

## ESSAY #3

The final essay is due Monday, December 15, any time. Your essay should be approximately 7 pages in length (around 2500 words), printed/double-spaced. You may submit a hard copy to my mailbox on the fourth floor at 1 Washington Place, across from the reception desk, or you may submit it by email as an attached Word or pdf file. If you submit it electronically, you will receive an email reply, so assume that I did not receive the paper if you do not see a reply within a reasonable time.

For this essay you must use **ONLY** our course readings. **DO NOT** use additional sources. You may draw upon readings going all the way back to the beginning of the course if you wish, **but you *must* make use of the books by Gordy Slack and Mark Pagel**. Depending on your approach to the essay, you may find parts of the Larson book to be very helpful, as well as the various responses to Pope John Paul II, the short readings on sociobiology by Wilson and Dawkins, and, of course, the original works by Darwin that we read earlier in the course.

Documentation: Use common sense. If it is clear from the context which source you are referring to and you are making general remarks, then you do not need to cite it. However, if you are referring to a specific passage, give the page number(s). As always, you *must* identify ALL direct quotations by source and page number(s). Use a shorthand method, such as author's last name, brief title (if necessary), and page number(s), for example (John Paul II, 383), (Darwin, *Descent*, pp. 465-66), (Larson, *Evolution*, 284-85), etc. A bibliography is not necessary.

The rationale behind this final essay is to encourage you to take a stab at formulating the big picture and answering the big question: What's it all mean? Here are some suggestions:

- **MORALITY?** Much of the resistance to Darwin's theory clearly has to do with its implications for human beings, particularly for the perceived view that Darwinian theory undermines the basis for morality. Are such concerns warranted? Regardless of the questionable tactics of the Dover School Board and others who oppose the teaching of evolution theory, are fears of the breakdown of society as a consequence of acceptance of Darwinian theory legitimate fears? Why or why not? Is Gould's cold bath a sufficient replacement for a morality grounded in religion? Does Pagel's account of the role of culture in human evolution offer a viable alternative?
- **PROGRESS?** Larson states (p. 284): "Gould's view [about the accidental appearance of humans and the non-inevitability of progress] thus contrasted sharply with that of Hamilton, Wilson, and other ultra-Darwinists who saw the creation of humans as all but inevitable in the naturalistic processes envisioned by the modern synthesis." Was the evolution of humans inevitable after all? Does Pagel's account of the origin and development of our species confirm that? Does this view mitigate the concerns of the opponents of evolution that Slack interviewed, such as Richard Thompson, or even the doubts and concerns of Slack himself? Is Gould's cold bath perhaps not necessary?
- **REVOLUTION?** What exactly is revolutionary about the Darwinian revolution? Imagine that a friend or relative who knows you are taking this course asked you this question. How would you answer? Is it the positive contributions to knowledge? The dangerous philosophical implications suggested by Gould and others? The cynical answer to the meaning of human existence suggested by Vonnegut? Or by Dawkins? How would you articulate the dimensions of the Darwinian revolution?

The above are meant to stimulate your thinking. You may combine parts of these suggestions, modify them, or suggest an alternative approach that utilizes the recent course readings.