

## IS NATURE ENOUGH? YES

by Jerome A. Stone

*Abstract.* Religious naturalism encompasses thinkers from Baruch Spinoza, George Santayana, John Dewey, Henry Nelson Wieman, and Ralph Burhoe to recent writers. I offer a generic definition of religious naturalism and then outline my own version, the “minimalist vision of transcendence.” Many standard issues in the science-and-religion dialogue are seen to fade in significance for religious naturalism. I make suggestions for our understanding of science, including the importance of transcognitive abilities, the need for a revised notion of rationality as an alternative to extreme versions of postmodernism, the value of rational dissensus, and the education of appreciation. Finally, I suggest ways to interpret the religious traditions of the world by religious naturalism.

*Keywords:* Ursula Goodenough; Bernard Meland; minimalist vision of transcendence; religious naturalism; Calvin Schrag; George Santayana, Baruch Spinoza; Yi T’oegy; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen; Henry Nelson Wieman.

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Is nature enough? Hardly! Nature is not self-explanatory. Nature is not completely meaningful. Nature does not provide for complete and final fulfillment of our deepest desires and longings. Nature does not provide answers to our moral queries. Nature does not provide a foundation for our epistemological, metaphysical, and axiological searches. In short, nature is not enough. But it’s all we have, and it will have to do.

The term *nature* is, of course, wildly ambiguous. As I am using the word now, it takes its meaning from the denial of the *supernatural*. Nature

Jerome A. Stone is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, IL 60067, and on the adjunct faculty of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago, Illinois; e-mail Jersustone@aol.com. A version of this essay was presented as a paper at the forty-ninth annual conference of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, “Is Nature Enough? The Thirst for Transcendence,” Star Island, New Hampshire, 27 July–3 August 2002.

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is not supernatural. By supernatural I mean not merely a miraculous intervention into the ordinary course of events, as when we refer to ghosts as supernatural beings. More precisely I mean an ontologically distinct and superior realm (such as God, soul, or heaven) that grounds, explains, or gives meaning or completion to this world.

Note that this generic conception of nature can encompass a variety of views—reductionist and emergentist, monist and pluralist, materialist and panpsychist. Specifically, I think of nature as definitely including the human, the historical, and whatever chance, choice, or freedom there is. I cannot prove these assertions. But those who differ from me cannot prove theirs, either. These claims are high-level hypotheses and worldviews—surmises, I call them—about the way things are. They are the basic cognitive assertions in terms of which I orient myself. Put together, they are the faith by which I live.

#### RELIGIOUS NATURALISM

The viewpoint I elaborate here is a variety of what could be called *religious naturalism*. Several articles on religious naturalism have been published in *Zygon* in the past few years, and I wish to orient myself in relation to this movement.<sup>1</sup>

First, I offer a generic definition of religious naturalism that I think marks its distinctiveness. I should express a word of caution. Not everyone who could be called a religious naturalist uses this term. Religious naturalism is a type of naturalism, so we start with naturalism itself. Negatively, naturalism, religious or otherwise, asserts that there is no ontologically distinct and superior realm (such as God, soul, or heaven) to ground, explain, or give meaning to this world. Positively it affirms that attention should be focused on this world to provide whatever explanation and meaning are possible for this life. *Religious* naturalism is that variety of naturalism which involves the belief that there are religious aspects of this world that can be appreciated within a naturalistic framework. Certain occasions within our experience elicit responses that are analogous enough to the paradigm cases of religion that they can appropriately be called religious. Religious naturalism also usually shares with other approaches an imperative for personal, social, and (recently) environmental responsibility.

Who are the religious naturalists? Historical roots go back at least to Baruch Spinoza and include Henry David Thoreau and poets such as Walt Whitman and Robinson Jeffers. Former religious naturalists included Samuel Alexander, George Santayana, John Dewey, Mordecai Kaplan, Ralph Burhoe (founder of *Zygon*), and such Chicago theologians as Henry Nelson Wieman, Bernard Meland, and the later Bernard Loomer. Members of IRAS include Michael Cavanaugh, Willem Drees, Ursula Goodenough, Karl Peters, Loyal Rue, and myself. Other recent religious naturalists in-

clude William Dean, Charley Hardwick, Henry Levinson, Robert Mesle, and I believe Gordon Kaufman.

Certain issues often central to the religion-science discussion fade in significance from the perspective of religious naturalism. Religious naturalists generally do not seem interested in questions of divine agency, creation, providence, miracle, or eschatology, even in the revised and scientifically informed formulations of contemporary revisionary theists. Thus, religious naturalists—if I may speak for other religious naturalists—are not likely to spend much time on the religious implications of the Big Bang or indeterminacy in quantum physics.

#### THE MINIMALIST VERSION OF RELIGIOUS NATURALISM

As for what is distinctive about my own brand of religious naturalism, I hold that many events have what could be called a sacred aspect. *Sacred*, or *divine*, is an adjective describing an aspect or quality of some events. I am not talking about a being, a separate mind or spirit. I am talking in a radically naturalistic, immanentist fashion about aspects of this world. My vision is also very pluralistic. I stress aspects of events or occasions. What degree of unity there is to this plurality I am reverently reluctant to say.

Gradually I have developed a technical theory of sacredness: *We use the word sacred to describe events, things, and processes that are of overriding importance and also are not under our control or within our power to manipulate.*

The stance for living that flows from this emphasis on the sacred is essentially one of openness, of readiness for the appearance of sacred events. Disciplined preparation and loyal commitment to the sacred are called for but need to be balanced by a recognition that the sacred is essentially unmanipulable. Thus, Confucian focusing of heart and mind needs to be balanced by a Daoist openness to the spontaneous play of the sacred. But there are further twists.

1. Given my commitment to a philosophy of naturalism, sacred events are not understood as manifestations of something deeper. Rather, of overriding importance *is* the “depth” or “height.” All of the world religions, as I understand them, speak of going beyond a surface understanding of life. My naturalistic outlook suggests that the deeper vision we seek to attain is not of another realm or an invisible spirit but rather a revised insight into the importance of things. There is a depth not apart from but right in the midst of things. My indebtedness, with modifications, to Paul Tillich’s notion of the depth dimension and even more to Dewey’s adjectival “religious quality of experience” in *A Common Faith* (1934, 9–11) should be evident.

2. There are no clear boundaries around the sacred. Some events are clearly sacred. Others are perhaps boundary-line cases. It is not always possible to know whether an event or place is sacred. Perhaps this means

that all things are sacred, although I do not think that we are capable of sustaining such a sense of the sacred.

3. The sacred is not a separate sphere of life. It is not to be found apart from the pursuits of truth, justice, beauty, and selfhood. Again, the extent to which this is a naturalization of Tillich's theology of culture should be clear.

4. What then is religion? Religion can be thought of as a self-conscious, explicit acknowledgment of the sacred. In that case there is no clear separation between the sacred and the secular, yet there is still a role for the deliberate recognition of the presence of sacred things. Religious communities and their traditions, what some disparagingly call "organized religion," are attempts to nurture and pass on the sense of the sacred. Each tradition has what Kaplan calls its *sancta*, the times, persons, and events that the tradition recognizes as sacred (Kaplan 1985, 42). That is what they are at their best. All of these communities are in danger of being at their worst, for in representing the sacred they are in continual danger of claiming to be sacred, to be of overriding importance themselves.

5. It seems that sacred things almost always have a dual aspect. They both challenge and support the persons who acknowledge their sacredness (Stone 1992, 11–18, 21–23).

6. My own vision is that the sacred is probably plural in nature. As I sense it, sacred events and processes are just that—plural. I am among the most radically pluralistic of religious naturalists.

7. This version of religious naturalism, like all versions, must speak to issues of social justice and environmental care and repudiate idolatry. In these areas it can speak as well or better than traditional theism. The sacred can be found in human and nonhuman others, and its overriding importance undermines all the idols that our minds create.

Recently I have been giving greater emphasis to the fact that a response to something sensed as sacred does not preclude empirical inquiry or a critical attitude. These responses are different from awe or gratitude, but if they are overlooked or prohibited we have superstition or idolatry. Whenever we have a sense of the sacred we are in danger of idolatry and fanaticism. Religious naturalism needs to articulate from within its own resources a challenge to these tendencies. Wieman and Kaplan recognized this.

A more technical definition that I use employs the term *transcendent*. I have elaborated it in the first chapter of *The Minimalist Vision of Transcendence* (Stone 1992). The transcendent, in my terminology, refers to norms and creative powers that are relatively or situationally transcendent. A common element in the paradigm cases of religion seems to be what I term an orientation to transcendence. There is also a polarity of norms or values and of creative powers or forces. In philosophical terms this parallels the distinction between values and facts; in religious language, between God's challenge and God's blessing. Both sides of this polarity have a transcen-

dent dimension. This condensed statement is a summary of historical and phenomenological investigation of various religions. Within the limits of a naturalistic outlook the transcendent dimension of norms and powers is understood as a collection of continually compelling norms and situation-transcending creative powers, that is, situation or relative transcendence. In other words, they are relatively transcendent to norms and situations within the world yet are within the world as relevant possibilities and realities beyond a situation as perceived.

To illustrate this, to search for the norms of truth or justice means to reach for possibilities relatively transcendent to present attainments and yet relevant to our efforts. Truth and justice remain continually compelling norms no matter how far we come. Likewise, openness to the healing or restorative powers of medicine or pedagogy means a readiness to receive creative and recreative powers relatively transcendent to our present situation and yet resident within the world beyond our limited present. In short, this is a philosophy urging openness to norms and resources that are beyond our narrowly perceived present situations and yet are not resident in a different realm. This is relative, or this-worldly, transcendence, a minimalist version of transcendence (Stone 1992, 9–20).

Normally I prefer to use *sacred* or occasionally *divine* as an adjective or adverb. I find, however, that other people (and I myself in the past) have used the term *God*. So I have developed what I call a minimal definition of God for purposes of conversation: *God* is the sum total of the ecosystem, community, and person-empowering and -demanding interactions in the universe. Another way I have of speaking of God, when I have to, is to say that God is the world perceived in its value-enhancing and value-attracting aspects. These two ways of thinking owe much to Shailer Mathews, George Burman Foster, and Edward Scribner Ames, Chicago theologians of the early twentieth century. These are minimal definitions because I have to acknowledge that God may very well be more than these formulas, but I am agnostic about this (Stone 1992, 52–54; 1999, 217–40; Ames 1929, 149–62; Foster 1909, 20–22, 108–10; Mathews 1931, 226).<sup>2</sup>

What this particular version of religious naturalism implies then is: (1) a recognition of the pluralistic possibilities of sacredness or transcendence, (2) an acknowledgment that relative transcendence can involve both the pursuit of values and the encounter with realities, and (3) a stress on a stance of openness.

A brief case for this view can be made here. One point is that the fertility of our mythological and ontological imaginations, coupled with our desire for wish fulfillment, requires restraint on our metaphysical impulses. Further, there is no consensus on the nature of any alleged God or other world or of the appropriate method to use in justifying assertions about them. These refutations, while not conclusive, make the burden of proof heavy for traditional or revised theism.

On the other hand, religious naturalism, particularly the minimalist version, helps us to conceptualize and thus encourages and nurtures openness to continually challenging goals and situation-transcending resources of renewal. Although not completely satisfying to some people as a basis for social and personal criticism and renewal, it offers much of the challenge and satisfaction of traditional religion without being as vulnerable to the acids of modernity. It offers a way beyond cynicism and fanaticism.

#### DIVERGENCES AMONG RELIGIOUS NATURALISTS

Religious naturalists have divergent ideas on a number of issues. Among these is whether the sacred or a naturalistically conceived God is morally or valuationally ambiguous or whether *the sacred* and *God* are selective terms applied only to forces creative of goodness. Wieman (1946) was quite clear that God was the source of human good. But a number of thinkers, including Dean (1994) and the later Bernard Loomer (1987), disagreed with him on this. There is divergence also on whether the term *God* should be used at all. Wieman, in his middle period, and Burhoe thought the term was important. Others, like Goodenough, would rather avoid it. A related issue concerns the relation of the religious outlook to religious traditions and communities. Rue, Peters, Goodenough, and others have different approaches to this. Another issue concerns the basis for a transformation or a reevaluation of our ideals and values, the naturalistic means of critiquing reigning ideologies. I have recently treated these and other issues facing religious naturalists somewhat more fully (Stone 2000; 2003).

#### THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF SCIENTIFIC PRACTICES

What does the science-religion dialogue look like from my own minimalist perspective? Now, science has some form of cognitive privilege for most naturalists, except for some neopragmatists such as Richard Rorty and Wesley Robbins. The religious traditions, on the other hand, remind us of some things for which science may be helpful but not sufficient. Insight, appreciation, evaluation, and wisdom are what could be called *transcognitive* abilities, which science cannot supply, although it sometimes helps. These, however, are not to be relegated to the realm of the subjective and arbitrary, of mere individual preference. By calling these responses transcognitive I wish to emphasize that scientific training and empirical inquiry are helpful in informing these responses but that this is not the whole story. The religious and artistic disciplines help in the nurturing of insight, critical appreciation, and wisdom.

Furthermore, for religious naturalists (at least for me) there continue to be issues about the nature of science itself. If religious naturalists do not take religion uncritically, neither should they take science uncritically. Some

religious naturalists are less reflective about science, although they may be quite familiar with its results and practices.

*Science*, like *religion* and *nature*, is a term covering a multitude of changing processes and procedures. We should be wary of general terms that essentialize complex practices and phenomena, convenient though they often are to use. Willem Drees in his book *Religion, Science and Naturalism* helps to counteract oversimplified versions of key events in the history of science and religion, especially Galileo and the acceptance of Darwin (1996, chap. 2). Naturalists, religious or otherwise, generally have a strong dependence on science. Therefore they should, and often do, reflect critically on the nature of scientific practices. I argue for four points here.

1. We need a revised notion of rationality to replace some of the outmoded notions of modernity without succumbing to the more extreme irrationalism of some postmodernists. There are a variety of scientific procedures, so it is difficult to speak of *the* scientific method. With J. Wentzel van Huyssteen we can retain, albeit in a revised fashion, notions of truth, objectivity, progress, and even perhaps a critical or transactional realism (Stone 1992, 130–34).

We need a more adequate account of rationality that takes account of the best of postmodern insights without losing the distinctiveness of empirical inquiry in science and everyday events. In attempting to dethrone the modernist assumption of the epistemological privilege of science, much postmodern discourse fails to realize the distinctiveness of empirical inquiry. What these more extreme postmodernists overlook is that, to use Quine's language, all sentences in our web of belief may be revisable, but not all are likely to be revised. Some, like mathematical and logical statements, are so embedded within the web that they are less likely to be revised, whereas others are so close to the periphery of sensory stimulation that we are less likely to feel the need of revision.

Van Huyssteen, in his important book *The Shaping of Rationality* (1999), seeks to develop a revised notion of rationality, beyond the false dichotomy of foundationalism and extreme postmodernism. Rationality, according to Harold Brown, is not an algorithmic, explicit, rule-governed procedure (Brown 1988). Rationality is best described neither by a modernistic totalizing metanarrative nor as a number of epistemic communities each with its own idea of rationality. Just as a line may be thought of not as infinite but as cutting across two or more figures, so, along with Calvin Schrag, van Huyssteen thinks not of universal rationality but of a "transversal rationality" intersecting more than one discipline (Schrag 1994, 64–69). Like Brown and Schrag, van Huyssteen is interested in retaining a sense of rationality in the face of various postmodernist challenges (Schrag 1992; 1994). This view of rationality goes beyond Kuhn's dichotomy of normal and revolutionary science. It also improves on Lakatos's notion of a research program with unchanging cores (Lakatos [1978] 1980). Van

Huyssteen instead uses Larry Laudan's notion of research traditions, which clearly have changing histories (Laudan 1977). With Delwin Brown, van Huyssteen emphasizes that we stand in traditions even as we criticize them (Brown 1994, 137–50). In addition, conversation is possible between epistemic communities because of our shared human rationality. Conversation combines conviction with a willingness to be challenged, a valuing of rational dissensus as well as consensus. Whether in science or in theology, dissensus is not necessarily a sign of failure or lack of rationality.

2. We need to retain the importance of the empirical probing, if not proving, of theories. We seldom achieve conclusive verification (or refutation) of theories, so an element of judgment will generally enter into our assessment of empirical evidence. Few scientific statements or theories can be supported by “knockdown” arguments or conclusive verification. Often we get to the point where we have to make judgments about the strength of conflicting evidence. Also, language and theoretical commitments enter into empirical inquiry. Nevertheless, none of this removes the significance of empirical inquiry or leads us to relativism (Stone 1992, 130–34). I have found the feminist philosophers of science Sandra Harding (1991) and Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1990) to be very helpful on these issues. Robert Neville (1989), Frederick Ferré (1998), and van Huyssteen (1999) are also significant in this regard.

3. I have tried to address these issues through my notion of experience as transactional, as a negotiation with the cultural and physical environments. Drawing on Dewey, Wieman, and Meland and my just-mentioned contemporaries, I have tried to fashion what I call a transactional or anticipatory epistemology realism (Stone 1992, 128–35). Now, I use the word *realism* deliberately as a red flag to alarm the postmodern bulls. Maybe it is language all the way down, but it is not *only* language all the way. It is a transaction, a dance, between language and the nonlinguistic factors of our experience, between narrative and what we tell the story of. The oxygen that now nourishes my brain and that some day will cease to nourish it, I speak of with the scientifically informed word *oxygen*. Yet the oxygen that nourishes is not a word. You cannot eat a menu. You cannot make love to a photograph. The map is not the territory. In the 1930s there was a concern for realism in worship, shared by Wieman, Meland, and Willard Sperry. I share this concern, even though the object of religious language in my naturalistic view is the sacred quality of experience.

In all of this discussion about the nature of science and rationality, I am more of a classical pragmatist than some other religious naturalists such as Robbins, who clearly follows Rorty's neopragmatism, and probably more of a pragmatist in a traditional sense than even Dean. On the other hand, I do not share the unabashed realism of Hardwick (Robbins 1993; Dean 1994, chaps. 7 and 8; Hardwick 1996, chap. 2).



We also need to explore the possibility and necessity of some conversation across the boundaries of epistemic and linguistic communities. Some religious naturalists see a contribution that religious communities can make. If religions and theologies remain confined in their own epistemic ghettos, they will have no impact or critical leverage on society at large. Such dialogue combines conviction with a willingness to be challenged, a valuing of rational and friendly dissensus as well as consensus.

4. I want now to take our ordinary concept of *appreciation* and develop it into a technical concept (Stone 1992, 111–27; 1995, 435–50). I think that we have some control over our appreciation and that it is possible even to train it. Appreciation is partly a matter of paying attention, of getting to understand something.

My paradigm here is a wine-tasting class. It is possible to improve one's ability to discriminate tastes of wine. Discrimination often leads to appreciation. Appreciation is not, as popular culture has it, merely a matter of opinion. We need at least four things in order to develop our appreciation: exposure, attention, understanding, and maybe a good book or teacher. Elsewhere I have developed this notion of appreciation in relation to the natural world (Stone 2002b, 264–65).<sup>3</sup> Goodenough and Paul Woodruff (2001) have been developing notions of mindful virtue and reverence that are akin to my notion of appreciation. If I understand Anne Whiston Spirn correctly, this is something like what she is doing in *The Language of Landscape* (1998).

Why do I emphasize appreciation? That is simple. We take care of what we like, what we enjoy, what we love. And the big secret of education is that our appreciations can grow. Let me emphasize that. We take care of what we like and enjoy—that is, the objects of our appreciation—and our appreciations can grow and mature. In philosophical terms, the motive for ethical action is our affections. And our affections can be informed by our trainable appreciations. Kant was wrong; morals must involve our inclinations as well as our duties. In this consumer age, duty is not worth much, but affections are. In short, appreciation, and affection informed by appreciation, is a bridge between fact and value.

Put another way, facts and statistics are not enough. Scolding won't work. Feelings must be involved, the right feelings. Fear is not necessarily a strong motivator; it often paralyzes. Guilt does not help much, either. There is a strong power in denial, but the affections have an even stronger power.

To be sure, the affections can be problematic in the environmental realm. They may lead us to focus on the warm fuzzies, on Bambi, which may be less than helpful at a time of deer population explosion. We need to train ourselves to appreciate, if not love, the creepy things, the bugs and worms that are so vital, to love the biological communities and the ecosystems.

## THE HERMENEUTICS OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Religious traditions are not to be defended, revised, or reconstructed. However, such traditions should not be abandoned. They should be carefully, critically, yet appreciatively explored for the light they shed on the resources and challenges of life. Traditions cannot be effectively explored all at once, but two or three can be sufficiently studied within a lifetime to yield a harvest of their fruits.

In a recent article in *Zygon* (Stone 2002b) I state that, when it comes to ethics, religious traditions frequently offer four suggestions: (1) a continuously challenging moral ideal, a maximal ethics of responsibility, of care or personal or social transformation; (2) a specificity to morals, which varies according to the tradition and the strands within the tradition; (3) motivation or empowerment; and (4) an analogue to forgiveness and a sense of value beyond morality. What I wish to do now is to show how religious naturalism might go about exploring the religious traditions.

There is precedent for such a naturalistic hermeneutics of religious tradition: Spinoza, Santayana, George Herman Randall, Sigmund Freud, and Chicago humanist historian of religion Eustace Haydon. Today, Marvin Shaw, Rue, and Hardwick have undertaken this task. One major point of divergence is that I am not dismissive like Freud or appreciative but unengaged like Haydon. I take seriously religious traditions as dialogue partners to see what I can learn from them. My approach is to take neither my own naturalistic worldview nor any religious tradition as normative but rather to engage in a back-and-forth conversation, asking myself, If these traditions were true, what could I learn from them? Now, this could result in the worst kind of dilettante eclecticism, a sophomoric dabbling and vacillation with no regard for any standards, the caricature of post-modern intellectual flabbiness. Or, it could be a thoughtful and reflective attempt to be open-minded and willing to learn from the wisdom of the ages.

I focus on one particular topic in order to illustrate a religious naturalist hermeneutic of tradition. This topic is, I believe, both intrinsically important and illustrative of how a religious naturalist can go about exploring the significance of religious traditions. In Japanese Buddhism it is articulated as the difference between other-power and self-power. In Christianity this topic is known, to use terms from the apostle Paul, as the difference between the grace of God and good works. I suggest that in Chinese philosophy this appears as the difference between Daoism and Confucianism.

In the bhakti traditions of the Hindus, this is the distinction between the cat hold and the monkey hold. Just as the baby monkey must hold on to its mother by itself, so the yogin must strive by himself. But just as the mother cat picks up the kitten, so does the savior deity save the devotee. If not for space limitations I could trace out this distinction in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Vedantas of Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

In Japanese Buddhism, Zen is often seen as the epitome of *jiriki*, or self-power, the strenuous pursuit of enlightenment. The key debate in Zen is whether enlightenment is sudden or gradual. What is not at issue is that each person is responsible for the journey, for the practice. In contradistinction are the Shinshu teachings of Shinran, who held that *shinjin*, that is, “entrusting” or “yielding” to *tariki*, the other-power of Amida, is what leads to enlightenment. This is in accordance with the Eighteenth Vow of Amida Buddha as found in the Larger Pure Land Sutra. The Boddhisattva Dharmakara is claimed to have declared, “If, when I obtain Buddhahood and beings in the ten quarters of the universe who desire with all sincerity and trust to be born in my Land . . . are not to be born there, then may I not obtain Supreme Perfect Enlightenment” (Amstutz 1997, 10, 142n2). “What is called the true faith in the Other-Power of Tathagata Amida . . . has its foundation in the faith in the Original Vow” (from the *Epistles of Rennyo* [De Bary [1969] 1972, 344]). Contrast this with the teachings of the Zen teacher Dogen in the Shobogenzo: “The great Way of the Buddha and the Patriarchs involves the highest form of exertion, which goes on unceasingly in cycles from the first dawning of religious truth, through the test of discipline and practice, to enlightenment and Nirvana” ([1969] 1972, 369).

In the Hebrew Scriptures the emphasis is variously on God’s other-power, on the self-power of Israel or the believer, or on their interplay. An especially illustrative and concise passage is found in the book of Deuteronomy: “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage” (Deuteronomy 7:7–8 RSV). Here is emphasis on an analogy to other-power, the elective love of God, not rooted in any characteristic of Israel, such as stature. But then the importance of Israel’s obedience, the analogue of self-power, comes in: “. . . the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and faithful love with those who love him and keep his commandments . . . and requites to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. . . . You shall therefore be careful to do the commandments, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day” (7:9–11).

In the Christian Scriptures, a version of other-power is articulated: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8 RSV). The contrast here is between being saved *chariti*, by grace, and *ex ergon*, from or through works or actions. The other note, the self-power of the Christian, is emphasized in another passage: “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food,

and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:14–17 RSV).

One of these polar views, that emphasizing grace, was developed by Augustine in his writings against Pelagius. In his treatise *On Nature and Grace* he writes that to return to righteousness humans need a Physician, because we are out of health, and a Vivifier, because we are dead (Augustine 1948, 25:537). Here we have the explicit indication of the notion that the exclusive emphasis on other-power implies the total lack of self-power, the famous doctrine of total depravity picked up in Calvin and also echoed in the notion of complete human weakness found in Shin Buddhism. Augustine continues this with the image of light: "Just as the eye of the body, even when completely sound, is unable to see unless aided by the brightness of light, so also man, even when most fully justified, is unable to lead a holy life, if he be not divinely assisted by the eternal light of righteousness" (1948, 29:540). Augustine further delineates the notion of divine assistance: "There is, however, no method . . . whereby any man makes the slightest progress to true and godly righteousness, but the assisting grace of our crucified Saviour Christ, and the gift of His Spirit." He is so clear on this that he immediately says that "whosoever shall deny this cannot rightly, I almost think, be reckoned in the number of any kind of Christians at all" (70:568).

As I read the Chinese tradition, the interplay between self-power and other-power lies in the dialectic between the Confucian and the Daoist traditions. Confucians emphasize moral self-discipline and self-transformation, while Daoists advocate a relaxed, more spontaneous attitude to life. Although proponents of each of these approaches often oppose the other, in Chinese history there was an approach that suggested that both attitudes were needed—that, when a person became too much oriented toward one pole, the corrective of the other was needed, a genuine yin/yang view.

The Confucian approach can be seen in the text of the Great Learning: "When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world" (Chan 1963, 86–87). Contrast this attitude with the following taken from the *Chuang Tzu*: "When one is at ease with oneself, one is near Tao. This is to let it (Nature) take its own course" (Chan 1963, 184). And again, "Vacuity, tranquillity, mellowness, quietness, and taking no action characterize the things of the universe at peace and represent the ultimate of Tao and virtue" (Chan 1963, 208).

The Chinese neo-Confucian philosophers of the Song dynasty continued the Confucian emphasis on self-discipline, but they balanced this, to some extent, by advocating the periodic practice of sitting quietly and composing the mind, a practice probably influenced by Daoism, and perhaps even Ch'an Buddhism, as the Chinese referred to Zen. The Korean Confucian philosopher Yi T'oegyē composed and commented on *Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* (1988), which has been translated as *To Become a Sage*. These diagrams and the commentary were printed on large silk screens and sent to the king, where they were to be displayed on the wall for constant reminder. The last diagram, originally composed by Ch'en Po, is called the Admonition on "Rising Early and Retiring Late." In this text one is advised, on rising in the morning, to sit erect, "compose your body and recollect your mind, . . . become solemn and silent, ordered and even, empty and lucid, still and undivided." This should be followed by a period of reading Confucius and the other classics. (Of course, someone else was taking care of the children.) The alternation between tranquility and activity is advocated. "When some matter arises, respond to it. . . . When the matter has been responded to and is finished, be as you were before, with your mind clear and calm. Recollect your spirit and dispel distracting thoughts." The overall accent is more on self-activity than openness to other-power. "When the night is far gone, go to bed, lying with your hands at your sides and your feet together; do not let your mind wander in thought, but make it return to abide in repose." The passage, aptly called an admonition, ends with the imperative "Be mindful of the matter at hand, industrious day and night" (T'oegyē 1988, 194–95).

Now that I have made a brief excursion through various religious traditions, I would like to elaborate a few hermeneutical principles that I have been employing and recommend them for your consideration.

1. More than one tradition should be explored. I believe that it is imperative for anyone who seeks wisdom from the cultural memes of religious traditions to be proficient in exploring more than one. This will help prevent the provincialism and cultural arrogance that comes from knowing only one tradition. On the other hand, this is a serious task, and it is easy to fall into the shallow dilettantism of reading a paragraph a day from the world's spiritual treasures. I believe that even if one is committed to a single faith community and to the theological task of reflection within and upon its tradition, in this day and age one must learn to see how the world is seen from another religious viewpoint. Like a second language, one might not become highly proficient in it but still attain a relative degree of fluency.

2. The counterpoint between divergent themes within a tradition should be explored. Here we have looked at the divergence between self-power and other-power in the Buddhist tradition and between grace and works in the Christian. Other counterpoints could be investigated, such as the

divergence between the Confucian emphasis on responsibility for one's family and the emphasis of the alternative classical Chinese tradition, the Mohist, on responsibility for all people. I have a brief comparison of the Confucian emphasis and the West African in *The Minimalist Vision of Transcendence* (Stone 1992, 101–2).

3. In exploring these counterpoints we need to look not only at classical texts but also at the later elaboration of these themes in the tradition. Augustine and T'oegye are as important as Ephesians and the *Analects*.

4. Logically, though not chronologically, the last step in the hermeneutical process is to engage in a dialogue between the tradition with all of its divergences and contemporary readers, a dialogue in which the self and the community of readers is challenged to learn and to grow. Within what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the fusion of the horizons of the tradition and the interpreters (1994, 306–7, 374–75) I envision a transaction between tradition and present, between text and readers. At present I refer to the traditions as embodied in text in the broad sense, including art, music, dance, and liturgy. This transaction is not merely an interpretative transaction in which the texts challenge the interpretations of the readers and the readers interrogate the text. It also is an existential transaction in which the traditions challenge the very behavior and orientations of the readers while the readers challenge the relevance and superstition of the texts. Thus, instead of the modernist, who asks how much of this text or this tradition agrees with what we independently know to be true and moral, we should ask what we can learn from the text or tradition that can expand our vision of what is true and moral. For a religious naturalist exploring the counterpoint of self-power and other-power, the question becomes, What can we learn from this counterpoint that might expand our notions and our orientation of self and other?

I now sketch what the results of this transaction between religious naturalism and the interplay between self-power and other-power could look like. Religious naturalists often tend to emphasize self-power, to be Pelagian in outlook. Two major exceptions to this are Hardwick and Shaw. In *Events of Grace* (1996) Hardwick develops a theology that is strongly within the tradition of emphasizing grace as liberation from inauthentic to authentic existence and faith as openness to the future, all on a thoroughgoing physicalist philosophy. Shaw, in *The Paradox of Intention* (1988), undertakes a hermeneutical exploration of the Stoic Epictetus, the apostle Paul, the *Tao Teh Ching*, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, and the *Dohakosha* or *Treasury of Songs* of the Tantric Buddhist Saraha. Shaw finds in all of these the opposite of what I have been calling self-power. This is the notion that a goal can often be reached by giving up the attempt to reach it. Although Shaw does not elaborate a naturalistic framework for understanding this, it is clear that he points toward it.

In my own elaboration, the key technical term is *transcendence* or *the transcendent*. In a technical definition I state that “the transcendent is the collection of all situationally transcendent resources and continually challenging ideals we experience. The situationally superior resources can be called the *real aspect*, the challenging ideals the *ideal aspect* of the transcendent. This definition is an attempt to state in the theoretical language of inquiry what in the language of devotion we call ‘God’” (Stone 1992, 11). Thus, the two aspects of the transcendent are the real and the ideal, provided that they are understood within the minimal parameters of a naturalistic outlook. One of my claims is that part of the adequacy of my minimal model of transcendence is that both aspects of transcendence are asserted. The ideal aspect includes all of the ideals that we pursue. I call them transcendent insofar as they are unattainable yet continually challenging to us. The task of groups like the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science to understand the relation between science and religion is, I affirm, one of these continually challenging ideals. I assert that these ideals are understandable within a naturalistic framework. They do not subsist in an eternal realm but are the imaginatively entertained, continually challenging ideals that lure us onward. The ideal aspect of transcendence is the set or collection of all of these ideals conceived of together.

Now, the real aspect of transcendence, as you may have guessed, is the naturalistic analogue of the other-power found at places in religious traditions. To use my technical language,

The real part of the transcendent, defined minimally, is the *collection* of all situationally transcendent resources, that is, the *unexpected and uncontrolled* processes in the universe *in so far as* they are productive of good. These processes can be called “situationally transcendent resources.” They are not totally transcendent, but, as unexpected and unmanageable, they are relatively transcendent, that is, they are “situationally transcendent” or “situationally superior.”

An example of a transcendent resource is the occurrence of unexpected healing. When the resources of a situation as perceived fail to heal the person but an unexpected healing agent enters the picture, then that agent is comparatively transcendent to that situation, provided that it is unexpected, unmanipulable, and superior in power and worth to the resources of the perceived situation. Traditional religious terms for such a transcendent resource are “miracle” and “the healing power of God.” According to this model, however, the comparative or situational transcendent is the doctor, drug, healing power of the body or some interaction of these factors, provided that they are transcendent to the situation as perceived. (Stone 1992, 13)

Elsewhere (Stone 2000) I refer to four events in my life (such as comfort by my daughter in a moment of grief) as examples of a situationally transcendent resource or of a relative yet continuously challenging goal. This situational superiority or transcendence is relative to a personal or temporal point of view. “What is unexpected or uncontrollable for the patient

may not be so for the doctor, and what is unexpected before the healing may become expected in a similar situation" (Stone 1992, 13–14).

To summarize, "*the transcendent is the collection of situationally transcendent resources and continually challenging ideals in the universe*" (Stone 1992, 17).

Our transaction with the notion of other-power in the religious traditions has resulted in my stressing the real aspect of transcendence. To be sure, in this conversation with traditions elements of the tradition may be lost or radically modified. The exclusivist tendencies incipient in Amidism and stronger in the writings of Paul are dropped. And the conditions from which and toward which we move do not have the Buddhist orientation of the move from ignorance to enlightenment or the Christian orientation of the move from sin to righteousness in Christ. To elaborate this would take us beyond the limits of this discussion.

One further point to be made is that the resolution of the counterpoint of self- and other-power is made in neither a Pelagian nor an Augustinian fashion. To use the Augustinian image of a physician in a way that Augustine probably did not intend, healing requires the active cooperation of the patient and the physician. Indeed, the patient is an agent. To put it in another way, self- and other-power are balanced in a yin/yang fashion. This balance is not a midpoint, but, like a dance or a Chinese meal, a constantly moving response to the needs of the ongoing life of the person.

#### CONCLUSION

I have offered herein a generic definition of religious naturalism and provided a glimpse of my own minimalist variety. The significance of this minimalist religious naturalism for the science-and-religion dialogue is that many of the traditional problems fade in importance. Both science and religion need to be viewed critically as well as appreciatively. Furthermore, there can be a constructive appropriation of aspects of the various religious traditions within a naturalistic framework. I have stressed the importance of transcognitive abilities, especially appreciation, and urged the defense of empirical inquiry in the face of postmodern intellectual flabbiness. And finally, I have focused on the pendulum between self-power and other-power in various religions and used this to illustrate some general principles of the hermeneutics of traditions and how other-power can be articulated in a naturalistic framework.

#### NOTES

1. Portions of what follows appear in Stone 2000 and 2002b. Readers who are familiar with my writings may glance lightly over this and the next two sections of this article, for they recapitulate much of the argument already published in *Zygon* (Stone 2002b, 381–84).

2. The selections by Ames, Foster, and Mathews are also available in Peden and Stone 1996, 1:45–46, 52, 93–102, 152.



3. I draw heavily on Meland here (1953, especially chap. 5); the key passages can also be found in Meland 1988, selection 17, and Peden and Stone 1996, 224–30. See also the excellent study of Meland by Tyron Inbody (1995, 51–60).

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