

## *In Memoriam*

THEODOSIUS DOBZHANSKY

January 25, 1900–December 18, 1975

One of the world's great geneticists and architects of evolutionary theory, Theodosius Dobzhansky was a beloved friend and creative participant in the work of those who led the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science, and *Zygon*. Scientifically famous since his 1937 *Genetics and the Origin of Species*, he became widely known among those concerned with the relation of religion and the sciences by his *Biology of Ultimate Concern* in 1967. His warm personality, high aesthetic taste, and intriguing Russian accent provided delightful ornaments to his creative and substantial contributions to religious understanding in the hottest light of evolutionary science. He had been a most popular contributor to IRAS conferences since 1957. Symbolic for his concern for IRAS was that just a few days before his death he confirmed to the program chairman that in spite of some infirmities he indeed wanted and planned to give a paper to the coming 1976 summer conference on "Diversity and Uniformity in Strategies for Human Survival."

For *Zygon*, not only did Dobzhansky spend much time to plan symposia, prepare papers, and help raise necessary funds, but he was one of the core group who helped found the journal. On December 18, 1960, he wrote a letter to IRAS headquarters commenting on "the amazing depth of misunderstanding" of a reviewer who had just damned with faint praise the IRAS volume *Science Ponders Religion*. He concluded: "This may however be a useful experience for us. It seems to me it shows clearly that the IRAS has important role to play. We should try to prepare and publish another volume. . . . I would be much interested in collaborating in such an undertaking. . . . You see, this review has made me excited. Perhaps getting excited is sometimes a useful stimulus." This letter was a stimulus that led to another IRAS book, to *Zygon* in 1966, as well as to his own further studies of the problem, followed by his *Biology of Ultimate Concern* and many other creative contributions to religion and science.

Perhaps one can catch some significant thrusts of this sharp mind's biological interpretation of our ultimate concerns by quoting from his "Chance and Creativity in Evolution" published in *Studies in the Philosophy of Biology*, edited by F. J. Ayala and himself, in 1974: "All animals die, but man alone knows that death is inevitable. . . . Self-awareness [and death-awareness] both are ultimately products of man's unique form of adaptive evolution. . . .

## ZYGON

[Through this evolution of self-awareness and death-awareness] man distinguishes good and evil. He is an ethicising being. He reflects on his past and makes plans for his future, and for the future of his environment, including other people. . . . Mankind has transcended its animality most of all in the spiritual sphere. . . . Life arose from lifeless matter and mind from life lacking self-awareness. Evolution has shown itself capable of bringing about radical novelties. . . . All evolution—inorganic, organic and human—stems from natural laws built into the very fabric of the universe.”