

Final paper topics

Write a 6–10 page paper on any ONE of the following topics. The papers are due at 5 pm on Friday, May 4th, in my mailbox in the philosophy department (503 Main Building).

Properly referenced quotations are permitted. Paraphrase is not: when you are describing the views of others, you should take care to put things in your own terms. Plagiarism, of course, is strictly forbidden.

- 1 'At any time, a typical material object shares its location with many other material objects.' Discuss.

In your answer, state as clearly as you can an argument for the quoted claim. Then present whatever seems to you to be the strongest competitor to the view that co-location is common—for example, mereological essentialism, or Burke's view, or van Inwagen's view, or some view of your own devising, making sure that you explain how a proponent of this view should respond to the argument. Consider at least one objection to this view.

- 2 'Persons are a lot like their stories. Just as my story has a part for my childhood, so *I* have a part consisting just of my childhood. Just as my story has a part describing just this instant, so I have a part that is me-at-this-very-instant' (Sider, p. 1). Discuss.

Your paper should include an explanation of the doctrine of temporal parts, a presentation of some argument for or against the view, and a critical assessment of this argument.

- 3 Are stories of time travel inconsistent?

In your answer, consider at least one argument for the claim that stories of time travel are inconsistent, and one objection to this argument. Your paper should show an awareness of the points made in David Lewis's 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel'.

- 4 'People are bodies. Bodies can't survive changes that involve abrupt physical discontinuities, and can survive changes that involve abrupt psychological discontinuities. Therefore people can't survive changes that involve abrupt physical discontinuities, and can survive changes that involve abrupt psychological discontinuities.' Discuss.

- 5 'In a case of fission, all the relations that matter in survival hold between the original person and the people who result from the fission. But it's not true that the original person is identical to each of the resulting people. Therefore identity isn't what matters in survival.' Discuss.

In your answer, explain what it means to affirm or deny that identity is what matters in survival. Describe a case of fission, and present an argument for the claim that the relations that matter in survival do not coincide with identity in this case. Consider and evaluate at least one response to this argument.

- 6 'Suppose one had certain (nonoverlapping) objects, the xs, at one's disposal; what would one have to do—what *could* one do—to get the xs to compose something?' (Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, p. 31)

Your paper should critically engage with at least one of the arguments for and against various answers to this question considered in *Material Beings* and/or Dorr and Rosen's 'Composition as a Fiction'.

- 7 'We do not have settled answers, fixed once and for all, about what is true concerning a certain individual according to a certain world. The way of representing is not at all constant. Different answers are often right in different contexts.' (Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, p. 251) Discuss.

In your answer, explain how Lewis takes the context-sensitivity of counterfactuals to bear on the argument for the possibility of two things tracing out the same spatio-temporal region (this will require some explanation of counterpart theory). Consider at least one objection to Lewis's view.

- 8 Wildcard question. In consultation with the instructors, make up your own question, which may concern any of the topics we have discussed in the course, or related areas of metaphysics. NB: if you want to take this option, you must meet with Cian or Brad to discuss your topic and readings before Friday, April 27th.