

## Editorial preface

Ronald L. Hall<sup>1</sup>

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This issue covers a variety of topics. The first two are about two of the traditional proofs for God, the ontological and cosmological arguments. The next articles range from discussions of miracles and animal suffering, to Berkeley's ontological twofold division things into the natural and the eternal, to difficulties in defining the concept of god, to criteria for counting a theist as a person of faith.

Bashar Alhoch objects to Stephen Davis' claim that Anselm's so called "second ontological argument" fails. As Davis, has it, this argument fails because it does not consider the logical possibility of an ontologically impossible being. Alhoch holds that even if such an ontologically impossible being were logically possible, this would not undermine the second ontological argument. As a matter of fact, he thinks that the logical impossibility of such a being is not logically possible, but argues that even if it were somehow interpreted as logically possible, it would still be irrelevant to the second ontological argument.

Bringing to bear all of the sophisticated resources of symbolic logic, Christopher Gregory Weaver constructs a new version of the cosmological argument for the existence of a necessary concrete being. For those who are a bit logic-challenged, or simply put off by such formalisms, the author kindly translates each step of his innovative argument from its symbolic expression into easy-to-follow English. Also, and very helpfully, the author ends the essay with possible objections to this argument and his replies.

We shift gears in the next article to the question of why God does not prevent natural evil, in particular the suffering of animals. Leigh C. Vicens argues that van Inwagen's defense of God's permission of such natural evil is implausible.

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✉ Ronald L. Hall  
ronhall@stetson.edu

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, Stetson University, Deland, FL 32723, USA

Inwagen's defense is based on the argument that the ubiquitous miraculous interventions that would be required to stop such suffering would violate God's perfect nature, and in particular, his intention to make a world that is not intrinsically defective and accordingly well-ordered. As such, God refrains from such ubiquitous interventions into animal suffering because this would produce, contrary to God's perfect will, a massive irregularity in nature. But according to Vicens, God's intervention in nature to stop such sufferings would not produce any greater irregularities than the exercise of the free choice that Inwagen also defends. So, because this attempt to rescue God from what seems like his moral failure to prevent natural evil is inconsistent with Inwagen's own defense of freedom, Vicens suggests that he might adopt an alternative defense of God's permission of animal suffering, namely, the skeptical theistic solution.

Berkeley scholars have been puzzled about the relation between human and divine ideas, given his assumption that human ideas are somehow grounded in the divine mind. For example human beings have an idea of pain because they suffer it, that is, sense it. This raises the question of whether God has an idea of pain since, in Berkeley's view, he does not suffer it, and indeed has no sensation of it. But for Berkeley, human beings are not the authors of the particular ideas they acquire via sensation because if so, these ideas would lack a requisite metaphysical (eternal) stability. Hence there must be eternal immutable ideas in the mind of God. So again, how are the two states of things, eternal and temporal ideas, related? After considering and dismissing three proposals to answer this question, Melissa Frankel proposes that eternal ideas in God's mind are simply the powers to produce human ideas. God's idea of pain is not the experience of pain in God's mind, but his power to produce it in human beings.

Who among us, like Jacob, has not wrestled, if not with God, at least with our concept of God? In particular, theists of biblical faith have struggled to make sense of God's personhood. Who has not been deeply puzzled as how to conceive of God as a person, or as personal? In our next essay, Claudia Weiz, concludes from this conceptual difficulty, with help from Kierkegaard and his imagined conversation with Levinas, Buber and Rosenzweig, is one that we inevitably face due to the fact that we are trying to understand what is by definition beyond our understanding. As such, we must acknowledge that God is a limit concept. But, she argues, perhaps our conceptual limitations need not keep us from establishing a relationship with God as a person, or as personal. How do we establish this? Well not by speaking *about* him, but by speaking *to* him, that is, by turning toward him in prayer, something that reminds me at least of Pascal's advice to take holy water.

In the final essay in this issue, Dan-Johan Eklund lays out criteria that analytic theists have employed regarding what is necessary in order to count someone as a person of faith. Four aspects of the faithful person are distinguished, the cognitive, the evaluative-affective, the practical, and the interpersonal. Eklund does not defend any of these aspects as primary, but rather, and helpfully, offers an analysis of each of these aspects and comments on questions each aspect raises.