Editorial preface

R. L. Hall¹

Published online: 1 July 2015

© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2015

This summer issue contains a potpourri of articles. The essays collected in this issue include considerations of free will and foreknowledge in the first article, considerations of specific philosophers in the next three articles (philosophes including Kant, Schopenhauer, Quinn and Craig) and finally ends with a set of three essays that consider traditional issues in religious epistemology and metaphysics.

Philosophers of religion have long sense wrestled with the problem of how to reconcile God's omniscience and human freedom, a problem especially troublesome if God exists outside of time. In our first article, De Florio and Frigerio defend the claim that libertarian freedom can be reconciled with a conception of God as outside of time and as omniscient only if we embrace a temporal framework that allows for the fact that some propositions are neither true nor false but indeterminate. On this view, God knows that some proposition are indeterminate until they become true or false by virtue of a free choice. One interesting benefit of this position, the authors argue, is that it allows us to understand how biblical prophecy can avoid fatalism.

As DiCenso points out in our next article, Kant thinks that a rational religion can arise only from a genuine determination to cultivate a pure moral disposition. To make this clear, Kant is intent on distinguishing this genuine moral effort from selfish efforts to earn or deserve God's favor. But more importantly, Kant is intent on criticizing what he takes to be the insidious religions of grace that minimize good works and prefer to think that salvation is the result of God's unmerited favor. Such religions play on emotional fears and hopes that are founded on self-love. So then, is there no place for grace in Kant's rational religion? The author thinks that there is. To see this, we must be clear that Kant thinks of grace not as God's unmerited favor,

✉ R. L. Hall
ronhall@stetson.edu

¹ Deland, USA

but as God's help to those who aim at but nevertheless fall short of achieving a pure moral disposition (as we all do). Kant allows a place for grace then only if it is clearly distinguished from selfish efforts to earn God's favor and from religions that offer unmerited favor to a chosen few.

There could hardly be a sharper contrast between Kant and Schopenhauer regarding moral effort. Unlike Kant, Schopenhauer did not think that the human will could save us from what he took to be the natural depravity and darkness of the human condition. Indeed, it is the will that is the problem that must be overcome. So as Auweele argues, even though Schopenhauer was a pessimist about the prospects of the will (human powers) to overcome the cruelty and violence generated by the will, he was not a pessimist regarding the possibility of achieving this negation of the will. Indeed, he welcomed certain transcendent tools such as religious faith or revelation as a means to attain our highest good, what he calls our state of nothingness. And while it may seem that Schopenhauer's view of this state was entirely negative, the author asks us to see its positive aspects. After all, in this state of liberation from the atrocities of will we are transported to a peaceful state of nothingness, a heavenly state of tranquility.

The final essay in this threesome deals with two well-known contemporary philosophers of religion, Phillip Quinn and William Lane Craig. They differ on the issue of the foundation of religious tolerance. Michael Jones clearly frames this dispute by focusing their difference in terms of the question of whether Quinn is correct in thinking that cognitive humility, or modesty is an appropriate foundation for religious tolerance. Craig thinks it is not an adequate foundation because it amounts to a form of skepticism. That is, he argues that this foundation for religious tolerance entails that one has to doubt one's own beliefs in order to be tolerant of other differing or conflicting views. Jones, however, defends Quinn by showing that Quinn's thesis of cognitive humility does not entail doubt and, *a fortiori*, skepticism. He concludes that cognitive humility is warranted and that Quinn's argument has a decisive advantage over Craig's position.

The next set of essays deal with issues of epistemology and metaphysics. In the first of these last three essays, Cobett and Cangelosi criticize Andrew Johnson's defense of what has come to be called the "New Atheism" (as Anderson's position was put forth in an essay that appeared in this journal). They argue that Anderson has wrongly accepted Flew's famous claim that atheism ought to be the default epistemic position and that accordingly the burden of proof is rightly placed on the theist to justify his or her belief that God exists. To make this point, the authors draw an important distinction between "not believing that God exists" and "believing that it is not the case that God exists." They contend that only the latter counts as atheism and when Flew and the new atheists (like Anderson) embrace the presumption of atheism they are actually embracing only the presumption of agnosticism. Once this is seen, it becomes clear that the onus of justification is not simply on theism, but is on atheism as well.

In moving to metaphysics, Dumsday clearly lays out the difference between dispositional properties (capacities, abilities, causal powers, etc.) and categorical properties (shape, size, spatial extension, etc.) and summarizes the various positions taken on whether reality is composed of only one or both of such properties. The

view at the focus of his argument is called pan-dispositionalism which holds that dispositional properties are the only irreducible intrinsic properties in reality. Even though Dumsday thinks that both this position and its mirror image categoricalism (the only irreducible intrinsic properties are categorical) are false, the focus of his argument is to show that pan-dispositionalism is logically incompatible with scientific naturalism. It is this point that should be of interest to many philosophers of religion. Such philosophers tend to favor pan-dispositionalism since it allows for the reality of unextended objects. Indeed such philosophers of religion might welcome the argument of this essay since it maintains that if pan-dispositionalism is true, the claim of scientific naturalism that no unextended objects exist must be false.

The final article in this issue, returns to epistemology. Nathan Shannon discusses divine conceptualism, according to which all abstract objects are taken to be propositions in the mind of God. His focus is on one set of these, namely, necessary truths. He asks: what makes the necessary truths of logic necessarily true? He proposes that they are true by virtue of existing in the mind of God, or if you will, that God makes them true. But even though we might embrace a theistic truth-maker theory for necessary truths, we will still not have a substantive account of *why* God makes these logical laws. Indeed, we necessarily cannot have such an account because this would require that we know the essence of God and this is impossible.