

## Editorial preface

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I am proud to say that our journal welcomes diverse approaches to the central philosophical issues that occupy the attention of philosophers of religion. We have published issues that focus on pragmatic approaches to philosophy of religion, ordinary language approaches, process philosophy, and analytic philosophy. Our last issue was devoted to the role of formal logic in advancing discussions in our field. In this issue we take a rather stark turn to consider some contributions from existentialism (with a special focus on Kierkegaard) to the complex issues philosophers of religion address.

The first article by Sharon Krishek and Rich Anthony Furtak and the second by John Lippitt focus directly on Kierkegaard. The second two, as different as they are, share an appreciation of existentialism's concern to make the condition of human finitude an important matter for consideration by philosophers of religion. I couple these second two articles with the first two since they show that the issue of human finitude that Kierkegaard wrestled with is not confined to philosophical schools that are usually and explicitly associated with existentialism. In Power's essay and Wynn's, the existentialist focus on the here and now is shown to be alive in both process philosophy and in pragmatism.

Krishek and Furtak focus on the issue of the relation between anxiety and faith. As is well known, Kierkegaard argues that anxiety is intrinsic to the temporally unfolding condition of human freedom. However, he also recognized that unless anxiety is faced in faith it will overwhelm us with destructive worry and distress. Krishek and Furtak explore Kierkegaard's use of biblical metaphors (the lilies of the field and birds of the air) to argue that Kierkegaard employs two senses of "worry." The first sense is a healthy care and concern for others and should not be overcome. The second sense of "worry" however is destructive and is generated by the failure of human beings to accept their human condition. On the basis of these different senses of worry, the

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authors of this essay contend that Kierkegaard is vindicated in claiming that faith can overcome destructive worry without denying a genuine concern and care (that is, a legitimate worry) for others. For Kierkegaard then, a life of faith is a remedy for destructive worry. For him, faith brings calm to the anxious, or if you will, a peace that passes all understanding; perhaps Kierkegaard might agree that this peace is just what the knight of faith has acquired and exactly the resource he or she needs to cope with and live joyously within the precarious and uncertain conditions of concrete existence.

John Lippitt's essay sets out to answer Sharon Krishek's critique of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. In *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love*, Krishek claims that Kierkegaard's tendency to focus on the neighbor as nobody-in-particular, or as everybody-in-general, failed to leave room for the importance of the special relationships to friends, lovers, and family (what Kierkegaard called preferential love) that are clearly of central existential concern for the concrete individual. Lippitt thinks this charge is unfair and relying on help from Jamie Ferreira, he proceeds to defend Kierkegaard as "preserving the concrete." An important element in his defense is the idea of the God filter or the God test. To count as genuine Christian love the God test must be passed. This test purifies love of every trace of selfishness and so makes it "the same love in spirit" whether it is directed to the stranger or to the beloved. As the same, in this spiritual sense, a properly purified Christian love leaves plenty of room for preferential differences.

Even though William Power's essay is more clearly affiliated with process philosophy than with existentialism we can see in it instructive points of contact between the two. Both philosophical perspectives stress the importance of concrete existence, or if you will, ways of life in the here and now. He thinks we need a theology that does the same. And he claims that we can find such a theology implicit in the biblical narratives, even though traditional metaphysics has made this difficult to see. So even though Kierkegaard is not discussed explicitly, Power's brief for the theological importance of ways of life is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's stages and especially of his idea that the crowning (biblically based) existential modality of existence is the concrete life of faith.

The final essay by Mark Wynn is included here as a reminder that the approach to the philosophy of religion of the sort that we find in pragmatists like William James, has much in common with existentialism in general, and in particular with Kierkegaard's emphasis on the inward spiritual life. Wynn reads James' focus on the experience of religious conversion as showing how a religious change in a person's inward condition radically transforms the way the world is experienced. He discusses this spiritual transformation as in part a change in the "existential feelings" of the convert. Wynn endorses Matthew Ratcliffe's use of this reference to existential feelings and seems to agree with his sharp contrast between two ways of being in the world: "One can feel like a participant in the world or like a detached, estranged observer." Now clearly this reminds us of Kierkegaard's distinction between aesthetic and existential modes of being-in-the-world. And surely the idea that religious conversion alters the appearance of everything, suggests another parallel with Kierkegaard. The person of faith now has eyes to see, whereas the aesthetic was blind; what had appeared flat and leveled (as Kierkegaard described it) is now sensed as a token of God's presence in everything. Now everything is made new.