M.A. THESIS PROSPECTUS

Spencer P. Murphy, Candidate

General Thesis Topic: An examination of the two dominate readings of Leo Strauss’ interpretation of the relationship between revelation and reason, with the East Coast view represented by Thomas Pangle, and the West Coast view represented by Harry Jaffa.

Specific Thesis Objectives:

(1) To understand Strauss’ diagnosis of the crisis of the West by highlighting the intellectual, moral, and practical symptoms of the crisis, as well as its underlying cause, which Strauss located in the attempt of modern philosophy to solve the theological-political problem by destroying the claims of revealed religion, thereby undermining the theological foundation of the West. From this analysis, the interpretations of Pangle and Jaffa regarding the theological-political problem will be developed.

(2) To explicate Strauss’ position regarding the relationship between revelation and reason as understood by Pangle and Jaffa. Both interpretations of Strauss will be laid out in detail, with special attention devoted to the fundamental differences concerning the centrality of revelation and reason in the work of Strauss, biblical wisdom verses philosophic wisdom, the nature and intelligibility of the biblical God compared to the Greek gods, and biblical morality in contrast to Greek morality.

(3) To argue in favor of Jaffa’s interpretation of Strauss by demonstrating that the fundamental premise upon which classical reason is built is the necessary premise for biblical faith, whereby it will be established that, in attempting to revive classical political philosophy, Strauss was also seeking to revive biblical faith. This section will also include Jaffa’s critique of Pangle’s “quarrel between philosophy and poetry,” followed by an examination of the inadequacy of Pangle’s overall position on the nature of political philosophy, divine revelation, and the relation between the two.

Methodology:

(1) The primary texts to explain Strauss’ diagnosis of the Western crisis will include Natural Right and History, City and Man, and “Three Waves of Modernity.” The first section will summarize for the reader what Strauss believed to be the symptoms and the root causes of the crisis, from which will be developed the two dominate interpretations of Strauss: the East Coast position, taken by Pangle, and the West Coast position, taken by Jaffa.

(2) The major texts used in articulating the contrary interpretations of Pangle and Jaffa regarding revelation and reason will include Pangle’s introduction to Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, “The Platonism of Leo Strauss,” Leo Strauss: An Introduction to His Thought and Intellectual Legacy, as well as Jaffa’s “The Legacy of Leo Strauss,” “The Legacy of Leo Strauss: Defended,” and “The Crisis of the Strauss Divided: The Legacy Reconsidered.” The arguments contained in these essays will clarify the diverse positions argued by Pangle and Jaffa, and the fundamental areas of their disagreement.

(3) The texts used to argue in favor of Jaffa’s interpretation over Pangle’s will include the texts cited above, as well as some other works of Strauss wherein he takes up the issue of revelation and reason, such as “Progress or Return,” “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections,” “On the Interpretation of Genesis,” the introduction to Philosophy and Law, and the autobiographical preface to Spinoza’s Critique of Religion. By explaining the content of these texts, it will be demonstrated that the position taken by Jaffa is more in line with Strauss, and is superior to the position argued by Pangle.
M.A. THESIS PROSPECTUS

Emma M. Miner, Candidate

General Thesis Topic: An examination of different conceptualizations or models of disability that permeate disability related discourse and literature. Additionally the thesis will discuss quality-of-life in relation to disability, and theories of distributive justice in light of the various conceptualizations or models of disability. Finally the thesis will explore the topic of genetic testing and the ethics involved in its use.

Specific Thesis Objectives:

(1) To understand how different conceptualizations of disability challenge both theory and human action.
(2) To construct a comprehensive definition of disability.
(3) To examine how quality-of-life evaluations provide grounding for treating individuals differently and/or whether quality-of-life evaluations are useful in eliminating or preventing disability related injustices.
(4) To understand different theories of distributive justice and to determine what each theory concludes that society owes persons with impairments or disabilities.
(5) To explore the topic of genetic testing as it relates to the responsibilities that society has towards preventing and alleviating human injustices related to disability.

Methodology:

(1) An introduction of the thesis will include a discussion about the general issues that will be explored. The introduction will be used to layout the general format of the thesis and the significant arguments that will be defended within the thesis.

(2) A general exposition of five key conceptualizations of disability that permeate disability-related philosophical discourse and literature will be presented. A more extensive discussion about each conceptualization or model will involve the presentation of a summary of each model, each model’s definition of impairment, definition of disability, and proposed social responses respectively. Finally, I will use the various conceptualizations to develop a comprehensive definition of disability.

(3) I will discuss quality-of-life and specifically objective and subjective quality-of-life analyses such as Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years. Tools to evaluate subjective well-being will also be considered.

(4) Basic expositions of the following theories of distributive justice: utilitarianism, libertarianism, welfare egalitarianism, a capabilities approach,
resource egalitarianism, liberalism, a fair opportunity for advantage approach, and prioritarianism will be included. In addition, following each exposition, I will evaluate each theory in light a comprehensive definition of disability, the models of disability, and from the perspective of a disability advocate, as well as out of concern for the demands of justice.

(5) An application of the ethics of genetic testing in relation to a comprehensive definition of disability will be considered. Specifically, I will consider whether there is a moral requirement to prevent the birth of persons with impairments via genetic testing and screening, whether there is a moral requirement to prevent some persons from unnecessary suffering and/or to conserve social resources to improve the human condition of needy persons and the overall well-being of society.

Major WorksUtilized:


(27) Wilkerson, Abby L. *Diagnosis: Difference, The Moral Authority of Medicine*


M. A. Student  

[Signature]  

Date: 1/30/2007

Thesis Director  

[Signature]  

Date: 1/30/2007

Graduate Advisor  

[Signature]  

Date: 1/30/2007
M.A. THESIS PROSPECTUS

Matt Gallatin, M.A. candidate
Dr. Wayne Pomerleau, thesis director

General Thesis Topic: A Defense of Irenaean Christian Theodicy

Specific Thesis Objectives:

(1) To show that the contemporary version of Christian theodicy built upon the writings of Irenaeus, and developed by Schleiermacher, Hick, and others, provides a more plausible account of the nature of evil (both moral and natural) than the more traditionally accepted Augustinian version, or the process alternative.

(2) To defend this theodicy as a Christian theodicy, in the face of certain specific Christian traditions that it seems to challenge.

Methodology:

(1) Exposition of the Irenaean theodicy and its historical development.

(2) Comparison, contrast, and analysis of the Irenaean theodicy against its Augustinian and process counterparts.

(3) Defense of the Irenaean theodicy with regard to four traditional Christian doctrines:
(a) the Fall;
(b) the concept of salvation (exclusive vs. universal);
(c) Eschatology (judgment vs. continued ontological development);
(d) Religious exclusivism vs. religious pluralism.

Major works utilized:


(4) Plantinga, Alvin, God, Freedom, and Evil (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).


**Thesis Approval:**

\[\text{Wayne P. Pomerleau} \quad \text{9/18/92} \]

**Student**

\[\text{Date} \]

**Date**

\[\text{Thesis Director} \quad \text{9/18/92} \]

**Department Chairperson**

\[\text{Date} \]

\[\text{Wagner} \quad \text{4/13/92} \]