

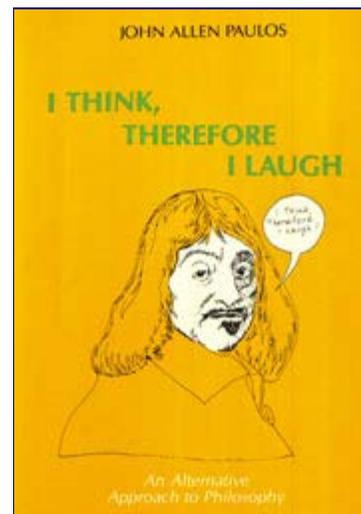


## A READER'S JOURNAL

### I Think, Therefore I Laugh by John Allen Paulos

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©1987

The title translates (thanks to Prof. Stephen L. Pearce) to: *Cogito ergo rideo* in Latin. *Ridere* is the root of *risible*, which means *laughable* or to laugh. I wonder if "to ride someone" originates from *ridere*?



Entomology(1) (and, of course, etymology) aside, Paulos wrote *Mathematics and Humor*, which I added to my humor collection several years ago (seriously). A wonderfully insightful writer, he brings humor to otherwise dreary subjects. The story from Leo Rosten about the kid who shot first and then drew bullseyes around them he says explains the organization and contents of this book: a miscellany of potshots with meaningful bullseyes drawn around them - examples:

- Friedrich Waissman, in his rebuttal to logical positivists, who claim that the meaning of every proposition (except their own) is in the method of its verification, said, "To believe metaphysics is nonsense is nonsense."
- Hy Marx (Groucho's estranged uncle) claimed that the smell associated with flatulence is for the benefit of the deaf.
- Howard Eves calculated the probability of there being two separate bombs on one airplane as so small that whenever he travels he carries one with him.
- Using medical research logic, Paulos proves that the lack of aspirin in the bloodstream causes headaches.
- When told that girls like these three topics of conversation in a man: food, family, and philosophy, the following tete-a-tete ensued:

He: Hello, do you like noodles?

She: <startled> Why, no.

He: Do you have a brother?

She: No.

He: If you had a brother, would he like noodles?

- Wife laughs at distraught husband with a loaded .45 at his temple. "Don't laugh," he said, "you're next." Ever notice that when people say "Don't laugh" that a laugh usually follows? There's a paradox in there somewhere.
- Told by his doctor to take a calming ten mile walk each day, the man reports in a month later "Things are fine. I'm very relaxed, but I'm 300 miles from home."
- Step right up and win the million dollar lottery: \$1 a year for a million years.

Let's leave laughing with a comment on "man's inhumanity to man." "That's what communism is all about," you say? I agree, but with Western governments, it's the other way around, up until now.

----- *Footnote* -----

**Footnote 1.**

Like in, "Waiter, there's a fly in my soup."  
"Yes, I see it. It's doing the breast stroke."

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