Essay Two

Requirements

You are to submit one 10-12 page research paper on Wednesday 19 December, addressing one and only one of the questions listed below. The paper must be submitted by email to me at bradley.weslake@rochester.edu. Please use PDF format if possible. In addition to sending your essay as an attachment, please also paste your essay into the body of your email.

Guidelines

Guidelines and comments from the first essay apply.

Questions

• Any one of the first essay questions may be addressed, so long as it is different from the question addressed in your first essay.

• Explain and evaluate eliminative materialism, addressing at least two of the following questions:
  – What is folk psychology, and what role does it play in the argument for eliminative materialism?
  – Identify and evaluate two reasons Churchland gives for the falsity of folk psychology.
  – Explain the argument that eliminative materialism is self-refuting, and evaluate Churchland’s reply to the argument.
  – How should a common-sense functionalist reply to an eliminative materialist?
• Explain and evaluate Davidson’s anomalous monism, addressing at least two of the following questions:
  – What are the premises of Davidson’s argument?
  – Why does Davidson think there are no psychophysical laws?
  – Why has Davidson been accused of being an epiphenomenalist?

• Explain and evaluate the exclusion problem, addressing at least two of the following questions:
  – What are the four premises that constitute the problem, and why are they inconsistent?
  – Why should we believe in causal closure?
  – What is causal overdetermination, and what role does it play in the problem?
  – Which premise do you think is most likely to be false, and why?

• Explain and evaluate Kim’s supervenience argument, addressing at least two of the following questions:
  – Which philosophical view is Kim arguing against?
  – What assumptions are made by Kim in the argument?
  – Which is the weakest premise in the argument?

• Explain Chalmers’ distinction between the easy and hard problems of consciousness, and address at least two of the following questions:
  – Why does Chalmers think that the easy problems are easy?
  – What is functional explanation, and why does it not help with the hard problem?
  – Explain and evaluate Chalmers’ argument for the principle of structural coherence.
  – Explain and evaluate Chalmers’ argument for the principle of organizational invariance.

• Explain and evaluate Nagel’s argument in his “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”, and address at least two of the following questions:
  – What does Nagel mean when he says that his point is conceptual rather than epistemological?
  – What is the aspect of consciousness that Nagel thinks most resistant to explanation, and why?
– What is the difference between imagining what it is like to be another person and imagining what it is like to be a bat, for Nagel?
– What philosophical view is Nagel arguing against?
– Do Nagel’s arguments show that physicalism is false? Why, or why not?

• Explain and evaluate the knowledge argument, and address at least two of the following questions:
  – How is the knowledge argument an argument against physicalism?
  – Explain and evaluate the ability reply to the knowledge argument.
  – How can a physicalist argue that Mary learns something new, consistent with the truth of physicalism?