

STRANGE PARADOXES

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The Colloquy in the November 1976 issue of *Word Ways* mentions the curious fact that buttermilk is milk from which the butter content has been removed. This makes buttermilk the opposite of what it ought to be, judging by its name: milk containing butter.

The oddity is not a recently discovered one. It was first mentioned, many years ago, in Ripley's "Believe It or Not". Actually, the strange characteristic of buttermilk is shared by various other dairy products. Normally, ice cream contains no ice and cottage cheese contains no cottages.

Considered from another point of view, the buttermilk paradox is one of a large number of paradoxes latent in our language. For some reason, most of these paradoxes have never been mentioned in print. Accordingly, it seems useful to present a collection of these paradoxes, 27 in number, in this article. Readers are invited to discover additional paradoxes and to submit them to the editor for future publication.

More importantly, readers are also invited to try their hand at devising a logical system for classifying the paradoxes. The problem of categorization appears to be a singularly vexing one. For example, it is obvious that some of the paradoxes listed here are conditional ones, while others are absolute ones. Or, there are several different styles of presenting the paradoxes in order to bring them out most effectively. However, no matter what classification principle is applied, one soon discovers that some of the paradoxes lie outside its scope, and that the principle overlaps other possible classification principles. Conceivably, a solution to the categorization problem will become obvious when a much larger number of paradoxes has been collected. For the moment, the problem is a baffling mystery.

1. You down Seven-Up.
2. To walk down the street is to walk up the street.
3. The second hand is the third hand on the face of a clock, since the hour hand is the first one and the minute hand is the second one.
4. The second hand on the face of a clock gives us firsthand information about the time.
5. Your wife may be your future former wife.
6. Yesterday's tomorrow is tomorrow's yesterday.

7. Nighttime is daytime, because the night is part of the 24-hour day.
8. The late, late show on TV invariably starts early in the morning.
9. MASCULINE is feminine, in French: it is the feminine form of the adjective MASCULIN.
10. When a man sleeps with a woman, he is fully awake.
11. If Mr. Black is a Caucasian, then Black is white.
12. If Mr. White is playing the black pieces in a chess game, then White is Black.
13. If Mr. Green is embarrassed, then Green is red.
14. An inexperienced Communist is a green Red.
15. If the left direction is the right one, then right is wrong.
16. A light package is a heavy package, if it is pale yellow in color and weighs more than 250 pounds.
17. Was there, indeed, a virgin birth?
18. The king is dead, long live the king!
19. Many believe that to die is to be born -- into another world.
20. On the highway, you must slow down in a speed zone.
21. To be hot is to be cool: both words mean "very good" or "excellent".
22. The laughing gull has a distinctive cry.
23. An even number that is also a prime number is an exceedingly odd number: in fact, the only known one is the number two.
24. To fill a form out is to fill it in.
25. In football, a player may start as an end.
26. If he occupies the proper position in the game of bridge, then Mr. North is South.
27. The Roman Catholic College of Cardinals, which is not a college at all, now includes a Cardinal Sin: Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila (his surname is Chinese). Little does he know that Sin is God: Sin was the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian moon god, conceived of as the Lord of Wisdom.