

The Last Question by Isaac Asimov

The Last Question is a science fiction story by Isaac Asimov. The story presents episodic stages in the human-machine evolution with the first story set in the year 2061.

The first time humanity asked Multivac the titular question was when two technicians, Alexander Adell and Bertram Lupov, were celebrating Multivac's solution for solar power on 21st May 2061. The energy that Multivac can generate from the Sun in order of magnitude is more than Earth can generate from coal and other non-renewable resources. Adell says they have enough energy to last forever. Lupov contradicts them, saying that it will only last for billions and billions of years but that entropy means we will run out of energy. So the two technicians challenge Multivac to learn whether entropy might be reversed. Multivac's answer is, "INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Far into the future, a family of pioneers, Jerrodd, Jerrodine, and Jerrodette I and II, have exited hyperspace near their new home; planet X - 23. A casual mention of entropy by Jerrodd has upset his daughters, so they ask Microvac if entropy can be reversed. Reassuring his daughters that Microvac has solved everything, he puts them to bed. Before disposing of the answer, Jerrodd reads the answer again, "INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Even further into the future, two people, VJ-23X of Lameth and MQ-17J of Nicron, are preparing a report for the Galactic Council about humanity's rate of expansion in the galaxy. They realize that the rate of energy expenditure is even higher than the rate of human expansion. VJ-23X jokingly suggests that MQ-17J asks the Galactic AC if entropy can be

reversed. It answers, "THERE IS INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Jumping ahead again, we meet Zee Prime and Dee Sub Wun, who are essentially Energy Beings because their immortal bodies are left alone on planets while their minds are free to traverse the galaxies. In a fit of curiosity, they ask the Universal AC to show them the original galaxy from which humanity was born, then ask to see the original star. Of course, this is so many millions of years into the future, the sun is now a white dwarf, and Zee Prime becomes depressed, realizing that all the stars will burn out. So they ask the Universal AC how they might reverse entropy, and it answers, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

It is Just Before the End now, and Man is the only person left; a compilation of the minds of trillions upon trillions upon trillions of human beings. Man speaks to the Universal AC three times to request an answer on how entropy might be reversed. Each time, the answer remains the same; "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

After the End of the universe, all data has been collected. Space is gone, and Time has disappeared with it. Ten trillion years was not enough to determine an answer to the last question. But the data had not been comprehensively correlated, so the Cosmic AC spends a period of contemplation sorting through the data and seeing how it all fits together. Finally, an answer is determined, and the AC considers the formless void that once held a universe.

To properly answer the question, it would become a Universe again, And AC said, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!" And there was light.

(Edited for Students, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Literature/TheLastQuestion>)

(Click on the link: <https://youtu.be/c8zrpl5Y2DY>)