

FIRST PAPER TOPICS

Due: Wednesday, February 15th by 4PM

Electronic copy to your TA (as per their instructions)

PROBLEMS OF
PHILOSOPHY

Write a 4-5 page typed, double-spaced paper on one of the following topics. Be sure to hand the paper in *on time* (see the syllabus late policy). Also, **anonymize** your paper as follows: **do not** put your name anywhere on the document. Instead use your **PeopleSoftID number**.

Paper Topic 1 Give what you take to be the *best* argument for substance dualism from a use of Leibniz' Law and defend or attack it. That is, say whether that argument succeeds (is sound) or not. You may use any of the arguments we went over in class, or come up with one of your own. Do one of the following with this argument:

(A) *If* you think the argument you chose is sound, then present the *best* argument you can think of against it and explain why that argument *fails*. That is, your paper should read something like

“...the best argument for substance dualism from Leibniz' Law runs as follows...the biggest worry for the argument is that [for example] its second premise might be false [or the argument might be invalid, etc.] for the following reasons...but these worries turn out to be wrong because...”

(B) *If*, on the other hand, you think the argument is not sound, first give reasons why one *might think* the argument is especially compelling. Then identify the *reason* it is unsound (false premise, invalid), and *give an argument* to show that this is the case. That is, your paper should read something like

“...the best argument for substance dualism from Leibniz' Law runs as follows...this is an especially compelling argument because...nonetheless it fails because [say] its second premise is false [or it is invalid, etc.]...we can see this because...”

Again, you may use arguments and ideas we considered in class, but a virtue of a paper is showing *some* (usually small) amount of innovation or novelty (e.g. in how it presents the ideas, or what argument it considers, etc.).

Paper Topic 2 Give what you think is the *best* option for the Dualist to account for the causal relationship between minds and physical things (e.g., Interactionism, Epiphenomenalism, etc.) and either defend or attack it. In particular, say whether you think the view in question is ultimately tenable or untenable, taking one of the following options:

(A) *If* you think the position you chose is tenable, then present the *best* argument you can think of against it and explain why that argument *fails*. That is, your paper should read something like

“...the best way for the Dualist to account for the causal relationship between minds and physical things is as follows... [describe the view and its virtues]... the biggest worry for the position is that... [fill in the problem]... but these worries turn out to be surmountable because...”

(B) *If*, on the other hand, you think the position you choose is not tenable, first give reasons why one *might think* the position is especially compelling. Then *give and defend an argument* to show that in spite of this, the position can't be maintained. That is, your paper should read something like

“...the best way for the Dualist to account for the causal relationship between minds and physical things is as follows... [describe the view]... this is an especially compelling position because... [fill in your reasons]... nonetheless it succumbs to the following argument [fill in the argument]...”

You may use arguments and ideas we considered in class, but a virtue of a paper is showing *some* (usually small) amount of innovation or novelty (e.g. in how it presents the ideas, or what argument it considers, etc.).

Paper Topic 3 First, describe (in no more than 1.25 pages) the book contraption from “A conversation with Einstein’s Brain”. Then say whether you think the book, or the “process” of operating a book is, or generates, a mind, and give *one* argument in favor of your position.

For example, you might say:

“In “A Conversation with Einstein’s Brain” we are asked to imagine a scenario like this. . . Now if this were the case, the process of operating the book, if done quickly enough [say] would generate a mind with conscious thoughts. . . Here is an argument to show why. . .”

or:

“In “A Conversation with Einstein’s Brain” we are asked to imagine a scenario like this. . . Now if this were the case, the process of operating the book would not be, nor would it generate, a mind with conscious thoughts. . . Here is an argument to show why. . .”

Two things to watch out for:

- (A) You really *need an argument* for your position—that is, you must say something to persuade your reader. Keep in mind that an argument can involve a thought experiment (like the Martian case in the multiple realizability argument). It’s not enough though to just say “I don’t think it would feel pain”, or “I do think it would feel pain”. Say *why you think someone who doubts your position should believe you*.
- (B) If you think the book creates a mind, try to be clear as to whether it is the book or the book plus the operator which is the mind, or the process of ‘operating’ the book which is generating the mind. Also, if things like the speed of operation of the book matter, make that explicit too.