

Phil 383 Midterm Results

Total Points Possible: 100
 Mean: 84.222
 Median: 85
 Standard Deviation: 8.9

I won't be assigning letter grades to your score on the midterm exam. Your numerical midterm scores will be factored directly into your final grade, which will then be assigned letter grades. As a rough guide, a score in the 90s is roughly an A, a score in the 80s is roughly a B, 70s roughly a C, and 60s roughly a D.

Below you will find the Exam with examples of ideal answers. If you think that your exam has been graded incorrectly, you need to write an explanation of how you think the grade was incorrect and come to speak to me about it by Friday, April 3.

Phil 383 Midterm 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

1. Traditionally, God is conceived of as the supreme being. Name the three traditional attributes that God as the supreme being is thought to possess. (6 points)

1. Omniscient – all-knowing
2. Omnipotent – all-powerful
3. Omnibenevolent – perfectly good

2. Give an example of

- (a) a metaphysically possible state of affairs, and
- (b) a metaphysically impossible state of affairs. (6 points)

- (a) that it snows in July.
- (b) that $2+2 = 5$.

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

- (a) “We proved also, in that same Book, that God cannot will any evil. It is therefore evident that God cannot sin.”
- (b) “Consider this: Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?”
- (c) “Let us weigh up the gain and the loss by calling heads that God exists. Let us assess the two cases: if you win, you win everything; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager that he exists, then, without hesitating!” (6 points)

- (a) Thomas Aquinas
- (b) Plato (said by the character Socrates)
- (c) Blaise Pascal

4. In formulating the Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge we appealed to five principles. The Aristotelian Response and the Boethian Response deny the same principle, but for different reasons. Which principle do these responses deny? (See board for a list of principles.) (3 points)

DFA – the divine foreknowledge of action.

(Explanation: According to the Aristotelians, future propositions do not have truth-values, so although God knows all true propositions, he doesn't know future propositions. So, DFA is false. According to the Boethians, God is outside of time, so he doesn't know things *at* certain times. So, DFA is false.)

5. Is the following statement true or false?

“In *Pensées*, Pascal gives a series of arguments that aim to show that God exists.” (3 points)

False.

(Explanation: Pascal gives arguments aiming to show that we should *believe* in God.)

6. Match Pascal's argument below with the problem that best applies to it. (In your bluebook, you can just match letters with numbers.) (6 points)

- (a) The Argument from Dominance [this is the first of Pascal's arguments we considered]
- (b) The Argument from Expected Value [this is the second of Pascal's arguments we considered]
- (c) The Argument from Dominating Expected Value [this is the third of Pascal's arguments we considered]

- (1) The problem that the odds that God exists might be worse than 50/50.
- (2) The problem that, if God doesn't exist, it might be worse to be a believer than to be a non-believer (e.g., believing that God exists when he doesn't exist is worse than not believing when he doesn't exist).
- (3) The Many Gods Objection

(a) – (2)

(b) – (1)

(c) – (3)

Part II • Medium Answer • COMPLETE ALL – 10 POINTS EACH

1. X is omniscient if and only if X knows every true proposition. X is infallible if and only if all of X 's beliefs are true. Give an example of a being who is infallible but not omniscient.

Consider a being, S , that only has one belief. S believes that Christmas is in December. Since this is true, and since this is S 's only belief, all of S 's beliefs are true. Thus, S is infallible according to the definition. But S is not omniscient. There are many true propositions that S does not know. For instance, S does not know that $2+2 = 4$. If he did know that $2+2 = 4$, then S would believe it. But he doesn't believe it since he only has one belief. So he doesn't know it. Thus, he isn't omniscient.

2. Here is a possible definition of what it means to believe something on faith:

Faith1: To believe p on faith is to believe p even though p is not absolutely certain.

State one undesirable consequence of this definition, explaining why Faith1 has this consequence.

According to Faith1 everything that is believed, but is not absolutely certain is something that is believed based on faith. So, if we can find any propositions that we believe, but which are not absolutely certain, we can infer that those propositions are believed on faith. Consider some examples. I believe that my car is parked outside my house. But I'm not absolutely certain of this – it could have been stolen. So, Faith1 says that my belief that my car is parked outside my house is based on faith. Similarly, I believe that my sister is not a cleverly disguised robot. But I can't be absolutely certain of this – it is not metaphysically impossible that she is really a robot. So, according to Faith1, my belief that my sister is not a robot is based on faith. In general, Faith1 implies that almost all of our beliefs are based on faith. But this is implausible. Any account of what it is to believe something based on faith should not have the consequence that almost *all* of our beliefs are based on faith.

Common incorrect answer:

According to Faith1, you should believe things that are not absolutely certain. But if you believe something that isn't absolutely certain, you could end up being wrong. This would be undesirable, so Faith1 is undesirable.

Problem:

Faith1 says *nothing* about what anyone does believe or should believe. It is consistent with Faith1 that no one believes anything. Faith1 simply tells us what it means to say that someone believes something on faith.

3. Imagine that someone who is a Divine Command Theorist says the following:

“A person is good because God approves of him/her, and a person is bad because God disapproves of him/her. But you don't have to worry about God approving of horrible people like Hitler or Pol Pot. God would never approve of such people because God is good.”

How could you critique this claim?

If a person is good because God approves of him/her, then God's goodness gives us no reason to suppose that he won't approve of people like Hitler or Pol Pot. If what it is to be a good person is just to be approved by God, then what it is for God to be good is for God to be approved by himself. But God's self-approval gives us no reason to think that he would disapprove of people who do horrible things. It is perfectly consistent to approve of yourself, and also approve of people who do horrible things. If God's goodness is to give us reason to think he won't approve of people like Hitler or Pol Pot, then God's goodness must be more than just self-approval.

4. Create a decision matrix for, and describe, a situation where one option *dominates* the others.

Imagine that your friend has invited you for dinner. You know that she will cook either fish, pork, or chicken, but you can't remember which. You're at the store to buy a bottle of wine to bring over. Your choices are red wine or white wine. You think that if fish is being served, you'd prefer white wine to red wine. If chicken is being served, you'd much prefer white to red. If pork is served, you're indifferent to which kind of wine you have. Here's one way to represent this with a decision matrix:

		P1 Fish	P2 Pork	P3 Chicken
a1	White	100	100	200
a2	Red	50	100	50

In this example, bringing white wine (action *a1*) dominates.

Part III • Medium Answer • CHOOSE 2 – 15 POINTS EACH

1. Here's one way of stating the paradox of the stone:

There are two options:

1. God *can* create a stone he cannot lift.
2. God *cannot* create a stone he cannot lift.

However, whichever option you take, there's something that God cannot do (either lift the stone or create it). So, God is not omnipotent.

In Mavrodes' response to this paradox he accepts one of the options. Which option does he accept? Explain how TAO allows one to say that accepting this option doesn't limit God's omnipotence.

Mavrodes accepts option 2. He says that God cannot create a stone that he cannot lift. However, TAO shows that this doesn't limit God's omnipotence. According to TAO some being, X , is omnipotent if and only if X can bring about any state of affairs that is metaphysically possible. A state of affairs is metaphysically possible just in case it does not entail a contradiction. According to option 2, God cannot bring about a certain state of affairs, the state of affairs:

S : there is a stone God cannot lift.

But since God is omnipotent, S is equivalent to:

S' : there is a stone that an omnipotent being cannot lift.

And since an omnipotent being can lift all stones, S' is equivalent to:

S'' : there is a stone that a being who can lift all stones cannot lift.

But S'' is a contradiction. It says that there is a stone that is both liftable and unliftable. Since S'' is equivalent to S , S itself entails a contradiction, so S is metaphysically impossible. Given this, TAO says that a being can be omnipotent, even if that being cannot bring about S . Thus, though option 2 does admit there is some state of affairs that God cannot bring about, it is not something that threatens his omnipotence, since the state of affairs is metaphysically impossible.

2. Here is *part* of St. Augustine's version of the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge:

P1. God knew long ago that you would take this test today.

P1. $K(A)$.

P2. If God knew long ago that you would take this test today, then it was necessary that you take this test today.

P2. $K(A) \rightarrow A$.

C1. Therefore, it was necessary that you take this test today.

C1. Therefore, A .

Thomas Aquinas thinks that this argument fails to establish its conclusion. Say why this argument fails (that is, does it have a false premise, or is it invalid?). If you say that the argument is invalid, explain why it is invalid. If you say that the argument has a false premise, explain which premise is false and why.

Augustine's argument is valid. However, Aquinas objects to this argument, by noting that P2 is false. P2 says that if God knew long ago that I would take this test today, then it was necessary that I take this test today. The idea is supposed to be that if someone knows something, then it must be true. But this premise is false. It is saying that if God knows that I will take the test, then it is a necessary truth that I take the test. But

even if God knows that I take the test today, it isn't a necessary truth that I take the test today. My not taking the test is not a metaphysical impossibility, it is not a necessary truth. Put a different way, even if God knows that I take the test, there are still possible worlds in which I do take the test.

That P2 is false can be brought out by considering a very similar premise, which better gets at the idea that if someone knows something, then it must be true. This premise says:

Necessarily, if God knew long ago that you would take this test today, then you take this test today.

$(K(A) \rightarrow A)$.

This premise is true. It says that it is impossible that God know that I take the test, and yet I don't take the test. That is, it says that all the possible worlds where God knows that I take the test are worlds where I do take the test. But it *doesn't* claim that it is a necessary truth that I take the test. P2, however, is different than this and is false.

3. The Fixity of the Past (FP) states: "Necessarily, if event E occurs at time t, then after t it is not within anyone's power to prevent E's occurrence at t." Give a counterexample to FP that Ockham (or Plantinga) might give. In giving your example, be sure to clearly and thoroughly explain why your example appears to refute FP.

Plantinga follows Ockham in denying FP. Since FP is a conditional, to show that it is false, we must come up with a situation where the first part is true, but the second part is false. That is, we must come up with a situation where there is an event that occurs at time t, but where it *is* within someone's power after t to prevent E's occurrence at t. So, consider the following example. On Monday, Ed quit smoking. If $t = \text{Monday}$, and if Ed never smokes again, then this is an event that occurs at time t. But consider some time after t, say Tuesday. On Tuesday, it is certainly within Ed's power to smoke a cigarette. He can easily pick one up and light it. Further, if Ed were to smoke a cigarette on Tuesday, then E wouldn't have occurred on Monday (at t). So, it looks as if Ed has the power on Tuesday to prevent the occurrence of something on Monday. Now, since Ed really did quit, he won't actually light up a cigarette. But nevertheless, he has the power to do so long after his quitting on Monday. Thus, we have a situation where the first part of FP is true, and yet the second part is false. This suffices to show that FP is false.

Common confusion:

A lot of people said something like the following to refute FP:

Imagine that Ed permanently quit smoking on Monday. So, it was true that Ed quit then. It was a fact about Monday. However, on Tuesday, Ed had a cigarette. So, on Tuesday Ed changed the fact that he permanently quit smoking on Monday. This shows that Ed can change the past, so FP must be false.

Now, this is very close to the kind of example that refutes FP. But it is mistaken in an important way. First, note that FP doesn't say anything about *changing* the past. Second, and more importantly, note that this example *doesn't* show that Ed has *changed* the past. For if Ed smokes on Tuesday, then it was never true that Ed permanently quit smoking on Monday. Maybe he thought he did, maybe all his friends thought he did, but he didn't. So "Ed permanently quitting smoking on Monday" was never a fact, and so Ed doesn't change that fact on Tuesday (since it wasn't a fact).

To refute FP, you need there to be a fact about the past over which Ed has power. But it really has to be a fact about the past. So, imagine that Ed permanently quit smoking on Monday. So, it is a fact about Monday that he quit. However, on Tuesday, Ed had the opportunity to smoke a cigarette. Now, he didn't smoke (or else he wouldn't have actually quit on Monday, and we're assuming that he did). But surely he had the *power* to smoke on Tuesday. And had he actually smoked, then what is actually true of the past wouldn't have been true of the past. [Though note: he wouldn't have changed a fact...because it wouldn't have then been a fact.] So, we have a situation where there is a fact about the past (Ed quitting smoking on Monday) over which Ed has power on Tuesday. This shows that FP is false.