

Editorial preface

R. L. Hall

Published online: 21 May 2013
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It is hard to underestimate the importance of free will for the philosophy of religion. From at least the time of Augustine, the issue of freedom has been recognized as deeply embedded in philosophical accounts of theistic faith and its first cousins, moral character and action. But providing a coherent account of a pathway to the embrace of both moral freedom and theistic faith has not proven easy. And like so many other philosophical challenges, the problem of finding a way to reconcile moral freedom with theistic faith has uncovered a nest of related conceptual issues. One such perennial issue is how to make sense of both God's foreknowledge, which God's omniscience seems to require, and an open future which moral freedom seems to require. But if an open future is required for freedom, how can the anxiety it generates avoid drowning the peace and confidence that faith offers?

Given the difficulties of reconciling God and freedom, faith and morality, it is natural the philosophers of religions turn to conceptual matters. Can we find a coherent use of both "divine "omniscience" and "human freedom" that makes them compatible? The articles in Part I of this issue attempt to clarify and relieve some of these very thorny conceptual tangles.

The first two essays take opposite positions regarding the wisdom of God in creating human beings with (libertarian) freedom. In the lead article, John Schellenberg argues that a perfectly good and wise God would not have given libertarian freedom to human beings before they were ready for it. As history has demonstrated, in the early stages of evolutionary development, humans lacked an appropriate spiritual sensitivity that is required to use this freedom wisely. As such, early humans used freedom to wreak moral havoc. Theists often claim that at the creation itself, God chose to bestow human beings with this intrinsic capacity for libertarian freedom. But Schellenberg argues that

R. L. Hall (✉)
Stetson University, DeLand, FL, USA
e-mail: ronhall@stetson.edu

a wise God would have bestowed it later. God, being God, should have known better. Accordingly this failure of wisdom can serve as a good reason to deny God's existence.

On the opposite side of this, our second essay argues that even in the wake of its moral failures (the problem of moral evil) God was wise in providing human beings with a capacity for agent freedom, that is, the power to change things, especially political evils, and more particularly, gender inequities. In a counter to feminist critiques of Leibniz, Jill Graper Hernandez uses the work of an early modern philosopher, Catherine Macauley, to defend elements of Leibniz's theodicy that are based in part on his concept of the world as created with a pre-established harmony. This version of the pre-established harmony argument praises God for creating the best of all possible *kind of world*, that is, the kind of world in which human beings, though anxious about possible and actual abuses of power, are nevertheless vested with a potential for God-like perfection. Only in this kind of world does the potential exist for using freedom to reverse freedom's moral abuse. God was wise indeed in creating the kind of world we actually have—a world with just the moral freedom needed to redress freedom's immoral abuses. Things could not have been more perfectly arranged. Only in this *kind of world* is it possible to make this *actual* world a better place.

The next two articles directly address the problem of reconciling libertarian freedom with God's foreknowledge. Benjamin H. Arbour distinguishes two camps of open theism regarding the truth-values of propositions concerning future contingents, for example, "John will vote tomorrow." The first camp, called open future open theism, denies that such propositions possess truth-values (OFOT). The second camp, called limited foreknowledge open theism (LFOT), holds that there are some propositions regarding future contingents that do have truth-values. William Hasker calls such true propositions "soft facts" and claims that they are nevertheless unknown to God. Arbour tries to close the door on this move and claims that in the end it does not manage to avoid fatalism. In this regard, Arbour notes that the position of OFOT, which he does not endorse, is more successful in avoiding fatalism.

In general, Tina Talsma defends the view that libertarian freedom is not compatible with the view that God's omniscience entails foreknowledge and hence foreordination. The focus of her critique is David Hunt's application of source compatibilism to the freedom and foreknowledge dilemma. While the source compatibilist thinks that freedom is not compatible with causal determinism, it holds that freedom does not require alternative possibilities; rather it depends on its having its source in the agent; and the fact that God's foreknows this is unproblematic. Against this view, Talsma argues that the source compatibilist cannot coherently make its case.

In the final essay in Part I, we find a nice transition to Part II of this issue. In this article, the question arises as to whether God was justified in creating a world with free agents when freedom has resulted in so much human suffering. On Plantinga's view, the fact that freedom does produce great amounts of evil does not outweigh the amount of goodness it brings. Indeed, there would be no moral goodness if there were no freedom: "Oh fortunate crime!" However, it is just this issue of the quantity of goodness over the quantity of evil in the world that is at focus for Anders Kraal. He argues that Plantinga's quantitative free will defense is only as strong as its crucial assumption of abounding goodness in the world. Relying on Hume, Kraal sees reason to be skeptical about the assumption that freedom brings more good than evil.

The first essay in Part II continues to explore the kind of world or universe we find ourselves in. Theists seem unified in believing that a morally perfect God would not have created a world with a greater balance of evil over good. If this were false then atheism would be the only plausible alternative. But suppose that Jason Megill is right that there might be multiple universes. Wouldn't this show that we are justified in denying that there is more evil in the universe than good? Perhaps so, but as Klaas J. Kraay argues, this knowledge, even if it is a necessary condition for justifying God's creation, cannot be a sufficient condition. What if there were overall more good than evil, but the evil (some at least) was gratuitous? The presence of gratuitous evil, even if it were outweighed by good, would seem to conflict with God's moral perfection.

The multiverse conversation continues with Mark Saward's essay that considers an aspect of the importance of fine-tuning evidence for the philosophy of religion. Discussions of fine tuning usually begin with the fact that we find it surprising that in order for life to be permitted, lots of conditions had to be in precisely in place. So how do we account for this fine tuning? Two particularly popular accounts are formulated in design and multiverse hypotheses. Roger White has suggested that the evidence for fine tuning supports design hypotheses but not multiverse hypotheses. Saward calls him to task for generalizing this conclusion. He claims that fine tuning might be used to support some versions of either hypothesis. But even when the evidence would seem to favor one hypothesis strongly over the other, this does not settle which hypothesis to prefer.

Paul Clavier argues in the next piece that the world must be of a certain sort if we are to make sense of divine revelation. He argues that if revelation is to make sense the world must be conceived of as a creation rather than as a causally closed self-existent world. The reason for this is that revelation itself is a divine creative intervention. As such, revelation necessarily depends, both ontologically and epistemically, on the existence of a supernatural creative agent vested with the power to bring something new into existence. Clearly then it makes little sense to claim that God has revealed himself as the creator of heaven and earth since every divine revelation presupposes this.

The final essay in this section presses the investigation of the kind of world that we live in and the implications of this for the existence of God. In our world mindless bits of matter are ordered by natural laws such as gravity. Danny Frederick argues that this fact might be fruitfully conceived as a manifestation of God's activity and hence of God's existence if we focus not on the fact of such natural laws but on their possibility. So Frederick is offering a design argument for God's existence but with an important difference from traditional such arguments. Traditional design arguments proceed by inferring the existence of a designer from the fact of purpose or order in the world. Frederick's updated version of the design argument is directed to an explanation of the possibility of order rather than the fact of it. This version of the argument promises to avoid many of the objections to its traditional formulations, but its full force assumes a realist metaphysics regarding natural laws.