

## *Editorial*

“Engagement” is one way of describing our ongoing efforts to attain depth and complexity in thinking about religion and science. The idea of engagement was an organizing principle for our preceding issue, June 2001, and again in this issue. Engagement means that writers do not work as if no one else were giving attention to the issues, nor are they content to talk past each other; rather, they try to advance the discussion by dealing with the specific ideas of others. This is not an easy task; authors often think that a critical reviewer has missed the point. Perhaps this comes with the territory, since we work so long and carefully searching for the best expression of our ideas that we begin to look upon those ideas as our children, and we wonder whether critics really appreciate the depth of what we are trying to say. For a journal like this one, it may indeed be the readers, not the authors, who are best able to see where genuine engagement has taken place—and of course readers will disagree among themselves, too.

The Think Pieces sound the first notes of engagement in this issue: Ursula Goodenough offers an alternative to Stephen J. Gould’s interpretation of the significance of recent advances in mapping the human genome, while Gregory Peterson raises questions about panentheism, which is a concept much employed by certain leading philosophers and theologians who are seeking new ways of describing how God is related to the natural world that take scientific ideas into account.

The second section takes up the theme of naturalism and naturalist modes of thinking. This journal quite intentionally gives a great deal of attention to naturalism. The reason for this attention? Perhaps the most significant challenge that the sciences pose to traditional religion is their skepticism about the existence of “another world” besides the natural world that the sciences investigate. This skepticism is generally expressed by a rejection or modification of supernaturalism. Whereas for many thinkers supernaturalism is a nonnegotiable if religion is to maintain its integrity, naturalist thinkers argue that there are alternatives to the supernaturalist worldview and that these alternatives can give adequate expression to the concerns and claims of religion. For some thinkers, science is incompatible with supernaturalism, while others believe they can work out modes of détente between the two. The engagement between naturalism and supernaturalism becomes, therefore, a major feature on the landscape of

the religion-and-science terrain. Testing the claims of naturalism and supernaturalism is one item on the agenda of this engagement; testing the adequacy of proposals set forth by specific thinkers is another.

Willem Drees, of the University of Leiden, is one of the leading thinkers who have elaborated naturalist alternatives to supernaturalist discussion of religion and science. His work, which includes several books and articles and substantial contributions to *Zygon*, reveals his broad sophistication in theology, philosophy, and the sciences. William Rottschaefer, a philosopher at Lewis and Clark College, is likewise an important thinker who has advanced naturalist proposals also in books, articles, and frequent contributions to this journal. In this issue, Rottschaefer presents what is perhaps the most substantial and detailed critique of Drees's thought that has yet appeared. Drees responds with a sharp countercritique, asserting that Rottschaefer has by no means taken the measure of his thought. Rottschaefer responds to Drees's countercritique in some detail, emphasizing his hope that this engagement of the two will advance the effort to formulate an adequate naturalist, empirical theology. One of the chief points of disagreement between the two is the question of how supernaturalism and naturalism relate to one another.

The neurosciences constitute another major item on this journal's agenda. Since Andrew Newberg and the late Eugene d'Aquili are among the leading contributors to our ongoing discussion, it is not surprising that we provide a section of engagement with their recent book, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience*. Among the discussants is Carol Rausch Albright, whose earlier book with James Ashbrook, *The Humanizing Brain: Where Religion and Neuroscience Meet*, has also received extensive commentary in our pages. The trade journal *Publisher's Weekly* recently gave special notice to both of these books as exemplifying one of the current cutting edges of religion-science publishing. Albright is joined by neuroscientist Michael Spezio and religious studies scholar Karl Peters; Newberg in turn responds to all three. Physicist-turned-psychologist K. Helmut Reich adds a separate article that is related to the d'Aquili-Newberg discussion, reviewing two works on the psychological analysis of spiritual development.

This issue concludes with four unrelated articles, each of which presents arguments of engagement. Sociologist Barbara Strassberg brings to our readers two significant dimensions that have been underrepresented in *Zygon*—sociology and postmodern perspectives. She argues that our perspectives on the interaction between religion and science will be enriched by a “model of social becoming” that will bring the conversation “down to earth,” to the level of people who “live” religion and science on a daily basis.

Two physicists join our team of authors. Varadaraja V. Raman presents criteria for the religion-science engagement that proceed from a “global

perspective,” that is, not anchored in any particular scientific discipline or any specific religion. Arnold Benz explores the implications for theology of a cosmology that emerges from an understanding of the universe as dynamic and ever changing. In this framework, he suggests, “the past development of the universe may become a metaphor for the future of our existence.”

Over the past four years, we have published a series of articles by philosopher Patricia Williams that engage traditional Christian theology from the insights of science, particularly sociobiology. In this issue, we offer the fourth of her articles, in which she takes up the problem of evil.

In popular parlance, one might say that there is “no way” the reader will not be engaged by these thirteen authors. That’s precisely our intention.

—Philip Hefner

We append here bits of data derived from our electronic operation—the number of articles accessed electronically in the year 2000 in libraries around the world. Seven authors rank ahead of the pack in these statistics, listed here in the order of the frequency in which they were “hit”: Ursula Goodenough, Nancey Murphy, Gregory Peterson, Eugene d’Aquili/Andrew Newberg, Michael Ruse, and Arthur Peacocke. Forty-three libraries around the world accessed ten or more articles last year. The University of Michigan had almost two hundred accesses and the University of North Texas more than one hundred, followed in high numbers by Louisiana State University, Catholic University of America, and universities in Korea, Australia, Israel, Canada, and both Oxford and Cambridge in England.