

Editorial preface

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The articles and book reviews in this issue draw some interesting connections between religious faith and the moral life, especially as these connections bear on the thought of Kant and Kierkegaard.

The lead article by Elizabeth Drummond Young explores the moral life of God and raises the question of whether God has moral obligations. Young discusses Alston's thesis that the source of God's goodness is not found in moral obligation but in supererogation. Alston claims it would diminish God's moral perfection to think of divine action as stemming from moral obligations since this would entail (as in a usual interpretation of Kant) that God must go against the grain of inclination. Agreeing with this, critics of Alston's position have nevertheless claimed that divine actions cannot be motivated by supererogation, since it makes no sense to say that God goes beyond moral obligation if moral obligation (for God) does not exist. Young attempts to rescue Alston's position from this criticism by founding supererogation in love, or more precisely in a revised moral notion of it, rather than in duty.

Our second essay by Paolo Diego Bubbio, turns explicitly to Kant. The topic is sacrifice and the paradigm of this for Kant is Christ. Bubbio notes that there is some tension in Kant's view of sacrifice. On the one hand, Kant does not find the biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac morally acceptable, since it makes precisely the move that Kierkegaard seems to make, namely, the move of ranking religious faith higher than morality. As well, Kant registers his puzzlement as to how a morally perfect God could sacrifice any of his perfection. But on the other hand, and even though reason cannot fully understand it, Kant finds in the Christ figure the perfect model for moral perfection, something that was shown in his ultimate sacrifice out of love for the world. Perhaps the tension here was generated by Kant's attempt to combine

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Lutheran pietism and rationalism, something again that registers a Kant/Kierkegaard comparison.

And speaking of the Lutheran factor, our third essay by Dennis Vanden Auweele, compares Kant's view of the power of the human will to both Luther and Erasmus. The latter thought that human beings were free to turn away from salvation or towards God. But even for Erasmus the question arose as to whether we need God's help in turning to God. But even granted that we do need divine grace, he thought that we can overcome the depravity of our fallen will. Luther, of course, is convinced that no work of the human will can rescue us from this depravity: grace alone can save us. The burden of the argument in this essay is to show that Kant is closer to Luther than to Erasmus on this issue.

In our final essay, we turn explicitly to Kierkegaard, but the issue of our depraved human condition (will) and our response to it continues. The signature theme of modern existentialism is the human confrontation with meaninglessness and absurdity. But differences in responses to this confrontation may hide some common assumptions regarding the role of the will in our redemption. We see this in Daniel Berthold's comparison of Kierkegaard and Camus. How could these two responses, call them faith and revolt, have any common ground? Again, we come to the issue of the will, the capacity of the human to make what Kierkegaard called a leap. Even, Sisyphus, Berthold argues, is free because of the way he chooses to live. Or more generally, Camus' understanding of the life of revolt as a refusal of faith implies that the human will is invested with a power equal to what is required for the embrace of faith. Both Camus and Kierkegaard offer paths of redemption, paths of resistance to despair (what Kierkegaard often calls sin), paths that are available for the taking.