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Meaning of life hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy

42 as “The answer to life, the universe and everything”, is a famous reference to the series of radio and TV shows, books and movies by Douglas Adams, called “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”. CaveMan {{ relativeTimeResolver(1571675979711) }} LIVE Points 181 Rating 0 Sign in to view all similar questions Help make Alexa smarter and share your knowledge with the world LEARN MORE “42” is a quotation from the science-fiction novel Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy by the famous Douglas Adams. In his book the number 42 is the “answer to the meaning of life, the universe, and everything” - calculated by a very big computer over a very very long time: “All right,” said Deep Thought. “The Answer to the Great Question...,” “Yes..!” “Of Life, the Universe and Everything...” said Deep Thought. “Yes...!” “Is...” said Deep Thought, and paused. “Yes...!” “Is...” “Yes...!!!!...?” “Forty-two,” said Deep Thought, with infinite majesty and calm.” Douglas Adams The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy quoted from GoodReads Software developers like to use 42 as magic number, that’s a number without any real significance, which you could replace by any other number. Of course the name arc42 wouldn’t sound half as cool if we had chosen another number... In Douglas Adams’ The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy a super intelligent race of beings builds a computer, called Deep Thought, to get an answer to the universe’s ultimate question: “What is the meaning of life, the universe, and everything?”, and in response to this question Deep Thought gives a very simple and supposedly off the wall answer: “42”. From: The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy Genre: Books, Movies, Television Who said it?: Deep Thought The story behind the quote: This is actually my first “book” and “radio” categories entry, but I am cheating a bit here since I’m getting it from the latest movie adapted from The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy series. The overall story follows Arthur Dent, an ordinary man who survives the destruction of the Earth with Ford Prefect (an alien in disguise) and goes off to have different adventures. The quote comes from a scene early in the story. Aliens created a supercomputer named Deep Thought and ask it to answer the question of life, the universe and everything. Deep Thought mentions that it would take seven and a half million years to get the Ultimate Answer. So, seven and a half million years pass. The aliens (their ancestors anyway) come back to Deep Thought to get the answer. Deep Thought gives his reply that the answer is 42. The aliens complain that the answer cannot be correct. Deep Thought then says that he cannot give an answer since the aliens don’t know what the question actually is. The computer does say that another computer, even more powerful than itself, will be able to know what the Ultimate Question is. SPOILER: The computer more powerful than Deep Thought is actually the Earth. Geek wisdom: The “meaning of life” question is meaningless since the answer is, and always be, something different for each person. The reason being is that the question is also going to be different for each person. Deep Thought felt that it was a perfectly legitimate answer since, for him, it made sense. For others, it was rubbish. That’s because the Ultimate Question is different for each and every one of them. When we ask ourselves “what is the meaning of life” we are actually asking how we personally think what we want in life. If you ask ourselves the Ultimate Question and we cannot find what the Ultimate Answer is within ourselves, then you may not know what direction your life is going. If you are able to answer it, then you have already found your purpose in life. Your complimentary articles You’ve read one of your four complimentary articles for this month. You can read four articles free per month. To have complete access to the thousands of philosophy articles on this site, please Five seconds after flicking the Infinite Improbability Drive to “Maximum Wisdom”, Arthur was amazed to find himself in Philos, the mythical planet where all the great philosophers of the past lived in eternal contemplation. “Here, at last, I shall finally get the answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything” thought Arthur. “Who shall I visit first – maybe Socrates or Plato, maybe Descartes, or how about Bertrand Russell?”. But, before he had time to decide, a thickly-moustached man wearing a superman outfit, with a huge letter ‘N’ emblazoned on it, shouted out “The only aim of life is be to be a superman. Rise above the herd, unless you are a sheep!” Outraged, refutations of stunning wit and logic citing the essential equality of man before God started to form in Arthur’s mind. So it was rather a pity that the only sound which in fact came from his mouth was a sheep-like “Baaa”. “If Nietzsche upsets my liberal sentiments”, mused Arthur, “maybe I should turn to modern philosophy for the answer”. So he visited Wittgenstein, who was in deep and abstruse conversation with Bertrand Russell about language. “The meaning of life ? You must be joking, we can’t even agree on the meaning of the word ‘meaning’. We’ve got a programme of a thousand years of linguistic analysis before we can get round to that sort of question.” Next he met a hippy wearing a ‘Don’t worry, Be happy’ T-shirt – it was Jeremy Bentham, of course. “The life of pleasure without pain is the life to be lived”, he exclaimed merrily, as one of his attractive female disciples handed Arthur a somewhat suspicious-looking cigarette. A child of the 1960s, Arthur was for a moment attracted by this unashamed hedonism. But then he remembered when Zaphod had stolen Robert Nozick’s Experience Machine, the gateway to perfect pleasure. Though it had been quite entertaining for a day or two – well alright, a millennium or two – there had to be more to life than pleasure – didn’t there ? Arthur was just about to dismiss philosophers as either eccentric, irrelevant or both when he encountered a strange man with a pug face, a beard and a toga. He seemed pleased to see Arthur. “Ah, a stranger in our city. I don’t get many new people to talk to these days”. Arthur asked him the same question he had asked all the others. “What is the meaning of life?” “We should investigate the question together.” said Socrates. “Two heads are often better than one.” “You obviously haven’t met Zaphod Beeblebrox”, quipped Arthur. “But first tell me how you found us here in Philos” asked Socrates. “It’s a long story. Basically I was rescued from Earth shortly before it was destroyed, which coincidentally was just before it was about to reveal the ultimate question.” “Don’t you mean the ultimate answer?”, interrupted Socrates. “No, you see they’d already built a massive computer to find the ultimate answer, which had rather disappointingly pronounced it to be 42. So they had to build an even more expensive, organic computer – the Earth – to discover the question. I never did find out what it was, so I used the Infinite Impossibility Drive to come here to see if you lot could help. Simple.” “But it sounds like you’ve already discovered the meaning of life.” “Really ?” “Yes, the meaning of life on Earth was to find the ultimate question.” “But ... that’s like saying a turkey’s life is meaningful because it is going to end up as someone’s Christmas dinner. I want my life to satisfy things I value.” “So being part of some great plan isn’t good enough. What then do you make of the answer the computer gave, 42?” “Maybe it was saying that the question was a meaningless one which should be ‘unasked’.” “Very good, Arthur – I suspected that you knew the answer all along. Instead of worrying about me meaning of life, you should be enhancing meaning in your own life. Tell me, what would you like written on your gravestone?” “How about :- ‘Arthur Dent yet to be buried.’” “But one day you will be buried.”, Socrates continued solemnly, failing to be diverted by Arthur’s attempt at humour - “so you should make the most of your time and ensure what you would like written on your gravestone becomes true. Be the author of your own life. Become more aware of what you value and learn how to attain it. As I never tire of saying, the unexamined life is not worth living” “Socrates, you are very convincing and I would believe you if only I hadn’t heard of the Total Perspective Vortex. That’s where you see the whole infinity of creation and a tiny speck showing yourself in relation to it. The shock of one’s insignificance is enough to kill most people.” “Well it wouldn’t kill me. If I am insignificant from another perspective, why shouldn’t that perspective or what it thinks about me be equally insignificant to me?” “A typical philosopher’s answer. But isn’t it unerving that the things you think are incredibly important are trifles to someone else?” “Of course, why else do you think we philosophers spend so much time trying to convince people about what matters? But if you are worried about not being as important as you would like, I suggest you visit Psycho, the planet of psychotherapists and psychologists. It’s only a twenty minute ride in a space-taxi.” “But what about cosmic meaning, God and all that?” “Even here on Philos we don’t have all the answers. Maybe the universe has an ultimate meaning, maybe it hasn’t. If you want to know the absolute nature of the universe you could always pop along to Cosmo, where all the great scientists live. But surely your own experience with Earth must have taught you that being part of some grand plan isn’t necessarily a good thing.” It had, and anyway Arthur’s dim memories of Earth made him deeply suspicious of anywhere called ‘Psycho’ or ‘Cosmo’. So he decided to take Socrates’ advice to try to become the author of his own life. Like Socrates, he was really fed up with being the mouthpiece for other people’s opinions © Tim Lebon 2001 Tim LeBon is a philosophical counsellor who lives and practises in London. His email address (for those who feel themselves to be in need of Help) is Tlebon@aol.com. Mynameiwnotdave view quotes Aiden (The Book Scourge) view quotes (Image credit: Shutterstock) In Douglas Adams’ sci-fi series “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy,” a pair of programmers task the galaxy’s largest supercomputer with answering the ultimate question of the meaning of life, the universe and everything. After 7.5 million years of processing, the computer reaches an answer: 42. Only then do the programmers realize that nobody knew the question the program was meant to answer.Now, in this week’s most satisfying example of life reflecting art, a pair of mathematicians have used a global network of 500,000 computers to solve a centuries-old math puzzle that just happens to involve that most crucial number: 42. The question, which goes back to at least 1955 and may have been pondered by Greek thinkers as early as the third century AD, asks, “How can you express every number between 1 and 100 as the sum of three cubes?” Or, put algebraically, how do you solve x^3 + y^3 + z^3 = k, where k equals any whole number from 1 to 100? This deceptively simple stumper is known as a Diophantine equation, named for the ancient mathematician Diophantus of Alexandria, who proposed a similar set of problems about 1,800 years ago. Modern mathematicians who revisited the puzzle in the 1950s quickly found solutions when k equals many of the smaller numbers, but a few particularly stubborn integers soon emerged. The two trickiest numbers, which still had outstanding solutions by the beginning of 2019, were 33 and — you guessed it — 42.In April, mathematician Andrew Booker, of the University of Bristol in England, knocked 33 off the list. Using a computer algorithm to look for solutions to the Diophantine equation with x, y and z values that included every number between positive and negative 99 quadrillion, Booker found the solution to 33 after several weeks of computing time. (As you can see, the answer is super, super long.)Here’s 33 expressed as the sum of three cubes. It only took one of the world’s smartest computers to solve. (Image credit: Numberphile/ University of Bristol)Still, this exhaustive search turned up no solutions for 42, suggesting that, if there was an answer, some of the integers must be greater than 99 quadrillion. Calculating values that large would take an insane amount of computing power; so, for his next attempt, Booker enlisted the help of Massachusetts Institute of Technology mathematician Andrew Sutherland, who helped Booker book some time with a worldwide computer network called Charity Engine.According to a statement from the University of Bristol, this network is a “worldwide computer” that borrows idle computing power from more than 500,000 home PCs around the globe. Using this crowdsourced supercomputer and 1 million hours of processing time, Booker and Sutherland finally found an answer to the Diophantine equation where k equals 42.And so, without further ado, the question AND answer to the meaning of life, the universe and everything is:(-80538738812075974)^3 + (80435758145817515)^3 + (12602123297335631)^3 = 42How does it feel? Glorious? Overwhelming? Like your brain is going to vomit a little? Just be thankful that, unlike in Adams’ search for the truth, the entire Earth wasn’t destroyed in the process.Originally published on Live Science. ETHICAL CONUNDRUMSWhat is the meaning of life? IN DOUGLAS Adams’s book, The Hitch-hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, we are informed that the computer, Deep Thought, ponders over a period of 7 million years the question of the meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything. It is widely understood that this machine calculated the total answer to these three separate concepts as 42. Thus dividing 42 by three, it can be deduced that the meaning of life alone is 14. This, however, can only be assumed if the ratio of Life to both the Universe and Everything is 1: 1: 1. Khairoun Abji (student at Luton VI Form College), Luton, Beds. IF YOU had actually read The Hitch-hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy you would know that the important thing was that the computer was finding the ANSWER to Life, etc, and the answer was 42. They haven’t yet found out what the QUESTION was. Bridget Floyer, London (u01bmf@abdn.ac.uk) WHAT WE do know with certainty is that we were not once, are now, and will not be again. Brian Mendes, Bromley, Kent. LIFE is a sexually transmitted condition with a 100% mortality rate. P Mellor, Centre for Software Reliability, City University, London EC1. LIFE is not a linguistic item and hence has no meaning. The question makes as much sense as ‘What is the meaning of lumbago?’ Graham Bryant, Nottingham. LIFE is an acronym invented by Mr Kenneth Baker: Let In Free Enterprise. (Dr) P V Youle, New Milton, Hants. MY OLD pal Plotinus has it thus: ‘If a man were to enquire of Nature the reason of her creative activity, and she were willing to give ear and answer, she would say, “Ask not, but understand in silence, even as I am silent and am not wont to speak”.’ N J Crofton-Sleigh, Norwich. THE CONCISE Oxford Dictionary states that life is a ‘state of functional activity and continued change peculiar to organised matter and especially to the portion of it constituting an animal or plant before death.’ God knows (sic), Jeff Thirburn, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. LIFE has no meaning related to an external frame of reference, only the meaning that you decide to give it. It follows that any such meaning given is as valid as any other for you, and any change is also up to you. Have fun being Cesare Borgia on Wednesdays and St Francis on Thursdays. Brian Cattermole, Stevington, Beds. BEFORE directing the questioner to the nearest dictionary or his local priest I would strongly advise that this is a question not to be asked, unless rhetorically. History shows that individuals who asked this of themselves or others are prone to insanity, alcoholism or other addictions, even visions of religious ecstasy: none of these help in the least with an answer, only offering a temporary palliative for the passing of life while it is being experienced, or in providing hope for the hopeless. Matters such as destiny, happiness and other connected issues only complicate the question and should not be dragged on to the stage of reasoning. The greatest minds that have ever lived have not come near to answering this question; choose what eschatology you will for now. The chances are that whichever one you adhere to, we have all got it wrong (if only fundamentalists knew as much). This is a great mystery and long may it remain so. There is something a little dull about the prospect of knowing everything and our humble brains are not wired for that prospect. Life is for living, surely. James A Oliver, London WC2. ACCORDING to a BBC2 Horizon programme screened some months ago (not on April 1) the meaning of life may have something to do with the notion that the most important living entity on this planet, the Earth itself, may regulate various life forms within its confines in order to ensure its own survival. Thus, for example, although the sun is now very much hotter than it was at the dawn of life, the proportion of oxygen in the atmosphere has remained more or less constant at 21 per cent, any greater or lesser amount being catastrophic. This suggests some kind of self-regulating mechanism which may be provided by the gases, particularly from manure, of all living things. That would also explain various epidemics and natural disasters as Mother Earth controls the number of living creatures and thus the level and mixture of atmospheric gases. What the meaning of life is for Planet Earth is another matter. D Fisher, Maidenhead, Berks. A Monty Python film. Chris, Plymouth, UK To love yourself, to learn and to use what you have learned. Haldun Musaziloglu, London, UK The meaning of life is to make oneself better than any other form of life. Civilised society is therefore inherently wrong because it is for the benefit of many when each individual should be doing what they can to hinder others. Steven, Inverness, Scotland Add your answer

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