

# Thought Tinnitus



Is this a table?

"Is this a table?"  
Was how my professor  
started a lecture on  
metaphysics...  
while pointing at  
a table.  
Jeer not



Professor brandishing the  
proverbial whip [her inquiry]

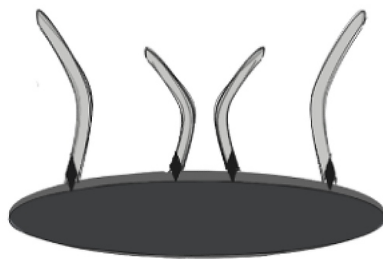
This deceptively  
simple question,  
which first  
seemed to me  
too, a belligerent  
attack on all varieties of common sense, joined  
me awake from my own dogmatic slumber of  
taking tables for granted[2].

One counter-example (not-a-table table) is  
enough to disprove tables are tables[3].

[1] The study of the nature of reality  
[2] Much like Immanuel Kant being awakened by David Hume.  
[3] Problem of induction: There's no guarantee that the future  
will resemble the past. The sun may not rise tomorrow.

- A. Table\*
- B. Collection of atoms arranged  
in-the-way-of-a-table
- C. Mental construct of a table
- D. Nothing. It is a non-entity.
- E. Dog\*\*

This is a \_\_\_\_\_.



You see, there is good reason to ask whether  
tables are tables—and, that tables exist at all,  
is thoroughly dubious.

\*A (smugly) incorrect choice.  
\*\*Pointed out astutely by my (non-human) friend. In case of  
objections, can you prove this is a not-dog?

If I dented the table, it would be a dented-table,  
and so on.[6] However, if objects do not occupy  
the same space as their atoms, wouldn't this  
render matter thoroughly inconsequential?  
Positing the existence of ghost-tables, bereft of  
matter, would be preposterous.[10]

Since both positions lead to absurdity, it is only  
logical to conclude that objects are not physical;  
they do not take up space.  
**In conclusion, objects do not exist.**  
When we "interact" with objects, we're actually  
interacting with conceptions.  
Tables—which belong to the class of objects—  
do not exist. There are no tables.  
Ergo, the professor who asked this question,  
does not exist either.[11]

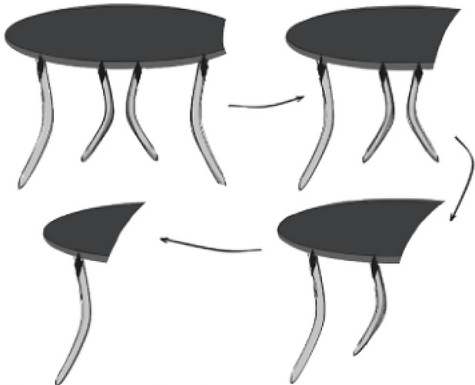
How can I answer the questions of an entity  
that I don't even know exists for certain?

[9] Consequently, an infinite number of tables would pop in  
and out of existence with the slightest physical variation.  
[10] Can a table be a table without the atoms that make it up?  
[11] The burden of proving the existence of the professor is  
Incumbent upon the professor herself.

Verify, I shall resort to cutting edge logic to  
prove this assertion. Firstly, what is a table?  
Secondly, do tables exist?  
"Obviously, if I can see, feel, etc. in other words,  
observe the table, the table must exist."  
In saying that "I" can see, feel, sense the table,  
etc. "I" am the common denominator.  
This entails "I" exist (contentious)[4], and also  
that an external world, independent of the  
mind, exists (more contentious).[5]  
Agreeing upon the definition of a table would  
mean "tables" are nothing but social constructs.  
We can talk and conceive of them, but it does  
not follow that they exist. If "tables" don't  
correspond to an objective reality, they're as  
"real" as unicorns.  
In actuality, there was no "table" to begin with.  
only an arrangement of atoms conveniently  
called a "table"—a purely semantic matter.

[4] It is not the case that 'I think therefore I am', for, 'a thought  
comes to me when it wishes, not when I wish.'  
[5] Perhaps the world came into existence 5 minutes ago, or  
a malevolent demon is deceiving you with false sensations.

Pray tell, when does something "start" or "stop"  
being a table?[8]

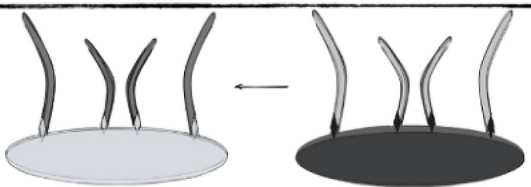


Objects are made of atoms that occupy space.  
If an object and its constituent atoms occupy  
the same space, i.e. every object is made up of  
precisely x atoms, one this number changes, it  
is no longer the same object.

[8] Sorites' paradox: If you were to remove individual grains  
of sand from a pile of sand until there are none, at what point  
would it cease to be a pile of sand? It would be absurd to say  
that a "pile of sand" flickers in and out of existence  
depending on some arbitrary threshold.

If I were to bash someone's head in with a  
table, (A) would it be "just" a table? Or, is it  
(B) a weapon and a table at the same time?[7]  
Conversely, if another object can serve the  
purpose of a table, would it not also be a table?  
The assumption that objects exist at all implies  
that they have concrete boundaries.... which is  
also problematic.

If I were to replace every single part of the "table"  
until none of its original constituents remained,  
would it still be the same table? [See: Ship of Theseus]



[7] Either (B) someone's intent can birth/extinguish  
(meta)physical objects into/out of existence without  
affecting their physical atoms, or  
(A): What makes a table, a table?