

Answer key for Intro Philosophy Midterm Exam, Sp 2016

Overall score: At the top right by your name. Use [class grading scale](#) to interpret the #. Check my math by adding the numbers at the top of each page and dividing by three (each page was worth the same). Average grade was 1.98, high was 3.41. Exam is worth 23% of course grade.

Multiple Choice: I have circled the correct answer in green. Scale was -0=4, -1=3.5, -2=3, -3=2.5, -4=2, -5=1.5, -6=1

Short answer: On the second page, the number at the top is the average of the four grades next to the questions.

Examples of excellent answers to short answer and essay questions below.

Short Answer

What is cultural relativism's (=CR) definition of right action? That is, according to CR, what is morally right is determined by _____. Identify and explain one of the problems ("unhappy consequences") that Rachels finds with this conception of morality.

According to CR, what is morally right is determined by cultural norms and the laws of the society. One of the unhappy consequence of CR relativism is that a culture would never be able to improve their society/laws. Social reforms would have to be mistaken because everything would already be "right" + "perfect" as is. We could also never critique other societies + cultures.

2. Bertrand Russell (in "Why I am Not a Christian") criticizes the cosmological argument in 3 ways: (a) If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause; (b) There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; (c) Nor is there any reason why the world should not have always existed. Explain why Richard Taylor (who wrote "God" and defended the cosmological argument) either agrees or disagrees with each claim. How would he respond to these objections to the Cosmological argument? Please separate your answers into a, b, & c.

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A) Taylor would say God's cause is within himself. He is a necessary being so therefore he exists by his own nature. He says he would agree w/ Russell because of Principle of Sufficient Reason, everything has a cause.

B) Taylor would disagree with this. Again, Taylor claims that everything must have a cause, either within it or outside. Taylor says cause for world must be outside b/c its contingent being (didn't have to exist).

C) Taylor agrees the world could've always existed but that doesn't explain how it exists. He says everything has a cause and that the world is caused by an ontological dependence. That is, the dependent could be caused even if it's always existed. Like a flame and a shadow.

3. William James (in "The Will to Believe") provides two reasons or situations where he thinks it is irrational to wait for sufficient evidence before one believes something. Identify and explain each.

4 James believes it is irrational to wait for sufficient evidence to believe something because, first, desiring to believe something could make that belief come true. For example, believing you are going to get a job can help give you the confidence to get that job. Secondly, to believe in something you have to at least meet it halfway. God would not present himself to you if you have no belief in God.

4. ? What is Rachels own conception of the nature of morality? Does it involve feelings? Is it objective? Explain.

Rachels believes that morality is a matter of reason. It is objective in that you can't just claim something to be unreasonable. Feelings can show that you have moral seriousness, but they can also blind us from being reasonable and thus morality has no real place for feelings.

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Essay: What is the (philosophical) problem of evil? State it as precisely and forcefully as you can. Explain in detail how John Hick (in his essays "The Problem of Evil" and "Evil and the Infinite Future Good") responds to the problem of evil. What is your own response to the problem of evil and what do you think about John Hick's ideas?

4 The problem of evil is one of the most discussed issues of religion. In fact, just yesterday I was sitting in the park on a bench with a woman who told me that her entire family was killed in the Holocaust. She explained, "How could I ever believe in a God that would let something like that happen?" (It was very fitting, the timeliness of my discussion with her, and this class's topic of the problem of evil). The concept of God is this all knowing, all powerful being, that - across the board in all religions - emphasizes love. The issue is that the world is full of a LACK of love, and there's so much evil in it. Many argue, like the woman at the park, that if God is all loving and powerful, evil shouldn't exist (yet it does exist, therefore God isn't real).

John Hick, in his essays "The Problem of Evil" and "Evil and the Infinite ^{Future} Good" aims to answer some of these big questions on the problem of evil. He claims that ~~natural evil~~ a world in which natural evil occurs is, in fact, a better world. Humans were created to be free beings which gives us freedom to make our own choices. The evil that we both experience and create in the world, through these choices, has allowed us to learn. He explains that a hedonistic world of paradise would never have science or any moral growth. ~~There is~~ #

He also describes the concept of evil being a process of "soul making". The bad in the world is the way we are able to make our souls what they are - it builds moral character. Hick's idea of an afterlife is different from the concept of "Higher Harmony"; - He believes that the afterlife will justify the evil in the world by giving individuals an infinite future goal where "soul making" continues.

I like Hick's ~~philosophy~~ Theodicy / Ideas. In a lot of ways they truly make sense. I think having evil done to me has surely built my character, and ultimately has made me a much stronger person. I would argue however, some of the world's HUGE evil, like the Holocaust and Genocide in general can't be belittled to "soul making".