

Editorial preface

Ronald L. Hall¹

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In our first article, Mikel Burley redresses what might be called the thinness of analytic philosophy of religion. The failure of having thick notions of, for example, animal sacrifice, dismisses out of hand discussions of such topics. Burley's attempt to thicken the philosophy of religion takes much of its inspiration from Wittgenstein's critique of Frazer's dismissal of primitive religious practices as un-scientific.

In line with these Wittgensteinian reflections, Brandon Yarbrough explores the concept of "logical inversion", a term that was introduced by D. Z. Phillips and Randy Ramal. The term refers to the misunderstandings of the grammar of a concept that sometimes take place in human thought-expressions. These misunderstandings are a function of failing to pay attention, or the right sort of attention, to the depth grammar of religious concepts. The suggestion is that Phillips' notion of philosophical contemplation can avoid these confusions.

It has often been thought (and I think mistakenly) that human beings were created in the image of God by being created with an immortal soul (God is a disembodied soul and human beings are essentially disembodied souls, albeit temporarily embodied). This metaphysics has naturally led to the view that the soul is the essence of a human being and accounts for how a person remains the same over time. Jacob Berger argues that this soul theory of personal identity is flawed and fares no better than physicalist-friendly accounts of personal identity such as bodily- or psychological-continuity-based views.

Robert E. Pezet reopens a discussion of the ontological argument, but not with the intent of defending it, but with the intent of trying to understand its premises. His aim is to get a clearer view of just why the argument fails.

✉ Ronald L. Hall
ronhall@stetson.edu

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

Recent arguments for atheism contend that if God exists, then no instance of innocent suffering could exist that that did not ultimately benefit the sufferer. Hence to try to prevent such sufferings would counter God's intention to use such suffering to bring about a greater good. But if that is so, then we human being should not try to prevent such sufferings. But this conflicts with ordinary morality wherein it is thought to be a moral obligation to try to prevent such sufferings. T. Ryan Byerly objects to this defense of atheism on the grounds that it overlooks the fact that it is morally permissible for human beings to try to prevent such sufferings, even if they cannot succeed. But the fact that we cannot succeed does not entail that we are not free or morally obligated to embark on such a program of prevention.

A text of recurrent interest to philosophers of religion is Hume's treatise on miracles. In our next article, responding to Alexander George's claim that Hume's account is richer than has been usually thought, Robert A. Larmer claims that this defense of Hume fails.

Travis Dumsday undertakes what he calls an exceedingly modest interpretation of the cosmological argument. He argues that the contingent regularity that empirically accessible macro-level contingent objects do not pop into existence causelessly demands explanation. And as it turns out, that explanation will have to be in terms of an object or objects possessed of at least some of the traditional divine attributes. If this is so then naturalism is undermined.

In our final article, Thomas M. Ward returns to Anselm's ontological argument. The specific issue is Anselm's reply to Gaunilo regarding the disanalogy between a perfect island and a perfect being. In defense of Anselm, Ward advances this ancient discussion by presenting a new and clearer formulation of the disanalogy.