

Editorial preface

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This issue combines an array of articles that tackle a wide range of issues from what has come to be known as the analytical approach to the philosophy of religion.

While the Psalmist (139) celebrates the fact that God is everywhere, this may be taken as an unwanted and unjustified intrusion into our privacy. In the first article, Elliot and Soifer raise the question of whether an omniscient God could fail to know the deepest and darkest secrets of his creatures. Against the claim that God (out of respect for the integrity of persons) can and should refrain from knowing our private lives, they argue that this knowledge can be justified on similar grounds. God's love and care for our well-being requires a knowledge of our private struggles in order to understand what we are going through. God's presence in our private lives then is not a source of intrusive offence but a source of comfort: God is with us. The authors end their essay with suggestions about developing a political theory of justified infringement on privacy in our ordinary human affairs. The justification is again a concern for our well-being; the intrusion is for the sake of bringing our deepest struggles, worries, fears, etc., to light so that public policies can address them.

In the next article, John Schellenberg offers us a modest recipe for solving the problem of religious disagreement. It is modest in the sense that if applied, little changes; and yet, he claims, everything changes. Perhaps the source of many disagreements is the fact that we get lost in differences in details. We forget that there is something common that unites all religions: the idea to which all are committed is what Schellenberg calls "ultimism". This is the idea that there is a divine reality that transcends the natural world. If this is true, then philosophical naturalism is false and every religion agrees to this. Various religious traditions

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have different ways of filling out the details of this common commitment, but these divisions are not nearly as important as the ultimism that unites them.

Next, Mark Saward takes us into the details of probability theory in his response to the argument of Lataster and Phillipse that polytheism is more probable than monotheism (if theism is assumed). Saward's argument is technical, but its final conclusion is not that monotheism is more probable than polytheism, but that the argument that goes the other way fails on technical grounds and finally proves too much.

The technical arguments regarding the probability of religious beliefs continues in the next article by Feldbacher-Escamilla. Here the author proposes an affirmative answer to the question: "Can religious and secular beliefs be rationally combined?" The argument for this affirmative answer makes use of the Wittgensteinian model of the language game and Phillips' remarks about the relevance of this for the rationality of religious belief. But unlike the Wittgensteinian version, where secular and religious languages games are not combined, the author introduces the idea of pooling religious and secular language games into an overarching language game. On this model, the rationality of the whole game is governed by probability theory. If the person identifies with the overarching language game, and relies on probability theory as the test of its rationality, this allows a person to combine a high degree of belief that some religious statement is true with a secular doubt that it is true. Even though the person has support from the religious context, insofar as the person identifies with its particular set of religious beliefs, that same person may lack support from the secular set of beliefs that is also part of the collective mind, and so is justified in doubting its truth.

In the next essay, Tiddy Smith argues that the methods of scientific naturalism ought not to constrain the theoretical conjectures of science. The method of scientific naturalism works as follows: an empirical hypothesis about the natural world is proposed and then experimentally tested. On the basis of repeatable experiments and observations, publically accessible evidence is gathered and the hypothesis is either falsified or confirmed as true, or at least as justified to some degree of probability. Since the method of naturalism credits only sensory perception as modes of epistemic encounter, it applies only to empirical hypotheses about the natural world that can be tested. As such, this method is by definition useless when it comes to justifying super-natural hypotheses. Such hypotheses rely on non-empirical modes of epistemic encounter, for example, revelation and faith. Hence, in the test case that is at the center of this essay, namely, the theory of Intelligent Design, which is a non-empirical hypothesis, methodological naturalism is not justified in dismissing it as a failed empirical theory. Indeed, it is no condemnation of it to say that ID is unscientific. Indeed, it is an unscientific hypothesis in the sense that it is not subject to justification or falsification via the methodology of scientific naturalism.

In the final essay in this edition, Richabaugh and McAllister argue that Paul Moser is mistaken in his claim that natural theology is of no help in finding a filial knowledge of God. What threatens to keep God hidden, that is, what threatens to block a seeker from finding such a filial knowledge of God is that the seeker trusts that the arguments devised by natural theology can break through God's hiddenness.

Moser thinks that only a personal encounter with God can do this. But the question arises as to how one becomes open to such religious encounters. The authors claim that Moser is wrong to think that natural theology is no help. To the contrary, they argue that natural theology can aid the seeker in opening the door to an experiential encounter with God.