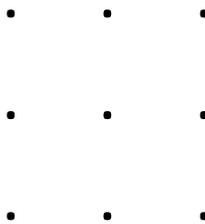


Paradigms Lost and Found

A magpie entropy-flavoured confectionary of dubious importance

A well known puzzle is, join the six dots with four lines in one movement without repetition.



Clue: think outside the box.

There is also a solution using three lines.

Clue: The solution is impossible to do (answer at end).

Solutions to nearly all questions are based on changing ones perceptual and interpretive mid-sets. By examining the question from a new perspective often provides the answer.

Some examples

Black is white. Consider what happens when light strikes and object. Wavelengths are either absorbed or reflected. The reflected colour is how we define the object's colour. If the light is completely reflected then we see white light and so we define the object as white but the object is black. If the light is completely absorbed then we see no light and so we define the object as black but the object is white.

2+2 = 10 or 11. The expected answer is 4, which is valid in the standard decimal numeral system. In the binary system the equation is meaningless as the only integers are 0 and 1. In the ternary system (0, 1, 2) the answer is 11 and in the quaternary system (0, 1, 2, 3) the answer is 10.

The Same Same only Different Question

If $A = B$ and $B = C$, does $B = C$?

First sight answer: No. The glyph A is not the same as B and neither are the same as C. The initial equations are incorrect.

Symbolic answer: No. The naming of an object as A, B & C cannot happen at the same time, there is always a time gap between the naming. In that gap the object changes according to the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. Heraclitus says Strife is Justice.

Symbolic answer: Yes, theoretically, when the object has reached maximum entropy

Identity Answer: No. Identities and their interpretations change over time. See the Theseus Ship and Washington's axe questions.

Mathematical answer: Yes, assuming that the number represented doesn't change over time.

If a tree falls in a forest and there's nobody there to hear it does it make a sound?

George Berkeley (Bishop of Cloyne 1685-1753) gave the definitive answer of yes. When asked by a North American clergyman if a falling tree made a noise on the 5th day of Creation he replied "Yes, because God would hear it".

There is a simpler reason independent of Christian biblical theology. *Homo Sapiens* is not the only faunal species with the ability to hear. In addition, because sound is a vibration, other species in the vicinity, faunal and floral, will sense the vibrations even if they do not have auditory organs.

This does away with the distinction between human experience and physical phenomena, the interplay between mind and external objects and action, since different species will interpret the experience differently depending on their physical attributes and abilities.

While the relationship between observer and observed has been subject of philosophy since the Eleatics to quantum science, the anthropogenic perspective that the universe is an illusion or cultural construct leads to bizarre conclusions.

An example of a bizarre conclusion: A murders B. If A is B's illusion then he was murdered by his own illusion. If B is A's delusion then the defence is that no murder happened because A was an illusion. And when B is found guilty and led away for execution this will be impossible because the executioners don't exist, they are cultural constructs. (Nowhere in history is this excuse used for waging war).

Either way at death the universe ceases to exist; it only came into existence at birth of A or B. This assumes that only one illusion can exist at any one time and space or, if more than one, then they don't interact. The mass and wave function of an illusion is anyone's guess.

Another one: a human and a rabbit eat a lettuce leaf, is the lettuce an illusion or cultural construct for the rabbit? Like it is for the human? Which is it from the lettuce's perspective?

The universe exists; the only illusion is if a person believes their interpretation of any particular object or phenomena is the only one.

Is it possible to see the same drop of water twice?

That depends how you define 'drop' and 'same'.

How many angels can dance on the point of a pin?

This question is part of the learning curve since the 5th Century BC on the nature of primary matter and infinitesimals combined with Christian theology on the nature of angels.

There are many perspectives from the 13th Century Thomas Aquinas, his later Protestant and secular critics and in more recent times from Dorothy Sayers, who argues that it

was solely an intellectual training exercise, various Christian philosophers who follow Aquinas and more recently by Phil Scewe and Anders Sandberg who used a Quantum wave/mass perspective instead of the traditional Cartesian paradigm of one entity per unit area.

Most, however, assume that the pin point has an area, no matter how small, though the original theory of a point having no dimensions changes the question, i.e. how many entities of no dimension can fit onto a dimensionless point? The assumption being that a point has no time dimension, it exists outside of time.

It may be that angels, because of their virtual existence, have no dimensions or mass but if they dance their energy is expressed as a wave, which implies a linear two (or three) dimensional movement that must happen over time. Therefore the interaction of an entity on a point causes the creation of wave-mass and dimensions as expressed by a universe.

But if the angels are static, which would make them truly virtual, there'd be no interaction.

A problem arises with the traditional belief of a hierarchy of angels and how it relates to God. Hierarchies are dimensional and raise the question of whether there is any difference between a seraphim-created universe and one by a standard angel down the pecking order. However, in a dimensionless virtuality there is no difference as there is no identity.

If the existence of angels and/or points is rejected then there is no question to answer.

Curiously Christian theologians have never asked how many devils could dance on a pin. Since both are virtual entities there is no physical way to tell them apart unless good and evil have different energy wave dynamics.

Maybe they would prefer to ask how many devils can be impaled squirming on a pin. One difference might be that dancing angels are orderly while squirming devils are random.

The question has an alleged historical context as being debated in Constantinople while the city was being conquered and acts as a warning for wasting time on irrelevancies when more pressing matters need to be tackled.

It is a myth, but this type of criticism is not new. The emperor Constantine, Christianity's first Caesar, complained of theological debates at the Council of Nicaea, and while he curiously insisted on orthodoxy for Christian pagans he did not do so for any other religion, nor did he follow the Roman position himself as he was baptised by an Arian bishop on his death bed 12 years later.

What is difference between the angel pin question and the multiple positions held by theologians on Gnostic and Christological questions? In theory, perhaps, little; but in practical terms the impact was huge as it dogmatically defined orthodoxy.

Those that disagreed were defined as heretics. The Caesar-Roman Christian partnership transformed a religion of communities into a full blown curia-led organisation that absorbed the ideologies of imperial political power and imposed orthodoxy with ever greater force whenever they had the chance, either directly or through proxies.

The history of Christianity shows it was, and still can be, dangerous to give the 'wrong' answer to questions where the 'right' answer is based on faith in a belief but there is no empirical proof.

The Brendan Grace Immanence Question

Teacher: "God is everywhere."

Student: "Is he in Murphy's back yard?"

Teacher: "Yes."

Student: "Murphy doesn't have a back yard."

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

This has nothing to do with sounds, hands or clapping but all about communication.

But the first point to make is that there could never be a sound; only sounds since everybody claps differently and nobody will clap the same way twice. Add to that the sounds of other faunal species that clap and you get a cacophony of sounds.

All human babies can and do spontaneously clap but learn clapping as a means of communication; as do primates and other species where the meanings are simple and direct. Humans are unique for the use of clap for the complexity of meanings, from applause to derision. Clapping, regardless of species, is learnt as is any other physical method of expressing meaning; for instance in some deaf cultures instead of applause hands are raised straight up with outstretched fingers and rotated.

Clapping usually means the striking of one surface, usually a hand, with another surface, usually another part of the body but mostly the other hand. Other terms for the same action can be used depending on the language. In all cases it is an activity of two parts, even a thunderclap does not happen on its own.

And so back to the question. The meaning of one word has been arbitrarily changed to something else that is not defined. So if the questioner has changed the meaning of one word how is anyone to know whether they have changed the meaning of other words? How is anybody to know what the sentence means? Is it even a question?

Equally one could seriously ask: What is the sound of ice cream melting? What is the smell of a fish riding a bicycle? What is the taste of a polka dot bikini dancing on a chimney? The meaning of one, or more than one, word may have been changed – or maybe not. But why stop there? Why not disassociate words from meanings altogether? Lh igjwritg reior gt 'gijwtriojrt qfleif? Answer me that.

Successful communication depends on shared meanings regardless of species. If meanings are not shared the result is claptrap.

To understand how this question came to have its current status requires a look at the history of Zen and koans.

Koan derives from Gongan, a compound word made up of two meanings, 1) official public, governmental and 2) legal opinion, file or article of furniture such as desk or

table. In other words the concept originated from Government bureaucracy, which tells you all you need to know about its subsequent history.

It first developed as a stand-alone literature by under-employed officials to pass the time and was then assimilated by Zen teachers scrabbling about for a philosophy to justify their teachings. They claimed that bureaucrats, their files and furniture were metaphors to attain enlightenment.

Over time Koan became codified with the expected dreary results. First was the codification of the canon, only those commented on by masters of 'official' monasteries were accepted leading to lineage nepotism in the control of stories and interpretations.

Next was the curriculum where questions and answers were standardised and became the norm following the model of Neo-Confucian education. The complete set of answers had to be correctly memorised. Successful students gained an MZA (a primitive version of the modern spuriously popular MBA) and went on to inflict the same on the next generation.

And woe betide if you gave an incorrect answer or had the temerity to think independently; for punishment the errant student could be hit with a bamboo cane to the more creative being forced to live as a fox for 500 lives, or anything in between.

While various schools have developed as reformers all are based on the correct answer and procedures, which has also extended to dharma transmission. This mirrors the traditional structures of family and society. The 20th century coming to power of Communist Atheists passed Zen ideologies by; during the black wind of the Cultural Revolution Zen masters went into deep cover.

It can be argued that all this misses the point altogether of the dual single nature of reality and the role koans have in achieving enlightenment; the definitions of which differ depending on religious and spiritual cultures. It is a very rare phenomenon that happens spontaneously with the application of a trigger, or so it is argued.

The literature tends to focus on the dramatic trope of spontaneous enlightenment. What is less clear is how often it happens incrementally. Also as sources are written it is unknown how often people became enlightened in non-literate cultures or in religions that had no philosophical framework for achieving and understanding the experience.

Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta probably would have answered: "I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not."

The Shoomery Question

One day, an eager Zen student approached his Zen master and requested he tell him a Koan.

Although doubtful, the master obliged and told him a koan, whereupon he asked, "So, did you get it?"

The student replied, "Get what?"

And the master was enlightened.

Joshu's dog question

In its simplest form from the *Gateless Gate*:

Student: Does a dog have Buddha Nature?

Joshu: wú.

There is lots of commentary as to the meaning of wú taken to mean either positive or negative in relation to Buddha-nature. However there are assumptions as to how the word was pronounced. In the texts he is often known as Joshu which is how he is named in Japan even though Zhàozhōu Cōngshěn is not recorded as having been there.

Is it possible the original was transcribed by a Japanese monk who misheard the question and answer? Or was it transcribed by a monk from a different Chinese dialect? Were there differences in accents that caused an incorrect transcription?

Perhaps the answer was not wú but the similar sounding wow; which is now prevalent in Cantonese, the closest in pronunciation to Middle Chinese. The nearest equivalent in English of a dog's bark is the similar woof. In other words, did Joshu use a common Chinese word of a dog's bark? That would imply a complete set of different interpretations.

The literature implies that Joshu didn't like dogs much because, according to the *Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*, when asked why the dog was unlike other creatures that had Buddha-nature he said it was because of their karmic delusions. An alternative in the *Book of Serenity* is that it was because a dog knowingly and intentionally offends.

Assuming this is an accurate reflection of his opinions, how did he come by them? Does this accurately represent popular opinion of the time? Dogs were utilitarian in agriculture and hunting, bred by ruling elites, sacrificed or eaten, or combinations thereof.

Attitudes varied from reverence, treated as loyal servants, crafty, cunning, as representation of nomadic enemies whose totem was a dog though other population groups have dogs as their founders, representation of an eclipse, a zodiacal age. The Chinese word for dog 'quan' is a special radical used in the formation of other animal words.

Did he have a problem with or get beaten by a DiShu Quan master? At that time the Kung-fu defensive system was only practised by Buddhist nuns; it was developed for women to compensate for the disabling effects of foot-binding. So he may have had some unreported unresolved issues concerning women, women as nuns, secular women retiring as nuns, or one particular nun.

There are a number of possibilities, depending on interpretation: Joshu said wú, but just meant no because he was biased against dogs (or what they may have symbolised); he said wow, which is an equally valid answer in keeping with Zen and would have attracted commentaries had anyone spotted it; he said wú as per the traditional understanding; and he blurred the pronunciation as he was making a Zen pun on wú and wow.

The Whatever Question

Master: "Study the *Gateless Gate*, *Blue Cliff Record* and *Book of Equanimity*."

Student: "Whatever!"

At that moment the master was enlightened and the student got a life.

Is satire of sacred cows a sacred cow?

JE SUIS SACRED COW

3-line answer: Euclid's theory that 'Parallel lines meet in infinity'