

Study Questions for Philosophy of Religion (Spring 2017)

— Exam 2: Proofs for God's Existence, God w/o Proofs, Evil, and Miracles —

The exam will consist of a set of short answer questions (a brief paragraph each). I am interested in how much you are able to work with the readings for the class and your notes from class. Uninformed opinions are not especially useful here. Copied answers from the Ppt slides also are not helpful; use your own words.

Proofs for God's Existence

1. Be able to distinguish theism, atheism, agnosticism, and their philosophical counterparts (e.g., "philosophical theism").
2. What is an argument? What is the difference between "having evidence for P" and "being able to prove P"?
3. Be able to briefly describe Anselm's understanding of God, his ontological argument, Guanilo's objection, Kant's objection (and any other's you want to throw in). Be sure to be able to distinguish "existence *in intellectu*" and "existence *in re*".
4. How do Anselm's first (ch. 2) and second (ch. 3) argument differ?
5. What does it mean for something to be a necessary being or a contingent being?
6. What is the difference between these different understandings of contingency and necessity: logical, metaphysical, and physical?
7. What is the difference between viewing God as the "sustaining cause" of the universe and as the "initiating cause" of the universe?
8. Be able to describe and evaluate the cosmological argument. What is Aquinas trying to prove about God?
9. What are Mackie's problems with the cosmological argument?
10. What is the difference between essential and accidental causal series? Explain these in the context of God as a first cause.
11. What is the Principle of Sufficient Reason?
12. In what sense might the universe be contingent? Why would one ever think it so?
13. Be able to briefly describe, and distinguish, the teleological argument and the argument from design (note that our authors distinguish three varieties of the argument from design — know them all).
14. What is the Anthropic argument for God's existence?
15. What is the "intelligent design" argument for God's existence?
16. What problems does David Hume find with the argument from design?
17. Be able to explain to the uninitiated what it means to justify a belief, and the two ways in which one might go about doing this. Have some examples in mind.
18. What is the difference between a basic belief and an inferred (or derived) belief? What are some likely candidates for basic beliefs? What are some likely criteria for being basic?
19. What is evidentialism? What is strong foundationalism? How has this been criticized? How might a foundationalist respond to those criticisms?
20. What is natural theology? And what is Plantinga's relation to it?
21. What does Plantinga mean by "noetic structure"?
22. What is the relationship between Phil Quinn and Al Plantinga? What problems did Quinn have with Plantinga's reformed epistemology? What is Gary Gutting's objection to Plantinga?

The Problem of Evil

23. Be able to characterize or give examples of moral (human) and natural evil. Why is this distinction relevant?
24. What is the "Epicurean Dilemma"?
25. How does Mackie present the "logical argument from evil"? How does this differ from the "evidential argument"?
26. Be able to describe the "adequate" solutions Mackie suggests to the problem of evil.
27. What is the "Free Will Defense" and what are its most difficult challenges?
28. What does Hick mean by a "soul-making theodicy"?
29. Be able to distinguish the Augustinian from the Irenaean approach to theodicy.
30. What does Hick mean by an "epistemically distant God" and why does he think this is necessary for God?
31. Both Hick and Mackie believe that God could create a free moral agent who does not sin; where do they disagree?
32. What does Marilyn Adams mean by "horrendous evil"?
33. What fault does Adams find with traditional theodicies (say, of the Leibnizian variety)?

Miracles

34. What is a miracle? How did David Hume define 'miracle'? Do we ever have a good reason to believe that some event is a miracle, according to Hume?
35. Evaluate Swinburne's account of miracles.