

Philosophy 100, Fall '08: Second Assignment

Length: 5 pages (please have a normal number of words per page).

Due date: **December 4th** (*I will accept papers during the week between this date and the following Thursday, the 11th; but please get them to me as close to the 4th as you can, especially if you would like feedback before the final exam.*)

Questions (choose ONE *numbered* question; the lettered sections are just to show which texts the questions must address. Some of these questions are repeated from the last assignment. You may NOT answer again on the same *lettered* section as before.):

(a) *Apology*:

1. Explain what Socrates means when he says we should care only about our souls, and not about material things like money, pleasure, and survival. Does this idea make sense, in your view? (Note that you will not do well on this paper unless you consider at least some *objections* to the Socratic view, even if you ultimately sympathize with it.)
2. Do Socrates' views on death make sense? That is, consider his various arguments and determine whether he is right to say that *we* (note, *we*, not just *he*) should not care about dying. (Again, you will do well on the paper only by considering arguments *for and against* the Socratic view.)

(b) *Euthyphro*

3. Explain, using the *Euthyphro*, what problems can arise when we claim that what is 'righteous' is a matter of what God wants from us. You may generalize this as being, in effect, the question of *whether our ethical claims can be based on God's will*. Be sure to consider *modern* problems that are equivalent to the ones faced by Euthyphro and Socrates.

(c) Existence of God/ Darwin

4. In your view does Swinburne provide an adequate solution to the problem of evil? For this

paper you must begin by explaining what the problem of evil is, and then assessing Swinburne's arguments. Once again, let me stress that a good answer to this question must consider arguments both *for* his view (i.e., *his* arguments) and *against* it, whatever your conclusion.

5. Why is Derren Brown's elaborate horseracing trick ('The System') potentially a useful analogy for Darwinian evolution? What does the program show us about the way the human mind is inclined to think about the products of biological evolution? [Watch it again here: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=derren+brown+the+system.]

(d) Equality/Democracy

6. Karl Popper thinks that the most important democratic principle is *that people should be able to remove their rulers without bloodshed*. Explain and assess his argument. In particular, explain why this principle is (in his view) much more important than 'majority rule.'

7. Using *The Protagoras* and Peter Singer's article *All Animals Are Equal*, consider whether it is an important political principle that *human beings are actually equal (i.e., at least roughly equal, as adults) in their moral capacities*. (Protagoras thinks that this is both an important *fact*, and an important political *principle*, Singer disagrees.)

(e) Descartes, Mind and Body

9. Descartes thinks that he can doubt *everything except the existence of his own mind*. Explain his argument and consider objections. (E.g.: Is it really possible to doubt the existence of the physical world? Can we *never* be sure that we are not dreaming? Does it make sense to conceive of the mind as conceptually separate from the world?)

10. Does Searle's "Chinese Room" argument succeed at proving that computers will *never* be conscious? Suppose that computers *could* one day be conscious; what bearing would that have on the mind/body question? (E.g., what would it imply about Descartes' view?)

(f) Hume on Miracles

11. Explain Hume's argument against believing in reports of miracles, with clear examples and illustrations *of your own invention*. Can you think of a plausible objection to his argument?

12. Are there any miracles — in the full sense of the term — that *you* believe in? If so, explain why you believe in those miracles, and then apply Hume's argument to your own beliefs.

(g) Aristotle, *Ethics*

13. Why, according to Aristotle, is being a good person such an important part of living an ideal life?

14. Explain and critique Aristotle's discussion of whether or not bad or good things can happen to us *after we are dead*.

Advice for writing your paper, exactly as for the last assignment.