

Suggested Paper Topics I

- 1) In what sense is the ethical a consolation for the tragic hero and in what sense is it a temptation for the Knight of Faith?
- 2) What does Kierkegaard mean when he says faith "is not the immediate inclination of the heart but the paradox of existence"? (p.76)
- 3) If you think Prof. Dreyfus's interpretation of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* or *The Third Man* is wrong on some significant point, you may write a paper defending your alternative (Kierkegaardian) interpretation. However, to make sure you have an objection worth pursuing, you must get your G.S.I.'s approval in advance of writing the paper.
- 4) Kierkegaard tells us how Knights of Resignation relate to the memory of their defining commitment but he never tells us what memory means for the Knight of Faith. How does the French woman relate to her memory? Considering the Japanese man's claim that the French woman doesn't know what memory is, give an account of what memory must be for him. How does his experience of memory suggest what memory must mean for the Knight of Faith?
- 5) In understanding the Knight of Faith, "temporality and finitude is what it all turns on."(p.78) According to Kierkegaard, how do the ordinary person, the Knight of Resignation, and the Knight of Faith each relate differently to the finite?
- 6) What is absurd about the Knight of Faith's actions in the Preamble? What is absurd about the Knight of Faith's actions in Problema I and II? Do you see anything in common between the kind of absurdity in the Preamble and the kind in the Problema?
- 7) Can the Knight of Resignation understand the Knight of Faith, and vice versa? In each case, if not, why not?
- 8) Why are the actions of a tragic hero, like Agamemnon killing his daughter, still ethical? In what sense is the ethical a consolation for the tragic hero, and in what sense is it a temptation for the Knight of Faith?
- 9) Can we view Harry Lime as a Knight of Faith suspending the ethical? Can we view Anna as one? (Answer either question or both.)
- 10) What is the significance, in Kierkegaardian terms, of Huck Finn's decision not to turn Jim in? Does this make Huck a Knight of Faith? Why or why not?
- 11) In class, Prof. Dreyfus said that if your Beloved is your defining commitment, it would be impossible to find someone "better" than the Beloved, who exemplified more of the qualities a Beloved person should have. Why is this impossible? Does this create problems for Kierkegaard's conception of "finding a new Isaac"?

12) What is the defining commitment of the Japanese Man in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*? What is the defining commitment of the French Woman? In particular, do they have a defining commitment to one another?

13) What is faith? Why is Abraham an exemplar of faith? Why does Johannes de Silentio want to have faith?

14) What is the "movement of resignation"? Why does Kierkegaard think it is necessary, and why is it possible for all people to make this movement? Why would someone decide to make the movement?

NOTE: You are encouraged to write on a topic of your own, but before you begin you must have the approval of your GSI. Don't wait until the last minute to propose a topic.

LENGTH: Approximately 6 pages. Please use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins. Double space, and number your pages.

**DUE: Mon. March 10 by 5:00 PM in The Howison Philosophy Library. One increment of grade (for example A to A minus) will be taken off for each day a paper is late.**

Suggestions: 1) Raise a specific question. Make your paper clearly an answer to this specific question. 2) Avoid jargon, e.g. "Death of God" and "meaninglessness", etc. In using words such as "commitment", "absurdity", and "faith", make sure to make clear the author's use of the term. 3) Avoid summary comparison. Show differences as well as similarities in any comparisons you make. 4) Avoid merely repeating what was said in lectures and sections. 5) Support your arguments with specific details from the relevant text and/or phenomenon. In film papers quote from the scenario. 6) Keep a copy of your essay.

PUT THE TOPIC AT THE TOP OF YOUR PAPER AND YOUR GSI'S NAME AND SECTION DAY AND TIME IN THE UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER.

BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF YOUR PAPER.