

## Reviews

*Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge and International Response.* Edited by J. RONALD ENGEL and JOAN GIBB ENGEL. London: Belhaven Press, 1990. 264 pages. \$20.00.

"The dominant patterns of economic development throughout the world have been quite the reverse of community development. They have consistently and systematically destroyed existing traditional communities, especially in the rural areas where most people in the Third World still live."<sup>1</sup> In these words from *For the Common Good* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, p. 166), Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., summarize much of the rich interpretation to be found in *Ethics of Environment and Development*. Ethical reflection upon the many issues of economic development and environmental integrity is in order because they have become the crux of the global problem. The growing, worldwide degradation of human and nonhuman life, and of the biosphere that carries it, has revived an ancient question: How shall we live rightly upon the Earth?

The editors arrange the book's twenty-one essays into two rather uneven sections, one on the "global challenge" and the other on the "international response." The first four essays outline the problems of economic development and environmental degradation in broad strokes, while the following seventeen essays represent responses from Western Europe and North America, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, South and Central America, Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and the "experience of women." In general, these essays provide restatements of the problems of development and environment in each context. A word and name index increases the value of the book considerably. Brief biographies of the twenty-three authors in this volume reveal them to be uniquely qualified to speak to the issues, both by formal education and by practical experience. Moreover, they are a diverse lot, spanning the world geographically, philosophically, and theologically.

Paradoxically, the virtues of a collection such as this also reveal its vices. Being a kind of international conversation, it covers a rich variety of issues and perspectives. At the same time, the analyses overlap significantly. "Western" thought, for instance, is identified again and again as a "cause" of environmental degradation, but there is little sustained and detailed argument concerning who and what constitutes this tradition and causes such effects. Ethical and religious resources are mustered to address the global situation, but without the development of a systematic understanding of them or of their relation to public life. This is, however, almost a generic criticism of any collection; one sacrifices a certain depth for the sake of intellectual breadth. The benefit of an international discussion of these global issues undoubtedly justifies this forfeiture.

Noticeably absent are the more subjective strains of utilitarian and postmodern ethics. Editor J. Ronald Engel notes, for instance, that the

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authors are "united in the conviction that universal moral principles are possible." This is far from the "deconstructive" antifoundationalism that characterizes much academic discourse today. Likewise missing is much of the "higher criticism" that has pervaded the contemporary scientific study of religion. Mawil Y. Izzi Deen (Samarrai), for instance, argues that "Islamic environmental ethics . . . is based on clear-cut legal foundations which Muslims hold to be formulated by God." From such perspectives, notions of more proximate human causation (or influence) do not arise.

Still, the immense service done by *Ethics of Environment and Development* is to exhibit the broad streams of converging thought (if not yet consensus) upon global failures in these two realms. Ecological foolishness has been practiced in virtually every culture, under the dominance of every major religion, in modernity and antiquity, as Thomas Derr and others have pointed out. It is the magnitude of environmental degradation and the acceleration of the rates of change that give rise to a new situation wherein the biosphere is threatened as such.

The consciousness of this danger—manifest in environmental and cultural degradation—is apparent in all of these essays. Each of them, besides identifying the cause(s) of destruction, offers prescriptions for a better world. Simon Sui-cheong Chau and Fung Kam-Kong, for instance, give an account of the relationship between economic growth and environmental damage: "What went wrong from an ecological point of view . . . [is] 'development.'" The problem is not merely the costs of development, but what essentially constitutes *development*. Indeed, a chorus of voices from around the world challenges the standard utilitarian account of economic progress.

Many suspected causes are identified, but some of them may be mutually exclusive. The environmental crisis is said to be due to anthropocentrism, or capitalism, or hierarchical thinking, domination, socialism, Western thought, Christian, Jewish, and/or Islamic traditions, science, technology, or male domination. But these attributions are neither univocal nor unconditional. "Things have gone wrong not because humans held an anthropocentric view of the universe," argues Denis Goulet, ". . . but because they erred in defining the value content of their own development and freedom." Thus, for him, the comparison of anthropocentric and cosmocentric views is not only insidious, it reveals a failure to look at the whole. In contrast, Eduardo Gudynas argues that both capitalist and socialist styles of development have been anthropocentric "in the worst sense," exalting success, production, growth, and technological progress. A similar case is made by Martin Palmer for Western Christian and Jewish views. Both lead to an unfortunate anthropocentrism. What is the alternative? For Gudynas, it is "a biocentric posture" that avoids hierarchies and embraces a holistic perspective. Neither the cause nor the alternative is a matter of simple agreement.

Likewise, a number of essayists cite Lynn White, Jr., who charges that the ecological crisis can be laid at the door of Christianity and Judaism. Robert J. Moore, however, identifies Christianity as supporting environmental "stewardship," as does Bill Clark in his description of Jewish environmental ethics. Socialism is implicated, along with capitalism, but the latter has no positive spokespersons in this volume, as does the former.

(It would have been interesting to have one or more essays by those who espouse the "dominant social paradigm," rather than merely read about it through its critics.) If hierarchy and domination are the problem, is the solution to be found in a women's ethic of reciprocity, or in the Eastern obliteration of distinctions in the compassion for human and nonhuman life? There is convergence, but not consensus. The same might be said (with different degrees of accuracy) for the other causes of identified degradation. How one recognizes the problem and solutions to it depend upon the very presuppositions of the interpreter.

Within the obvious pluralism of interpretive frameworks, it is not remarkable that there is a lack of consensus concerning the more theoretical dimensions of ontology, theodicy, and soteriology, of normative foundations and argument. That is to be expected. Of interest is the universal search for an understanding of what has gone wrong in economic development, especially as it has threatened the Earth itself. More than that, there are rudiments of an environmental ethic as global as the problem itself. There are (apparently) resources in each of the international settings represented that lead to environmental care and reconstruction.

Whether any conception of "ecojustice" not already embodied in political, economic, social, and religious structures can reverse the planet's dance with death remains to be seen. However, the fact that such conceptions are coming to the fore is a sign of hope in a threatening world.

J. MARK THOMAS

Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies  
Madison, Wisconsin

*Amythia: Crisis in the Natural History of Western Culture.* By LOYAL D. RUE.  
Foreword by William G. Doty. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989. 223 pages. \$29.95.

Ours is a time of amythia, a time when Western civilization lacks a shared myth. To counter the prevalence of competing partial views in contemporary culture, Loyal Rue calls for a reconceptualization of Western religious traditions. A new myth is needed that will take into account the biological basis of human activity, the central traditions of our cultural self-understanding, and the scientific nature of our current comprehension of the world. Creative imagination and artistic innovation are required if a vision is to arise that can persuasively reconnect the moral "ought" with the cosmic "is."

Rue is hardly unique in his summons to remythologize or reenchant the world; similar pleas have been a staple of the Romantic tradition for nearly two centuries. Usually, however, science, with its detached observation, has been seen as an agent of fragmentation, not as the potential centerpiece of a new, unified worldview. Nor is Rue alone in believing that a rejuvenated Christianity is essential to the well-being of a Western culture that has become largely secularized. No less noteworthy a predecessor than T. S. Eliot even foreshadowed (by half a century) Rue's biologically based argument on behalf of a revitalized Christianity: "I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian

Faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes" (*Christianity and Culture* [New York: Harvest Book, 1940 and 1949], 200).

It is praiseworthy that Rue does not merely repeat the insight that a new myth would be helpful now; he outlines the components of the myth he thinks we need (even if he does not flesh it out with narratives or images). The eventual elaboration of the myth is to be the work of artists, not theologians. And what is the key notion from which a reunified culture can arise? Evolution is God. That is, the root metaphor of evolution is what best integrates cosmology and morality. That such an answer is seriously proposed is surprising, in several ways.

To begin with, some will find it surprising that evolution, that *bête noire* of Fundamentalist Christianity, is set forth as a candidate for apotheosis. One can almost hear the spirit of William Jennings Bryan exclaim, with both disdain and glee, "See, once you start tinkering with the literal word of the Bible, there's no telling what absurdity men will conjure up." Or a latter-day creationist might proclaim that Rue is merely making it explicit that those who advocate that evolutionary theory (and not creationism) be taught in the public schools are just as much driven by religious impulse as creationists—except that it is the impulse of the Antichrist. With conservative and Fundamentalist Christianity so widespread, it seems doubtful that "baptizing" evolution will lead to the cultural unity Rue seeks.

It is not surprising that Rue extols evolution as the locus of divinity, but that he extols it as the locus of divinity *today*, for the metaphor of evolution has lost much of the status it enjoyed earlier in this century. For instance, evolutionary functionalism has largely been displaced in anthropology by structural or interpretive models of analysis, and the tenor of *Amythia*, attuned to notions of survival and progress, would appear to fit more harmoniously into the world of social Darwinism as it was a century ago than into today's world of ironic detachment and pluralistic babble. Rue's work seems to have more affinity with the thought of Herbert Spencer, Henri Bergson, and Julian Huxley than with the ideas of such leading contemporary thinkers as Jacques Derrida, Richard Rorty, and Paul Feyerabend. One wonders how Rue's proposed metaphor for divine activity would differ from Bergson's *elan vital*. Or how would it compare to the evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin?

It is also surprising that Rue advocates evolution as the centerpiece of a new myth, because the concept of evolution does not seem in many respects an ideal candidate for mythical status. Rue may decry the plausibility of the personal metaphor for God, but at least a worshiper feels some commonality with a personal god. How can one relate with any emotional intensity to the laws of survival? An impersonal force would seem neither to inspire worship nor to motivate moral behavior.

Rue attempts to defend his position by setting forth criteria that must be heeded if a myth is to be successful in grounding and integrating a society. "Any new expression of myth must take care to preserve the distinctive identity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and . . . be plausible enough to elicit commitment" (pp. 163–64). Surely evolutionary theory is plausible to most people in today's world, but does mere plausibility generate *commitment* to evolution as a notion powerful enough to organize life? Elsewhere Rue

notes that a notion gains mythic power only by “*effective* integration of cosmology and morality; or, to put it differently, myth is the undifferentiated presence of cosmos, ethos, and pathos” (p. 73).

Out of Rue’s discussion several questions seem to crystallize:

1. How might an explanatory theory such as evolution be incorporated into theology in a way that preserves the distinctive identity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition?
2. How might it ground moral theory?
3. How might evolution generate pathos?

1. I find Rue most successful in setting forth a case for connecting evolutionary emergence with Western theology. He sees the covenant as central to our religious traditions, and he shows how, historically, the covenant has been renewed in ways that accommodate cultural change. Surely he is correct in saying that Christianity must incorporate an intelligible response to the scientific insights and technological innovations of our society, and he also seems on target with his contention that the metaphor of God as person is not fully able to integrate all the spheres of knowledge we inhabit. In today’s world personal piety has been severed from public decision making, be the latter practical or theoretical.

Perhaps, then, cultural reunification may come from quarters other than our religious traditions. The media are saturated with heroic figures and stories that have at least quasi-mythical import. But as Rue indicates (p. 86), these stories come into and go out of fashion quickly, and rarely do they deal adequately with a broad array of important issues.

Are possibilities of mythic restoration latent in our life as citizens? The myths supporting American identity and direction seem about as seriously in disrepair as religious myths. Indeed, in a time of global interrelationship and nuclear capacity, strong national myths may represent a great danger to survival. Thus a case can be made that hope for a coherent perspective rests largely on revitalizing our religious myths.

In speaking of revising the terms of the covenant that defines our religious tradition, Rue seems to mean that dialogue leading to a new consensus about religious meaning needs to take place. In fact, such dialogue *does* seem to be occurring, in several venues. Feminist theology has had a profound impact on religious thought and practice; liberation theology and other forms of critical engagement with our institutions continue to percolate through society; but perhaps nowhere has more far-reaching theological change been occurring than among those who deal with religious pluralism and the possibility of a world theology. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, John Hick, Paul Knitter, Masao Abe, Hans Kung, John Cobb, Raimundo Pannikar, and many others have been exploring new ways of conceiving the religious covenants that undergird human society.

Loyal Rue’s emphasis is on ensuring that any revised covenant is consistent with a scientific worldview. The uniqueness of *Amythia* is that it reconceives Christianity through the lens of sociobiology, and it shares the strengths and weaknesses of its controversial approach. “The aim of sociobiology,” Rue says, “is to extend the principles of evolutionary biology into the domain of social behavior among animals, including humans” (p. 35). But is this not to fall into what Gilbert Ryle called “category mistakes”? The disciplines of biology, sociology, and the humanities, organized by different—perhaps even partially incommensurate—principles,

tend to be conflated by sociobiologists. When Rue speaks of “the interaction between DNA and cultural tradition” (p. 35), he suggests a feat analogous to mating elephants with bats. It is the sort of language that Michael Polanyi, cited in support of Rue’s approach, would vehemently oppose. Cultural change can only be explained intelligibly by economic conditions, institutional practices, the desire for status, and similar culturally manifest factors, not by DNA structures or the activity of certain dominant genes. These biological factors (just like chemical components) would presumably underlie human behavior of any sort, but the explanation of one particular historical occurrence rather than another must depend upon unfolding the pattern of human motivation, cultural convention, or operative values (each culturally manifest) that in fact prevailed.

To be sure, Rue (despite some unguarded claims) does not simply reduce culture to biology. He makes an interesting case for the transmission of culture by means of the extragenetic channel of traditions. He bases his natural history of culture in part on an analogy to the differential survival of genes in biological evolution. The analogue to the gene in cultural evolution is called—in terminology consistent with *phoneme*, *lexeme*, *sememe*, and similar examples of linguistic exotica—the *meme*. I find the meme to be a protean, unreliable concept, signifying at different points in *Amythia* a unit of meaning (p. 39), a metaphor (p. 65), and the equivalent of personal name (p. 66). The originator of the term, Richard Dawkins, uses *meme* to refer to “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, pottery techniques, etc.” (p. 38), surely a mess of diverse entities. (Perhaps the meme can be saved by equating it with *symbol* in the broad sense of that term, utilized by Cassirer and Langer.)

Rue’s next point is that those cultures survive whose symbols best promote knowledge and behavior attuned to our natural environments and consistent with our genetic endowments. Western religious symbols grounded in the covenant tradition are now out of harmony with our pluralistic, complex society and our scientific knowledge of the world. If theological concepts can be pulled into a new mythic unity embracing cosmos, ethos, and pathos, then Western culture will survive.

2. Can the theory of evolution ground moral behavior? Rue claims that “evolutionary theory gives us a vision of what is true about the world (cosmology) and it gives us some ideas about how to behave in the world (morality)” (p. 265). The moral that social Darwinists drew from evolutionary theory is that it promotes the survival of the fittest, not the triumph of the most moral or the goodness of self-sacrifice. Rue admits that the metaphor of evolution does not demonstrate the objective value of human survival, but the problem is deeper than that: It does not support the worth of *any* value; it merely states that the fittest (insects, lions, humans) *do* survive. Evolution must be imaginatively recast (as must our view of nature) if it is to be a plausible candidate for apotheosis.

3. As a descriptive theory, how can evolution evoke an emotional response? Rue states that he has no illusions that those who comprehend evolution “might be stirred to the point of self-transcendence and life-orientation. That is a task for mythmakers” (p. 267). Given contemporary awareness of the gap between description and prescription, it seems a challenging task indeed. In his final two chapters, which I find to be the most stimulating in the book, Rue employs his considerable rhetorical skills

to try to convince his readers of the appropriateness of his proposal—but earlier he seems, at times (perhaps unconsciously), to assume the role of the mythmaker. *Amythia* shades into mythia: “Evolution has also selected against those individuals who were incapable of compromising their own immediate needs for the purpose of advancing the cooperative goals of a social group” (p. 80). Here the concept of evolution takes on the character of agency, becoming a force supportive of the moral behavior Rue advocates.

The incipient mythical status of *Amythia* becomes most evident when Rue adopts the language of sociobiology. Various features of analysis virtually become personified. “The cortex decides” (p. 58); the memes of a culture and the cultural gene pool “work together” and have the same purpose: “to devise behaviors that will enhance survival and replication” (p. 67).

It is interesting that Rue, who rejects the personal metaphor for God, engages in so much personification and reification. Indeed, if one examines the various religions of the world, it again and again appears that, while the intelligentsia may revere a variety of abstractions, the great mass of people responds to gods, saints, spirits, and other manifestations of the personal. Rue is correct: Pathos is needed if a new myth is to capture the hearts of individuals. But the challenge to mythmakers to tell stories that make evolution winsome seems greater than Rue realizes, if these stories are to be true to a scientific worldview and to satisfy people’s emotional hunger for unity and significance. Indeed, Rue’s reference to the need for creative mythmakers is but a simple gesture toward the complex dialectical dynamics through which a culture comes to consensus concerning what is of ultimate significance in the personal, social, and cosmic orders. But that is another story.

In *Amythia*, Loyal Rue steps back from the widely perceived situation in our culture, places our *amythia* dilemma in historical context, and suggests a solution. He has carried the conversation into new fields of inquiry. His proposal is at once conservative (he argues for objective values as a hedge against nihilism) and liberal (evolution qualifies as a theological norm). I do not always agree with his analysis, but I appreciate the impetus he has given to discussion of an important topic. The conversation has taken on a new richness because of *Amythia*.

WALTER B. GULICK  
Department of Philosophy  
Eastern Montana College  
Billings, Montana

*God in History: Shapes of Freedom.* By PETER C. HODGSON. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1989. 272 pages. \$21.95.

The traditional conception of salvation history under the general but firm providential direction of God, furthered by occasions of divine intervention, has been increasingly called into question in recent times. There are many difficulties that such a salvific view has to face, including its compatibility with a modern, scientific understanding of the world. As a result, the old account has become more and more unconvincing to many people,

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including Professor Hodgson and many other theologians. However, not many of those who are uneasy about the older story have devised an alternative account of God's relation to history with Hodgson's determination and vigor in this book.

Hodgson is well known for his extensive and distinguished work on Hegel, which was not a purely historical (*historisch*) undertaking. Hegel is the primary inspiration of Hodgson's approach to our contemporary problem, supplemented by important inputs from the thought of Troeltsch and of Tillich. With insights from those sources, Hodgson engages a wide range of postmodernist writers, particularly such writers as Derrida, Foucault, and Mark Taylor, whose work involves a deconstruction of history itself. The combination of such forebears and sparring partners does not suggest that the outcome will be easy reading—nor is it.

For those less well versed in his sources than the author (surely the great majority of his readers), much of the book will be hard going. I am not convinced that Hodgson's complexity and abstractness of language always contribute to what he is saying, but that is largely a matter of intellectual background and personal predilection. I *am* convinced that Hodgson's position is developing a deeply thought-out and valuable attempt to tackle a major aporia in contemporary theology.

Rather than a *history of salvation*, Hodgson prefers a *history of freedom*, along the lines of Habermas's "communicative action." But Hodgson does not suggest that we replace a theological with a purely humanistic account: to exclude the idea of divine intervention is not to exclude the idea of transcendence or that of divine immanence. The divine "lure," which is the way in which process thought deals with essentially the same problem, is too uniform a concept to satisfy him. He prefers to speak of God's efficacious presence in the world as a transformative gestalt:

God is present in specific shapes or patterns of praxis that have a configuring, transformative power within historical process, moving the process in a determinate direction, that of the creative unification of multiplicities of elements into new wholes, into creative syntheses that build human solidarity, enhance freedom, break systematic oppression, heal the injured and broken, and care for the natural. (p. 205)

This transformative divine presence does not constitute a single providential direction to history as a whole. The victims of history are far too many and too tragic for such an idea to be acceptable. But it does give rise to "partial fulfilments and momentary clearings of freedom within history" (p. 227). That is important, but not by itself sufficient for reasons of theodicy in relation to the victims of history. So Hodgson wants to speak also of a transhistorical consummation of freedom in God, which lies effectively beyond our words and conceiving. He brings the two together by his conception of a mutual relation of God and the world, whereby God is historicized in the world and the world is taken beyond history in God.

The balance on Hodgson's account seems to me to develop entirely on the right lines, with its concern to do justice to both the transcendent and immanentist aspects of Christian faith, and to do so very consciously in relation to the world as modern science, history, and sociology depict it. But there are, not surprisingly, difficulties in grasping just what his account



implies, quite apart from linguistic and stylistic difficulties.

Moving away from conceptions of divine intervention usually involves moving away from any conception of God as personal in any sense that religious faith desiderates. Hodgson seeks to meet that objection by insisting on the difference between a "transformative gestalt" and an "idea." If God is not to be conceived as a personal agent, that does not leave the sole alternative of God as a theoretical concept. What makes for the distinctively "personal" is not just a matter of the embodied individual; it is a way of being human in mutual relation to others. Hodgson therefore argues that "for Christians the person of Jesus of Nazareth played and continues to play a normative role in mediating the shape of God in history, which is the shape of freedom in love. Jesus' personal identity merged into this shape insofar as he simply *was* what he proclaimed and practised" (pp. 209-10). So there is a personalist character about the operation of this noninterventionist God as the gestalt of freedom.

Overcoming the objection that regards a gestalt as no more than a theoretical notion and its establishment as a personal reality poses a further problem, however. How is this gestalt efficacious in the world? If it is not the influence of an idea or the action of an individual agent, what kind of agency is at work? There are perhaps parallels in the scientific sphere, with the transformative power at work in the emergence of new species in the evolutionary process, or with what is sometimes called *top-down* causation, whereby the total configuration of physical conditions may influence what happens in much smaller units, so that physical causation is not only a matter of what happens at the microlevel but also determines outcomes at the macrolevel. But even if there are analogies here, there is still a puzzle in clarifying the sense in which such an efficacious gestalt in history is to be identified with God. That it would be a particularly efficacious form of causality in the world of God's creation is true enough. But would it be appropriately spoken of as God?

Perhaps that doubt or hesitation is no more than a part of the adjustment in the conception of and language about God that our continually changing understanding of the world calls for—an adjustment that will come more easily to those who have drunk more deeply of Hegel than I have done.

The fact that this discussion of Hodgson's thesis has taken the form not so much of objections but of tentative reflection on possible lines of development is testimony to the searching and creative way in which he is tackling one of the most urgent problems in theology today. I am not convinced that his proposal will prove the most helpful way forward in the long run, but it certainly puts its finger on an issue of the utmost difficulty and importance and expounds it constructively with great verve and erudition.

MAURICE WILES  
Regis Professor of Divinity  
Christ Church, Oxford University  
Oxford, England

*The Brain and Belief: Faith in the Light of Brain Research.* By JAMES B. ASHBROOK. Bristol, Ind.: Wyndham Hall Press, 1988. 362 pages. \$24.95; \$14.95 (paper).

This book is the most recent report of the ongoing research that Ashbrook began nearly twenty years ago, when he first reported his interest in the interaction of neuroscience, psychology, and theology. Coming after other books and articles by the author that have dealt with the same subject, this volume represents the current stage of Ashbrook's cross-disciplinary synthesis toward what he calls "a natural theology in an empirical mode" (p. 129). There is very little in this volume that he has not dealt with at some level in previous writings, but there is stronger emphasis on the theological interpretation of neuroscience data and a more coherent picture of how the brain is a metaphor for God.

The split-brain model is one of the principles of neuroscience that provides an organizing metaphor by which Ashbrook analyzes theological science. Based on the now common understanding of the specialized function of the right and left hemispheres, Ashbrook divides theological inquiry into two ways of knowing God. Employing the insightful image of architectural styles, he relates the central dome of the old Byzantine Hagia Sophia to the strategy of the more receptive right brain, to make meaning of the creation by embracing it in universal wholeness. The same objective (of meaning-making) is accomplished by the more active left brain, through a different strategy of penetrating into the heavens on Chartres's spire. (The architectural reference is presumed to reflect the theological or cultural mind-set of those who created the buildings.) The left-brain-dominant theological style is *kataphatic*, and the right brain is *apophatic*.

From this model, Ashbrook suggests that two primary ways of responding to the world can be derived. The drive toward world transformation is the result of the left brain's need to manipulate and reorganize the environment, because this hemisphere does not understand the world as having been created or maintained just as it should be for optimal function. This is the sense of needing to "save" the creation and each creature. The other way of dealing with the world, favored by the right brain, is to receive and accept it as it is. This is a sense of needing only to "savor" the creation and its creatures.

Ashbrook calls the first mode "prophetic action" and the second mode "prophetic mysticism." The goal of a fully integrated approach to the world is that which balances the two modes—that is, the left and right hemispheres. A balance of "saving" and "savoring" results in "caring" for the world. In Ashbrook's words, "Brain mechanisms make understandable that shift in belief from saving and savoring to caring" (p. 237).

This whole-brain method of making meaning out of the world is a metaphor of God. By analogy to the brain's methods, God, being perfectly balanced, would be understood as both savoring and saving the creation through caring for it. The caring goal of God would be both to affirm the world and, at the same time, to transform it into its ultimate fulfillment.

This is the analogical method that Ashbrook has put to good use in this book. On the positive side, I place his admirable desire to bring neuroscience, psychology, and theology into conversation. I agree with the need to integrate these and other disciplines. Ashbrook has drawn together, in a

coherent way, a large amount of information that generally supports his case for "a natural theology in an empirical mode."

On the negative side, he has overgeneralized and oversimplified all three disciplines in order to introduce the discussants and initiate the conversation. Ashbrook appears to be using this analogical approach in a way that is certainly appropriate to the classroom, where oversimplification can legitimately be used as an introductory heuristic device—but with full understanding, by teacher and student, that the complexities to be encountered in a deeper analysis will tend to diminish the adequacy of the organizing metaphor. This deeper analysis, however, is just what is required.

Ashbrook can negate my objections if he will take his cross-disciplinary study to the next level of critical conversation, in which the generalizations and simplifications can be expanded and deepened into the exceptions, qualifications, incongruencies, and anomalies that arise in all theoretical construction.

How his synthetic method is able to fashion novel ideas from these stubborn facts will be a severe test of its acceptability to the scientific communities. Since these communities extend from natural scientists, to psychosocial scientists, to theological scientists, the likelihood is small that each community will be satisfied that its criteria for acceptability can be met. Even though Ashbrook has not achieved a stunning success in this book, and such a success is unlikely to be achieved by any author who attempts to integrate these disciplines within a single mind-life, Ashbrook, acting as a holistic generalist, has outlined the agenda for the work of future teams of specialists.

Those of us in the above-mentioned scientific communities who are interested in a "natural theology in an empirical mode" should read this book, appreciate its synthetic quality, notice its limitations, and prepare for the critical conversation which must take us beyond this preliminary stage of the neuroscience-psychology-theology cross-disciplinary interaction. A mountain this high can only be climbed by teams.

ROBERT LYMAN POTTER  
Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine  
Kansas University School of Medicine  
Adjunct Professor of Religion and Medicine  
Central Baptist Theological Seminary  
Kansas City, Kansas