

Free a philosophical debate essay example

[Religion](#), [God](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Religious studies](#) \n \t
2. [Three of such philosophies are discussed below:](#) \n \t
3. [The occasions of experience are divided into four groups:](#) \n \t
4. [Pannenberg's Systematic Theology:](#) \n \t
5. [Bracken's Philosophical Theology:](#) \n \t
6. [Similarities between The Three Philosophies:](#) \n \t
7. [Differences between The Three Philosophies:](#) \n \t
8. [Conclusion:](#) \n \t
9. [Works Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Religious studies

A PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE

Ever since the beginning of time, Man has strived to discover the secrets of the Universe. From Aristotle to Socrates to the modern philosophers, every curious mind has tried to divulge answers from Mother Earth in order to satiate their burning thirst for the knowledge. Philosophy has solely existed to answer questions related to reality, existence, values, reason and mind. Philosophy has been divided into many subcategories. They include metaphysics, ethics, logic, aesthetics and epistemology. Whereas logic is connected with reasoning, epistemology attempts to garner the nature and scope of knowledge. Ethics refers to the philosophy on moral grounds and on aesthetics deals with beauty and art, which are further categorised into law,

language, religion and science. Over the years, numerous philosophers have put forward their own theses to unravel the innate working of the Universe as we know it.

Three of such philosophies are discussed below:

Whitehead's Process Philosophy:

Metaphysics deals with answering the basic questions about the questions about Universe. " What is ultimately there?" and " What is it like?" among others. Process philosophy deals with answering some of the pivotal questions in metaphysics. Usually these questions are dealt with a scientific approach. Whitehead approached these questions using both scientific and religious theses. He assumed that science wasn't the only way to solve questions and find relevant answers. Many of the previous attempts solely involved the use of equations and mathematics. Whitehead, on the other hand, decided upon a holistic approach which would help humans gain ethical and religious prowess through both science and religion.

Whitehead's process philosophy was a welcome in the field of philosophy since science and religion have been at war since time immemorial. Hence, a change such as this, where science and faith were both to walk hand in hand was a phenomenon.

In his work, Whitehead discusses the existence of two kinds of entities:

Actual entity and abstract entity. Actual entity focuses on an outcome due to certain definite happening. Abstract entity, on the other hand, refers to the outcome because of a general happening. There is no definite when, why or how attached. The ultimate principle for an abstract entity, according to Whitehead is creativity. Creativity is a concept that the world diversifies

upon itself and that an actual entity can allow the existence of another, or several other entities because of it. Also, a single event may have much causality; that is many reasons. Of these, the causality that determines the definite occurrence of the event is called "singular causality". Aristotle called the same concept "efficient causality".

Actual entities constitute of actual happenings or occurrences that are dependent on other malleable or volatile occurrences. Whereas philosophers before Whitehead considered the actual entities to be substances, for Whitehead they were the fundamental elements of reality. They are divided into two categories: temporal and atemporal. Everything under the Sun falls under the temporal category, which are made up of numerous occasions of experience. Occasions of experience, or actual occasions refer to the final real happenings in the Universe that may be verified or witnessed by many or a single person at a time. The only exception to the actual entity is God. He is classified both into temporal and atemporal. This is fitting seeing the conflicted views of the human race upon him as well as the faith that they preach. While some people find complete solace in God and start anew, others become divided into the name of God and Science. He is an object in the Universe but is not eternal. But He is immortal. Hence, there arises a conflict again.

The occasions of experience are divided into four groups:

1. Propagation of electromagnetic waves in space.
2. Non-living things.
3. Living organisms.
4. Conscious experience.

Another notable thing about Whitehead's thesis is that there is no mind-matter duality. Since there are only occasions of experience involved, the mind is treated as one entity whereas the body another. And since the brain belongs inside a body, they are one and the same.

Pannenberg's Systematic Theology:

Pannenberg first published his essays in 1950s and ever since then he has both been worshipped as one of the most prominent philosophers in the "post death of God era" and criticized in equal measure. He believed that the road to theology lead to discovering the hidden truths of the Universe. He attempted to revolutionise the way Christians felt about God and how He created the mass. According to Pannenberg, God has a supreme say in all matters, and it is His decision as to make or break us. He believes that, through systematic theology, a Christian has regained his faith as well as his beliefs in his religion. Theology is the ultimate tool to understand God's Universe, and it will lead us to the illumination of all the sacred knowledge. In his papers, he discards the obsolete methodologies of finding that ONE single universal truth, saying that the truth is everywhere and that it is personal. A truth to one may be a fantasy to some other. Hence, when in perseverance of the truth, we should always keep in mind where, what and how the happening came to be. He criticises the attempts to standardise the truth and to balk it upon all the people of the world as one. He also believes that the truth should be available to all, in order to make it acceptable and reliable. Since any idea or any truth in ground zero is credited when the people believe in it, it was for the very same reason he asserted that truth cannot be private and sheltered. Rather it must be passed on and shared

with everyone. He also asserts that an individual mind has " a free will", which cannot be made to accept the truth on the basis of some blind decision on faith. Everyone should be allowed to find out the truth their own way, which, might differ for two individuals.

He also stated that truth is not stagnant in the sands of time; that truth is not only reflected in the people or faith that stood the test of time. Rather it exists as our history. The real path to absolute and complete knowledge is in knowing that our history has shaped us, made us and even decided a path for our futures. And hence, due to this, there is no SINGLE formula in which we can mould our God and his laws into. There are diversifications which allow the bending and breaking of some previously instated laws, and that it is not out of the ordinary. Change is the outcome of time. It is inevitable.

On his views about God, he says that God is the supreme creator of the Universe. God is a single entity and all our lives are in his hands as well as the lordship of creation. Since the universe comprises of people as well as non living things, Pannenberg's thesis states that God also determines the way the entire Universe works, not just human beings. Hence the world exists as a whole in His creation. On dealing with God on a scientific note, he mentions that if God IS the centre of the Universe, then the debate about the God hypothesis " God is the unity of all reality" is embedded, in the very soul of human existence, which in turn, was made by God himself. Pannenberg declared God as an " all inclusive object of theology".

Bracken's Philosophical Theology:

Bracken starts by picking up one of the oldest and most known beliefs of the Christian religion; that is, God is tripersonal (The Father, the Son and the

Spirit). Bracken divides his thesis into two parts:

1. God as an interpersonal Process: Keeping in mind the tripersonal assumption, Bracken goes on to quote Jürgen Moltmann in his deduction of the modern cross, saying that it symbolises " a Father grieving for a Son, and a Son wrenching in agony for his Father". After Jesus and his Father surrender, they find another home and meet in Spirit. He criticises Moltmann by saying that even though while quoting Whitehead, he failed to explain how the bipolar concept fits into the Trinity concept for God.

Bracken believes in an ever changing God. Since the world, we live in is ever changing, with the people becoming more and more volatile by the day, Bracken believes that it stands to reason that the Creator of this Universe also be ever changing. He thus raises a very important question " Can God be true for both Trinity and process thought theology?" The two are very conflicting concepts, which the process thought theology by Whitehead stating that there is NO mind-body duality where as Trinity refers to the fact that God is three individuals within one.

2. Communities and Corporate Agency: He quotes Lewis Ford here, saying " God's relationship to the world necessarily entails a fundamental triunity." This sentence is in accordance with the Tripersonal concept, but a very potent question arises. Assuming every occurrence in the Universe is in accordance with God's work, and that he behaves as three separate entities (Father, Son and Spirit), then the Whiteheadian principles allow them to be separate entities on the basis of occasions of experience. However, Whitehead also allows for two or more occasions of experience to come together and form a single entity. That would imply that the Father and Son

or any two of the three personas have combined, that is, they are no longer distinct. This comes in opposite to the Triunity theory, since it would imply that one of these persons acts as a leader to other as in a democracy.

Whitehead's society does not itself exercise all agency and decisions; the power is vested in all the living beings that are an active part of the society, which is portrayed to be a modern democratic firm. In this situation, saying that the conscience of the society is based on the Triunity, it would not assert three Gods acting in one person, but three Gods acting in close cooperation.

He also added upon the existing "society" section under the Whitehead's thesis, saying that the society needed to be more than a group of occurrences of experience with a few attributes in common. Therefore, he described the society as "an enduring structured field of activity for successive generations of constituent actual occasions", which refers to the fact that even the standard bases for categorisation into a society would change in time, as the society itself changes with time. Bracken believed that diversification and change were the key to accepting the volatile nature of the Universe. Hence, the societies were no longer a clique where creatures of habitat would go, but they had a mind and soul of their own, as prone to changes as the human soul.

Similarities between The Three Philosophies:

All the three philosophies come together in theology to find out the hidden truths of the Universe. All of them support the existence of an Almighty, or God. All of them also accept that this Almighty is responsible for the creation of the Universe and all that lies within.

Bracken and Whitehead both support the notion of occasions of experience. This means that they do not believe in ONE single occurrence changing the due course of history, but a series of events that allowed the transition to take place. Also, two or more of these occasions of experience may come together and form a causality, which in turn, could lead to an event. That event could be definite; that is, actual event or general, that is, abstract event.

Differences between The Three Philosophies:

Bracken minimises the use of scientific reasoning and logic into the foray of understanding the Universe. Pannenberg, on the other hand, believes that is no single formula to the beauty of God's planet. Whitehead states that the path to understanding and gaining knowledge can be attained only through merging scientific and holistic paths together in an attempt to solve the mystery.

In addition, Bracken partly conducts his expression by assuming God to be a triunity (The Father, the Son and the Spirit). None of the other philosophies assumes God to be a Tripersonal being. Also, going by Whitehead's assumptions, there is no mind-body duality in any causality or event. The occurrence of experience in this case, the mind and the body belong to one individual and hence has a singly minded conscience. Hence, any occurrence of experience for the mind is synonymous with the occurrence of experience for the body. This contradicts Bracken and his Tripersonal thesis, because it suggests that God is made up of three distinct beings with different personas.

Conclusion:

All the three philosophies attempt to understand Christianity by achieving knowledge through God's enlightenment, albeit in different methods. Most theologians take Whitehead's theologies like the standard and work their way around it. Bracken used Whitehead's concept of systematic theology and added his own "society" section to it.

Works Cited

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