

24.221: Problem set #2

Short answer (1 paragraph)

1. Describe what would happen if someone time travels to the past on the A-theory. Be sure to clearly explain what the A-theory is and how it differs from the B-theory.

Long answer (multiple paragraphs, please answer thoroughly)

2. Since we know Tim the time traveler must fail to kill his grandfather in 1922, we know something weird will have to have interfered with his attempt. But what if Tim keeps trying? What if Tim, equipped with nearly unlimited resources and a deep hatred of his grandfather, sends an army of well-trained assassins back to kill his grandfather? Since his grandfather continued to live beyond 1922, we know all such attempts failed. Think about the following two questions:
 - (i) Why did each attempt fail? (Did they all slip on banana peels? Was it the God of logic who prevented them from succeeding? Is this just too weird to be true?)
 - (ii) If each attempt failed, doesn't this give us reason to think that none of them could have succeeded (despite Lewis's argument that each can, in some sense)?

Try to formulate a new version of the grandfather paradox, using your thoughts about (i)/(ii). Then, think about how you might respond to this new version of the paradox (for instance, does it show that time travel is impossible?).

3. Your friend is about to enter the teletransporter for a quick trip to Mars. She is worried that the machine will kill her, and that it won't be *her* (but rather a doppelganger) who materializes on Mars. Write a dialogue in which you try to convince her either that she is right to be worried, or that her worries are misplaced. Either way, make sure you discuss some of Parfit's arguments from *Reasons and Persons*. (Also make sure your friend doesn't come across as stupid – that she offers reasonable responses to your points, which in turn demand reasonable and creative responses from you, etc...)

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

24.221 Metaphysics
Spring 2015

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