

## Editorial preface

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The nine articles in this issue are divided into three sets. The first set considers matters of religious disagreement; the second set deals with apparent conflicts between evolutionary science and theism and the final set is devoted to questions regarding the nature and existence of God.

Our first three essays deal with a very volatile topic: religious disagreement. As we know all too well, disagreements in and about religious beliefs and practices run deep and can accordingly erupt into war, terrorism, insult, humiliation, social and political chaos, irrational condemnation and the like. Is there a way for human beings of radically different beliefs and practices to resolve or at least calm the tensions inherent in religious diversity? Well perhaps philosophers of religion can offer some guidance as we try to deal with the fact of religious disagreement.

One thing that Tomas Bogardus would advise is that it is a mistake to apply a single policy to all cases of religious disagreement. This is the mistake advocates of the equal-weight view make. According to this view, we ought *always* to accord religious views that are different from our own a plausibility of equal-weight with our own. But this view has provoked worries of spinelessness. Avoiding spineless conciliation however does not require that we abandon equal-weight conciliation completely. In some cases its application is appropriate, but in others it is not. Suggestions are made regarding how we might tell the difference.

Dennis Potter raises the very interesting contrast between internal and external religious disagreement. For example, what seems like a clear example of an external disagreement is the one between those who support the theory of biological evolution and those who are theological creationists. On closer inspection, however, the lines of disagreement are not so clear when we consider that amongst creationists some

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believe that there is room for the acceptance of evolution and vice versa. Once the importance of internal disagreement is seen, philosophers of religion might not be so quick to assume that definite lines of external agreement can be easily drawn.

David Holley's essay presents a critical discussion of Richard Feldman's approach to religious disagreements. In such disputes, for example, between the theist and atheist, Feldman claims that if both are epistemic peers and share all the relevant evidence, neither party has an epistemic right to claim the other is mistaken. Rather, both sides should suspend judgment regarding which is correct. Holley argues however that Feldman's evidential approach fails to consider the difficulties in his assumption that both sides in such a disagreement can obtain and share completely the entire body of evidence on the disputed issue. Holley makes the case that this assumption is unrealistic and that its extension to starting points is illicit. This, along with some practical considerations, leads finally to Holley's conclusion that Feldman is not warranted in calling for a suspension of judgment in such disagreements.

The next three articles explore various aspects of agreement and disagreement, internal and external, between scientific naturalism and theism. A key item in this dispute is the apparent conflict between theistic doctrines of creation and the theory of evolution. Given the place of science in modern culture, there has been some effort, especially from Reformed Theology, to show that evolution is not necessarily incompatible with theistic belief.

Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt argue that both evolutionary and reformed epistemologists share a deep agreement that the human mind is vested with a very basic drive for truth. Their difference—less profound than their agreement—is found in the fact that one side claims that the human mind was designed this way by God, the other that this drive was a product of natural selection. A more profound difference seems to be in their respective accounts of how the fundamental drive for truth can go awry. To further the goal of reconciliation, and drawing on the findings of the cognitive science of religion, De Cruz offers and De Smedt offer a reconceptualization of the noetic effects of sin that reduces the tension between theism and the theory of evolution.

In the next article, Tyler Andrew Wunder discusses Alvin Plantinga's critique of Paul Draper's argument that evolution seems more probable on naturalism than theism. Plantinga's main complaint with Draper's argument is that it commits him to a contingent theism. This is enough for him to dismiss Draper's argument since on Plantinga's view God's existence is not contingent. Wunder argues however that Plantinga's own evolutionary argument against naturalism presupposes a contingent theology no less than Draper's a-theology.

The effort to reduce the tension between theism and science is carried in a slightly different direction in Joshua C. Thurow's essay. He considers the worry that some have that work in the cognitive science of religion (CSR) might show that religious beliefs are irrational. There is a good bit of overlap in this article and the previous two, since CSR presents various theories of how evolution produced creatures whose natural adaptive mental structures make them prone to having religious beliefs. In a complicated argument, Thurow seeks to establish that grounding religious beliefs in the natural adaptive structures of the mind does not establish that they are irrational; indeed, this work may support their rationality.

As we move to our last set of essays, I take this opportunity to say that I have long been convinced that the God of the philosophers has provided human beings, for good or ill, with a model of knowing, power, goodness, presence and so forth, against which we are prone to measure our own human condition of limitation. Along these lines M. J. Mander claims that an appeal to God's perspective might help to resolve the old conflict between our conflicting attractions to both realism and anti-realism. On the one hand, there is no escaping the attraction of anti-realism since every human claim to truth is a product of human noetic activity and as such made from a particular human perspective and notoriously vulnerable to error and retraction, at least when it does not match up what we also take to be a reality that is independent of our perspective (the attraction of realism). But as Mander suggests, recalling a number of philosophers who have made similar arguments, we can reconcile these conflicting attractions by affirming a reality that is independent of human noetic activity but not independent of God's noetic activity. In God we find the synthesis: there is a single reality created and sustained by God's noetic activity, a reality independent of human noetic activity but not of God's.

In the second article in this last section, the much discussed idea of divine simplicity is taken up. Yann Schmitt explains why there is a deadlock in the arguments defending absolute divine simplicity. The core of his claim is not that divine simplicity cannot be successfully defended, but that the deadlock can be broken only if we revise our concept of divine simplicity. The key here is to adopt a moderate concept of divine simplicity as absolute indivisibility instead of a concept of divine simplicity as an absolute lack of complexity or composition.

In the final essay, Martin Lembke attempts to save the Anselmian claim, to wit, that God is that than which none greater can be thought, from charges of unintelligibility. He does this by proposing that we interpret Anselm's claim as being directed to moral beings, given that God is a moral being. Accordingly, because it is defensible that an actual moral being is greater than whatever is not an actual moral being, it makes sense to say that a God that actually exists is greater than one that does not.