

Editorial

Our previous issue of *Zygon*, devoted largely to the thought of philosopher Michael Ruse, centered on questions of whether it makes sense at all for intelligent, scientifically sophisticated, and philosophically critical persons to entertain the Christian faith (and by implication, any traditional religious outlook) as a viable option for personal understanding and commitment. When the votes were counted among the authors of that issue, it would have required a symbolic chairperson to cast the deciding ballot.

We published the March 1994 issue because it represents one significant facet of intelligent inquiry in our society concerning religion in the context of a scientifically informed culture, both with respect to the diversity of viewpoints it presented (recall, it included one parish minister among its authors) and also with respect to the standoff it mirrored between skepticism or rejection of religion and vigorous religious faith. The present issue moves to quite a different facet of our culture's probing. The five authors explore edges of thinking and experience in which scientific and technological vision points to an interface or, in some cases, even a synthesis, with traditional religious practices and insights. Some readers may detect an element of so-called New Age thinking in certain of these pieces. The editors, however, view these articles as attempts to proceed responsibly to chart areas of thought and religious sensibility that are necessarily ambiguous and even shrouded from sure knowledge. There is a great energy present in our culture today, however, that wants to probe these areas, and *Zygon* will not shrink from the difficult task of providing some critical markers for this quest.

It may be worth noting that one of the authors is a graduate student, while two others are part of the growing ranks of "independent scholars"—persons who hold no academic posts but who are critically and thoughtfully involved in the concrete developments in our society that pertain to this journal's concerns. The probing that is at issue here does not wait upon academic appointment. Each of the authors focuses on unconventional, yet highly significant themes. Cophorne Macdonald moves between communications and information theory and traditional (even pre-Christian) religious thought and mysticism. J. W. Traphagan wrestles with the very difficult question of whether traditional Christian mysticism and the metaphysics of contemporary physics do not provide resources for ethics. Lyle Steadman and Craig Palmer propose an anthropological interpretation of ancestor veneration that advances this journal's ongoing interest in "dual-inheritance" (genes-culture) models of human evolution. Michael Cavanaugh explores the possibility that ethological studies, particularly those of Konrad Lorenz, may throw light on the processes of human knowing, including the process of discovery, or "eureka" moments. Holmes Rolston, III, offers a profound reflection upon the redemption of nature. Rolston's reflections complement his piece in the December 1993 issue of *Zygon*, in which he set forth an environmental ethics.

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Whereas our March issue may have encouraged readers to take sides in a sharp debate, the set of articles that lies ahead in this issue presents an invitation to mind- and spirit-stretching. *Zygon*'s program of yoking science and religion includes both kinds of ventures.

—Philip Hefner

A Look Ahead:

The September 1994 issue of *Zygon* will include:

“On the Evolution of Morality and Religion: A Response to Sociobiology” by Roy Rappoport (anthropology, University of Michigan)

“What Science Can and Cannot Offer to a Religious Narrative” by Ursula Goodenough (biology, Washington University, St. Louis)

Articles by James Ashbrook (psychology/theology, Northwestern University), and George Murphy (physics/theology)

Symposia on three recent books:

The Grace of Guile by Loyal D. Rue

The Human Factor by Philip Hefner

In Face of Mystery by Gordon Kaufman