

Editorial preface

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The International Journal for Philosophy of Religion is committed to being inclusive. This issue is testimony to this commitment. You will find in this collection articles that represent an array of philosophical schools and an array of their representatives. This includes, inter alia, discussions of pragmatism, post-modernism, recognition theory, and Jewish Orthodoxy. As well, the works of a variety of philosophers, such as Rorty, Caputo, Levinas, Whitehead, Buber, and others are discussed.

In the lead article, Tracy Llanera claims that, as unlikely as this may seem, in developing his radically secular pragmatism, Richard Rorty calls on the religious concept of redemption to play an important, perhaps indispensable, role in his vision of a free society. Rorty thought that a free democratic society is the best that we humans can hope for or achieve; and yet, because it is free, it is an essentially fragile social arrangement. He suggests that to keep it intact we need both the passion and power that is characteristic of religious redemption. Even though he thinks that this passion and power can be harnessed without accepting its religious content, we are left to wonder if he is as hostile to religion as he would have us believe.

In our next article, William Myer employs Whitehead's process insights to construct a bridge between Reinhold Niebuhr's existential affirmation of human agency and challenges to it that come from scientific determinists such as Paul Sheldon Davies. Meyer claims that a key concept that Whitehead contributes to such discussions is his organic model of an integrated collective. Perhaps the brain is such an integrated collective itself and as such is integrated as well into the whole person. If so, this would generate what Meyer calls "organic agency".

Next, Sylvie Avakian challenges John Caputo's radical hermeneutical concept of undecidability. In putting Caputo in conversation with Heidegger, Avakian claims

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that Caputo needs to follow Heidegger in moving beyond the worthy effort of de-construction to defeat the logocentric metaphysics of presence. That is, Caputo needs to supplement de-construction with a positive effort of recovery. This more positive move is exactly what Heidegger provides in his idea of resoluteness. Avakian thinks that Caputo would do well to add this to his completely negative program of de-construction.

Samuel Daniel Breslauer's essay begins with the assumption that the embrace of faith that privileges one community over others is immoral. This charge is particularly urgent for Martin Buber to address since he makes no secret of his Zionism. To redress the charge of embracing an immoral faith, Buber, in dialogue with William James, develops a moral faith that he calls "mere theism". According to this generic view of theism, particular communities of faith, like his own, can be interpreted as universal models for all mankind rather than as superior to any others.

In contrast to the inference-to-best explanation model of sublime religious experiences, Thomas Atkinson argues for the plausibility of a different model. He calls this the "acquaintance" model. According to this model, the fact that "God is F" may be disclosed in a sublime religious experience of acquaintance as opposed to rationally inferred.

Theories of recognition figure decisively in Levinas' understanding of the historical development of the social order. Terence Holden argues that Levinas forged his most mature social theory by going between Kojève's model of recognition as grounded in agonistic conflicts and Honneth's model of mutual affirmation. Holden argues that Levinas manages to negotiate this move thanks to the decisive role that Hebrew concepts (for example, the concept of Commandment purified of an element of submission) played in the development of his social theory.

The last article, stays with this Hebraic theme. The question that Samuel R. Lebens raises and answers is this: is the Torah eternal, or at least, was it created at some "pre-time"? His answer is that Orthodox Judaism is committed to an affirmative answer. And, rather than argue for this directly, Lebens argues for it by claiming that there is no compelling reason for denying the ontology of a primordial Torah.