

Star Trek TNG: “The Measure of a Man”

For up to **+6XP**, send answers to these questions to Stephen via email (subject line “CPSC 415 - Star Trek”) no later than **Wednesday, Nov. 22nd at midnight**. Answers to each question should be between 1–6 sentences.

1. If you had to create a poker-playing agent, do you think that anticipating the possibility of “bluffing” would make it significantly more difficult to program? Would dealing with bluffs merely require logic like any other logic in the program, or is it qualitatively different somehow?
2. Commander Maddox calls Data “it” instead of “he”/“him.” He obviously does this to express a certain conviction about what kind of entity Data *is*. Why do you think the absence of *gender* (of all things) suggests a being’s non-sentience?
3. What point is Data making with its/his question about Lieutenant Geordi La Forge’s cybernetic eyes?
4. Why does Data refuse to undergo the procedure? Is it because it/he disagrees with the logic presented by Commander Maddox about the costs and benefits? Or because it/he weights things differently in its/his utility function? Or something else?
5. What does Data accept that Commander Maddox is able to do with a positronic brain*, and what does it/he doubt?
6. What do you think of the comparisons Commander Maddox makes between (a) Data and a box with wheels, and (b) Data and the Enterprise Computer? Do you agree these are valid comparisons? Why or why not?
7. Summarize the evidence *for* Data’s being “property” presented by Commander Riker. Which specific parts of it do you believe are relevant and compelling to the question, and which are not?
8. Summarize the evidence *against* Data’s being “property” presented by Captain Picard. Which specific parts of it do you believe are relevant and compelling to the question, and which are not?
9. What are Commander Maddox’s three conditions for “sentience?” And are these indeed the key criteria required for a being having rights? Why or why not?
10. Finally, do you agree with JAG Captain Louvois’s ruling in the case? Why or why not?

*Btw, the term “positronic brain,” like so much of science fiction in this area, is from Isaac Asimov’s “Robot” book series. –SD