Editorial preface

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Accepted: 30 April 2021 / Published online: 12 May 2021
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The first paper in this issue, “Existential Inertia and the Aristotelian Proof” (of God’s existence) is by Joseph Schmid. Here the author defends the following thesis:

- The Existential Inertia Thesis (EIT), according to which, necessarily, concrete objects (1) persist in existence (once in existence) without requiring a continuously concurrent sustaining cause of their existence and (2) cease to exist only if caused to do so.
- The author prefers this thesis to the following (competing) thesis: The Existential Expiration Thesis (EET) according to which, necessarily, temporal objects will cease to exist (by means of instantaneous annihilation) in the absence of causally sustaining factors.

Schmid concludes that EIT enjoys a host of theoretical virtues, most notable among which are its explanatory power and simplicity. As well, he claims that the most powerful criticisms of EIT can all be met, ending with the hope of generating a greater dialogue and unity between both proponents and opponents of existential inertia.

The next essay is entitled, “The Problem of Arbitrary Requirements: Its Abrahamic Perspective”. The authors present their reflections on a very old problem, namely, the problem of whether obeying seemingly irrational and arbitrary practices is irrational. This is a problem that religious thinkers are well aware of. A classic example of this problem is Abraham’s fidelity at the Akedah, after which God chooses him as the Father of the Jewish People and assigns them their special destiny. In order to deal with this problem, the authors provide a taxonomy of ways of understanding how religious requirements can be arbitrary and yet also constitute genuine normative requirements which issue in reasons for religious practitioners to obey them. They conclude that religious practitioners need not be morally immature when they obey arbitrary requirements.

In the third essay in this issue, Chad McIntosh, presents a defense of modal appearances as legitimate evidence for rational belief. He argues that beliefs about

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what appears possible are justified in much the same way as beliefs about what appears to be actual. The author considers the import of the claim that "the absence of a thing does not appear to one in any way. So, technically, "it appears that there are no tables," is just a sloppy way of putting "it does not appear that there are tables." His argument "modalizes" Chisholm's concept of appearances in a way that strengthens them as reasonable grounds for justified beliefs. He concludes that such a revised concept of appearances can be used to defend a Cartesian argument for dualism and an ontological argument for the existence of God.

Next, Saniye Vatansever attempts to resolve a dispute amongst Kant scholars regarding his understanding of "the highest good." The dispute is focused on the question of whether we need to postulate God and immortality as a condition of the possibility of attaining the summum bonum or whether this highest good is attainable through human agency alone. The dispute then, is whether the theological or the secular concept of the highest good was central in Kant's philosophy. The author's main goal is to show that Kant has a unified theory of the highest good. More specifically, it is argued that the apparent incoherence results from failing to see that Kant believes that the highest good is possible for both individuals and for the human species. Yet, the possibility of the highest good for individuals requires a different set of preconditions than the possibility of the highest good for the human species.

Finally, in the last essay, Dan Cavedon-Taylor takes aim at Neil Sinhababu's attempt to refute the fine-tuning argument for God's existence. As the fine-tuning argument goes, the universe is so precisely ordered that it could not be the result of mere chance and necessity. The best explanation for this order is that it was the work of an intelligent designer. Sinhababu argues that the fine-tuning arguments that focus on explaining why the universe is perfectly suited for the emergence of life is misplaced. Because God cares about the moral consciousness of his creatures, he should have designed the universe with fine-tuned psychological laws that would promote this moral development. However, he did not. This would be a more intelligent design since it would have made the development of moral consciousness more abundant and more easily attained. Given that the universe is not well-designed for moral development, the argument for a perfect moral designer fails. Cavedon-Taylor, objects to this argument by raising doubts as to whether such a universe that is more precisely fine-tuned for moral development (rather than just fine-tuned for the development of life) would be a better kind of universe, or at least that Sinhababu's argument does not establish that it would be.