

## Reviews

*Global Perspectives on Science and Spirituality*. Edited by Pranab Das. West Conshohocken, Pa.: Templeton Press, 2009. xiii + 244 pages. \$29.95.

The declared goal of this neatly prepared paperback is to provide new stimuli for the discourse on the issue of science and religion—plaguing mainly the post-Enlightenment intellectual history of the Western world—by inviting scholars from Asia and Eastern Europe to comment on this topic from within their cultures and fields of study. Edited by Pranab Das, professor of physics at Elon University, Elon, North Carolina, and leader of the Templeton Foundation-funded program by the same title, “Global Perspectives on Science and Spirituality” (since 2003), the book contains twelve contributions by as many different authors from the project network that address the topic from non-Western positions. The disciplines and topics represented relate to mathematics, physics, and biology, anthropology, philosophy, and cognitive science, religious studies, theology, and spirituality. The cultures represented are from Asia—India, Japan, China, and South Korea—and from Eastern Europe—Russia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. The religious traditions of the different contributors range from Buddhism (mainly its Japanese versions) to Daoism, Hinduism, and Orthodox Christianity (in its Russian and Slavonic tradition), Polish Catholicism, and Czech-style Reformed Protestantism.

To meaningfully manage such a broad variety, the editor has taken pains to introduce the book as a whole, its coming about and its purpose, which is “to feature short overviews” luring “the inquiring reader to delve further into the work of very accomplished scholars” so as to “spark lively conversation and deep reflection” and to establish “new contacts, cross-pollination, and deeper exploration” of the matter in question (p. xiii). In addition, the editor prefaces each chapter with a brief summarylike introduction, although he fails to properly situate the respective contributions within the overall quest of the project. Readers are on their own with what to make out of the interesting bits and pieces that are presented. However, the notes and brief bibliographies that accompany each chapter do help somewhat.

The authors all are masters of their topics, so the editor’s recurrent emphasis on the high quality of their work (see especially pp. ix–x) is only detrimental to the cause. Because they are accomplished scholars in their fields and competently represent their subject matter, their words carry weight. Yet it is precisely in this respect where the learned intellectual needs to have more to really make sense out of the broad diversity of issues presented. It will not be too difficult for a person raised in and embracing the intellectual tradition of the West to relate to the issues addressed by scholars from Eastern Europe—I. Kasavin, “Religion, Science, and *Lebenswelt*” (pp. 21–38); A. Chernyakov, “Mathematics as Formal Ontology” (pp. 165–78); B. Gaál, “Is Mathematics Able to Open the Systems of

the Human Mind?" (pp. 179–90); A. Markos et al., "Aut Moses, aut Darwin?" (pp. 125–42); and G. Bugajak and J. Tomczyk, "Human Origins: Continuous Evolution versus Punctual Creation" (pp. 143–64)—because of the somewhat common epistemological roots that were severed only during the early twentieth century with the enforced ideology of dialectical materialism superimposed by the political powers. A much tougher challenge is to meaningfully engage in dialogue with the Asian traditions represented in this anthology: S. Menon, "The Puzzle of Consciousness and Experimental Primacy" (pp. 3–20); M. Paranjape, "Science and Spirituality in Modern India" (pp. 39–54); P. Swanson, "*Kokoro* [Mind-Heart-Spirit]: Affirming Science and Religion in the Japanese Context" (pp. 55–68); J. Sheng, "Daoism and the Uncertainty Principle" (pp. 69–92); R. Takeda, "Whitehead Reconsidered from a Buddhist Perspective" (pp. 93–106); and H. Young Kim, "Sanctity of Life: A Reflection on Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debates from an East Asian Perspective" (pp. 107–24)—save any superficial, undiscerning quick associations. Because the issue is indeed mainly a problem for the Western mind and Western intellectual history, not to the East, a respective critical hermeneutical reflection has to precede any such conversation, a reflection that is missing here.

Despite the editor's perception of this book as "an accessible stand-alone text" (p. vii), it is anything but this. It gives account of an ongoing inquiry and of some of the individuals presently actively involved in it. It also highlights an already existing discourse on multiple topics deserving serious attention that to discuss in detail or even highlight here is simply impossible. The Templeton Foundation is to be praised for having initiated a project like this and the editor for having these papers published in a timely manner so as to get others beyond the network involved in the task. May the high expectations accompanying this publication of "scintillating overtures" (p. ix) not be disappointed but find the echo they deserve, because the various issues raised are important indeed and need serious attention.

CHRISTOFFER H. GRUNDMANN

John R. Eckrich University Chair in Religion and the Healing Arts  
Valparaiso University  
Valparaiso, Indiana

*Science and Religion: New Historical Perspectives*. Edited by Thomas Dixon, Geoffrey Cantor, and Stephen Pumfrey. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010. xii + 317 pages. \$95.00.

This book is dedicated to John Brooke, author of *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (1991). Brooke is one of the key representatives of the recent wave in the history of science that addresses extensively also the relations with religions. He may be considered the intellectual author of what has been dubbed by others "the complexity thesis," as he wrote: "it is almost always assumed that there are lessons to be learned from history. The object of this book is not to deny that assumption but to show that the lessons are far from simple. . . . The real lesson turns out to be the complexity" (Brooke 1991, 4f.). Neither polemics (conflict thesis) nor apologetics is the task of the historian, but more scholarly and impartial analysis.