Yes or No Philosophy Tree

by Elliot Temple, 2019

Problem: We think of lots of ideas. How do we compare them? Which are good? Which should we believe or act on?

- Standard solution: Consider pros and cons of ideas. Add points for pros, subtract points for cons, highest score wins.
  - Some methods don't use numeric scores but work basically the same way.
  - Some cons, e.g. *contradicted by evidence*, may subtract a huge number of points or rule an idea out entirely.
    - After dealing with these cons, there are still many other ideas left which are compared based on pros and less important cons.
- YesNo solution: Get exactly one non-refuted idea and choose that.
  - If the issue isn't important, you can get several non-refuted ideas and choose arbitrarily.
  - Only uses decisive arguments. Other arguments count for nothing.
  - Uses meta theories.
    - Theory X is refuted for purpose P but part X2 can solve problem P2.
  - Uses new problems.
    - Got zero ideas plus time pressure and think you're gonna fail? Criticize the problem as inappropriate to your context. Too hard, should solve a different problem.
      - Recognizing difficulties and successfully solving an easier problem that you choose – and that you have no criticism of switching to – is ~infinitely better than failure.
    - Given we don't know X, what can do we?
      - Or for a discussion: Given we disagree about X, what can we agree on?
  - This is always possible to achieve with limited time and resources. It's not a theoretical option, we can do it.
    - That doesn't mean you can solve any problem now. It means you can live and act rationally. It means you can solve some problems using ideas with no known refutations and have a happy, productive life. You can make progress and never compromise on reason.