

Paper topics 1

Write a paper 2-3 pages in length, answering **one** of the following questions. Use your own words; **do not use quotation or paraphrase**.

The papers are due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, 11 October.

1. 'Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God.' (NM, p. 26) What thesis is Descartes arguing for in this passage? Explain his argument. Discuss one objection to the argument as you have stated it.
2. What is dualism (about the philosophy of mind)? In your own words, state and discuss one argument against dualism.
3. 'From the statement "X has a pain" by itself *no* behavioural statement follows—not even a behavioural statement with a "normally" or a "probably" in it.' (NM, p. 154) What view is Putnam arguing against here? Explain his argument. Discuss one objection to the argument as you have stated it.
4. '...I will argue that any object—or as I shall say, any *system*—whose behaviour is well predicted by this strategy is in the fullest sense of the word a believer. *What it is* to be a true believer is to be an *intentional system*, a system whose behaviour is reliably and voluminously predictable via the intentional strategy.' (NM, p. 340) Explain this claim, and briefly describe Dennett's reasons for holding it. State and discuss one argument against Dennett's view.
5. J.J.C. Smart (in 'Sensations and Brain Processes') and David Lewis (in 'Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications') both argue that certain mental properties are identical to certain brain properties. Choose one of these two authors. Explain how the author you chose argues for some conclusion about the identity of a mental property with a brain property. Discuss one objection to the argument as you have stated it. Does the objection apply to both philosophers' arguments or only to the one you chose?

Notes

- 'Explain X's argument' means something quite different from 'summarise X's paper'. To explain an argument, you should state the conclusion of the argument, state **two** or **three** premises that are either explicit or implicit in the text, and say how the conclusion is supposed to follow from those premises. Since the premises are often implicit, your paper may actually be longer than the passage you are writing about. You are **not** required to describe the arguments the author gives to support the premises of the main argument, the arguments the author gives to support the premises of those arguments, etc.
- An **objection** to an argument must either be a reason for rejecting one of the premises of the argument, or a reason to think that the conclusion of the argument does not follow from the premises. An objection to the conclusion of the argument doesn't count!
- To 'discuss' an objection you might say why you think the objection fails, or you might describe a reply that the target of the objection might make and say why you think that fails, or why you think the debate is a standoff...