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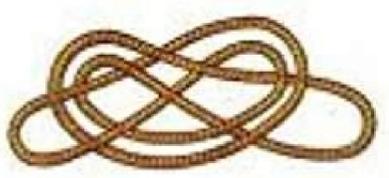
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RIDDLES IN MATHEMATICS

A Book of Paradoxes



EUGENE P. NORTHPROP



I also have an all-time recommended reading list which non-members can access. Oh, did I mention I also do a live monthly webinar with members where I'll answer all your questions and talk about tacos? And wrong about tons of his analogies and examples. Well, here's the starting point: Often the most influential events in history are, by definition, the least anticipated. ...you want to read something smart but don't want to wade through hundreds of pages of gibberish and academic jargon to understand it. And as freedom encourages a multiplicity of attempts, it unavoidably multiplies failure." Bonus Points For: It was apparently one of President Eisenhower's favorite books. On The Genealogy of Morals by Friedrich Nietzsche What It's About: Hidden beneath the bombastic prose, the angry rhetoric, the shameless blasphemy and a mustache the size of a small child's leg, Nietzsche wrote with a cold and stark logic. You are also going to have a group of people who are less talented/gifted/intelligent than average. So instead of divulging what my favorite books are, I'll leave you with something better: seven of the most mind-fucking, reality-reshaping, Keanu Reeves "Whoa" inspiring books that I've ever read. If not, what are you waiting for? No, seriously, Nietzsche calls this "Slave Morality." Master/Slave Moralities have been in a kind of tension in every society for all of recorded history. In other words, humans were given the gift of being able to imagine the future and who we want to be, but the price we pay for this gift is the realization that we will one day die. Medical nanobots that live in the bloodstream that we wireless upload vaccines to. Freud argued that civilization could only arise when enough humans learned to repress these deeper and baser urges, to push them into the unconscious where (according to his model) they would fester and ultimately generate all sorts of neuroses. Notable Quotes: "One cubic inch of nanotube circuitry, once fully developed, would be up to one hundred million times more powerful than the human brain." "Can the pace of technological progress continue to speed up indefinitely? Uploading and downloading consciousness onto the internet, so that you could download somebody else's life experiences as your own the same way you downloaded the last season of Breaking Bad. Nietzsche believed that the ideas of guilt, punishment and a "bad conscience" are all culturally constructed and used by The Weak to chip away at the dominance and power of The Strong. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: BDSM porn involving a guy with a really, really bushy mustache... and syphilis.4 Read This Book If... ...you're the kind of sicko like me who finds obtuse 19th-century German philosophy to be excellent beach reading. Couch is over there. Ray. We toil and sweat to give them just what we think they will like, and they quit their jobs, grow their hair, move to or from San Francisco, and wonder how we could ever have been stupid enough to think they'd like that. Kurzweil claims, among other things, that baby boomers are the first generation that will conquer aging and death, and that he wants to digitally transcribe his dead father's brain into computer software so he can like, you know, Skype chat with good ol' dad again. This knowledge of our own inevitable death leads to a kind of ever-present "terror" that underlies everything we do. The hills being London, of course. The idea is ludicrous, if it is not monstrous. I never know what the hell to say because so many of the books that have influenced me have done so not because they're so good or brilliant, but mostly because they addressed the issues I was going through at the time I was reading them. If he's trolling the world with his writing style, he's doing a good job, because some passages are almost impossible to get through without either rolling your eyes at him or shoving the book through a paper shredder. ...you are interested in behavioral economics and irrational decision-making. It seems like a hoax, which is why one type of cultural man rebels openly against the idea of God. I'll believe it when I see it. The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology by Ray Kurzweil What It's About: In the beginning of The Singularity is Near, Kurzweil shows that the processing power of computers and technology has increased exponentially through history and is likely to continue doing so. ...you are an aging boomer who refuses to see a therapist and needs something to look forward to. Freedom of choice places the whole blame of failure on the shoulders of the individual. If that tweaks your nipples and you don't mind putting up with pages upon pages of pretentious meandering, then go nuts, Taleb is for you. What would they come up with? Bonus Points For: Delusional optimism to the point where you kind of feel bad for the guy and how scared he is of dying. Gilbert is a famous Harvard psychologist who has a knack for coming up with zany experiments that show just how flawed and biased the human mind is. Genetic programming for newborns so parents can choose not only the physical characteristics of their children but their talents as well. ...you basically hate humans and think they're a bunch of rape-hungry assholes waiting to stab each other over a sandwich. Why don't you lay down and tell us how you're feeling? On The Genealogy of Morals, perhaps his shortest and most influential work, was starker of all. The True Believer by Eric Hoffer What It's About: The True Believer discusses why people give in to fanaticism, fundamentalism, or extremist ideologies. It's like a mind orgasm. These ideas can be explained well in about 50 pages. A dog doesn't realize she's going to die. ...you want to read a convincing argument for why we should embrace our pain and our fear rather than avoid it. These are called "Black Swan" events.5 As humans, we are inherently biased against noticing both the number of random events in our lives and the impact these random events have on us. ...you think you take life a little bit too seriously sometimes and need to chill. This is the terror: to have emerged from nothing, to have a name, consciousness of self, deep inner feelings, an excruciating inner yearning for life and self-expression and with all this yet to die. ...you want to have your conception of "success" and "progress" completely flipped on its head. ...you want to read a book that would consist of maybe 60% bullshit, will have you still thinking about the ideas years later. It's when hero projects fail that we fall into deep despair and depression because we're once again confronted with the inevitability of our own death and meaninglessness of our lives.7 Notable Quotes: "Man cannot endure his own littleness unless he can translate it into meaningfulness on the largest possible level." "The irony of man's condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation; but it is life itself which awakens it, and so we must shrink from being fully alive." "What does it mean to be a self-conscious animal? Notable Quotes: "The game of history is usually played by the best and the worst over the heads of the majority in the middle." "The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim all excellence for his nation, his religion, his race or his holy cause." "Freedom aggravates at least as much as it alleviates frustration. It doesn't fit in with the rest because it basically tries to convince you that you don't even know what the hell makes you happy in the first place, so why stress out about it? Notable Quotes: "It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct." "A love that does not discriminate seems to me to forfeit a part of its own value, by doing an injustice to its object." Bonus Points For: Basically arguing that we're all fucked and there's no hope for any of us. It means to know that one is food for worms. For unenhanced humans, clearly so. Lots of non-fiction. He had invented psychoanalysis, brought the science of psychology to the mainstream, and was highly regarded in intellectual circles around Europe. And we will undoubtedly see a significant percentage of them in our lifetime. If you're already a site member, you have full access to the School. ...you want to read a book that explains happiness without mythologizing it or worshipping it. Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder by Nassim Taleb What It's About: Before I explain a few of the brilliant ideas in this book, I need to get something off my chest: Taleb sounds like a pompous dick. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better." "The irony of the process of thought control: the more energy you put into trying to control your ideas and what you think about, the more your ideas end up controlling you." "Difficulty is what wakes up the genius." Bonus Points For: Being a totally insufferable asshole. Civilization and Its Discontents by Sigmund Freud What It's About: Freud was an academic sensation at the beginning of the 20th century. In three essays totaling around 100 pages, he lays out the following: In any population, you are going to have a group of people who are more talented/gifted/intelligent than average. Neither does a fish. One chronological year would be like a millennium for them. Civilization and Its Discontents was the result of this depression. In no particular order... Stumbling on Happiness by Daniel Gilbert What It's About: Stumbling on Happiness is like the red-headed stepchild of happiness books. See below. Join my newsletter and get a free ebook!3 Ideas to Change Your Life/Privacy Policy | Close: Don't show this again/Subscribe to my channel on YouTube/Close: Don't show this again Read This Book If... ...you want to know why people give up their identities for some insane cause. Read This Book If... ...you like feeling like you're smarter than everybody even though you're not. The book is perhaps the most-to-the-point and non-bullshitty philosophical work I've ever read. He used Christianity as his primary example of this. Life Advice That Doesn't Suck/My favorite moments reading non-fiction are when a book bitchslaps my brain and reconfigures my entire understanding of reality and my place within it. If you're a human and you have a brain, then you probably like using your brain. Well, I put together a list of over 200 of the best books to read, organized by topic for The Subtle Art School members. Let's call them The Weak.2 The Strong will naturally accrue the power in society for no other reason than they are more capable and talented than the others. In the book, he shows you time and again that as humans, we inaccurately judge, among other things, what made us happy in the past, what will make us happy in the future, and even what is making us happy right at this moment. Because The Strong won their greater power and influence through outsmarting or outperforming others, they will come to adopt ethical beliefs that justify their position: that might makes right, that they are entitled to their privileged position, that they earned what is theirs. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: The Eye of Sauron overlooking hordes of his minions advancing on the kingdom of Gondor as the darkness consumes the — oh wait, wrong book. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: A holographic robot orgy that's not actually happening, but the nanocomputers embedded into the synapses in your brain just make you think it's happening. I mean, it's probably not going to happen. And doing it convincingly. We fail to achieve the accolades and rewards that we consider crucial to their well-being, and they end up thanking God that things didn't work out according to our shortsighted, misguided plan." "Economies thrive when individuals strive, but because individuals will only strive for their own happiness, it is essential that they mistakenly believe that producing and consuming are routes to personal well-being." Bonus Points For: Being perhaps the wittiest and best-written psychology book you'll ever read. ...you wonder how war and revolutions are even possible. I love that. ...you've always had a hunch that you are completely full of shit but would like 400 pages of psychological research to confirm it for you. And as an Austrian Jew, he ran for the hills. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: The grim reaper silently laughing to himself watching you build an elaborate Lego set called "Life," and you turning around and saying, "Stop laughing, this is important!" Read This Book If... ...you plan on dying one day. He also believed that Slave Morality is just as capable of corrupting and oppressing a society as Master Morality. ...you want to read a book that explains happiness without mythologizing it or worshipping it. Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder by Nassim Taleb What It's About: Before I explain a few of the brilliant ideas in this book, I need to get something off my chest: Taleb sounds like a pompous dick. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better." "The irony of the process of thought control: the more energy you put into trying to control your ideas and what you think about, the more your ideas end up controlling you." "Difficulty is what wakes up the genius." Bonus Points For: Being a totally insufferable asshole. Civilization and Its Discontents by Sigmund Freud What It's About: Freud was an academic sensation at the beginning of the 20th century. In three essays totaling around 100 pages, he lays out the following: In any population, you are going to have a group of people who are more talented/gifted/intelligent than average. Neither does a fish. One chronological year would be like a millennium for them. Civilization and Its Discontents was the result of this depression. In no particular order... Stumbling on Happiness by Daniel Gilbert What It's About: Stumbling on Happiness is like the red-headed stepchild of happiness books. See below. Join my newsletter and get a free ebook!3 Ideas to Change Your Life/Privacy Policy | Close: Don't show this again/Subscribe to my channel on YouTube/Close: Don't show this again Read This Book If... ...you want to know why people give up their identities for some insane cause. Read This Book If... ...you like feeling like you're smarter than everybody even though you're not. The book is perhaps the most-to-the-point and non-bullshitty philosophical work I've ever read. He used Christianity as his primary example of this. Life Advice That Doesn't Suck/My favorite moments reading non-fiction are when a book bitchslaps my brain and reconfigures my entire understanding of reality and my place within it. Therefore, we should build up systems (and ourselves) to be "antifragile," that is, to construct our lives and our societies in such a way as to benefit from major unanticipated events. But we do. I get a list of emails asking me for book recommendations. Nietzsche believed that Slave Morality stifled man's greatest characteristics: creativity, innovation, ambition, and even happiness itself. Many political/social conflicts are side effects of the struggle between Master and Slave Moralities. Umm... dude, there's something living on your face. And if you like using your brain, then you love having those epiphany moments where your hair blows back and you go "Whoa" like Keanu Reeves in The Matrix when he learns Kung Fu from a USB drive in his neck. Taleb has a handful of amazing ideas. ...you won't be offended if some angry German dude rhetorically punches Jesus Christ in the vagina and calls your God a sissy over and over again. I'm talking potentially life-changing, world-affecting ideas. ...you want to like the internet and smartphones are just the tip of the iceberg of what's coming in our lifetimes. What kind of deity would create such a complex and fancy worm food? Bonus Points For: Making you contemplate your own non-existence and kind of making you feel okay about it. And the fucked up part is that some of his explanation of how this is going to happen makes sense. I know it's not what the cool kids like to do, but I like to read non-fiction. The book makes one simple argument: that humans have deep, animalistic instincts to eat, kill, or fuck everything. Read This Book If... ...you like the explanation that the only problem any of us have is that we want to fuck and/or kill everybody in sight, yet we're not allowed to. But still brilliant somehow, despite himself. Then World War I broke out, and destroyed, well, just about everything. ...you like mustaches. It's when people's hero projects contradict one another that we get conflict, violence, bigotry, and evil. I poke fun at Ray, but the technological possibilities presented in this book are truly mind-boggling. The School is a collection of 6 brand-new video courses each with a pretty printable workbook, plus 3 bonus courses, ebooks on my favorite topics, commentaries on all my books, and a "library" of best books to read. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: An open hand, heading straight for the side of your face. Becker argues that this terror inspires us all to take on what he calls a "hero project," where we attempt to immortalize ourselves through our deeds and actions, to create something bigger than ourselves that will live beyond our own lives. But if you can trudge through hundreds of pages of technical explanations of genetic engineering, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence to see the implications of some of what we're likely to experience in the next 50 years — well, get ready son: shit's going to get wild. Freud was deeply moved by the devastation and fell into a deep depression and secluded himself for much of the 1920s. Isn't there a point at which humans are unable to think fast enough to keep up? Or a roach. Freud basically came to the conclusion that as humans, we had one of two shitty options in life: 1) repress all of our basic instincts to maintain some semblance of a safe and cooperative civilization, thus making ourselves miserable and neurotic or 2) to let them all out and let shit hit the fan. That due to the exponential scaling of technology, Black Swan events are becoming more common and influential than ever before. Read This Book If... ...you enjoy Harvard professors who reference The Beatles in every chapter and make jokes about quadruplets. Looking for more books to read? He lived out the last years of his life in a city being bombed into oblivion. So what are his handful of earth-shattering ideas in Antifragile? Notable Quotes: "We treat our future selves as though they were our children, spending most of the hours of most of our days constructing tomorrows that we hope will make them happy... But our temporal progeny are often thankless. Nietzsche calls this "Master Morality." Because The Weak lost their power and influence by being outsmarted and outperformed, they will come to adopt ethical beliefs that justify their position: that people deserve aid and charity, that one should give away one's possessions to the less fortunate, that you should live for others and not yourself. Notable Quotes: "Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. ...Hitler makes you sad. Nietzsche was a pretty hardcore dude. Notable Quotes: "Above all, there is no exception to this rule: that the idea of political superiority always resolves itself into the idea of psychological superiority." "Without cruelty, there is no festival."3 Bonus Points For: Claiming that the weak people had to invent God so that they could believe their suffering actually meant something. But what would 1,000 scientists, each 1,000 times more intelligent than human scientists today, and each operating 1,000 times faster than contemporary humans (because the information processing in their primarily non-biological brains is faster) accomplish? He then argues that because of this, in the year 2046 all of our brains are going to be digitally encrypted and uploaded to the cloud where we will all form a single, immortal consciousness that will control all computing power on the planet. As Neo once said: The whole immortality, one-computerized-world-consciousness thing? And the power of Hoffer's short sentences can take your breath away. 6 Read This Book If... ...you are a geek, plain and simple. If This Book Could Be Summarized in An Image, That Image Would Be: A dog named "Humanity" endlessly chasing its own tail with a big slobbery smile on its face.

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