarity as a means of relating science and theology. Sharpe raises pressing questions concerning possible inadequacies in the concept. We have received a gratifying number of responses to our earlier invitation for readers to submit pieces like Sharpe's, carrying on the conversation with articles that appear in these pages. We consider the length and format of his piece to be a reasonable way of proceeding with such conversation. Shorter pieces would also be suitable.

The series of installments from David Breed's study of Ralph Wendell Burhoe's life and thought continues in this issue. Earlier, we announced that there would be four such installments, but in fact, a fifth will follow in the next issue.

—Philip Hefner