FIRST PAPER

Instructions

Your paper should be on one of the following topics, and should be between 1000 & 1500 words in length. Further details about what is expected in your paper will be provided in the discussion sections. If you have questions about what is expected, you should bring them up during the discussion sections or in office hours.

The paper is due on Wednesday, October 27. Details on how to submit papers and penalties for late papers will be announced on the course website.

On the first page of your paper be sure to write (i) your name, (ii) your TA’s name, (iii) your section number, and (iv) the number of the topic you are writing on.

Before you start writing, you should review the Policy on Academic Integrity on the class webpage. If you have questions about the policy, Prof. Stich will be happy to answer them. Plagiarism will result in an automatic F for the course.

Topics

1. The conclusion of the Problem of Evil argument is that God does not exist. If you disagree with this conclusion, explain clearly why you think the Problem of Evil argument is not sound. For each criticism you offer of the Problem of Evil argument, you should also state what you take to be the best response to that criticism, and why you do not find that response convincing. Your paper should include a clear and accurate statement of the Problem of Evil argument.

2. The conclusion of the Problem of Evil argument is that God does not exist. If you think the Problem of Evil argument is sound, explain clearly what you take to be the two best objections to the argument. For each objection, explain why you do not think it is convincing. Your paper should include a clear and accurate statement of the Problem of Evil argument.
3. The Teleological Argument maintains that the best explanation of the obvious function and superb design to be found in nature is that the natural world was created by a vastly intelligent mind. **If you disagree with this conclusion,** explain clearly why you think the Teleological Argument is not sound. For each criticism you offer of the Teleological Argument, you should also state what you take to be the best response to that criticism, and why you do not find that response convincing. Your paper should include a clear and accurate statement of the Teleological Argument.

4. The Teleological Argument maintains that the best explanation of the obvious function and superb design to be found in nature is that the natural world was created by a vastly intelligent mind. **If you think the Teleological Argument is sound,** explain clearly what you take to be the two best objections to the argument. For each objection, explain why you do not think it is convincing. Your paper should include a clear and accurate statement of the Teleological Argument.

5. George Berkeley offers many arguments against the existence of “material substance.” According to Berkeley, there are only two kinds of things in the universe: minds and “ideas”. Berkeley also insists that his view is much more commonsensical than the view of philosophers (like Locke) who think that physical objects are made up of matter. Indeed, he argues that the theory that physical objects are made up of matter leads to skepticism. If you select this topic you should:

   i) explain what Berkeley means by ideas, matter and physical objects

   ii) explain clearly and in detail why Berkeley thinks that the theory that physical objects are made up of matter leads to skepticism

   iii) explain what you take to be the best objections to Berkeley’s theory

   iv) explain how Berkeley (or a defender of his view) would respond to these objections

   v) say which side you think has the stronger case in this debate, and why.