PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

DAY 2
Welcome to Phil024 – Philosophy of Religion
- Javy W. Galindo

1. New students get/review syllabus online, make a friend and copy notes.
2. A word on note taking.
3. Class review from Day #1
4. Framing The Discussion – The Parable of the Gardener
5. What Kinds of Gardener(s)? – Ideas of The Absolute
6. Believers vs. Non-Believers - Thinking Critically about God and Religion
7. Which explorer are you?
NOTE TAKING

NOTE TAKING ≠ DICTATION

Note taking is writing complete ideas using shorthand:

- Gives you more time to think about what is being taught.
- Jotting down ideas in your own way helps with learning.

So, some instructors give you the opportunity to take notes to help you remember & learn certain concepts.
NOTE TAKING ≠ DICTATION

Don’t just write what is written (on a board or on slides).
• Write any important ideas that are discussed/said.
• Write questions or insights that YOU have.
REVIEW: CLASS SUMMARY

What the class is not:

• Not a class on world religions.

• Not a class on what you should believe.

What this class is:

• A place to explore and think critically about ideas.

• A place to respect personal beliefs.
REVIEW: CLASS SUMMARY

• To be successful:
  • Read, reflect, and regenerate.

• What is our class about?
  • Gaining wisdom through critical reflection of religious beliefs and practices.

• Why is this important?
  • Learn how to coexist in a world of religious diversity.
  • Improve our own quality of life by actively and wisely choosing the beliefs we live by.
ENTERING THE GARDEN

John Wisdom  (1904-1993)
British Philosopher

• Published this parable in article (Gods) in 1944

• What is it about?
  Without going into the other readings, how does this parable help us frame a philosophical discussion concerning religion?

1. Can compare the religious person to the person who believes an invisible gardener comes.

2. Religions often make claims about reality that a non-believer, or believer in another religion dispute.

3. The parable asks us to reflect upon the difference between a religious and non-religious person and ask the following questions...
Questions of the Day

• Are the differences between a religious and non-religious person important?

• Is it important to test and verify religious beliefs to see if they are valid claims?

• Or is the difference between the religious and non-religious simply about “how one chooses to feel about reality (the garden)?”
QUESTION FOR YOU

Before even beginning our exploration, a question for the class:

Should everyone’s beliefs be respected?
EXPERIENCING THE GARDEN
HOW DO VARIOUS RELIGIONS SEE IT?
WHAT KIND OF GARDENER?

Various Views on the Gardener (What, Where, Who?):
• Where is the gardener?
• How many are there?
• Who is it?
• What are the gardener’s characteristics?
WHAT, WHERE, WHO?

• Theism:
  • **Transcendent:**
    • God is not the manifested world. God is independent of it.
  • **Immanent:**
    • God is personal and actively involved in the world.
  • Judaism, Christianity, Islam, some sects within Hinduism.
WHAT, WHERE, WHO?

• Pantheism:
  - God and the physical universe as a whole are one.
  - Everything is God, and God is everything.
  - Divine being unknowable, but all is connected to it.
  - Taoism, some Christians, some sects within Hinduism.
WHAT, WHERE, WHO?

• **Panentheism:**
  
  • Everything is God.
  
  • God is not *ONLY* the manifested world. More than the some of its parts.

• **Pantheism+**
  
  • Some sects in Hinduism, Christianity (eastern orthodox, process theology), some Buddhists, and mystical/esoteric sects of Judaism and Islam.
WHAT, WHERE, WHO?

• Atheism:
  • Belief that there is no God or divine entity, or Supreme Being in the cosmos.

• Where is God?
  • Not here…
  • May also respond like this:

  Physical Universe
WHERE IS GOD?

AREN'T YOU A LITTLE OLD TO HAVE AN IMAGINARY FRIEND?
HOW MANY GARDENERS?
HOW MANY GODS?

- **Monotheism:**
  - Belief in one God.
  - Found in Abrahamic Religions

- **Ditheism:**
  - Belief in two equal Gods.
  - Found in Zoroastrianism, not so popular anymore.

- **Polytheism:**
  - Belief in an unspecified number of gods, demigods, and other deities.
  - Found in Hinduism and Primal/Nature Religions

- **Nontheism:**
  - Belief that whether God exists or not doesn’t matter.
  - Found in Buddhism.
DIFFERENT EXPLORERS
A SAMPLE OF THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS

• Eastern
  • Buddhism
  • Hinduism
  • Taoism/Daoism

• Western
  • Judaism
  • Christianity
  • Islam
RELIGION &
THE ULTIMATE NATURE OF REALITY

Broad Strokes

- Easter Religions
  - Ultimate (Absolute) reality is not a personal supreme being, but “the way things really are, including who you really are.”
  - Focus is learning to perceive this “Absolute” reality that exists beyond our normal perception.
  - Absolute reality often referred to as Tao, Brahman, Shunyata

- Western Religions
  - Ultimate reality IS a supreme personal being.
  - Focus is understanding or enhancing our relationship with this Supreme Being.
  - What’s absolutely real is referred to as God who created all things.
SHOULD WE RESPECT EVERYONE’S BELIEFS?

Nice to say everyone belief is “true” for them, but…
Nice to say everyone belief is “true” for them, but…

You may not share my beliefs, but you SHOULD respect them!

What shall I do? He believes he's God's gift to women.
WHAT KIND OF GARDENER?
CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

When most of us think about God we think of the Monotheistic, Abrahamic God.

What is HE like?
WHAT KIND OF GARDENER?
CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

God Almighty: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjAM2J_D4UY
WHAT KIND OF GARDENER?
CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

Devils Advocate: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jARp24AJWLk
The Three Perfections

1. Omnipotence
   - the property of being perfect in power.

2. Omniscience
   - the property of being perfect in knowledge.

3. Omnibenevolence
   - the property of being entirely good.

Necessity
   - the property of existing necessarily, independent of all other things.

Eternity
   - Outside of time, everlasting,
THINKING ABOUT THE GARDEN

• Now that we have some ideas of how our gardeners see the garden, we can think critically about these perceptions.
Questions of the Day

- Are the differences between a religious and non-religious person important? Is it important to test and verify religious beliefs to see if they are valid claims? Or is the difference between the religious and non-religious simply about “how one chooses to feel about reality (the garden)?”

Two different pictures of a religious person.

Anthony Flew’s Parable

R.M. Hare’s Parable
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

Let’s take a religious belief:

• “God/universe loves you.”
• “There is Divine order in the world.”
• “Everything has a purpose.”

• Do these statements mean anything?
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

Antony Flew (1923-2010)

• British Philosopher, world famous atheist.

• Became famous through his article *Theology and Falsification*.

• Participated in several public debates arguing against the existence of God.
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

• In Groups of 4 to 6

  • What does Flew mean by “A fine brash hypothesis may thus be killed by inches, the death by a thousand qualifications.” (end of the 2nd paragraph).

  • How would you summarize Flew’s argument? What is his main point?
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

Antony Flew (1923-2010)

• Logical Positivist: “A statement or claim has meaning if and only if it can be proved or falsified empirically— with testing.”

• Is it important that beliefs be proved or falsified?

• His argument implies that “yes, it is important.”
"God/universe loves you. There is Divine order in the world. Everything has a purpose."

Do these statements mean anything?

- Flew’s answer:
  - No. Every time there is evidence to the contrary we are given endless qualifications to justify them. Therefore, they really can’t be falsified, which makes them meaningless. Why not believe in unicorns and smurfs?

- False beliefs may result in horrible behaviors.
  - You want your 5 year old child to think all strangers are safe to be with?
  - Do you want people who believe all children should be killed to save the planet.
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

Richard Mervyn Hare (1919-2002)

• British Philosopher

• Taught at Oxford, and later at the University of Florida.

• Most well known for his work in the philosophy of morals and for coining the term “Blik”.
THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RELIGION AND GOD

• In Groups of 4 to 6
  • What do you think Hare means by “Blik”?

  • Based on this definition of Blik, what is the argument that Hare puts forward in response to Flew? What is his main point?