PHST-4020 Miracles
Anselm Ramelow, O.P.
Dominican School for Philosophy and Theology
Fall 2018
TH 12:40pm-03:30pm
room: DSPT TBD (3?)
3 units

Office Hours:
After class, or by appointment.
I can be reached under (415) 567 7824 (St. Dominic's Parish, ask for Fr. Anselm) or
aramelow@dspt.edu.

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.
        [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
  - 15-20pp research paper (75% of grade)
            This will include an evaluation of the student in the following area:
            Deep Learning (Institutional Goal A.1 and 2): based on the paper, according to the published rubrics of assessment.
  - Class participation and contribution to the discussions.
  - Taking turns in preparing texts that are to be discussed in class and possibly by a presentation on the paper research.
  - The latter two points include evaluation of the following:
        o **Collaborative learning** (Institutional Goal B.1); based on
            ▪ class participation
            ▪ the paper proposal you are submitting and integration of feedback
            ▪ your contribution to the common good of the class:
                • class preparation
                • class participation

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- o **Self-direction** (Institutional Goal A.3):
  - finding your own paper topic will demonstrate this ability
- o **Leadership** (Institutional Goal B.1)
  - Your paper and its topic can be an opportunity to show that you can identify relevant issues and address them.

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 a specific problem. Also, anything pertinent to current thesis research and work is welcome.

> For this purpose, I ask you to give me a **paper proposal** after reading week (**TH 11/1**). 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 they are very specific to your topic). 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.

I would like you to forgo the use of laptops in the class sessions.

Bibliography
required:
- C. S. Lewis: *Miracles* (New York: HarperOne, 2001); List Price: $13.99; ISBN-13: 978-0060653019
- R. Douglas Geivett/Gary R. Habermas (Editors): *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press Academic, 1997); Price: $18. 12 (Paperback, new, Amazon), ISBN-13: 978-0830815289
- Richard Swinburne (ed. and introd.): *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, c1989) ISBN-13: 978-0024187314
- a **READER** will be available at **Vick Copy** (1879 Euclid, corner of Hearst and Euclid)

further bibliography:
> **S**ee 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.

2. Ralph M. McInerny: *Miracles: A Catholic View* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1986).

3. François Pouliot, O.P.: *La doctrine du miracle chez Thomas d'Aquin; Deus in omnibus intime operatur* (Paris: Vrin, 2005).

4. Craig S. Keener: *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vol. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

5. Anselm Ramelow, "The God of Miracles." In *God: Reason and Reality*, edited by A. Ramelow, 303-364. Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2014.

Subject to revision, notice possible **change of date** for **10/11** and **11/8.**

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:

      handout: Ramelow, "Not a Miracle:
          Our Knowledge of God's Signs and Wonders"
      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)

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[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

*I will have to travel for a talk at M.I.T. and would appreciate, if we could move this meeting, perhaps to **Wednesday 10/10** 10am-1pm?*

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   *paper proposal due*

CHRISTIANITY
read:

        Geivett/Habermas: pp. 226-275 (Feinberg, Craig, Habermas)[2]
        C.S. Lewis: pp. 233-266 (ch. 16)
        (recommended: Keener, *Miracles*, pp. 21-82)

TH 11/8   *I will have to travel to the ACPA conference and would appreciate, if we could move this meeting, perhaps to **Wednesday 11/7** (any time that is convenient)?*

MIRACLES IN OTHER RELIGIONS AS PROBLEM
Read:

        handout of Ramelow, "Miracles, Metaphysics and Salvation History"
        re-read Hume's argument at: Geivett/Habermas *p. 37f. only*
        Reader: pp. 87-92 (some biblical texts)
              pp. 93-97 (Josephus)

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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

pp. 98-103 (Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio)
pp. 104-117 (Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine)
pp. 118-158 (Aquinas)
pp. 159-163 (Hobbes)
pp. 164-182 (Pascal)
pp. 258-263 (Swinburne ch. 5)
Geivett/Habermas: pp. 199-213 (Clark)

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