

Center for Philosophy of Religion

Spring 2012 Newsletter

Notes from the Director

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Center, Last year, under the direction of Sam Newlands, we undertook a major overhaul of the Center’s website. (Check it out at philreligion.nd.edu) In the course of that revision, the graphic design staff remarked that our level of activity and content was about comparable to that of a small college. Indeed! We are now in our third year of the “Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary Thought” project (evilandtheodicy.org), and the “Analytic Theology Project” (analytictheology.org) is also in full swing. Our research visitors this year are pursuing projects related to the problem of evil in early

modern philosophy, as well as projects exploring some of the most well-known contemporary strategies for responding to the problem. Research fellowships in analytic theology begin next year; and we are offering a variety of additional funding opportunities in analytic theology as well. We continue to sponsor our very successful *Food for Thought* series, which provides each semester a catered dinner and philosophy discussion for some 50 – 60 undergraduates; and we have also begun working with the Philosophy Club on campus. The Center’s staple activity, however, continues to be the weekly discussion group, which features work-in-progress by our research visitors, local faculty, and occasional outside speakers. We are

excited about the research that is being done here, and you can learn more about it in the pages that follow as well as on our website. (Be sure to check out the new “Resources” link on the website as well!)



Center Director, Michael Rea

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Philosophy, Understanding, and Being a Person

Robert C. Roberts

Søren Kierkegaard says somewhere that every human being's fundamental task is to become himself or herself, an individual who knows what it means to exist as a human being and who exemplifies that knowledge in his or her own existence. Might philosophy contribute something to such a project? To think so is to suppose that the achievement of a maturely human identity involves *understanding* in some intimate way. I assume that one of the chief aims of philosophy is understanding. Understanding comes in degrees: whatever you understand, you always might understand it better, and even if you understand only a little, at least you understand that much. It is also possible, unfortunately, by understanding something *in a certain way*, to backslide in your understanding, understanding less after you've done all that work than you understood before. This can be the lamentable effect of false philosophical theories. If naturalism, or consequentialism, or virtue ethics is false, and you succeed in deeply understanding your own existence in its terms so as to shape your character, your actions, your emotions, and your way of perceiving your fellow human beings in accordance with that understanding, you may not only have ceased to understand what you understood before the theory got hold of you, but you

may also have made a human wreck of yourself (not to speak of the others you may infect with your twisted understanding).

In the above I distinguished understanding from understanding in a certain way. Whenever we understand, we understand in some way, but to understand (full stop) implies avoiding the many distorting ways offered

“It is ... possible, ... by understanding something in a certain way, to backslide in your understanding, understanding less after you've done all that work than you understood before.”

in the history of philosophy and the contemporary philosophical scene. This is a tall order, and Kierkegaard in effect raises the stakes in connecting our reflective understanding with the fundamental task of each individual's very existence.



De Generation en Generation, by Bruce Krebs;
Photo by Saad Kadhi

For quite a long time I have wanted the philosophy I practice to be a kind of

reflection that could contribute to my development as a person and to the development of any people my thought might affect. I suppose that's what has drawn me to ethics, and within ethics to the discipline of moral psychology—the study of such matters as human emotions, motivation, virtues, happiness, self-understanding, and personal relations with others.

The ethical tradition that supplies the framework for my understanding of these matters is the Christian one, understood without much insistence on doctrines that have divided Christians historically—thus “ecumenical” Christianity, but not in

the sense of the ecumenical movement of the 1960s and 70s. It seems to me that ethical theories as they appear in modern philosophy systematically distort ethical concepts and thus lead to the kind of false understandings, with potential distortions of persons, that

I noted above. Modern ethical theories such as deontologies, consequentialisms, social contract theories, divine command theories, and the more recent virtue ethics theories that are modeled on the earlier ones, are artificial regimentations of the ethical concepts in which some one privileged concept is assigned a foundational or quasi-foundational role, and the attempt is then made to derive all the other important concepts from the privileged one. I think this procedure is fundamentally flawed, in part

because the concepts just don't work

in the way supposed. If anyone ever concerted to live by the understanding so generated, his life would be a mess, though rescue comes to most theorists in the form of existential sloth: they never get around to living rigorously by such understanding.

My project for this year at the Center for Philosophy of Religion is two books entitled tentatively *Emotions and Values* and *Virtues*. Both books constitute a sequel to my *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (2003), which was substantially written during an earlier visit to the Center. *Emotions*

and *Values* starts with an introduction titled "Studying Virtues" and then discusses various ways that emotions can have moral value. *Virtues* consists of sustained explorations of particular virtues such as compassion, justice, courage, generosity and gratitude, sense of duty, and sense of humor, with special attention to the involvement of emotions in or with the virtues. The books are not a "virtue ethics" in the modern sense, because I make no effort to establish that *virtue* is a more fundamental concept than any of the other ethical concepts. The book aims at understanding the virtues rather than

making a theory of, or out of, them. I stress the virtues' structural diversity, and also how a virtue of one type can differ from one moral tradition to the next (e.g. Nietzschean generosity or courage compared with Christian generosity or courage). Also in the interest of personally usable conceptual understanding, I try to make frequent use of narrative examples from fiction and life. Juxtaposition of diverse moral frameworks and use of narrative aim to provide the reader with what Wittgenstein calls "perspicuous representations" of the concepts in question.

Year In Review

It has been another fruitful year at the Center for Philosophy of Religion. In addition to the Center's numerous established activities, both Templeton Projects are now active and thriving (more on page 8). One result of the Projects is a record number of fellows being hosted this year, which has produced lively discussions each Friday. The Friday discussion group has also seen distinguished visitors, such as Eleonore Stump and former fellows Chris Tucker and Ryan Nichols. This summer the Center's website was redesigned to be more useful than ever, with more developments on the way. Visit us at philreligion.nd.edu.

On September 30, Baylor University's Distinguished Professor of Ethics Robert C. Roberts delivered the Tenth Annual Alvin Plantinga Fellow Lecture, entitled "Emotions and Moral Judgments: What role do emotions play in mature moral judgments?" Professor Roberts explained how emotions belong to a class of perceptual

experiences in which non-sensory information can be received with a kind of directness that gives emotions a special epistemic status. Thus emotions can serve for moral judgments in the same way that perceptions function for sensory judgments, giving us a way



Robert Audi and Robert C. Roberts discuss the virtue of faith.

to understand and know moral and spiritual truths.

The 2011-12 year is again marked by a number of lectures, conferences and workshops. On October 6-8 the Center co-organized the Baylor-Georgetown-Notre Dame Philosophy of Religion Workshop, which was held this year in Washington D.C. At the end of October, the Center sponsored a musical lecture for undergraduates and their parents, who were in town ostensibly for a football game, by Professor William Edgar of Westminster Theological Seminary called "*Beauty for Ashes*": *Evil, Suffering, and the Christian Roots of Jazz*.

Still to come this spring are two exciting events. First, on March 30-31 philosophers from all over will join the Skeptical Theism research fellows to discuss Skeptical Theism and Explanatory Arguments from Evil. Then on April 13-14 philosophers and scientists will gather to discuss the nature, extent, and moral-theological significance of animal pain. Both conferences are due to the planning efforts of the fellows funded by the Problem of Evil Project.

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Of Faith and Fido

Trent Dougherty

I'm very happy to be here at the Center this year. It's a very stimulating environment. The family enjoys long walks on campus, riding mountain bikes in Rum Village as well as sledging and XC skiing there. I enjoy the other Fellows very much, both professionally—I will be collaborating with some of the other Fellows this year—and socially—both Pub Night at the Fiddler's Hearth and Poker Night (don't even get me started!).

My work here at the center focuses on the problem of evil. It is a problem for theists because it doesn't obviously fit in to the story of the world according to theism. Well, that's not right of course: the theistic story includes a lot of evil. So it can't be evil as such that causes a problem for theism. But there are certain kinds of evil that don't seem to fit in well. Particularly when innocent people suffer for no good reason. Okay, so there are no innocent people. Nevertheless, lots of suffering is unconnected to guilt for past wrong in any obvious way. Nor can we discern any plausible line connecting the suffering to any greater good in the future. These instances of suffering—apparently isolated from any past vice or future virtue—don't fit into a story that connects pain to these two broader phenomena.

But here's the rub: we must allow for the possibility that there really are such

connections, it's just that we can't see them. On the other hand, a simple explanation for not seeing something is that it's not there. We must ask the question when absence of evidence is evidence of absence. Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. Theists who are skeptical that we would be able to see such connections even if they were there are sometimes called "skeptical theists" and the view they advocate

"We should explore skepticisms other than the skepticism about our knowledge to discern the connections between suffering, virtue, and vice which bear on the evidential problem of evil."



Mizpor Shalom, by Ursula Malbin; photo by Guillaume Paumier

called "skeptical theism" (this term was coined by this-year fellow Paul Draper, last year's Plantinga Fellow).

There are interesting reasons for and against skeptical theism, but my work involves broadening the discussion between skepticisms and theism. That is, there are skepticisms other than the

skepticism about our ability to discern the connections between suffering, virtue, and vice which bear on the evidential problem of evil. My current work focuses on two of those skepticisms. Most attention has been paid to human suffering. In fact, only one book has been written in recent times on the problem of animal suffering (Michael Murray wrote *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw* in part here at the Cen-

ter). I am working on a book to kick off Palgrave-MacMillan's *New Frontiers in Philosophy of Religion* called *The Problem of Animal Pain: A Theodicy for All Creatures Great*

and Small. It looks at two skepticisms involved in the problem of animal pain. The first is skepticism about whether animals even feel morally relevant pain. The second skepticism is skepticism about whether animals are capable of morally relevant properties which would connect their pain with the development of virtue. I argue against both these skepticisms. That is, I argue both that there is sufficient reason to believe that animals feel morally relevant pain and that there is sufficient

reason to believe—or at least not doubt too strongly—that animals have or will have properties which connect their suffering to the development of virtue.

I'm afraid you'll have to read the book to get more, and if you like it, you can thank the folks at the Center for providing the opportunity to write it.

A Sublime Year at the Center

Andrew Chignell

Fall 2010 witnessed an unusual influx of historians of philosophy into the Center. It was the first year of the multi-year Templeton grant on the problem of evil, and “Evil in Modern Thought” was the theme. In addition to the various early modernists who were sponsored by that grant, there were also the regular Center fellows, of which I was one. Since my work is also primarily historical, however, the balance was tipped in favor of historians for the year (much to Sam Newlands’ delight). As a result, Michael Rea, Tom Flint, Robert Audi, and the other regulars working in contemporary philosophy had to slog (and they did so graciously) through numerous colloquium papers on Leibniz, Bayle, Desgabets, Kant, and the like. The year also featured major international conferences on Pierre Bayle, on G.W.F. Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, and on Evil in the Scottish Enlightenment.

In addition to being the first Year of Evil, 2010-2011 was the first year after former director Alvin Plantinga’s full retirement from Notre Dame. Although he was already living in Grand Rapids at this point, Plantinga retained an office in Malloy Hall and came back on occasion to meet with graduate students. The next-door office that had long housed his administrative assistant was vacated,

however, and it was the one that I happened to inherit upon arrival in South Bend. Apparently I also inherited its phone number: over the course of the year I received calls from academics, students, members of the public, and the odd reporter hoping to ask “Professor Plantinga” (“Plantinger,” “Plantinga,” “Platlingua,” etc.) about various religious, philosophical, and even personal issues. Most were surprised to hear that he was no longer at Notre

tionary argument against naturalism, about who had really won the *mano-a-mano* with Daniel Dennett at the 2009 Central APA, about whether the “Aquinas-Calvin model” of religious belief formation in Plantinga’s work is *really* Calvinist, or about whether they should quit their day jobs and consider graduate work in philosophy of religion. I often (not *always*) enjoyed these occasional breaks from my own day job, and tried to answer the questions as best I could.

“Are there episodes that do not result in explicitly religious epiphanies but still count as an experience of the religious sublime?”



Snowstorm: Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth, by J. M. W. Turner

Dame and quickly signed off. Some callers, however, seemed content to talk to an unknown Kant scholar from Cornell about whatever it was they had called to discuss with the O’Brien Chair. I thus found myself engaged in longish conversations about the evolu-

My work at the Center was focused not on evil, but rather on the somewhat sunnier concepts of *sublimity* and *hope* (indeed, I suspected that I had been awarded the fellowship in order to balance off some of the research on evil taking place at the Center that year). During the first part of the fall term, I fulfilled a promise to a forthcoming volume on *The Sublime* (ed. Timothy M. Costelloe, Cambridge University Press) by writing a chapter called “Religion and the Sublime.” My co-author Matthew Halteman (Calvin College) and I discussed ways in which the aesthetic concept of *sublimity* is connected to religion, and in particular how experience of the sublime differs, if at all, from religious experience.

A central question we faced was that of whether the concept of *sublimity* or *the*

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Salvation, Evil, and the Divine Attributes

Gary Gutting

The following are some tentative thoughts that developed out of my graduate seminar last semester. I'm currently trying to develop them in more detail and would welcome comments and suggestions.

The Christian religion responds to deep human hopes, most importantly our hope to be ultimately safe (saved) in a world of peril. This is not to say there's nothing to religion beyond this hope, just that a worldview that does not fulfill it will not be religiously fulfilling. Our salvation may depend on our free choice (e.g., to accept divine grace), but given the right choices, salvation is assured.

God, of course, must be the sure source of that salvation. He must be good in the sense of fully committed to working for our salvation (given any free cooperation needed from us) and powerful to the extent of assuring that no external circumstances (factors outside his and our wills) will interfere with our salvation. These are what we might call the *conditions of religious adequacy* on a concept of God.

It's natural to think that these conditions are met by a God defined by the properties of traditional natural theology: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. But this is not so. First of all, the omni-

properties are not necessary to guarantee our salvation. God could be totally committed to saving us, even if he, say, lacked appropriate moral attitudes to other beings. Similarly, he might lack power over forces that are irrelevant to human salvation.

More importantly, the omni-properties of natural theology are not sufficient to guarantee our salvation. Omnipotence assures the divine power to do whatever is needed to save us. But omnibenevolence could prove an obstacle to our salvation.

“Once the appeal is made to the gap between God’s knowledge and ours, we cannot move from what we think God would do to what he does do.”

To see this, consider standard ways of responding to the problem of evil. Contemporary philosophers have worked through the twists and turns



Lord Answering Job Out of the Whirlwind,
by William Blake

of the problem of evil in subtle and complex logical detail. But, as I see it, the only viable answer to the question, How could an all-good and all-powerful God create an imperfect world?, is that such a God may have knowledge beyond our understanding. As Hume suggested long ago, the problem of evil is solved only by an appeal to our ignorance.

This is an important philosophical result for believers, since it shows why all atheistic arguments from the existence of evil to the nonexistence of

God fail. But the philosophical escape from the problem of evil is a two-edged sword. Appealing to our ignorance of God's knowledge saves us from the apparent contradiction of a world created by an all-good God but still

containing evils. But it also restricts much of what we would like to say about God.

In particular, it restricts our judgments about what an all-good God would do. It may seem to us that God would never, given our proper moral disposition, allow us not to be saved. But it also seems to us that God would not have permitted the Holocaust or the death of innocent children from painful diseases. Once the appeal is made to the gap between God's knowledge and ours, we cannot move from what we *think* God would do to what he *does* do.

As responses to the problem of evil

often point out, an all-benevolent being, even with maximal power, may have to allow considerable local evils for the sake of the overall good of the universe. We have no way of knowing whether we humans might be the victims of this necessity. For example, we do not know whether there is or will be some other, far more advanced, species for whose sake God will allow us to be annihilated or suffer endlessly.

It's true that an all-good God would, of course, do everything possible to mini-

mize the evil done to us, but we have no way of knowing how great that minimum might be. Some have suggested that when God allows suffering it must ultimately be for the benefit of the sufferer. But what basis do we have for thinking that this is the way God, in his omniscience, sees it? The free-will defense, for example, emphasizes that the freedom of moral agents may be an immense good, worth God's tolerating horrendous wrong-doing. We have no way of knowing whether destroying our happiness might turn out to be an

unavoidable step in the soul-making of a super-race whose eventual achievements make our ultimate loss of salvation acceptable to God.

My conclusion is that, given standard ways of responding to the problem of evil, even knowing that there is an all-good and all-powerful God does not guarantee our hope that (assuming we act appropriately for salvation) we will be saved.

A Sublime Year at the Center

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sublime is determinate enough to conduct such an investigation (Mike Rea consistently emphasized the concept's fuzziness or gerrymandered quality in our discussions). We ended up claiming that there is at least a *technical* concept of the sublime bequeathed to us by 18th-century European aestheticians that does have sufficiently determinate boundaries. Our task, then, was to analyze that technical concept and discuss how it relates to various commonsense and philosophical concepts of religion and religious experience. With respect to analysis, we found it easier to discuss *the sublime* in terms of the experiences one has of it. Paradigmatic cases of such experiences, we argued, comprise three distinct phenomenological moments: *sensory overwhelmedness*, *transcendence of the conceptual*, and ultimately an *epiphany* of a certain sort (temporally these moments can overlap, or be separated by a space of years). If the ultimate epiphany involves affirmative religious

content of some sort, then the episode clearly counts as an experience of the *religious sublime*. A trickier question is whether this is a necessary condition: are there episodes that do not result in explicitly religious epiphanies but still count as an experience of the *religious sublime*?

After presenting that paper to the Center colloquium and receiving very helpful feedback, I turned to the main project for the year: a short book on Kantian theories of hope. The book – titled simply *What May I Hope?* – has been commissioned as part of a five-part series called “Kant’s Five Questions,” edited by Allen Wood (other books in the series are *What Can I Know?*, *What Should I Do?*, *What is the Human Person?*, and *What is Enlightenment?*). The book is not meant to be merely historical: I start by laying out Kant’s unique conception of religious, social, and political hope, but then go on to consider post-Kantian develop-

ments and contemporary accounts of hope as well. The act or attitude of hope, it turns out, is both subtle and interesting, even though it has been vastly understudied by contemporary philosophers (in comparison, say, to attitudes like belief and faith).

What May I Hope? is still a work-in-progress, but the research fellowship was crucial not only because it offered leisure for reading and reflection, but also because it allowed me to discuss early ideas with philosophers and theologians at the Center and across the university. I now have numerous files on my hard drive with names like “Conversation with Sean Kelsey” and “Reflections on Draper’s and Flint’s comments at the Workshop” that continue to shape my thinking as I bring the book to completion. It was a very rich year indeed, and I am grateful to the Center, its directors and other members, and to the University of Notre Dame for the opportunity.

Year In Review

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Analytic Theology Project

www.analytictheology.org 

The Analytic Theology Project has made some significant strides over the past year. In June, we held the third annual Logos Workshop in Philosophical Theology, whose focal theme was “Divine Revelation: Meaning, Authority, and Canon.” During the summer, we also held our first “Course Awards” competition, which provides funding to theology faculty for the development of courses in Analytic Theology. Then, in November, Eleonore Stump, the Richard J. Henle Professor of Philosophy at St. Louis University, gave the First Annual Analytic Theology Lecture at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Her lecture was entitled “Philosophical Reflections on the Atonement.” Finally, we have also begun planning for the launch of a new online, open access journal: *The Journal of Analytic Theology*, to be edited jointly by Oliver Crisp, Michael Rea, Kevin Diller, and Trent Dougherty. We hope to begin taking submissions in Fall 2012.

For next year, we have also advertised funding for two research fellowships in Analytic Theology for the 2012 – 2013 academic year, and for “Cluster Group” grants, which provide funding for materials, stipends, and guest speakers to interdisciplinary teams who wish to form reading groups in Analytic Theology. The Logos Workshop will be held May 3 – 5, and the theme for the conference will be “Minds, Bodies, and the Divine”. Finally, the 2012 Analytic Theology Lecturer at AAR will be Alan Torrance, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of St. Andrews.

Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary Thought Project

www.evilandtheodicy.com 

This marks the second full year of the *Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary Thought* research initiative here at the Center. Last year, most of the project activities focused on the 17th century as we celebrated the 300th anniversary of Leibniz’s landmark *Theodicy*. As work continues on the early modern period, the second and third contemporary components of the project also got underway this year.



Chris Tucker and Christina Brinks discuss her defense of historical biblical criticism.

The second component focuses on “skeptical theism,” a recent response to the problem of evil that emphasizes human cognitive limitations to argue that we have no reason to think that we could discern divine purposes in allowing horrendous evils if there were any, and so we have no warrant for believing that such evils do not serve a divine purpose. Paul Draper (Purdue University), Trent Dougherty (Baylor University) and David Anderson (a recent graduate of Purdue University) are in residence this year to critically examine this response. They have also organized a

workshop on skeptical theism for the spring.

The third component, focusing on pain and the nature of minds, also launched this year. In January, David Bain and Michael Brady inaugurated a large, multi-year, multi-disciplinary project at the University of Glasgow that explores the phenomenal character and motivational force of pain. The project also funded John Schneider (Calvin College) to write a monograph developing a novel, “aesthetic” approach to the problem of animal suffering. Beth Seacord, a graduate student from the University of Colorado-Boulder is in residence this year to work on her dissertation on the problem of animal pain.

Work on the early modern component of the program continued this year as well. Marcy Lascano from CSU-Long Beach has been in residence writing about responses to the problem of evil from women philosophers in the 17th century. We have also had two visiting graduate students in residence as early modern dissertation fellows: Colin Chamberlain (Harvard University) and Eric Stencil (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Each week, they were joined by Center fellow Liz Goodnick and local Notre Dame faculty and graduate students for discussion of works in progress. They also hosted several outside visitors during the term. Planning for the concluding Leibniz conference in Lisbon, Portugal (October 2012) also continues.



Robert C. Roberts

Alvin Plantinga Fellow

Robert C. Roberts is visiting from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he is Distinguished Professor of Ethics in the philosophy department. His project for this year is a study of the moral properties of emotions and the way such properties bear on such virtues as compassion, sense of humor, generosity and gratitude, justice, and the sense of duty. This work will be published in two volumes, *Emotions and Values* and *Virtues*, which constitute the sequel to *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (2003). Roberts thinks that moral philosophers should teach and write in such a way as to contribute to their own and other people's wisdom. In his spare time he likes to root around in languages like Spanish and Dutch.



Anastasia Scrutton

Frederick J. Crosson Fellow

Anastasia (Tasia) Scrutton is visiting from Durham in the UK, where she works for the Open University. Her current research is on the diverse interpretations religious and spiritual people give to mental illness – from the idea that mental illness is a sign of demonic possession or a punishment for sin to the idea that mental illness is a symptom of unfulfillment or trauma that can nevertheless ultimately be transformative or salvific. Her hobbies include walking, cooking, painting, and having existential crises of diminishing profundity.



Liz Goodnick

Research Fellow

Liz Goodnick received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2010. Her research focuses primarily on the philosophy of religion, specifically on the epistemic consequences of naturalistic explanations for the belief in God (e.g., evolutionary explanations and those from the cognitive science of religion). She is interested in this question both as it is discussed in the early modern period (especially Hume), as well as by our contemporaries (especially Plantinga). She also enjoys vegetarian cooking with her husband, Alex, and training her dog, Banjo, in agility.



Tyron Goldschmidt

Research Fellow

Tyron Goldschmidt recently completed a Ph.D. in Philosophy at King's College London, with a dissertation on why there is something rather than nothing. Originally from South Africa, he also studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Cambridge, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His main interests are in metaphysics, philosophy of religion and philosophy of mind, and his current research is in philosophy of religion and the history of philosophy. Tyron and his wife Yael recently had a baby daughter, Hannah.



Paul Draper

Skeptical Theism Research Fellow

Paul Draper is visiting this year from Purdue University, where he is a Professor of Philosophy and editor of the journal, *Philo*. His goal this year is to complete seven papers, four of which are on the problem of evil, including two on skeptical theism. Paul lacks any ability to appreciate jazz, plays chess very badly, and does not like to travel.



Trent Dougherty

Skeptical Theism Research Fellow

Trent Dougherty (Ph.D., Rochester) is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University. His areas of specialization are Epistemology, Philosophy of Language, and Philosophy of Religion. When not writing he likes to spend time outdoors with his wife, Sarah, and four kids: Sam (2), "Jeep" (5), Annabelle (10), and Fiona (13). The household also contains Caesar, Bagheera, Ka, and Una: a lab, cat, python, and cockatiel, respectively.



David J. Anderson

Skeptical Theism Research Fellow

David J. Anderson graduated in August 2011 with a Ph.D. from Purdue University. His dissertation work, under the direction of Michael Bergmann, focuses on issues in contemporary epistemology but his interest in the problem of evil began with his undergraduate thesis at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. He has published and presented work in both areas. Anderson was born and raised in the Yukon Territory of northern Canada where he developed a love of the outdoors and met his wife Gina.



Beth Seacord

Pain-Mind Dissertation Fellow

Beth Seacord is a Ph.D. student at the University of Colorado. Her research interests are in philosophy of science and philosophy of religion. She is currently writing her dissertation titled, "Unto the Least of These: Animal Pain and the Problem of Evil," under the direction of Wes Morriston. She is a graduate of the University of Southern California (B.A.) and Biola University (M.A.). Beth is originally from Glendale, California and enjoys surfing, bird watching and vegan cooking. She currently resides with her husband, Matt and her two cats: Scout and Spike.



Marcy Lascano

Early Modern Research Fellow

Marcy Lascano is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at California State University Long Beach. Her research focuses on 17th and 18th century philosophical theology and metaphysics. Her research at the Center is investigating the views of three women philosophers on the nature of God and the problem of evil: Anne Conway, Damaris Masham, and Emilie du Châtelet. She is particularly interested in the unique ways in which these women philosophers conceived of God and his relation to the world. Marcy is a native of California. She went to UMass Amherst for her Ph.D. and while there married Jason, another UMass philosophy graduate. They both live and teach in Long Beach. In her spare time, she enjoys cycling, running, and traveling.



Colin Chamberlain

Early Modern Dissertation Fellow

Colin Chamberlain is visiting this year from Harvard University, where he is currently working toward his Ph.D. in philosophy. His main interests are in Early Modern, and his dissertation is about the mind-body union and the passions in Descartes and Malebranche. More generally, he is interested in the way these Cartesians believe that our bodies shape our mental lives. As a side project, he is trying to show that Malebranche's occasionalism is consistent with free human action.



Eric Stencil

Early Modern Dissertation Fellow

Eric Stencil is a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he is currently finishing his dissertation: *Cartesian Modality: Possibility and Essence in Descartes and Arnauld*. This project focuses on the Cartesian theory of modality in René Descartes and Antoine Arnauld. While at the Center, in addition to finishing his dissertation, he is also working on a related set of issues from the debate between Arnauld and Nicolas Malebranche concerning their respective conceptions of God's nature and *modus operandi*.



Chen Jiangjin

Templeton Research Fellow

Chen Jiangjin is visiting the Center from Wuhan University in Wuhan, China, where he teaches moral philosophy and political philosophy. His current work focuses on Henry Sidgwick's moral philosophy, especially to better understand the nature of the dualism of practical reason and Sidgwick's religious thought. His wife Guo Yan, a doctoral candidate at Wuhan University, is an environmentalist, focusing on environmental justice and the protection of Chinese rural areas. They have a lovely daughter, Julia, who is now almost six years old and attends an elementary school in South Bend.



Manxin Liu

Templeton Visiting Graduate Student

Manxin Liu, who goes by 'Sun', is a visiting graduate student from Sun Yet-sen University in Guangzhou, China. He is working in the areas of philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology, especially perception. While at the Center this year, Sun is working on a paper on perceptual knowledge, and also applying to Ph.D. programs in the United States. Besides philosophy, Sun likes playing soccer, and making jokes that are difficult to get.



Liang Chen

Templeton Visiting Graduate Student

Liang Chen is a visiting graduate student from Renmin University of China, Beijing, where he is finishing his master's degree. His main philosophical interest lies in metaphysics, and he is currently working on Wilfrid Sellars' nominalism. He loves art, poetry and music — Bach and Goethe in particular are his heroes. In his spare time he is a concertgoer and plays the classical guitar.

Interview with Chen Jiangjin



CPR In what areas of philosophy do you focus? What about these topics interests you?

CJ I focus on moral and political philosophy, and the main question that interests me is “Why be moral?” I want to find a strong argument to justify that, even if I will be suffering injustice, pain and loss, I also should be a moral and just person, even if these people around me can get big benefits by acting unjustly. I think this question is the core of moral philosophy, and the pursuit of its answer is very important for the whole world, especially for Chinese people today.

CPR What philosophers guide your research projects?

CJ The philosophers I like most are Plato, Kant and Sidgwick, as they represent three different moral philosophy traditions and provide excellent answers to the question mentioned above. As for me, the argument Plato made in *Republic* is more attractive, although there remain some holes in his argument.

CPR What prompted you to spend a year with the center for philosophy of religion?

CJ The CPR has a good international reputation for philosophical research, as there are lots of famous professors and active young scholars here. Throughout my research, I have encountered many problems about God and soul, and many philosophers presuppose the existence of God or the immortality of soul for justifying the rationality of morality. So I’m interested in efforts to prove the existence of God and soul, how to understand the relationship between God and the rebirth of soul, the continuity of this life and the afterlife, and I think the CPR could help.

CPR What do you hope to come out of this year, or what projects do you anticipate working in the next few years?

CJ I hope to complete two papers. The first is about, how to understand the nature of Sidgwick’s dualism of practical reason, while the second is about reconsidering his religious sanction. I’d like to compare the main opinions in Western philosophy of the question “Why be moral” with how great Chinese thinkers think about it.

CPR Have you found the philosophical climate to be different here at Notre Dame, compared to Wuhan University?

CJ Yes, it is a little different. In my opinion, most Chinese scholars, such as the philosophers at Wuhan University, are focused on the history of philosophy, not the main topics in philosophy, though the situation is now changing gradually. On the other hand, I hope that there will be more and more American philosophers that are interested in Chinese philosophy.

CPR Have you enjoyed your time in the center, particularly the Friday discussion group?

CJ Yes! The Friday discussion group is so amazing, many papers are new for me. I have needed to collect some materials about the background of the papers, read and think of the main ideas and arguments in each paper, so the discussion group provides me a good learning platform and opens some new research fields. I always organize the discussion group at Wuhan University, so I regard the Friday discussion group as a good model and I can learn much from it.

Former Center Director in Headlines

Matt Getz

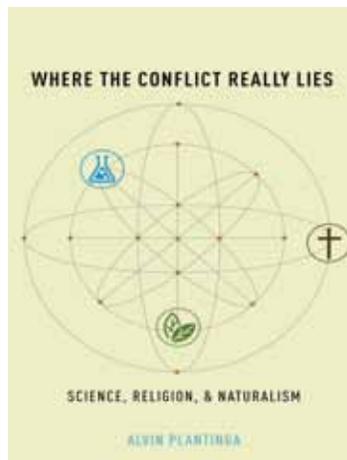
Most readers of this newsletter will no doubt be aware that the second and longest-acting director for the Center was Alvin Plantinga, whose career was celebrated in the summer of 2010 and documented in this newsletter's Spring 2011 edition. Many readers of this newsletter are no doubt familiar with his work, perhaps including his article recounting the history of the Center in the Spring 2010 newsletter. His latest work — *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* — represents something of a culmination of Plantinga's most recent focus, that of the relationship between science and religion.

In the preface to *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Plantinga writes that his overall claim is that "there is superficial conflict but deep concord between science and theistic religion, but superficial concord and deep conflict between science and naturalism." For example, evolutionary theory is often thought to be at odds with Christian doctrine by both religious and secular thinkers. But, says Plantinga, God certainly could have made the biological world by means of natural selection operating on genetic variation. He likewise disposes of the alleged problem of divine intervention in a world governed by scientific laws as another case of merely apparent conflict.

However, not all conflicts between science and specifically Christian belief are merely apparent. For instance, Plantinga deems some of the recent developments of evolutionary psychol-

ogy and certain theories of historical biblical criticism as genuine conflicts. However, the Christian need not be alarmed: these conflicts are only superficial — that is, they do not typically provide defeaters for Christian belief.

But Plantinga isn't satisfied with these mere defensive maneuvers. Indeed, he argues that religion and science are not only compatible, but in fact profound companions. Here he adverts to fine-tuning arguments that support a theistic cosmology, and to the oft-repeated historical point that science began in



the bosom of Christianity. So, concludes Plantinga, science and religion are not the enemies they are typically portrayed to be. Rather, religion only conflicts with science when science is understood as *naturalism*.

The mistake many people make today is in supposing that science somehow supports the "quasi-religious" view of naturalism. That is to say, Plantinga isn't satisfied even with these additional defensive maneuvers. Indeed he goes on the attack, arguing that the deepest and most serious (and perhaps most surprising) conflict is between

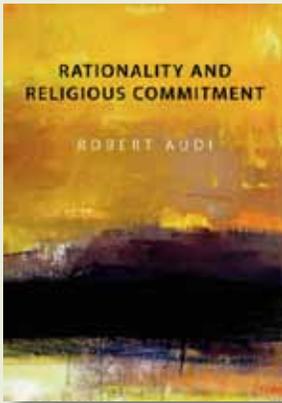
science and naturalism. Enter the well-known Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism.

Now, most readers of this newsletter will no doubt find these Plantingian arguments interesting and important, even if familiar and controversial. What is noteworthy is how *Where the Conflict Really Lies* has created waves outside of academia. In its December 2011 issue, the magazine *Christianity Today* published an interview with Plantinga, where he offered a sort of précis of *Where the Conflict Really Lies*.

However, the Plantingian ripples haven't been limited to the ponds of Christian magazines. Even in the ocean of leading secular journalism Plantinga has found an audience. First, Jennifer Schuessler of *The New York Times* wrote a column for the December 14, 2011 issue. There she documented some of Plantinga's personal faith history and impact in philosophical academia, in addition to discussing some of the claims of the book. She also recounts Plantinga's recent debate with Daniel Dennett, along with Plantinga's reaction to that debate. Second, NPR's Weekend Edition aired an interview on January 29, 2012, in which Plantinga briefly discusses the book, along with the rationality of faith and the limits of science.

While it is hard to quantify the effect of such press, it is clear that the relationship between science and religion is of considerable interest for many. Once again, Plantinga has shown his characteristic keen eye for issues of significance, this time reaching well beyond the ivory tower.

Recent Work by Past Fellows and Friends of the CPR

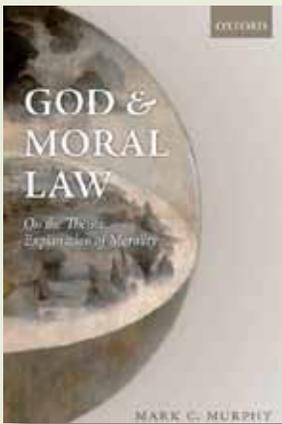


Rationality and Religious Commitment

Robert Audi (Oxford U.P.)

Rationality and Religious Commitment shows how religious commitment can be rational and describes the place of faith in the postmodern world. It portrays religious commitment as far more than accepting doctrines — it is

viewed as a kind of life, not just as an embrace of tenets. Faith is conceived as a unique attitude. It is irreducible to belief but closely connected with both belief and conduct, and intimately related to life's moral, political, and aesthetic dimensions.

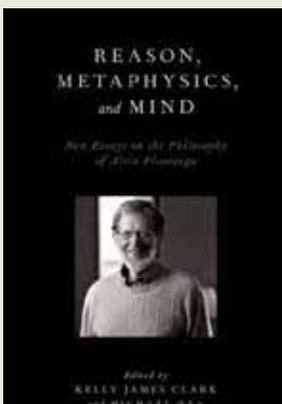


God and Moral Law: On the Theistic Explanation of Morality

Mark C. Murphy (Oxford U.P.)

Does God's existence make a difference to how we explain morality? The characteristic methodology of theistic ethics is to proceed by asking whether there are features of moral norms that can be adequately explained only if we hold that such norms have some sort of theistic foundation. But this methodology, fruitful as it has been, is one-sided. *God and Moral Law* proceeds not from the side of the moral norms, so to speak, but from the God side of things: what sort of explanatory relationship should we expect between God and

moral norms given the existence of the God of orthodox theism? Mark C. Murphy asks whether the conception of God in orthodox theism as an absolutely perfect being militates in favor of a particular view of the explanation of morality by appeal to theistic facts. He puts this methodology to work and shows that, surprisingly, natural law theory and divine command theory fail to offer the sort of explanation of morality that we would expect given the existence of the God of orthodox theism.



Reason, Metaphysics, and Mind:

New Essays on the Philosophy of Alvin Plantinga

Kelly James Clark and Michael C. Rea, eds. (Oxford U.P.)

In May 2010, philosophers, family and friends gathered at the University of Notre Dame to celebrate the career and retirement of Alvin Plantinga, widely recognized as one of the world's leading figures in metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of religion. Plantinga has earned particular respect within the community of Christian philosophers for the pivotal role that he played in the recent renewal and

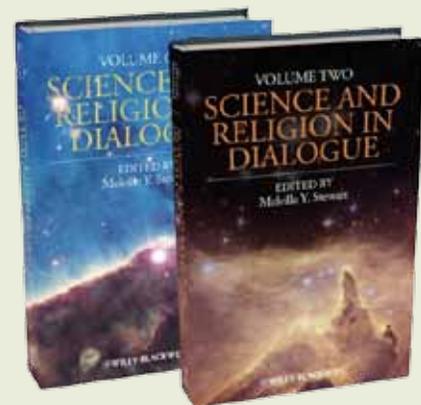
development of philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. Each of the essays in this volume engages with some particular aspect of Plantinga's views on metaphysics, epistemology, or philosophy of religion. Contributors include Michael Bergman, Ernest Sosa, Trenton Merricks, Richard Otte, Peter van Inwagen, Thomas P. Flint, Eleonore Stump, Dean Zimmerman and Nicholas Wolterstorff, in addition to invited responses to each essay.

Science and Religion in Dialogue

Melville Y. Stewart, ed. (Blackwell)

This wide-ranging two-volume collection represents the most cutting-edge thinking on topics at the convergence of faith and science. Consisting of 70 articles by eminent scientists and philosophers from the world's most prestigious colleges and universities, issues such as Big Bang cosmology, evolution, intelligent design, dinosaurs and creation, and the God-Gene Hy-

pothesis are addressed. The implications of religious beliefs on hot-button scientific issues such as stem cell research, bioethics, and neuroscience, are also explored, along with topics that delve into the deeper realm of physics such as general and special theories of relativity, dark energy, dark matter, the Multiverse Hypothesis, and Super String Theory.

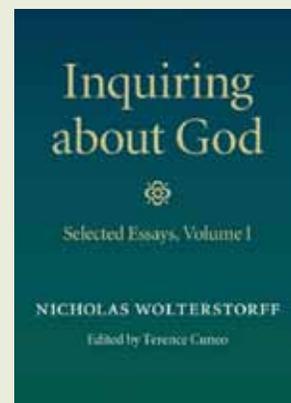


Inquiring About God

Nicholas Wolterstorff; Terence Cuneo, ed. (Cambridge U.P.)

Inquiring about God is the first of two volumes of Nicholas Wolterstorff's collected papers. This volume collects Wolterstorff's essays on the philosophy of religion written over the last thirty-five years. The essays, which span a range of topics including Kant's philosophy of religion, the medieval (or classical) concep-

tion of God, and the problem of evil, are unified by the conviction that some of the central claims made by the classical theistic tradition, such as the claims that God is timeless, simple, and impassible, should be rejected. Still, Wolterstorff contends, rejecting the classical conception of God does not imply that theists should accept the Kantian view according to which God cannot be known.

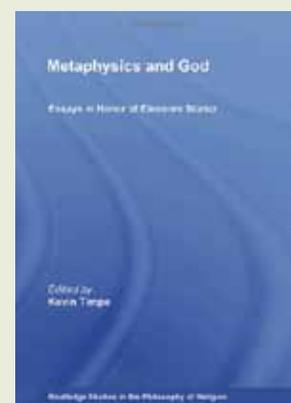


Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump

Kevin Timpe, ed. (Routledge)

Metaphysics and God focuses on contemporary issues in the philosophy of religion through an engagement with Eleonore Stump's seminal work in the field. Topics covered include: the metaphysics of the divine nature (e.g., divine simplicity and eternity); the nature of love and God's relation to human happiness; and the issue of

human agency (e.g., the nature of the human soul and hell). Contributors include Peter van Inwagen, Brian Leftow, Thomas D. Senior, William E. Mann, Michael C. Rea, Thomas P. Flint, Jonathan L. Kvanvig, John Martin Fischer, John E. Hare, Lynne Rudder Baker, Timothy O'Connor, Jason T. Eberl, C. P. Ragland, and Christopher Brown.

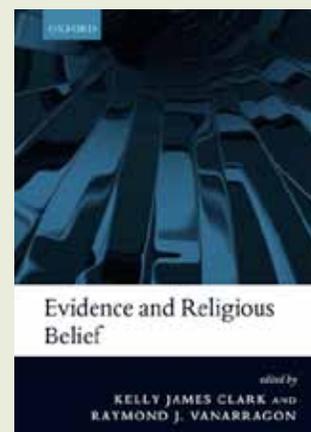


Evidence and Religious Belief

Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon, eds. (Oxford U.P.)

A fundamental question in philosophy of religion is whether religious belief must be based on evidence in order to be properly held. In recent years two prominent positions on this issue have been staked out: evidentialism,

which claims that proper religious belief requires evidence; and Reformed epistemology, which claims that it does not. *Evidence and Religious Belief* contains eleven chapters (in three parts) by prominent philosophers which push the discussion in new directions.



* The book images and descriptions are courtesy of the respective publisher's website. Please visit them for more information.



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Upcoming Events in the Center

- March 1: *Food for Thought* Dinner and Panel Discussion on Divine Hiddenness
- March 30-31: Skeptical Theism and Explanatory Arguments from Evil Conference
- April 13-14: Conference on Animal Pain and the Problem of Evil
- May 3-5: Logos 2012 "Minds, Bodies, and the Divine"
- October 24-27: "Leibniz's *Theodicy*: Reception and Relevance"
Problem of Evil Conference in Lisbon, Portugal
evilandtheodicy.com
- Logos 2013: "Theorizing about God — Realism in Theology"
www.analytictheology.org

C. S. LEWIS ESSAY PRIZE

The Lewis Essay Prize has been established to provide up to *ten awards* of \$3,000 *each* for essays published in popular venues that present the state of the art or make new progress on the topics funded through the Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary Thought project during the 2010-2013 academic years. See www.evilandtheodicy.com for more information.