

*Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates.* By Willem B. Drees. London: Routledge, 2010. 168 pages. \$34.95.

This book charts a helpful way to engage in “religion and science” in the future. Willem Drees, a philosopher of religion, combines outsider and insider perspectives to analyze and clarify contemporary work in the field, using numerous examples of people and movements in academic circles and the wider culture.

In the first four chapters Drees uses outsider, social-scientific and historical, approaches to examine various contexts and related purposes for work in “religion and science.” Following an introductory chapter, Drees examines in the context of secularization (which is different in Europe than in the United States) how “religion and science” may be used to defend science, to defend religion, to defend a particular viewpoint within a religion, and to help resolve personal discomfort in the face of reductionism. In chapter 3, in the context of superstition and using philosophy of science, he presents science as a human project “that approximates quite well to the ideal of knowledge independent of cultural and personal bias” (p. 47). This leads to his “ten commandments” for working in “religion and science.” For example, “Neither shall you commit adultery by selectively using those aspects of science that accord with your preferences, but rather engage science where it hurts most” (pp. 57–58).

In chapter 4 Drees engages the complexity of religion, asks “Who defines religion?” in the academy and for political purposes, and, consistent with his outsider approach, uses Clifford Geertz’s understanding of religion as symbols that integrate our understanding of the world as it is (cosmology) with our ideas of how it should be (axiology). Then Drees moves to the insider approach to consider basic content questions in “religion and science” as he offers a schema for theory construction and “theological” reflection.

The schema is presented with the aid of an oval diagram. Up one side of the oval (chapter 5, “Mystery in an Intelligible World”) one moves from the world and life to observations and experiments, and scientific theories, to a cosmology that then can be incorporated into a religious or nonreligious vision. Because science shows that the world has integrity and coherence, Drees holds that naturalism is a plausible (though not necessary) view of reality. After briefly reviewing the idea that there can be divine action from “beyond” nature at the quantum level (Robert Russell), Drees compares two main options within naturalism. The first, “naturalistic theism,” accepts that science provides in principle a full explanation of events within the world but also acknowledges persistent “limit questions.” These allow the possibility that there is a ground of being for the world as a whole—a primary cause of all the secondary causes uncovered by science. The second, “religious naturalism” in its many varieties, “affirms that attention should be focused on this world to provide whatever explanation and meaning are possible for life” (Jerome Stone). Drees concludes this chapter as a “serious agnostic” who wishes to explore both of these alternatives and who also, with epistemic modesty, acknowledges what may be called “ultimate mystery.”

Up the other side of the oval (chapter 6, “Values in a World of Facts”) Drees moves from the world and life to moral intuitions, and ethics or reflective morality, to an axiology that also can be incorporated into a religious or nonreligious vision. He then outlines how values are grounded in the facts of evolved prosocial

behaviors and of the evolved capacity to question and reflect on these behaviors. When reflection is done with others in community, general ethical principles arise. When these are combined with our understanding from the sciences of the way things are, the result is an overarching vision that integrates cosmology and axiology, facts and values.

However, this is not sufficient to bring about positive moods and motivations in response to the fundamental context for “religion and science”—life as lived here and now. In chapter 7, “Meaning in a Material World,” Drees suggests that we need stories that are consistent with our understanding of the ways things are and that “are manifest forms of symbols that influence mood and motivations” (Geertz) in order to live out our values. Because religious stories respond to ongoing basic human experiences and concerns, one source of stories is the wisdom of the world’s religions. We can also develop new stories and images from contemporary understandings rooted in science. Drees closes with an image of “place” from the video *The Powers of Ten* (Ray and Charles Eames) and a story of “time”—his own poem of the epic of creation.

Drees packs a wealth of material and insight into this wonderful book. At times I wanted him to expand his specific discussions. Yet, overall this is one of the best books I have read in forty-four years on the general subject of “religion and science”. Everyone working in this area will benefit from reading it.

KARL E. PETERS  
 Professor Emeritus, Rollins College  
 30 Barn Door Hills Road  
 Granby CT 06035  
 Kpeters396@cox.net

*Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life.* By John F. Haught. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2010. 144 pages. \$19.95.

John Haught is no stranger to the issues addressed in this slender volume. Formerly professor of theology at Georgetown University and now Senior Fellow in Science and Religion at the Woodstock Theological Center, he has written widely on them. *Making Sense of Evolution* is an admirable book that crystalizes the reflections of more than twenty years by one of the foremost experts in the field, and does so in an accessible, engaging, and thoughtful way. It is avowedly Christian in its stance and will not please some readers (those influenced by the “new atheism,” for example), but I warmly recommend it to readers of *Zygon* because Haught is an author who takes seriously what science can tell us about ourselves and our world but who nevertheless thinks that theology can tell us something deeper and more fundamental.

“Evolution makes very good sense scientifically,” Haught writes, but he asks “does it make any sense theologically?” (p. xi). He thinks it does, but one has to drastically rethink the relation between theology and evolutionary theory. In this work, as in earlier ones, Haught tries to do that. He seeks to develop a middle ground position between what he variously calls “scientific naturalism” (SN), “evolutionary naturalism,” and “scientific materialism” and the sort of crude theism