

Paper assignment # 2

PHIL 20208
Jeff Speaks

Due: Tuesday, November 21

Below are four topics for your first paper. You are welcome to come up with your own topic, though you must get my approval by e-mail first. If you do this, the question that I approve should be on the first page of your essay. The papers should be at most 5-7 pages in length, double-spaced and with reasonable margins and font.

A late penalty of 3 points per day, including weekends, will be assessed for any papers which are handed in late. Papers should be handed in either in class or to my office at 205 Malloy Hall.

If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted under the honor code, please contact me.

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1. We have discussed three main approaches to the problem of personal identity: the psychological theory, dualism, and physicalism/the 'body' theory. Say which of these you think is most plausible; be sure to be specific about which version of the view in question you defend, as we have considered several versions of each of these approaches. Then (1) explain and evaluate what you think is the best arguments for your view, (2) explain and evaluate the best arguments against opposing views, and (3) explain what you think is the most serious problem for the view you defend, and how you think that we should respond to this problem.

2. Swinburne argues that every plausible view of personal identity other than dualism faces the problem of duplication. Explain the problem, and show how it can be used to argue against some versions of the psychological and physical theories of personal identity. Can any version of either view escape this problem? How about any version which does not include a 'non-branching' clause? Is Swinburne right that the best response to the problem of duplication is to be a dualist?

3. Hume argues that we have no idea of the self; Swinburne argues that Hume has made a mistake. Explain the arguments on both sides, and say which you think is correct, and why. What assumptions, if any, are they making about what it takes to have an idea of something? What does this issue have to do with the problem of personal identity?