

Philosophy of Mind: Minds, Brains, and Computers
Spring 2009
First Paper Topics

Due: Friday, March 13, 6 PM (email: mcollier@morris.umn.edu)

Format: Paste text into body of email and attach file as RTF, PDF, or Word 2003

OPTIONS

Kim: Why does Kim maintain that the “pairing problem” represents a serious challenge to substance dualism? How might substance dualists attempt to respond to it? Would such a response be adequate? Why or why not?

Huxley: What is his main argument in favor of epiphenomenalism? Does this argument succeed? Why or why not?

Smart: What is Smart’s argument for identity theory? What is the third objection and how does he attempt to reply to it? Does his response work? Why or why not?

DIRECTIONS:

Choose one of the following topics and write a *4-5 page paper* on it. (Note: this means that you should get onto the fifth page but not off the sixth). The paper should be double-spaced, and it should be formatted in 12 point font with one inch margins all around. You should avoid quotations from the text. You must rely *solely* upon primary sources for this paper.

There are two main parts of philosophy papers: the first part involves an *interpretation* of the structure of the argument; the second part involves an *evaluation* of the merits of this argument. So you should (1) reconstruct the argument in question in your own terms, (2) describe the strongest objection that one might raise to it, and (3) discuss whether or not this is really a devastating objection, or whether the philosopher can adequately respond to it.

More about (1): the goal here is to put the argument as elegantly and simply as possible, while not oversimplifying it. More about (2): you will only have space to discuss *one* objection to the argument, so make sure to choose the strongest objection (note: even if you think the argument works, you should defend it from a counter-argument). More about (3): you should then make it clear *why* the objection fails or succeeds; even if you think the objection succeeds, you should make it clear how the philosopher would try to deal with it. (You should assume that your reader is another student in the class. That is, you should assume that the reader has a basic grasp of the text in question. This means that you don’t need to introduce all the basic ideas in the text; instead, you can just launch into a discussion of the particular topic at hand).