Editor’s Note

This is a special issue in honor of Michael S. Hogue’s *American Immanence: Democracy for an Uncertain World* (Columbia University Press, 2018). The issue emerged from the 2021 annual meeting of the Institute for American Religious and Theological Thought, which was also devoted to Hogue’s book. It is an honor to host this contribution to an ongoing exchange, given that Hogue’s project is among the most successful yet written in building constructively from the central premise of the Anthropocene, which is that nature is political. What Hogue grasps is that if nature is political, then how it is political is to some extent up to us. Central to Hogue’s account is what he calls the “Anthropocene paradox,” in which humanity appears powerful enough to be the driving force for the planet’s climatic and biological systems, yet powerless to prevent either the destruction of those systems or the end of our own way of life. For Hogue, the American immanental tradition, with its abiding conviction that this, “our one and only world, matters ultimately” (AI 119), is enlisted on behalf of a theopolitical vision of solidarity and “resilient democracy.” Hogue’s project speaks to commitments that are perennial to this journal, including the social and political relevance of metaphysics and religion and the sense that democracy and the environment bear special consideration. The affinities here are unsurprising, since Hogue dives straight into the same streams that shape the AJTP, specifically the pragmatic naturalist, radically empirical, and process lineages of the American immanental tradition. Hogue’s is a beautiful vision, one that is at once powerful and fragile, and it has inspired a robust response of constructive criticism. This issue is part of that response.

Contained herein are five essays. Four of these have been adapted from papers presented at the 2021 IARPT meeting, and the fifth is a response from Hogue himself. What unites the first four essays, other than basic admiration for Hogue’s book and the conviction that it’s important, is the pragmatic sense that the impact of Hogue’s project could be made sharper, more consequential, or more extensive. This is the explicit focus of the first essay from Walter Gullick, which unpacks a set of impediments to the implementation of Hogue’s vision and surveys resources on that might be enlisted on its behalf. The second essay, from Robert Smid, focuses on the question of specialized knowledge within Hogue’s account of democracy. For Smid, a robust education is an indispensable ally to resilient democracy, and “professional expertise provides an acceptable and necessary default when democratic structures fail” (31). In the third essay, AJ Turner identifies in psychodynamic approaches to religion
a crucial counterpart to resilient democracy, with such approaches especially adept at helping understand sources of resistance. In the fourth essay, John Teehan reads Hogue in light of cognitive science and scientific worldview studies, positioning the theopoetic dimension of Hogue’s account of the immanent tradition within a public context in which multiple worldviews intersect. Finally, in Hogue’s essay responding to his readers, he engages each of these perspectives in turn and describes some of the leading lines of his research that have emerged in the years since his book was published.

The contents of this issue display both the urgency of the problems Hogue addresses and the vitality of the response he has inspired. They also contribute to a rich concatenation that has produced key insights at each link. Note the following sequence of events, which obviously only capture a select few moments in the lives of everyone involved: Hogue first read Victor Anderson, then attended an IARPT (then called HIARPT) meeting, then served as reviews editor of this journal, then became its editor-in-chief, then wrote *American Immanence*, then inspired an IARPT meeting, which in turn inspired the essays that comprise this issue, and now he has written an essay in response to those contributions. Would that you, dear reader, experience your own sequence of encounter, creativity, and exchange here in these pages. In any case, happy reading!