

In 2017 we organized an international conference in Munich on the topic: “Analytic Theology and the Nature of God – Advancing and Challenging Classical Theism”. In this and the previous issue we publish some of the papers presented at that conference - which was generously sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation. For practical reasons, some of the talks given at this conference had to be placed in the previous issue of this journal (Bishop, Bracken, Perszyk, Ventimiglia). But all nine of them are meant to form a thematic unity. The five papers in this issue explore various alternatives to classical theism. Alternative concepts of God have rarely been discussed in analytic philosophy of religion. By classical theism we mean the view that God is a substance that exists totally independent of creation and is characterized by the predicates of perfection: perfect power, perfect goodness, perfect knowledge. Neo- or non-classical versions of theism include panentheism, process theology, and theories developed in the tradition of German Idealism, and more. They often reject substance ontology and re-interpret the perfection predicates.

Panentheism, for example, is the view that the world is not totally separated from God but is actually “in” God. The exact definition of the “en” (or “in”) in the concept “Panentheism” has sparked a lively debate. Panentheism has been challenged by the claim that the position is ill defined. Philip Clayton defends panentheism as a research program. He argues that there are three distinct ways of demarcating panentheism, and that, accordingly, distinct “sub-programs” of panentheistic research can be distinguished. Clayton develops a specific answer to the question in which sense the world exists “in” God. If metaphysical space is an attribute of God, then God must be present at all points in space. If metaphysical space is God’s space, then the physical space is not ‘outside him’ but by definition within him. God remains the absolute framework for all talk of space and time, thus allowing the world to be in God and God to be immanent in the world.

Anna-Case Winters argues that most problematic habit of thought in classical theism is the assumption that God is radically separate from the world. This separation leads to a desacralization and objectification of nature. According to Case-Winters a more extended conversation between Christian theology and process thought can be seen to be fruitful in rethinking the relation of God and the world and the deeper meaning of incarnation. This alternative understanding of God “in all things” has the potential to radically reshape our thinking about the natural world, its value, and the role of human beings in it and thus opens up the possibility of overcoming anthropocentrism. Also, Whitehead’s “dipolar theism” allows for reconceiving divine perfection as embracing two poles, manifesting each Divine attribute in dual ways of perfection. God can, for example, be both changing and unchanging without being

less perfect. Finally, she also argues that God's being related to the world internally leads to a version of panentheism. The whole of Whitehead's metaphysics is an attempt to understand how one entity can be in another one without losing its alterity.

Johannes Stoffers argues that Cusanus relativizes classical divine attributes in order not to substantialize God, nor to describe him as an entity among others. Cusanus is able to do so because he conceives the absolute as an all-encompassing reality, but does this in a way that remains more traditional or "orthodox" than the more recent systems of neo-classical theism (like process theology). Cusanus argues that God does not need to be diminished ontologically in order to be intimately related to other entities. The idea of divine receptivity, central according to neoclassical theists as, is alien to Cusanus. He stands fast with God's aseity. The absolute, as *non aliud*, is transcendent to everything finite that is to be characterized as *aliud*. Stoffers argues that Cusanus is a panentheist, and that his panentheism is occupying a fruitful middle ground between classical and neoclassical concepts of God.

While Klaus Müller assumes that the solutions of classical theism, especially in the question of theodicy, are not convincing, he sees the most challenging problem for a panentheistic paradigm in the Christian context of God-talk in integrating the trait of personhood in the monistic horizon of this approach. According to him, using the concept of imagination and its logic of an "as if" proves to be a helpful strategy for this challenge. Müller takes reflections by Jürgen Werbick, Douglas Headley, and Volker Gerhardt into account in order to substantiate the philosophical and theological promises of this solution.

Thomas Schärfl compares the non-standard theistic notion of God as presented by John Bishop and Ken Perszyk in their so-called "euteleological" concept of God with idealistic, especially Hegelian and post-Hegelian, concepts of the Divine. Both frameworks not only share striking similarities, based on their guiding intuitions, but also share notable problems that have already been discussed in 19th century speculative theology. The article offers some proposals to strengthen the euteleological concept of God ontologically – based on insights originating in post-Hegelian discussions. Schärfl sees the question of subjective immortality and the associated metaphysical modifications of the concept of God as a litmus test for Perszyk's and Bishop's approach.

Godehard Brüntrup, Tobias Müller