



Thought Journal

By Zuha Tareen

WEEK #1 - TROLLEY PROBLEM

What would you do if you were in Chidi's place when your friend is on the other track and why?

If I were in Chidi's place and my friend was on the other track I would still pull the lever because in that moment of frenzy I wouldn't consider my relationship with the person I would simply try to avoid causing 5 deaths, and if the only option instead of that is to kill one friend then I would have no choice but to choose that. It's rather easy to hypothesize this scenario but when this unrealistic scenario is actually happening, I would probably consider sacrificing one person to save 5 people, even though I do believe that every person's life matters equally, and shouldn't be looked at quantitatively. However, when in crisis and in panic mode, it can be inferred that the human mind will kick into such quantitative thinking rather than emotional, and 5 vs. 1 will make more sense at that moment.

WEEK #1 - ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

Should it be mandatory to study arts in school?

The relation of the arts as a field of study with others, such as STEM, humanities, etcetera, is too strong to ignore. Rote learning and understanding concepts without being able to correctly visualise and apply them can render them useless, and moreover create a lack of empathy and accounting of the emotional side of human life and the world's structures in professionals. The art world and artists are often misunderstood in their practices and thinking by professionals in other fields, so closing that gap can help individuals on both sides by allowing a holistic understanding and approach to all fields. Artists must study other basics (Mathematics, Language, Science, etc) so it logically does not make sense to not include art in this almost holistic approach in primary learning. Further on primary education, classes in the arts can allow children to expand their creative minds and understanding which can equip them with better visualisation and problem solving skills which are immensely helpful regardless of their future profession. Moreover, there is more to human life and fulfilment than one's profession, and an appreciation for the arts which expands on humans' appreciation of beauty and delving into the emotional mind can create a greater and deeper appreciation for life generally.

WEEK #2 - RHETORICAL APPEALS

An exploration was undertaken to look at how rhetorical appeals are applied to something as common as an advertisement. Rather than analysing from the outside, we did it from the inside, by making the advert ourselves. Here, we created a cartoonish poster for a hand sanitiser brand.

Pathos was applied as the dominant appeal- calling children 'to action' through the use of a superhero-like posed figure behind popping text urging kids to take on the role of a hero in their lives by protecting themselves and their loved ones against germs.

Ethos and Logos were secondary appeals used here; Ethos applied through the validation of the World Health Organisation, and Logos through the succinct tagline stating the convenience and usefulness of the product.

While there were plenty of things that could have been improved, the overall advert was a success.

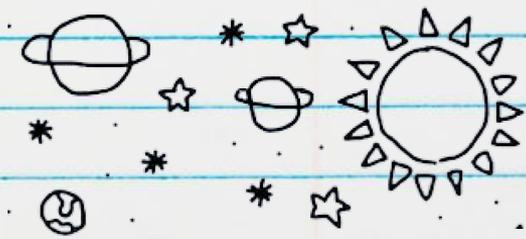


7/11/2020- week 4

Does the universe exist? 5

Today's reading and discussion made my head spin to be honest but I've noticed that this unanswered question tends to act as a base to a lot of philosophical thought/discussions so it felt useful to go over it and discuss it in this way... sort of felt like my head was cracked open in a good way so that more thoughts and observations have space to develop. I disagree with figgerson because of the reasons I stated earlier but also mathers didn't help himself by being so transparently biased, however figgerson was not too different either.

It made me think of an experience I had in a high school philosophy class in which we discussed the "jinn will follow you if you sit under a tree" thing in depth and within knowledge frameworks. That particular discussion was very enlightening for me because it essentially helped me contextualise the prying thoughts I have generally about the nature of being. that resulted in something I call the traffic light incident- I was waiting in traffic and zoned out staring at the red light and suddenly started to think about how nothing is real. we made traffic lights, we made cars, we made ourselves wait here no matter how irritated we all are. this might not make much sense on the outside but it was a perfect clicking moment for me.



Does God exist?



The nature of reality is, arguably, completely subjective. Human beings have created rules and laws and sciences to create ballparks and scales for understanding the world and all it contains, and it can be argued that organised religion is no different. The concept of something existing before us and above us, or something that is responsible for creating us and things existing before we could create, is arguably beyond the comprehensive abilities of the human mind simply because of the intensity of debate and confoundedness around the topic.

The proof of G-d's existence is reliant on the definition of G-d. Many newly sprouting subcultures of the West, inspired by ancient spiritual practices of the East, (see: Wellness culture), is largely divorced from common notions of organised religion but the fixation on simpler spirituality, attunement to energies, chakras, vibrations, etcetera, are no different than the Abrahamic concept of G-d we are used to; it is simply a rephrasal. The same goes for most religions. Sun worshippers, moon worshippers, religions with multiple deities, religions with one deity, and so on, all exist to fulfil one of the most primal human needs that is often dismissed in Maslow-esque discussions- Spiritual fulfillment.

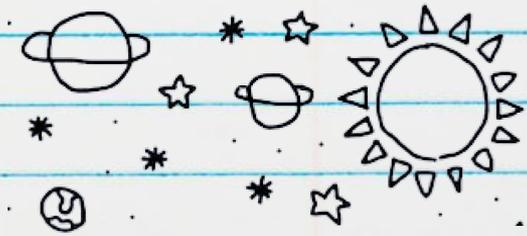
Therefore, it can be argued that the simple existence of this need can be seen as proof of G-d. Many religious people, myself included, ascribe their reasoning for believing in a G-d to simple feelings. That is to say, they tend to say that they simply feel the presence of G-d, and that is enough for them. This brings us back to the subjectivity of reality. My reality is not yours, and yours is not mine, even if we are living more or less the same lives in the same city of the same country, and so on and so forth.

7/11/2020- week 5

Does the universe exist? 7

What could be a convincing sign of G-d's existence?

So, a possibly convincing hypothetical sign G-d can send could be a personal intervention for each and every last person on earth. This can be anything, depending on the person. In my personal experience as a child, I frequently felt like I could magically control the weather, or the behaviour of inanimate objects, simply because I would 'place a bet' in my head; that is to say, I'd 'talk to G-d' in my head, asking for something very small and inconsequential (like a leaf falling at a precise moment, or the weather becoming nice and cloudy when my preschool teacher gives us our break-time) and 'tell G-d' that this would be proof enough for me. Sure enough, those things happened. Treating that as an example, I'd say something like that for each person on earth would be extremely difficult to dispute.



Ideologically, one wouldn't expect religious systems and economic systems to have many similarities, but with capitalism and particularly the now-morphed late stage capitalism, there are quite a few. Critics of the capitalistic system would substantially argue that because of inherent flaws in the system and the lack of justice it does to the working class, capitalism is designed to pacify those less fortunate and stunt any questioning of the system. That is to say, it is indoctrinated in society in such a way that it seems to be the only natural and rightful way to go about things, even if it fails most people and is inefficient in practice.

Similarly, one could argue that while original religious doctrine may not give the same message, religion in practice functions very similarly. Taking examples of Christian fundamentalism in the United States' rural towns, or Islamic fundamentalism in rural Pakistan, one can see how the notion of essentialism of religion and capitalism both are used to keep the lower socio economic classes pacified, similar to how Marx argued that religion is weaponized by the bourgeoisie.

Marx also clarifies that religion in general has consistently been used to uphold an unfair status quo, and above all presents that status quo as simply the right and natural thing, in order to suppress possibilities of uprising or revolt.

Aside from these ideological and practical similarities, religion and capitalism also intertwine in direct practice in an almost cyclical manner. The commercialisation of religious festivals in such a way that even non practicing individuals feel compelled to spend on them (the whole Christmas industry, Eid meat/cattle markets, Hanukkah, etcetera). The difference in this example arises when this consumerism is systemically engineered rather than being the simple supplying of products that will be in demand because of a festival.

Moreover, patriarchal and family values indoctrinated through religion only benefit capitalistic interests further by reducing diversity in job markets and allowing for wage discrimination, as these things are justified by religion and then suit the ever-adaptive model of capitalism further by streamlining and cementing the social hierarchies that continue to benefit the rich, the male, the white, and the cisgender-heterosexual.

All in all, religion may not directly cause and influence capitalism in all entirety but due to the capitalist systems innate ability to adapt (read: exploit) any and all societal structure or change, it facilitates it greatly.

The Conflict
Perspective on
Religion | Boundless
Sociology. (2020).

Dear Zuha at 15,

Your haircut is a bad idea but also not. Maybe chopping it all off was good for you, but as much as you refuse to believe this now, you're growing it out at 22. That applies to a lot of other stuff, too. You will eventually have the courage to go to therapy but your therapist will be a jerk. Don't take the meds they'll give you, it'll be bad for your health- TRUST ME. The back pain you have at 22 will make you feel 45.

Avoid that injury on your right wrist. I don't remember the year but your shelf fell and your wrist ligament will snap and as an artist who's a righty, that's going to be a problem. Or at least just go to a physiotherapist first rather than having misogynistic doctors dismiss you and give you panadol. Look into more holistic and organic treatments for your so called "ailments", but also realise most of your physical pain is psychosomatic and no you don't know what that means yet but in simple terms you're kind of insane so maybe fix that first.

You are fine, though. And you will actually be stable and happier one day. At least in November 2020, at the age of 22, you're happier. You have good friends you can trust, a loving and healthy relationship, and more independence. You will come to acknowledge the importance of love for you, and how it's grown to redefine itself. It may not be what you expected but that's more than okay.

But, you will never be perfectly fine. You have to accept the ebbs and flows sooner rather than later. 11

Pay more attention in your high school philosophy class that you'll take maybe 3ish years later. You already were active but sir Ali you will soon find out is an incredible human+mentor and a great resource. Learn from people. Don't be so reactionary- you don't know everything.

Art isn't scary. It doesn't matter if you can't draw right now. Ignore what your psychotic 0 level art teacher says; she's ridiculously unqualified anyway. Don't let that stunt your creative growth and for the love of all things good don't consider yourself a future filmmaker because trust me you don't ACTUALLY care about filmmaking at all. You're a painter.

Also, I know how much you like Florence and the Machine. You will grow to love her work more than you expected, and then when you see her live in 2019, it will be incredible. You'll learn to actually cherish things in 2020.

Your worst years are in progress, and they're coming too. But you'll be fine. I know you and I know all my prophetic warnings will mean nothing because you think you know everything. So make your mistakes, I guess. You're better for it.

Love,

Zuha at 22.

Logic is defined as the art of thinking well, and the art of reasoning justly. Therefore, logic isn't exactly a singular objective notion, but rather a system of idea development processes.

According to Proclus, something as "non relative" and concrete as mathematics was once a more intuitive and empirical back in the sixth century and was later transformed into the deductive discipline that it is today. From this example, it can fairly be inferred that even the most solid building blocks of our reasoning tools were once based on abstraction and intuition. Relativity and subjectivity seems impossible to escape.

Systems of understanding like scientific reasoning, as concrete as they are, are still developed by human beings who cannot escape emotionality and intuitive questioning, and therefore fixating on pure intellectualism as the final decree of knowledge categorisation is naive at best.

Therefore, Western methods of scientific reasoning and logic, while very widely applicable, can still be seen as relative. Western medicine may clash with Eastern holistic practices (such as Ayurvedic medicine), Greek philosophy versus Confucianism or Taoism, Western astronomy versus Islamic astrology, and so on and so forth. Neither of either "side" of reasoning can be deemed entirely false and inapplicable because evidence suggests otherwise.

All in all, I believe that seeing scientific reasoning and logic as purely non-relative could be argued as a naive and/or limited view of knowledge systems as a whole.

Rougier, L. (1941). *The Relativity of Logic*. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2(2), 137-158.
doi:10.2307/2102926

12/12/2020- week 9

Brain snatched- Think like a skeptic¹⁴

The sun will rise again tomorrow.

The skeptic says...

The statement is based off of empirical evidence and history, which a skeptic is already wary of. If everything has been and is a simulation or illusion, there is little guarantee that those running the simulation will decide to once again bring it up the next day. Arguments of distrust around human sensory tools can easily be brought up here, such as how light refraction affects how we view objects submerged in water. If your drinking straw is skewed when seen through the cup, but isn't actually skewed in physical regards, why does it look that way? The skeptic would use this argue that our senses are not completely trustworthy and therefore even historical empirical evidence could be flawed as a result. Further, scientific reasonings such as the prediction of the earth's rotation pattern are essentially defined and understood in human-made terms. Mathematics, physics, etcetera, are quantified and categorised by flawed human beings, and therefore the cracks could show one day.

The skeptical opposition to the statement remains within the statements own indication that empirical evidence and scientific reasoning are non relative truths and therefore true and predictive of the future- something that the skeptic will deny.

12/12/2020- week 9

Brain snatched- Think like a skeptic¹⁵

Medicinal drugs work towards healing.

The skeptic says...

Because medicine itself has so many flaws, one can easily be pushed to question whether they carry out healing or not. Some may even conspire to say that they do the opposite. The term "healing" on its own comes under a microscope when viewed from the perspective of Western medicine when one looks at the issues of side effects of varying intensities, skyrocketed drug prices, and bioaccumulation affecting the environment. Examples like chemotherapy and anti depressants make the image clearer, when we see that a "healing drug" like chemo in actual practice destroys the body's cells, or when we see the destructive side effects of SSRIs used to treat depression. This may also explain the recent shift of many people towards holistic healing practices over Western medicine.

Moreover, the simple notion of the functioning placebo further questions the meaning of healing as well as the meaning of sickness. The skeptic could argue that if a false "drug" and its effects on the mind are enough to ease symptoms in certain people, how can the reasoning given behind medical science be trusted?

Like many arguments, skeptics would target this one using the bases of its own existence.

What does it mean to have knowledge?

Knowledge can be described as a justified to be true belief. A belief can be no different from a theory or a thought that has inseminated itself into one's perspective on things. Therefore, a belief doesn't need to be proven true or false to be a belief (see: religion). However, to quantify itself as knowledge, there must be adequate justification of the "truth" of said belief. The parameters for this justification can vary.

So, to have knowledge means to have a belief that is backed up with sufficient reasoning to be seen as logically coherent.

12/12/2020- week 9

Brain snatched- Responding to the skeptic?

Is the invisible pebble response or the dismissive response better to counter the skeptic?

The invisible pebble response is a clear illustration of how the opposition sees the skeptic's argument, unlike the dismissive response which is arguably fallacious in its own way. In a sense, the dismissive response gives little evidence or analogy for why the skeptic is wrong and rather uses exactly what the skeptic is criticising to criticise the skeptic; therefore to the skeptic, this person will be seen as one who simply does not understand.

Furthermore, the invisible pebble argument clarifies that even if the skeptic is somehow proven correct, just like an invisible intangible pebble, knowing the "truth" of our existence without it having tangible effects will make no real difference to how things function as we know them, and therefore renders the skeptic's view useless.

Should patents be allowed?

The concept of patents is in place in order to protect intellectual property of inventions in an attempt to do justice to the efforts of the creator, and in some perspectives to maintain quality assurance. However, such isn't always the case in practice.

Take the case of lifesaving drugs like Daraprim which is used to treat toxic infections often caused in people with HIV. The CEO of the company producing it with no competitors, Martin Shkreli, is known to have gotten exceptionally rich very fast solely because of the 5000% price hike he introduced to this necessary pill. Imagine suffering from HIV and needing this pill to combat the infections caused, and having to pay a whopping \$750 dollars per pill. Shkreli was jailed for fraud in 2017.

This is one among many examples which can be applied to the unethical dangers of placing patents on creations, particularly ones that become a necessity or solution for many. The same logic can be applied to patents placed on objects of use, referred to as utility patents. If we are to follow a capitalistic society, how can it be logically sound to not allow market competition of an object by restricting the legal production of it to whoever, essentially, called dibs on it?

26/12/2020- week 11

Should You Be Eating That??

Modern "halal" meat is a mockery of Islam. Respond to this.

This article reflects a common problem in modern press, particularly online forums for it. The point being made is solid for sure, but in an attempt to strengthen the argument the writer ends up weakening it. The article is clogged with fallacious statements and language, and while I can regard it as an opinion piece and give it that leeway, the oppressive emotionality of the writing is hard to move past.

While the factual points are correct, Islamic teachings indeed contradict the capitalist system's dreadful exploitation of animals, a more fact-based approach coupled with sensible alternatives would have landed better. Instead, this article attempts to point and shame, and offers no explicitly clear alternatives. In fact, it could have been the perfect space to help promote local ethical butchers and farms, as well as meat alternatives (both fake meat and natural products with similar nutritional makeups).

The last statement in particular, "Share this article on twitter or on facebook and protect yourself from hell-fire." meant to be a serious warning actually came out as hilariously laughable. It beautifully solidified the article's position as a truthfully thoughtful piece watered down due to the screeching fallacious mess of language.

9/1/2021- week 12

Philosophy Gym- Reflection²⁰

Reflect on this course!

Taking this course was an excellent decision. Personally, it was a hard choice because taking this meant forgoing an interesting looking painting course due to schedule clashes. I told myself I already paint 24/7, and I can paint any time during the rest of my degree, and I know for a fact how deeply I miss philosophy classes. Any fear of it being lackluster and bookish did not get to last long, because right off the bat the discussions were active, engaging, and exciting. As awful as this semester has been for me personally, Saturday afternoons with this course were a light in my always-crap week. Any changes or feedback I'd have are more related to the general issues with online classes. Critical thinking/reading and studying from a contextual lens is something I already have to do for most other classes, but the direction and method undertaken in this class was unique and refreshing. I'll definitely miss getting a perfect end to the work week in which my brain juices are forced to start flowing again. I've learned a lot, both theoretical terminology and knowledge as well as different perspectives to account for.

Thank you!!