Editorial preface

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Published online: 19 September 2020
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In our first essay, James Dominic Rooney defends the claim that a doctrine of physical premotions is necessary if traditional theists are adequately to account for a notion of divine causality that makes room for human freedom. The doctrine of physical premotions is about the *process* of choosing and not about some fact of the matter regarding what is chosen. Accordingly, this doctrine denies that God directly intervenes in human choices. To the contrary, it affirms that God is the cause of the human process of freedom, not the cause of the outcome of a free decision. That is, the doctrine of physical premotions holds that God does not choose or us or cause us to choose what we choose. Rather, in creating us as he did, God vested human beings with the capacity to engage in the process of free deliberation. Because God gracefully created human beings with the capacity to exercise human freedom, every choice is dependent on God's grace as its efficient cause.

Daniel Statman begins the second article in this issue with the observation that modern orthodox rabbis are often considered more moderate than their ultra-orthodox counterparts when it comes to an openness to considering moral arguments regarding the relative independence of Jewish law from divine commands. Statman considers some central figures such as Walter Wurzburger, Eliezer Berkovits and Joseph B. Soloveitchik, to show that the modern orthodox approach to morality is somewhat more ambivalent regarding this matter of independence. As it turns out, modern orthodox thinkers may have more in common with ultra-orthodox rabbis than is usually supposed. On this point, both sides agree that in conflicts between divine commandments and morality, the former must take precedence. If morality is independent of God, then God, or religion, seems to become redundant in the moral domain. If it is not, morality seems to be arbitrary, unstable, and lacking in value.

As Patrick Monaghan has noted, it is unusual to find philosophers so widely and so readily agreeing that some proposed argument has been so thoroughly and so completely defeated that it has been taken off the table as no longer worthy of further comment or defense. This is what Monaghan thinks has happened to John Mackie's argument that the existence of evil is logically incompatible with the existence of God. Most agree that Mackie's argument is invalid or unsound and that it has

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definitively been shown to be so. Without further ado, philosophers of religion have turned to a harder problem, what is called the evidential problem of evil. Monaghan rejects the assumption made by apparently all parties to the debate, which is that there is only one logical problem of evil and it has been defeated once and for all. His purpose is to defend a different deductive argument that is not based on God's properties but on his action of throwing his creatures into the world. This act was not wrong because of its consequences, but wrong deontologically, that is, wrong in and of itself. This deontological evaluation of God's action as wrong shows that God's existence is logically incompatible with the fact that he threw us into a world fraught with suffering and pain. This demonstrates conclusively that a being who does this cannot be good; and this is a new version of a logical problem of evil; and finally, this logical problem leads to atheism.

Next Pao-Shen Ho presents an argument that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* based on the Fourth Lateran Council violates modal logic and is necessarily false. As this Council has it, God creates from nothing if and only if God creates everything except God Himself. In opposition to this, Ho shows that this doctrine entails that it is both possible and not possible that there is nothing at all except God, or alternatively, that it is both necessary and not necessary that there is something else besides God. This contradiction entails the incoherence of this doctrine.

In reply to Pao-Shen's argument that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is logically incoherent, Jacobus Erasmus claims that Ho commits the (all too common) modal scope fallacy *by confusing the scope of necessity* in the argument and, therefore, Ho's argument is unsound. Ho thinks that the proposition is true because God's freedom implies that, if God creates the universe out of nothing, then God could have refrained from doing so: God is traditionally taken to be a maximally free agent, such that He could do otherwise than what He in fact does. Accordingly, if God creates from nothing, then He could also hold back from creating anything at all. Thus, the fact that creation of everything is what a maximally free agent chooses to do entails that possibly, nothing is created. Ho admits that, if God is not absolutely free and creates the universe out of necessity, then the doctrine of creation from nothing is not inconsistent. Erasmus thinks that Ho's mistake rests on failing to see that the following two propositions have very different meanings:

1. For any object *x*, if God wills to create *x*, then, necessarily, *x* exists. For any object *x*, if God wills to create *x*, then, necessarily, *x* exists.
2. Necessarily, for any object *x*, if God wills to create *x*, then *x* exists.

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