The memory skepticism solution to the surprise exam paradox

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Abstract. Will a surprise exam happen in the next school week? The memory skepticism solution says, "The students should expect a rational student on the penultimate evening of that week to open themselves up to the possibility that the exam may have happened already, rather than predicting that the exam will happen tomorrow."

Has Kripke actually been to school?

He adds to the situation this and that rule

But I can only imagine him in the swimming pool

A teacher announces that there will be a surprise exam on one day in the next school week. The school week lasts from Monday to Friday and the school day from 9am to 4pm. The students reason that a surprise exam cannot happen. If no exam is given by the end of the penultimate school day of that week, Thursday, then in the evening the students would be able to predict that the exam will happen on the final day, Friday, tomorrow for them. That is the only day left. But because they can predict this, the exam will not be a surprise on that day. So it will not happen on Friday. But then if no exam has been given by the end of the school day before the penultimate day of that week, that is to say by 4pm Wednesday, then in the evening the students would be able to predict that it will happen tomorrow, Thursday. For it will not happen on Friday, for it will not be a surprise on that day. But because they can predict this, then it will not happen on Thursday, because it will also not be a surprise on this

day. By repeating this reasoning further backwards, they rule out each day of the next school week.

Has the students' clever argument gone wrong somewhere? I said that the school day lasts from 9am to 4pm, but more precisely that is just the time in which compulsory lessons occur and lunch breaks too. Some staff are in the school after 4pm and perhaps there are some after-school activities held there and detentions occur then as well. Now imagine a student who makes a complaint when lessons have finished on Thursday to the teacher's boss, the headmaster or headmistress, saying, "I can predict the exam will happen tomorrow so the teacher has misled us. The teacher promised a surprise exam this week." The teacher's boss says, "Are you sure the exam has not happened already?" and "Are you absolutely sure of that?" in a skeptical tone.

The teacher boss's suggestion here is this: "The student began the week with the assumption that the exam has not happened already, but what the student should think on Thursday evening is not that the exam will happen tomorrow, as the paradoxical argument maintains, rather that perhaps the exam has happened already and they have somehow forgotten this or failed to notice this. After all, if they are in a position to conclude that it will happen tomorrow, then it will not be a surprise and the teacher said it would be a surprise! They should at this time doubt the assumption."

Reference

Kripke, S. 2011. On Two Paradoxes of Knowledge. *Philosophical Troubles: Collected Papers, Volume 1.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.