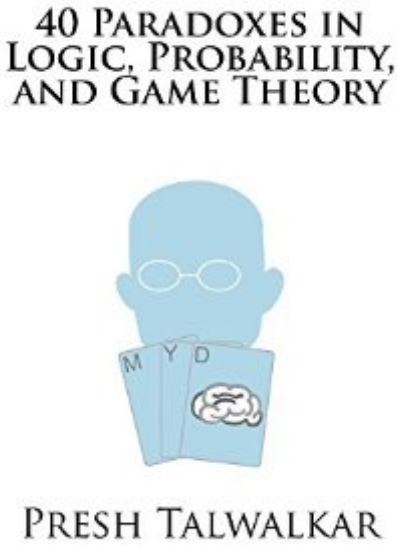
40 Paradoxes In Logic, Probability, And Game Theory



Synopsis

This book contains 40 delightful paradoxes. Here is a small sampling.LOGIC: Is it ever right to ask the question: "May I disturb you?" The very act of asking will disturb the person. And yet, I simply can’t know if it’s correct to ask the question unless I actually ask the question!PROBABILITY: In 2007, the college football team USC was ranked as 7th in the Harris poll, 6th in the USA Today poll, and 6th in the computer rankings. And yet, when the three polls were averaged, USC ended up as being ranked as the 5th best team overall. How is that possible?GAME THEORY: You play game A that is a losing bet. You also play game B that is a losing bet. Yet when you play games A and B alternately that is a winning bet. How can two losing games combine to make a winning game?

Book Information

File Size: 1978 KB

Print Length: 144 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1517319307

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: April 13, 2013

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00CCUMC8Y

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #328,915 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #38 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Mathematics > Pure Mathematics > Logic #74 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Logic & Brain Teasers #204 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Mathematics > Pure Mathematics > Logic

Customer Reviews

The book describes paradoxes of many kinds. Some paradoxes are of more hypothetical or philosophical nature, while others are strange and surprising results that actually occurred in real life. Such is the "Simpson’s paradox", demonstrated in the book using American college football ranking, or the "Braess paradox", which shows that opening a new road can increase traffic jams,

instead of decreasing them (a phenomenon believed to have occurred in major cities).Along the way the book touches on many fields and domains. There are historical anecdotes (e.g., a 1964 U.S. supreme court ruling offering a paradoxical distinction between art and pornography), concepts and methods from economics, decision theory, geometry, and probability.Everything is described in a simple, engaging way, and no special prior knowledge is assumed.

Presh Talwalkar surely took a liking in writing ebooks with mathematical problems! In this new work, he chooses to talk about paradoxes, a theme which fascinates people since the time of Zeno. A paradox, mathematically speaking, is a situation where alongside (in Greek, "para-") one opinion ("-doxa") there is another one which is mutually exclusive.The paradoxes in the ebook are divided in three broad categories: logical, probabilistic and from game theory (Mr Talwalkar studied mathematics and economics, so the last group comes naturally). There are classical ones, nearly classical ones (Simpson’s Paradox and Monty Hall problems are well known in the circles of people liking such themes), but also paradoxes quite recent, and really puzzling. But as usual the value Mr Talwalkar adds lies in the exposition of the material; he always starts with examples grounded to earth, and explains in detail what happens, and *why* it happens. Moreover there is a bibliography which allows the interested reader to explore further the problems in the book.If you like paradoxes, or if you *fear* paradoxes, the ebook is for you!

If you are geeky enough to understand the math then there is probably nothing in here that you haven’t already heard. However, do not let the math stop anyone from reading this since it is nonetheless fun. I gave it only four stars because there are a few grammatical errors. I am starting to reserve five stars for writing AND editing that deserves it.

The "paradoxes" presented in this book are interesting and well-explained. My only wish was that there would have been more on game theory-there were only a few examples worked in at the end.

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