**Four Paragraph Essay**

Take one of the readings that we’ve covered in the first weeks of class (Singer “Famine, Affluence and Morality”, Mill, *Utilitarianism*, MacAskill “Replaceability, Career Choice and Making a Difference”, Nozick “The Experience Machine”, Hill “Autonomy and Benevolent Lies” and write four paragraphs as follows:

1. **Paragraph 1: Summary of main claim**

This paragraph should reconstruct what you take to be the author’s central argument/one of their central arguments (if they have multiple). Make sure not to simply summarize; instead, you need to tell me *what reasoning* the philosopher used to arrive at the particular conclusion that they arrived at.

This paragraph should start with sentences that look something like this:

"In [INSERT PAPER NAME], [INSERT PHILOSOPHER NAME] argues [INSERT CLAIM]. [PHILOSOPHER] argues for [CLAIM] as follows: [DESCRIPTION OF WHAT REASONING GETS PHILOSOPHER TO CLAIM]."

1. **Paragraph 2: The strongest objection you can muster**

Now, raise an objection to this argument (or more specifically, to the reason that the author used to arrive at it). This shouldn’t be any old objection—it should be the objection that you think is strongest. It’s okay to raise an objection that the author explicitly considers in the text, but if you do this, you should go beyond the text in some way (e.g. find a way to make this objection *even more compelling* than it was when the author discusses it in the text).

To do well on this paragraph, you don’t simply want to state an objection—you want to *sell me* on it. Make this objection as compelling as you possibly can, perhaps by offering a good argument for it, or providing an example that makes its strength apparent.

Crucially, you also need to explain \*exactly how\* this objection undermines some part of the author’s position. Make sure you can clearly explain how, if true, this objection undermines some specific component of the author’s argument.

This paragraph should start with sentences that look something like this:

"Someone could object to this claim by [INSERT EXPLANATION OF HOW SOMEONE COULD OBJECT]. [INSERT EXPLANATION OF HOW THIS OBJECTION WORKS, WHY WE OUGHT TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY ETC]. This undermines the claim because [INSERT EXPLANATION OF HOW EXACTLY OBJECTION UNDERMINES AUTHOR’S ARGUMENT]."

1. **Paragraph 3: The strongest *response* to your objection that the philosopher can muster**

Now it’s time to consider how the author could respond to your objection. Make sure that you don’t just offer *any old response*—instead try to think about what the author would likely say, given what you know about their philosophical commitments. Make sure that you’re offering a response that directly engages with the objection from Paragraph 2, and that doesn’t just offer some novel, independent argument in support of the position outlined in Paragraph 1.

This paragraph should start with sentences that look something like this:

"[PHILOSOPHER] could respond to [OBJECTION] by saying [INSERT RESPONSE]. This undermines the objection because [INSERT WHY IT UNDERMINES OBJECTION."

1. Paragraph 4: An evaluation of whether this response is successful or unsuccessful, and why

Finally, consider how successful you find the Paragraph 3 response to be. If you think it’s successful, explain why someone who endorses the objection from Paragraph 2 ought to revise their opinion. If you think it’s unsuccessful, explain where exactly it goes wrong. Make sure that you engage directly with the substance of the response from Paragraph 3—don’t just raise new considerations for or against the argument from Paragraph 1.

**How to do well on this assignment**

1. Write in clear, straightforward prose (check out the writing guides on Canvas for advice on philosophical writing)
2. Provide a clear and accurate statement of the philosopher’s main argument(s)
   1. Don’t forget to provide adequate citations!
3. Don’t simply offer objections and responses
   1. Instead, *motivate them*—make them persuasive to the reader
   2. As well, explain clearly how they undermine whatever argument they’re directed at
4. Stay on point—engage directly with whatever argument/objection/response came before
5. When in doubt, talk with your professor/GTA
   1. Note: we won’t read drafts, but we’ll happily talk through ideas
6. Talk with your peers
   1. Don’t write this assignment together, but feel free to talk through your ideas with other members of the class