

IRAS @ 60 and the Future of Religion and Science

with Karl E. Peters, “The ‘Ghosts’ of IRAS Past and the Changing Cultural Context of Religion and Science”; Michael Ruse, “Why I Am an Accommodationist and Proud of It”; Nancy Ellen Abrams, “A God That Could Be Real in the New Scientific Universe”; Whitney Bauman, “Religion, Science, and Globalization: Beyond Comparative Approaches”; Zainal Abidin Bagir, “The ‘Relation’ between Science and Religion in the Pluralistic Landscape of Today’s World”; Sarah E. Fredericks and Lea F. Schweitz, “Scholars, Amateurs, and Artists as Partners for the Future of Religion and Science”; and Willem B. Drees, “From Authority to Authenticity: IRAS and Zygon in New Contexts.”

FROM AUTHORITY TO AUTHENTICITY: IRAS AND ZYGON IN NEW CONTEXTS

by Willem B. Drees

Abstract. In the 60 years since IRAS was founded, and the 50 years since *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* started, science has developed enormously. More important, though less obvious, the character of religion has changed, at least in Western countries. Church membership has gone down considerably. This is not due to arguments, for example, about science and atheism, but reflects a change in sources of authority. Rather than the traditional and communal authority, an individualism that emphasizes “authenticity” characterizes religion and spirituality in our time. Less extensive but similar is the loss of authority with respect to science. As a consequence, “religion and science” might seek to provide attractive constructive proposals for visions that integrate an ethos and a worldview. IRAS might contribute by providing a platform for information and the exchange of proposals for a particular audience, while *Zygon* serves a global and diverse audience with well-researched articles.

Keywords: authenticity; authority; IRAS; religion; science; science and religion; secularization; *Zygon*

IRAS has existed for 60 years; *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* is in its 50th year of publication. These anniversaries are an occasion for a reflection on religion and science today and on the way forward. In his contribution

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in this issue, Karl Peters (2015) considers the changing cultural context. He does so by focusing on changes in science and changes in religious studies, as well as the prominence of pluralism. I will consider briefly developments in science, but have become convinced that for Western countries the more important changes are in religion. Not merely the emergence of “religious pluralism”; the deeper issue is that *what it means to be religious* has changed. Part of the challenge should be to clarify what is happening with “religion,” or more broadly, with human existential orientations and communities of identity, in particular in Western contexts. Religion is more than belief, and certainly much more than the discussions on theism, atheism, and naturalism that seem to dominate the religion and science discourse. Think of all the magic in video games and of contemporary “Easternization” (Campbell 2007). Thus, “religion today” will be discussed in slightly more detail here, drawing on numbers concerning religious affiliation in the Netherlands and in the United States. On the basis of the changes in the religious self-understanding, I will consider “religion and science” and the contributions both, distinctly, might make to human lives.

In focusing on religion (and on science, but I do not think there is as much confusion there), I do not intend to consider IRAS’s role as constrained by typical “religion and science” in the sense of dialogue or even intellectual integration to overcome conflict (to use major categories of the scheme of Ian Barbour 1997, 77-105). Even if these two human projects, science and religion, or nonreligious existential orientations, are fundamentally different, as the independence view would maintain (see Ruse 2015, this issue), they might both be relevant when we seek to serve society. With a broader understanding of religion, the cognitive and apologetic orientation of much “religion and science” may be avoided, but even then we engage science and technology and religion and human values. In this vein, I will conclude with some remarks about IRAS and *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*.

SCIENCE TODAY

Science has progressed enormously in the past 60 years. In physics, a much greater depth has been achieved, theoretically and experimentally. Cosmology has developed enormously, with the establishment of the Big Bang theory, the rise of further refinements and developments, and remarkable observational work on the universe at great distances. Occasionally, current knowledge is that we know we must be missing something. On the basis of the impact of gravity, astrophysicists have concluded that the matter we see is only a fraction of all the matter that has gravitational effects, and they thus have come to speak of dark matter and dark energy, terms that serve as placeholders for current ignorance. Perhaps an even more remarkable development in the last 60 years has occurred in the life sciences, with

an increased understanding of processes within cells, recent work on gene expression, three-dimensional understanding of proteins, and much more.

While different branches of the natural sciences developed, theoretically and instrumentally, the coherence across the disciplines increased as well. Different “levels of complexity” may need their own vocabulary, but physics, chemistry, biology, and the neurosciences are tightly connected. Some speak of *reductionism*, as “higher” phenomena are materially realized in physical processes, while others speak of *emergence*, as “higher” phenomena have emerged out of more simple processes. As I see it, reduction and emergence are two terms that describe basically the same coherence, the compatibility of different descriptions (Drees 1996, 14–17, 189–195).

One more development, alongside greater depth in all disciplines and greater coherence across disciplines, is the pragmatic impact of science. Science is dependent upon technology, but also it is drawn upon to refine technology. We have an enormous power to manipulate the world, as shown by the creation of new materials, the possibility of genetic modification, and the rise of modern information and communication technologies.

One last comment about science: Not all countries and cultures are equally involved in the development of science; wealthy countries are dominant, given the resources needed for research. However, in the natural sciences, we encounter a model of knowledge that approximates fairly well the ideal of knowledge that is universal, independent of cultural, religious, and political preferences. There is substantial variation in access to scientific knowledge, and the reception of scientific insights is clearly related to context and culture, but science itself seems to transcend cultural conditions (e.g., McMullin 2012; Ruse 2012).

RELIGION TODAY IN THE NETHERLANDS

“Religion” has changed significantly. Before offering some figures on religious involvement, a comment on the concept of “religion” and “a religion.” The more I have been involved in the study of religion, the more I have realized the many different ways this concept is used. It started as an analytical concept, a category imposed by outsiders in order to classify groups of people (Harrison 1990; Smith 1998). However, it has become an actor concept; someone might say: “I am not religious.” As two major facets of religion, I would consider the social one—belonging to a particular *community*, and thus, adopting a particular *identity*—and the more individual one, of human *existential orientations*, of personal values and attitudes. In both contexts, *beliefs* may play a role, as beliefs mark identity and legitimize values and attitudes. However, *practices* should not be underestimated, as these may strengthen a community and may motivate people to belong to a community, in the communal version, or serve to express one’s identity and attitude, in the more individualistic mode.

Table 1. “Belonging to a church,” according to surveys in 1966 and 2006, and by age group in 2006 (Bernts et al. 2007, 14 and 16)

Membership	1966	2006	17–34 yr	35–54 yr	55 yr and over
Roman Catholic	39%	16%	9%	13%	28%
Protestant Church in the Netherlands	25%	14%	10%	13%	18%
Other churches and religions	7%	9%	12%	8%	8%
No affiliation	33%	61%	69%	66%	46%

Table 2. Engagement with one’s own church, among affiliated persons (Bernts et al. 2007, 19)

Engagement with one’s church	Very close	Close	Loosely	Totally not
All religiously affiliations	26%	24%	40%	10%
Roman Catholics	12%	29%	48%	11%
Mainline Protestant	22%	24%	42%	12%
Other religious groups	57%	18%	22%	3%

To see how “religion” has changed in the last half century, I offer some figures from sociological research. Such research tends to focus on membership and participation, and thus, the community aspect, though more individual issues of conviction also show up. I limit myself to Western countries, especially the Netherlands and the United States.

For the Netherlands, there are surveys that have been repeated every decade. Comparing figures from 1966 and 2006, we see the following trends. Membership has gone down considerably—for all churches and religious groups together from 67% to 39% in four decades. Membership among the young and middle-aged people in the more recent survey has dropped even further, and hence, the general trend may be expected to continue (see Table 1).

However, membership is not all that matters. How important is the membership to the individual? Here are figures, based on self-reports. Of those that are members of the major churches in the Netherlands, Catholic and Protestant, about 10% are not engaged with their own church, while another 42%–48% are only “loosely engaged.” Such members might show up for a service on Christmas, but not otherwise (see Table 2). Similarly, for a question of to whom one would turn for advice when facing a moral or existential conflict: In 1966, 35% considered the pastor or minister their most trusted advisor; in 2006, that applied only to 10%. In 2006, it was significantly higher, however, among members of “other religious groups”

(e.g., evangelicals, more strict Calvinist churches, Muslims), of which 43% listed their pastor or minister first (Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart 2007, 31f).

Differences between the two mainline churches, as churches one tends to be “born into,” and the more diverse category of other churches and religions, which include some that are churches one enters into by choice (e.g., evangelical churches in the Netherlands), indicate that religious socialization has diminished considerably.

In order to have a better understanding of those who are *not affiliated*, one may also look at scores on particular beliefs. In the period 1966 to 2006, the number of nonaffiliated has risen from 33% to 61%. However, in the same period, the number of atheists has risen from 6% to 14% of the population, far behind the 61% of nonaffiliated. Among the nonaffiliated, 23% self-declares as atheist, 35% as agnostic, 8% as theist, and 34% as believing in “something” (Bernts et al. 2007, 42). And if one takes a particular substantial issue, belief in life after death, 29% of the nonaffiliated say they believe in life after death, 33% do not know for sure, and 38% do not believe in life after death (49).

Thus, in the Netherlands, a few of the nonaffiliated self-identify as theists, and quite a few nonaffiliated persons believe in life after death. An open orientation, agnostic or “something-ism,” characterizes about two-thirds of the nonaffiliated. Figures such as these give reason to speak with nuance about secularization among members of religious communities (see Table 2) and among the nonaffiliated. For many, there is a substantial difference between institutional identification and personal belief. A slogan that expresses this is: “I am not religious but I am spiritual.” For a more extensive analysis of the Dutch situation, focusing on consequences for public policy, see Van de Donk et al. 2006. For some information on the situation in Germany, see the contribution by Dirk Evers in this issue. Are those trends typical for modern, Western countries? As a second context, let us consider a few figures from the United States.

RELIGION TODAY: THE UNITED STATES

American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell (2010) offers extensive data and analysis of the development of religion in the United States of America. According to some of their numbers, the American case is quite different from the one in Western Europe. Thus, according to a survey from 2006, in the United States 38% would identify as an active member of a congregation, whereas a comparable number for Italy would be 9% and for France 4%. As for personal importance, 47% of Americans would claim that religion is “very important” in their lives, compared to 17% of the Swiss, 12% of the Dutch, and 9% of the Swedes (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 8–9). Some American

Table 3. Flavors and intensities in the United States (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 17, 24; survey 2006)

Flavors and intensities	Population (%)	Religious intensity
Evangelical Protestant	30	0.4
Roman Catholic	24	0.05
None	17	-1.3
Mainline Protestant	14	0.1
Black Protestant	8	0.6
Other	3	-0.1
Jewish	2	-0.6
Mormon	2	0.5

Table 4. Church attendance, by decade of reaching adulthood (after Putnam and Campbell 2010, 74)

Decade of reaching adulthood	Nearly weekly attendance
1950s and before	40%–50%
1960s	30%–40%
1970s, 1980s, 1990s	20%–30%
2000s	15%–20%

figures seem to be remarkably stable over many decades. For instance, in 1937, 73% would have been a member of a church or congregation; in 1999, 70%. And in 1948, 73% believed in life after death; in 2006, 70%. (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 71).

However, variation within the USA is substantial. Putnam and Campbell (2010) constructed a scale that indicates “religious intensity” (the number has no meaning by itself; it is normalized at 0 for the average). Listing the various “flavors” (or denominations, broadly speaking), they offer an overview of religious flavors and intensities in the USA (see Table 3).

And despite the apparent stability, there are some indicators of major changes in religious behavior. This is illustrated by figures about attendance, considered by decade of reaching adulthood (see Table 4).

Whereas involvement in the evangelical movement among the younger generation peaked in the mid-1980s, those numbers have since seen a slow but steady decline, whereas the category “none” among the younger generation is rising.

Thus, if one may expect trends to continue for some time, the group of “nonaffiliated” is rising (see Table 5). As in the Dutch case, the majority of the nonaffiliated are not outspoken atheists. Rather, they do not identify with any of the major religious organizations. Putnam and Camp-

Table 5. Self-identification among 18–29-year-olds (after Putnam and Campbell 2010, 125)

Among 18–29-year-olds	1973	1985	2000	2008
Evangelicals	20%	25%	21%	17%
Nones	13%	12%	21%	27%

bell (2010, 163) see a new market: “Given the rise of religious nones, it would seem that there is a potential constituency for a new form of religion within the contemporary United States. We thus speculate that religious entrepreneurs will increasingly seek to reach into this untapped pool.” I am not certain that this will lend itself to congregational organization, as Unitarian Universalists might already be in that niche, but perhaps this might be an opportunity for self-identified religious naturalists (e.g., Goodenough 1998), including those who founded the Religious Naturalist Association (RNA) last summer during the IRAS conference on Star Island. According to Putnam and Campbell, the structure of American social-religious life is very much congregational, and that might continue among nones, whereas the European model seems to be less conducive to the formation of new communities of such a kind.

Given the plurality of orientations and organizations, how do members of one group judge those with a different affiliation? Putnam and Campbell have figures on “exclusivity,” as they call it. Only 13% would hold that their own religion is true, whereas others are not. Another 6% would be skeptical of all religious claims: “there is very little truth in any religion.” An overwhelming 80% hold that “there are basic truths in many religions” (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 543f). Thus, even though membership in a particular congregation is important, most acknowledge that other communities might be adequate too. Even among the evangelicals, 75% would be nonexclusivists. Campbell and Putnam explain this tolerance by the social dynamics that facilitate switching during a lifetime, entering into mixed marriages, and living in mixed neighborhoods, thus giving rise to diversity within families and among important acquaintances and friends (523–527). This acceptance of other views gives them reason to be optimistic about tolerance; the American pattern is “faith without fanaticism” (547).

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF RELIGION

Numbers may show trends, but they need interpretation. With Linda Woodhead, British sociologist of religion, I think that it is not merely participation that has changed. “Being religious *means something quite different* for young people today than it did for their grandparents” (Wood-

head 2013, emphasis added; see for a more extensive and globally oriented discussion Woodhead, Kawanami, and Partridge 2009, and for more on globalization Bauman 2015, this issue).

Woodhead points to similar changes in the political climate during the leadership of Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom Prime Minister, 1979–1990) and Ronald Reagan (President of the United States, 1981–1989). Their orientation and support base was conservative, but also anti-establishment. For Thatcher, herself a Methodist, this also was in opposition to the dominant position of the established Church of England. The paternalistic consensus, ridiculed already in the 1960s, became less and less a living reality. The climate became more individualistic.

As one element in this cultural change, continuing with the religion into which one is born and baptized became less obvious; a religious identity becomes a matter of choice—even for those who choose to stay in the church their parents belonged to. Evangelicals, Pentecostals and other independent churches and religious groups profited. So too did Western Hinduism (e.g., “transcendental meditation”) and Western Buddhism, not as adoption of traditional Asian religions, but as Western creations that drew on Asian elements, according to the argument of Colin Campbell (2007). Thus, one sees a shift away from long-term membership in communities to a more fluid involvement—shifts well documented in *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), based on a study of a provincial town in England, Kendal.

At the same time, Western European countries saw a more outspoken presence of a different religious presence, Islam, mostly among migrant communities, the result of colonial history (France, United Kingdom) and labor migration (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands). A pivotal year may have been 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell and the year of the controversy over Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. As Woodhead (2013) writes, “the year in which the Berlin Wall fell marked the symbolic end of both the great secular progressive projects *and* of traditional religion.” Seeing a book being burned in the streets of Bradford, England, must have been quite surprising to secular elites that had expected a gradual conformation to a liberal orientation. Outspoken “new atheism” has been fueled by new assertions of “strong religion,” with the Rushdie affair, the attack of September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York, and the bombs in the London Underground on July 7, 2005.

Fundamentalisms of various kinds are not at odds with the modern, individualistic orientation, but rather a possibility within this modern landscape. Though nominally appealing to traditional resources, whether the Bible or the Qur’an, representatives of fundamentalisms have unashamedly modern ways of reading such texts, treating these as manuals that can be used without any sense of historical context and historical distance, and

thus without any need for a hermeneutical or authoritative process of interpretation.

Both by modernism that did not see the need for membership and by fundamentalisms that were also modern in style, the churches that lost the most ground were those that relied on the tradition in membership “by birth,” in interpretations of their scriptures, and in practices. “The majority of the population in Britain today is left with some form of spiritual commitment—more informed by the tradition in the case of older people than younger ones—but no visible means of institutional support” (Woodhead 2013). Quite a few dissociate themselves from “religion” and from “atheism,” as these terms are taken to stand for dogmatism and superficiality.

To summarize the current situation for modern countries in the West, we see secularization, but not as a turn to science and to naturalism or atheism. Rather, the trend might be characterized as a combination of indifference and of “*believing without belonging*” (Davie 1994), as the relevance of membership in a national church or a local congregation has gone down. Among the remaining members the older generation is far over-represented. More than half of the members self-describe as “loosely connected” or “not connected.” Thus, the decline in membership may be expected to continue. Decline in membership is not only happening for religious organizations; other types of membership organizations see this too.

The decline in membership does not correlate with an intellectual debate, as if membership is a consequence of shared beliefs, and one is no longer a member because one does not share particular beliefs. Most people are not somewhere between two extremes, a scale from new atheism to fundamentalisms. Rather, they are eclectic, they play with ideas as some would consider themselves “spiritual but not religious”; others are neither atheist nor religious but rather indifferent (or “just normal,” as Evers reports a response from the former DDR, Eastern Germany (Evers 2015).

In this context, we see changing sources of authority, a shift from the given community (citizenship, tradition) and its established leadership to the individual and his or her immediate friends and acquaintances—even when those immediate relationships are globalized, maintained via modern communication technologies. It is not that “spiritual seekers,” say adherents of New Age, Paganism and the like, are less engaged socially and ethically than members of traditional churches, though there is a slight shift toward environmental causes versus social justice issues (Berghuijs 2014); rather moral engagement or “spiritual belief” has not changed, but sources of authority have.

Qua values, we see a major shift from values that emphasized citizenship, community, tradition, and similar collective notions, to a more individualistic orientation that makes *authenticity* the central value. Thus, authority

that used to reside in religious organizations is now far more an individual and eclectic matter (see also Taylor 2007). A new voice for a religious organization (such as Pope Francis) may well attract attention, but that is not so much because he speaks for the tradition as it is because he is seen as authentic, an individual of interest. In Europe and in the United States, we seem to witness a shift toward a society in which religious belief (often re-labeled “spirituality”) is treated as an individual option, a matter of choice. That applies for those inside churches and other religious organizations as much as for those outside such organizational forms of belonging.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR “RELIGION AND SCIENCE”

In “religion and science” discourse, we encounter a lot of arguing pro and con about design and origins, relating these to the Bible or theological doctrine, apparently repeating the “natural theology” discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, underlying the traditional discussions, we may see within “religion and science” also the changing landscape of religion.

Advocacy of creationism and intelligent design operates to a large extent independently from traditional religious structures, and would be misunderstood if taken to be the continuation of earlier institutional structures of religion. The controversies are typically shaped by coalitions of individuals in advocacy groups, developing their own individual interpretation of religion. As an outsider looking at the United States of America, the movement labeled “Tea Party” seems to exemplify a coalition of those who distrust universal ambitions in education, distrust government to organize the public good, and distrust “the establishment,” whether religious or non-religious. Not only New Age types or benign agnostics operate in a new landscape, with detraditionalization and an elevation of authenticity, but so do adherents of charismatic and evangelical forms of Christianity, as well as various forms of conservative “traditionalisms” and fundamentalisms.

I think this is typical of the Western world today, even for young Western Muslims. Wearing a headscarf becomes a matter of self-expression. Radicals invent their own version of Islam with self-appointed leaders and the use of modern resources such as the Internet. In Islamic reasoning, we occasionally see some of the older pathways engaging a religious authority that is heteronomous and external, given, for instance, in a set of articles on Islam and biomedical ethics in *Zygon* two years ago (Alghrani 2013; Ghaly 2013a, 2013b; Padela 2013; Rasheed and Padela 2013; Shabana 2013), but in the radical modernization that seems partially a matter of legitimization rather than the traditional authority. That the role of tradition assumed in those articles has become foreign to most Western readers, but seems also somewhat instrumental for such Muslim intellectuals themselves, illustrates the cultural shift regarding religion in the West.

The distrust in authority is not merely a distrust in religious authority. It also appears as a distrust in science, in many domains of life. About food or health, for example, vaccination, people make up their own minds rather than follow “authorities.” Thus, “religion and science” also has to deal with changes in the standing of science and of scientific organizations.

My own earlier writings are within the individualistic mood, though respectful of tradition; traditions are less and less a given, and certainly not a source of authority. In *Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates* (Drees 2010a, 11–38), I distinguished various motives and agendas in “religion and science.” Some work is driven by an apologetic agenda, as *apologetics* for religion among science-minded audiences and as apologetics for science among religiously minded. The second is more prominent in the United States, whereas the first is more typical for the European market, but there too we also have to consider the fact that for many “science” is not the source of authority that it might have been. A task for “religion and science” is also to counter superstition—as the subtitle of Carl Sagan’s book *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (1995) evokes—and the modern individualistic playing-down of consolidated knowledge.

Another setting is *intrareligious competition*, as different groups and persons appeal to science or claim to follow a scientific methodology, in order to strengthen their own position and challenge others. Thus, Richard Olson (2011) described the “conflict” notion as useful in a competition between groups—by pointing out that when other views are in conflict with science, they should be dismissed. A further orientation, most individualistic in kind, is *anthropological*, to articulate how important features of human existence can be maintained when one accepts the scientific image of reality, including ourselves.

Though such agendas are legitimate, they tend not to stimulate self-critical scholarly research (except for the work by historians of science and of religion), a somewhat pessimistic assessment on which I concur with Michael Ruse (Ruse 2015, this issue; Drees 2010b, 122). Aside from the bias that might be stimulated by a particular agenda, I also think that we tend to lack clarity on the understanding of religion, and its changes in the contemporary world. As far as projects are apologetic for traditional religious traditions, they might have a decreasing audience.

What would be more constructive in our time? Let me first say something more on the character of religion, as the intersection of a worldview and an ethos. In my own efforts at an intellectual understanding of “theology” (the ideas side of religion), I have learned from anthropologists, especially Clifford Geertz, who wrote 50 years ago:

Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people’s *ethos*—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its aesthetic style and mood—and their *world*

view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. (Geertz 1966, 3 [1973, 89], emphasis added; see Drees 2010a, 68)

This combination of ethos and worldview returns as the distinction between “moods and motivations” and “a conception of a general order of existence” in the definition of religion Clifford Geertz (1966, 4 [1973, 90]) subsequently offers:

A religion is (1) a system of symbols, which acts to (2) establish powerful moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

As an anthropologist, Geertz clearly looked at groups and their systems of symbols and their structure of authority.

With the changes indicated above, we need to be more individualistic. But even then, “religion and science” has a similar dual orientation, seeking to develop a plausible “conception of the general order of existence” that is coherent with our attitudes and ideals, our “moods and motivations.” One might also approach “religion and science” more pragmatically, as the quest to find a combination of ethos and worldview that helps us to live well. Thus, one might see as the purpose of “religion and science,” alongside critical thought, to provide *constructive proposals for visions that integrate an ethos and an understanding of reality*.

When the emphasis is on the intellectual exercise, such work leans toward theoretical philosophy, discussing *beliefs* and *epistemology*. If “religion and science” is a project to be approached via practical philosophy (social philosophy, ethics), the question is how to think of the coexistence of two major but different human activities, *working together for a common good*. Working together may respect differences in kind and status. The main concern then might be to understand the good, and the factors that help promote “the good,” as the opposite of “good” is all too often a disappointed “intended well.” Hence, even if the driving ambition is “practical” (social, moral), we need critical intellectual consideration. Using the best available knowledge is a matter of intellectual honesty and of moral responsibility, especially as beliefs have consequences. The classic discussion is well illustrated with the essay by the mathematician William K. Clifford (1879), “The Ethics of Belief,” and the response by William James ([1896] 1956), “The Will to Believe,” which better could have been titled “The Right to Believe,” as James argues that under certain conditions where there is insufficient evidence, it is still legitimate to decide to hold a particular belief.

How might science and religion work together for a common good? Arguing for “independence,” as Ruse (2015) does in this issue, may be

sufficient for the theoretical interest in claims about reality, but does not present us with the particular roles science and religion could have. In working together with religion, science is primarily a source of understanding, *models of reality*, and through technology a source of *power*, the ability to modify reality. Scientific practice also provides a model for good collaboration and for rational operation, and hence, a *normative example*. Religions primarily provide stories and visions, *models for reality*. They could also help us reflect on the “human condition,” individual and collective. One might hope that religions provide normative and inspiring examples, but given embarrassing examples from people who have religious offices or justify violence with religious motives, this exemplary role should be treated cautiously, if at all. As another contributor, the study of religion and of religions, by scholars of religion, anthropologists, and other colleagues, may help us understand processes of legitimization and rationalization. It also nourishes awareness of cultural contingency, against “too strong” claims on behalf of a particular religious view, and helps us understand the possible nature of religious orientations, against easy dismissal.

IRAS AND ZYGON: JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE

What may IRAS and *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* contribute today? For IRAS, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, with its annual conferences, discussions by e-mail, and further activities, I think it may be important to consider its particular geographic niche, as well as its broad but nonetheless characteristic profile.

Geographically speaking, IRAS currently is mostly a North American organization, with a concentration in the Northeast and in the Chicago area. I think it most relevant to think what IRAS might do and mean in its own, American context. Discussing what should be done in Latin America, China, Indonesia, the Middle East, Europe, or Australia might be perceived as arrogant or paternalistic. An export model of “religion and science,” by translating Barbour or exporting IRAS discussions, is not necessarily helpful to others. The globalizing world is part of the American context, but acknowledging and accepting the specific location of IRAS seems to me an important form of realism and modesty. Globalization takes local form, and that is where one lives and acts.

The particular intellectual niche, it seems to me, is to engage and nourish science and the intellectual ambition that comes by engagement with science, also in domains such as history, anthropology, psychology, the study of religions, and the like. Not by dismissing human existential quests, as the new atheism seems to do, but neither by allowing “self-invented” varieties of science to stand for genuine science. Rather, the aim should be to bring a genuine scientific orientation to the table in the human, individualized, and communal discourse about our existential orientations

and moral responsibilities, encouraging a constructive and critical reflection on worldviews and values.

Thus, I would expect IRAS to serve as a *platform* for an intellectually and socially responsible encounter of our best available knowledge and methods with the plurality of values and forms of practical and theoretical human self-understandings present in our situation, for some people (mostly white, mostly American, mostly liberal Christians, Unitarians, and Jews, all with a proscience attitude), and on that platform to exchange opinions and arguments, become informed and assured by finding like-minded people. But not too much alike; within IRAS, participants need not come to an agreement on the desirable policy in our time or the true view of the universe. IRAS, as I see it, is not an advocacy group for a particular cause, but an environment that fosters good information and critical reflection.

Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science is a somewhat different beast, as a journal that has its basis in IRAS and CASIRAS, but operates independently. As a scholarly journal, present also in digital form, *Zygon* can have a global scope. According to the report on 2013 from the publisher, Wiley, the journal is present in over 10,000 libraries, roughly one-third North America, one-third Europe, one-third rest of the world. The majority of the articles are written by authors based in North America, but a gradual shift in submitted and accepted papers seems to be occurring, and that is certainly something I, as editor, like to see.

As a journal, *Zygon* also provides a platform, but not so much one for participants in a conversation from person to person. Articles, hopefully, have been composed carefully by the authors, their arguments and presentation have been reviewed critically by at least two colleagues of good standing, and, often, thereafter have been revised in response to comments of the reviewers. Thus, more than a private conversation, articles that appear in print should be well argued, based on good research and resources, and make an original point. By publishing certain articles, inviting contributions to some thematic sections, drawing on particular conferences, *Zygon* does contribute to the shape of the agenda for “religion and science” discourse.

Our particular orientation is broad, qua religious and nonreligious points of view represented, including also voices from those representing more traditional forms of religion. The journal is broad qua disciplinary orientation, including as authors natural and social scientists, scholars from the humanities and religious studies, theologians and philosophers, insiders speaking from within a tradition or particular scientific context, and outsiders describing “others.” A common denominator, for the journal, is that we emphasize the importance of science as done within the disciplines themselves; engaging a self-invented alternative “science” is not engaging science as it is. If an author submits a manuscript that offers an alternative within science, say to Einstein’s relativity theory or within contemporary

biology, the author is referred to journals in those scientific disciplines, as the proper forum to evaluate such a claim would not be *Zygon* but the particular scientific community.

Zygon aspires to be a scholarly journal, providing opportunities for authors. In the current academic climate, academic recognition depends on proper publications. Thus, as editor I am particularly open to contributions by early career scholars, though we also publish the scientist-emeritus who reflects upon the discipline that was his own or her own for many years.

In a changing world, with science providing an increasingly deep and unified understanding of reality that may seem more and more remote from human existential interests, and with existential orientations, whether religious or nonreligious, becoming more and more individualized with “authenticity” as the prime norm, IRAS and *Zygon* should aspire to contribute to a serious engagement with the best available knowledge and methods and with moral wisdom that respects but transcends personal “authenticity,” both critically and constructively.

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