

Fourth 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 Tuesday, December 11. Please *also* email a copy to me.¹ If your paper will be late, please note when you are turning it in on the first page. Thank you.

1. According to C.S. Lewis, Hume's case against miracles conflicts with his skepticism about our knowledge of the uniformity of nature. Explain Lewis's charge against Hume. How might Hume try to show that his positions are consistent? What do you think? Has Lewis caught Hume in a contradiction? Is that enough to rescue miracles from Hume's arguments?
2. Suppose someone said that the birds of paradise, the birds in the film that Vivian showed us in class, show that Darwin's account of natural selection cannot be right. Hopping around like that does not contribute to the survival of those birds. Explain why someone might think that is an objection to Darwin's theory. How might someone defending Darwin reply? What do you think? Does the reply answer the objection?
3. Louis Menand criticizes Steven Pinker's discussion of child development on the grounds that it is not really about psychology. Pinker, according to Menand, only identifies "the biology" while "psychology is everything that the organism does to cope with its biology." Explain what Menand means by this and why he thinks it is relevant to Pinker's claims. How might Pinker defend his views? What do you think? Does Menand show that Pinker is mistaken or not?
4. Francis Collins believes in a personal God, that is, a God who cares about human beings and is infinitely good (Collins, p. 218). Why does Collins

¹ You can find it here (<http://carneades.pomona.edu/2007-ID1/contact.shtml>) or here (<http://pomona.edu/directories/>).

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believe this? Give what you regard as the most compelling reason for doubting that God is like this. How might someone who shares Collins's views reply? What do you think? Do we have good reasons for believing in a personal God or is this something that can, at best, be accepted on faith?