

Philosophers

Logic Puzzles

Puzzles and Trick Questions

Philosophy

Philosophy of Everyday Life

What is your favourite philosophical puzzle?

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26 ANSWERS



Linda Weaver, Blogger and Digital Marketer

Answered 12h ago · Upvoted by John Cole, MA Philosophy, Kent State University (1969)

THE RONALD OPUS STORY

Was Ronald Opus murdered, or did he commit suicide? This story, invented by Don Harper Mills, explores the logic of assigning guilt under unusual circumstances.



brendantheraven, Doug Kerr

Ronald Opus jumped off the top of a building in a suicide attempt. His fall was interrupted by a shotgun blast to the back of his head, fired from a ninth-story window. His body fell into a safety net that had been erected below the eighth floor, unbeknownst to Opus or the occupants of the ninth-floor apartment.

The [medical](#)  examiner was unsure how to classify the death. Normally if a person intends to commit suicide and his actions cause his death, it is a suicide even if the death does not take place in the way the person expected. However, in this case, if not for the shotgun blast, Opus would have survived the fall unharmed. Therefore, the medical examiner believed that the death might be a homicide.

A police investigation revealed that the shotgun had been fired by an old man who lived with his wife in the ninth-floor apartment. Angry at his wife, he aimed the shotgun at her and pulled the trigger. The shot missed the wife and hit Ronald Opus as he fell outside their window. Normally, when a person intends to kill one human being and by his action kills another human being accidentally, the charge is murder.

However, both the husband and wife maintained that they both believed the shotgun to be unloaded. They said that they always kept it unloaded and that the old man was in the habit of threatening his wife with an unloaded shotgun during their often heated arguments. This evidence tended to point toward the killing of Opus being ruled an accidental death.^[1]

Further investigation revealed that the shotgun had been loaded by the couple's adult son, who was angry at his mother for cutting off monetary support. The man knew that his father often pointed the unloaded shotgun at his mother, and he loaded the firearm in hopes that she would be killed. When that failed to happen after several months, the man, Ronald Opus, depressed by his financial situation and the failure of his murder plot, threw himself off the top of the building.

The death was ruled a suicide.

Footnotes

[1] [puzzlewocky](#) ↗

5.1k Views · 225 Upvotes



Carson McNeil

The point of criminal justice isn't to get overly focused on blame, it's to change future behavior...

2 more comments from Matt Saks, John James Morton

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OTHER ANSWERS



Alexander Baumgärtner, Minimally educated, yet quite passionate.

Answered Aug 21

By far, my favourite has to be the well-known **Trolley Problem**, postulated by Philippa Foot.

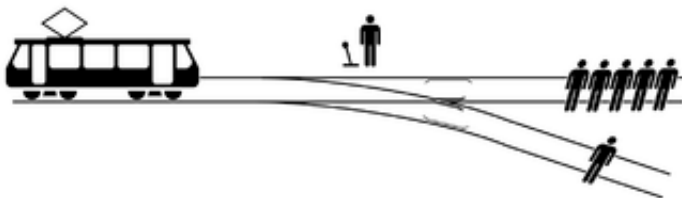
It's a brilliant way to introduce people to different systems of normative ethics, or how we *ought* to act, morally speaking. The "solution" to the following problem changes depending on which system of ethics you apply.

Alright, so you've all heard it before.

There is a runaway trolley barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five people tied up and unable to move. The trolley is headed straight for them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. However, you notice that there is one person on the side track. You have two options:

1. Do nothing, and the trolley kills the five people on the main track.
2. Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.

You have no other option. *You* must either pull the lever, or do nothing. No other elements are a play.



What's the most ethical choice?

According to theorists like [Bentham](#) [↗], you *ought* to pull the lever. Do the maths (Or *hedonic calculus*) -

- Do nothing, you're down four lives.
- Pull the lever, you're up four lives.

$4 > -4$, ergo, pull the lever.

Seems fairly reasonable, right? This is called [Utilitarianism](#). ↗ The *ends* justify the *means*.

There are problems with utilitarianism, though. For one, consider this -

Your organs can save five people, right now, if donated. Obviously, you die in the process. Should you kill yourself?

The maths are the same - you're up four lives. However, you may be pretty hard-pressed to convince people into suicide this way.

[Kant](#) ↗'s proposed ethics* have another answer to this problem. He proposed that you *shouldn't* pull the lever, because if you do, you'd be committing an unrighteous act. Kant thought we ought not to use people as a means to an end, regardless of how desirable that end may be. According to what's called [Deontology](#) ↗, the *means* justify the *ends*, and therefore, with pulling the switch being an effective act of murder, it's better to let the trolley go.

There are a few other rationales for either given decisions, ranging in respectability and practicality.

There are also different *versions* of the trolley problem.

Say, instead of standing beside a switch, you're standing on a raised platform directly above the tracks, behind a rather fat man. The trolley is headed toward five people tied to the track. It is certain that, should you push the fat man, the trolley will stop. Should you do nothing, the five people will die.

Does that change your answer?

Now, instead of pulling a switch, you have to push an innocent bystander onto the tracks. ***The maths are the same.*** One life for five. However, now you've got to effectively murder someone *with your own hands*.

What would you choose? What if the fat man were a villain? What if he were a saint? Are lives boolean values, 1 or 0, or are we allowed to subjectively assign value to them?

The trolley problem is my favourite both because it's easy to understand, making it serve as a good way to introduce ethics to *anyone*, and because it was one of the first things that piqued my interest in philosophy.

At first, I thought the answer was obvious. Then different variants were added, with differing rationale justifying them.

Now, I'm not so sure. I don't know what the right answer is.

Likely because there is none.

*Which no, I still don't fully understand, partially because *holyfuck Kant is convoluted and hard to read*. Feel free to correct if I'm mistaken, but please don't argue with me on what "Kant *really* meant". I don't know, and I don't particularly care right now.



Alexander Baumgärtner

I wish I could have added Zeno's dichotomy paradox and/or the Euthyphro Dilemma, since they're al...

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Natalie Engelbrecht, Meditated 30yr, psychotherapist 20yr, studies positive psychology.

Answered 9h ago

Original question asked: **What is your favourite philosophical puzzle?**

Moore's Puzzle



Image Source: National Portrait Gallery, London

Suppose you are sitting in a windowless room. It begins to rain outside. You have not heard a weather report, so you don't know that it's raining. So you don't believe that it's raining. Thus your friend McGillicuddy, who knows your situation, can say truly of you, "It's raining, but MacIntosh doesn't believe it is." But if you, MacIntosh, were to say exactly the same thing to McGillicuddy —"It's raining, but I don't believe it is"—your friend would rightly think you'd lost your mind. Why, then, is the second sentence absurd? As G.E. Moore put it, "Why is it absurd for me to say something true about myself?"

The problem Moore identified turned out to be profound. It helped to stimulate Wittgenstein's later work on the nature of knowledge and certainty, and it even helped to give birth (in the 1950s)

to a new field of philosophically inspired language study, pragmatics.
I'll leave you to ponder a solution.^[1]

In part I like this problem because it inspired the study of pragmatics.

Footnotes

[\[1\] 8 Philosophical Puzzles and Paradoxes](#) 

509 Views · 8 Upvotes · Answer requested by Martin Silvertant



Uraj Singh (यूराज सिंह), Engineer at Qualcomm (2016-present)

Answered Aug 22



The ship of Theseus^[1], also known as Theseus's paradox, is a [thought experiment](#) that raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally [the same object](#). The paradox is most notably recorded by Plutarch in [Life of Theseus](#) from the late first century. Plutarch asked whether a ship that had been restored by replacing every single wooden part remained the same ship.

I find it quite deep and interesting. There is a great movie based on this theme.

Images credits :-Kim Fifield.

Footnotes

[\[1\] Ship of Theseus - Wikipedia](#) 

1.5k Views · 31 Upvotes



Prabhat Kumar, studies at Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida (2020)

Answered Aug 22

Randomly surfing on the internet I found this the **MOORE'S PUZZLE**



P.C Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

So here it goes...

Suppose you are sitting in a windowless room. It begins to rain outside. You have not heard a weather report, so you don't know that it's raining. So you don't believe that it's raining. Thus your friend McGillicuddy, who knows your situation, can say truly of you, "It's raining, but MacIntosh doesn't believe it is." But if you, MacIntosh, were to say exactly the same thing to McGillicuddy—"It's raining, but I don't believe it is"—your friend would rightly think you'd lost your mind. Why, then, is the second sentence absurd? As G.E. Moore put it, "Why is it absurd for me to say something true about myself?"

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I'll leave you to ponder a solution

1.6k Views · 40 Upvotes



Tanuj Dey, worked at Freelancer.com (2015-2017)

Answered Aug 25

THIS ARE MY 8 FAVOURITE PHILOSOPHICAL PUZZLE!



Plato and Aristotle both held that philosophy begins in wonder, by which they meant puzzlement or perplexity, and many philosophers after them have agreed. Ludwig Wittgenstein considered the aim of philosophy to be “to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle”—to liberate ourselves from the puzzles and paradoxes created by our own misunderstanding of language. His teacher, Bertrand Russell, remarked in a joking mood that “The point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.”

Whether paradox is the beginning or the end of philosophy, it has certainly stimulated a great deal of philosophical thinking, and many paradoxes have served to encapsulate important philosophical problems (many others have been exposed as fallacies).

The following list presents eight influential philosophical puzzles and paradoxes dating from ancient times to the present. Take a look and be perplexed.

8The liar

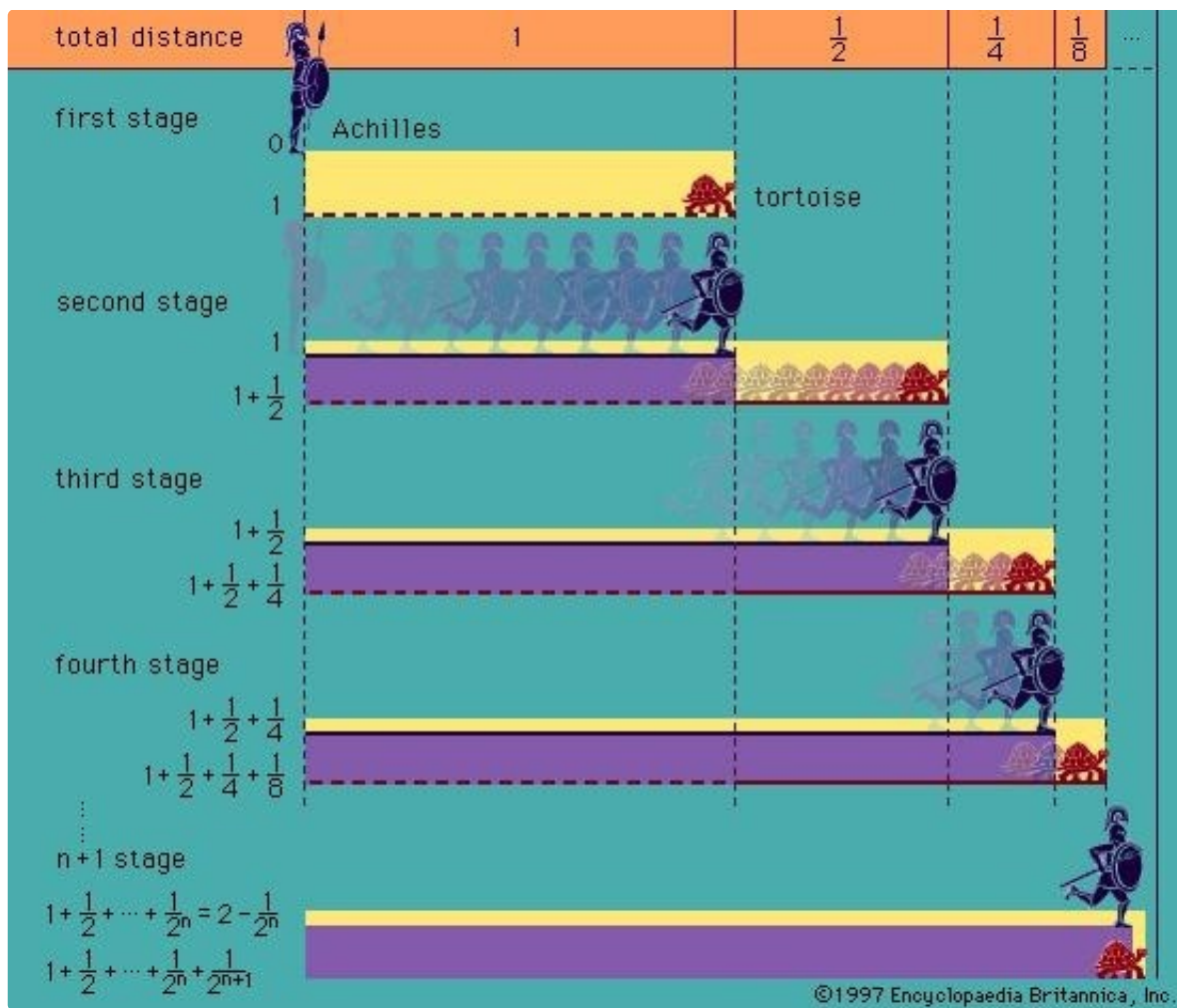


Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum

Suppose someone tells you “I am lying.” If what she tells you is true, then she is lying, in which case what she tells you is false. On the other hand, if what she tells you is false, then she is not lying, in which case what she tells you is true. In short: if “I am lying” is true then it is false, and if it is false then it is true. The paradox arises for any sentence that says or implies of itself that it is false (the simplest example being “This sentence is false”). It is attributed to the ancient Greek seer Epimenides (fl. c. 6th century BCE), an inhabitant of Crete, who famously declared that “All Cretans are liars” (consider what follows if the declaration is true).

The paradox is important in part because it creates severe difficulties for logically rigorous theories of truth; it was not adequately addressed (which is not to say solved) until the 20th century.

7Zeno's paradoxes



Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

In the 5th century BCE, Zeno of Elea devised a number of paradoxes designed to show that reality is single (there is only one thing) and motionless, as his friend Parmenides had claimed. The paradoxes take the form of arguments in which the assumption of plurality (the existence of more than one thing) or motion are shown to lead to contradictions or absurdity. Here are two of the arguments:

Against plurality:

(A) Suppose that reality is plural. Then the number of things there are is only as many as the number of things there are (the number of things there are is neither more nor less than the number of things there are). If the number of things there are is only as many as the number of things there are, then the number of things there are is finite.

(B) Suppose that reality is plural. Then there are at least two distinct things. Two things can be distinct only if there is a third thing between them (even if it is only air). It follows that there is a third thing that is distinct from the other two. But if the third thing is distinct, then there must be a fourth thing between it and the second (or first) thing. And so on to infinity.

(C) Therefore, if reality is plural, it is finite and not finite, infinite and not infinite, a contradiction.

Against motion:

Suppose that there is motion. Suppose in particular that Achilles and a tortoise are moving around a track in a foot race, in which the tortoise has been given a modest lead. Naturally, Achilles is running faster than the tortoise. If Achilles is at point A and the tortoise at point B, then in order to catch the tortoise Achilles will have to traverse the interval AB. But in the time it takes Achilles to arrive at point B, the tortoise will have moved on (however slowly) to point C. Then in order to catch the tortoise, Achilles will have to traverse the interval BC. But in the time it takes him to arrive at point C, the tortoise will have moved on to point D, and so on for an infinite number of intervals. It follows

that Achilles can never catch the tortoise, which is absurd.

Zeno's paradoxes have posed a serious challenge to theories of space, time, and infinity for more than 2,400 years, and for many of them there is still no general agreement about how they should be solved.

6 Sorites



AdstockRF

Also called “the heap,” this paradox arises for any predicate (e.g., “... is a heap”, “... is bald”) whose application is, for whatever reason, not precisely defined. Consider a single grain of rice, which is not a heap. Adding one grain of rice to it will not create a heap. Likewise adding one grain of rice to two grains or three grains or four grains. In general, for any number N , if N grains does not constitute a heap, then $N+1$ grains also does not constitute a heap. (Similarly, if N grains *does* constitute a heap, then $N-1$ grains also constitutes a heap.) It follows that one can never create a heap of rice from something that is not a heap of rice by adding one grain at a time. But that is absurd.

Among modern perspectives on the paradox, one holds that we simply haven't gotten around to deciding exactly what a heap is (the “lazy solution”); another asserts that such predicates are inherently vague, so any attempt to define them precisely is wrongheaded.

5 Buridan's ass



© Isidor Stankov/[Shutterstock.com](#) 

Although it bears his name, the medieval philosopher Jean Buridan did not invent this paradox, which probably originated as a parody of his theory of free will, according to which human freedom consists in the ability to defer for further consideration a choice between two apparently equally good alternatives (the will is otherwise compelled to choose what appears to be the best). Imagine a hungry donkey who is placed between two equidistant and identical bales of hay. Assume that the surrounding environments on both sides are also identical. The donkey cannot choose between the two bales and so dies of hunger, which is absurd. The paradox was later thought to constitute a counterexample to Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, one version of which states that there is an explanation (in the sense of a reason or cause) for every contingent event. Whether the donkey chooses one bale or the other is a contingent event, but there is apparently no reason or cause to determine the donkey's choice. Yet the donkey will not starve. Leibniz, for what it is worth, vehemently rejected the paradox, claiming that it was unrealistic.

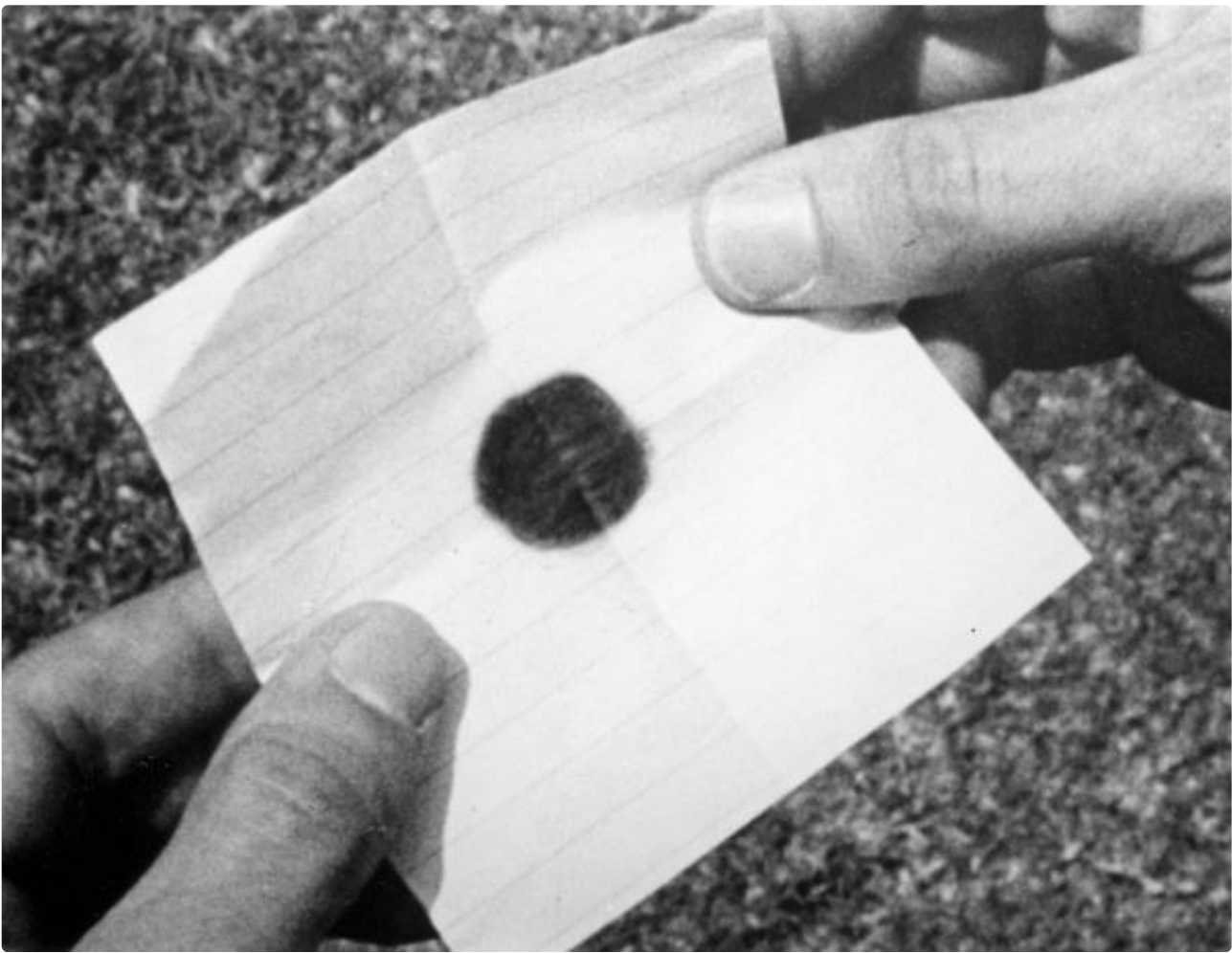
4The surprise test



Will & Deni McIntyre/Corbis

A teacher announces to her class that there will be a surprise test sometime during the following week. The students begin to speculate about when it might occur, until one of them announces that there is no reason to worry, because a surprise test is impossible. The test cannot be given on Friday, she says, because by the end of the day on Thursday we would know that the test must be given the next day. Nor can the test be given on Thursday, she continues, because, given that we know that the test cannot be given on Friday, by the end of the day on Wednesday we would know that the test must be given the next day. And likewise for Wednesday, Tuesday, and Monday. The students spend a restful weekend not studying for the test, and they are all surprised when it is given on Wednesday. How could this happen? (There are various versions of the paradox; one of them, called the Hangman, concerns a condemned prisoner who is clever but ultimately overconfident.) The implications of the paradox are as yet unclear, and there is virtually no agreement about how it should be solved.

3The lottery



Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

You buy a lottery ticket, for no good reason. Indeed, you know that the chance that your ticket will win is at least 10 million to one, since at least 10 million tickets have been sold, as you learn later on the evening news, before the drawing (assume that the lottery is fair and that a winning ticket exists). So you are rationally justified in believing that your ticket will lose—in fact, you'd be crazy to believe that your ticket will win. Likewise, you are justified in believing that your friend Jane's ticket will lose, that your uncle Harvey's ticket will lose, that your dog Ralph's ticket will lose, that the ticket bought by the guy ahead of you in line at the convenience store will lose, and so on for each ticket bought by anyone you know or don't know. In general, for each ticket sold in the lottery, you are justified in believing: "*That* ticket will lose." It follows that you are justified in believing that *all* tickets will lose, or (equivalently) that no ticket will win. But, of course, you know that one ticket will win. So you're justified in believing what you know to be false (that no ticket will win). How can that be?

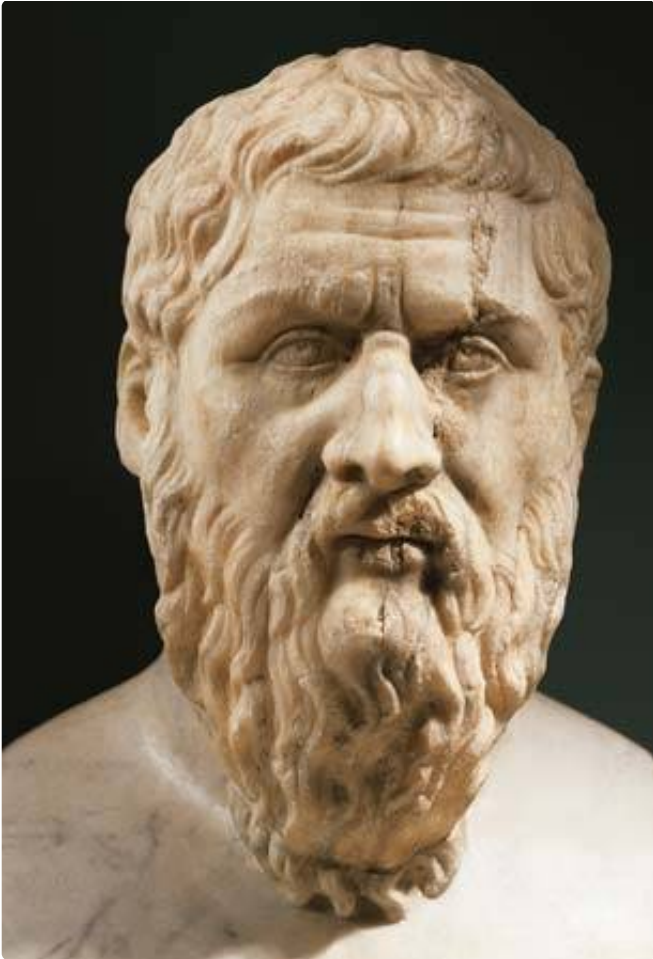
The lottery constitutes an apparent counterexample to one version of a principle known as the deductive closure of justification:

If one is justified in believing P and justified in believing Q, then one is justified in believing any proposition that follows deductively (necessarily) from P and Q.

For example, if I am justified in believing that my lottery ticket is in the envelope (because I put it there), and if I am justified in believing that the envelope is in the paper shredder (because I put it there), then I am justified in believing that my lottery ticket is in the paper shredder.

Since its introduction in the early 1960s, the lottery paradox has provoked much discussion of possible alternatives to the closure principle, as well as new theories of knowledge and belief that would retain the principle while avoiding its paradoxical consequences.

2Meno's problem



G. Dagli Orti—DeA Picture Library/Learning Pictures

This ancient paradox is named for a character in Plato's eponymous dialogue. Socrates and Meno are engaged in a conversation about the nature of virtue. Meno offers a series of suggestions, each of which Socrates shows to be inadequate. Socrates himself professes not to know what virtue is. How then, asks Meno, would you recognize it, if you ever encounter it? How would you see that a certain answer to the the question "What is virtue?" is correct, unless you already knew the correct answer? It seems to follow that no one ever learns anything by asking questions, which is implausible, if not absurd.

Socrates' solution is to suggest that basic elements of knowledge, enough to recognize a correct answer, can be "recollected" from a previous life, given the right kind of encouragement. As proof he shows how a slave boy can be prompted to solve geometrical problems, though he has never had instruction in geometry.

Although the recollection theory is no longer a live option (almost no philosophers believe in reincarnation), Socrates' assertion that knowledge is latent in each individual is now widely (though not universally) accepted, at least for some kinds of knowledge. It constitutes an answer to the modern form of Meno's problem, which is: how do people successfully acquire certain rich systems of knowledge on the basis of little or no evidence or instruction? The paradigm case of such "learning" (there is debate about whether "learning" is the correct term) is first-language acquisition, in which very young (normal) children manage to acquire complex grammatical systems effortlessly, despite evidence that is completely inadequate and often downright misleading (the ungrammatical

speech and erroneous instruction of adults). In this case, the answer, originally proposed by Noam Chomsky in the 1950s, is that the basic elements of the grammars of all human languages are innate, ultimately a genetic endowment reflecting the cognitive evolution of the human species.

1 Moore's puzzle



Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

Suppose you are sitting in a windowless room. It begins to rain outside. You have not heard a weather report, so you don't know that it's raining. So you don't believe that it's raining. Thus your friend McGillicuddy, who knows your situation, can say truly of you, "It's raining, but MacIntosh doesn't believe it is." But if you, MacIntosh, were to say exactly the same thing to McGillicuddy—"It's raining, but I don't believe it is"—your friend would rightly think you'd lost your mind. Why, then, is the second sentence absurd? As G.E. Moore put it, "Why is it absurd for me to say something true about myself?"

The problem Moore identified turned out to be profound. It helped to stimulate Wittgenstein's later work on the nature of knowledge and certainty, and it even helped to give birth (in the 1950s) to a new field of philosophically inspired language study, pragmatics.

I'll leave you to ponder a solution.

1.2k Views · 38 Upvotes



Akhil Burle, A pondering inquisitive Quoran.

Answered Aug 21

My favorite philosophical puzzle is the '**heap**' paradox.

I read it a long time ago on Britannica once and somehow this intrigued me.

This paradox arises for any predicate (e.g., "... is a heap", "... is bald") whose application is, for whatever reason, not precisely defined.

Consider a single grain of rice, which is not a heap. Adding one grain of rice to it will not create a heap. Likewise adding one grain of rice to two grains or three grains or four grains. In general, for any number N , if N grains does not constitute a heap, then $N+1$ grains also does not constitute a heap. (Similarly, if N grains does constitute a heap, then $N-1$ grains also constitutes a heap.) It follows that one can never create a heap of rice from something that is not a heap of rice by adding one grain at a time. But that is absurd.

Among modern perspectives on the paradox, one holds that we simply haven't gotten around to deciding exactly what a heap is (the "lazy solution"); another asserts that such predicates are inherently vague, so any attempt to define them precisely is wrongheaded.

Amazing, isn't it!

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/list/...> 

→Do check out my profile and follow me if you enjoyed this answer←

1.2k Views · 36 Upvotes



Preben Reppenhagen, works at ABB

Answered Sep 3

Well here are a few to puzzle your brain

The liar

Suppose someone tells you "I am lying." If what she tells you is true, then she is lying, in which case what she tells you is false. On the other hand, if what she tells you is false, then she is not lying, in which case what she tells you is true. In short: if "I am lying" is true then it is false, and if it is false then it is true. The paradox arises for any sentence that says or implies of itself that it is false (the simplest example being "This sentence is false"). It is attributed to the ancient Greek seer Epimenides (fl. c. 6th century BCE), an inhabitant of Crete, who famously declared that "All Cretans are liars" (consider what follows if the declaration is true).

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Suppose that there is motion. Suppose in particular that Achilles and a tortoise are moving around a track in a foot race, in which the tortoise has been given a modest lead. Naturally, Achilles is running faster than the tortoise. If Achilles is at point A and the tortoise at point B, then in order to catch the tortoise Achilles will have to traverse the interval AB. But in the time it takes Achilles to arrive at point B, the tortoise will have moved on (however slowly) to point C. Then in order to catch the tortoise, Achilles will have to traverse the interval BC. But in the time it takes him to arrive at point C, the tortoise will have moved on to point D, and so on for an infinite number of intervals. It follows that Achilles can never catch the tortoise, which is absurd.

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Sorites

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unrealistic.

The surprise test

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For example, if I am justified in believing that my lottery ticket is in the envelope (because I put it there), and if I am justified in believing that the envelope is in the paper shredder (because I put it there), then I am justified in believing that my lottery ticket is in the paper shredder.

Since its introduction in the early 1960s, the lottery paradox has provoked much discussion of possible alternatives to the closure principle, as well as new theories of knowledge and belief that would retain the principle while avoiding its paradoxical consequences.

Meno's problem

This ancient paradox is named for a character in Plato's eponymous dialogue. Socrates and Meno are engaged in a conversation about the nature of virtue. Meno offers a series of suggestions, each of which Socrates shows to be inadequate. Socrates himself professes not to know what virtue is. How

then, asks Meno, would you recognize it, if you ever encounter it? How would you see that a certain answer to the the question “What is virtue?” is correct, unless you already knew the correct answer? It seems to follow that no one ever learns anything by asking questions, which is implausible, if not absurd.

Socrates’ solution is to suggest that basic elements of knowledge, enough to recognize a correct answer, can be “recollected” from a previous life, given the right kind of encouragement. As proof he shows how a slave boy can be prompted to solve geometrical problems, though he has never had instruction in geometry.

Although the recollection theory is no longer a live option (almost no philosophers believe in reincarnation), Socrates’ assertion that knowledge is latent in each individual is now widely (though not universally) accepted, at least for some kinds of knowledge. It constitutes an answer to the modern form of Meno’s problem, which is: how do people successfully acquire certain rich systems of knowledge on the basis of little or no evidence or instruction? The paradigm case of such “learning” (there is debate about whether “learning” is the correct term) is first-language acquisition, in which very young (normal) children manage to acquire complex grammatical systems effortlessly, despite evidence that is completely inadequate and often downright misleading (the ungrammatical speech and erroneous instruction of adults). In this case, the answer, originally proposed by Noam Chomsky in the 1950s, is that the basic elements of the grammars of all human languages are innate, ultimately a genetic endowment reflecting the cognitive evolution of the human species.

Moore’s puzzle

Suppose you are sitting in a windowless room. It begins to rain outside. You have not heard a weather report, so you don’t know that it’s raining. So you don’t believe that it’s raining. Thus your friend McGillicuddy, who knows your situation, can say truly of you, “It’s raining, but MacIntosh doesn’t believe it is.” But if you, MacIntosh, were to say exactly the same thing to McGillicuddy—“It’s raining, but I don’t believe it is”—your friend would rightly think you’d lost your mind. Why, then, is the second sentence absurd? As G.E. Moore put it, “Why is it absurd for me to say something true about myself?”

The problem Moore identified turned out to be profound. It helped to stimulate Wittgenstein’s later work on the nature of knowledge and certainty, and it even helped to give birth (in the 1950s) to a new field of philosophically inspired language study, pragmatics.

I’ll leave you to ponder a solution.

552 Views · 11 Upvotes



Ian Heckman, PhD student in philosophy.

Answered 6h ago

I hesitate to call philosophical problems, ‘puzzles’, as it seems to denote philosophical problems as games to toy with in your free time. Perhaps that is what they are for some people, including some professional philosophers.

But they’re not just games to exercise our wit at. Philosophical problems are serious issues that we need to confront if we want to understand the world around us. The Trolley Problem is not just a cool thing to think about on Sunday mornings. It presents a serious problem with how we understand

morality and moral responsibility.

That being said, the philosophical problem that occupies much of my time at least currently is this:

“Why should we go see live performances when it is much cheaper and easier to access good recordings of those performances?”

I see this as a serious problem, not just a problem as to the general value of live performances, but as a problem about how we coordinate society *right now*. Think about it this way, if we can, from the comfort of our homes, listen to our favorite performers, perform our favorite musical pieces and watch our favorite actors perform our favorite theatrical works, then why should we pay \$20 or more to go see them live?

Furthermore, given how expensive it is to produce live productions of music, opera, and theatre, why should these companies keep spending tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of dollars to keep presenting the same shows?

This is a question I see of the utmost urgency right now, though it appears other people aren't quite as concerned about it as I am.

89 Views · 3 Upvotes · Answer requested by Martin Silvertant



Sophia Gold, studied history of philosophy

Answered Aug 11

Off the top of my head, probably Platos's [Meno's paradox](#) [↗]. In many ways it birthed the field of the philosophy of mathematics by posing its dual nature as invented and discovered. I find it's a good discussion starter in this age when it's become perversely fashionable to only accept knowledge derived via the scientific method, which of course leaves out any framework of reasoning to interpret the results of experimentation.

I'm also fond of David Hume's presentation of the [problem of induction](#) [↗] in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, i.e. the billiard ball argument that inspired Kant and all of German idealism to find a solution to. Coming to face with the amount of thought required to provide a foundation for causality has a similar ability to rebuff reductionism.

3.3k Views · 26 Upvotes



Bhagyasree Malla, studied at Andhra Pradesh, India

Answered Aug 23

Philosophical puzzles are artificial scenarios meant to make you think about the philosophical principles involved in the puzzle or moral dilemma.

Here are few puzzle's which are my favorite.

The Surprise Test

A teacher announces to her class that there will be a surprise test sometime during the following week. The students begin to speculate about when it might occur, until one of them announces that

there is no reason to worry, because a surprise test is impossible. The test cannot be given on Friday, she says, because by the end of the day on Thursday we would know that the test must be given the next day. Nor can the test be given on Thursday, she continues, because, given that we know that the test cannot be given on Friday, by the end of the day on Wednesday we would know that the test must be given the next day. And likewise for Wednesday, Tuesday, and Monday. The students spend a restful weekend not studying for the test, and they are all surprised when it is given on Wednesday. How could this happen? (There are various versions of the paradox; one of them, called the Hangman, concerns a condemned prisoner who is clever but ultimately overconfident.) The implications of the paradox are as yet unclear, and there is virtually no agreement about how it should be solved.



Absence of evidence and evidence of absence

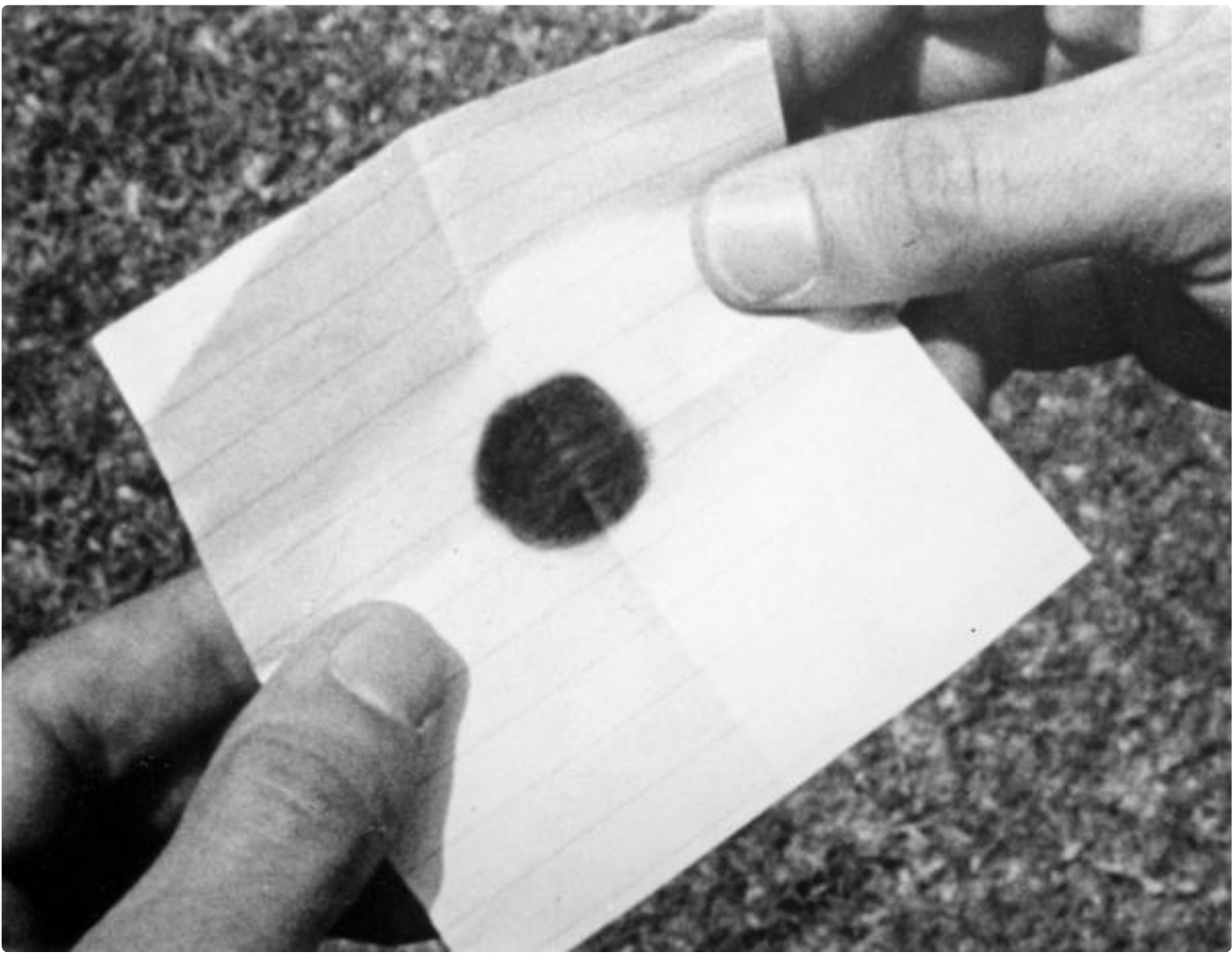
It is often stated that “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence,” but this maxim is not so clear cut.



Does the fact that we have not found any credible evidence of intelligent life on other planets mean that no such life exists? Here it is true that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The universe is vast, and we have explored only a tiny portion of it. There could be other civilizations millions of light years away. To argue that there could not be complex life on other planets because we have not found it yet is to make an argument from ignorance, a logical fallacy.

And yet, sometimes the absence of evidence *is* evidence of absence. However, in such cases it may be thought of as positive evidence, rather than an absence of evidence. For example, thoroughly searching your closet and finding no evidence of anyone there is actually positive evidence that there is no one in your closet. The crucial factor is that if there were someone in your closet, you would expect there to be some evidence, such as being able to see them.

The lottery



For suppose,

You buy a lottery ticket, for no good reason. Indeed, you know that the chance that your ticket will win is at least 10 million to one, since at least 10 million tickets have been sold, as you learn later on the evening news, before the drawing (assume that the lottery is fair and that a winning ticket exists). So you are rationally justified in believing that your ticket will lose—in fact, you'd be crazy to believe that your ticket will win. Likewise, you are justified in believing that your friend A's ticket will lose, that your uncle H's ticket will lose, that your dog R's ticket will lose, that the ticket bought by the guy ahead of you in line at the convenience store will lose, and so on for each ticket bought by anyone you know or don't know.

In general, for each ticket sold in the lottery, you are justified in believing: "*That* ticket will lose." It follows that you are justified in believing that *all* tickets will lose, or (equivalently) that no ticket will win. But, of course, you know that one ticket will win. So you're justified in believing what you know to be false (that no ticket will win). How can that be?

The lottery constitutes an apparent counter example to one version of a principle known as the deductive closure of justification:

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would retain the principle while avoiding its paradoxical consequences.

Images source:google

923 Views · 27 Upvotes



Rahul Choudhary, studies Instrumentation Engineering (2018)

Answered Aug 23

The puzzle is often called **Einstein's Puzzle** or **Einstein's Riddle** because it is said to have been invented by [Albert Einstein](#)  as a boy;

it is also sometimes attributed to [Lewis Carroll](#) 

However, there is no known evidence for Einstein's or Carroll's authorship and the *Life International* version of the puzzle mentions brands of cigarette, such as [Kools](#) , that did not exist during Carroll's lifetime or Einstein's boyhood.

It is often claimed that only 2% of the population can solve the puzzle.

Description

The following version of the puzzle appeared in *Life International* in 1962:

1. There are five houses.
2. The Englishman lives in the red house.
3. The Spaniard owns the dog.
4. Coffee is drunk in the green house.
5. The Ukrainian drinks tea.
6. The green house is immediately to the right of the ivory house.
7. The Old Gold smoker owns snails.
8. Kools are smoked in the yellow house.
9. Milk is drunk in the middle house.
10. The Norwegian lives in the first house.
11. The man who smokes Chesterfields lives in the house next to the man with the fox.
12. Kools are smoked in the house next to the house where the horse is kept.
13. The Lucky Strike smoker drinks orange juice.
14. The Japanese smokes Parliaments.
15. The Norwegian lives next to the blue house.

Now, who drinks water? Who owns the zebra?

In the interest of clarity, it must be added that each of the five houses is painted a different color, and their inhabitants are of different national extractions, own different pets, drink different beverages and smoke different brands of American cigarettes .One other thing: in statement 6, *right* means *your* right.

900 Views · 5 Upvotes



Denis Matei, I read about philosophy alot.

Answered 11h ago

Q: What is your favourite philosophical puzzle?

Moral luck

The problem of moral luck is that some people are born into, live within, and experience circumstances that seem to change their moral culpability when all other factors remain the same.

Especially this specific case

a poor person is born into a poor family, and has no other way to feed himself so he steals his food. Another person, born into a very wealthy family, does very little but has ample food and does not need to steal to get it. Should the poor person be more morally blameworthy than the rich person? After all, it is not his fault that he was born into such circumstances, but a matter of "luck".

I have written on this extensively, but the writings are private and have never been published. I don't want to sound arrogant, but I think, I came very far regarding this puzzle. I'm even slightly inclined to say that I cracked the code.



[image source](#)  edited **by** Denis Matei



John David Kievlan, I majored in philosophy.

Answered 6h ago

Oh, there are lots. One interesting one is the Ship of Theseus problem.



It is a puzzle of identity. What defines what a thing is? Are you still you even though all your cells have died and been replaced?

A: The Athenians preserved Theseus's ship for centuries by removing timbers as they rotted and replacing them with identical timbers. After some time, not a single piece of the ship was original; everything had been replaced at least once. Is it the same ship, or not? What do you think? Most people would agree it's still the same ship. Refurbished, sure, but still Theseus's ship. Right?

But we can play with this idea in lots of other interesting ways, as well.

B: Suppose we put the ship of Theseus in dry-dock, and piece-by-piece, remove each timber and use them to build another, identical ship in the next dry-dock over. The result is one ship with the same materials and same design as the ship of Theseus. Is it the ship of Theseus? If not, then where did the ship of Theseus go? Seems like it makes sense to say it's still the same ship, right? All we did was move the ship from one place to another, in pieces.

C: But wait! Let's say we do exactly B, only this time, every time we remove a timber from the ship of Theseus, we replace it with an identical timber. At the end of this process, we have two identical

ships. Which one is the ship of Theseus? If the ship of Theseus can still be the ship of Theseus after having all its timbers replaced (A), then wouldn't it be the first one? But if "moving" the ship of Theseus one piece at a time results in a ship that is still the ship of Theseus (B), then wouldn't it have to be the second one? Are they both the ship of Theseus?

As a final note, you can make the problem slightly more personally interesting if you frame it in terms of a transporter that destroys each atom in your body and replaces it with an identical atom at the destination. I read the problem in this form somewhere — can't remember where. But an example of, for instance, scenario C:

You step into the transporter to go to work one day. You've done this every single day, all your life. However, today, the machine buzzes and clicks for a few minutes but nothing seems to happen. You step out and tell the operator, "Hey, I think the transporter is broken."

The operator checks over a few things and says, "Well, it looks like the transporter is working just fine, but the device that is supposed to destroy atoms on this side had a glitch. You're at your destination right now, on your way to work. But no worries! We can fix this! Just step into this room over here and we'll clean up all those useless atoms that got left behind."

:)

177 Views · 6 Upvotes

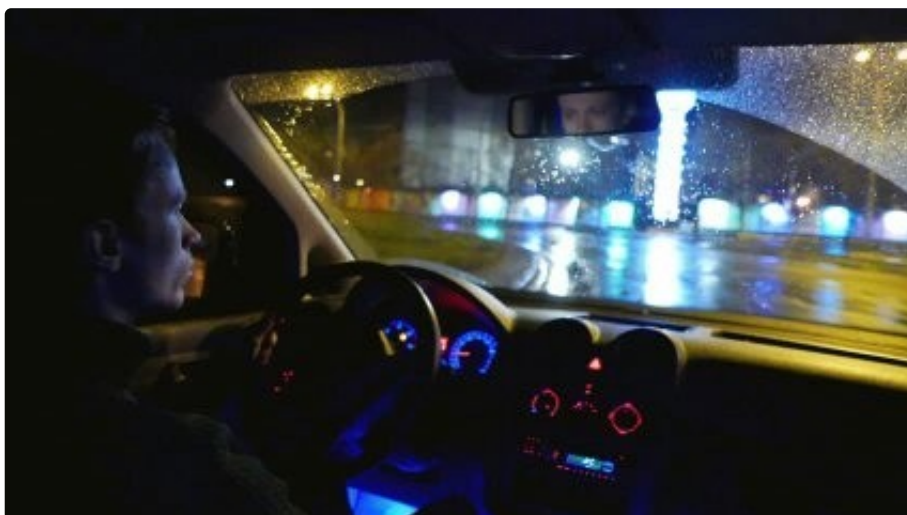


Ayanda Mahlalela, Night Manager

Answered Aug 23

OK this one is based on true event of a wise man in for a job interview in Britain.

Imagine you're on your way from a very long day at work, while heading home on your new 2 sit ferrari 458 GTS and there's a heavy rain pelting the city. On a robot you stop by, next to it there's a bus stop with three familiar faces of your old friend who helped you and you owe him the favour back. An old granny who might die in 30 mins if she doesn't reach to an emergency room and lastly you see your lover at first sight.



The next bus to catch is in 28 mins. What would you do. What alter would you utilise under this circumstance?

The man slowly said “I would let my friend drive granny to an hospital and I would wait for the bus with my new lover”. He got the job.

14.5k Views · 27 Upvotes

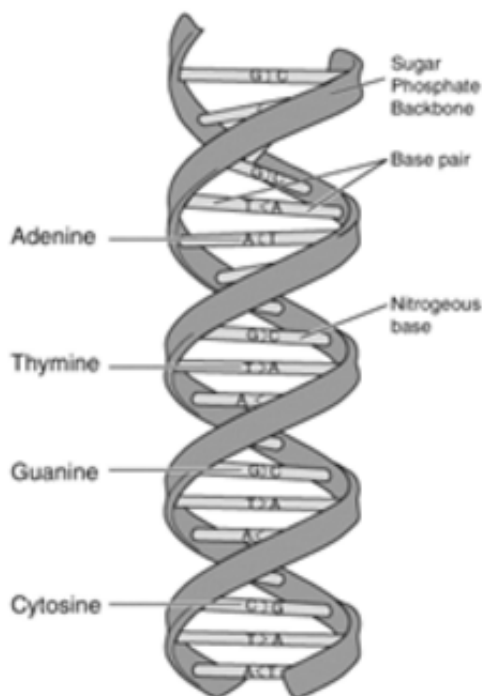


Ruud Loeffen, writer of How to change our human nature by regulating our neurotransmitters

Updated Aug 19

One of my favorite puzzles starts with biochemical knowledge, but ends up with a seemingly philosophical question.

We know our DNA started to construct our body and brain after egg and seed-cell shared their information and started to work. We know about the structure of that DNA. Now I “dive” into the molecules from that DNA and further to the atoms with orbiting "electrons". The exact number of electrons determines what kind of atoms are involved and the atoms determine with their number and position what molecule to make. If just one or two electrons change positions the DNA has a problem. Billions of atoms with billions of electrons are arranged in a way that this DNA can do his "job". How are these atoms "guided" to their place, to their function and how do the "electrons" "know" how to combine the atoms to molecules in a way that they form this DNA and make the DNA to "know" what to do? See the video on <http://human-dna.org/2-summary-1-statement-from-the-biological-basis/>



1.4k Views · 9 Upvotes



Shiful Islam, student at Green Touch IT Academy (2017-present)

Answered Aug 26

my favourite philosophical puzzles here....



1. Are We Selfish?

Some human behavior is self-interested: when choosing which new shoes to buy, you might well focus solely on how different choices will affect you.

Psychological egoism is the view that all human behavior is ultimately self-interested: that everything you do is ultimately for your own benefit. Psychological egoists allow that we sometimes help others, but claim that this happens only when we believe that such behavior will ultimately benefit ourselves. For example, you might be polite and nice to someone but only because you hope they'll later do you a favor.

2. what are we?

Suppose we have a machine that can record a complete description of the arrangement of molecules inside a person's brain, as well as all their psychological states – their beliefs and desires, their feelings, their memories, and their character traits. Moreover this machine can also reconfigure people's brains and psychology to match any that it has recorded. Suppose we use this machine to

transfer Barry's psychology to Gary's body, and Gary's psychology to Barry's body.

So now, the person in Gary's body is psychologically continuous with Barry – he has all of Barry's beliefs, desires, memories and character traits, and presumably will 'feel like' Barry – and vice versa.

3. Is morality objective

We often consider moral questions. For example, you might consider whether it would be wrong to lie to a friend to avoid hurting their feelings, or whether it is right to support military intervention in a civil war abroad. One central question in moral philosophy concerns whether there are *objectively right* answers to such questions.

Moral *objectivists* say that there are. They hold that there are facts about what is right and wrong, and that these facts do not depend on what we or our societies think about right and wrong. For moral objectivists, the aim of moral thought is to try to discover these facts.

4. giving to charity

Suppose you are walking past a shallow pond and you see a child drowning. You could step in and save the child, but this would ruin your beautiful new clothes.

5. God and evil

Imagine you are watching live 24-hour news coverage of a recent earthquake. The death toll reaches into the hundreds, and then the thousands. Survivors sift among the ruins where their homes and communities once stood. These kinds of tragedies, you remind yourself, are not even uncommon.

Many philosophers have argued that such 'natural evil' constitutes strong evidence against the existence an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God.

2.9k Views · 14 Upvotes



Mahesh, studied at Kamaraj Matriculation Higher Secondary School

Answered Aug 22

Chinese room

Chinese room is the thought experiment and it basically puts the question whether it is possible for a machine to **know** something.

Consider an room and in the room there is a person and the room is locked, the only way to communicate to the person inside the room is by writting the things on the paper and put it on the room, the person will reply by sending the paper

The person outside the room only knows chinese hence he writes the question in Chinese and put into the room, the person inside replied with Chinese.

Hence the person outside thinks that he knows Chinese.

But what happening inside the room were there is bunch of box which containing Chinese letters, by pattern matching the peraon replies to the questions, hence the person himself doesn't know the Chinese but he manages to reply

The same goes for artificial intelligence, just because they doing things doesn't mean that the machine knows that thing.

It just follows the instructions

462 Views · 11 Upvotes



Poh Kui, studied at Travel Hacks

Answered Wed

What are some of your favorite math puzzles? Some of my friends in the math department here at my university like to give each other some clever math puzzles to do in our spare time, and I'm afraid I've run out of new ones.

My personal favorite was one presented by one of our professors which was a variant on the prisoners and hats puzzle.

[read more](#) ↗

other

[What is your favorite logic or math puzzle?](#) ↗

34 Views · 1 Upvote



Alan Simpson, Web developer, author, educator

Answered Aug 28

Why is there something, rather than nothing? (e.g. no space, time, matter, energy....nada).

51 Views



Tufail Abbas, Independent Researcher of Physical Significance

Updated Aug 16

It is the case of **MUTTON IN THE CASSEROLE**



At an authentic mughlai restaurant “[Kareems](#)” [↗](#), I was doing lunch during my latest visit to Delhi. Waiter served the dishes in a casserole, but my plates were empty. I was wondering why the mutton pieces are not automatically jumping out of the casserole to get served in the plates. Are these pieces not part of the **same live goat** which was jumping all around a few days back. Then I realized that possibly the mutton pieces are complying to [Newton's First Law](#) [↗](#) Newton's of motion.

So I applied force as per [Newton's Second Law](#) [↗](#) along a curved trajectory to put the pieces out of casserole into my plate. When I was doing this action, I wondered whether my hands in this move to hold the spoon, have already violated the Newton's First Law

Then I remembered that movement of my hands were caused by a complex network of neurons, powered by [Action potential](#) [↗](#).

Thinking deep for the cause and effect chain, I reached a dead end where the most initial cause of generating the action potential was a simple intent made out of my FREEWILL. I tried to comprehend this most initial cause in terms volume/ mass/ dimension, but I failed to establish any relationship.

Was this failure due to my incompetence to address such problems, or is it the case that the most initial cause really do not have any dimension (i.e . It is dimensionless). Or , may be we are living in a reality of physical dimensions which has originally emerged out of dimensionless.

And I also wondered whether following videos are in anyway related to above puzzle:

[Strange Physics of The Mind? \(Closer to Truth Roundtables - Season 1, Episode 12\)](#) ↗

[Consciousness is a mathematical pattern: Max Tegmark at TEDxCambridge 2014](#) ↗

[Can Science Seek the Soul? \(Closer to Truth Roundtables - Season 1, Episode 13\)](#) ↗

1.1k Views · 3 Upvotes



Exploring Tourism

Answered Aug 24

It's certainly a very odd argument. The correct analysis of where it goes wrong is likely going to be involve articulation of the distinction between "being" in the sense of "being so" and "being" in the sense of existing. Still, certain accounts of propositions make it difficult to draw this distinction in a way that will resolve the problem.

Suppose one thinks that, when one utters some declarative sentence, one represents a state of affairs. So, suppose I say "Theatetus is sitting." I've represented the state of affairs that is Theatetus's being sitting. Since Theatetus is sitting, the state of affairs that I've represented, Theatetus's being sitting, is something that exists. Suppose I say "Thaetetus is flying." Then, the state of affairs I've represented, Theatetus's being flying, is something that does not exist. But if I've represented something that does not exist, then I've represented nothing!

Clearly, this is an argumentative "howler," and there's clearly something sophistical about the reasoning here, but it's certainly quite an amusing puzzle, and it interested Wittgenstein quite a bit.

Also, yes, if the argument works, it's an argument against falsity generally, not just against speaking falsely.

128 Views · 2 Upvotes



Kwesi Sackey

Answered Sep 2

The mind body problem, is the mind part of the body, therefore material or is it separate from the body, therefore immaterial. If immaterial, how does an immaterial thing control or "move" a material thing?

36 Views



Gilad Visotsky

Answered Sep 10

Would you rather have to poo your remaining lifetime poo in one go or eat your remaining lifetime

meals in one go if it meant you never had to do it again?

26 Views



Marijn Depraetere, studied Mental Health Worker & Mental Health Stigma at VVGG Belgium (2016)

Answered Aug 23

Popper: to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance.

91 Views · 4 Upvotes



Aakash Huggi, former Doctor at Kims Hubli

Answered Aug 25

Well...this happens with me always..

Murphy's law: "everything that can happen ,will happen"..

46 Views · 1 Upvote

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