

LANGARA COLLEGE

**Philosophy 1140, Section 001**

**Essay #2** (to be handed in November 15)

Write an argumentative essay of about 1200 words. Choose *one* of the essay questions below, or develop one for yourself. (This set of questions may be improved or expanded at a later date)

1. Summarise Blaise Pascal's "wager" argument that it is reasonable to join the church, even in the absence of good evidence that God exists. State some objections to this argument, and evaluate them.
2. Alvin Plantinga claims that a person can reasonably believe in God, even in the absence of scientific or philosophical arguments proving God's existence. Summarise Plantinga's argument for this view, and evaluate how reasonable it is by considering objections to it.
3. Summarise an argument, for example one due to Hume, Mackie or Flew, that we are never justified in believing reports of miracles. Also summarise one or two objections to these argument and evaluate them.
4. According to Alfred R. Wallace, Hume (in Section X of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*) initially argues that the *evidence* for miracles is always insufficient, but later in the section Hume "entirely changes his ground of argument by appealing to the inherent impossibility of the fact, and not at all to the insufficiency of the evidence." Is this criticism of Wallace correct? Argue for your conclusion.
5. What arguments did St. Teresa of Jesus give for her experiences being genuine (i.e. from God), rather than being from the devil, or just the work of her imagination? State two of Michael Martin's (or your own) objections to these arguments, and evaluate them.
6. When a person has a religious experience, which two possible hypotheses might account for this, according to Michael Martin? State Martin's arguments for the hypothesis he endorses, and evaluate objections to these arguments.

7. In *Where the conflict really lies*, Chapter 9, Alvin Plantinga offers various arguments for the view that science requires *adequatio intellectus ad rem*, and that theism is uniquely able to explain this congruence between the human mind and physical reality. Present one of these arguments (or at most two) and evaluate it.
  
8. There is a strong popular tradition that science and religion have some kind of deep-seated, inherent incompatibility. Historians of science now discount this conflict thesis in general, but the question of human origins seems to be a topic where such conflict is very real. Present the view of at least one author (such as Stephen J. Gould, Richard Dawkins, Francis Collins, John Polkinghorne, etc.) on the relation between theistic religion and evolutionary biology. Also critique this author and give your own views.