Editorial preface

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The general topic of this issue is the philosophy of God. Questions are raised regarding whether God is a person, or personal, or is an agent, or an idea, and proposals are offered regarding the nature of God's relation to the world.

Elizabeth Burns considers differences between the claims of classical and revisionist theism regarding whether God is or is not a person or a personal being. This leads her to consider the very difficult issue of what it is to be a person and to the question of what it means to hold that God qualifies or not for this designation. She notes that because classical theism (rightly) claims that God is a person (in a metaphorical sense) it (wrongly) accepts the claim that *qua* person God must also be an agent (in a literal a sense). Burns suggests that revisionist theism rejects this personal metaphor because it (rightly) sees that a literal divine agency is incoherent. Burns suggests that if divine agency were itself a metaphor, then the differences between classical and revisionist theism would be recognized as largely superficial.

In our second essay, Troy Thomas Catterson continues to explore the implications of classical theism's belief that God is a conscious person (with what he calls a face.) By way of what the author characterizes as his long and twisted foray into the labyrinths of saturated phenomenality, he formulates the following argument: because God (in classical theism) is an omniscient being, and as such must have complete self-knowledge, and because God is a conscious being, and as such must have a face (in some sense), "he" must experience himself as both an "I" and as a "you;" therefore, it is a basic feature of God that "he" must have multiple centers of consciousness. The upshot here is that the Trinitarian concept God in classical theism can be intelligibly grounded in this basic feature of God's self-

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knowledge. While this does not promise to settle disputes between Christian Trinitarians and Jewish and Muslim Unitarians, it may open the door to a dialogue between them.

The issue of God's agency is discussed again in our next article by Hugh Hunter. Here Bishop Berkeley's much maligned argument that God exists is reconsidered. As Hunter points out, Berkeley believed that God is a pervasive (greater-than-human) agent in the world. This, as far as it goes, is in perfect alignment with classical theism. In Berkeley's metaphysics, ideas are inert, and only minds (or spirits) can be agents. Therefore, God, as a greater-than-human agent, must be a mind and not an idea. So Berkeley set out to prove that such a greater-than-human mind must exist. But, as Hunter claims, this modest conclusion is all that his argument for God's existence aims to establish. The criticism that Berkeley's argument fails to establish that the God of perfect being classical theology exists is therefore unjustified. Again, this is so, because Berkeley was only trying to establish a weaker claim, namely, that a greater-than-human mind-agent exists. As Berkeley saw it, this was just the first step in establishing the existence of the God of perfect being classical theism. And he proceeds to launch, as Hunter puts it, a flotilla of smaller arguments to this end.

In our next article, Natalja Deng asks us to consider whether the naturalist claim that God's existence is a fiction excludes the possibility of engaging in religious practices. This is an especially urgent question for those who are deeply embedded in religious traditions but who are nonetheless atheists, or at least non-theists. In other words, does the idea of a non-theistic religion make sense? Can a person engage in religious practices, that is, live a religious life, without believing that God exists? She considers a number of positions on this question and concludes that a make-believe religious practice can be valuable in one's moral growth.

The last two essays in this issue are by the same author, Benedikt Paul Göcke. Both articles continue the theme of developing a concept of God's relation to the world as both an agent and as a knower. Hence the two articles raise the following questions: "Did God do it?" and "Did God know it?" In the first article, the author argues that special interventions of God in the world make sense only if we embrace a concept of "the laws of nature" that is different from both Humean and anti-Humean views. The intriguing alternative view he proposes is that laws of nature are generalizations of the dispositional behavior of natural kinds and as such, without contradiction to science, can be temporally changed by God in order to forward "his" purposes.

The last article explores the charge that the existence of chance or randomness in the world deny God's omniscience. Göcke claims that such arguments against God's existence are not clear about the ontology of chance and the meaning of randomness. He proceeds to offer such a clarification and claims that, with this in hand, it is clear that the existence of God is not inconsistent with the reality of chance and randomness in the world. He ends by showing how these clarifications enable classical theism, open theism and panentheistic process philosophy to avoid difficulties in accounting for God's relation to a world of chance and randomness.