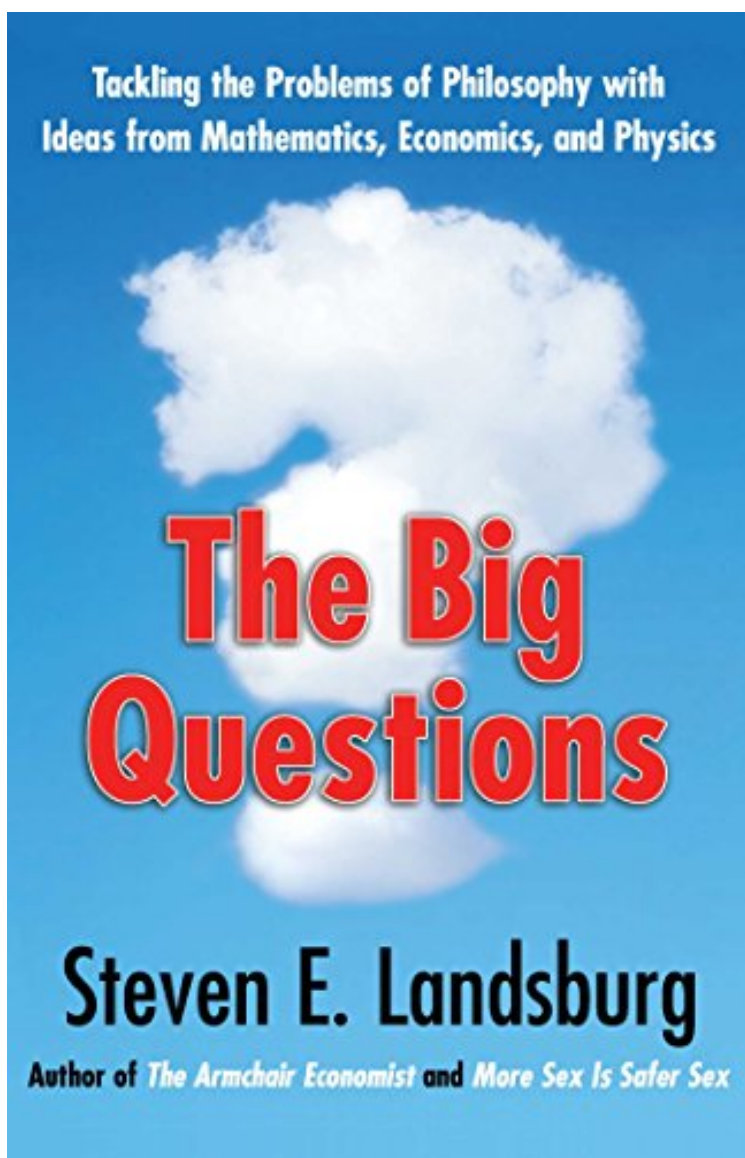


[FREE] The Big Questions: Tackling the Problems of Philosophy with Ideas from Mathematics, Economics and Physics

The Big Questions: Tackling the Problems of Philosophy with Ideas from Mathematics, Economics and Physics

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Steven E. Landsburg : The Big Questions: Tackling the Problems of Philosophy with Ideas from Mathematics, Economics and Physics before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Big Questions: Tackling the Problems of Philosophy with Ideas from Mathematics, Economics and Physics:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. DisappointedBy Daniel MclaughlinI was expecting to be bowled over with irrefutable logic and powerful insights. I was not.He used a great deal of logic, but some of the premises were dubious and some of the logical reasoning did not follow, even on critical strands of his major thesis.On page 17, in order to prove his point that "math must be the fabric of the universe," everything not math is defined as "baggage." He explains that there is no natural division between heart particles and lung particles from an atomic or sub-atomic level, and that we, as humans, create the boundaries between heart and lungs for our own classification system, adding "even though it's not a fundamental aspect of reality."That is a false statement. Because the atoms in lung tissue may be identical to the atoms in heart tissue, that does not prove that, in reality there is no fundamental difference. Those very real differences, which guide our decisions, are defined as baggage, and thus discarded, leaving, in the end, only math.From this he derives the false dichotomy that "Either everything is baggage, in which case there is no external reality whatsoever beyond the subjective creations of human brains. Or something is real, completely independent of us humans," implying that it is either math or nothing. The argument defines away everything that does not support his contentions and uses logical juggling to arrive at nonsense. Similar lapses in reasoning pervade much of the first two thirds of the book.I was glad I read it to the end. The economic reasoning in later chapters was, for the most part, very solid, as well as his insights on "how to think," partly redeeming the work.Overall, I was disappointed. The meat of the book let me down.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I really enjoyed this bookBy Michael StackI really enjoyed this book. It isn't quite as entertaining as The Armchair Economist. If you haven't read either, I recommend reading Armchair first. If you're a fan of Landsburg's writing in other contexts (Slate, his blog, etc), you'll love this book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy cwcarlson@msn.comA fine followup to his other books.

In the wake of his enormously popular books *The Armchair Economist* and *More Sex Is Safer Sex*, Steven Landsburg uses concepts from mathematics, economics, and physics to address the big questions in philosophy: What is real? What can we know? What is the difference between right and wrong? And how should we live? Widely renowned for his lively explorations of economics, in his fourth book Landsburg branches out into mathematics and physics as well—disciplines that, like economics, the author loves for their beauty, their logical clarity, and their profound and indisputable truth—to take us on a provocative and utterly entertaining journey through the questions that have preoccupied philosophers through the ages. The author begins with the broadest possible categories—Reality and Unreality; Knowledge and Belief; Right and Wrong—and then focuses his exploration on specific concerns: from a mathematical analysis of the arguments for the existence of God; to the real meaning of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle and the Godel Incompleteness Theorem; to the moral choices we face in the marketplace and the voting booth. Stimulating, illuminating, and always surprising, *The Big Questions* challenges readers to re-evaluate their most fundamental beliefs and reveals the relationship between the loftiest philosophical quests and our everyday lives.