

Editorial

The coherence of man's understanding seems continually to founder as he tries to match his traditional or commonsense views of his purposes with his scientific views of his nature. The commonsense and traditional notions of his freedom to make choices and his responsibility for his behavior seem denied if he is to believe a scientific view that his mind is nowhere free from some kind of mechanically or electrochemically determined system of his brain. But, even if we could successfully account for man's "free will" and "responsibility" for making meaningful and purposive choices in a deterministic world, we are still faced with the question of whether that world is in the end a meaningless chaos in which man's fate is ultimately doomed to disorder and death, a chaos that cares not a whit for man, holds no purpose for man, and where man is merely an accidental freak of circumstances. At least this seems to be the kind of picture that many have claimed to be implied by the scientists. Three world-famous biologists present the first three papers in this issue of *Zygon* concerning how they as scientists view this problem of how we can speak about human freedom to make value choices and about human purpose, in the context of the deterministic world view of the sciences.

These problems, such as the mind-body relation, as freedom and determinism, as right and wrong, as purposes, goals, values, and the ultimate meaning of man, are traditionally problems dealt with by philosophy rather than the sciences. The fourth paper in this issue of *Zygon*, by an internationally distinguished philosopher, comments on the poverty of contemporary philosophy, segregated from the sciences, in dealing with these problems. The reader who shares the perspectives of traditional philosophy and theology may be somewhat shocked by philosopher Laszlo's critique and by its juxtaposition with the three papers by biologists seeking to illuminate problems that are basically philosophical and theological. Readers will be able to judge whether the scientists have been successful or helpful, and they may be able to judge the degree to which a man needs to be versed and skillful in both philosophy and areas of science in order to deal with these traditional problems of philosophy. Perhaps here are the grounds for a new revolution in the nature of philosophizing and of theologizing. One may ask whether, after centuries of separation, philosophy may be rejoined with natural philosophy, and whether, after the millennia of separation, metaphysics may be rejoined with physics?

Perhaps even more startling than Laszlo's "poverty of philosophy" will be the implication of Bouma's paper on the impact of religion on men today. If readers of *Zygon* are concerned with the usefulness of the sciences in illuminating religion and human values, what do we make of this survey of ten years (1960-69) of ten major sociological journals and the 185 articles in them which reported empirical studies of religion? The survey concludes that less than 12 percent of the 185 articles were able to relate religion reliably to some other characteristic of people. Perhaps, as Bouma suggests, this rather slight impact of religion on society and behavior "is due to the morbidity of formal religion" at the present moment in history. But, perhaps, as he also implies, this is due to the failure of the scientific study of religion adequately to define or deal with what in fact are the phenomena that are actually, rather than merely formally, religious.

In this first issue of our sixth year, we are publishing an index of the 139 essays published in the first five volumes. Here the reader will find that many distinguished scientists, philosophers, and theologians have presented a corpus of substantial and significant insight for better understanding of the relevance of religion and its relationship to science and human values. While *Zygon* has often pointed to the evidences of the morbidity of elements of formal religion, it also has provided a way of understanding the perpetual relevance of religion, when the term religion is understood to refer not merely to certain forms but rather to the underlying functions that religions, in their prime stages at least, have carried on, such as the functions of being the cultural repository and transmitter of values. For instance, historian of religion, Erwin R. Goodenough, in the March 1967 *Zygon* said that "insofar as we have any sense of direction or value in life, we are all, for better or worse, religious." The September 1966 issue of *Zygon* included a paper by anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, who said that "religions have been the traditional repositories of moral values and sometimes of aesthetic values as well. It is an induction from the evidence at the disposal of the anthropologist that religion in the broad sense is essential to the health and survival of any society." Many of us would join Kluckhohn in seeking to "bring scientific method and outlook to bear on these [religious] problems," to overcome our present "lack of a system of general ideas and values to give meaning to human life." We suspect that a scientific illumination of human values is essential today for such prime functions of religion as providing men with a sense of direction and meaning, and society with health and survival.

R. W. B.