

PAPER 2

Ted Sider
Intro Metaphysics

4–7 pages (double-spaced, normal font and margins), due by email at 9:50am on 12/12

Write a short essay on one of the topics below. The articles mentioned are available either in the textbook or on the course readings website. (Be sure to cite any works you use in some standard bibliographic style.) Make sure your paper is “self-contained”: it should make sense to someone who isn’t already familiar with the issues in question.

1. In his article “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” Harry Frankfurt argues against what he calls the “principle of alternate possibilities”, according to which a person is morally responsible for an action only if she could have done otherwise. Your assignment is to extract, explain, and evaluate his main argument, which occurs in section IV of his article. Begin your paper by introducing the issues. This will take a bit of time, since you should i) briefly explain the problem of freedom and determinism, ii) state the principle of alternate possibilities, iii) explain how that principle relates to the problem of freedom and determinism. Then you should extract, explain, and evaluate Frankfurt’s argument against the principle. In the explanation phase (when you go through the argument you have extracted and say, line-by-line, why Frankfurt thinks the premises are true) you will need to describe Frankfurt’s example of “Jones₄” and “Black”.
2. In “The Agent as Cause”, Timothy O’Connor defends a theory somewhat like Roderick Chisholm’s, but he tries to improve on it. How does he do this, and does he succeed?
3. In “An Argument for Animalism”, Eric Olson says what “animalism” is, gives an argument for animalism, and discusses some objections to animalism. In your paper, explain what “animalism” is, present Olson’s argument for it, and then add your own critical contribution. Here are some options for your critical contribution: i) critically discuss one of the objections to Olson’s argument that Olson himself discusses (adding your

own viewpoint to the mix); ii) give your own objection to Olson's argument; iii) critically discuss one of Olson's replies to one of the objections to animalism that he discusses; iv) give your own objection to animalism.

4. In his paper "The Paradox of Increase", Eric Olson states a certain paradox. Your paper should state that paradox, and critically discuss, in detail, one or two of the solutions to the paradox that Olson discusses.
5. In "How Fast Does Time Pass?", Markosian replies to Smart's argument about how fast time passes. Describe Smart's argument, give Markosian's response to it, and evaluate that response.