

Assignment: First Paper

Phi 107: Fall 2020
Theory of Knowledge & Reality

Instructions

Assignment : Write a short paper where i) you present and explain substance dualism; ii) reconstruct and explain an argument in favor of dualism; iii) evaluate the argument; iv) consider an objection against dualism; v) evaluate the objection. (See tips below.)

Due Date : Submit it through *Blackboard* by 11:59pm on **March 12th**.
(Blackboard>Assignments>Writing Assignment 1. Click “View/Complete”.)

Header : include a header at the top of your paper. The header must include i) your SUID and ii) a word count. **Do not** put your name.

Words : Your paper must have at least 1200 words.

Format and requirements : double spaced, 12pt size, any legible font, any style. (APA, MLA, Chicago etc.)

Recall Academic Integrity

Please be aware of the Academic Integrity Policy, posted on Blackboard. Meanwhile recall that: Every source *must be cited*. Every phrase that appears elsewhere *must be put between quotation marks* and followed by citation. Every paraphrase must be followed by a citation of the text it's a paraphrase of. See the Academic Integrity Policy for details.

Important Tips

To present and explain a view (item i above), you can explain the *technical terms* relevant to it (e.g. what do ‘dualism’, ‘substance’, ‘identity’ and ‘two-way interaction’ mean?); you can *contrast* it with other views (e.g. how is it different from the mind-brain identity theory); you can give *examples* (e.g. what would the view say about feeling pain?). A good explanation will do all these.

To present and explain an argument or objection (ii, iv), you should make sure you present it in *standard format* (i.e. with numbered premises and conclusion), and make sure you explain *each premise*. (To explain a premise, you can do various things. For example, if the premise is a general claim, you can explain what it would say about a specific case; if

the premise contains technical terms, explain those terms; you can also just paraphrase the sentence in other words that you think would be easier to understand.)

When evaluating the argument and objection (iii, iv) make sure you use the critical thinking concepts we have been working with. (Are the premises true? Do the premises support the conclusion? Is the argument non-circular?) Make sure you state very clearly what the result of your evaluation is. (E.g. ‘I think the argument from dubitability is unsound because ...’.)

- How to show that a premise is not true? You can give an argument against it. (No need to formulate the argument in standard format here, as long as the reasons why you think the premise is false are stated clearly.) You can give a counter-example to premise too. (Recall: if the premise is a conditional statement, i.e. a statement of the form ‘If x then y ’, then you have to tell a story where x is true but y is false. If the premise is a general claim of the form ‘All x ’s are y ’s’ show a case of an x that is not y .)
- How to show that the premises don’t support the conclusion?
 - If the argument is deductive, you show that the premises do not support the conclusion by showing that the argument is not valid — that is, you have to tell a story that, if (we pretend to be) true, would make the premises true and the conclusion false. (See slides and reading of Jan 16 and 21)
 - If the argument is abductive (aka. an inference to the best explanation), you show that the premises do not support the conclusion by showing that there is an alternative explanation that is better than the one the argument concludes. Explain exactly why you think it’s better. Is it ‘simpler’, closer to ‘common sense’? Why? (See slides Feb 4)
- To show that an argument is circular you should explain exactly which premise depends on the conclusion being true, and why. (Our paradigm case here is the argument from the bible to the existence of God. You can try to compare the given argument with this paradigm.)

**** For more on critical thinking see slides and reading of Jan 16 and 21 ****

How to show that an argument is successful? An argument is successful when your evaluation (see question/items above) doesn’t show it to fail. For example, if you evaluated a premise and found that it is true, then you’ll have thought about possible counter-examples to that premise but will eventually have found that these counter-examples don’t work. Thus, to convince the reader that that premise is true, you just have to tell this process to your reader. That is, in general, to show that an argument is successful, you consider one or two *potential* objections against the argument but show why, at the end, they aren’t successful objections. (You can say ‘Someone might think that this premise is false because of ... [such-and-such] But this is not the case since’)

Structure You can think of points (i)-(v) as different ‘sections’ of your paper. Each of them can contain a few paragraphs. Order matters. It doesn’t make sense to evaluate an argument before you even present it, and it doesn’t make sense to present an argument

for a view before explaining the view. So, view first; then argument; and only then, your evaluation of the argument.

The first paragraph : No need for something fancy here. All you have to do is to *briefly indicate* to the reader what you'll do in the paper. The first sentences of your paper can be something very simple, like "In this paper I'll explain ... [view]... According to this theory ... [very brief statement of the view]... I'll then present ... [argument] ... and show that it is ... [sound/unsound/invalid etc.]")

Further tips

Clarity : Be as clear as you can. Use simple prose. Besides the technical, philosophical terms, use words that you would normally use in a conversation. No need for fancy big words when a short one will do. (Write as if your reader was a colleague who is not taking our course; you want to explain things in a way they could understand and do well in the course too.)

Use space effectively : Don't repeat points already made. (If you think you might not achieve the required number of words, remember that there is *always* something *substantial* to clarify, to exemplify, to explain or to justify. Don't assume that your reader knows the topic.)

Examples and Imagination : As you might have noticed from the previous tips, *examples* are really important. Philosophy is very abstract. Examples help us thinking about abstract things by focusing on particular cases; they sometimes help clarifying statements and meaning of words; they help justifying premises; and they help raising objections against statements. Thus, your paper will end up having many of them. This is how it's supposed to be.

I mentioned many examples in classroom and on slides for these various purposes. The more *original* your examples are (in the sense that we didn't talk about them in class), the better (i.e. the more you show that you understood a statement and that you thought about why that statement is true or false). So use your *imagination*. The more you do this, the better your paper will be.

Enjoy! Writing a paper is a good opportunity to think and imagine cool stuff!

Send me an email if there is anything unclear or if you need help to plan your paper or if you just want to chat about it. (The earlier the email, the more I can help you.)
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