

God & Persons (PHL 320)

Spring 2007

Study Guide for Exam # 1

Exam # 1 begins with the general introduction to the course, includes the existence of God, and goes to and includes as much as we cover in class on religious faith and reason.

Be able to identify and locate the following names and concepts. You should be able to identify and connect authors of the readings with the positions they defend.

the subdisciplines of philosophy ÷ epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, logic, historical studies, philosophy of studies

religion & theology & philosophy of religion Emile Durkheim's df. of religion

Freud's explanation of religion

Marx Û base and superstructure, the alienation of work and of religion

Roger Trigg Û religious realism, the context & content of religion, naturalism

Ninian Smart's six dimensions of religion

a priori arguments & *a posteriori* arguments ontological & cosmological arguments

the Middle Ages Anselm of Canterbury Thomas Aquinas

a temporal series of causes vs a dependent series of causes

Summa Contra Gentiles & *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas's version of the design argument

William Paley's version of the design argument

Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) & the Darwinian theory of evolution

Stafford Betty & Bruce Cordell's version of the design argument

Vesto Slipher Abbé Georges Henri Lemaître

Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery red shift & the Doppler effect

the age of the universe & the age of life The Anthropic Principle (Robert Dicke)

the Scientific Revolution the two book metaphor

Richard Taylor's contingency and necessity argument for God's existence

The Principle of Sufficient Reason

Alvin Plantinga Û Reformed epistemology, properly basic

the three principal positions on the faith-reason relationship Û fideism, strong rationalism, & critical rationalism

"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian

August Comte & the Law of Three Stages Blaise Pascal & the wager

Sören Kierkegaard Û objective & subjective knowing, risk & dread

William Clifford Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

Blaise Pascal & the wager William James & the right to believe

James' 3 areas in which the will is justified in going beyond compelling logic & evidence Û ethics, personal relations, & religion

James' 3 conditions which must be met to justify the will going beyond compelling logic & evidence Û forced, lively, & momentous

Sample essay questions.

1. What is the difference between religion, theology, and the philosophy of religion?
2. Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud's accounts of religion have been labeled "reductionist." What does this mean? Present a statement of each of their reductionist explanations of religion. Then offer a critique of each account.
3. Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx both consider religion a form of illusion. Explain each of their positions on the illusory character of religion. Then offer a critical evaluation of their positions.
4. What is Roger Trigg's criticism of social scientific (and tacitly of psychological) accounts of religion? In your discussion, include his distinction between content and context, and his discussion of religious realism (including what he means by this phrase).
5. Compare and contrast Anselm's argument and Aquinas's second argument (the first one we considered) for the existence of God on the following points. (1) What are their starting points? (2) How do they move from their starting points to God? (3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of their positions?
6. Present Aquinas's or Paley's version (one only) of the design argument. Why does Darwin's theory appear to undermine the argument? How might the argument be salvaged in the face of Darwin's theory? Do you think one or some of these salvaging strategies are successful? Defend your answer.
7. Compare Paley's design argument for God with Betty and Cordell's design argument. Which of the arguments do you think is stronger and why? What value do Emerton and Polkinghorne propose that the anthropic principle and design argument generally have with respect to the question of God's existence?
8. What is the datum for Richard Taylor's argument for God from contingency? How does this starting point differ from Aquinas's second argument and Betty and Cordell's first argument? What fundamental principle does Taylor use in constructing his argument? Do you think this principle is justified?
9. What does Plantinga mean when he states that the existence of God is "properly basic"? How does he explain those who do not believe in God? Critically evaluate his position.
10. Present one of Aquinas's arguments for the claim that it is appropriate that there are some truths about God which go beyond human reason. And present one of his arguments for the claim that it is appropriate that there are truths about God which can be known from human reason but are also revealed. What is your position about truths about God? Are such truths entirely beyond reason? Are they accessible to reason? If the latter, how much do they tell us?
11. What is Kierkegaard's position on the role of reason in religious faith? Kierkegaard is often classified as a Fideist. What does this mean and do you think that this classification is appropriate? If Kierkegaard is a Fideist, would you classify him as a strong or weak Fideist? Offer a brief critical evaluation of Kierkegaard's position.
12. Briefly present William Clifford's argument against religious faith and Pascal's defense of religious faith using the wager. Then critically assess each position.
13. William James argues that one sometimes has the "right to believe" (is rationally justified in believing), even though the beliefs may go beyond the bounds of compelling evidence and logic. In what **areas** and under what **conditions** does James assert that the acceptance of such beliefs is justified? Why are they justified?
14. How does C.S. Lewis respond to the claim that religious faith is obstinate in clinging to beliefs even in the face of contrary evidence whereas science is not? What justification does Lewis offer for the special character of religious faith? What is Lewis's position on the nature of religious faith?