

Philosophy 371
Professor Guerrero
Paper #1

Due by 9am on Monday, October 24, 2016

Please email your paper to me as a .doc or .docx file with the subject “Phil 371: Paper #1”
1000 to 1500 words (roughly 3-4 pgs)

This paper is an argument analysis. Please read the passage below carefully. It contains at least one argument. Your job in this paper will be to clearly state the main argument in your words and to raise a question/objection with at least one of the premises of the argument you have presented.

Step One: Reconstructing the Argument

- PRESENT THE ARGUMENT AS A LOGICALLY VALID ARGUMENT.

Two forms of short, valid arguments (these might form the basis or subparts of your reconstructed arguments):

Modus ponens:

- (1) If p , then q .
- (2) p .
- (3) Therefore, q .

Modus tollens:

- (1) If p , then q .
- (2) Not q .
- (3) Therefore, not p .

- Number the premises and the conclusion. Articulate each premise and the conclusion in no more than one sentence. STATE THE PREMISES AND THE CONCLUSION IN YOUR OWN WORDS, NOT IN THE AUTHOR’S WORDS.
- Include both explicit and implicit premises. In other words, you may need to supply premises that are not explicitly stated in the text.
- When presenting the argument, present it charitably and as convincingly as possible. You are trying to make it seem like a strong, compelling argument.

Step Two: Engaging with the Argument

- After stating the argument, briefly explain it in your own words.
- After explaining the argument, identify one premise that you think is most plausibly objected to, the “weakest link,” so to speak, and then write at least one paragraph explaining the basis of an objection to this premise. This objection can be of your own invention, or it can draw on the other readings for the course.
- Now return to DeGrazia’s side: present one plausible counter-response that might be made to the objection that you’ve just raised. Write at least one paragraph presenting and explaining this counter-response and how it is a response.

- You should read the surrounding material in the article from which the passage is taken, but do not discuss arguments the author makes elsewhere in the article. Discuss only the argument in the quoted passage.

The Passage:

David DeGrazia:

“Some philosophers ... hold that we are essentially *persons* in a sense of the term that implies the capacity for relatively complex forms of consciousness such as those associated with self-awareness, reasoning, and linguistic thought. On this view, losing the capacity for consciousness would entail loss of personhood and therefore the end of a person’s existence. But this view has incredible implications. It implies that people who undergo progressive dementia actually die – go out of existence – at some point *during* the gradual slide to irreversible coma. Even if practical concerns recommend drawing a safe line at irreversible loss of the capacity for consciousness (to prevent errors and abuse), the implication that, strictly speaking, we go out of existence *during* the course of progressive dementia strains credibility. A second implication of person essentialism along these lines is that because newborns lack the capacities that constitute personhood; you came into existence *after* what is ordinarily described as *your* birth. Although there is nothing incoherent about these implications, or the essentialist thesis that generates them, I find them too implausible to accept without a very compelling philosophical justification – of which, I think, there is none.”