

Editorial preface

Ronald L. Hall¹

Published online: 9 May 2016
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2016

I am delighted to open this issue with Ingolf U. Dalferth's essay "On Distinctions." A version of this paper was presented as the Presidential Address of The Society for the Philosophy of Religion at this year's annual meeting in San Antonio. I will let his reflections on distinctions speak for themselves.

The next six articles divide roughly into two general topics. The first two are about Divine Freedom, the last four deal with a variety of issues that crop up in discussions of epistemic realism.

In the first article on divine freedom, Yishai Cohen argues that the Molinist account of the counterfactuals of divine freedom is not sufficient to provide the openness that rational deliberation requires in the libertarian framework. This is because the counterfactuals of divine freedom (God would have done *x*, if *y*) are pre-volitional and hence cannot be true. A volitional act can make contingent proposition true if it brings some concrete state of affairs into actuality. In this respect, God's position with regard to questions of what to do is not essentially different (contra Molina) than that of human beings. That is, counterfactual conditionals are pre-volitional for both God and human beings and not as Molina argues, post-volitional for God and pre-volitional for humans.

In the next essay, David S. Oderberg raises the issue of the compatibility of divine providence and human free will. The view under discussion is called divine promotion. On this view, God governs (is the primary cause of) everything that happens in the universe (God's providence) including the secondary causes in human actions. This, he says, is the view endorsed by St. Thomas, and presumably by Scripture. The problem many have had with this view is that it seems to be

✉ Ronald L. Hall
ronhall@stetson.edu

¹ Department of Philosophy, Stetson University, Deland, FL 32723, USA

incompatible with the causal efficacy of the secondary causes that seem to be involved in human action, seemingly a necessary condition for holding human beings responsible for what they do. Oderberg argues however that divine promotion has been largely misunderstood. He thinks that after these confusions are removed, divine promotion emerges as the only plausible way to make sense of divine and human sovereignty.

In the first of the articles in the second category, David Killoren supports the idea of a robust moral realism, but gives it a twist that should be of interest to philosophers of religion. Rather than accepting the standard criticism of moral realism, to wit, that it requires a leap of faith, Killoren embraces the view that a robust moral realism is a kind of religion. Indeed, he thinks such a religion of moral realism makes for a better kind of religion than we find in its traditional religious counterparts. This is because, traditional religions base their moral realism on the problematic assumption that the only way to make moral laws objective is to posit mysterious supernatural agents who lay them down as such. For Killoren's version of robust moral realism, positing such supernatural agents is not necessary, since moral laws are cooked into reality itself. In the religion of robust moral realism, even though there are no mysterious supernatural agents, there is a mysterious supernatural reality, that is, morality itself.

Nathaniel Gray Sutanto is not worried about the objective status of moral laws, but of the objective status of the laws of logic. While he does not reject what he calls a theistic conceptual realism regarding the laws of logic, he does spend a good portion of the argument tracking the merits of and objections to the second view, namely what he calls the archetype-ectype paradigm that derives from Reformed Scholasticism. The main difference between these two positions is that on the former view the laws of logic are necessary and on the later they are contingent. Though he does not argue that one or the other of these models is the preferred one, he does consider the implications of each. And one important such implications is the bearing of each on the doctrine of creation. This brings us back to the question raised in the previous article: are the laws of logic laid down by God or are they cooked into reality? It seems we never stray too far from the problem of the *Euthyphro*.

Kegan J. Shaw introduces a fascinating distinction between Perceptual Epistemological Disjunctivism (PED) and Religious Epistemological Disjunctivism (RED) as two different ways of “grasping the truth.” In PED, I see, for example, that there is a mouse on the table. Clearly, I *either* see (given that ‘see’ is a success verb) that there is a mouse on the table, *or* I merely seem to see this. I can succeed in seeing that there is a mouse only if there is a mouse there to be seen. The *either/or* is different in the case of religious experience, even though it is like the perceptual case insofar as it can succeed or fail. But the success conditions are very different in religious experience. Shaw introduces a new term that functions in the religious case like seeing in the perceptual case. This is called pneuming (pronounced nooming). If I am pneuming that God is strengthening me, this cannot be true unless I am being strengthened. If I am not being strengthened, then I am merely seeming to pneum that I am being strengthened by God, and I have not grasped the truth of the matter.

In the last article, Mark Q. Gardiner defends what is called semantic holism. This is the view that the meaning of an expression is constituted in its relations to an indefinite number of other expressions. His aim is to defend this view against its strongest objection, namely, that such a view would make learning a language impossible. This problem with semantic holism seems obvious to some, since we learn language in bits and pieces and not all at once. Following Quine and Davidson, Gardiner argues against this objection. Applying this to the religious life, he says that the bits of religious practice (its words, rituals, creeds, and so forth) do not have meanings that are independent of the whole. As such he agrees that just as learning our language does not require, per impossible, that we learn all of it at once, entering a religious life does not require that we grasp it all at once. To my mind, this sounds like he might agree with what Wittgenstein was getting at in holding that light dawns gradually over the whole.