

# AN INTELLECTUALLY HONEST THEOLOGY

by *Antje Jackelén*

*Abstract.* A hallmark of Arthur Peacocke's work is his aim of writing theology that is intellectually honest. He believed that intelligibility and meaning are foremost on theology's agenda. Consequently, he focused on ultimate meanings, but he did so by taking into account the scientific knowledge of the world. He faced head-on the challenge to accept the Christian tradition, at the same time subjecting that tradition to critique and reforming its images and modes of thinking. I survey Peacocke's agenda, his methodology, and the sources of his theological thinking, and how this contributes to understanding the relationship between science and theology. A major result of his approach is the abolition of dualisms, specifically that of the natural and the supernatural. Peacocke's approach to theology has exemplary potential for the debate between those who espouse a radical Enlightenment with its claim to universal principles of reason and radical postmodernists who may appear to fall prey to a relativism that equals nihilism.

*Keywords:* dualism; emergence; intellectually honest theology; intelligibility; meaning; Arthur Peacocke; science-and-religion

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Arthur Peacocke's *Theology for a Scientific Age* (1993a) represents the sum of the work of his early years in science-and-theology. Therefore, it is not only an excellent book to read; it also is an inspiring partner in the pursuit of the theme of this essay: What is an intellectually honest theology?

Peacocke concludes his book with these words: "This volume is offered as a necessarily inadequate contribution to that pressing and perennial task of refurbishing our images of God—and of humanity" (p. 349).

This single sentence offers some valuable insight into what an intellectually honest theology is and what it is not. What does it tell us when we unpack it?

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1. *Theology is a perennial task.* Theologians may run out of employment, but they never run out of work. This also means that theology can never become such a thing as a *theologia perennis*—a theology that is a *fait accompli*, valid for all times and places. A theology with such a claim would be intellectually dishonest. Why is that so? Our images of God and humanity are in need of continual refurbishing, because language changes, people change, and the world and our knowledge about the world change. Therefore, the so-called eternal questions about meaning, about the ground of all being and becoming and about what it is to be human in this world, need to be constantly and contextually reworked and reworded.

2. *Theology is a pressing task.* Because images of God and humanity are the expression of questions of ultimate concern (to use Tillichian terminology), they cannot be neglected, or else humanity will pay for it with the loss of sense of meaning. Peacocke holds “that theology should be regarded as an exploration of the ultimate meaning of all levels” (1993a, 23). Theology is necessary; it is nothing less than, in his words, “an exploration into the nature of reality” (1991b, 491). The realization that religious experience is deeply embedded in our evolutionary past and thus an integral part of what it has come to mean to be human offers additional justification for the urgency of the reflection on religious experience, that is, of theology.

3. *Theology is necessary, but also necessarily inadequate.* I define theology as the critical and self-critical reflection on the content and effects of a religious tradition, in this case the Christian tradition, and I agree with Peacocke that the task of theology includes talk about God as well as humans and their world and the cosmos. This broad definition of theology makes it a highly demanding task. Peacocke is correct to caution that, although a pressing task, our theological endeavors always remain “a necessarily inadequate contribution.” This caveat is not a great man’s coquetry but rather, I want to argue, a genuine characteristic of theological work. It is that mark of theology that our Eastern Orthodox colleagues call *apophatic* theology. It honors the radical transcendence of God, and yet, by acknowledging that which cannot be said, it becomes a vessel of communication with the mystery called God. The negative way, the apophatic way that abstains from positive, *kataphatic* statements about the nature of God, is in the end a way of communion with God (Ware [1993] 1997, 63–64). Another way of saying this is that mystery is not the opposite of rationality but a coexisting dimension of honest intellectual pursuit. Mystery even coexists with the intellectually rigorous inquiry in the world of nature. More than once, Peacocke expresses his agreement with Albert Einstein’s dictum, “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility” (1993a, 81, and elsewhere). There is more than one definition of mystery!

In sum, the starting point for an intellectually honest theology is this: (1) Theology is the perennial task of constructively refurbishing images of

God and humanity, (2) it is a pressing task of grand scope, and (3) it deals with the most comprehensive questions of meaning in a way that must acknowledge a dimension of ineffability and hence the necessary incompleteness of the theological enterprise.

Building on these three observations, what does an intellectually honest theology look like?

#### AGENDA

... these two fundamental activities, the search for intelligibility and the search for meaning, that characterize respectively, but not exclusively, science and religion, find themselves inextricably interlocked with each other in the common human enterprise of seeking *both* intelligibility *and* meaning. (Peacocke 1993a, 5)

*Intelligibility* and *meaning* are the two keywords that inform the agenda of an intellectually honest theology. Science may come across as having its prime obligation in the realm of intelligibility, whereas theology seems to have its expertise in the realm of meaning. However, this is true only to a limited degree. As much as science strives to explain meaning, theology strives to be intelligible. How could it be different, since both enterprises are carried out by human agents who seek both? It is the quest for both intelligible meaning and meaningful intellectuality that drives humans in most of their pursuits.

Therefore, theology should not be done without taking into account the scientific knowledge of the world. Even more so, with Peacocke we can postulate the necessity of religion-and-science on both structural and contextual grounds. This necessity is *structural* because it comes out of the nature of each of the two enterprises and is thus indispensable, as he puts it, “for the health of each enterprise” (1993a, 6). The claim is that religion and science need each other in order to stay healthy. As we shall see, though, Peacocke focuses his energy overwhelmingly on the health of theology. Whether and how theology can provide health care for science is a question that remains waiting in the wings. Besides being a structural necessity, the need for religion-and-science is also *contextual*—motivated by the way the world looks. Most of the issues of utmost concern that are facing humanity today have both a science side and a religion side. Environmental issues are just one example of this common concern. They clearly have a science side. However, as stands clear—not only from Lynn White Jr.’s wakeup call in *Science* 1967 but also from recent discussions within the evangelical camp—these issues also are intrinsically linked to questions of meaning regarding the natural world and the human place and role in it. They are connected to how we speak about suffering in humanity and nonhuman nature and how we articulate meaning and lack of meaning in such suffering. Such discourse may or may not invoke talk about God, but the nature of these questions makes them items on the agenda of theology.

So we find that the agenda of an intellectually honest theology is informed by the quest for intelligibility and meaning and a structurally and contextually motivated need to do theology in a religion-and-science context.

#### METHOD

If indeed God exists, *is* at all, the honest pursuit of truth cannot but lead to God. (Peacocke 2004, 414)

This is a bold claim. However, despite its boldness, this is not an attempt to revive anything like a medieval order where theology ranks as the queen of all sciences. It is not an approach from above that seeks to pull down divine authorization for human truth claims. It is an approach from below, insisting that any honest pursuit of truth will come to points where it encounters the God question, the question of radical and mystical transcendence and its relationship to the immanent realm of our experience.

The method or strategy that results from this point of departure has been cogently summarized by Gloria Schaab (2008, 9): inference rather than definition, intelligibility rather than certainty, and reasonableness rather than proof (where reasonableness means reason based on experience [Peacocke 2004, 419]). This choice of terms marks a shift of emphasis from results to activities. Definition, certainty, and proof designate the results of an activity; they describe what you arrive at when you have done your work well. Inference, intelligibility, and reasonableness are geared more toward describing the kind and quality of the process that is meant to lead these results. Peacocke shifts emphasis from results to criteria. Thus he comments on “inference to the best explanation”: “This method employs criteria such as *comprehensiveness*, giving a unified explanation of a diverse range of facts not previously connected; *general plausibility*, giving the best fit with previously established knowledge; *internal coherence and consistency*, avoiding self-contradictions, and *simplicity* of explanation” (2004, 419).

I am not suggesting that this is an exhaustive list of criteria for an intellectually honest theology. I am suggesting that the question of criteria is an indispensable methodological element of such a theology and that criteria need to be specified to fit with the different fields of theology, such as anthropology, Christology, eschatology, and sacramentology.

Peacocke lists some general criteria for theology: convergence of common core beliefs; learning from other traditions; readiness to reinterpret beliefs in the light of new, well-established factual or moral beliefs (science and philosophy); dialogue with conflicting and dissenting views; and sensitivity toward cultural contextuality, both historically and contemporary (2004, 419).

In my view, this method accomplishes three things. By virtue of the scope of criteria it safeguards the freedom of theology from the claims of authoritative communities. By virtue of its approach from below it can draw on concrete content from a variety of traditions and experiences. By

virtue of its assumption of a theological aspect of any honest pursuit of truth it distinguishes itself from philosophy. All three accomplishments are visible in Peacocke's work. He makes it clear that reference to authoritarian claims can never be accepted as the sole justification for any belief; "the church says" or "the Bible says" is not sufficient to fulfill the criterion of reasonableness. The role of religious communities is to be carriers and interpreters of the central narrative of their tradition in ways that do not stymie open-minded inquiry.

Striving for antiauthoritarianism and reasonableness does not lead to a bloodless, abstract theism, however. Peacocke does not reduce the wealth of traditions to a set of formal philosophical propositions. Quite the contrary: Drawing on a variety of Christian traditions, he develops concepts of God, humanity, and the world that are ecumenical and rich in content. For example, he maintains the concept of an *analogia entis* (analogy of being), at least in a weak form, which clearly alludes to Thomas Aquinas and subsequent theological thinking that has shaped especially Roman Catholic teachings. He likes to use the wording "in, with and under," which is a hallmark of Lutheranism and its attempt to provide an intelligible description of Christ's real presence in the natural elements of the Eucharist. He extends this terminology into a portrayal of God's presence in the natural world. He also speaks of the *sacramentality* (defined as "the bond that unites the physical, the mental, the aesthetic, and the spiritual" [1991b, 485]) of the universe, a notion he derives from William Temple and his Anglican tradition that also has a place in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.<sup>1</sup> And he successfully releases the sacramental from any confinement to the interior life of a church by describing a scientist's attraction to the sacraments as "an explicit and repeatedly manifest sign . . . of what [is] going on in cosmic and biological evolution—namely, the very stuff of the world becoming the vehicle of personhood" (1994, 657).

For his concept of God, Peacocke draws explicitly on the Eastern Orthodox distinction between God's essence (*ousia*) and the *uncreated energies* of God. When he wants to explain what it means to speak of God's transcendence as immanence and the immanence of the transcendent, he revisits Augustine's beautiful image of the sponge to make his point about panentheism (world in God, but God more than the world):

As if there were a sea everywhere and stretching through immense distances, a single sea which had within it a large but finite sponge; and the sponge was in every part filled from the immense sea. This is the kind of way in which I supposed your finite creation to be full of you, infinite as you are, and said: "Here is God and see what God has created. God is good and is most mightily and incomparably superior to these things." (Augustine 1991, 115)

Through this theological method, an image conceived within the framework of a fourth-century worldview can be made work for a twenty-first-century one in order to illustrate panentheism and make the point that

God may interact with the world at a supervenient level of totality—“causatively effective in a ‘top-down’ manner without abrogating the laws and regularities . . . that operate at the myriad sub-levels of existence that constitute that ‘world’” (Peacocke 1993a, 159).

This method provides for an interesting relationship with philosophy. Peacocke certainly takes philosophical method seriously, but he is not captive to it. I would say that his methodological habitat is located somewhere between the philosophical method of a Protestant philosophy of religion and an Eastern Orthodox understanding of theology as liturgy. Within those bounds he pursues an approach that comes across as 75 percent Chalcedonian in its operations: without confusion, without division, and without separation. And yet he is 25 percent strictly anti-Chalcedonian: “without change” is nothing that appeals to a physical biochemist who sees God at work “in, with, and under” evolutionary processes.

*Critical realism* is the technical term that Peacocke uses for this philosophical position. He sees it as a program rather than an achievement (1991c). Simply put, the *realism* tells us that we can be as comfortable as possible in assuming that what we are dealing with is real. The *critical* provides a creative and challenging opening to any system. As he expresses it, “both science and theology are engaging with realities that may be referred to and pointed at, but which are beyond the range of any completely literal description” (1993b, 472). This insight in turn requires us to consider the role of language, models, and metaphors and the hermeneutical analysis of what is going on when we interpret, explain, and understand data. The critical aspect of realism makes it intellectually dishonest to say that there is no way to have an intelligible conversation between science and theology. On the contrary, it becomes “entirely appropriate to ask how the respective claimed cognitive contents of science and theology might, or should be, related” (1993b, 472). Open-endedness is a mark of the creative processes in the universe; it also is a mark of our epistemological endeavors. Closure is not at hand, and that is as it should be. Again: “As we probe the depths and intricacies of each successive level, new layers of reality emerge to challenge us epistemologically, yielding only partial reflections of the realities-in-themselves” (Peacocke 1991c, 538).

Philosophy has rightly given up on the grasp of the thing-in-itself. Intellectual honesty cannot mean confining theology within the limits of pure reason alone (if there ever has been such a thing as pure reason). The overcoming of extreme rationalism is not the same as taking refuge or escaping into some obscure mystification, however. Even with the highest standards of intellectual work, there is a space to be retained for mystery—not as a place to get rid of the not-yet-explained but as a category that accompanies knowledge. Mystery is not the opposite of knowledge but a category of knowledge. Knowledge without a sense of the *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance) of a Nicholas of Cusa is missing something.

What Peacocke says about the New Testament testimony of Jesus may be extended to apply to his overall view of theology: “What the New Testament vouchsafes is not an intellectual synthesis but a kaleidoscopic variety of poetic insights” (1993a, 293). This is not the same as abstinence from rationality. Quite the contrary: *Theology for a Scientific Age* is a highly rational project. Yet it makes room for a theology that is not bound within the limits of a rationalistic framework but is familiar and confident in its dealings with poetics, irony, subversiveness, and hybridity. From its engagement with contemporary science it takes away the insight that entanglement does not mean irrationality.

#### APPLICATION TO SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

Science is one of the major spurs goading believers in God onto new paths for expressing their beliefs and commitments. (Peacocke 2004, 414)

For Peacocke, the path runs from science to theology, biographically as well as methodologically. By looking not only to the results but also to the methods of science, Peacocke hopes to find a model that can help theology to be more honest, attractive, and trustworthy in the eyes of enlightened people. “Now science has found a reliable method for establishing *public* knowledge about nature. . . . Hence, the key question is: Can thinking hard about religious beliefs (theology) exercise a method or procedure of comparable reliability that can carry conviction and be heard above the cacophony of siren calls from other sources today?” (2004, 417)

His trust in science is great. In our days, Peacocke says, “science could well be the divine agent of regeneration of theology, as were Greek philosophy in the early centuries of the church and Aristotelian learning in the eleventh and twelfth centuries” (2004, 427). His conviction that science is the challenge *par excellence* is even greater—it “constitutes a challenge of far greater significance and consequence than did the rediscovery of Aristotle for the times of Saint Thomas Aquinas” (1993b, 483). This does not rule out the possibility of conflict between science and theology, but the theologian who approaches the sciences with such negative expectation is ill advised: “the theologian should not enter the lists with destructive ambitions” (1984b, 179).

On the other hand, such strong confidence in science does not mean that theology should capitulate. Sociobiology serves as an example of a critical and constructive conversation between science and theology. Theologians will probably appreciate the attribution of a survival function to religion by sociobiology, Peacocke opines. Yet, they will and should ask critical questions precisely about survival: What kind of a value is survival? Survival how? And for what? Especially a faith tradition that has a cross as its central symbol needs to ask questions about the truth of religion that reach beyond survival calculations (1984b, 181).

To start with, science talks and theology listens. Theologians ask questions, but their main task is to revisit their traditions in light of contemporary science, understand the limits of that science, and articulate their own theological contribution. There certainly is a space and a call for theology to absorb science and even to go beyond it. Yet the traffic keeps running mostly one way on what could be more of a two-way-street. Peacocke's summary from a 1984 article on sociobiology describes the space where theology should move beyond science in its questioning:

... the pressure from the ideas of sociobiology, in particular, and that of biology and cosmic evolution, in general, is towards a franker recognition of our natural relatedness to the physical and biological worlds and an acknowledgment that our mental and spiritual aspirations are so grounded. But what they should aspire to is not thereby prescribed and so it is that theology has, in my view, a new and exciting role to play if it will only recognize its new brief. (1984b, 181)

Nevertheless, paraphrasing Einstein, one may want to say that Peacocke was more concerned with the blindness of religion than with the lameness of science. "The Western intellectual world has yet to be convinced that theology can be done with the kind of intellectual honesty and integrity that are the hallmarks of scientific thought," he argued (2004, 418). There is a tendency to make science paradigmatic for all kinds of knowledge. I think the reasons for this are mainly contextual. They are to be found in Peacocke's biography—the scientist turned theologian—as well as in the perceived need of a church compelled by increasing secularization to develop a theology that is more intellectually honest than many of its traditional teachings. Finally, I see in his focus on science a fruit of a theological epistemology he describes as the "three-legged stool" of scripture-tradition-reason" in the Church of England (1991b, 483). A fourth leg, such as experience in the broadest sense, might have been helpful in encouraging more two-way-traffic. As it stands, the best to be hoped for is that scientists might hear and listen to the music of creation in doing their science—which is not a small hope but may still not be bold enough. The ambitious program that Peacocke outlines for an intellectually honest theology has the potential of achieving even more than that.

In light of more recent developments in the religious landscape in both the Western and non-Western world, another question needs to be raised: Does the world really *want* to be convinced of that kind of intellectual honesty? I am not the only theologian who has been surprised by scientists, even top scientists, who seem to abdicate their intellectual rigor when it comes to their faith commitments. They practice *credo quia absurdum* (I believe because it is bizarre) rather than *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). In religious matters they do not seem to care about any "most reasonable inferred explanation." In fact, there are intelligent people who have more interest in an intellectually dishonest (or at least nonrational) theology than an intellectually honest one—some because



they want to feel that faith is really different from their intellectual world, and others because they want that straw man to point to in order to say, See how absurd religion is? Even otherwise very intelligent people can work with the hypothesis that belief is better and stronger the more unreasonable it is. By these standards, a liberal theologian does not really believe and therefore is not a respectable representative of a religious tradition. It happens that double standards live side by side in the same mind. The more independent inquiry in science, the better the science; the more excessive reliance on an authoritative book and/or authoritative community in religion, the better the religion (2004, 419). This, of course, is a far cry from Peacocke's view of religious activity as what he calls the highest and most significant "vector" of integrated relationships in the hierarchy of the natural (1993a, 22).

I now leave these questions and turn very briefly to some of the results of Peacocke's program of an intellectually honest theology.

## RESULTS

. . . the demise of all kinds of dualisms in a monistic world with its inappropriateness of talk of the "supernatural." (Peacocke 2004, 426)

I see the demise of dualisms as one of the most significant results of Peacocke's work. He does away with all dualisms except one—namely, the one between God and all-else-that-is (1991c, 535). This does not translate, however, into the obsolete dualism between the natural and the supernatural. Instead, he offers us the notion of God and the Other (2004, 416–17). God cannot be understood to be an emergent reality; God is ultimate (1994, 649). God is always "other" and can be described only by means of analogy and metaphor, that is, always leaving open the tension of *is* and *is-not*.

The problem for theology is that popular renderings of Christian theology often maintain dualistic concepts that have been abandoned by much of theology. The naturalist/supernaturalist dualism belongs to this category. The demise of this particular dualism is not just a recent invention of Western theology and not necessarily a result of the advance of science; it has long been a constitutive part of Eastern theology, motivated there both by the unity of natural and supernatural revelation and by the distinction and unity of God's essence and uncreated energies or operations of God.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, when the West travels the antisupernaturalist road it often does so antagonistically, the claim being that nature is all there is, that the supernatural does not exist (cf. Drees 1996, 12).<sup>3</sup> The East offers a different solution. There, the dualism is overcome not by dismantling the one half but by claiming the unity of both, or what I would call the differentiated relationality of the two. Although this kind of thinking originated long before the emergence of the modern scientific worldview, it appears to me to be a largely underused resource for an intellectually honest theology.

I hear an echo of such thought in Peacocke's work. Referring more to biology than to physics and cosmology, he is especially receptive to the observation of emergence of one from the other, of seeing difference yet relationship. An example of this is his way of speaking of God the Creator's relationship to the world, particularly when he chooses to complement the spatial metaphor of panentheism with a biological model: "God creates a world that is, in principle and in origin, other than 'himself,' but creates it, the world, within 'herself'" (1991a, 463). The same biological framework inspires his thinking about death and natural evil as a prerequisite for the emergence of free, self-conscious beings and for speaking about God as a God who suffers with creation to bring it to fulfillment through the creative processes of the world "with their costly, open-ended unfolding in time" (1993a, 126).

Even the understanding of his own biography is molded on the biological pattern: from "DNA to Dean"—the two stories of his life, science and theology, running "parallel and intertwined . . . like the two complementary chains of DNA" (1991b, 481). Or, as he says about himself: "Somehow, I have always tended to live on boundaries"—"on borderlines, whether of physics/chemistry, physical chemistry/biochemistry, and science/theology" (1991b, 485, 490).

Let us remember that it is especially at the borderlines that creativity happens—at the boundaries, where the experience of limits and the thirst for improvement, enhancement, perfection, infinity, and eternity rub shoulders. It seems to me that this interest in borders and transition is a motivating factor for the amount of attention that Peacocke from the beginning has given to emergence. In retrospect, we take that almost as a given, but it was so novel at the time that its importance for his work with an intellectually honest theology was underestimated. His interest in emergence is probably an outcome of his persistent interest in thermodynamics as "the science of the possible" (1984c). As he declares, "I have never actually stopped teaching or writing about thermodynamics in some context or other" (1991b, 479).

In our day, emergence has almost taken on an ideological flavor, it is so wonderfully and excitingly rich in possibilities. For Peacocke emergence is just "the entirely neutral name for that general feature of natural processes wherein complex structures, especially in living organisms, develop distinctively new capabilities and functions at levels of greater complexity. Such emergence is an undoubted, observed feature of the evolutionary process, especially of the biological" (1994, 643–44). He goes on to attribute to emergence a heuristic and hermeneutical function for his whole program: "It eventually goaded me to wider reflections: first, epistemological, on the relations among the bodies of knowledge which different sciences provide; and second, ontological, on the nature of the realities which the sciences putatively claim to disclose" (p. 644).<sup>4</sup>

This leads me to think that, even if on the surface science takes the lead, there is more mutuality going on under the surface. The theological understandings of such terms as *chance*, *potentiality*, and *ambiguity* reflect back, at least heuristically, on science.

#### RELIGION-AND-SCIENCE AS EXEMPLARY?

I cannot pretend that this work is a systematically complete whole. . . . but I would hope that its open-endedness, its possibilities of its boundaries and rough edges, is, in practice, more in tune with the spiritual explorations of many in our times than are the cut-and-dried offerings of many systematic theologies. (Peacocke 2007, 4)

Peacocke has spoken of the scientific and theological enterprises as interacting and mutually illuminating approaches to reality (1991a, 455; 1984a, esp. chap. 1). Others have developed variations of the same theme, such as friendly reciprocal action (Viggo Mortensen) or creative mutual interaction (Robert Russell). I have argued elsewhere that this mutuality needs to be expanded into a triangle drama between faith in knowledge (science), the knowledge of faith (theology) and their common responsibility for the world (Jackelén and Hefner 2004, 412).

Granted this, what is it about an intellectually honest theology developed in and out of the relationship between science and theology that is so significant that it can inform the overall dealings of theology? In my opinion, it is precisely the open-endedness, the possibilities and rough edges that Peacocke mentions in the Preface to his last work, *All That Is: A Naturalistic Christian Faith for the Twenty-First Century* (2007).

Much of this terminology may sound surprisingly familiar to postmodern ears. I know that Peacocke had some strong reservations against postmodernism, and I am not going to argue that he was an anonymous postmodernist. I am making a claim that wants to reach farther than a debate about the labels *modern* or *postmodern*. The attempt at an intellectually honest theology includes an understanding of the world as open-ended, creative at its boundaries and rough edges, and ambiguous in its potentialities. Our knowledge of the world is “increasingly rich and exciting to the intelligence, but [also] increasingly eliciting intellectual vertigo” (1993a, 83). The interplay of chance and law is creative, yet it makes us find ourselves in an ambiguous natural order that is essential to our existence and nurtures us but also can be tragically destructive to human existence and aspirations (1993a, 65, 83). This ambiguity, together with the common responsibility of science and religion for the world, stir up some healthy unrest in what could become a cozy togetherness between two partners who have to come to know their standard rejoinders all too well.<sup>5</sup>

I think that the threefold relationship I am suggesting has some exemplary potential for a different debate that rages in certain places of the

contemporary world—the debate about whether genuine multiculturalism is possible. In one camp are those who advocate a radical Enlightenment with its claim to universal principles of reason, rights, and law to which all religious and cultural claims must submit. In the other camp we find radical postmodernists who are understood and sometimes misunderstood to falling prey to a relativism that equals nihilism because it does not allow for the affirmation of any truth claim at all (Cliteur 2007, for example).

Experiences from religion-and-science may help to expose the mistakes at both ends. On the one hand, not everything can be submitted to universal reason or caught within the limits of reason alone; on the other hand, this insight equals not the abdication of reason but rather a fuller assessment of it. The acknowledgment that religion and culture matter to how we shall live in the world does not mean that every religious or cultural claim can, need, or should be accepted.

Religion-and-science has by now gathered some significant experience in dealing constructively with radically secular and radically religious claims. This experience may well be indispensable for meeting the challenges that are waiting for us right around the corner. In all of this, an intellectually honest theology is necessary—as a perennial, pressing, and necessarily incomplete task. I can envision no other way in which we can express both our very best knowledge about the natural world and the wisdom and hope that “underneath are everlasting arms” waiting for us to be enfolded in love, as Arthur wrote in his last letter to his friends (2007, 192–93).

#### NOTES

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1. Peacocke himself refers in his use of the term to Temple ([1934] 1964), “who was Archbishop of Canterbury and the most considerable philosopher-theologian to hold that office since Anselm” (Peacocke 1991b, 482; cf. Peacocke 2004, 424).

2. Dumitru Staniloae starts the first chapter of the first volume of his six-volume theology with the sentence “The Orthodox Church makes no separation between natural and supernatural revelation” (Staniloae [1994] 1998, 1). Similarly, referring to Gregory of Palamas’s distinction between the being of God and the uncreated operations flowing from this being, he writes, “although God effects something in each occasion through a particular operation, yet he is wholly within each operation. . . . The operations, therefore, are nothing other than the attributes of God in motion—or God himself. . . . God himself is in each of these operations or energies, simultaneously whole, active, and beyond operation or movement” (p. 125).

3. Note, however, that Peacocke is aware that notions of naturalism are in need of much qualification (Peacocke 1984a, 177).

4. So, when in these days (13 February 2007) a divinity school in this country (Harvard Divinity School) holds a symposium on “Beyond Reductionism: Reinventing the Sacred without Supernaturalism,” with a main speaker (Stuart Kauffman) who, according to the announcement, proposes emergence as an alternative to scientific reductionism, this is very good—but, in light of Peacocke’s work in the late 1980s, not all that brand new.

5. By this I do not imply that getting to know the standard replies automatically makes for peaceful relationships—just as the standard matrimonial rejoinders do not automatically make for a harmonious marriage.

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