Why John Buridan (c. 1300 – after 1358) should be remembered for more than cruelty to animals

Tony Mann
Buridan’s Ass
Buridan’s Ass

Cham, *Le Charivari*, 1859, Wikimedia Commons

W.A. Rogers, *New York Herald*, c.1900, Wikimedia Commons
Buridan on self-reference

I say that I am the best-looking man at MathsJam

Am I telling the truth?
Buridan on self-reference

Proposition:

Someone at this moment is unsure whether a proposition is true or false
Buridan on self-reference

Socrates wants to cross bridge Plato is guarding.

Plato will let Socrates cross if he makes a true statement but will throw him in the river if the statement is false.

Socrates: “You will throw me in the river”
What else did Buridan do?

Theory of Impetus
($\approx$ Newton’s First Law)

“Created modern theory of money”

“somewhere found on internet”, Wikimedia Commons
What else did Buridan do?

Hit future Pope Clement VI on head with shoe, giving him remarkable memory.

Thrown into Seine in a sack by King of France because of his affair with the Queen.
Où est la très sage Heloïs,
Pour qui fut chastré et puis moyne
Pierre Esbaillart à Sainct-Denys?
Pour son amour eut cest essoyne.
Semblablement, où est la royne

Qui commanda que Buridan
Fust jetté en ung sac en Seine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan!

François Villon

"Ballade des dames du temps jadis"
Thank you for listening!