

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION AND THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS: AREOPAGUS REVISITED

by Viggo Mortensen

Abstract. Christianity finds itself in a new situation, one that resembles its first-century experience in that it will be shaped by a new dominant world culture. This culture is marked by three factors—the economy, the multireligious situation, and science. The author’s discussion deals with the issues that arise in this engagement with culture under three rubrics: dialogue between science and religion, globalization of the religious encounter, and interreligious dialogue in a globalized world. The major assertions are: (1) Science and religions must avoid restrictive and expansionist relationships and work for reciprocal interaction. (2) Globalization is an unavoidable, but ambiguous, historical development; religions should reject responses of “ethnification” and “primitivism” and rather engage in strategies that encourage both productive encounter and critical distance. (3) Interreligious dialogue includes dialogues of life, of intellectual exchange, of religious experience, of common action, and of confrontation; this dialogue will seek to embrace truth (which involves science) and wisdom (which includes the various religious traditions) in the reciprocal interaction that is marked by love.

Keywords: dominant culture; economy; globalization; interreligious dialogue; love; reciprocal interaction; science-religion dialogue; truth; wisdom.

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THE CALL

“Areopagus Revisited” in the title of this paper refers to a well-known passage in Acts 15, in which is described Paul’s dialogue with representatives of the guiding institutions and the elite in the new world of his time. What was to become the Christian world religion was in the midst of a first radical transformation process, setting itself apart from Judaism and finding a new shape in the Hellenistic world. When Jerusalem fell to the troops of Titus and the menorah was conveyed in triumph to Rome, not only Jews had to realize that Judaism would never be the same. Christianity also would have to change. Those Christians who stayed behind in Jerusalem after A.D. 70 would have to realize that their world would never be the same. Never again would they hear the psalms sung in Hebrew at the temple. They would look back to the golden time when they had lived in a close-knit community under the guidance of Jacob the Just, sharing everything from the prayers in the Temple to their possessions, and they would know it was history. They would with fear and trembling anticipate a situation in which their male children would not be circumcised and in which they would eat pork as if doing so was a natural thing. In their misery they could perhaps see a glimmer of hope in the fact that there were now more Christians in Antioch, in Corinth, and in Rome than in Jerusalem.

The background for the position I hold in this paper is that, in my opinion, Christians today are in a position similar to that of the first generation of Christians: Christianity is undergoing a fundamental change. This has first of all to do with a change in geography. The center and the vitality of Christianity has moved southward. The main effect of the missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is that we now have growing and independent churches in the southern regions, and this fact will increasingly influence how Christianity fares in the world.

The new shape Christianity got in the first century developed in the encounter with the dominant culture of that time. We glimpse that process when we read about Paul on Areopagus. Likewise, Christianity in the new millennium will be shaped in the encounter with the dominant culture of this time, and that includes the factor of globalization. Contributing to this development in particular are three factors: the economy, the multireligious situation, and the sciences.

For this reason it is very much to the point that this seminar addresses in a multicultural and multireligious context how two of those main factors that will determine our future—science and religion—can supplement, interact, or even cooperate with each other.

Let us therefore briefly touch upon the text that is meant to be endorsed from this meeting, “The Call to Our Guiding Institutions.” I think there is an imbalance in this text.

In the section on science and medicine there is a strong call to those

institutions and the people involved in those activities “to enter into dialogue with competent persons from the world’s religious and spiritual traditions.” This call is repeated in the last paragraph (C9), where institutions are invited “to enter into dialogue with religion about the evolving scientific understanding of the origins and complex dynamics of the universe.” In the preceding paragraphs there has been a strong appeal to develop ethical standards for the practice of science and medicine and to reflect on their limitations.

When we come to the call to religions, we might expect some of the same recommendations directed to religious institutions and religious personalities, a call to dialogue with science and technology about the complex dynamics of the universe and a reflection on the limitations of religion. But that we do not find.

I see this seminar as an attempt to redress this imbalance. Science and religion, together with the economy, are potent powers when it comes to changing the world and its people. Therefore it is of the utmost significance if these two powers are in constant dialogue.

As is mentioned in “The Call to Our Guiding Institutions” (part B), this dialogue has gone on for some time, and today an “increasing openness . . . has produced a new level of dialogue between the two.”

In this first section of my paper I intend to review some of the models for dialogue between science and religion and consider which is most fruitful for a constructive and productive interaction. In a second section I review the effect that globalization has had on the religious scene. Then, in a final section, I evaluate these two forms of dialogue to discern whether the dialogue between religion and science and the dialogue between people of different faiths can be of mutual inspiration.

MODELS FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Restriction. My fellow countryman the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard had an extremely critical attitude toward natural science. He could be obliging and kind toward the individual natural scientist, as we see in his correspondence with his brother-in-law P. W. Lund. At about the same time when Charles Darwin rounded Cape Horn with the good ship *Beagle*, Lund was also in South America. Contrary to Darwin, Lund definitely sought the traces of God in the history of nature. Because he did not find them, but instead saw the same variation evidenced by Darwin as evolution, he eventually became insane. Toward natural science as such, however, Kierkegaard was ruthless.

It is no good trying to cope with natural science. One finds oneself standing there defenseless and is in no position to control. The researcher immediately begins to dissect with his details, now one has to reach Australia, now the moon, now a cave beneath the ground, now to hell up in the ass—chasing an intestinal worm; now it is time to use the telescope now the microscope; who the hell can stand that! (Pap. VII, 1 A, 200)

Of course, nobody can stand that. That is why there is more in the daily newspaper on astrology than on astronomy. Kierkegaard's view is that natural science threatens to change life from an existence of decisions and seriousness into one of observation.

In our time, the natural science is especially dangerous. Physiology will eventually be so comprehensive that it swallows ethics as well. Sufficient traces of a new endeavour are already to be seen, efforts to treat ethics as physics, whereby all of ethics becomes illusion, and the ethical is to be treated statistically on average figures, or to be calculated as one calculates oscillations in natural laws. (Pap. VII, 1 A, 182)

Perhaps Kierkegaard here anticipated one of the basic problems of the modern world, namely, the *expansion* of the scientific method into the fields of life aspects and worldviews. For a long time, at least the theologians hoped as a prolongation of Kierkegaard to be able to resist, to keep the sciences out of the field of existence *restrictively*. The question now remains whether the time has come to move beyond both restriction and expansion.

It is possible by means of catchwords to describe the stages of development in the relationship between science and religion: from unity over conflict and condemnation to separation.

The state of separation was in many ways a natural reaction to the confrontation between religion and natural science that Darwin had created in the late nineteenth century. It became clear in the light of this last and most vehement confrontation that the old unity among the sciences was lost forever.

Often enough it has been emphasized that theology came out of this confrontation on the losing end. Even theologians accepted this view, and so society saw it. Although theologians in answer to the challenge argued for separation, they seldom acknowledged their assent as weakness but, rather, allowed their doctrines to speak for themselves, to have explanatory force in the empirical field. In fact, the separation was often presented as a strength, a strength gained through a "shortening of the front," to use a military expression.

The theological reconstruction that was necessary to adapt to the new situation lasted nearly a hundred years. By then, a position had been built up that is now almost classical; it is characterized in the American discussion as neo-orthodox. Langdon Gilkey describes it in the following way:

The inquiries of the physical sciences and those of theology are now seen to be asking fundamentally different kinds of questions, in totally different areas of thought and experience. Consequently the answers to these questions, the hypotheses of science, and the affirmations or doctrines of theology, cannot and do not conflict. Religious myth has finally become that for which it was most aptly fitted: a symbolic story expressing the religious answer to man's ultimate questions. (Gilkey 1970, 34)

Just as within cosmology there is a standard model for the birth of the universe, we also can talk about a standard model for the relation between theology and natural science: separation. In the United States it has been necessary to officially systematize this separation under pressure from the influence of the creationism boom. In 1972 the National Academy of Sciences stated that religion and science are separate and mutually exclusive realms of human thought.

There are several answers to how these “separate and mutually exclusive realms” are to be further defined in relation to each other. One possibility is the creation of an ontological dualism. If such a division is made, one is always as a theologian on retreat against science, and one may be tempted to fall into the God-of-the-gaps trap. At the same time, this view provides no basis for the demand for universalism that is implicit in Christian talk about creation and providence.

This kind of theology has been called *ad hoc* maneuvers to avoid confrontation with the sciences or to satisfy the demands of “modern man” (Austin 1976, 56f.).

If there are difficulties in dividing the world into two classes, the two-kingdom arguments are refined by referring to such things as layers, dimensions, and aspects. The danger is that such talk becomes purely metaphorical or abstract, which does not further a precise understanding. The thesis that I will defend is that this situation is not viable. This state of affairs is the result of several developments within both theology and science and a number of other internal and external factors, including some of a sociological nature.

One such development within the philosophy of science is the realization that even strictly natural scientific recognition is based on defined methodological presuppositions, presuppositions that cannot be purely justified within natural science. Science cannot and does not claim to be able to explain reality in all its dimensions. Even the causal explanatory model ignores certain phenomena. In other words, the results of natural science are relativized. They work with functional connections that can be used to provoke certain causal changes.

A second reason that the problem regarding relations between natural science and theology has changed is a pragmatic one: namely, that the crises of modern civilization are in part a result of the technology’s having been built on the methods of natural science.

Therefore, the dialogue between theology and natural science continues on a new basis, revolving around the problems concerning arms production, environmental destruction, unlimited growth, and the ecological crisis. So the discussion is no longer concentrated so much on the major, old, basic questions but takes its starting point in actual problems, often of an ethical nature, that require consideration and action.

One of the great problems confronting our dialogue is whether we should resign ourselves to the ethical issues. There is no doubt in my mind that we would more easily come to an agreement in ethics and practice than on the epistemological issues. I would suggest, however, that we not forget any of them.

The situation of separation developed so strongly because such different schools and isms as scientism, positivism, and existentialism could agree at least that theology and natural science belonged in two different fields. Each ism in its own way helped to cement the position of separation. The position is further strengthened by linguistic arguments—usually the so-called theory-of-language games, which derives from the later Wittgenstein.

The point of developing religion into an independent, autonomous language game is that one thereby avoids having to justify one's concepts. Religion is a practical way of life with its own independent language and its own logic. If you enter such a way of life, your norms are changed and reality looks different, and there are no criteria to help you when choosing a religious way of life.

The question is whether the immunity to falsification gained through this theory is not bought at too high a price—namely, the isolation of the religious language game from both other intellectual disciplines and other religious communities (Barbour 1974, 128).

Critics of the language theory in this field hold that it is not possible to avoid the demand for verification so easily. One cannot blame a modern agnostic such as Kai Nielsen (1967) for demanding to be told whether a certain sentence is true, or whether it is in a coherent order just as it is. In his view, the notion that religion is a language game that can be valued only in a religious context, which he calls “Wittgensteinian fideism,” changes religion into an unimportant phenomenon in the ordinary secular world.

An appealing way out of the dichotomy that the theory-of-language games suggests is to seek in everyday language the common language out of which all of the different language games have grown. This is possible because of the family likenesses existing between the different languages: they have roots in everyday language and make use of metaphors when a new meaning is to be created. The metaphor is a “desirable linguistic device used to express and suggest hypotheses for both scientists and theologians,” says Earl MacCormac (1997, 157), and he hereby attempts to dissolve the traditional tensions between scientific and religious language by using the scientific term *hypothesis* for the assertions of faith and theology as well. This is also Wolfhart Pannenberg's view.

There are not two languages, a language of religion and a language of science, but one language, ordinary discourse, that is modified in like manner by both enterprises to form the metaphors of conveyance and root-metaphors (Austin 1976, xvi).

I am very sympathetic toward this way of bridging the gulf between

religion and science. The immediate result apparent from this insight into the language-philosophical and philosophy-of-science discussion is that the case for remaining separate appears strengthened. The contrast between natural science and theology becomes mainly methodological.

Expansion. If we all agree that the state of separation is unsatisfactory, we must leave this position, although leaving a secure place is very difficult. In my view, however, it can be done with confidence, because

The substantial content of theology, if it is not in perfect harmony with scientific knowledge, cannot be in sharp incongruity with it, and what we say about God must be congruent in some way with what we know about human experience and its objects through the sciences. . . . To affirm that there cannot be deep incongruity between theology and scientific knowledge, and that such knowledge can also be theologically construed, is to continue in a very old strand of the Christian tradition. (Gustafson 1981, 252)

This is not a solution to our problem but a starting point for a research program. To elaborate, I will briefly touch on the opposite extreme of restriction, namely, expansion, which is found in both a scientific and a religious form.

The scientifically expansionist attitude is characterized by the assumption that discoveries, methods, or results within the scientific field can be applied outside this field as well—for instance, as a foundation for certain value conceptions or sociopolitical values.

When reducing the phenomena of morality and anthropology, the demand for a way of description other than the scientific—a demand shared by theology and philosophy and on which theology must insist if it wishes to keep its integrity—becomes more strongly felt.

If we claim survival to be the highest ethical value, we ought to give people an understanding of where and how we are unique, because that is what is needed to survive.

If scientific expansion is carried to its logical conclusion, not much seems to be left. All human phenomena, including those of the highest spirituality, are explained by reference to their genetic determinants. To defend religion and theology against such scientific expansion, it seems that the only possibility is to hold that evolution's way is God's way and thus that natural selection is God. In fact, we find something like this in, for instance, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Ralph W. Burhoe, the founding editor of *Zygon*. The goal for Burhoe has three parts: (1) Through a revitalization of religion he will (2) create a synthesis between science and religion and thus (3) bridge the gap between science and values.

I find Burhoe's expansionist ideas stimulating and provoking, but I have one reservation. Burhoe's ideas of revitalizing religion by integrating God into the sciences could actually, against his intent, contribute to the demise of religion. When religion can be explained as a mere manifestation of brain functions and God can be explained by genetics, religion becomes

nothing but words—words that we could just as well do without.

Other ways of relating religion and science will at least retain an element of the standard model, in that they all regard religion as having some sort of independence.

Integration: A New Metaphysics? The reaction against theological and philosophical restriction was not only scientific or theological expansion. There also has been an attempt to go back to an earlier model of the relationship between theology and science, namely, to let metaphysics be the meeting point. But is not metaphysics dead? Of those who have concerned themselves with metaphysics, the first name that must be mentioned is that of Alfred North Whitehead. I find Whitehead's work fascinating but must also consider whether what Arthur R. Peacocke says of Whitehead's system is correct, namely, that it "is no longer of currency even in an intellectual and philosophical climate deeply influenced by science" (Peacocke 1979, 140). Still, he believes that Whitehead's attempt stands as "the most systematic attempt to date to understand God's action in the world in relation to the scientific picture of that world" (1979, 141). I would suggest that we pursue the direction given by Whitehead without being tied down by his metaphysical system. That is exactly what I think is the case with the Danish philosopher and theologian K. E. Løgstrup (1905–1981). Løgstrup seeks to identify features of human life that invite metaphysical reflection and that are susceptible to religious interpretation.

Løgstrup's main opponent is in many ways nihilism. He settles with this opponent in more than just a theological way, as do, for example, the existentialist theologians by preaching the gospel "senkrecht von Oben" (directly from above) as the only alternative to nihilism. Løgstrup shows that, in a fundamental way, nihilism can be shown to be philosophically untenable. His theological reasoning: ". . . if the coming of God's kingdom into our life is not to be an esoteric event, hence the planet where it has happened, and nature and history where God's kingdom has arisen, and the universe to which they belong, must all be God's. And it must be our fault if it is not evident that it is so" (unpublished manuscript).

Løgstrup indeed sees nihilism as a child of natural science in many ways, but he also sees that we live on natural science to a great extent. So there is a need for a more differentiated attitude.

As opposed to transcendental philosophy, which isolates the subject and places it on the edge of the universe—"a gypsy on the border of the universe" (Monod)—Løgstrup is intent on developing an ontology in which humanity is seen not as separate from the universe but as a part of it and in unity with nature. As he says, we must try to understand the cosmos or the universe not so much as our surroundings but rather as our source.

Thus Løgstrup argues that certain phenomena can be fully understood only from the universe, from cosmos, thus implying speculative philo-

sophical statements about cosmos. The absolute contrast to a position like Løgstrup's would be a scientific naturalism that maintains that the unity of humankind with cosmos could be fully explained scientifically, an enterprise that he would label reductionistic.

Løgstrup insists that in our sense perception we are in contact with real features of the universe. Likewise, he insists that everyday language refers to genuine features of the historic and natural life of human beings. The way in which language is used shows a knowledge of the phenomena, a knowledge that is used exactly in the phenomenological philosophy that he, inspired by Edmund Husserl and Hans Lipps, turns to.

To illustrate what Løgstrup means by phenomenology, one can point to the first paragraph in *The Ethical Demand* (1971), which contains a phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon "trust." These phenomena are in Løgstrup's later writings called the sovereign or spontaneous manifestations of being (Danish: *suverne livsytringer*; German: *souveräne Daseins-äusserungen*). Ethics is thus, according to Løgstrup, based on these phenomena, which are not ethical themselves. As precultural phenomena they carry the whole existence, and thus they offer a picture of how life really ought to be. So here the is-ought gap really has been bridged. As life often enough is not as clear cut, the ethical demand arises out of our failure and disobedience—dogmatically spoken, our sin. The interdependence from which the demand arises is interpreted by means of the Judeo-Christian concept of creation.

The analysis leads to some practical consequences concerning our behavior toward nature. The natural sciences' occupation with nature threatens to end in an abstract spirituality, in which nature is reduced to a case of general laws and an area for using technology.

Thus Løgstrup takes it for granted that science can give us a knowledge of reality, but at the same time it is reductionistic in its approach to reality. That is why the phenomenological analysis and the metaphysical speculation that lead to the religious interpretation must be maintained.

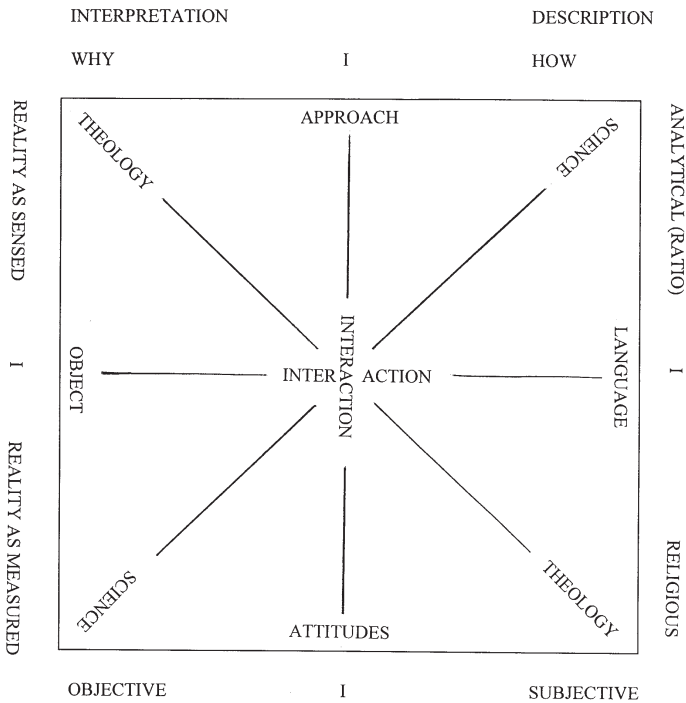
Considering this, it would be an obvious thought to claim complementarity between the two (or more) approaches to reality.

Niels Bohr—who introduced the concept of complementarity to overcome the difficulty in measurement in quantum mechanics, that one is unable to discern sharply between the event and the spectator, between subject and object—could already use this concept of complementarity outside physics, both within the other sciences and to characterize general phenomena, for example, the relationship between love and justice. Others have tried to use the concept to determine the relationship between religion and science.

I am very attracted to that idea. It makes way for the point of view that the two approaches have a status of their own and can contribute with independent understanding. But if the trait is urged that they exclude

each other, then the model of complementarity becomes an all-too-logical consequence of the restrictive standard model. The restriction becomes too obvious, and the state of separation is cemented.

Reciprocal Interaction 1. Although I cannot follow the synthetic endeavors of the expansionist models to the end, I find it possible to learn from them that there are more points of resemblance between the various approaches than were previously thought of. We must move on to a position beyond both restriction and expansion. Reality cannot be divided into two areas, one scientifically and technically controlled, the other religiously interpreted. Reality is one. This one reality can be seen in different ways, but its unity has to manifest itself also in the way we talk about it.



In this model of reciprocal interaction, the various approaches, languages, attitudes, and objects of both theology and natural science are brought together. The disciplines vary; they keep their integrity, but they need to interact. The interaction must for ecclesiastical and sacramental theology lead to reformulation of central Christian ideas and concepts including creation, providence, sin, Christology, and redemption.

In a later section of this paper, I explore how this model in a new form can show itself to be fruitful also for interreligious dialogue. But first, a glimpse of those forces that are currently transforming the global culture.

GLOBALIZATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER

There is a widespread feeling in many areas and also among the religious that we are entering a new paradigm as we enter the twenty-first century. In the twentieth century there was—partly because of the influence of Marxism and partly because of other factors related to modernization—a widely held notion (at least in the North and West) that the world was becoming more and more secular. Thus a religious person expended much energy in fighting the influence of secularization and finding the right place for religion in view of the reigning paradigm.

It is my conviction that the reigning paradigm for the twenty-first century will be influenced greatly by what could be called the globalization of the religious encounter.

Although, allegedly, globalization holds much promise for the future of planet Earth, it is regarded with some trepidation by all those who find it difficult to visualize the greater picture into which they are supposed to fit. The world's leading financial institutions are evolving, and new technology is developing rapidly and changing our way of life. One thing is clear: we need to educate ourselves and critically analyze developments so that we can make informed decisions.

Globalization of the Economy. For better or worse, *globalization* has become the buzzword used to characterize the present situation, and like all buzzwords it has a wide range of meanings. Its starting point is the interconnection of people's political, economic and social lives. What pushes globalization forward are trade and the economy, technology, and technological progress, as well as political developments.

The decisive political development that sparked the trend toward globalization was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The world changed from a bipolar to a multipolar world. We had been accustomed to a clear distinction between East and West, Marxist and capitalist. Although the current situation is much more confusing, it does allow new regions to develop and grow.

The collapse of the bipolar reality has led to the development of a new single-world economy. There seems to be no viable alternative to a market-driven capitalism. Even China, despite still being Marxist officially, seems to have adopted the new economic strategy. The neoliberal capitalism spreading through the world disregards all national boundaries; one political consequence could be that the nation-state loses its importance. This spreading, in turn, has given rise to certain insecurities that we might wish to cover up and has resulted in an unhealthy nationalism. Nation-states are becoming less important, as the regions are gaining in importance and a definite growth in nationalism is apparent.

We have witnessed considerable movements of goods, capital, and people. Although sometimes the flow has been unrestricted, more often than not

the free flow has been hampered by trade protectionism, tariffs, and tight restrictions on capital movements. Negotiations of the World Trade Organization have resulted in the gradual elimination of some of these barriers to free trade and capital movement. This liberalization is an international trend; few countries continue to isolate themselves (and then very much to their own disadvantage). The trend toward economic globalization is undeniable, although its importance has often been exaggerated. Commodity and financial markets are limited with regard to their “globality,” and the labor market has barely been globalized. Nevertheless, the world economy has become more internationally integrated than ever before.

The following traits distinguish globalization from the well-known phenomenon of internationalization:

- Business activities are “footloose”; they do not have anchorage in any given place.
- A comprehensive notion have been implemented at all levels, including the microlevel, and is internalized by the individuals.
- Globalization is advocated by the world’s macroeconomic institutions and superpowers, which see a linkage between development and globalization.
- Globalization does not allow for different ideological outlooks.
- A permeation by neoliberal thinking promotes values such as equity and efficiency and has changed the world more than Christianity or Marxism, for instance. Neither religion nor philosophy has been able to unite the world, but the economy has.

Trade is the most obvious manifestation of a globalized world economy. Those unversed in economic theory might sometimes find it difficult to understand why trade has such a beneficial influence on the world economy, a fact on which both economists and policy makers agree. The explanation lies in the theory of comparative advantage, according to which both those who export and those who import will be better off under the terms of free trade. Nevertheless, much remains to be discussed, including the relationship between trade, labor conditions, and the environment.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) play a significant role in the process of globalization and are subject to considerable controversy. On one hand, they are often regarded as bullies that exploit workers and natural resources while ignoring the community’s well-being; on the other hand, they are seen as quasi saints that bring advanced technology to poorer countries and cheap products to the wealthier ones. The truth lies somewhere in between. There are sufficient pull factors in the direction of enhancing the TNCs’ activities: these have to do with scale, vertical integration (the wish to have a perfectly smooth transition between supplier, manufacturer, and consumer), and competitive advantage. All this can result in the exploit-

ative exertion of power that can be impossible for the political system to control. The TNCs' flexibility makes it hard for governments to raise revenue, to protect the environment, and to promote the safety of the labor force.

Nevertheless, a number of developing countries invite TNCs because they consider the gains to be greater than the cost. The problem is that in the developing world most direct foreign investment goes straight to those regions that have the highest growth potential and prospects.

Everybody agrees that technology, especially information technology, is the motor behind globalization. The cost of communication and computing has fallen dramatically. Sea and air transport have become increasingly competitive, and the progress in computer technology means that transactions are made at lightning speed. If companies do not want to be left behind, they must be able to react promptly. Technological change also influences investment strategies. Sophisticated technology can be introduced into developing countries and combined with comparatively low wages. This technological development has changed our perception of time and space and of the way in which we communicate. The "network" has become the preferred metaphor to describe human communication and a wide variety of other activities. Theorists talk about extension and compression as the two main characteristics of our time: the extension of the effects of modernity to the entire world and the compression of time and space. Extension brought about by computers, modems, fax machines, and the Internet brings with it a certain culture, Western culture, a powerful homogenizing system that often functions the same way worldwide. Trade has become globalized, and research and education function according to certain globalized patterns. Although the homogenizing effect is powerful, it does have its limits. In spite of globalization, local culture will often have enough room to flourish, thus creating plural modernities. So the global and the local complement one another.

The other side of extension is compression. Time and space are compressed. Things that happen on one half of the globe can be experienced instantaneously by those living on the other half. The speed at which communication takes place influences our relationship to the past. The same goes for space. Information now contained in a single tiny computer chip would previously have filled an entire library. We often leave the place where we were born and where our ancestors have lived for generations in search of new opportunities. New identities—and even multiple identities—develop in the wake of globalization.

How to Evaluate Globalization? Globalization is a complex and many-faceted phenomenon. In order to evaluate it, we must begin with the realistic assumption that at the end of the twentieth century globalization has become a fact of life, an irreversible trend that promises wealth and

growth. What remains to be seen is whether it can cope with the two major challenges the neoliberal economy faces today: population growth and environmental problems.

Ecumenical social ethics has until now concentrated primarily on the negative results of globalization and the concomitant widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. The expansion of trade and foreign investment has exacerbated the differences between the developing countries, while unemployment and inequalities in income in the industrialized countries have reached an alarming level. The fruits of globalization appear to be distributed very unevenly: many of the poorer countries have benefited only marginally from the expansion of world trade, while many have been bypassed, with most foreign investment going to the already-established centers such as Europe, North America, and Japan. Why? In short, because of bad policy, bad terms, and bad rules.

Factors such as poor macroeconomic policy, large fiscal deficits covered by external borrowing, overprotection of markets, and neglecting to invest in human resources and infrastructures have contributed to deterring foreign investment.

Nevertheless, we must be wary of falling into the trap of holding only governments accountable for not having taken full advantage of the benefits of globalization. It is well known that developing countries often suffer extremely unfair terms of trade. Falling commodity prices coupled with the burden of foreign debt aggravated by poor credit ratings have resulted in their having to pay exorbitant rates of interest.

The rules governing the process of globalization are often unfavorable to poorer countries. It has been established that the developing world—which, after all, constitutes three quarters of the world's population—will benefit from only a quarter to a third of the income gains generated. “A rising tide of wealth is supposed to lift all boats. But some are more seaworthy than others. The yachts and ocean liners are indeed rising in response to new opportunities, but the rafts and row boats are taking on water. And some are sinking fast” (*Human Development Report* 1997, 82ff.).

When evaluating globalization, one must remember that it is a human-made phenomenon. It has not come down from heaven. This means that it can be influenced and changed. The central mechanism in economic globalization is the market. The modern market is an effective mechanism for distributing certain goods, yet it also has certain flaws. The traditional marketplace was a place of sharing more than just goods and services. One also shared information and experienced community there. Because modern markets exclude those who cannot compete, the market has become a place of exclusion and brought fragmentation to communities and the politics that should respond to the aggressive competition in the market.

The *Human Development Report* lists a number of initiatives at national and international policy levels. At the national policy level it is possible to

manage trade and capital flows more carefully, invest in the poor, foster small enterprises, manage new technology, provide emergency options, and improve governance.

Because globalization has a tendency to disregard national borders and weaken national policies, a system of global policies is needed. Here we might propose a more supportive macroeconomic policy environment for the eradication of poverty and a more equitable institutional environment for global trade. A fair partnership with multinational corporations might help promote growth and alleviate poverty. To avoid marginalization, developing countries will need assistance in coping with the information revolution. Finally, action will need to be taken to address the problem of international debt and to offer poorer countries better access to finance, loans, and aid. Economic integration is only partly about money, goods, and services; fundamentally it is a political and cultural phenomenon that shapes the mentalities, aspirations, and dreams of people across the world.

Globalization and Religion. Inasmuch as globalization touches on all areas of life, it naturally also affects religion. Some of the recent changes in the religious world—such as New Age and other forms of spirituality; Pentecostalism among Christians in Africa and Latin America; fundamentalism within Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism; and new trends within Buddhism—can best be interpreted within the framework of globalization. This haphazard enumeration illustrates that religion does not function as a global system itself but that within the different traditions it responds in various ways to the new global realities. When global systems fail to live up to their ideals of progress and equality, religions are often mobilized, frequently fostering antisystemic feelings. Nevertheless, they can also offer a religious answer, a “vision” to address the problems arising from globalization. Robert J. Schreier (1997, 16) identifies four “flows” related to theological discourses that address the failures and contradictions of global systems: liberation, feminism, ecology, and human rights.

We do not review these different trends here, but it is interesting to note that what they have in common is their attempt to mediate between the global and the local. This may take the form of *antiglobalism*, a retreating from the modern world and sometimes even a counteroffensive. In religious circles antiglobalism is manifest in fundamentalism and other guises. Fundamentalism has arisen in several of the world religions. Because of its simplicity it is thought to provide a bastion against globalization. In fact, its very simplicity may prevent its addressing the complexities of the situation, and sooner or later it will collapse or have to adapt.

Another strategy is *ethnification*, a process of rediscovering a lost identity based on blood and cultural ties. This happens frequently when asserting a local identity amid rapid social change and cultural instability, as we have seen in places where new national identities have had to be formed following a colonial era or adoption of Marxist ideology. These examples

show us that establishing an ethnic identity is no easy task and that we often end up with a sort of hybrid. A third form of cultural response to globalization is *primitivism*, an attempt to revert to an earlier, premodern period in order to find there a meaningful frame of reference.

If we look at the religions of the world, it is easy to find examples of these approaches to globalization. It would be unfortunate if the religions were to subscribe wholesale to any of these strategies, given that they are all backward looking. What we need is a forward-looking attempt to grapple seriously with the diverse aspects of globalization. It is a positive sign that we find several examples of what we could call *productive encounter—critical distance*. Critical distance would be in line with a strong trend in contemporary ecumenical social ethics that censures the neoliberal capitalist way of trade and production. An excellent example of this attitude can be found in the report of the Visser't Hooft Memorial consultation in Bossey, June 1997 (de Santa Ana 1998), which dealt with sustainability and globalization. The report emphasizes that globalization goes hand in hand with continued environmental deterioration and the social exclusion of a large number of people. Against this background, questions such as Is a sustainable society possible within the framework of ongoing globalization? and Can sustainable development be achieved given the conditions imposed by globalization processes? are raised.

As a complex process, globalization merits neither a comprehensive endorsement nor a blanket rejection; globalization is an ambiguous process. It creates considerable wealth for some while increasing the impoverishment of others; it widens the gap between the rich and the poor; while homogenizing culture at one level, it contributes to the fragmentation and hybridization of culture at another. In order to face the forces of globalization it is necessary that the local communities and the political control over the economy be strengthened and that the relevance of civil society be recognized when it comes to counteracting some of the consequences of globalization. Churches should work out educational programs that aim at forming Christian communities committed to the promotion and defense of sustainability: sustainable societies and sustainable development.

One of the ecumenical movement's most prominent spokespersons, Konrad Raiser, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC), gave a good example of what I call productive encounter and critical distance in his report to the Central Committee of the WCC in 1997.

While the WCC and the ecumenical movement cannot but resist globalization as an ideological and political project, we cannot easily opt out of the historical dynamic and the ambiguity of global interdependence. The ecumenical movement must accept the challenge to articulate and embody an alternative understanding and vision of globalization. . . . We are beginning to see more clearly that the challenge of globalization must lead to a re-examination of our ecumenical commitment . . . enabling it to become a source of inspiration for rebuilding community and for developing and strengthening a culture of life and hope.

Globalization from above driven forward and sustained by macroeconomic institutions needs to be met by globalization from below. Religions should be in the forefront of such a popular movement. An obvious task, that of strengthening civil society, lies ahead.

Christian churches confronted with globalization have in the biblical tradition a criterion by which they can judge the homogenizing effects of globalization. That criterion is diversity. In several places in the Bible, the diversity of people is acknowledged, respected, and seen as a resource. In light of the unifying tendencies we face today, churches should advocate plurality and diversity.

Many arguments in favor of globalization have religious overtones. Some advocate globalization as a new religion. Like all other religions, it also has a doctrine: namely, that growth is intrinsically good and growth in international trade benefits all.

This doctrine is based on the assumption that the economy relies on a stable equilibrium. In other words, the economy left to its own devices (or, according to Adam Smith, guided by an invisible hand) will by itself create harmony and wealth.

What if this assumption is simply not true, if what underlies the economy is not a stable but an unstable equilibrium? If that is the case, stability growth and harmony do not come about by themselves; agents have to intervene.

The question in this ongoing discussion in the field of economics is what side the religions will take. The answer is not entirely obvious, but a case could be made for the second stance. In Christian tradition both the biblical notion of stewardship and the jubilee year point us in that direction.

Another controversy emerges when one asks, Who benefits? and Who *should* benefit from economic growth? The classic, utilitarian response is: The greatest happiness for the greatest number. Yet, as is well known, there are many problems with this answer: What is greatest? What is happiness? What is the greatest number? But, after all, this is still a moral answer, which changes if what I seem to be experiencing is correct, that in fact there is another reply one hears more and more frequently to the question of who should benefit: namely, ME. In other words, if I am OK, everything is OK.

Christianity and most other religions stand for the contrary. The Bible leaves no doubt about what the answer should be to the question of who should benefit. It is those who suffer, the poor, the marginalized. Although Christianity is frequently criticized for being unworldly and impractical, it does actually present a relevant criterion when concrete economic strategies are evaluated: Do such strategies improve life for the little ones among us, the poor and the marginalized?

Theology also needs to take issue with globalization if it is seen as all-encompassing and inevitable. Theology needs to affirm that other things

are important, too. The challenge that the church and theology face in the wake of the emergent global culture includes the fragmentation of globalized society, religious relativism, and an increasing individualization of religion. Religion is seldom the common voice inviting all, but as a system it tends to be diminished and relegated to the margins. This is strange in a way, because religions have this potential to overcome the fragmentation. The other side of the coin is that in many places religion is becoming more powerful and influential. The challenge is to respond to the forces of globalization out of one's own identity.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

After this excursion into the world of globalization and the globalized religious world, we now return to the question of how the two forms of dialogue, science-and-religion and interfaith, can mutually enrich each other.

Models for Dialogue between People of Different Faiths. One could say that the nineteenth century, seen from a Christian perspective, was the century of the missionary movement, whereas the twentieth century was the century of the ecumenical movement. As we enter the twenty-first century, we are grappling to understand the new and emerging paradigm that can guide our thoughts and actions now. Events such as the World Parliament of Religions and the call for a global ethic in our guiding institutions are important in this endeavor.

Elements to be included in this new emerging paradigm are yet to be determined, but one thing is clear: the phenomenon of dialogue will be central. In the wider ecumenical discussion four forms of dialogue have been identified: the dialogue of life, the dialogue of intellectual exchange, the dialogue of religious experience, and the dialogue of common action (Amalados 1998).

In the *dialogue of life*, believers of different religions encounter one another in the ordinary course of life. In order for the community to thrive, it is vital that one relate to the Other with respect and attention, recognizing the basic community that incorporates all people in spite of differences. One can learn something about oneself and be enriched by such interpersonal contact.

The dialogue of intellectual exchange is often an area for experts. Faith seeks understanding, and theologians and religious scholars grapple many times with issues that cut across religious lines. Often the insights in one tradition are absolutized. In order to further a more adequate understanding, one needs also an exchange at the intellectual level in order to see the deeper meaning of rituals, customs, and symbols. Intellectual exchange must accompany a deeper search for insight, in which one engages in a search for the Absolute beyond—even if the ultimate truth proves to be beyond one's reach.

In *the dialogue of spiritual experience*, an attempt is made to share in one another's search for the experience of God. Entering into that kind of dialogue, one can read unfamiliar religious sources as spiritual documents. The aim of this activity is to discern God's presence and action. Prayer and meditation can be shared, and this can be experienced as liberating.

The dialogue of common action can take place at different levels. Common human and spiritual values can be promoted, but also alliances can be formed at the political and socioeconomic level with a view to transforming the human community. All religions can normally agree to the goal of making the world a little more just. How to achieve that goal is often a matter of discussion, but such discussion carried out in respect and understanding of the Other's foundation can be an important step to more lasting and sustainable solutions to the urgent problems of the day.

In addition, a fifth form, *dialogue in confrontation*, has been singled out as a necessary step when religions are dishonest and begin to pursue a hidden agenda.

Dialogue between people of different faiths is necessary not only for instrumental reasons but also because we are bound together in a common search for the truth. Michael Amalados formulates as a basic prerequisite for this dialogue that "every religion claims a particular relationship to the divine. Encounter between religions does not deny such special relationships or special calls; rather, it sets them in the context of the whole" (1998, 16).

Because it is the truth we are after, the sciences can play a pivotal and constructive role in all these forms of dialogue. The sciences are characterized according to their methods by a relentless seeking of the truth. It might not be an all-encompassing truth, but what is said to be fact according to scientific method must not only be taken into account but also must be respected in the dialogue between different faiths. However, as scientific knowledge, as we have seen, is a knowledge that also—exactly for methodological reasons—has its limitations, it needs to be complemented with the insights gained in the world's great religious traditions.

Reciprocal Interaction 2: Truth and Wisdom in Love. As is now clear, the mutual interaction between different religious traditions and the sciences that we are advocating here must be carried out in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition of the fact that both the sciences and the religions are pursuing their endeavors in order to obtain truth. Scientific truth must be complemented with the insights of wisdom from the age-old religious traditions because what we are aiming at ultimately is love.

We pursue the dialogue between science and religion in the interest of truth, and we find a common meeting point in the traditions of wisdom.

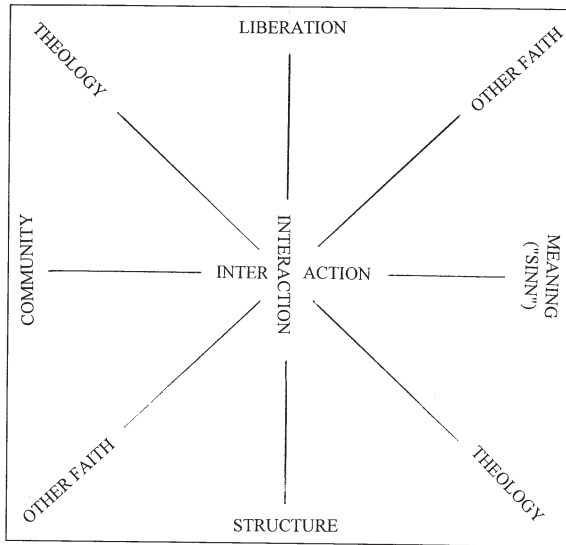
We pursue the dialogue between different faith traditions with the sciences as sparring partners helping to keep us on track, and we do that in the interest of love. To enable the love of God and our neighbor to flow

freely is the ultimate goal of our dialogue.

The religious traditions also have their truth claims; but often the proof for these claims has to be of a different kind and may refer to ways of gaining knowledge that are not (yet?) available for the scientific method. That there are such other ways of knowing, other means of insight often embedded in traditions of

wisdom, must be recognized reciprocally by the scientific community.

Religions order and create structure in our lives. They give meaning, foster community, and provide liberation. When interreligious dialogue transcends the exchange of niceties those questions will come to the forefront. What we need is a frank and truthful exchange of how our respective traditions best contribute to order and community, meaning and liberation. Sustained by our faith, nurtured by our hope, carried by the love of God, we are called to engage in dialogue and to interact in a peaceful and truthful way with our neighbor. "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).



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