Editorial

RELIGION AND SCIENCE: SEPARATENESS OR CO-INHERENCE?

Much of our talk about "religion and science" portrays their separateness. It is not just the common generic reference to "religion" and "science" that conveys two distinct entities but also such terms as *dialogue*, *engagement*, and *conversation* between religion and science. Some of our most useful categories for exploring this interaction—categories of conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration—are predicated on the separateness of religion from science.

As useful as this terminology is, by emphasizing exclusively their discrete and different methods and identities we disguise the ways in which religion and science interpenetrate each other. It may be preferable to speak of the *co-inherence* of religion and science. We need to recognize the ways in which religion and science are *not* separate. A move in this direction is made in this issue of *Zygon* in the discussion of Bronislaw Szerszynski's book *Nature, Technology, and the Sacred*. Szerszynski, together with his interlocutors (Anne Kull, Eduardo Cruz, and Michael DeLashmutt), makes the point that science and technology have not so much desacralized the natural world as they have become the instrument for sacralizing the world in new ways. It is not too much to say that science and technology express the ways we are religious today—science sketching the overarching order, technology focusing on how we ought to live; science assuming the status of the "new revelation" and technology becoming the religious way of life. To put it another way, science can become doctrine and technology, spirituality. Technology also becomes the revelation of a great promise—"release from earthly limitations and uncertainties." Szerszynski goes on to argue that this recognition provides new insights into the needs, fears, and hopes that drive our times. It enables us to gain a deeper understanding of how our age expresses the sacred dimension of life.

Langdon Gilkey (1919–2004) proposed a similar thesis concerning science. He believed that divine presence and everyday life are fused. Daily life, which includes the formative influences of scientific understandings, is "saturated, so to speak, with the ultimate and the sacred." For any culture to be totally secular, in which no sense of the sacred is expressed, is, he

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thought, a human and historical impossibility. Rather, if we attend carefully to the fundamental dynamics of any culture, including our own, we will discern the outlines of ultimacy. Why is this important? Because ultimacy appears at the moments in which we struggle with the limits of our scientific and technological endeavors, and these limits trace the outlines of both the crises we face and the hopes we hold to. The crises appear in the fears and failures we experience in our struggle to overcome our limitations and triumph over blind fate—our efforts to cure diseases, for example. The hopes take form in our almost boundless optimism that we can find fulfillment in our lives. In his own words, ultimacy appears

> (1) where the foundations of our being, of our meanings and our values, appear to us in the "given" which we do not create or control but which creates us and so represents the grounds and limits of our powers; (2) when these foundational structures are threatened by Fate and we experience our absolute helplessness; (3) in the mystery of ambiguity as it appears within the midst of our own freedom and therefore quite beyond our own deliberate or rational control; and finally (4) this dimension appears in man's confidence and hopes despite these outer and inner threats to the security, meaning, and fulfillment of his life. (Gilkey 1969, 297)

For both Szerszynski and Gilkey, ultimacy and the sacred are not encountered in some otherworldly realm apart from everyday existence; on the contrary they engage us whenever and wherever we experience that our lives are rooted in the imponderables of mystery—mystery that both threatens us and offers us hope.

From this perspective, the richness of reflection on religion and science lies in the ways in which they co-inhere. Studies that concentrate on this aspect are often called social or cultural studies of religion and science, and they disclose basic insights into the engagement of the two; they are also important agenda items for the scientific and religious communities.

In a second symposium, Vítor Westhelle and Gregory Peterson respond to Lluís Oviedo's challenging reflection on scientific understandings of human beings. Oviedo believes that the nature of humans is the center of interest in the dialogue between religion and science, more pressing than discussion of God. His comments probe what he considers to be inadequate theological responses to scientific interpretations of human nature. Presently, theology finds itself in a very difficult position over against both science and humanism: Either it must abandon its conviction of the special calling of humans in order to conform to scientific perspectives or it must affirm the specialness of humans and thereby appear to be endorsing supernaturalism or a kind of dualism between matter and spirit. In this situation, theology must learn how to state its concerns for human purpose and destiny in new language. In so doing, it will contribute to a reshaping of the landscape in which religion and science carry on their engagement. Westhelle and Peterson share Oviedo's concern, but each poses the issues in differing ways, throwing light on differing aspects of

theology's engagement with science. In theological circles today, there is much support for the notion that how we interpret human nature (anthropology) may indeed be more critical for the religion-science dialogue than the issue of how God is understood (theology)—although thinking about human nature leads many theologians also to reflection on God. Westhelle and Peterson represent very different theological responses to this issue. Westhelle's point is that "theology finds its uniqueness not in refuting either [science or humanism] but by subverting them." It will subvert the scientific sense of certainty by disclosing what science cannot illuminate, and it will subvert the humanist glorification of humans by insisting that it is in their weakness and sinfulness that humans discover their transcendent destiny. Peterson emphasizes that theologians must learn to "start from a broader base of assumptions than is usually the case" and must recognize that what is at stake "is not simply whether theology can be said to be intellectually respectable but whether and in what way theology should have a place in the university."

The reader who considers these two essays side by side will soon conclude that it is very difficult to generalize about theology and its contribution to the dialogue between religion and science.

The third section of this issue gathers a group of six essays to deal with a topic that stretches considerably the purview of religion and science: spiritual transformation, healing, and altruism as they are observed by four anthropologists (Joan Koss-Chioino, Bonnie Glass-Coffin, T. S. Harvey, and Edith Turner) and a team of three psychologists (Cassandra Vieten, Tina Amorok, and Marilyn Mandala Schlitz). The studies are drawn from case studies of popular and traditional healing systems in Puerto Rico, Peru, Guatemala, and the United States, but the authors believe that they are relevant to a wide cross-section of world cultures. Although this material differs markedly from that of the first symposium on Szerszynski's book, the co-inherence of science and religion is just as vividly apparent. The question, Koss-Chioino suggests in her introduction to this segment, is whether the healing practices, steeped in religious traditions, and modern science can come to terms with each other. Turner provides a summary and assessment of these papers in her concluding article.

The fourth section focuses on "Einstein, God, and Time." Historian John Hedley Brooke, theologian Antje Jackelén, and physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne bring perspectives from their disciplines to bear on the theme.

We conclude this final issue of *Zygon's* forty-first year with two articles: philosopher-theologian Nancey Murphy reflects on altruism in the context of the "moral ambiguity of biology," specifically in the analysis of animal behaviors; and Ross Stein, neurobiology, offers a discussion of the origins of life in which he suggests a synthesis of science and theology within the framework of a "process theology" approach.

Separateness and co-inherence—in this issue of our journal we invite readers to reflect on how and where they manifest themselves in the engagement of religion and science.

—Philip Hefner

REFERENCE

Gilkey, Langdon. 1969. *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language.* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

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