

## Phil 383 Final Exam Results

Total Points Possible: 100

Mean: 72.7

Median: 76

Standard Deviation: 15.2

Because of the way the scores turned out, I curved the grades upward somewhat. As a rough guide to how this worked, you can consider the following chart:

A 87-100

B 72-87

C 57-72

D 42-57

F <42

If you would like to know what your specific grade was on the final exam, or if you would you're your exam back, please email me.

### Phil 383 Final Exam – Answer Key

Please write your answers in the bluebook provided. I will not look at things written on this exam sheet. Please place this exam sheet inside your bluebook when you turn it in.

#### Part I • Short Answer • COMPLETE ALL

[30 POINTS TOTAL]

1. *True or False?* According to Clifford's Evidentialism, it is morally acceptable to believe in God even if the evidence is equally weighed for and against God's existence. [3 points]

**False**

2. Give one example of a belief that a Strong Foundationalist would say is a basic belief and briefly explain why the Strong Foundationalist would say this. [6 points]

**"2+2=4" Because it is self-evident. Once you understand what the terms mean, you can see that it is true.**

**"I exist." Because it is indubitable, it cannot be doubted.**

3. The following quotes are taken from our reading assignments. Name the author of each quote: [8 points]

(a) "...it [is not] necessary to add to the way in which God has arranged creation in this world and the next by (so much as) a gnat's wing, nor to subtract from it (by so much as) a gnat's wing..." **Al Ghazali**

(b) "Every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the difference, on the side of nature, of being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation." **Paley**

(c) "When any one tells me that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle." **Hume**

(d) "...it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient

evidence.” **Clifford**

4. Consider the following argument against believing in God:

1. If there is insufficient evidence for belief in God, then belief in God is irrational.
2. There is insufficient evidence for belief in God.
- C. Thus, belief in God is irrational.

If you follow Plantinga in thinking that belief in God is a basic belief, how would you respond to this argument? [4 points]

**Plantinga would reject premise 1.**

5. *True or False?* The fine-tuning argument attempts to show that the fact that the physical constants are fine-tuned is evidence that the Christian God, in particular, exists. [3 points]

**False**

6. *True or False?* Human evil is evil that is done **to** humans. Natural evil is evil that is done **to** non-humans (such as animals and the environment). [3 points]

**False**

7. According to van Inwagen’s theodicy, what is the primary reason that free-will a good thing? [3 points]

**Free-will allows for the possibility of love.**

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**Part II • Medium Answer • COMPLETE ALL**

[10 POINTS EACH • 40 POINTS TOTAL]

8. Consider the statement:

“You should believe that God exists.”

Explain how this statement could be understood in *three* different ways depending on how one understands the word ‘should’.

1. **You *morally* should believe that God exists. This means that it is immoral for you to fail to believe in God – to not believe is to do something wrong.**
2. **You *prudentially* should believe that God exists. This means that it is in your best interests to believe in God – you stand to gain something by believing. Pascal attempts to show this.**
3. **You *epistemically* should believe that God exists. This means, roughly, that there is good evidence in favor of God’s existence. Another way to put this is to say that there are reasons in favor of the truth of the claim that God exists.**

9. One issue that comes up in the debate over the fine-tuning argument concerns whether or not very unlikely events demand explanation. A natural question is:

*Do unlikely events demand explanation?*

Do not attempt to answer this question. Instead, give one example that supports a positive answer to the question and one example that supports a negative answer.

***In support of a positive answer: It is very unlikely that a coin flipped 100 times will land “heads” every time. If this unlikely event were to occur, we’d think it demands an explanation.***



antelopes by a rival deity. Alternatively, if there is only one Creator who made the tiger and the lamb, the cheetah and the gazelle, what is He playing at?...

The true utility function of life, that which is being maximized in the natural world, is DNA survival. But DNA is not floating free; it is locked up in living bodies and it has to make the most of the levers of power at its disposal. DNA sequences that find themselves in cheetah bodies maximize their survival by causing those bodies to kill gazelles. Sequences that find themselves in gazelle bodies maximize their survival by promoting opposite ends. But it is DNA survival that is being maximized in both cases..." (pp. 111-112)

Dawkins can be seen as giving a design argument very similar to Paley's design argument, but with a different conclusion. Drawing on this passage, formulate Dawkins' argument in the style of Paley's argument and briefly explain each premise. (To do this, you will need to identify the evidence and the two hypotheses in question.)

**In this passage the evidence in question is the behavior of cheetahs, antelopes, and gazelles. In general, the evidence is that cheetahs seem to be well-designed to maximize gazelle and antelope deaths whereas antelopes and gazelles appear to be well-designed to maximize cheetah starvation. There are three hypotheses in this passage, but I will focus on two. First there is the Monotheistic Design Hypothesis: a single benevolent Creator designed all animals on earth. Second, there is the Selfish Gene Hypothesis: DNA is trying to replicate itself, but it is locked up inside the bodies of animals. Since DNA controls the traits of animals, this leads to evolution by natural selection. Dawkins argument can then be given as follows:**

1. Cheetahs, antelopes, and gazelles exist with their respective attributes.
  2. This is highly probable if the Selfish Gene Hypothesis is true.
  3. This is highly improbable if the Monotheistic Design Hypothesis is true.
  4. If E is much more likely given H1 than given H2, then E supports H1 over H2.
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5. Therefore, the cheetah/antelope/gazelle evidence strongly supports the Selfish-Gene Hypothesis over the Monotheistic Design Hypothesis.

**Premise 1 we take for granted from Dawkins' discussion. Premise 2 is true because if genes are attempting to survive, but are trapped in the bodies of animals and control the traits of those animals, then they will manipulate the animals so as to maximize survival. This is what the evidence appears to show. Premise 3 is true because a benevolent Creator would not be expected to create animals that are designed to ensure the suffering of other animals. Premise 4 is the Surprise Principle, which is a plausible general principle about confirmation.**

**13.** Explain how one could argue from the existence of rational disagreement concerning God's existence to the conclusion that agnosticism is the appropriate position with respect to God's existence. (To do this, you need to explain both what rational disagreement is and what agnosticism is.)

**Rational disagreement occurs when two mature and intelligent adults know all the arguments and all the evidence on both sides of an issue, and yet come down on different sides of that issue. Importantly these are not cases where someone is being irrational or missing relevant evidence. Rather, these are cases where both people have considered the evidence, have talked with each other, understand the opposing side, and yet come down on different sides of an issue. Agnosticism is the view that both atheism and theism are incorrect. The agnostic claims that the evidence warrants one to withhold judgment concerning God's existence.**

**There seems to be a lot of rational disagreement about God's existence. That is, there are intelligent, well-informed theists and atheists. But in general, rational**

disagreement about some issue is often evidence that the evidence is evenly balanced concerning some issue. For example, if one finds political experts evenly divided on an issue, it is plausible to think that this is evidence that the evidence is evenly balanced. But if the evidence is evenly balanced for and against an issue, then it is plausible to think that one should withhold judgment about that issue. Similarly, in the case of God's existence, one might think that rational disagreement is evidence that the evidence is evenly balanced for and against God's existence. And if the evidence is evenly balanced for and against God's existence, then it is plausible to think that one should withhold judgment about God's existence. This is agnosticism.

**14.** The most popular response to the problem of evil is the so-called free will theodicy. Focusing *only* on the problem of human evil, explain how the free will theodicy gives a response to the problem. Then, explain an objection to the free will theodicy that appeals to the notion of selective freedom. (To do this, you'll need to explain what selective freedom is. You needn't, however, evaluate this objection).

**The free will theodicy maintains that free will is a very good thing. But if a being is free, then the being can choose to do the wrong thing, which often leads to pain or evil. God could eliminate this human evil only by eliminating human freedom. However, free-will is so good that it outweighs the human evil in the world. Since the good of human freedom outweighs the bad of human evil, God is justified in allowing human evil.**

**The selective freedom response to the free will theodicy grants that free will is a good thing that outweighs human evil. However, the response points out that it seems possible for God to limit human freedom only at certain times, when a human is about to do something particularly harmful. In this way, we would seem to preserve the good of human freedom (because freedom is only occasionally limited), and yet avoid the worst human evils.**

**15.** Hume says that we should not believe that there have been miracles because

Evidence for miracles = reports

Evidence against miracles = our experience of the laws of nature

and the latter outweighs the former. But if that is true, then it seems that we should not believe a scientist when she claims to have found a counterexample to the laws of nature. This is because

Evidence for violation = report of scientist

Evidence against violation = our experience of the laws of nature

And the latter outweighs the former. Explain how these two cases though superficially the same are actually quite different. (To do this, you may need to explain the examples in more detail).

**Since a miracle is defined to be an event contrary to the laws of nature, when someone wants to believe a report of a miracle, they must simultaneously believe that**

**(i) the reported event occurred, and**

**(ii) it was contrary to the actual laws of nature.**

**If it they don't believe this, then they don't believe that a miracle occurred, and so they do not believe the report.**

**In the science case, we have the following sort of scenario. A scientist reports to her colleagues that she has done an experiment and observed some event that violates the laws of nature as they are formulated. The scientist's colleagues have a choice. They can either believe the report or not. If they do not believe the scientist, then they reject (i): they do not believe that the reported event occurred. If they believe the report, then they accept (i), but they then reject (ii): the reported event was contrary to what we thought the laws of nature were, but the event in question is**

evidence that our formulation wasn't an accurate formulation of the actual laws of nature. In the science case, scientific researchers are never in the position where they must simultaneously believe (i) and (ii). This makes the scenarios very different from one another.

**Part IV • Bonus • COMPLETE IF DESIRED**

[5 POINTS POSSIBLE]

**B.** Van Inwagen thinks that we should reject the claim that if the amount of evil in the world can be less (and still be consistent with God's plan), then it should be.

He says that we should reject this claim for the same reason that we should reject principle L:

(L) If our fines can be less (and still effective), then they should be.

We should reject (L) because we get an absurd conclusion when it is paired with the following plausible principle:

(S) If a fine of \$n is an effective deterrent, then a fine of \$n - 1¢ is an effective deterrent.

What is the absurd conclusion, and how is it implied by L and S?

**The absurd conclusion is that our fines should be \$0. To see why, consider a fine of \$25.50 that is an effective deterrent. According to (S), a fine of \$25.49 is just as effective. According to (L), our fine should then be set at \$25.49. So, consider our new fine of \$25.49. It is an effective deterrent, so according to (L) a fine of \$25.48 is an effective deterrent. According to (L), our fine should then be set at \$25.48. There is no place at which to stop this process. So, we must reject either (S) or (L).**