

Second 5-7 page paper

PHIL 10100

Due: in discussion sections, Friday, April 23

Below are five topics for your first paper. You may choose one of these; or you are welcome to come up with your own topic, though you must get the written approval of your TA by email first. If you do this, the question that your TA approves 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.

Plagiarism is a serious and growing problem at Notre Dame and other universities. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourselves with the University's honor code, as well as with the philosophy department's guidelines regarding plagiarism. Both are linked from the course web site.

1. Say whether you think compatibilism or incompatibilism about free will and determinism is more plausible, and why. If you think that compatibilism is more plausible, explain how you think that a compatibilist should respond to van Inwagen's consequence argument. If you think that incompatibilism is more plausible, say how you think an incompatibilist should reexplain the examples of Jane (from van Inwagen) and Jones & Black (from Frankfurt).
2. Explain the argument for idealism from Kant discussed in class, and say how you think a non-idealist should respond. Is that response plausible? Does Kant succeed in showing that either the Thesis or the Antithesis are false?
3. Explain, in a page or two, Descartes' argument for dualism. How should a materialist reply to that argument? Consider two or more such replies, as well as dualist responses to them. Is the argument, in the end, a convincing argument for the existence of immaterial souls?
4. Explain Singer's argument concerning our obligations to the poor. What is the intended conclusion of the argument? Is the argument convincing? Consider what you take to be the strongest objections to the argument, and say whether you think that Singer can give satisfactory replies to these objections. Be sure to take into account Singer's replies to objections he considers in the article.
5. What is the problem of moral luck? How should a defender of the reality of moral responsibility solve this problem? Be sure to consider a few of the kinds of examples which you think are most challenging for the defender of moral responsibility, and say how these examples should be handled.