

Philosophy 3600
Summer 2009
First paper assignment
Due in class on Friday, June 12

Write a short (four to six page) paper on just one of the following topics. (Note that 3 below is itself an option between two different topics. So you have five to choose from.)

1. Briefly explain Hick's doctrine of "the Real" and O'Connor's reasons for thinking that this doctrine is incoherent. How should Hick respond to this line of criticism? Is an adequate response available to him?
2. How, exactly, does the "modal" ontological argument go? Be sure to explicate Van Inwagen's concept of a perfect being, his distinction between "the World" and the infinitely many "possible worlds," and the concept of "necessary existence." Then explain how the existence of a perfect being follows from the twin claims that a perfect being is possible and that necessary existence is a perfection. (It is not required that you use Van Inwagen's device of "world diagrams" to explain how the argument works, but be sure not to miss the critical assumption made by the argument - the assumption that this device is supposed to help you understand.) Finally, answer the following questions. Do you think we should believe that the premises of this argument are both true? Why or why not?
3. William Lane Craig gives two arguments for saying that the series of past events must have a beginning. Pick just one of these arguments. State it, explain it, and consider some criticisms of it. Does the argument survive these criticisms? Why or why not?
4. Take a look at Samuel Clarke's version of the cosmological argument, which you can find summarized here.

<http://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/wes/lad/zagzebski.pdf>

Briefly explain (in your own words) how this argument goes. Then answer the following questions. If the principle of sufficient reason were true, would the argument be sound? Is the principle of sufficient reason true? If so, how do you know that it is true? (You might get some help on this from the Pruss article.)