PHST-5020 Miracles
Anselm Ramelow, O.P.
Dominican School for Philosophy and Theology
Fall 2012
TH 12:40pm-03:30pm
DSPT 3
3 units

Office Hours:
Monday, 1:15-3:15 p.m., or by appointment
I can be reached under (415) 567 7824 (St. Dominic’s Parish, ask for Fr. Anselm) or aramelow@dspt.edu; I am also available after class.

Course description:
Miracles are a key topic of the philosophy of religion. Are they possible? And if yes, can we know that they have occurred? Answering these questions involves a range of philosophical and theological topics, such as: what is a law of nature? what is the nature of causality? It requires answering questions about probability, epistemology, metaphysics and historiography. The freedom of God and petitionary prayer, the possibility of revelation and its relation to reason – all these will have to play a role. Numerous philosophers and theologians have contributed to the debate, especially since D. Hume. We will engage selected texts of this ongoing conversation.

Seminar: Class presentations and 15-20 page research paper.
Intended audience: MA/MTS; PhD/ThD.
[15 max enrollment; PIN code required; auditors excluded]

The format of the class is a seminar; attendance and participation in the discussion is therefore important.

As an outcome, the student will have gained an understanding of the epistemological and metaphysical aspects of the question of miracles. He or she will have become acquainted with important texts from the history of the discussion from Aquinas to the present day. The student will be able to defend or articulate critically various arguments pertaining to the topic – orally as well as in research and writing.

The student will demonstrate this knowledge through
   a) Class participation and contribution to the discussions.
   b) Taking turns in preparing texts that are to be discussed in class.
   c) a 15-20pp research paper (75%).

Students will take turns in the class preparation: this preparation should articulate the argument of a given text in a brief and concise manner, so as to give the participants a starting point for discussion. It should make the text’s logic as clear as possible and might offer some reflection questions for discussion. It is always helpful to use handouts.
The research paper is subject to approval and will ideally consist in relating two different authors with regard to our subject matter. For this purpose, I ask you to give me a paper proposal after reading week (presumably TH 11/1, but the date might be subject to rescheduling). This proposal should consist of a short paragraph, describing the topic of your choice (it might be good to talk to me about it sometime beforehand), and a bibliography. The bibliography is most important. Please make your bibliography as specific as possible. Do not quote general handbooks or the textbooks of the class (unless you reference specific texts therefrom). As one possible research tool I recommend the “philosopher’s index” that is available on the GTU library website (although this will probably suffice only as a starting point). It is not required – but a good practice – to write an outline as well.

The deadline for the paper is TH 12/13. Out of fairness to other students who submit their work on time, missed deadlines will result in a lower grade.

Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance and participation will impact the grade.

Bibliography required:
- a READER will be available at Vick Copy (1879 Euclid, corner of Hearst and Euclid)

Further bibliography:
- See the bibliographies in the textbooks, in addition:
  1. An atheist critique of the Geivett/Habermas collection by R. Carrier can be found at: http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/indef/ - if you would like to tackle a critic, e.g. in your paper. You certainly may want to read his particular response in addition to the readings from Geivett/Habermas.
SYLLABUS
Subject to revision, notice possible change of date for 11/1.

TH 9/6  INTRODUCTION
read:
    Reader:  3-12 (Bultmann)
            232-237 (Swinburne, ch. 1)
            C.S. Lewis pp. 1-16, 71-86, 99-106 (ch. 1, 2, 7, 9)¹

TH 9/13  NATURALISM
read:
    Reader:  13-29 (Spinoza, Hegel)
            30-36 (Aquinas)
            Geivett/Habermas: pp. 115-131 (Nash)
            C.S. Lewis: pp. 17-70, 267-274 (ch. 3-6, 17)

TH 9/20  LAWS OF NATURE: THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES
read:
    Swinburne: pp. 49-52 (McKinnon)
               and (recommended): pp. 103-112 (Taylor)
    Reader:  pp. 243-248 (Swinburne ch. 3)
               and pp. 37-44 (Al Ghazali)
               pp. 44-47 (SE: Hume on causality)
               pp. 48-53 (Maimonides)
    Geivett/Habermas:
               pp. 61-72 (Purtill)
    C.S. Lewis: pp. 87-98 (ch. 8)

TH 9/27  THE ACTUALITY OF MIRACLES: CAN WE KNOW THEM?
(1) Probability
read:
    Geivett/Habermas: pp. 29-44 (Hume)
    Reader:  pp. 54-56 (on Bayes)
    Swinburne: pp. 115-132 (Owen)
    Geivett/Habermas: pp. 73-85 (Geissler)
    C.S. Lewis: 159-172 (ch. 13)

TH 10/4  THE ACTUALITY OF MIRACLES: CAN WE KNOW THEM?
(2) Evidence
read:
    Swinburne: pp. 85-96 (Mackie)
    Reader:  238-242, 248-257 (Swinburne ch. 2 and 4)
    Geivett/Habermas: pp. 214-225 (R.C. Newman)

¹ We will not discuss all of Lewis' chapters in order; so you might want to read the whole book sooner rather than later. It is his most philosophical book (which he famously discussed with E. Anscombe), and it is well worth it!
TH 10/11 **THE ACTUALITY OF MIRACLES: CAN WE KNOW THEM?**

(3) **Prior Probability**

read:

- Reader: pp. 264-267 (Swinburne ch. 6)
- pp. 57-59 (Augustine)
- pp. 59-60 (Vatican I)
- Swinburne: pp. 41-48 (Paley)
- Geivett/Habermas:
  - pp. 149-162 (Beck)
  - pp. 178-196 (Geivett)
  - pp. 99-111 (Corduan)

TH 10/18 **HISTORY**

read:

- Swinburne: pp. 97-102 (Flew)
- Geivett/Habermas: pp. 45-58 (Flew)
- C. S. Lewis: 107-128 (ch. 10)
- Reader: pp. 61-86 (Craig)
- Geivett/Habermas: pp. 86-98 (Beckwith)

TH 10/25 **READING WEEK**

TH 11/1 **CHRISTIANITY**

read:

- Geivett/Habermas: pp. 226-275 (Feinberg, Craig, Habermas)
- C.S. Lewis: pp. 233-266 (ch. 16)
  - (recommended: Keener, *Miracles*, pp. 21-82)

**paper proposal due**

*I will have to travel to the ACPA conference and would appreciate, if we could move this meeting, perhaps to Wednesday 10/31 2-5pm?*

TH 11/8 **MIRACLES IN OTHER RELIGIONS AS PROBLEM**

Read:

re-read Hume’s argument at: Geivett/Habermas *p. 37f. only*

- Reader: pp. 87-92 (some biblical texts)
  - pp. 93-97 (Josephus)
  - pp. 98-103 (Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio)
  - pp. 104-117 (Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine)
  - pp. 118-158 (Aquinas)
  - pp. 159-613 (Hobbes)
  - pp. 164-182 (Pascal)
  - pp. 258-263 (Swinburne ch. 5)
- Geivett/Habermas: pp. 199-213 (Clark)

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2 If you want something to animate you, here is a debate on Youtube:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhT4IENSwac
TH 11/15  **Miracles in Other Religions continued**  
**Miracle and Intercessory Prayer** (only if there is time)  
read:  
Swinburne: pp. 153-188 (Penelhum, Stump)

TH 11/22  **Thanksgiving, no class**

TH 11/29  **Divine Agency**  
read:  
Geivett/Habermas: pp. 132-148 (Moreland)  
and pp. 163-177 (Davis)  
C.S. Lewis: pp. 129-150 (ch. 11)  
Reader: pp. 183-192 (Aquinas)

TH 12/6  **Nature and the Super-Natural (1)**  
read:  
Reader: pp. 193-200 (Tillich)  
pp. 200-201 (Augustine)  
pp. 201-204 (Aquinas)  
and re-read De Pot. VI, 1: pp. 30-36  
pp. 205-211 (Leibniz)\(^3\)  
Swinburne: pp. 53-70 (Holland)  
C.S. Lewis: pp. 151-158 (ch. 12)

TH 12/13  **Exam week, we will have class**  
*Paper due: evaluations*  
**Nature and the Super-Natural (2)**  
read:  
C.S. Lewis: pp. 173-232 (ch. 14 and 15)  
Reader: pp. 211-226 (Aquinas)  
pp. 226-227 (Augustine)  
Swinburne: pp. 189-205 (Purtill)

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\(^3\) Recommended: Kenneth L. Pearce: “A Leibnizian Theory of Miracles:”  
http://writings.kennypearce.net/miracles.pdf