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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 7/1, Spring 2012

Editors' Introduction	
Alan M. Olson, Helmut Wautischer <i>Boston University, Sonoma State University</i>	iii
An Unexpected Friendship	
Herbert W. Mason <i>Boston University</i>	1
Baal – Satan: A Dramatic Presentation	
Herbert W. Mason <i>Boston University</i>	13
Rationality of Belief in Action – A Look at the Theory of Allāmah Tabātabāī	
Hādi Sādeqi <i>Quran and Hadith University at Qom, Iran</i>	23
The Instrumental Intellect in Islamic Tradition	
Reza Berenjkār <i>University of Tehran</i>	46
How Philosophy Shapes Theology	
Muhammad Ali Abdullahi <i>University of Tehran</i>	51
Characteristics of Islamic Philosophy	
Ali Asgariyazdi <i>University of Tehran</i>	56
Philosophy in Islam and the West	
Mohammad Reza Rezvantalab <i>University of Tehran</i>	60
Philosophy and Jurisprudence in Islam – A Hermeneutic Perspective	
Charles E. Butterworth <i>University of Maryland</i>	65

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION



Volume 7/1 fills a genre of discussion that has not yet been addressed in earlier volumes of *Existenz* related to religion or to Jaspers' concept of world philosophy. Past volumes addressed religion primarily from a Judaeo-Christian perspective; this current volume brings Islam into the conversation. Earlier volumes addressed world philosophy from a theoretical perspective or with reference to ideologies that are amicable to Western thought; this volume includes voices from a culture that is oftentimes viewed as a political adversary. Based on an outreach attempt by the University of Tehran we decided to prepare a panel on "Shiite Islam's Jurisprudence in Hermeneutic Perspective" for our annual meeting in conjunction with the APA Eastern Division meeting of December 2011. World philosophy is alive and well when diverse voices are heard and integrated into a collective comprehension of human thought. Several distinguished Iranian scholars with high ranking academic or clergy positions expressed their interest in participating in such dialogue and we were very pleased that an equal number of distinguished scholars from American universities expressed similar interest to participate in such scholarly exchange.

The program was scheduled, abstracts and early drafts of papers were on file, but one major obstacle remained, the issuance of entry visas for our Iranian colleagues. We were fortunate to find assistance by the Iranian Intersection in Washington, DC, and we also petitioned directly with the appropriate Federal authorities, but in the end we were unsuccessful and not even one of the presenters was given entry permission for attending the conference. These obstacles then resulted in the withdrawal of some of the Iranian scholars from participating in absentia and several scholars from American universities withdrew their participation as well. Nonetheless, five distinguished Iranian scholars and one distinguished American scholar of Islamic tradition remained committed to the conference. Their contributions were presented at the conference and Professor Charles Butterworth did an exemplary task to comment on each of the five papers. The edited version of this interaction is now included in this volume. We want to express our thanks to each of the participants for their valuable contributions to this intercultural academic dialogue.

We are especially pleased to publish in this edition of *Existenz* (for the first time) two new essays by the internationally recognized Middle Eastern scholar, Herbert W. Mason, "Baal – Satan" and "An Unexpected Friendship." Professor Mason is the William Goodwin Aurelio Professor of History and Religious Thought Emeritus at Boston University, and University Professor Emeritus of the University Professors Program at Boston University. Among the many honors and achievements of Professor Mason are a National Book Prize nomination for his verse narrative translation of The Gilgamesh epic [*Gilgamesh, A Verse Narrative* (Houghton Mifflin, 1970)] and his translation of the famous French Orientalist, Louis Massignon's, 4-volume masterpiece *The Passion of al-Hallaj* (1983) for the distinguished Bollingen Series (Princeton University Press). He presently serves as President of the Association des Amis de Louis Massignon in Paris. Professor Mason has also recently published a novel (*This Never Happened!*, available in a Kindle edition) which coincides with the same period referenced in "An Unexpected Friendship," viz., the Paris of the 1950s (<http://amzn.to/SEqcMp>).

The Editors,
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Mission Statement

The mission of *Existenz* is to encourage research and publication on problems and topics consistent with the general overview of Karl Jaspers, namely, the history of philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics; psychology, philosophy of religion, politics, culture, and the arts. This journal serves as a publication outlet for various international Jaspers societies, including those in the United States, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan, and also considers direct submissions of articles for online publication.

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