

## *Editorial*

### *ZYGON @ 50: HALF A CENTURY OF ZYGON: JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE*

With this issue, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* enters its fiftieth year of publication. In the first issue, in March 1966, the first lines of the first editorial were as follows:

*Zygon*, the Greek term for anything which joins two bodies, especially the yoking or harnessing of a team which must effectively pull together, is a symbol for this journal whose aim it is to reunite the split team, values and knowledge, where co-ordination is essential for a viable dynamics of human culture. (Burhoe and Tapp 1966, 1)

Values and knowledge are envisaged as a team that should work for the common good. Religion and science are respected as powers that have their own characteristics. However, they coexist as facets and fruits of human culture, and they should both be drawn upon as resources to work for a healthy, sustainable future. In recent contributions, *Zygon*'s second editor Karl Peters reflected on the original vision for the journal and for IRAS, one of the founding organizations (Peters 2014), while the third editor, Philip Hefner, wrote on Ralph Burhoe, the founder, "and his vision of yoking religion and science" (Hefner 2014). On each of the three previous editors, a virtual issue with a selection of their contributions to *Zygon* has been composed, available online at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1467-9744](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-9744).

There is much wisdom to be found in the earlier vision, though the world has changed. While nuclear weapons may have been the greatest concern for scientists and sensitive citizens in the period following WWII, in our time ecology and sustainability are foremost for many. While Protestant Christianity in its main line and liberal expressions seemed vibrant at that time, together with its Unitarian cousin, we now see more charismatic forms of Christianity, a global presence of Muslims (including many reasonable persons), and a rise of not affiliated "spirituals" alongside more outspoken seculars. Powerful information technologies have strengthened new forms of globalization as well as local variation, an interplay that has been coined "glocalization." In a later issue this year, we will return to the history, present, and the future of "religion and science" when we publish contributions derived from the sixtieth anniversary conference of IRAS, held on Star Island in the summer of 2014.

During the fiftieth year of publication, *Zygon* will have a series of contributions that review the particular shape of discourse on knowledge and values, science and religion, in different geographical and cultural contexts. *Zygon* started in the American context, but by now has a global readership. We should not expect that the issues in all countries are basically the same, or follow the same trajectory; such a presumption would be narrow-minded. In this first issue, we have a contribution on the discourse in contemporary Japan, by Seung Chul Kim—where even

the Western concept of religion seems hard to apply. We have a contribution by Lluís Oviedo and Alvaro Garre on developments in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. As one might expect, discussions on science and religion reflect developments in the Roman Catholic Church—think of individuals such as Teilhard de Chardin and institutional developments such as the Second Vatican Council. The third contribution in this issue comes from two colleagues from Kraków in Poland. Earlier in the twentieth century, there were sharp and creative minds such as Józef Bocheński who approached theological issue with modern tools. In that vein, Michael Heller and Bartosz Brożek, the authors of this contribution, and colleagues of the Copernicus Center in Kraków present us with an original program, with a strong engagement with logic, mathematics, and philosophy of science. In the book review section, I review eight books published by this group. Japan, Catholic southern Europe, and Kraków, Poland: These are just three quite different engagements, reflecting different personalities, interests, and cultural conditions. In later issues this year, we'll have more contributions spanning the globe, from New Zealand and China, to the Middle East, Germany, Southern Africa, and Latin America.

Geography is not the only source of variety. Professional contexts are as much shaping particular issues and discussions. One context with which academics have to do is higher education. In this issue, an article in the section on higher education as context refers in its title to *Galileo Goes to Jail*, a recent book busting myths about interactions between religion and science (Numbers 2009). Whereas historians have made clear that the conflict thesis needs nuance—e.g., understanding conflicts as conflicts *between subgroups*, drawing on science or on religion to strengthen their case (Olson 2011)—or even rejected the conflict thesis in favor of an emphasis on complexity (Brooke 1991, 4f; Dixon, Cantor, and Pumfrey 2010), conflict metaphors and myths continue. While teaching on religion and science at a Canadian university, Thomas Aechtner discovered that messages his students brought from their anthropology courses to his class were at odds with his understanding of recent scholarship. He thus started to discuss textbooks used in anthropology classes. The other article on higher education, by Garrett Kenney, is of quite a different kind, engaging discourse about the antimodernist lament on loss of meaning by religionist scholar Huston Smith.

The very first article in this issue is about a classic myth concerning Andrew Dickson White, the author of *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896). The myth is that this is a book favoring atheism. However, if one reads the introduction to White's book, it turns out he is quite religious:

Religion, as seen in the recognition of 'a Power in the Universe, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness', and in the love of God and of our neighbour, will steadily grow stronger and stronger. (White 1896, xii)

As White saw it, there were conflicts between science and dogmatic theology, not between science and religion as he understood it. His *Warfare* may well be understood as a plea for a liberal form of religion. In his contribution to this issue, Richard Schaeffer looks in greater detail at A. D. White, and his stance on religion.

A study of Confucian environmental ethics and climate change by Pak-Hang Wong introduces the reader to a quite different setting, religiously and thematically. Concerns about humans using their technological powers mistakenly that are

phrased in theistic terms as “we should not play God,” need to be reformulated and rethought when one comes with a rather different perspective. In focusing on this motive, and an Asian critique, it might be interesting to read alongside this article the contribution on Japanese discourse on religion and science by Seung Chul Kim, in this issue too, as he picks up this metaphor in the context of discussions on cloning. Those voices from nontheistic contexts can be compared to the next contribution, by Jason P. Roberts, on the Christian command to “fill and subdue.” Roberts considers ways to imagine God in new social and ecological contexts.

Again another place where science plays a role, is in new religious movements. Stefano Bigliardi discusses in some detail the way science is drawn upon in the Raelian religious movement that has appropriated easily ideas about space travel, cloning, and other techno-scientific developments.

Anthropologist Margaret Boone Rappaport and astronomer Christopher Corbally offer a proposal for understanding the sciences, including the social sciences, the arts, and religion—a proposal they have dubbed “matrix thinking.” This draws upon earlier work by Andrew Robinson and Christopher Southgate, some of it also presented in *Zygon* (Robinson and Southgate 2010, 701).

Ben Page considers a particular contemporary account of laws of nature, dispositionalism, and its potential for a theological conceptualization of God. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains dispositions with the example of glass that has the disposition to shatter when falling on the ground. A genuine possibility—but is a possibility a property, comparable to real properties such as mass (Choi and Fara 2014)? And once we understand dispositions and use this to articulate an understanding of laws of nature, what about God, envisaged as the Creator of the laws of nature?

In the final article before the thematic sections, Ilkka Pyysiäinen brings again the cognitive studies of religion to our attention. However, perhaps surprisingly for some, he also uses the work of Terrence Deacon in this context to argue that the notion of potentiality or absence that is so important in Deacon’s book *Incomplete Nature* (2012) offers also a way to conceive of God, not as an additional presence, but as efficacious though absent. It reminds me of a passage in the writing of the British novelist John Fowles, in his aphorisms *The Aristos* (1980, 27):

The white paper that contains a drawing; the space that contains a building; the silence that contains a sonata; the passage of time that prevents a sensation or object continuing forever; all these are “God.”

Such images steer a course between dismissal of the conceptuality and a stronger, and perhaps more problematical, ontological endorsement.

The issue also offers five reviews that relate at various points to the earlier articles—one on Victorian naturalism that links with nineteenth-century thinkers such as A. D. White; a review of a work by Neil Messer on flourishing in an evolutionary perspective. Michael Ruse’s book *The Philosophy of Human Evolution* covers basic territory for those interested in evolution, while the Canadian philosopher J. L. Schellenberg in his *Evolutionary Religion* offers further discussion on these issues. In a review of eight books produced by the Kraków school, one comes to know some of the substantial production by Michael Heller, Bartosz

Brożek, and colleagues from Poland—reflecting the program on rationality, logic, and religion presented in the article by Brożek and Heller in this issue.

There is much that might be read, such as the books reviewed and, even more, the articles in this issue, the first of our fiftieth year of publication, the beginning of the second half century for *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. Though a mathematically inclined person might see this as the last year of the first half. We will go on.

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