**Clarion Review**

**An Essay Toward the Other**
John Streed
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Five Stars (out of Five)

Today's technology is awe-inspiring. Our gadgets and doodads may be user-friendly, but the majority of us cannot explain or understand the science behind their functioning. We take their operation at face value: when we push a button, something will happen. We have faith that all the intricacies of science will come into play to make our toys function. Blind faith in a dogma of science isn't much different from faith in a supreme force that regulates the universe, like the being that John Streed calls "The Other" in this thought-provoking book.

The origin of the universe has been pondered since humanity first asked the question, "why?" "Materialism" (the belief that the universe is all there is, and there is no guiding hand) and "theism" (the belief that "an Other is the source of all things") are both theories that cannot be proven. Materialists believe that the universe began with a Big Bang and what followed is a series of "accidents" that led to our current universe. Theists believe that the universe was created by a Supreme Being that "has always been and always will be." With a non-judgmental and common-sense approach, Streed points out the uncanny similarities between these two theories.

Some may believe that theism and religion are interchangeable terms, but according to Streed, theism and religion are different, although they are at times connected. "Theism is a concept, a proposition about something; religion is the response, in thought and act, to that proposition," he writes. Materialists, on the other hand, turn to the theory of evolution and try to apply pure science to find their answers. Streed combines the theistic belief in an ultimate reality with the materialistic tools of science and logic to form an argument for an "Other" and a system of universal checks and balances that he calls "Verities."

The Verities include the "True," which like some parts of materialism consists of science and logic; the "Good," which consists of "…free will and choice which necessitate mind and consciousness independent of the material cosmos"; and the "Beautiful," which is "…delight and enjoyment, appreciation and contemplation: modes of consciousness that quicken the senses

and enrich our lives." The Verities are based on Plato's Theory of Forms, and the idea of an "Other" is a Neo-Platonist monotheistic theory of the "One," the "Primal Being," the original source of everything.

Streed has an amazing ability to bring the complexity of Plato's Dialogues and many philosophical, religious, and scientific ideas to an easily understandable format for a general readership. Readers who have always pondered the origin of the universe will enjoy *An Essay Toward The Other* as much as students of philosophy. Streed's humor and open-mindedness are apparent in his writing, which is funny, brilliant, and poetic. The author's previous works include a book of poetry, a study of ethics, and many essays and articles for publications including *The English Journal*.