

PHIL 20229: Final exam study guide

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On the midterm, you will be given five questions from the following list, and will have to answer three:

1. Explain 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 Newcomb’s problem, and explain the arguments in favor of one-boxing and of two-boxing. Which is more convincing? Why?
4. 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?
5. 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$, and say what you think is wrong for the arguments which oppose your view.
6. 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.
7. 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?
8. Evaluate the following claim: ‘The Liar sentence is defective because it is a self-referential sentence, and all self-referential sentences are defective.’ Is there an interpretation of ‘self-referential’ on which this is correct? How far does a ban on self-reference go toward solving the Liar paradox?