

First paper. NB: no paraphrases; answer in your own words. Be sure to explain any technical terminology. Please write *five* pages.

Part 1 (2-3 pages)

Nativists often argue for their position by giving a "poverty of the stimulus argument" (PSA). What is the general form of a PSA? Set it out with numbered premises and a conclusion. (If you think that PSAs come in importantly different varieties, say what they are.) Give some examples (in prose) of PSAs mentioned in this course, and explain (again in prose) how they fit your general form (or forms). What are the main ways in which an Empiricist can resist a PSA?

Part 2 (2-3 pages)

Take one of the PSAs discussed in class and/or in the readings -- e.g. Plato's argument in the *Meno*, the case for CONSPEC, the argument from early competence in reasoning about object interactions, a Chomskyan argument for innate knowledge of language -- and discuss it in detail. Set out the argument with numbered premises and a conclusion. Is the argument persuasive? If not, say why and explain what sorts of further evidence would tend to reinforce it. If so, say why and explain what sorts of further evidence would tend to undermine it.

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

24.08J / 9.48J Philosophical Issues in Brain Science  
Spring 2009

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.