

## Second Paper Topics

Write a short (5-7 page) paper on ONE of the following topics; follow the "Guidelines for Papers" handed out in class and available on the course website. Be sure that your paper has a clear and comprehensible *thesis*; that it contains *arguments* for that thesis; and that it anticipates and responds to likely *criticisms*. Remember that part of your job is to be a good interpreter: in considering the readings we have covered, it is your responsibility to show the author's ideas in their strongest and most plausible form, while remaining true to the text.

### PAPERS ARE DUE IN SECTION: Thursday/Friday, November 1/2

Papers turned in late without an extension will be penalized 1/3 of a grade per day. To receive an extension you must speak to your teaching assistant.

1. In his essay, "Racisms," Anthony Appiah argues that racial prejudice consists in "the deformation of rationality in judgement that characterizes those whose racism is more than a theoretical attachment to certain propositions about race." (p. 8) Explain this idea, using examples. (E.g., what does Appiah mean by a "deformation of rationality in judgement"? What "propositions about race" does he have in mind?) On Appiah's view, racial prejudice ends up being a kind of "cognitive error". Do you agree? Why or why not. (E.g., Are there other forms of racism that Appiah's view doesn't capture? Does *intrinsic racism* (as he defines it) represent a different kind of failing? What kind?)

2. In his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume reasons:

When a man says, *I have found, in all past instances, such sensible qualities, conjoined with such secret powers*, and when he says, *similar sensible qualities will always be conjoined with similar secret powers*, he is not guilty of a tautology, nor are these propositions in any respect the same. You say that the one proposition is an inference from the other; but you must confess that the inference is not intuitive, nor is it demonstrative. Of what nature is it then? To say that it is experimental is begging the question. For all inferences from experience suppose as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance. (p. 273)

Explain and critically evaluate Hume's argument. Does it show that our commitment to science is no more grounded in evidence than someone's faith in religion or astrology?

3. Imagine that your father has suffered a serious accident and has total amnesia. He cannot recognize you and remembers nothing from the time before the accident. You attempt to have conversations with him, but he treats you as a total stranger--in fact he seems a bit suspicious of you when you claim to be his child. Is the person before you (after the accident) the same person you knew before the accident? Consider the various accounts of personal identity we discussed in class: explain how they would each respond to this question, and critically compare their responses. Do you agree with any of the accounts? Why or why not? (If not, can you propose a better account?)

4. Imagine that you are living in the era of "Star Trek", and you are among a group of distinguished visitors invited onto the Enterprise. The captain is giving you a tour of the ship, and you have just reached the transporter room. Here is the beginning of the conversation:

**Captain:** We are very proud of the latest technology that has been installed on this ship. Our old transporters converted a person's matter into energy and transported that--the new ones don't need the energy from your old body, but using information scanned while you are in "the box", reconstitute a body just like yours from whatever energy is available at your destination.

**Visitor Go:** That's very impressive. Would it be possible to see a demonstration?

**Captain:** Of course. Keep in mind, however, that if you agree to be transported, your existing body will be destroyed and another body will be generated out of completely new material. The new body will have thoughts and attitudes just like yours, will seem to remember your past experiences, etc. But the new transporter cannot guarantee that the body it creates will have the exact form of a human body. What form it will take will depend on what resources are available--it may, e.g., produce a body more like other species on that planet, though it will endeavor to create a body as much like yours as possible.

**Visitor Go:** I would like to be transported to the planet Urquart. I have a friend there I haven't seen in years. Can I step in?

*There is a bit of commotion amongst the visitorsÖanother visitor steps forward:*

**Visitor Stop:** Don't do it! The new technology is flawed--these newfangled transporters don't transport individuals, but destroy them and make copies of them at the destination site. If you go through with the demonstration you will not survive!

An intense discussion ensues. Some visitors eagerly volunteer to be transported, others step back in horror. You face a difficult decision. You are eager to make a trip to Earth to see your ailing motherÖa trip by less technologically advanced methods could take weeks. Will you go?

Continue the dialogue with Visitor Go, Visitor Stop, and the Captain, adding yourself as a speaker in the discussion (and other characters if necessary). Do you think it is *possible* for you to survive a trip in the new transporter? What would it take for you to survive? How plausible is it you'd perish? Would you go for it? Why or why not?

5. In his essay, "But Would That Still Be Me?Ö", Anthony Appiah argues:

I am asserting here, therefore, a contrast between our attitudes towards (ethical) gender and (ethical) "race." I suggest that we standardly hold it open to people to believe that the replacement of the characteristic morphology of their sex with a (facsimile) of that of the other (major) one would produce something other than themselves, a new ethical person; while the replacement of the characteristic morphology of their ethical "race" by that of another would not leave them free to disclaim the new person. "Racial" ethical identities are for us--and that means something like, us in the modern West--apparently less conceptually central to who one is than gender ethical identities." (p. 497, coursepack)

Explain what Appiah means by an "ethical" identity, and the difference between an "ethical" identity and a "metaphysical" identity. Summarize Appiah's reasons for thinking that (ethical) gender is more central to "our" sense of self than (ethical) race. Are his reasons convincing? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?