

Philosophy of Mind

Philosophy 435 – Spring Term 2018 – Purdue University

Instructor: Daniel Kelly

Paper Assignment #2

- The assignment is to choose one of the following topics and write a paper on that topic. It should be no less than 6 pages (not including bibliography), double spaced, with reasonable margins (1 inch is standard) and in a reasonable font (12 pt Times New Roman or Garamond is standard). If you have questions about the particular topics, or about the paper in general, please bring them up in class or office hours, or send me an email.
- Papers are due by the end of lecture, **Thursday, April 26th**. Any papers not given, in person, to the instructor by that time will be considered late. Electronic submissions will be considered late. As stated in the syllabus, there is a 7-point per day late penalty on all papers – no excuses will be accepted.
- Be sure to write your name and the topic you have chosen on the first page of your paper. Also be sure to staple the pages of your paper together.
 - **ProTip 1:** leave out of the final draft of your paper whatever version of the “Since the dawn of time humans have wondered...” sentence that, judging from my past experiences grading papers, you may be feeling a very strong urge to start your paper off with. It doesn’t add anything, and it puts professors in a bad state of mind off the bat, partly because it’s clichéd but also because it feels like padding.
 - **ProTip 2:** In general, avoid asking rhetorical questions; when tempted to ask one, instead write out what you take to be the obviously correct answer in the form of a declarative statement and explicitly state the reasons you think that statement is obviously correct. Rhetorical questions themselves don’t make good or convincing arguments, and when you are in a philosophical debate the answer you take to be obviously correct will often be rejected by those arguing the other side of the issue.
- **Mandatory Reminder:** Cite your sources in a separate bibliography page at the end of the paper. Make sure Wikipedia does **not** appear in that bibliography. Drawing on outside source material is fine, just be sure to properly cite them; this means that any phrases that are taken verbatim from any source should be in quotation marks, and the in text citation should include a page number. Materials and ideas borrowed (which includes paraphrasing) from a source that is **not** properly cited are plagiarized. Plagiarism will result in an automatic F for the course, and the plagiarizer’s name will be given to the Purdue administration.
 - Please use **proper in text citation**, and citation conventions. If you do not know how to do this, it’s time to learn. You may follow the guidelines in the APA Style Citation Format (<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/APAStyleGuide2004.pdf>).
- Make sure your paper, ideally in your introductory and concluding paragraph, contains a clear statement of **your thesis**, the claim or position **you** will defend in your paper. It should be a clearly identifiable sentence, something like “In this paper I will argue that ...” or “The main thesis I will defend is that ...” where the “...” is replaced by that thesis. (Do not be afraid to use the 1st person voice to state your thesis.) Your thesis can be positive or critical, but ideally it will be stated in an introductory paragraph (that also lays out the basic shape of the paper to come), in the body of the paper, where you offer the reasons you think your thesis is correct, and then again in a concluding paragraph (as per Aristotle’s advice, paraphrased: “tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em; tell ‘em; then tell ‘em what you told ‘em.”). For more on how to do good writing, read this and reflect on the advice expressed therein: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/11/05/david-foster-wallace-dictionary-writing/>

Topics:

1. Externalism: First decide which form of externalism you wish to write on, either the passive, semantic externalism of Putnam's Twin Earth thought experiment, or Clark and Chalmers' more radical active externalism. Declare your position with respect to the doctrine in the form of a thesis statement of your paper. Briefly distinguish the two versions of externalism, and state more carefully the basic idea behind the form of externalism on which you are focusing. Describe the intuition pumps or thought experiments used to motivate the position, and formulate, in premise/conclusion form the main argument given in support of it. Make explicit any background assumptions. Consider the best objections, and say how you would respond to them. Draw out an implication or two of the view that the author or authors themselves did not draw out, and say some interesting, insightful things about them.
2. This paper will largely unpack a thought experiment and assess its dialectic success. As mentioned in class, materialism is the idea that mental states and properties are really just complicated physical states or properties. In our last chapter, we have looked at a few arguments and thought experiments that suggest that any materialist solution to the mind/body problem will be inadequate.

In the cases of Nagel's "What is it like to be a bat?" and Jackson's "Epiphenomenal Qualia", we have two thought experiments designed to show that materialism fails to account for the 1st, person, subjective qualitative character of consciousness. Your job in this paper is to provide the following:

 - a. A concise description of materialism, including its characteristic claims and the types of considerations that motivate philosophers to seek materialist solutions to the mind/body problem
 - b. What the author of the article means by "consciousness" (Block's article will be helpful with this)
 - c. A detailed description of the relevant thought experiment, including any background assumptions it might make.
 - d. A description of what the thought experiment is supposed to *show*, how it is supposed to provide an *objection* to materialism
 - e. A formulation (or translation, as the case may be) of the line of thought behind the thought experiment into an argument, in premise/conclusion form.
 - f. A description of the best response a defender of materialism might make to the thought experiment-cum-argument (Does it not show what it is taken to show? Is one of the premises false? If so, which one, and why? Does the conclusion not follow from the premises? Why not?)
 - g. Finally assess the standoff – who do you think is right, and why?
3. This will be a largely critical paper. If some article we have read thus far in the semester simply infuriates you, or seems misguided or confused to you, you can write a critical paper that addresses it. Some ideas:
 - Putnam's paper on Twin Earth
 - Clark and Chalmers on the Extended Mind

- Churchland's Hornswoggle Problem
- Strawson on panpsychism
- James' view (as defended by Draper)
- McGinn's mysterianism about consciousness
- Dennett on qualia (the negative view)
- Dennett's empirically informed functionalism about consciousness (the positive view)

If you choose this topic, your paper should include the following:

- a. A careful, detailed description of the view being defended in the paper
- b. A careful, detailed formulation of the main argument for the view in question, especially the premises and conclusion
- c. A sketch of any relevant background, and discussion of any presumptions or principles tacitly assumed by the author, used to support his premises
- d. A careful, detailed formulation of your objection to the argument, which should state
 - i. Where you think the argument goes wrong (Is one of the premises false? If so, which one, and why? Does the conclusion not follow from the premises? Why not?)
 - ii. Making a case that your objection is plausible – this will probably require that you describe what you imagine the author of the article would say to your objection, and how you would respond to him.

4. Two options for the slightly more boldhearted:

- a. Narrativity and Selves
 - i. Explain Dennett's theory of the self (not his theory of consciousness). This paper should accommodate elements of what he says throughout the following 3 papers, all available on the course website:
 - Dennett, D. [The Origins of the Self](#)
 - Dennett, D. [The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity](#)
 - Humphreys, N. & Dennett, D. [Speaking for Ourselves](#)
 - ii. J.T. Ismael discusses Dennett's theory in her paper [Saving the Baby: Dennett on Autobiography, Agency, and the Self](#). What features does she like about Dennett's theory? What doesn't she like? What suggestions does she make to supplement or improve it?
 - iii. Formulate a thesis about some aspect of these discussions, and defend it.
 1. This topic is a big huge compelling sloppy can of worms and not easy to discuss cleanly, coherently and carefully. This makes it very interesting! It also makes it hard to find any precise arguments or crisp theses.
 2. If you write on this topic, ultimately your job, after explaining the similarities and differences between Dennett and Ismael's views is to do just that – state a sharp thesis, and give an argument in support of it. Your claim doesn't have to be enormous – you're not going to refute or vindicate either D or I's entire theory in a 6-8 page paper. Just make a nice

point, and show that you understand how it might connect up to the larger issues and theories in this area of philosophy.

b. Plant Minds

- i. Use the philosophic concepts and theories we've discussed this semester to address the question: do plants have minds? Why or why not?
- ii. Your paper should include all the usual elements of a good philosophy paper:
 1. An introduction where you state and defend a thesis
 2. Explain the concepts you'll be using
 3. Motivate the premises, give reason for thinking they're true
 4. State the argument in premise/conclusion form, where the conclusion is your thesis
 5. Consider two or three pressing objections to your thesis
 6. Respond to those objections
 7. Summarize and restate your thesis
- iii. Use some of the concepts and theories we've talked about this semester (behaviorism, type identity theory, functionalism, intentional stance theory, panpsychism, etc.) to frame and discuss the issues
- iv. It'll be helpful to introduce some examples that you can apply those theories and concepts to, discuss in terms of
- v. Some readings and resources to help:
 1. Laura Ruggles' article on the website
 2. A series of blog posts found here:
<http://philosophyofbrains.com/2017/02/19/do-plants-have-minds.aspx>
 3. The review of the book here:
<https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/plant-minds-a-philosophical-defense/>
 4. The book reviewed here was also very interesting:
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2015/aug/04/plants-intelligent-sentient-book-brilliant-green-internet>