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# Riddles Of Existence: A Guided Tour Of Metaphysics



## Synopsis

The riddles of metaphysics are the deepest and most puzzling questions we can ponder. *Riddles of Existence* is the first book ever to make metaphysics genuinely accessible and fun. Its lively, informal style brings these questions to life and shows how stimulating it can be to think about them. Earl Conee and Theodore Sider offer a lucid discussion of the major topics in metaphysics. What makes me the same person I was as a child? Is everything fated to be exactly as it is? Does time flow? How fast does it flow, and can one travel back in time, against the current? Does God exist? Why is there anything at all rather than nothing? If our actions are caused by things science can predict and control, how can we have free will? The authors approach these topics in an open-minded and undogmatic manner, giving readers a full sense of the issues involved. They don't try to convince us of their point of view. Instead, they hope that, by reading this book, we will come to appreciate the importance of such problems and develop reasoned opinions of our own. *Riddles of Existence* shows that philosophy can be exciting and important, and understandable by anyone.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Review from previous edition A series of hors d'oeuvres for intellectual diners.... The entertainment value lies in picking one's way through ingenious arguments, encountering along the way basic ideas like the law of the excluded middle and the principle of sufficient reason.... Mr. Conee and Mr. Sider like to start with a common-sense, real-life question--Why is the person in my baby picture the same as the person I see in the mirror today?--and then pick apart the comfortable assumptions that

carry most of us through life.... The questions are big. Do things occur by accident or necessity? Do humans have free will? Why does anything exist? Nothing is resolved, but a lot is discussed, and some famous arguments, like St. Anselm's devilishly clever proof of the existence of God, are presented clearly and understandably.' William Grimes, The New York Times

Earl Conee is Professor of Philosophy at University of Rochester Theodore Sider is Frederick Whiton Professor of Philosophy at Cornell University

A very good introductory book. It is impressive how accessible it is.

This is a tough read for the lay person, but it is an excellent book.

Great condition

This is a well written and easy to follow/understand text on the fundamental problems of metaphysics. A reliable starting point to grasp the main concepts before further investigations.

I really enjoyed the heck of of this book! Well written and a really entertaining read! I purchased it due to needing it as a supplemental textbook for an Intro. To Philosophy course at a JC!

"Riddles of Existence" covers central problems in general metaphysics and in special metaphysics. These include the nature of personal identity, free will, fatalism, the existence of God, material constitution, universals and modality. The problems and their proposed solutions are explained clearly and carefully, and the style is friendly and engaging. Conee and Feldman defend their own positions, and I often disagree with them, but I do not think that they are didactic; they usually treat alternative positions sympathetically and recommend further reading for each chapter. The book is supposed to be accessible to those without any previous exposure to metaphysics or to philosophy more generally, and I think that it is the most accessible introduction available. To be sure, beginners may find some of the discussion, for example, of the ontological argument and of universals, quite difficult and demanding. There is also what to my mind is an original formulation and treatment of the ontological argument, and the book may be of interest to more advanced readers. It also includes a chapter on the problem of why there exists anything at all, why there is something rather than nothing, which is typically neglected in introductions. I think that this book is a

fascinating and entertaining introduction for the general interested readers, and that it should also prove quite helpful to undergraduate philosophy students.

From personal identity to time to "why not nothing?", Conee and Sider have cooked up an introduction to metaphysical questions that are a lot of fun. The chapters can be read (and re-read) in any order and thought about for a lifetime. The book is designed for a general audience - at least a general audience that likes to think philosophically. At the end of each chapter you will find a helpful list of suggestions for further reading (mostly by contemporary philosophers). Don't be fooled by other reviews! The book is neither difficult nor hard to follow. The prose is clear, engaging, and any steps in its arguments are logical, sensible, and clearly labelled (labels aren't always used and aren't rocket science, but help with recall; if you have trouble figuring out that "P2" can stand for "phase 2" then you might end up a little befuddled here and there). This book is suitable for anyone in high school or above, though it might be found attractive by a precocious middle-schooler. But while accessible to a wide audience, it isn't a "dumbed-down" approach to philosophy.

This book is the crappiest introduction to metaphysics I've ever encountered. Both authors fail to see past the tips of their noses for one second to question whether it's even logical that this being of ultimate supremacy would even be male. I've studied metaphysics for years, and this is like going to a museum with a tour guide who just shows you around the front lobby and tells you where the bathroom is.

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