

Ph.D. General Examination

Philosophy of Religion

Spring 2013

Instructions

1. The exam will last four hours. You should answer a total of **four** questions, including at least one from each of the three parts, so you should expect to spend about one hour on each question.
 2. Read the question carefully before writing. It is not necessary to repeat the question you are answering on your exam, but you should clearly indicate the number of the question you are answering.
 3. You are expected to mention arguments and views of philosophers you have read whose work you believe is most pertinent to the question you are answering.
-

Part One. Religious Epistemology

1. (a) What does Alvin Plantinga mean by a properly basic belief?
(b) Present and evaluate Plantinga's argument that nobody has shown that belief in God is not properly basic.
(c) Present Plantinga's positive thesis that belief in God can constitute knowledge when properly basic. Evaluate it briefly.
2. What is Plantinga's "Aquinas-Calvin Model" of Christian faith? Explain how belief obtained according to this model constitutes knowledge according to Plantinga's proper function account of knowledge. Evaluate Plantinga's claim.

Note: Do not answer both questions 1 and 2.

3. What is meant by religious exclusivism? What is meant by religious inclusivism? Distinguish exclusivism and inclusivism about truth and about salvation. Explain the theory of religious diversity John Hick supports, which he calls pluralism. How is it meant to circumvent the unappealing aspects of both exclusivism and inclusivism about the truth of different religions? Discuss some objections that have been raised against Hick's theory and evaluate it.

Deleted: exclusivism

Deleted: c

Deleted: exclusivism

Deleted: inclucivism

4. What reasons do we have or could we have for believing that a miracle has occurred? Distinguish between first hand reasons and reasons based on testimony. Critically discuss Hume's argument in his essay, "On Miracles." Include his definition of a miracle and his claim that belief in Christianity rests on belief in miracles.

Part Two. Religious Metaphysics

5. Present the argument that infallible foreknowledge seems to entail the non-existence of human free will. Give at least three traditional compatibilist solutions to the problem and briefly evaluate them. Present your own evaluation of the argument.

Deleted: to

6. Discuss one of the three traditional classes of arguments for theism: the Ontological Argument, the Cosmological Argument, or the Teleological Argument. In your discussion mention both a classical form of the argument and a contemporary version. (The latter may be a version of your own invention).

7. Some philosophers have argued that evolutionary theory shows that religious beliefs are not truth-sensitive. In response, Plantinga has argued that evolutionary theory with naturalism is incoherent. Explain and critique Plantinga's argument.

8. Discuss the mutual coherence of such traditional divine attributes as omniscience, omnipotence, perfect goodness, timelessness, and immutability. It is not necessary to discuss every attribute, but your discussion should highlight some tensions among these attributes, and your response to possible problems of incoherence.

Part Three. Religious Meta-ethics and the Problem of Evil

9. Distinguish the logical and evidential problems of evil. Carefully explain the most compelling version of the Free Will Defense. Discuss the prospects for a version of this response as a plausible way out of each problem.

10. In her recent book, *Wandering in Darkness*, Eleonore Stump argues that no defense or theodicy can be successful without appeal to a category of suffering she calls "the loss of the desires of the heart." What does Stump mean by the desires of the heart? Explain Stump's distinction between subjective and objective scales of value and how they can conflict. What would such a conflict look like and how might they be reconciled with each other?

11. In his recent book, *The Problem of Evil*, Peter van Inwagen expands upon the Free Will Defense to make it more plausible. What does van Inwagen add to the typical Free Will Defense, and how plausible is the result? Should he be allowed to answer both 9 and 11?

12. What is skeptical theism? Explain some of the basic objections to the view and provide some responses.