The MIT philosophy trivia quiz 2.0

collected and curated by:

the puritanical lip-pursing professor h. de bres
the strongly-believed-to-be-innocent professor a. byrne

note: we received absolutely no assistance from our uc boulder correspondent, professor “i couldn’t possibly comment” ■■■■■■■■
“Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*
1. match the review...

1. This book runs the full gamut from the mediocre to the ludicrous to the merely bad. It is painful to read, poorly thought out, and uninformed. It is also radically inconsistent.

   Note at foot of page: The review that appears here is not as I originally wrote it. The editors asked me to “soften the tone” of the original; I have done so, though against my better judgment.

2. It is puzzling to me how X could have clung to a theory with such obvious flaws for so long. Is this a case of becoming attached to a theory in callow youth and then finding oneself committed to it and not being able to let go? I am also puzzled as to why the obvious objections I have made were not urged on X over the years, as I assume they were not. What hindered critics from pressing such objections? That he is a nice guy, that the view sounds more complicated and daunting than it is, that he is highly intelligent, that he is from [distinguished university]?

3. It is mind-numbingly repetitive, toe-curlingly pretentious, and amateurish in the extreme ...

4. “Who can deny the mood-destroying effect of an errant flatus just at the moment of erotic fervor?” he writes. [His] book is just such a flatus, threatening to spoil an exciting intellectual moment for the rest of us. Sometimes with books, as with farts, it’s better to just hold it in.

   (a) McGinn on Scanlon
   (b) McGinn on Honderich
   (c) Strohminger on McGinn
   (d) McKenzie on McGinn
2. rinse and repeat:

1. That X’s book should be thought to be the best scholarly book in philosophy [this year] in the USA is disturbing because of its implications for the state of philosophical scholarship in America...If, as has been predicted, [the] book becomes the standard history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, then history will indeed be, as Henry Ford put it, ‘bunk’.

2. ...though X has a considerable turn for smart and epigrammatic writing, X hardly possesses the gift of lucid exposition. Yet on the whole [the] book, though crude and immature, is certainly interesting and suggestive...

3. It is difficult to come to grips with X’s ideas, because it is difficult to figure out what they are...X prefers a verbosity that causes the reader to expend so much effort in deciphering [the] prose that little energy is left for assessing the truth of the claims.

4. Let us have a look, then, at the very beginning of X’s [book] – the bottom, one might perhaps call it, of the garden path.

5. ....[the] book is likely to waste a great deal of a good many people’s time—though they will also gain some insights, and will at any rate get some exercise. Over the years X has collected a mass of criticisms of X’s views, but has thought it possible to insulate...from the effects of them by folding each in a little piece of cotton wool”

(a) Hare on Rawls
(b) Austin on Ayer
(c) Sidgwick on Bradley
(d) Hacker on Soames
(e) Nussbaum on Butler
3. books for our times

who penned

1. Mindfucking?
2. On Bullshit?
3. Holy Sh*t?
4. Assholes: A Theory?

Hint: one is a philosophy spouse
4. brawls

who:

1. threw an ashtray at Errol Morris?

2. threatened Popper with a poker?

3. replied to Mike Tyson’s ‘Do you know who the fuck I am? I’m the heavyweight champion of the world’, with:

   ‘And I am the former Wykeham Professor of Logic. We are both preeminent in our field; I suggest that we talk about this like rational men.’
5. identify the happy couples

1. ‘Why have children?’ and ‘The Tractatus is not all rubbish’
2. ‘Empathy and animal ethics’ and ‘Empathy and animal ethics’
3. ‘Defining knowledge’ and ‘Grokking pain’
4. ‘Macbeth’s dagger’ and ‘Heraclitus and the bath water’
5. *The subject’s point of view* and *The mechanical mind*
6. ‘Truthmaking for presentists’ and ‘Emergence and fundamentality’
7. *The sceptical feminist* and ‘We are not human beings’
8. ‘Holes’ and ‘Holes’
6. match the star to the movie

1. Bertrand Russell
(a) *The Dead Matter*
2. Daniel Dennett
(b) *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology*
3. Chris Robichaud
(c) *Aman* (1967 Bollywood)
4. Slavoj Žižek
(d) *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*
5. Alain de Botton
(e) *The Future is Now!*
6. David Sosa
(f) *Waking Life*
7. ejection

who vomited, or wants to?

1. At another time, Antisthenes had gone to see X when he was ill, and when he saw there a dish in which X had been sick, he said, “I see your bile there but I do not see your conceit.”

2. I don’t read much philosophy, it upsets me when I read the nonsense written by my contemporaries, the theory of extended mind makes me want to throw up.

3. People. You must love people. Men are admirable. I want to vomit—and suddenly, there it is: the Nausea.

4. I can’t read any more of the Michael Tooley documents or I will throw up.

   yuck
   ugh, argh
   gah
8. erection

who:

1. called pubic hair “nature’s furry bounty”?

2. explained that “the erectile organ can be equated with the √-1, the symbol of the signification produced above, of the jouissance it restores—by the coefficient of its statement—to the function of a missing signifier: (-1)”?

3. suggested that “jerking off the universe is perhaps what all philosophy, all abstract thought is about”?
9. ‘— Reason’? is easy, but try these:

1. Reason, _ and _
2. Reasons and _
3. The _ of _ Reason
4. _ and Reason
5. The _ of Reasons
6. Reasons without _
7. _ within Reason

(bonus points for >1 correct answer)
10. brags

who remarked:

1. “Fall schedule so far includes talks all over Italy, in Abu Dhabi, and in India. Good thing I am now a “Known Traveller.””

2. “Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.”

3. “Then there’s Evidence and Inquiry [which offers] most importantly, the detailed development of a whole new theory, foundherentism, intermediate between the traditional rivals...This was the book that won me a place—alongside Thales, Plato, Confucius, Kant, etc.—in Peter J. King’s book, 100 Philosophers: The Life and Work of the World’s Greatest Thinkers.”

4. “...the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems.”
finally: the award for best humblebrag...

“I am so grateful I discovered Plato and Aristotle late in my philosophical career. The experience of being so vastly outclassed philosophically is intense and a bit debilitating.”

...goes to?