

Editor's Note

For Paul Tillich, sin is separation. For Simone Weil, every separation is a link. For Michael Raposa, the paradigm of relation is love. Are love and sin thus somehow the same? Of course not, at least not necessarily. But sophistry such as this only underscores the difficulty of asserting the boundaries at which something ends, and another thing begins (not to mention love and sin!). Consider the coronavirus, for instance. The virus is connected biologically to billions of humans, and we are connected through it to each other and to other species. And yet connectivity is hardly what comes to mind when considering the cultural and political response to the virus, neither when cross-border regulations are considered nor with respect to the American polity. If every separation really is a link, then perhaps every link is also a separation. Perhaps where thinking really begins is when one asks, “in what respect?” or “to what end?” when considering relations between two or more things.

Identity and difference, imbrication and isolation, continuity and discontinuity: these are some of the considerations that come to mind when looking at the present issue of the *AJTP*, which raises rich and challenging questions about relationships within and between virology, religious naturalism, education, and religion. In her adaptation of her 2021 *AJTP* lecture, Mary-Jane Rubenstein masterfully unpacks the theological dimensions of the metaphors by which cultural figures have sought to explain and grapple with the pandemic. Donald A. Crosby methodically defends his longstanding account of religious naturalism by way of a series of responses to various objections. Laura J. Mueller articulates a robust case for an American *Bildung* on behalf of resilient democracy in a time of crisis. In doing so, Mueller argues brilliantly on behalf of Socratic dialogue as a public good, thus bringing philosophical reasoning into the heart of everyday life at both individual and community levels. Finally, J. Edward Hackett convincingly integrates William James's philosophy of religion with his radical empiricism. With diligence and imagination, Hackett asserts a religiously affective character within everyday experience, even as some distance between such affectivity and doctrinal religion remains intact.

Biology, culture, nature, education, and religion: here is the *AJTP*'s mix of academic disciplines and thoughtful commentary at its best. Broadly one could see a dialectic here between the first two articles, which present different ways of interacting with nature, and the latter two, which enlist philosophy in the service of culture, broadly construed (education and religion for Mueller and

Hackett, respectively). But that is only one way to see it. For whatever patterns best facilitate your engagement with the contents of this issue, I can really only say: happy reading!