

Second Paper Topics

Write a paper no longer than 1800 words, about 5-6 pages, on one of the topics below. Please turn your paper in to Michael Green's box in the Philosophy office, Pearsons 208, by 2:30 pm on Monday, October 15.

1. According to Thomas Hobbes, in dreams, the mental images that are formed while one is awake,¹

“appear as if a man were waking, saving that the organs of sense being now benumbed ... a dream must needs be more clear, in this silence of sense, than are our waking thoughts. And hence ... it is a hard matter, and by many thought impossible, to distinguish exactly between sense and dreaming.

For my part, when I consider that in dreams I do not often, nor constantly, think of the same persons, places, objects, and actions, that I do waking, nor remember so long a train of coherent thoughts dreaming as at other times, and because waking I often observe the absurdity of dreams, but never dream of the absurdities of my waking thoughts, I am well satisfied that being awake I know I dream not, though when I dream, I think myself awake.”

To answer this paper topic, you will tell your reader what Hobbes was saying and why it is relevant to Descartes's dream argument in the fifth paragraph of the First Meditation (p. 14, AT 19). First, explain Descartes's dream argument: how does Descartes move from observations about dreaming to conclusions about whether his beliefs are open to doubt? Second, explain Hobbes's observations about dreaming and how he uses them to reach a different conclusion. Third, assess their disagreement.

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), chapter 2, paragraph 5.

Consider how Descartes might reply to Hobbes and tell the reader why you agree with one or the other.

2. In his Second Meditation, Descartes uses a piece of wax to show that bodies have only three properties: extension, flexibility, and mutability (pp. 21–2, AT 30–1). What does it mean to say that bodies only have these properties? How did he use the example of the piece of wax to argue for this conclusion? Is his argument successful? Consider what you regard as a compelling objection. For instance, someone might think that Descartes hasn't shown that bodies, like the piece of wax, have the properties he says they do. Or someone might think he hasn't shown that they *lack* some of the properties that he claims they lack, such as color, smell, sound, and so on. After considering the objection, give your answer. Is the objection a good one or not?
3. In the nineteenth paragraph of section four, Hume claims that those who try to prove that "the future will be conformable to the past" with "probable arguments" "must evidently be going in a circle, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question" (p. 23). What does it mean to try to prove this in that way? Why did Hume think those attempts must fail? How might someone reply to Hume? What would Hume say in response? What do you think: does experience give us no reason to believe that the future will resemble the past?