

Total points: 10

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Instructions:

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You believe that the earth is round. The fact that the earth is round explains why someone traveling in the same direction eventually gets back to the same spot, why the earth appears as a disk from the surface of the moon, and so on. However, there are people who belong to an organization called the “Flat Earth Society,” and they believe that the earth isn’t really round at all. To explain why travellers can get back to the same spot by apparently going in the same direction, Flat Earthers have to claim that compasses and other navigational devices systematically mislead us. We think we’re going in the same direction, but we’re really not. To explain why pictures from the moon show the earth as a disk, Flat Earthers say that there was a conspiracy to preserve the conviction that the earth is round, and the moon landings and pictures were all faked. The Flat Earth story is just too complicated to be believable. A much simpler and better explanation of everything is that the earth really is round. If we were to generalize this point, we would be saying that other things being equal, a simpler, more economical explanation is better than a less simple, unnecessarily complicated one. Now consider the skeptical scenario discussed in class where a supercomputer is simulating the experiences you are having. Your experience is caused by computer files with electronic properties, such that the files exactly mimic everyday objects and events. What is a more economical explanation of your experiences: that they were caused by objects and events in the real world (non-skeptical scenario) or that they were caused by a supercomputer (skeptical scenario)?