**Final Exam Questions PHI 248 Dr. Lawler (tentative)**

Write two essays in a coherent essay form: 1) one based on one of the following outlines at your own choice; 2) the second will be chosen by Dr. Lawler at the final exam. If this second question happens to be the same as the one you have prepared, there will be an alternative question to answer relating to another outline.

1. Explain the nature of moral duty, using examples from *The Simpsons*.
	1. Explain how morality is not about actions by themselves, but about the individual’s inner attitude, giving an example.
	2. Explain the steps in moral thought from having desires and interests to maxims, to willing the maxims as universal laws.
	3. Explain the three formulations of the Categorical Imperative with illustrations from *The Simpsons*.
	4. How does this approach allow for different moral perspectives within a larger unity, using Lisa’s vegetarianism as an example?
2. Explain the “antinomy of practical reason,” using ideas in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* to illustrate.
	1. How/why does moral experience point to the ideal of the highest good, a Just Society? Explain what this is.
	2. How does ordinary experience of the “dog-eat-dog world” of competitive individualism suggest that this ideal of morality is impossible?
	3. Explain how the scientific perspective, found in both physics and economics, seems to imply that morality is impossible, and give Kant’s reply to this point of view. Illustrate with Levy’s existentialist theory about the nature of our cold universe.
	4. Explain Kant’s arguments and reasons for believing in freedom, God, and immortality (the “postulates” of morality) as important beliefs for supporting moral goals. How are such beliefs theoretically possible in the light of scientific thinking?
	5. Add to the previous discussion reasons why and how imagination strengthens confidence in the possibility of this moral goal.
3. Using ideas from *The Matrix* explain the nature of illusion and reality, explain Kant’s theory of science and his “Copernican revolution” in philosophy.
	1. How does modern science challenge ordinary experience of the world, such as that the sun goes around the earth?
	2. How does the scientific explanation of perception (object 🡪 subject) lead to doubts about whether what we perceive is real? How does Kant respond to this conception of how we perceive reality?
	3. Give Kant’s argument about the importance of free will to morality, and so the problem that science creates when its concepts are thought to apply to reality. How does Kant solve this problem?
	4. How do questions about the relation between our ordinary ideas and the nature of reality point to the need to make a choice (the red pill or the blue pill)? (Morpheus says that the Matrix is all around us.)
	5. Explain how the allegory of the cave in Plato’s philosophy challenges our common sense idea of what is real. Show how *The Matrix* expresses this idea.
4. Using ideas from Kant’s concept of morality, as well as his theory of how the universe came into being (Kant’s early cosmology), give conceptual justification for the multidimensional world found in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.
	1. How does morality imply dimensions above ours and dimensions below ours, and the tensions of human existence in the middle?
	2. Explain this multidimensionality in the light of Kant’s conception of the genesis of the cosmos, based on Newtonian laws of attraction and repulsion, provides a framework for understanding human experience.
	3. Explain Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy. What was the nature of the ancient science before the Copernican revolution in science, and how did Kant justify modern science while still allowing for free will. How does Kant’s theory allow for multidimensionality?
	4. Explain the argument for immortality from Kant’s cosmology and his morality. How does this provide conceptual justification for Buffy’s experience of death?
5. Explain how realizing the Highest Good is central to the development *The Matrix Trilogy*, with the struggle to save Zion from the machine world.
	1. Explain why morality culminates in the Highest Good.
	2. Explain how Adam Smith’s concept of economic life justifies egotism, and not morality, as leading to the best possible world. Illustrate with Cypher’s rejection of the goal of the saving Zion.
	3. How does Kant reply to Adam Smith by showing how the power of the market is really the power of human beings, and arises out of human choice? Explain how this perspective connects with the postulate of God.
	4. The theme of external and internal religion and salvation is implicit in the portrayal of Neo as “savior.” Explain Kant’s perspective on this issue in relation to this portrayal.
	5. Following Diotema’s teaching to Socrates, explain how love is connected to the realization of the Highest Good, using Neo’s choice between two doors as illustration.
6. Show how Hegel provides philosophical grounds for taking seriously central elements of the film “Avatar.”
	1. What is the meaning of “avatar” in the film, and how does Hegel’s philosophy give support to this meaning?
	2. How does Hegel explain the evolution/devolution of Spirit, in terms of the progression of Newtonian scientific laws?
	3. Explain how Hegel goes beyond Kant’s philosophy, with its conclusion that we cannot know things in themselves.
		1. Why does Kant argue for this conclusion?
		2. What is Hegel’s response to this argument.
	4. Explain the epistemological problem of early modern philosophy, and give Hegel’s solution to this problem
		1. Explaining his theory of consciousness and representation
	5. Illustrate the above ideas with texts of “Avatar,” emphasizing the conflict between Jake and the scientists.