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1-1-2006

PH 501 Philosophy of Christian Religion

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PH 501(a)
Philosophy of Christian Religion
Fall 2006
Jerry L. Walls

I. Objective

Students who complete this course will

A. gain initiation into the great intellectual tradition of seeking wisdom that is called philosophy;

B. gain some competence and confidence in analyzing and criticizing philosophical arguments;

C. come to appreciate more fully how Christian theism is both a rich source of philosophical reflection and a powerful resource for making sense of our deepest questions. In particular, our discussion will revolve around Eight Great Questions

    1.   What is the nature of freedom and responsibility?
    2.   How are mind and body related?
    3.   Are there good extra-biblical reasons to believe God exists?
    4.   If God is all good and all powerful, why is there so much evil?
    5.   Are faith and reason compatible?
    6.   Is it rational to believe in miracles in the modern/postmodern world?
    7.   Can life after death be defended philosophically?
    8.   What is the meaning of life?

II. Requirements

A. Most of the class time will be given to lectures; the remaining part will be spent in discussion. It is required that students will read all assignments to facilitate understanding of lectures and participation in discussions. A reading report will be due at the end of the term. If less than 100% of the reading is done, it will affect your grade adversely.

B. Three essays will be assigned over the term. Each will be 4-5 pages (MAXIMUM), typed, double spaced, numbered pages, and stapled with a cover sheet. (NO paper clips and NO folders or covers. Name, date and SPO # in upper right hand corner). Each paper is worth 25% of your grade.

C. Class attendance is required. You are expected to take your own notes. An attendance report will be due at the end of the term. Two absences are permitted. If you are absent more than two times, it will affect your grade adversely unless all are excused.

D. A final exam worth 25% of your grade.

III. Texts

A. William Hasker, Metaphysics.

B. Michael Peterson et al., <u>Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion</u>, 3rd edition.
C. Michael Peterson et al., <u>Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings</u>, 2nd edition (***Readings***).
D. Jerry L. Walls, <u>Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy</u>.

IV. Daily Assignments

September 5	Introduction	
September 7	Hasker	13-28; 119-123; 29-44
September 12	Hasker	45-65
September 14	Hasker	65-80
	Walls	92-112
September 19	Peterson	1-14; 220-245
	Readings	***427-434***
September 21	Peterson	77-106
	Readings	***176-180***
September 26	***Readings***	***197-222: 232-256***
September 28	Peterson	15-38
Octobre 3	***Readings***	***45-53***
October 5	Peterson	128-153
	Readings	***296-303***
October 10	Walls	14-33
October 12	***Readings***	***315-340***
October 17	***Readings***	***341-353***
	Walls	113-132
October 19	Peterson	39-57
October 24	***Readings***	***101-3; 118-129***
October 26	Peterson	107-127
October 31	***Readings***	***104-117; 261-272***
November 2	Peterson	173-193
November 7	***Readings***	***473-480***
November 9	***Readings***	***481-495***
November 14	Peterson	194-219
November 16	Walls	133-160
November 20-24		**Reading Week**
November 28	Walls	161-177
November 30	Walls	178-200
December 5	Walls	63-91
December 7	Conclusion	

POSITION	GOVERNING ASSUMPTION	JUDGEMENT ON LAW OF UNIVERSAL CAUSALITY	DEFINITION OF A FREE ACTION	ARE WE FREE?
Hard Determinism	Science demands Universal Causality	True	An event consisting in the thought or movement of a person which has no cause and thus no causal history	No
Simple Indeterminism	We are free from Causal Determinism	False	Same as above	Yes
Soft Determinism (Compatibilism)	1) Science demands U.C. 2) We are free in some sense	True	An event consisting in the thought or movement of a person which has as its immediate cause an inner state of the person whose act it is.	Yes (in a sense)
Agency Theory	1) All events have causes 2) We are free	Universal A – True Universal Causality B – False	Event caused directly by and only by an agent	Yes

THE MAIN ARGUMENT FOR FATALISM

1) ~ ◊ (**P** + **P**)

2) **P** → I HAVE NO POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT ~ **P**

3) **P** → I HAVE NO POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT **P**

4) □ (**P** v ~ **P**)

5) EITHER I HAVE NO POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT **P** OR HAVE NO POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT ~ **P**

6) I HAVE GENUINE CHOICE CONCERNING **P** ONLY IF I HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT **P** AND THE POWER TO MAKE IT TRUE THAT ~ **P**

7) I HAVE NO GENUINE CHOICE CONCERNING **P**

1. **MODUS PONENS**

   If **P** then **Q**

      P

                                     VALID

   ∴ **Q**

2. **MODUS TOLLENS**

   If **P** then **Q**

   ~ **Q**

   ∴ ~ **P**

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3. **AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT**

   If **P** then **Q**

     Q

   ∴ **P**

4. **DENYING THE ANTECEDENT**

                                    INVALID

   If **P** then **Q**

   ~ **P**

   ∴ ~ **Q**

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

1.   A contingent being exists.

2.   This contingent being has a cause or explanation of its existence.

3.   The cause or explanation of its existence is something other than the contingent being itself.

4.   What causes or explains the existence of this contingent being must either be solely other contingent beings or include a non-contingent (necessary) being.

5.   Contingent beings alone cannot cause or explain the existence of a contingent being.

6.   Therefore, what causes or explains the existence of this contingent being must include a non-contingent (necessary) being.

7.   Therefore, a necessary being exists.

A TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

1.   The "products of human contrivance" are the products of intelligent design.

2.   The universe resembles the products of human contrivance.

3.   Therefore probably the universe is a product of intelligent design.

4.   Therefore probably the author of the universe is an intelligent being.

A STRONGER TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

1.   Everything that exhibits curious adaptation of means to ends and is such that we know whether or not it was the product of intelligent design, in fact was the product of intelligent design.

2.   The universe exhibits curious adaptation of means to ends.

3.   Therefore the universe is probably the product of intelligent design.

KANT'S THEORETICAL MORAL ARGUMENT

1.   We ought (morally) to promote the realization of the highest good.

2.   What we ought to do must be possible for us to do.

3.   It is not possible for us to promote the realization of the highest good unless there exists a God who makes the realization possible.

4.   Therefore, there exists such a God.

KANT'S PRACTICAL MORAL ARGUMENT

1.   It would be demoralizing not to believe there is a moral order of the universe: for then we would have to regard it as very likely that the history of the universe will not be good on the whole, no matter what we do.

2.   Demoralization is morally undesirable.

3.   Therefore, there is moral advantage in believing that there is a moral order of the universe.

4.   Theism provides the most adequate theory of a moral order of the universe.

5.   Therefore, there is a moral advantage in accepting theism.

HUME'S A PRIORI ARGUMENT

1. We have a priori expectations about the sort of world an infinitely powerful, intelligent, and good God would create.

2. The world we discover by experience is very different from our a priori expectations.

3. Given the very great difference between the actual world and our a priori expectations, we have no reason to infer that it was created by an infinitely powerful, intelligent, and good God.

THE LOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

1. God is by definition perfectly good, omnipotent, and omniscient.

2. A perfectly good being prevents all the evil he has the power to prevent.

3. A being that is omnipotent and omniscient has the power to prevent all evil.

4. If there were a God, there would be no evil.

5. But there is evil.

6. Hence, there is no God.

THE REVISED ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

1. If there were a God, there would be no evil in the world which God is not ultimately justified in allowing or bringing about.

2. There is evil in the world which God is not justified in allowing or bringing about.

3. Hence, there is no God.

1. **The Approximation Argument**

   A. All historical inquiry gives, at best, only approximate results.

   B. Approximate results are inadequate for religious faith (which demands certainty).

   C. Therefore, all historical inquiry is inadequate for religious faith.

2. **The Postponement Argument**

   A. Once cannot have an authentic religious faith without being totally committed to the belief in question.

   B. One cannot be totally committed to any belief based on an inquiry in which one recognizes the possibility of a future need to revise the results.

   C. Therefore, authentic religious faith cannot be based on any inquiry in which one recognizes the possibility of a future need to revise the results.

   D. Since all rational inquiry recognizes the contingency of future revision, no authentic religious faith can be based on it.

3. **The Passion Argument**

   A. The most essential and valuable trait of religious faith is passion, a passion of the greatest possible intensity.

   B. An infinite passion requires objective improbability.

   C. Therefore, that which is most essential and valuable in religious faith requires objective improbability.

HUME'S PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST MIRACLES

1. The evidence from experience in support of laws of nature is extremely strong.

2. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature.

3. The evidence from experience against the probability of a miracle is extremely strong.

4. If we have testimony that a miracle occurred, we have either a violation of the laws of nature or a violation of the law that testimony is reliable.

5. Given the strength of our evidence for the laws of nature, it is always more probable that we have a violation of the law that testimony is reliable than a violation of the laws of nature.

6. Therefore, we should always reject testimony for miracles.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

1.   A thing can be destroyed only by separating its parts.

2.   Since the soul is immaterial by definition, it has no parts.

3.   Therefore, the soul cannot be destroyed.

THE INNATE DESIRE ARGUMENT

1.   Every innate desire indicates the reality of its object.

2.   Desire for immortality is innate.

3.   There is an indication that afterlife is a reality.

THE MORAL ARGUMENT FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH

1.   If morality makes sense, justice must ultimately prevail.

2.   Justice does not prevail in this life.

3.   Either morality makes no sense or there must be life after death.

4.   But morality makes sense.

5.   Therefore, there is life after death.

THE BRAIN DEPENDENCE ARGUMENT

1.   If you change certain parts of the brain you eliminate certain experiences.

2.   Death involves the complete destruction of the brain.

3.   So death is the end of all experience.