

Re: Some Simple Questions

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.logic/2005-03/0778.html>

From: David C. Ullrich (ullrich_at_math.okstate.edu)

Date: 03/20/05

Date: Sun, 20 Mar 2005 08:29:40 -0600

On 19 Mar 2005 15:39:19 -0800, "Charlie-Boo" <chvol@aol.com> wrote:

>

>David C. Ullrich wrote:

>> On 18 Mar 2005 12:24:32 -0800, "Charlie-Boo" <chvol@aol.com> wrote:

>> >

>> >> As I suggested: Why don't you re-read the question? It's

>> >> *_such_ a stupid question that it can't be what you actually*

>> >> *meant to ask.*

>> >

>> >> *It's stupid to not believe something that hasn't been proven?*

>> >

>> >> *No. Why don't you re-read what your question actually asked???*

>> >

>> >> *You didn't ask whether the lack of proof implies something*

>> >> *hasn't been proven. You asked whether the lack of an explicit*

>> >> *proof implies that something is false.*

>> >

>> >> *No. "implies" means logical certainty. I said "demonstrates",*

>> >> *"increases the probability", gives "confirming evidence".*

In fact "demonstrates" *_means_* "proves", at least in logic, which is where we are.

But it doesn't matter. So evidently you just didn't phrase your question quite accurately (as I suggested many times when I asked if you'd read what you'd written.) If we take your question and substitute the words "increases the probability"; gives "confirming evidence" for "demonstrates" it's still a silly question, although not quite as blatantly stupid as the original version.

>*The paper that makes unsubstantiated claims about what the authors accomplished is presumably expecting the reader to be persuaded that the claims are true. My point was that to a logical person it is only providing evidence that it is not true.*

Yes, this was your point. And that point is simply ridiculous – the supposed lack of substantiation does not provide evidence that the assertion is false.

And not that it's relevant to the question of why your question was so stupid, but in fact if we're talking about the paper and the assertion that I think we are, it's simply not true that there is no substantiating evidence in the paper. If I give a clear description of an algorithm in informal English, together with a proof in English that the algorithm does what is intended, then state that this could all be done by a computer program, the fact that I don't include any actual computer code in the paper does not give evidence that writing such a program is impossible.

Saying that the absence of code gives evidence that the program is impossible is stupid. Laughably, blatantly stupid. Expressing doubts as to whether the program is possible is another matter – whether that looks stupid depends on how clear the informal proof was. Here it does in fact make you look pretty clueless.

*>To add a little more detail: Suppose a paper describes a new system
>that purportedly generates proofs of given theorems. It contains all
>sorts of cryptic formalisms, and ends with the claim that the theorem
>has been proven.
>
>The naive reader will be impressed at the array of symbols, not
>understand them, and conclude that it must be some new advanced theory
>and that it is valid.*

Sorry, Charlie. The fact that something is too hard for you to follow does not prove that it's just a bluff with no actual content.

*>However, the logical reader knows that in the final analysis, any proof
>is a convincing argument that the given proposition is true.
>Formalisms do not constitute a proof. It is the logical argument that
>they represent that is the proof. If an intuitive, semi-formal
>convincing argument is not given, then there is no real proof.
>
>Similarly with a system that purportedly generates computer programs.
>The proof of the pudding is an actual, executable program that is
>created by the system. Short of this, the truth of the claim has not
>been supported.
>
>Furthermore, the lack of such real examples suggests only that the
>system does not work, and that the claims of success by the authors are
>>false.
>
>C-B
>
>> ******

>>
>> *David C. Ullrich*

David C. Ullrich