

First 5-7 page paper

PHIL 10100

Due: in discussion sections, Friday, February 26 (the Friday before spring break)

Below are four topics for your first paper. You may choose one of these; or you are welcome to come up with your own topic, though you must get the written approval of your TA by email first. If you do this, the question that your TA approves should be on the first page of your essay. The papers should be at most 5-7 pages in length, double-spaced and with reasonable margins and font.

A late penalty of 3 points per day, including weekends, will be assessed for any papers which are handed in late.

Plagiarism is a serious and growing problem at Notre Dame and other universities. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourselves with the University's honor code, as well as with the philosophy department's guidelines regarding plagiarism. Both are linked from the course web site.

1. Explain Leibniz's cosmological argument. Should the proponent of the argument say that the fact that God created contingent things is itself contingent, or necessary? Is the argument in the end a good argument for the existence of God? Why or why not?
2. Explain Hume's argument against the possibility of justified belief in God on the basis of testimony about miracles, and some of the problems we discussed with that argument. Do your best to reconstruct Hume's argument in such a way that it avoids those objections.
3. Explain the fine-tuning argument for the existence of God, along with some of the objections discussed in class. Is the argument convincing? Would it change matters if we had good reason to believe in the existence of multiple universes? Does the improbability of the universe's being life-supporting give us good reason to believe in multiple universes?
4. Explain why the following sort of case (the case of "Rowe's fawn") poses a challenge for the believer in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God:

"... in some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible agony for several days before death relieves its suffering ..."

How should a traditional theist explain this sort of event? Does it provide good evidence that God does not exist? Why or why not?