

## Editorial

*Zygon* has established a track record over these thirty-three years of giving substantial attention to the implications of scientific research that focuses on human beings. It is consistent with this tradition that the concluding issue of the journal's thirty-third volume presents seven articles that deal with human nature from the perspectives of science, philosophy, and theology. The substance of these pieces testifies to the increasing sophistication with which the scientific research is interpreted by the community of humanities scholars.

The first four contributions emanate from the Epic of Evolution conference convened by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History in November 1997. Biologist Francisco Ayala, philosopher Loyal Rue, theologian Philip Hefner, and theological ethicist Stephen Pope move from a consideration of morality and human culture to more comprehensive interpretations of human nature.

Patricia Williams and Wesley Wildman provide stunning analyses of one of the most difficult problems that confront interdisciplinary reflection on human nature: how natural scientific research on human nature impacts classic theology, and what can emerge from that impact. Williams deals with sociobiology's significance for the Christian doctrine of atonement; Wildman proposes the concept of the "modern secular interpretation of humanity" and reflects on how religious thought can respond to it.

Edward Schoen takes up pressing methodological issues in his suggestion that the work of George Lakoff, which argues that human understanding proceeds on the basis of a plurality of cognitive strategies, is useful both as critique of inadequate uses of scientific research and also as the basis for more promising constructive use of that research for interpreting human nature.

Willem Drees offers our readers another installment in his ongoing efforts to carve out a rich and viable naturalistic foundation for thinking about religion and science. In the course of his piece, he also responds to some criticism of his most recent book, *Religion, Science, and Naturalism*, that appeared in the December, 1997, issue of *Zygon*.

The Teachers' File features Russell Genet's comprehensive proposal for a college course on the epic of evolution. He has, in effect, translated the theme of the Field Museum conference (from which our first four articles emerged) into curriculum possibilities for college students. Mary Clark,

who has received national recognition for her success as a college teacher of biology, presents a programmatic argument that (1) certain popular, biologically-based theories of human nature are deeply flawed, and (2) societal endorsement of these flawed theories has engendered perverse behaviors, both by individuals and by our society as a whole, which underlie many of our most serious social problems. She also describes some concrete experimental efforts to shape human behavior on more wholesome lines.

As my summary comments indicate, the articles in this issue follow closely the programmatic intentions of our journal as they are stated elsewhere in this issue:

*Zygon's* hypothesis is that, when long-evolved religious wisdom is yoked with significant, recent scientific discoveries about the world and human nature, there results credible expression of basic meaning, values, and moral convictions that provides valid and effective guidance for enhancing human life."

—Philip Hefner