

Study Guide for Exam 2

Justifying Religious Belief

What is the difference between a “proof” and an “argument” for a hypothesis, theory or worldview?

What is “foundationalism”?

What was *scientia* (“knowledge”) for Descartes?

Why is it justified to consider Descartes the “father” of foundationalism?

What did Descartes consider to be the *goal* of his philosophical work?

What did Descartes choose as the *method* to develop his philosophy?

What is, according to Descartes, an *innate idea* and what are its marks?

What are, according to Descartes, the two most important *innate ideas*?

What did the lecturer present as the three key tests of a hypothesis, theory or worldview?

What is a “disqualifier” in the context of evaluating a hypothesis, theory or worldview?

Classic Arguments for the Existence of God (General considerations)

Why is it more correct to use the term “arguments” for the existence of God rather than “proofs” for the existence of God?

What is the “ontological argument” for the existence of God?

What is the “moral argument” for the existence of God?

What is the “cosmological argument” for the existence of God?

What is the “teleological argument” for the existence of God?

Ontological Argument

Consider the following form of the “ontological argument” for the existence of God (from Haslanger):

1. The concept of God is the concept of a maximally perfect being (“that than which nothing greater can even be conceived”).
2. Existence is a perfection, (i.e., a “great making” property; it is greater to exist than not to exist).
3. Therefore, if God didn’t exist in reality, then it would be possible for there to be something even greater than God, i.e. with all God’s attributes *plus* existence. But this is impossible, given the definition of God.
4. So the concept of God is the concept of an existent being.
5. Therefore, God exists.

In class discussion, it was pointed out that there are problems with *two* of the four premises in this argument. Critique this form of the ontological argument on the basis of those two premises.

Consider the proposition: “God created the heavens and the earth.” What are the two truth conditions of this statement?

Cosmological Argument

Why did Aquinas’s form of the “cosmological argument” not involve a “beginning” of the universe?

The lecturer used the metaphor of a light bulb to illuminate Aquinas’s form of the cosmological argument. Briefly explain the analogy.

What is the difference between Aquinas’s form of the cosmological argument and the “Kalam” form?

“Why is there anything rather than nothing?” W. L. Craig says this question, “led the great German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz to posit the existence of a *metaphysically necessary being* which carries within itself the sufficient reason for its own existence and the sufficient reason for the existence of everything else in the world”.

What is a “metaphysically necessary being”?

The Scottish sceptic David Hume wrote: “Why may not the material universe be the necessarily existent Being?” Einstein’s discovery of the GTR (General Theory of Relativity) and the subsequent empirical discovery of the expansion of the universe undermined Hume’s argument. Why?

The isotropic expansion of the universe predicted by the Friedman-Lamaitre model was confirmed by the empirical findings of Edwin Hubble. What did Hubble discover?

W. L. Craig writes: "The discovery that the universe is not eternal in the past but had a beginning... implies that the universe is not necessary in its existence but rather has its ground in a transcendent, metaphysically necessary being." Craig says there is only one way to avoid this conclusion. What is that way?

Richard Swinburne argues that there are two types of causal explanation. What are these?

Moral Argument

Contrast the views of S. Freud and C.S. Lewis on the source and origin of *moral sentiments* and *moral obligation*.

How does naturalistic *sociobiology* answer what Paul Kurtz calls the central question about moral and ethical principles: "If they are neither derived from God nor anchored in some transcendent ground, are they purely ephemeral?"

Why is the reality of evil in the world considered a strong "disqualifier" against classic theism?

What is the "logical problem of evil"?

Consider the following form of the atheological argument from evil (against the existence of God):

1. If God exists, then he is omnipotent, omniscient, and all good.
2. If God is omnipotent, then he can do anything that is possible.
3. If God is omniscient, then he knows everything that is true.
4. If God is all good, then he would have created the best possible world (if he could and knew that he could).
5. This, the actual world, is not the best possible world.
6. Therefore, God does not exist.

How could a classic theist attack premise #5?

Describe briefly Plantinga's "Free Will" defense of the coherence of classic theism in the face of the problem of evil.

Plantinga writes: "The essential point of the Free Will Defense is that the creation of a world containing moral good is a cooperative venture." What does he mean by this?

In what way does the "free will defense" imply that there are things that God cannot do?

Define and explain the difference between *voluntarism* and *essentialism* in respect to the connection between God and morality.

What light can this shed on some of the differences between Islamic and traditional Judeo-Christian ethics?

Teleological Argument

What is meant by the terms “mind resonant” or “mind-suggestive” features in nature?

Describe the difference between the following statements:

- a) There are design-like features in nature.
- b) There are marks of design in nature.

Why did F. Crick seem to feel it necessary to “warn” his fellow biologists in 1988: “Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved”?

What is an “abductive argument”? [See “Schema 3” (Section 2.3) in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article]

What is the “cosmic fine-tuning” argument for design?

What is the “many universe” theory?

Why do many philosophers criticize the “many universe” theory on the basis of Occam’s Razor?

The physicist Paul Davies writes: “Science began as an outgrowth of theology, and all scientists, whether atheists or theists... accept an essentially theological worldview.” What do you think Davies means when he says “*all* scientists... accept an essentially theological world view”? In what way could this be true?

Miracles

Hume argues: “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire an argument from experience as can possibly be imagined. . . There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event.”

Discuss:

Hume’s definition of a miracle,
His definition of laws of nature,
and whether or not it is good science.