

big questions debate format

big questions debate format is a distinctive style of structured discussion that focuses on exploring profound and often philosophical inquiries. This debate format encourages participants to engage deeply with complex topics that challenge conventional thinking, such as ethics, existence, society, and human nature. Unlike traditional debate formats centered on political or policy issues, the big questions debate format emphasizes critical thinking, open-mindedness, and the exploration of multiple perspectives. This approach fosters intellectual rigor and respectful dialogue, making it popular in educational settings, philosophy clubs, and public discourse forums. The structure of the big questions debate format is designed to facilitate thoughtful argumentation and reflection, providing a clear framework for participants to present, challenge, and defend their ideas effectively. In this article, the key components, rules, and strategies of the big questions debate format will be examined, along with tips for participants and organizers to maximize the format's potential.

- Understanding the Big Questions Debate Format
- Key Components of the Format
- Rules and Structure
- Strategies for Participants
- Benefits and Applications

Understanding the Big Questions Debate Format

The big questions debate format is centered around discussing fundamental and often abstract questions that do not have straightforward answers. It emphasizes philosophical inquiry and encourages debaters to think beyond surface-level issues. This format typically involves open-ended questions such as "What is justice?" or "Does free will truly exist?" which require extensive reasoning and exploration of various viewpoints. The format is not about winning or losing in a traditional competitive sense but about fostering a richer understanding of complex ideas through dialogue.

Origins and Purpose

The big questions debate format has roots in classical philosophical traditions where dialogue and dialectics were primary methods of inquiry. Modern adaptations aim to make these discussions accessible and structured for contemporary audiences, particularly in educational contexts. The purpose is to cultivate critical thinking, philosophical literacy, and respectful discourse among participants. By focusing on big questions, the format transcends partisan arguments and encourages participants to engage with ideas on a

deeper level.

Distinctive Characteristics

Key features that distinguish the big questions debate format from other debate styles include:

- An emphasis on abstract, philosophical, or ethical topics.
- A less adversarial tone, promoting collaboration and exploration rather than confrontation.
- A flexible structure that allows for nuanced arguments and reflection.
- Encouragement of multiple perspectives and acknowledgment of complexity.

Key Components of the Format

The big questions debate format consists of several essential components that guide how the debate unfolds. Understanding these elements is crucial for participants and moderators to maintain clarity and purpose throughout the discussion.

Selection of the Question

The central question or topic is the foundation of the debate. It must be open-ended, thought-provoking, and sufficiently complex to allow diverse interpretations and arguments. Selecting the right question is critical because it shapes the scope and depth of the debate. Questions often relate to ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, or social philosophy and are framed to invite reflective dialogue.

Roles of Participants

Participants in the big questions debate format usually assume specific roles to structure the discussion effectively. Common roles include:

- **Proponent:** Argues in favor of a particular interpretation or answer to the question.
- **Opponent:** Challenges the proponent's arguments by presenting counterpoints or alternative views.
- **Moderator:** Oversees the debate, enforces rules, manages time, and facilitates respectful exchanges.
- **Audience or Judges:** In some settings, observers may participate by asking

questions or evaluating the quality of arguments.

Phases of the Debate

The debate typically unfolds in distinct phases, each with specific objectives and time allocations. These include:

1. **Opening Statements:** Participants present their initial positions and key arguments.
2. **Rebuttals:** Each side responds to the opposing arguments, highlighting weaknesses or contradictions.
3. **Cross-Examination:** Participants ask direct questions to clarify points and challenge assumptions.
4. **Closing Statements:** Summarize the main points and reinforce the participant's stance.

Rules and Structure

To maintain order and ensure productive discussion, the big questions debate format adheres to specific rules and structural guidelines. These rules help balance the free flow of ideas with disciplined argumentation.

Time Management

Each phase of the debate has a pre-set time limit to keep the discussion focused and efficient. Strict time management prevents domination by a single participant and ensures all voices are heard. Typical timing might allocate 5-7 minutes for opening statements, 3-5 minutes for rebuttals, and shorter periods for cross-examination and closing remarks.

Conduct and Civility

The format emphasizes respectful communication, discouraging personal attacks, interruptions, or inflammatory language. Participants are encouraged to engage with ideas rather than individuals, fostering a constructive environment for intellectual exchange. Moderators play a key role in enforcing these standards.

Use of Evidence and Reasoning

Arguments should be supported by logical reasoning, relevant examples, or philosophical theories. While empirical data may be referenced, the format values conceptual clarity and coherence over empirical proof. Participants are expected to explain their reasoning clearly and respond thoughtfully to critiques.

Strategies for Participants

Success in the big questions debate format relies on preparation, critical thinking, and effective communication. Participants can employ various strategies to articulate their positions persuasively.

Thorough Research and Understanding

Given the abstract nature of big questions, participants must familiarize themselves with relevant philosophical concepts, schools of thought, and historical debates. Deep understanding enhances credibility and enables participants to construct nuanced arguments.

Anticipating Counterarguments

Effective debaters anticipate opposing views and prepare responses. This foresight allows for smoother rebuttals and demonstrates intellectual rigor. Considering alternative perspectives also enriches the debate by highlighting the complexity of the question.

Clear and Concise Expression

Clarity is essential in communicating complex ideas. Participants should avoid jargon unless well-defined and aim for concise, structured statements. This approach helps the audience and judges follow the argument and appreciate its merits.

Active Listening and Adaptability

Listening carefully to opponents' points enables participants to respond directly and thoughtfully. Adaptability in argumentation shows openness and intellectual honesty, qualities valued in the big questions debate format.

Benefits and Applications

The big questions debate format offers numerous educational and intellectual benefits. It encourages participants to explore deep issues, develop critical thinking skills, and engage in respectful dialogue.

Educational Advantages

In academic environments, this debate format enhances students' abilities to analyze complex problems, articulate ideas, and appreciate diverse viewpoints. It supports the development of reasoning, public speaking, and active listening skills, which are valuable across disciplines.

Promoting Civic Discourse

By focusing on fundamental questions rather than partisan politics, the big questions debate format fosters a culture of thoughtful discussion and mutual respect. It can serve as a model for civil discourse in broader social contexts.

Encouraging Lifelong Inquiry

This debate style inspires curiosity and ongoing exploration of important philosophical and ethical issues. Participants and audiences alike are motivated to continue questioning and learning beyond the formal debate setting.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Big Questions debate format?

The Big Questions debate format is a structured style of debating that focuses on addressing fundamental, often philosophical, questions with clear motions and timed speeches, encouraging critical thinking and deep analysis.

How is the Big Questions debate format structured?

It typically involves teams or individuals debating a central, thought-provoking question with set speech times, including constructive speeches, rebuttals, and a concluding summary, promoting clarity and logical argumentation.

What types of topics are suitable for the Big Questions debate format?

Topics suitable for this format are broad, significant questions that often relate to ethics, philosophy, society, science, or politics, such as 'Is free will an illusion?' or 'Should artificial intelligence have rights?'.

How does the Big Questions format differ from traditional debate formats?

Unlike traditional formats that may focus on policy or specific resolutions, the Big

Questions format emphasizes exploring profound, open-ended questions, encouraging participants to think abstractly and engage with complex ideas.

What skills does participating in a Big Questions debate help develop?

Participants enhance critical thinking, public speaking, logical reasoning, research abilities, and the capacity to engage with complex and abstract issues effectively.

Can the Big Questions debate format be used in educational settings?

Yes, it is widely used in educational contexts to stimulate intellectual curiosity, promote open-mindedness, and develop students' argumentation and analytical skills.

Where can I find examples or resources to practice the Big Questions debate format?

Resources and examples can be found on debate organization websites, educational platforms, and forums dedicated to debating, such as the Big Questions online community or debate training materials from schools and universities.

Additional Resources

1. Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High

This book explores strategies for engaging in meaningful and productive dialogue during high-pressure situations. It offers practical tools to help readers communicate effectively, manage emotions, and reach mutual understanding. Ideal for those interested in debate formats where navigating difficult conversations is essential.

2. Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion

Jay Heinrichs presents a witty and accessible guide to rhetoric and persuasion. Drawing from classical and contemporary examples, the book teaches readers how to construct compelling arguments and recognize fallacies. It's a valuable resource for anyone looking to excel in debate and public discourse.

3. The Art of Debate: A Guide to Confident Public Speaking

This comprehensive guide covers the fundamentals of debating, including argument structure, refutation techniques, and effective speaking skills. It emphasizes critical thinking and clarity, making it a useful handbook for debate participants at all levels. The book also addresses common challenges faced during competitive debates.

4. Argumentation and Debate

A foundational textbook in the study of debate, this book delves into the theory and practice of argumentation. It covers topics such as logical reasoning, evidence evaluation, and case construction. The text is widely used in educational settings to prepare students

for formal debate competitions.

5. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

Daniel Kahneman's groundbreaking work explores the dual systems of thought that drive human decision-making. Understanding these cognitive processes is crucial for debaters aiming to anticipate and counter opponents' arguments. The book provides insights into biases and heuristics that affect reasoning in debates.

6. *How to Win Every Argument: The Use and Abuse of Logic*

Madsen Pirie offers a concise guide to logical fallacies and persuasive tactics. The book helps readers identify flawed reasoning and improve their argumentative skills. It's particularly useful for debaters interested in sharpening their critical thinking and avoiding common pitfalls.

7. *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*

Saul Alinsky's classic text provides strategies for advocacy and social change, focusing on the power of organized debate and persuasion. It highlights practical approaches to influencing public opinion and negotiating power dynamics. This book is relevant for debates centered on social and political issues.

8. *Debating in the World Schools Style: A Guide*

This book offers an in-depth look at the World Schools debate format, which combines elements of British Parliamentary and Australian formats. It covers preparation, argumentation techniques, and adjudication criteria. A must-read for debaters participating in international competitions.

9. *Philosophy and the Big Questions*

This collection introduces readers to fundamental philosophical questions that often underpin debate topics. It encourages critical examination of ethics, existence, knowledge, and society. The book provides a solid intellectual foundation for engaging with complex debate resolutions.

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big questions debate format: Can War Be Justified? Andrew Fiala, Jennifer Kling, 2023-02-21 Can war be justified? Pacifists answer that it cannot; they oppose war and advocate for nonviolent alternatives to war. But defenders of just war theory argue that in some circumstances, when the effectiveness of nonviolence is limited, wars can be justified. In this book, two philosophers debate this question, drawing on contemporary scholarship and new developments in thinking about pacifism and just war theory. Andrew Fiala defends the pacifist position, while Jennifer Kling defends just war traditions. Fiala argues that pacifism follows from the awful reality of war and the nonviolent goal of building a more just and peaceful world. Kling argues that war is sometimes

justified when it is a last-ditch, necessary effort to defend people and their communities from utter destruction and death. Pulling from global traditions and histories, their debate will captivate anyone who has wondered or worried about the morality of political violence and military force. Topics discussed include ethical questions of self-defense and other-defense, the great analogy between individuals and states, evolving technologies and methods of warfighting, moral injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, broader political and communal issues, and the problem of regional security in a globalizing world. The authors consider cultural and religious issues as well as the fundamental question of moral obligation in a world saturated in military conflict. The book was written in the aftermath of the war on terrorism and includes reflection on lessons learned from the past decades of war, as well as hopes for the future in light of emerging threats in Europe and elsewhere. The book is organized in a user-friendly fashion. Each author presents a self-contained argument, which is followed by a series of responses, replies, and counter-arguments. Throughout, the authors model civil discourse by emphasizing points of agreement and remaining areas of disagreement. The book includes reader-friendly summaries, a glossary of key concepts, and suggestions for further study. All of this will help students and scholars follow the authors' dialogue so they may develop their own answer to the question of whether war can be justified. Key Features Summarizes the debate between pacifism and just war theory Considers historical and traditional sources as well as contemporary scholarship and applications Models philosophical dialogue and civil discourse, while seeking common ground Discusses issues of concern in contemporary warfighting and peacemaking, while offering an analysis of the war on terrorism

big questions debate format: Can We Know Anything? Bryan Frances, Michael Huemer, 2023-09-19 In this book, Michael Huemer and Bryan Frances debate whether – and how – we can gain knowledge of the world outside of our own minds. Starting with opening statements, the debate moves through two rounds of replies. Frances argues that we lack knowledge because, for example, we cannot rule out the possibility that we are brains in vats being artificially stimulated in such a way as to create an illusion of living in the real world. Huemer disagrees that we need evidence against such possibilities in order to gain knowledge of the external world, maintaining instead that we are entitled to presume that things are as they appear unless and until we acquire specific grounds for thinking otherwise. The authors go on to discuss how one should think about controversial issues wherein the experts persistently disagree. Frances argues that we should generally withhold judgment about such issues or at least greatly reduce our confidence. Huemer agrees that people are often overconfident about controversial issues but tries to carve out exceptions wherein one can rationally hold on to controversial views. Accessible whilst also detailed and substantial, this thoughtful debate is suitable for readers at all levels, from those encountering the topic for the first time through those who are deeply familiar with the issues. Key Features: Showcases arguments from two leading philosophers in standard form and in clear language Presents definitions in an easily accessible form Summary boxes recap key arguments Includes an annotated bibliography and glossary of all specialized vocabulary

big questions debate format: Is It Wrong to Buy Sex? Holly Lawford-Smith, Angie Pepper, 2024-03-29 Is it wrong for a man to buy sex from a woman? In this book, Holly Lawford-Smith argues that it is wrong: commercial sex is quintessentially hierarchical sex, and it is wrong both to have, and to perpetuate a market in, hierarchical sex. Angie Pepper argues that it isn't wrong: men are permitted to buy sex from those women who freely choose to sell it. Important but different interests are at stake in these two positions. According to the first, we should prioritize the interest of all women in securing a society that has achieved equality between the sexes, and we should make the changes needed to get there including prohibiting men from buying sex from women. In contrast, the second position prioritizes the protection of individuals' rights to engage in consensual commercial sex exchanges and demands that we strive for gender equality without compromising these rights. The two authors debate the ethical issues involved in the decision to buy sex, arguing passionately for very different conclusions, in a way that is lively, constructive, and sure to leave readers with a lot to think about. Key Features: Focuses on the pressing moral issue of whether

we're morally permitted to buy sex Advances two different normative ethical approaches to the issue and develops two competing arguments Demonstrates how philosophical debate on controversial topics can be productive and easy-to-follow Provides a glossary with definitions of key terms that are bolded in the main text Includes section summaries that give an overview of the main arguments and a comprehensive bibliography for further reading

big questions debate format: Do We Have Free Will? Robert Kane, Carolina Sartorio, 2021-09-30 In this little but profound volume, Robert Kane and Carolina Sartorio debate a perennial question: Do We Have Free Will? Kane introduces and defends libertarianism about free will: free will is incompatible with determinism; we are free; we are not determined. Sartorio introduces and defends compatibilism about free will: free will is compatible with determinism; we can be free even while our actions are determined through and through. Simplifying tricky terminology and complicated concepts for readers new to the debate, the authors also cover the latest developments on a controversial topic that gets us entangled in questions about blameworthiness and responsibility, coercion and control, and much more. Each author first presents their own side, and then they interact through two rounds of objections and replies. Pedagogical features include standard form arguments, section summaries, bolded key terms and principles, a glossary, and annotated reading lists. Short, lively and accessible, the debate showcases diverse and cutting-edge work on free will. As per Saul Smilansky's foreword, Kane and Sartorio, present the readers with two things at once: an introduction to the traditional free will problem; and a demonstration of what a great yet very much alive and relevant philosophical problem is like. Key Features: Covers major concepts, views and arguments about free will in an engaging format Accessible style and pedagogical features for students and general readers Cutting-edge contributions by preeminent scholars on free will.

big questions debate format: Is Morality Real? Matt Lutz, Spencer Case, 2023-09-07 In this book, Spencer Case and Matt Lutz debate whether objective moral facts exist. We often say that actions like murder and institutions like slavery are morally wrong. And sometimes people strenuously disagree about the moral status of actions, as with abortion. But what, if anything, makes statements about morality true? Should we be realists about morality, or anti-realists? After the authors jointly outline the major contemporary positions in the moral realism debate, each author argues for his own preferred views and responds to the other's constructive arguments and criticisms. Case contends that there are moral truths that don't depend on human beliefs or attitudes. Lutz maintains that there are no moral truths, and even if there were, we wouldn't be in a position to know about them. Along the way, they explore topics like the nature of common sense, the meaning of moral language, and why the realism/anti-realism debate matters. The authors develop their own arguments and responses, but assume no prior knowledge of metaethics. The result is a highly accessible exchange, providing new students with an opinionated gateway to this important area of moral philosophy. But the authors' originality gives food for thought to seasoned philosophers as well. Key Features Gives a comprehensive overview of all the main positions on moral realism, without assuming any prior knowledge on the subject Features both traditional and original arguments for each position Offers highly accessible language without sacrificing intellectual rigor Draws upon, and builds on, recent literature on the realism/anti-realism debate Uses only a limited number of technical terms and defines all of them in the glossary

big questions debate format: Do We Have a Soul? Eric T. Olson, Aaron Segal, 2023-08-04 Are we made entirely of matter, like sticks and stones? Or do we have a soul—a nonphysical entity—where our mental lives take place? The authors Eric T. Olson and Aaron Segal begin this accessible and wide-ranging debate by looking at the often-overlooked question of whether we appear in ordinary experience to be material things. Olson then argues that the dependence of our mental lives on the condition of our brains—the fact that general anesthesia causes complete unconsciousness, for instance—is best explained by saying that our mental lives are physical activities in our brains rather than nonphysical activities in the soul. Segal objects that this view is incompatible with two obvious and important facts about ourselves: that there is only one of you

rather than trillions of almost identical beings now thinking your thoughts, and that we exist and remain conscious for more than an instant. These facts, he claims, are presupposed in our practical and moral judgments—but they require us to be immaterial things. Olson is forced to concede that there is no easy and uncontroversial answer to these objections but doubts whether taking us to be immaterial would be any help. The debate takes in large philosophical questions extending well beyond dualism and materialism. The book features clear statements of each argument, responses to counter-arguments, in-text definitions, a glossary of key terms, and section summaries. Scholars and students alike will find it easy to follow the debate and learn the key concepts from metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and other areas necessary to understand each position. Key Features Is the only introductory book devoted to the debate between substance dualism and materialism Discusses both traditional and novel arguments for each position Debates important but infrequently discussed questions, including: do we appear, in ordinary experience, to be material? should materialism be the default view? is there a good probabilistic argument for materialism? Written in a lively and accessible style Uses only a limited number of technical terms and defines all of them in the glossary

big questions debate format: Is There a God? Graham Oppy, Kenneth L. Pearce, 2021-10-12 Bertrand Russell famously quipped that he didn't believe in God for the same reason that he didn't believe in a teapot in orbit between the earth and Mars: it is a bizarre assertion for which no evidence can be provided. Is belief in God really like belief in Russell's teapot? Kenneth L. Pearce argues that God is no teapot. God is a real answer to the deepest question of all: why is there something rather than nothing? Graham Oppy argues that we should believe that there are none but natural causal entities with none but natural causal properties—and hence should believe that there are no gods. Beginning from this basic disagreement, the authors proceed to discuss and debate a wide range of philosophical questions, including questions about explanation, necessity, rationality, religious experience, mathematical objects, the foundations of ethics, and the methodology of philosophy. Each author first presents his own side, and then they interact through two rounds of objections and replies. Pedagogical features include standard form arguments, section summaries, bolded key terms and principles, a glossary, and annotated reading lists. In the volume foreword, Helen De Cruz calls the debate both edifying and a joy, and sums up what's at stake: Here you have two carefully formulated positive proposals for worldviews that explain all that is: classical theism, or naturalistic atheism. You can follow along with the authors and deliberate: which one do you find more plausible? Though written with beginning students in mind, this debate will be of interest to philosophers at all levels and to anyone who values careful, rational thought about the nature of reality and our place in it.

big questions debate format: What is Consciousness? Amy Kind, Daniel Stoljar, 2023-06-30 What is consciousness and why is it so philosophically and scientifically puzzling? For many years philosophers approached this question assuming a standard physicalist framework on which consciousness can be explained by contemporary physics, biology, neuroscience, and cognitive science. This book is a debate between two philosophers who are united in their rejection of this kind of standard physicalism - but who differ sharply in what lesson to draw from this. Amy Kind defends dualism 2.0, a thoroughly modern version of dualism (the theory that there are two fundamentally different kinds of things in the world: those that are physical and those that are mental) decoupled from any religious or non-scientific connotations. Daniel Stoljar defends non-standard physicalism, a kind of physicalism different from both the standard version and dualism 2.0. The book presents a cutting-edge assessment of the philosophy of consciousness and provides a glimpse at what the future study of this area might bring. Key Features Outlines the different things people mean by consciousness and provides an account of what consciousness is Reviews the key arguments for thinking that consciousness is incompatible with physicalism Explores and provides a defense of contrasting responses to those arguments, with a special focus on responses that reject the standard physicalist framework Provides an account of the basic aims of the science of consciousness Written in a lively and accessible style Includes a comprehensive glossary

big questions debate format: *Do Numbers Exist?* Peter van Inwagen, William Lane Craig, 2024-03-12 In *Do Numbers Exist?* Peter van Inwagen and William Lane Craig take opposite sides on whether there are abstract objects, such as numbers and properties. Craig argues that there are no abstract objects, whereas Van Inwagen argues that there are. Their exchange explores various arguments about the existence and nature of abstract objects. They focus especially on whether our ordinary and scientific thought and talk commit us to abstract objects, surveying the options available to us and the objections each faces. The debate covers central problems and methods in metaphysics, and also delves into theological questions raised by abstract objects. Key Features: Showcases the presentation and defense of two points of view on the existence of abstract objects, from two of the world's leading philosophers Presents definitions in an easily accessible form Provides frequent summaries of previously covered material Includes a glossary of all specialized vocabulary

big questions debate format: *Should You Choose to Live Forever?* Stephen Cave, John Martin Fischer, 2023-11-22 In this book, Stephen Cave and John Martin Fischer debate whether or not we should choose to live forever. This ancient question is as topical as ever: while billions of people believe they will live forever in an otherworldly realm, billions of dollars are currently being poured into anti-ageing research in the hope that we will be able to radically extend our lives on earth. But are we wise to wish for immortality? What would it mean for each of us as individuals, for society, and for the planet? In this lively and accessible debate, the authors introduce the main arguments for and against living forever, along with some new ones. They draw on examples from myth and literature as well as new thought experiments in order to bring the arguments to life. Cave contends that the aspiring immortalist is stuck on the horns of a series of dilemmas, such as boredom and meaninglessness, or overpopulation and social injustice. Fischer argues that there is a vision of radically longer lives that is both recognizably human and desirable. This book offers both students and experienced philosophers a provocative new guide to a topic of perennial importance. Key Features: Gives a comprehensive overview of the main arguments for and against living forever Uses lively examples from myth, literature, and novel thought experiments Highly accessible—avoiding jargon and assuming no prior knowledge—without sacrificing intellectual rigour Includes helpful pedagogical features, including chapter summaries, an annotated reading list, a glossary, and clear examples

big questions debate format: *Is Political Authority an Illusion?* Michael Huemer, Daniel Layman, 2021-11-09 What gives some people the right to issue commands to everyone else and force everyone else to obey them? And why should people obey the commands of those with political power? These two key questions are the heart of the issue of political authority, and, in this volume, two philosophers debate the answers. Michael Huemer argues that political authority is an illusion and that no one is entitled to rule over anyone. He discusses and rebuts the major theories supporting political authority's rightfulness: implicit social contract theory, hypothetical contract theories, democratic theories of authority, and utilitarian theories. Daniel Layman argues that democratic governments have authority because they are needed to protect our rights and because they are accountable to the people. Each author writes two replies directly addressing the arguments and ideas of the other. Key Features Covers a key foundational problem of political philosophy: the authority of government. Debate format ensures a full hearing of both sides. A Glossary includes key concepts in political philosophy related to the issue of authority. Annotated Further Reading sections point students to additional resources. Clear, concrete examples and arguments help students clearly see both sides of the argument. A Foreword by Matt Zwolinski describes a broader context for political authority and then traces the key points and turns in the authors' debate.

big questions debate format: *What Should Individuals Do about Climate Change?* Marion Hourdequin, Dan C. Shahrar, 2025-06-10 Climate change is a pressing problem. Does each of us have a moral responsibility to help tackle it? In this volume, Marion Hourdequin and Dan Shahrar debate the timely issue of individual behavior and climate change, examining what it takes to live

morally in a warming world. Hourdequin argues there are important reasons for people to translate their concerns about climate change into actions in their personal lives. This includes attending to the many ways a single individual can help catalyze systemic change through choices about voting and political participation, food and clothing, energy use, travel, and so on. Shahar disagrees because he endorses moral specialization and division of labor in a world filled with many problems. He argues we should not expect everyone to take action on every serious issue: rather, it is acceptable and even desirable for people to focus on certain issues and decline to act on others – including climate change. The two authors take turns responding to each other and then defending their ultimate conclusions. This volume is sure to draw attention to the question of “individual choice” in climate change debates and to help clarify some of the best thinking on this issue. Key Features: Refocuses attention from big-picture debates over the actions of nations and corporations to more tractable questions about individual choices Examines whether there are good reasons to structure our daily lives to reduce our impacts on the climate Explores whether it would be best if individuals became “moral specialists” by focusing on a small number of problems while declining to act on many others Is highly accessible, with clear language and an easy-to-follow format Provides a glossary of key terms that are bolded in the main text Includes section summaries that give an overview of the main arguments and a comprehensive bibliography for further reading

big questions debate format: *Should We Maximize Utility?* Ben Bramble, James Lenman, 2025-03-28 Utilitarianism directs us to act in ways that impartially maximize welfare or utility or at least aim to do that. Some find this view highly compelling. Others object that it has intuitively repugnant results, that it condones evildoing and injustice, that it is excessively imposing and controlling, that it is alienating, and that it fails to offer meaningful, practical guidance. In this ‘Little Debates’ volume, James Lenman argues that utilitarianism’s directive to improve the whole universe on a cosmic time scale is apt to lead it down a path of imperious moral overreach. The project, he further maintains, ultimately shipwrecks on an extreme lack of epistemic humility in framing the determinants of what is morally right and wrong beyond the limits of what we can ever hope to know. Utilitarianism thus leaves us morally clueless. In contrast, Ben Bramble seeks to develop and defend an original form of utilitarianism, less vulnerable than other, more familiar versions to a number of important objections, including those raised by Lenman. He aims to avoid such unappealing results by presenting it as a claim about what we have the most reason to do, and not as a theory of right action, which Bramble urges we should understand quite differently by reference to what would motivate virtuous people. Key Features: Focuses on one of the dominant ethical theories debated by moral philosophers today Clearly written, free of jargon and technicality, and highly accessible to students Addresses questions of great importance to anyone wishing to grow in understanding of human moral life Provides a glossary of key terms highlighted in bold as well as a bibliography for further reading Important issues discussed include: welfare; value; right action; virtue; impartiality; obligations to non-human animals; the badness of human extinction; the happiness of future people; the ethics of climate change; the long term future; and the moral significance of the limits to what we can know.

big questions debate format: *What Do We Owe Other Animals?* Bob Fischer, Anja Jauernig, 2023-12-22 Philosophers Bob Fischer and Anja Jauernig agree that human society often treats animals in indefensible ways and that all animals morally matter; they disagree on whether humans and animals morally matter equally. In *What Do We Owe Other Animals?: A Debate*, Fischer and Jauernig square off over this central question in animal ethics. Jauernig defends the view that all living beings morally matter equally and are owed compassion, on account of which we are also obligated to adopt a vegan diet. Fischer denies that we have an obligation to become vegans, and argues for the position that humans morally matter more than all other living creatures. The two authors each offer a clear, well-developed opening statement, a direct response to the other’s statement, and then a response to the other’s response. Along the way, they explore central questions, like: What kind of beings matter morally? What kind of obligations do we have towards other animals? How demanding can we reasonably expect these obligations to be? Do our individual

consumer choices, such as the choice to purchase factory-farmed animal products, make a difference to the wellbeing of animals? The debate is helpfully framed by introductions and conclusions to each of the major parts and by smaller introductions to each of the sub-sections. A Foreword by Dustin Crummett sets the context for the debate within a larger discussion of sentience, moral standing, reason-guided compassion, and the larger field of animal ethics. Key Features Showcases the presentation and defense of two points of view on the moral worth of non-human animals Provides frequent summaries of previously covered material Includes a topically-organized list of Further Readings and a Glossary of all specialized vocabulary

big questions debate format: Should Wealth Be Redistributed? Steven McMullen, James R. Otteson, 2022-12-20 A central contested issue in contemporary economics and political philosophy is whether governments should redistribute wealth. In this book, a philosopher and an economist debate this question. James Otteson argues that respect for individual persons requires that the government should usually not alter the results of free exchanges, and so redistribution is usually wrong. Steven McMullen argues that governments should substantially redistribute wealth in order to ensure that all have a minimal opportunity to participate in economic life. Over the course of the exchange, the authors investigate a number of important questions. Is redistribution properly a question of justice, and what is the appropriate standard? Has the welfare state been effective at fighting poverty? Can we expect government intervention in the economy to be helpful or counterproductive? Are our obligations to help the poor best met through government action, or through private philanthropy and individual charity? The book features clear statements of each argument, responses to counterarguments, in-text definitions, a glossary of key terms, and section summaries. Scholars and students alike will find it easy to follow the debate and learn the key concepts from philosophy, politics, and economics necessary to understand each position. Key Features: Offers clear arguments written to be accessible to readers and students without a deep background in economics, philosophy, or political theory. Fosters a deep exchange of ideas with responses from each author to the main arguments. Provides in-text definitions and a glossary with definitions of key terms. Includes section summaries that give an overview of the main arguments and a comprehensive bibliography for further reading.

big questions debate format: Does Tomorrow Exist? Nikk Effingham, Kristie Miller, 2023-03-28 This book takes up the question of whether past and future events exist. Two very different views are explored. According to one of these views (presentism), advanced by Nikk Effingham, the present is special. Effingham argues that only present things exist, but which things those are changes as time passes. Given presentism, although there once existed dinosaurs, they exist no more, and although you and I exist, at some time in the future we will come to exist no more. According to the alternative view (eternalism), advanced by Kristie Miller, our world is a giant four-dimensional block of spacetime in which all things, past, present, and future, exist. On this view, dinosaurs exist, it is just that they are not located at the current time. The book considers arguments for and against presentism and eternalism, including arguments that appeal to our best science, to the way the world seems to us to be in our experiences of time, change, and freedom, and to how to make sense of ordinary claims about the past. Key Features: Offers an accessible introduction to the philosophy of temporal ontology Captures the process of philosophical debate, giving readers an insight into the craft of philosophy Engages with and clearly explains state-of-the-art and cutting-edge research

big questions debate format: What Makes Life Meaningful? Thaddeus Metz, Joshua W. Seachris, 2023-11-30 Can human life be meaningful? What does talk about life's meaning even mean? What is God's role, if any, in a meaningful life? These three questions frame this one-of-a-kind debate between two philosophers who have spent most of their professional lives thinking and writing about the topic of life's meaning. In this wide-ranging scholarly conversation, Professors Thaddeus Metz and Joshua W. Seachris develop and defend their own unique answers to these questions, while responding to each other's objections in a lively dialog format. Seachris argues that the concept of life's meaning largely revolves around three interconnected ideas—mattering,

purpose, and sense-making; that a meaningful human life involves sufficiently manifesting all three; and that God would importantly enhance the meaningfulness of life on each of these three fronts. Metz instead holds that talk of life's meaning is about a variety of properties such as meriting pride, transcending one's animal self, making a contribution, and authoring a life-story. For him, many lives are meaningful insofar as they exercise intelligence in positive, robust, and developmental ways. Finally, Metz argues that God is unnecessary for an objective meaning that suits human nature. Metz and Seachris develop and defend their own unique answers to these three questions, while responding to each other's objections in a dialog format that is accessible to students though—given their new contributions—will be of great interest to scholars as well. Key Features Offers an up-to-date scholarly conversation on life's meaning by two researchers at the forefront of research on the topic. Provides a wide-ranging, yet orderly discussion of the most important issues. Accessible for the student investigating the topic for the first time yet also valuable to the scholar working on life's meaning. Includes helpful pedagogical features, like: - Chapter outlines and introductions; - Annotated reading lists for both students and research-level readers; - A glossary; and - Clear examples, thought experiments, narratives, and cultural references, which enhance the book's role in thinking about life's meaning and related topics.

big questions debate format: Big Questions in Ecology and Evolution Thomas N. Sherratt, David M. Wilkinson, 2009-02-20 Why do we age? Why cooperate? Why do so many species engage in sex? Why do the tropics have so many species? When did humans start to affect world climate? This book provides an introduction to a range of fundamental questions that have taxed evolutionary biologists and ecologists for decades. Some of the phenomena discussed are, on first reflection, simply puzzling to understand from an evolutionary perspective, whilst others have direct implications for the future of the planet. All of the questions posed have at least a partial solution, all have seen exciting breakthroughs in recent years, yet many of the explanations continue to be hotly debated. Big Questions in Ecology and Evolution is a curiosity-driven book, written in an accessible way so as to appeal to a broad audience. It is very deliberately not a formal text book, but something designed to transmit the excitement and breadth of the field by discussing a number of major questions in ecology and evolution and how they have been answered. This is a book aimed at informing and inspiring anybody with an interest in ecology and evolution. It reveals to the reader the immense scope of the field, its fundamental importance, and the exciting breakthroughs that have been made in recent years.

big questions debate format: Political Communication in American Campaigns Joseph S. Tuman, 2008 What makes this book unique is the basic structure: Descriptive or historical chapters, followed by discussions of strategies and tactics of political communication in numerous contexts.

big questions debate format: The Dynamics of Political Communication Richard M. Perloff, 2013-12-04 What impact do news and political advertising have on us? How do candidates use media to persuade us as voters? Are we informed adequately about political issues? Do 21st-century political communications measure up to democratic ideals? The Dynamics of Political Communication: Media and Politics in a Digital Age explores these issues and guides us through current political communication theories and beliefs. Author Richard M. Perloff details the fluid landscape of political communication and offers us an engaging introduction to the field and a thorough tour of the d.

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