

## *Editorial*

When a man contemplates his rather dependent, fragile, and short-lived self with the vast, powerful, and puzzling world in which he lives, he wonders why he exists, what is his destiny and his meaning.

To be sure, many men are not gifted or afflicted with such contemplations, and in large measure innate, instinctual mechanisms, together with the cultural traditions they have inherited, more or less automatically and unconsciously provide them with a reasonably satisfactory motivation by which they adapt themselves to the larger reality around them. For most people thus far in human development, life does not require any complicated intellectual analysis on their part. These preadapted men are in one sense fortunate. They are untroubled as long as their unexamined heritage is adequate for their thriving in the world in which they find themselves. Under such conditions, they flourish without worry for the morrow. However, in a world where cultural evolution is radically increasing its tempo, they may not find themselves viable in tomorrow's world.

It therefore is fortunate that in most populations of men a certain portion of them are gifted or condemned to probe the puzzling implications of present signs and trends for what might have been or what may come or be done about tomorrow. To this portion of men, their fellows are in large measure indebted for the richness of their culture. Within this portion of men we find the poetic, imaginative spinners of human drama, moral myth, and scientific hypothesis. In one way or another they are men with a passion for creating some order (beauty, good, or truth) where they find disorder (ugliness, evil, or meaninglessness) in the images, maps, or models of themselves and their world that men make with their symbol systems or beliefs.

In the twentieth century we find ourselves in the midst of perhaps the most violent and disruptive period in all human history thus far, with regard to the building up of new symbolic models and the smashing down of old ones. Great poets, dramatists, and philosophers for a century have been proclaiming the meaninglessness and even the absurdity of man in the disordered disjunctions between his traditional

images and his new images coming from scholarship and science. A century ago this beating of the breasts and mournful wailing over the disorder and catastrophe in the realm of man's images of himself and his destiny in the world were fortunately confined to the relatively few who understood the deep validities of what such men as Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche were saying. But today the belief that God is dead and that the traditional humane and religious myths are empty is spreading to the whole population of the world.

For instance, up until only eleven years ago, according to a report of the Gallup Poll published in the *New York Times* for May 25, 1968, only 14 per cent of the American population thought religion was losing its influence. But for some reason this doubt about the effectiveness of religion has in the past decade rapidly surged to 67 per cent of the people. This trend was found to be present in the whole population, with little regard to location, age, sex, church membership, education, etc. This is a tremendous swing in public opinion with respect to so stable and enduring an element of culture. It needs to be analyzed carefully for its import for tomorrow, for it is really a wild fluctuation of a barometer of public opinion. Does it portend a revolutionary tornado that will disrupt our society? A parallel phenomenon that may have similar implications is the increasing doubt in the public mind of the sacrality of the American Way, or of Western Civilization, or of the governmental agencies thereof. Barometers here include the rise of the beatniks, hippies, draft resisters, and student rebellions.

There is wide discontent, doubt, and a tendency to tear down what we dislike, but does anyone advance any positive, constructive alternatives? Will the end of the twentieth century become a time of wild, irrational rebellions in which angry and frustrated minorities in the extremities of disillusioned, disoriented populations break up the ship of civilization in a stormy sea without so much as a thought concerning the necessary structure of the ship in which they or their descendants will keep afloat in the future? Such events have happened in the past, and societies and cultures have faded out. But never have the cultures and societies in the world all been so much in the same boat.

In such times as these, therefore, it is encouraging to find a few thoughtful, wise, and creative men who have worked through to at least some partially successful, rational models or myths of human destiny and duty which on the one hand seem to fit with or grow out of the generally recognized and believed scientific models and on the other hand to tie in with man's perennial religious needs and institu-

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tions. In this issue of *Zygon* five unusually penetrating essays are presented to this end.

Two of the essays are by scientists of different species, a chemist and a zoologist, who show how human values and meaning may be discerned in or derived from scientific pictures of the world. In an age when many have been proclaiming that the world cares not a whit for human values and that man is both free and lost in the cosmos, these men are showing, from the perspective of sophisticated science rather than religious apologetics, how the values of life, including human life, derive from the very nature of the world. In my opinion, the notions advanced by Lambert and Emerson on the nature of evil and good in the context of the physical and biological pictures of the processes regnant in the world carry us further than the late paleontologist-poet-priest Teilhard de Chardin was able to go toward a sound, scientific basis for understanding human meaning in cosmic evolution. (We shall shortly publish in *Zygon* some critical evaluations and appreciations of Teilhard's work.) While Lambert and Emerson are also highly imaginative, their imagination is more carefully reined by the scientific pictures, and by scientific pictures about which Teilhard was not and hardly could be so full informed when he wrote. Yet the relation of human values to thermodynamics and to other aspects of the nature of the nature that selects them will require further imaginative and scientifically grounded essays before we are likely to have a new theological consensus based on the sciences. These two represent highly promising stages in our voyage of discovery.

Three of the essays in this issue of *Zygon* are by theologians of different species, and they represent the theological and poetic spirit of Teilhard in his effort to justify that the heart of the religious traditions is at home in the scientific community. In fact, Hayward reflects a notion, not new to either *Zygon* or contemporary scholarship, that science has roots in the Judaic and Greek myths and continues a program of making science's myths more abstract, a program that began with the philosophers and theologians. Moreover, all three of the essays by Barrett, Cauthen, and Hayward reflect a Teilhardian attitude that the new scientific images of world evolution or process are grist for theologians' mills. They seek to reinterpret theology in this light. As a matter of fact they draw upon the partial revelations made by the sciences of the cosmic totality, its role in the creation and maintenance of life, and man's kinship with it, for reinterpreting the ultimate source which created man and upon which man ever remains dependent, the source that theologians traditionally have called God. Man's

meaning becomes clearer with the meaningfulness of his kinship with the ultimate sources of power and life. It may be found that these theologians' notions of human meanings and values are pleasingly compatible with those of the scientists, and show a good deal of overlap among themselves.

The criticisms and extension of the developments in these five essays (readers of *Zygon* are invited to write) should lead us toward an integration of man's religious convictions with his scientific beliefs at a new level that may provide ways to an alternative to a disintegrating civilization. As Lambert points out, ours is the dangerous but potentially creative time when the massive input into a living system of a wide range of new and relatively disordered variations threatens its disruption, but also provides the potentiality of new creations or formulations of higher-level order, homeostasis, or values. It is inspiring to believe that we are witnessing, some of us participating in, a creativity that is advancing the formulations of paramount human values (religion) to higher levels.

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