

WHICH COMES FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG? EXAMINING THE CRISIS & CONFLICTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNANSWERED CONUNDRUM

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Abstract

The indecision about an answer to the question 'Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?' led to the research for the conclusion on the topic. Previous research and numerous articles exist on the subject; however, a clear answer has not been obtained, largely due to the differing views presented and contrasting knowledge. Data from credible online sources, religious texts, and articles were used in this paper, and the comparative method was used to compare each view to find gaps and unity between them. Some views were of the fact that the egg came first; however, they were discounted due to the fact that the case in question was of the hard-shelled egg, in which case, the chicken was proven to come first. This study is significant in the fact that it asks deep questions about origin, cause and effect, and even evolution. The results provide a clear and better understanding of life as we know it!

Keywords: Chicken; Conundrum; Egg; Evolution; Hard-Shelled Egg; Paradox.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

For generations, the question 'Which comes first, the Chicken or the Egg?' has been an intensely debated paradox (Wogu, 2010 and Wogu, 2011). The answer constantly circles back to the question proposed. In today's world, however, it is more than a riddle. It inspires thought about more than just the chicken. It asks questions about the fundamental existence of life around us. It seeks to uncover our origins, tracing our roots and the essence of our being (Wogu, 2011). In short, it is not an empty question. It is a conundrum that, when explained, gives us the answer to our very existence.

1.2 Problem Statement:

It is a fact that the chicken came from an egg; however, the origins are unclear. Different branches of knowledge, such as biology, chemistry, and even religion, propose alternative theories regarding the evolution of the egg. Children address it as a riddle to be solved. No clear answer has ever been brought forth. Such problems were the varying ideas around the topic. Another issue was a matter of interpretation. This question is vague. Therefore, individuals usually have their own answers to the question, based on their beliefs. There is significant discourse among knowledgeable individuals about the exact answer to the proposed question. Most remain unsettled.

1.3 Research Questions:

This research paper seeks to address the following research questions:

How do the theory of evolution, principles of religion, and biological evidence provide evidence for the answer?

Based on the existing theories, what came first, the chicken or the egg?

1.4 Research Objectives:

This research study aims to:

Evaluate the relationship between the chicken and the egg.

Provide sufficient evidence, based on the theory of evolution, principles of religion, and biological factors, to answer the research question.

Determine, using scientific evidence and research done by other theorists, which came first, the chicken or the egg.

1.5 Relevance of the Study:

Research on the question, *‘Which came first, the chicken or the egg?’* is important because it encourages examination of questions related to the origins of existence and species. Investigating this paradox highlights the processes of evolution and reveals complexities in current understanding about life. Furthermore, it promotes critical thinking and analysis across philosophical and scientific disciplines.

1.6 Scope of Study:

The inquiry into the age-old question of *‘Which came first, the chicken or the egg?’* has been a riddle for a long time. In this paper, the importance of this question will be established as a philosophical, biological, and theoretical issue (Christianity Stack Exchange, 2022). This question has implications for debates about origins, processes of life, and theories of evolution. This research aimed to analyse evidence related to whether the chicken or the egg came first. It focuses on the evolution of species and interpretations from religious and philosophical texts, limiting the discussion to sources from historical, medieval, and early scientific periods for simplicity.

This study will primarily focus on biological evolution to address the central question. Evolutionary evidence offers insight into the changes and origins of species, enabling a deeper understanding of how eggs and chickens evolved. The paper will also draw on religious, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives to provide additional context, although the emphasis remains on biological processes.

This research has certain limitations. It will not attempt a comprehensive analysis of all bird species or all possible religious viewpoints. Instead, it is limited to theoretical knowledge and philosophical ideas that have a direct connection to the chicken-and-egg paradox.

1.7 Research Methodology:

This study employed methods such as comparative analysis to find evidence to prove which came first. Religious texts, such as the Qur'an and the Bible, would be referenced. Approved theories from established philosophers, such as Aristotle and Socrates, would also be examined. Credible online sources and peer-reviewed journals were used to find an answer to the question. The research was qualitative and literature-based. It compared the findings from theories of evolution and biological textbooks. It included references from the works of renowned scientists, which would further substantiate the claim of which came first.

1.8 Organization of the Research Article:

This paper comprises six chapters, each addressing a distinct aspect of the research. The first chapter, titled "Introduction," discusses the background of the study, including the research questions and objectives, the statement of the research problem, the scope and limitations, the methodology, and the definitions of key terms.

The second chapter, titled "*Theoretical Framework for the Research*," includes the relevant existing theories, their underlying concepts, and definitions.

The third chapter, entitled "*Review of Relevant Literature*," delivers a comprehensive analysis of scholarly contributions to the debate. It identifies pertinent philosophical texts and evaluates their significance. Historical context and ongoing debates regarding the precedence of the chicken or the egg are also examined.

The fourth chapter, titled "*Methodology*," explains how the questions are answered. It expands on the research methods, the process by which the research was conducted, and the sources of evidence.

The fifth chapter, Result Presentation and Data Analysis, provides a detailed interpretation of the research findings. It contains a comprehensive discussion of the theoretical frameworks, evidentiary support, and key results emerging from the study.

Last but not least is the *Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation*. This last section contains the summary of the entire project. It provides a clear and concise conclusion to the argument of which came first and offers recommendations for further insight.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms:

Chicken: This term refers to the common domesticated fowl, specifically *Gallus domestica* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025) (Chicken, 2025)

Egg: This refers to the biological reproductive structure laid by female birds, particularly with a hard outer shell. This study focuses on avian eggs (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). (Egg, 2025)

Evolution: This refers to the changes in the proportions of biological types in a population over time (Millstein, 2024) (Curtis et al., 1989, pp. 974-975)

Paradox: This is a statement that seems contradictory in nature, yet is perhaps true (Merriam-Webster, 2025) (Paradox, 2025)

The *Chicken or the egg?* encompasses more than a paradox; it represents a fundamental philosophical problem. This study aims to address this question by combining insights from various disciplines. The goal is to encourage thoughtful consideration of existence and evolutionary theory while providing a precise analysis of this enduring debate.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 A Review of Relevant Philosophical Theories:

2.1.a Review of Metaphysical Theories:

The query on what came first, the chicken or the egg, deals with the nature of reality. It addresses questions about what it means to exist and how things come into existence. Thinkers like Martin Heidegger (1889-1973), Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Kierkegaard, who is regarded as the father of existentialism, offer significant and profound views on what it means to exist (Berard, 2023). (Sartre, 2007) even stated that *Existence precedes essence*. Relating that to our present argument, it would be safe to conclude that the existentialists would be of the notion that the chicken came before the egg.

2.1.b Review of Causality Theories:

New Scientist defines causality as the study of how things influence one another, essentially how causes lead to effects. To answer the question from this perspective, several questions need to be addressed. How did the chicken and the egg come into existence? What caused them to be intertwined? Moreover, what is the effect of their connection? We see the infinite loop of the chicken and the egg. The chicken lays the egg, then the egg hatches into the chicken, which then lays another egg. This loop is called the **Infinite Regress** in philosophy.

Cameron, (2018) defines an infinite regress as a philosophical concept that describes a series of entities. Each entity in the series depends on its predecessor, following a recursive principle (Cameron, 2018). It is a series of appropriately related elements, with a first member but no last member, where each element leads to, or generates, the next in some sense (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018). (Infinite regress, 2025) In this case, what exactly was the FIRST cause, the chicken or the egg?

2.1.c Review of Teleological Theories:

Teleology, as first proposed by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, is the belief that everything has a purpose or meaning. Teleology is primarily found in biological studies, as it relates to the nature of living organisms (EBSCO, 2025). (Biscontini & Tyler, 2025) This relates to the chicken-and-egg question, as finding the purpose of a creation also helps in determining its origin. Teleology asks whether the egg was made *for* the chicken, or the chicken *for* the egg.

2.2 A Review of Scientific Theories:

Scientifically, an answer to the paradox has been found. The literal chicken-and-egg dilemma has been traced back to its origins (Uhuegbu, Ukpokolo, & Wogu, 2011). On the other hand, Cameron, (2018) defined evolution as the change in the inheritable characteristics of biological populations over successive generations (Cameron, 2018). For Maurin, (2007). Evolutionary biologists were able to trace the origin of the chicken back over countless generations, made possible by the Darwinian principle that states species evolve. The chicken might not have even been a chicken in its earliest stages. The final answer arrived at the chicken (in the case of the hard-shelled egg), due to the creation of the egg, which is solely dependent on a protein found only inside a chicken (CBS News, 2010) (Chicken Came Before the Egg: 'Scientific Proof', 2010)

2.3 A Review of Religious Perspectives:

Another way to view the question is from a religious perspective. Many religions in the world have their thoughts on the question, but only the Islamic and Christian views will be discussed here.

Islamically, it was not explicitly stated which came first; rather, the question of Creation was answered. Instead of focusing solely on individual entities, Allah (God) willed that there be life, and so it was. Moreover, since He created everything at a mature age, the chicken had to have come first. In Islam, it is believed that Allah created the entire universe in six days. The Heights (7:54)

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then established Himself on the Throne. He makes the day and night overlap in rapid succession. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars- all subject to His command. The creation and the command belong to Him ĒaloneĒ. Blessed is Allah, Lord of all worlds! (Quran, 7:54, Sahih International).

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٥٤

The Christian perspective also affirms that the chicken came first. BibleStudyGuide.org stated that "to Christians, the biblical account of God creating birds tells us that the chicken came before the egg." Then God said, 'Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and **let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.**' God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying,

'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and **let birds multiply on the earth.**' There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day (Gen. 1:20-23) (BibleStudyGuide.org, n.d.; NASB).

In summary, ancient and medieval views on the debate, which included philosophers like Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, were of the notion that the chicken came first. At the same time, early scientists and naturalists believed that the egg came first, influenced by Anaximander's ideas that all life began at the sea, leading to discussions of evolution. With the help of some philosophical theories, we were able to present two important perspectives from which to view the debate: the scientific and the religious. While

the scientific perspective dealt with hard facts obtained from years of research, the religious perspective dealt with facts derived from Holy books, which were considered divine messages to believers. Both perspectives concluded that the chicken came first, in the case of the hard-shelled egg.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction to Chapter Three:

This chapter reviews philosophical, theoretical, scientific, and religious ideas to explore potential answers to the proposed research question. The works of philosophers such as Socrates and Plato would be examined where relevant, alongside scientific theories like evolution, and religious texts like the Quran and the Holy Bible. Examples would be outlined, and an attempt would be made to justify the logic necessary to answer the research question.

3.2 Review of Relevant Literature:

3.2.1 Conceptual Clarification of Key Terms:

The key concepts to be discussed here are:

Chicken: Biologically, a chicken (*Gallus gallus domestica*) is a domesticated fowl primarily descended from the wild red jungle fowl of India, that is raised for its meat and eggs (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). Symbolically, the chicken refers to an existing being, i.e., any living thing, be it an animal, plant, or human being (Chicken, 2025). It represents that whose origin is unknown.

Egg: An egg, in the context of the research question, is the content of the hard-shelled reproductive body produced by a bird, considered as food (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). (Egg Definition & Meaning, 2025) Philosophically, however, it represents the origin from which living things come. It acts metaphorically as the point of emergence, the *how and why* of basic existence. More will be explained later in the chapter.

Origin: This refers to the point or place where something begins or is created. It is the source or cause of something.

Causality: This refers to the relationship between cause and effect. It examines how and why a particular effect occurs, and what causes it to happen (Causality Definition, 2025)

3.2.2 Historical Overview of the Conundrum:

3.2.2.a A Review of Ancient Views on the Debate:

The ‘Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?’ debate has been ongoing for at least 2,000 years. The oldest recorded reference to the question proposed goes back to a collection of discussions and essays by the Greek historian Mestrius Plutarchus, who was born in 46AD (The Guardian, 2006) (Chicken or the egg, 2006). The problem of the egg and the hen, which came first, was raised in our discussion, a complex issue that poses considerable challenges for investigators (The Guardian, 2006) (Which came first, the

chicken or the egg? 2006). There, he also hinted at the significance of the conundrum and how the question could be a metaphor for the creation of the world.

Aristotle was also among the philosophers who encountered the chicken-egg paradox. Big Think framed Aristotle's *unmoved mover* concept in the language of the chicken-egg conundrum. He was on the side that stated the chicken came first because, according to his principles, form comes before matter. They also related it to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic concept of God and how the influential philosopher Thomas Aquinas drew from this concept to develop his five arguments for the existence of God, known as The Five Ways.

3.2.2.b A Review of Medieval Views on the Debate:

As introduced in the previous point, the famous philosopher St Thomas Aquinas drew from Aristotle's concept of the unmoved mover forms the basis of his five arguments for the existence of God. This is relevant in exploring the chicken-egg paradox, as it provides insight into what Aquinas believed. He believed that everything came from God and that everything originated from Him. This means that he believed God to be the first and most perfect being; therefore, he would have concluded that the chicken came first, as God created it, and then came the egg (Patheos, 2016) (Which Came First, the Science or the Atheism? 2016). One common feature of Medieval philosophy was its approach to origins, viewed through the lens of divine causality.

3.2.2.c A Review of Modern/Early Scientific Views on the Debate:

With the turn of the scientific age, more knowledge on evolutionary science was discovered. This led to the attempt at the conundrum. National Geographic stated that Anaximander of Miletus, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E., was a Greek philosopher "who was one of the first to propose ideas aimed at explaining how organisms change over time." He speculated that humans must have descended from some creature whose young could survive without any help. He concluded that those ancestors must have been fish, as their young are independent immediately they hatch from their eggs. From this, he proposed that all life began in the sea (National Geographic Education, 2023) (Anaximander of Miletus, 2023).

From this, Charles Darwin published his famous book, *On the Origin of Species*. He and a scientific contemporary, Alfred Russel Wallace, proposed that evolution occurs due to a phenomenon called natural selection (National Geographic Education, 2023). (Alfred Wallace, 2023) According to this theory, humans may have originated from the sea. Based on this, early scientists and naturalists concluded that the egg originated first, then evolved into the chicken.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction:

The inquiry into which comes first, the chicken or the egg, while seemingly looping, has a definite answer. In this research paper, I utilised credible online sources to compare and contrast the knowledge gained from numerous attempts to answer the question. This was philosophical research, viewed from an

argumentative and comparative angle (Berard, 2023). I read through many online articles to find appropriate sources, conducted my analysis, and evaluations.

4.2 Philosophical Approaches:

The philosophical approach used in this paper entails reviewing debates on existence and beingness, from the views of philosophers such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Plato.

4.3 Metaphysical Approaches:

Metaphysics deals with the questions of reality and existence. It involves questions concerning the origin and nature of reality (Van Inwagen et al., 2023). This study is primarily rooted in metaphysical inquiry, as the origin of the egg and the chicken remains a topic of debate. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas provide a solid foundation for the research that proceeded.

4.4 Epistemological Approaches:

This study also approaches the question epistemologically. It is what ensures that we know what we know and how we know it (Steup & Neta 2024). It lays the groundwork for the knowledge to be gained and added to the topic of the debate. While the debate may seem to have an answer based on basic reasoning, this suggests that empirical knowledge is necessary to legitimate the answer obtained.

4.5 Teleological Approaches:

Teleology, concerned with purpose, is another important approach to the debate. The question of whether the chicken and egg were created with purpose, and if so, what the purpose is, and how finding the purpose could provide an answer to the origin (Ginsborg, 2022).

4.6 Logical and Analytical Approaches:

The use of logic and fundamental analysis was employed in this paper. Questions on whether something can occur without cause, if so, what would be the effect, and whether the question proposes a fallacy.

4.7 Comparative Approaches:

Ancient thinkers mainly had ideas about how life began. Thinkers like Aristotle believed that there was a spiritual origin before actuality, and thus, he posited a continuous cycle of both the chicken and the egg. With the rise of religion in medieval times, thinkers like Aquinas believed that everything came from God and had a purpose, leading to the idea that the chicken came first. Modern evolutionary theory posits that life originated in the sea, with the egg coming first before it later evolved into the chicken. However, biological studies disproved this with the discovery of a protein responsible for forming the hard-shelled egg, which is unique to the chicken. By comparing these approaches, the answer to the question was obtained (Lapidge, 2009, pp. 20-38).

4.8 Sources of Data:

Philosophical texts by Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas, along with religious texts such as the Qur'an and the Holy Bible, as well as credible online sources like encyclopedias, journals, and articles, were critically reviewed to provide a conclusive answer to the debate. They were mainly secondary sources.

4.9 Scope and Limitations:

This paper encountered several limitations, including a lack of access to primary sources, unintentional bias, limited resources, and a dependence on Western thinkers and philosophers.

5.0 RESULT PRESENTATION AND THE ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Introduction:

Inquiry and evidence into '*Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?*' has been asked for centuries and generations. It is more than a childish riddle, and when the paradox is looked at deeper, and with logical conclusions, a clear answer is presented. This question is important because it asks fundamental questions about origins, cause and effect, purpose, and even evolution. It is necessary for both scientific and philosophical reasoning to enhance understanding of the principles of life.

5.2 A Presentation of the Main Arguments:

Theologians and religious believers argue that the chicken came first, based on the idea of divine influence.

Biology argues that the chicken came first in the case of the hard-shelled egg because, as New Scientist posted on its website, its origin from the red junglefowl found in the forests of Southeast Asia, up to parts of Southwest China. The species had been interbred with other junglefowl species, resulting in the domestic chicken years later. The argument centres around the fact that 'the chicken would have developed within a junglefowl egg and only produced the very first chicken's egg on reaching maturity. Evolutionary science, however, as reported by New Scientist, states that since the chicken resulted from interbreeding between the red junglefowl and other junglefowl species, which in turn evolved from an amniote egg, the egg came first (New Scientist, n.d.).

Philosophically, the chicken came first, because existence preceded essence (Sartre, 2007).

5.3 An Analysis of the Major Contending Arguments:

Theologians and religious believers argue that the chicken came first. They concluded that because God created the universe and everything in it, the chicken was fully formed at the moment of creation. Their evidence came in the form of holy scriptures, which were believed to have been sent by God Himself.

With the numerous studies on the evolution of birds providing considerable evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the egg came first (Hoyt, 2023). It is important, however, to distinguish the type of egg discussed (hard-shelled chicken egg) from amniotic eggs.

The saying existence precedes essence is logically sound because for there to be essence, something needs to exist for this to have said essence.

5.4 My submission on the Ongoing Debate:

Based on all the views and perspectives approached, I believe that the chicken came before the egg. When examining it logically, we find evidence from religious scriptures and philosophical reasoning. As a Muslim, I believe wholeheartedly in the Quran, and for it to have backed up scientific evidence further proves that indeed the chicken came before the egg.

6.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Summary:

The inquiry on which comes first, the chicken or the egg, is a conundrum that was not easily answered. Different branches of knowledge were employed to obtain the answer. There were theories from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and even an idea on evolution by Anaximander of Miletus. A comparison was made between ancient, medieval, and early scientific periods, which were then translated into scientific and religious approaches to arrive at a conclusive answer. The question demonstrated a level of philosophical complexity that spanned the principles of knowledge.

6.2 Conclusion:

Re-examining the points presented in the debate, I believe that the chicken came first. My conclusion was based on religious and biological facts and evidence provided, which trumped the other evidence. The paradox is important in the question of origin and causality. It addressed the unknowns we face over how we were created and why.

6.3 Recommendations:

For further research, African and Eastern philosophies should be studied to understand how these philosophies apply to this paradox. Thoughts from other cultures on the subject would help ground the answer in a more definitive conclusion

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