

Final exam study questions

PHIL 20229

Exam is on Monday, May 5, from 8-10 a.m.

On the final exam, you will be given four questions from the following list, and will have to answer three:

1. Explain Mackie's version of the problem of evil, and the free will defense. What assumptions about free will does the free will defense rely on, and why? Is the free will defense a partial solution of the problem of evil, a full solution, or neither?
2. Explain the assumptions in the following argument and say what, if anything, is wrong with it: "If there's something God can't do, then God is not omnipotent. Either God can make a stone which can't lift, or he can't. Either way there's something he can't do; so God is not omnipotent."
3. Explain clearly why the doctrine of the Trinity appears to be contradictory. Explain at least two theories of the Trinity than aim to resolve this contradiction. Which is more plausible?
4. Explain Sider's paradox of heaven and hell. Could a just God send some people to heaven, and some to hell, in a world like ours? Why or why not?
5. Explain Newcomb's problem, and explain the arguments in favor of one-boxing and of two-boxing. Which is more convincing? Why?
6. What assumptions must we make about the distribution of money in the two envelopes in order to generate the two-envelope paradox? Consider the versions of the case in which you choose one of the two envelopes, and say whether you should switch in the case in which your envelope is opened, the case in which the other envelope is opened, and the case in which neither is opened. Defend your answer. Does this involving giving up the Dominance Principle? Why or why not?
7. Imagine that a professor tells his class — who believe everything he says, have excellent memories, and are adept at logic — that he will be giving them a surprise exam sometime between the announcement and the end of the semester. Explain the argument (the surprise exam paradox) in favor of the conclusion that it is impossible for the students to know what he says to be true. Is this argument convincing? Why or why not?
8. When Sleeping Beauty is awoken on Day 1, what probability should she assign to the sentence "The coin flip on Day 1 came up heads"? Explain the main arguments in favor of $1/2$ and $1/3$ and say what you think is wrong with the arguments which oppose your view.
9. Explain why the lottery paradox seems to show that we know much less than one might have thought. Explain what you take to be the most promising response to the paradox, and evaluate that response.
10. Explain the sorites paradox, and say what you think the correct solution to the paradox is. Say why you think that your solution is better than at least two of the other competing solutions to the paradox discussed in class.
11. What is the difference between the Liar sentence and the Strengthened Liar? Why is the latter thought to pose more difficult problems than the former? Explain the argument by which the Strengthened Liar seems to lead to a contradiction. Are there any questionable steps in this argument? Which ones?
12. Explain the main argument of the Doomsday paradox. Does it provide us good reason to believe that the extinction of humanity will come sooner than one might have thought? Why or why not?