Editorial preface

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The first two articles in this issue deal with the question at the heart of theories of divine simplicity, namely, the problem of whether it makes sense to think of God as a person, or as personal. As is often noted, we are not sure how to speak of God and when we do we are forced to use concepts familiar to us. It is no surprise that we often speak of God as a being analogous to human persons. Sometimes we forget that claims that God is a person is merely analogical. This gets us into trouble.

As Simon Hewitt claims, some philosophers of religion like Swinburne push the analogy too far and turn God into a personal being that has a mind like ours and is a member of a linguistic community univocally parallel to the community of human speakers and moral agents. Swinburne rejects pantheism because it rejects this idea that God is a person, or at least a personal being. Hewitt agrees that pantheism rejects the idea that God is a person. And this is because the God of pantheism is not *in* the world like human persons. Rather, on pantheism, God is identical with the world. Because God is not *in* the world as human persons are, he cannot be a person. He agrees with Swinburne on this, but notes that, for Swinburne, it is also true that God, as transcendent, is not *in* the world. This entails, on Swinburne's own terms, that God cannot be a person. So, given that both Swinburne and pantheism agree that God is not *in* the world, they ought to agree that neither view can make sense of God as a person in any univocal sense. So, perhaps we should abandon the claim that God is a person or revise our doctrine God as a personal being.

The second article continues the discussion of the God-person analogy. Ben Page very helpfully sets out three positions on this issue. (1) God is a person and so is a persona being; (2) God is not a personal being and so is not a person; and (3) God is a personal being but is not a person. Page brings the debate back to considerations of divine simplicity and is guided by the work of Brian Davies on this issue. Page sees (2) as a position compatible with pantheism but does not focus on it. Rather he considers the differences and similarities between (1) and (3). He ends with the suggestion that (3) has overstated its differences from (1) and recommends that both sides do more work in filling out their conceptions of God as a personal being.

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In the third article, Andrew Buckareff discusses Mark Johnston's recent book that defends a panentheistic concept of God. Johnston's book is part of a growing literature exploring alternative concepts of God, that is, concepts that diverge from traditional "omni" perfect being theism. Buckareff agrees with Johnston that the divine mind (God) is a unified totality of modes of presentation of reality. That is, God just *is* the universe, where 'is' is the not a matter of identity but of constitution. However, he questions Johnston's concept of unity and proposes a way to understand it by appealing to a Neo-Aristotelian view of causal powers. He argues that this Aristotelian concept of powers suggests that pantheism would give us better version of the unified divine mind than Johnston's panentheism.

We come now to an essay by Bruce Milem that brings together issues discussed in the previous articles. So far, the issue has focused on definitions of theism: Is God a person? Is God just another way of speaking about the universe as a whole? Milem comes to this issue through the back door. He thinks that the way to advance the project of defining theism is by clarifying our definition of atheism. He proposes the following contrast: atheism is the view that reality is solely an impersonal order and theism is thus the view that reality is a personal order. A personal order is one that is founded by at least one person. Such an order may be understood as an impersonal order founded by at least one person (God) who is not subject to the laws of the impersonal order and as such transcends it.

As I read the final article in this issue, I see an oblique connection to the previous themes just discussed. In thinking about who God is, it seems that a plausible case can be made that God, as creator, is some kind of agent, perhaps, by analogy, a personal one. Does the analogy hold? When we think of the human creative activity, it is plausible to claim that such projects are guided by plans and envisioned possibilities. However, if God is so guided, then it seems that this threatens to undermine his absolute *ex nihilo* creativity. Recently a view has surfaced in the literature that denies the analogy between human and divine creativity. This view holds that God was not following any kind of blueprint for the universe. Rather, God's creation was not subject to a plan, nor did he foresee possibilities prior to his creation of them. Plans, possibilities, and things all were constructed at once, that is, constructed *ex nihilo*. Walter Schultz tries to show that this view, called Divine Possibility Constructivism, is incoherent.

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