

### Suggested Third Paper Topics

These paper topics are just suggestions; you may write on a topic of your own choosing. Papers should be about three pages, double-spaced. Papers from this list are due Wed., Nov. 25 at 5:00 as an e-mail attachment (word file or pdf). There will be one more list of paper topics for papers due the last day of classes, Friday Dec. 11. You must do two papers for the class.

1. We talked in class about how, when we have bought a ticket in a lottery with a lot of tickets, even a million or a billion or a trillion, we are reluctant to assert that we know we will lose. Consider ways in which that may support an argument for a very broad skepticism according to which we do not know many of the things that we ordinarily take ourselves to know. (We considered one sort of skeptical argument in class; there is a somewhat different skeptical argument in the reading; you may discuss either or both.) Consider how one might respond to the skeptical argument(s).
2. Write an essay on the principle of agglomeration, which says: if I believe  $P_1$  and I believe  $P_2$  and ... I believe  $P_n$ , then I ought to believe ( $P_1$  and  $P_2$  and ...  $P_n$ ). First, explain the role this principle plays in the Preface Paradox. Then give arguments both for and against accepting this as a principle of rationality.
3. Write an essay on the following question: is it ever rational to be irrational? You will need to disambiguate the question, as there are multiple things that it might mean, so that in some senses the answer may be "yes" and in other senses the answer may be "no".
4. Consider Newcomb's problem with an infallible predictor: you know in advance that the predictor is always correct. Do you think that this case should be treated any differently than the case of a good, but fallible, predictor? If you are a two boxer for the latter case, should you still be a two-boxer for the former case? Try to give arguments both pro and con.
5. Suppose you know that you are going play the prisoner's dilemma game with the same person as the other "prisoner" 100 times. What you do each time can depend on what happened with the previous games. Assume causal decision theory, and that you want to maximize your utility (and that you know that the other "prisoner" also wants to maximize his utility). Would it be rational to "confess" every time? If not, why not? Can you come up with some other strategy that might be more rational? How could you justify it without rejecting causal decision theory?