

From: Shoko Miura

Thank you so much, Brian, for a succinct and forceful reply to my comments on Akiko's paper. As Zoran wrote, your clarity of expression is amazing. Here are my thoughts, not really questions, to your reply.

In your first paragraph, do you mean that Moore's paradox, "I don't believe it is raining, and yet, it is raining," is not a paradox but a contradiction? I think you are right, but one point bothers me--why did Wittgenstein take it as a paradox? I thought I understood it but now I am not sure. Perhaps Akiko can help me, too.

In your second paragraph, I admit my definition of coincidence was incomplete. I asked my question about coincidence because VN seems fascinated by coincidences and near-miss coincidences in his works and even in his past life. The essential part of coincidence, as you pointed out, is that it is an unexpected "conjunction" of at least two events. When a coincidence happens, one can take it either as an occurrence of fate or sheer chance, depending on whether you see time as "fixed" (predetermined) or "open." If time is open, there are degrees of "improbability" of the occurrence, so we call an event a coincidence when it is improbable to a certain degree. If time is fixed, coincidences cannot occur since there is no question of "probability." The occurrence is predetermined. Am I right in following your argument so far? To avoid dialectic thinking, I should say that when we call an event as coincidental, each of us differs in the actual degree of believing or disbelieving in predetermination. When VN creates ghosts in his stories, we are never sure if he believes in predetermined events. He leaves the question open since, as you say, "the world is open." I see now that his ghosts reveal his emphasis on ambiguity as a necessary consequence of his concept of time.

Thank you again for your wonderful thoughts and your patience with my questions. I learned so much from you again.