

# The Image of God

revised September 26

ID-1 Fall 2007

## Schedule

*Tuesday, September 11*

### IN THE BEGINNING

Our topic is the idea that man was created in the image of God. We are interested in how this idea influenced early modern intellectual life, how it was undermined by thinkers like David Hume and Charles Darwin, and how something like it persists today. So we should start at the beginning. What does the Book of Genesis say about our origins?

READING: Michael David Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 9–27.

*Thursday, September 13*

### DESCARTES ON KNOWLEDGE

Descartes seeks to put his beliefs on a certain foundation, so that he will *really* know things. But what does he think it takes to *really* know something? Is it genuinely possible that he is dreaming or being deceived? If so, why does that possibility mean he does not know what he thinks he knows?

Short paper topics distributed; paper due Monday, September 17.

READING: René Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy*, edited by Donald A Cress, 3rd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), Synopsis and Meditation 1, pp. 8–17.

*Tuesday, September 18*

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE MIND

Descartes finds something he is certain of: his own existence. What's striking about this is that his certainty is not derived from having seen himself. It's a product of "intellection" or reasoning about it.

READING: Descartes, Meditation 2, especially pp. 17–21.

*Thursday, September 20*

### KNOWLEDGE OF BODIES

Bodies are physical things. Descartes tries to show that we know what bodies most fundamentally are. Once again, this is accomplished through reasoning rather than the senses. A question relevant for our theme: how would God know what bodies are like?

READING: Descartes, Meditation 2, especially pp. 21–4.

*Tuesday, September 25*

### KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The normal explanation of why I have an idea of, say, a keyboard is that there is a keyboard in front of me that causes me to have the idea when I touch it. According to Descartes, beliefs formed in this way are unreliable but, he argues, the idea of God is different. It *must* be caused by God. We'll look at why. Pay

particular attention to the use of the image of God doctrine in the last paragraph, on p. 35.

READING: Descartes, *Meditation 3*, pp. 24–35.

*Thursday, September 27*

#### HOBBS'S MATERIALISM

Why couldn't we answer Descartes by saying that our ideas are caused by external objects? We're sometimes wrong, but there have to be some objects out there to cause the ideas that happen in our heads, right? Note also Hobbes's remark about the dream argument on page 9. Would that be enough to refute Descartes?

In addition, I will try to schedule a showing of *Hamlet* sometime this week.

READING: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), Chs. 1–2, pp. 6–11.

*Tuesday, October 2*

#### HAMLET DISCUSSION

Was Hamlet deluded or not? As the Hobbes reading suggests, the ghost at the beginning would have meant different things to different audiences. Protestants would have had more trouble accepting benign ghosts than Catholics. Note also the nature of Hobbes's argument. In addition to using his psychological theory, he gives a historical explanation of how what he regards as the false belief in spirits came to be part of Christian doctrine.

Second paper topics distributed; papers due Monday, October 15.

READING: Hobbes, Chs. 45, 47, pp. 435–53, 477–84.

*Thursday, October 4*

#### THE PROBLEM OF INDUCTION

We make inferences about what will happen on the basis of past experience. But those inferences seem groundless: we have as much reason for believing that the sun will rise tomorrow as we do for believing that it will not. We will pay special attention to Hume's argument that attempts to justify these inferences based on past experience involve reasoning in a circle (see paragraphs 6–8 in part 2). What does that mean? Where is the circle?

There will be a debate on religion in politics either tonight or tomorrow night hosted by the Pomona Student Union.

READING: David Hume, *An enquiry concerning human understanding*; [with] *A letter from a gentleman to his friend in Edinburgh*; [and] *An abstract of a Treatise of human nature*, edited by Eric Steinberg (Hackett Pub. Co., 1993), Section 4, pp. 15–25.

*Tuesday, October 9*

#### LIBRARY SESSION

The College requires that this course fulfill a library research requirement. Today, we'll meet with a research librarian.

READING: none.

*Thursday, October 11*

#### HUME'S 'SKEPTICAL SOLUTION'

We don't have any reason to make inferences based on past experience, so why do we make them? Hume's answer is habit. When we see As consistently followed by Bs, we conclude that As cause Bs and, when we next see an A (or hear of an A's happening, etc.), we conclude that there will be (or must have been, etc.) a B. Is this enough to make sense of our idea of a cause? In particular, how does it distinguish between causation and correlation? If A causes B, then A made B happen. If A is merely *correlated* with B, then this is not so; the two just happen to occur in that order.

READING: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections 5 and 7, pp. 25–37, 39–53.

Tuesday, October 16

#### HUME ON MIRACLES

Can we ever have reason for believing in any reported miracles? Hume thinks he can show that we can't, given what miracles are said to be.

READING: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 10, part 1, pp. 72–77.

Thursday, October 18

#### MORE ON MIRACLES

The second section disputes miracles claimed in the Christian tradition.

Research project ideas distributed and discussed; research reports due on Monday, November 12.

READING: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 10, part 2, pp. 78–90.

Tuesday, October 23

#### FALL BREAK

No class.

READING: none

Thursday, October 25

#### CRITICISM OF HUME

Did Hume cheat? That is, did he simply define the miraculous away?

READING: C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: a preliminary study* (Harper-SanFrancisco, 2001), pp. 159–171.

Tuesday, October 30

#### NATURAL RELIGION AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Religious worship makes sense only if God is provident, meaning that he cares about people and what they do. What's the point of praying to an indifferent being? But the evils of the world suggest that God isn't provident. Can we have reason to believe otherwise?

READING: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 11, pp. 90–102.

Thursday, November 1

#### DARWIN ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

How much does Darwin's case for evolution by natural selection rest on the perfection of creatures and how much does it rest on their imperfections?

READING: Charles Darwin, *On evolution : the development of the theory of natural selection*, edited by Thomas F. Glick and David Kohn (Hackett, 1996), pp. 156–215.

Tuesday, November 6

#### DARWIN ON US

Darwin treats human beings as just another animal whose bodies and behavior bear the traces of their evolutionary history. We have no special created place in the world.

READING: Darwin, pp. 240–77.

Thursday, November 8

#### THE NEW SCIENCE OF HUMAN NATURE

Steven Pinker argues against the view that human beings are blank slates whose minds are formed only through experience. He claims that neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, and evolutionary psychologists have shown that the human mind has a variety of innate characteristics that make up a human nature, impervious to culture or other artificial influences. We will read a chapter from his book on children and the influence that parents can have on their development.

READING: Steven Pinker, *The blank slate : the modern denial of human nature* (New York: Viking, 2002), pp. vii–xii, 1–3, 372–99.

Tuesday, November 13

#### CRITICISM OF PINKER

What is Menand's thesis? What is his argument in favor of that thesis? I ask because I think Menand is a wonderful writer and I'm struck by the fact that his essay does not at all resemble the ones that writing textbooks tell us to write. Among other things, there is no explicit thesis statement: you have to work for it. Is that a good thing or a bad one?

READING: Louis Menand, "What Comes Naturally", *The New Yorker* (November 25 2002).

Thursday, November 15

#### ABOUT CHILDREN

Today, I would like to focus specifically on Menand's discussion of the chapter of Pinker's book that we read.

READING: Menand.

Tuesday, November 20

#### A SCIENTIST FINDS GOD

Collins was head of the Human Genome Project. He also converted to Christianity. Why did he convert and how does he combine science and faith?

READING: Francis S. Collins, *The language of God : a scientist presents evidence for belief* (Free Press, 2006), pp. 1–31, 109–42.

Thursday, November 22

#### THANKSGIVING

No class.

READING: none

Tuesday, November 27

#### COLLINS AND PINKER

Are Collins's arguments similar to Pinker's? Don't they both presume that science would have discovered something if it were there?

Final paper assignments distributed; papers are due Tuesday, December 11.

READING: Collins, pp. 219–29.

*Thursday, November 29*

HISTORY AND MORALITY

Collins relies heavily on human beings' sense of morality in arguing for the existence of God. But how universal is the moral sense? Note that Hume's argument rests on history rather than science.

READING: David Hume, *An enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford University Press, 1998), "A Dialogue", pp. 185–99, 250–7.

*Tuesday, Dec 4*

WRAPPING UP

I'm keeping these days open because I'm not sure that I will be able to make it to class.

READING: None scheduled, yet.

*Thursday, Dec 6*

OPEN

See above.

READING: See above.

*Tuesday, Dec 11*

OPEN

See above.

READING: See above.

## Materials

The appropriate editions of Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* and Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Knowledge* may be purchased at the Huntley Bookstore. Everything else will be available in a xeroxed reader from King's Copies, 865 W. Foothill, 625-2002, kingsclaremont@yahoo.com.

All readings will be on reserve in the Honnold-Mudd Library.

Announcements and reserve readings will be posted on the Sakai site for this course: <http://sakai.claremont.edu>. While you're there, look for links to notes for class sessions, writing advice, and detailed grade policies posted at this website: <http://carneades.pomona.edu/2007-ID1/>.

## Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. I have office hours on Thursdays from 2–4. That means that I guarantee that I will be available at that time, first-come, first-served. This is my preferred time to meet. If it does not work for you, it's usually easy to make an appointment at another time.

My office phone number is 607-0906. My life goes much better when I only answer email once a day. I will reply, but if you need a prompt answer to a smallish question, you're probably best off calling or dropping by my office.

### Assignments

Grades will be based on four assignments: one 900 word (about three pages) paper and three that are 1800 words long (about five or six pages). One of the three longer papers will be based on library research. It will be worth 40% of the final grade while the two other longer papers will be worth 30% each. The short paper is diagnostic: you have to write it, but it will not count in the final grade. These papers will be due Monday, September 17 (short); Monday, October 15, Monday, November 12 (research); and Tuesday, December 11.

Grades are based on the College's twelve point scale, as described on p. 38 of the 2007-08 Catalog. Late papers will be accepted *without question*. They will be penalized at the rate of one quarter of a point (0.25) *per* day. Exceptions will be made in extremely unusual circumstances; suffering from writer's block or having a cold are, alas, too common to qualify. The penalty is quite mild. Just turn it in the next day.