Midterm Examination

In around 6 typed pages respond to ONE question from each section, for a total of THREE responses. Your essays are due in class on Tu 2/19. As usual, no electronic submissions will be accepted. This is an open-book exam. However: you are not to work together with other students, lab assistants, etc. All work is to be your own!

I

1. State and explain Bayes’s Theorem. An urn contains 10 balls, one black the rest white. An observer is such that, if a ball is a color, she correctly identifies it 90% of the time. Suppose the observer says a ball is black. What is the probability that the ball is black? Show your work, using Bayes’s Theorem.

2. State and explain the worlds account of possibility and necessity. Use that account to show that, □p and □(if p then q) imply □q.

II

3. Consider the cases Hume relates in paragraphs 1,2,3 and 5 of the last section “Why Miraculous Reports Used to Support Religious Belief are Even More Dubious” of his article on miracles (each paragraph of the section but the the short one at the top of p. 480). Critically evaluate his discussion of the cases in light of Bayes’s Theorem. That is, say how he is evaluating the different factors, and then whether you think his evaluations are right.

4. Consider the argument we had from Price against Hume according to which, if Hume’s argument were correct, we could not treat as credible even reports of ordinary low-probability events — as reports of a traffic accident or lottery winner. Explain Price’s objection and then the treatment of these cases according to Bayes’s Theorem. And critically discuss the question whether Hume’s argument is sustained in the face of Price’s attack.

III

5. On the last page of his response to Plantinga, “Divine Foreknowledge, Human Freedom and Possible Worlds” Pike says, Plantinga “has not taken account of the restrictions that must be respected if one is to employ a possible worlds analysis of what it is for something to be within one’s power... What must be asked is whether there is a possible world, having a history prior to T2 that is indistinguishable from that of the actual world, in which Jones refrains from doing X at T2.” Why does he say this, and do you think he is right? That is, set up and critically evaluate the debate between Plantinga and Pike.