

"It is open to every man to choose the direction of his striving; and also every man may draw comfort from Lessing's fine saying, that the search for truth is more precious than its possession."

– Einstein¹

We all know children love asking the question "why?" We were once ourselves in a constant state of curiosity. Unfortunately, we know many people who, as adults, no longer question or reflect. The universe depends on mankind's insatiable desire to discover truth, and the current deficit of that is unnatural and detrimental to society. This is not to simply say that the universe is waiting on us to create new states of matter, but that it thrives on creativity *per se*. Wondering about something is what leads to wanting to understand or know that something. With this knowledge, be it scientific, social, or artistic, you now have a greater power to act. The biosphere, for example, depends upon, and can only rapidly increase its power on the planet and beyond by human cultivation. If this wonderment dies down, the acquiring of truth and greater power also ceases.

Let's look at what the state of wonder is, by the way different great minds describe it.

1. "The true value of man is not determined by his possession, supposed or real, of Truth, but rather by his sincere exertion to get to the Truth. It is not possession of Truth by which he extends his powers and in which his ever-growing perfectibility is to be found. Possession makes one passive, indolent and proud. If God were to hold all Truth concealed in his right hand, and in his left only the steady and diligent drive for Truth, albeit with the proviso that I would always and forever err in the process, and to offer me the choice, I would with all humility take the left hand, and say: Father, I will take this – the Pure Truth is for You alone."—Gotthold Ephraim Lessing "Anti-Goeze" Eine Deuplik 1778

On Wonder



by Shawna Halevy

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For the naturalists state that a certain unpleasant sensation in the opening of the stomach precedes the appetite in order that, having been stimulated in this way, the nature (which endeavors to preserve itself) will replenish itself. By comparison, I consider wondering (on whose account there is philosophizing) to precede the desire-for-knowing in order that the intellect (whose understanding is its being) will perfect itself by study of truth.

– Nicholas of Cusa
De Docta Ignorantia, Book I

The wonderment we're speaking of is not the kind that leads to our physical preservation (at least not in the way that hunger literally leads to eating, though we wouldn't have advanced agriculture if not for wonder), but to our spiritual and intellectual survival. Unlike animals, a large part of human existence is for the satisfaction of the soul. This is not too obvious in today's society, where the emphasis is on success in financial terms, where

"idle curiosity" in an adult is looked down upon as ivory-tower theorizing or useless daydreaming. Yet, with this need for more ethereal fulfillment, human society still has advanced magnitudes beyond any animal or lower species. Not in spite of this need, but because of it.

How does wonder come about? In speaking of his personal experience of discoveries in astronomy, Johannes Kepler states in his *New Astronomy*:

When experience is seen to teach something different to those who pay careful attention, namely, that the planets deviate from a simple circular path, it gives rise to a powerful sense of wonder, which at length drives men to look into causes.

This is strikingly similar to Einstein's more general statement from his *Autobiographical Notes*:

'Wonder' appears to occur when an experience comes into conflict with a world of concepts already sufficiently fixed within us.

Our readers may recall that this is what Lyndon LaRouche identifies as a crucial paradox, an irony of the senses, which leads to a creative discovery.

The human mind lives for the type of challenges that help overthrow its assumptions. It seems impractical to gaze at the stars and inquire into their motions, yet the healthy mind craves these ironies to change the way it is thinking, in order to better reflect reality. What a lot of people figure nowadays, is that open-ended questions are for the philosophers. Well, I've got news for you, philosophy wasn't paying too well, so they all got jobs in finance! The leisure of developing your mind (which used to only be available

to an upper class) is what a Republic relies on so that the population can govern itself. Not only that, the universe relies on this as well. No system built on practical ideas of stagnated people ever flourishes.

So why has the general population stopped asking “why?” Why have they given up on thinking creatively? Is it because they already figured it all out? Have all the answers been discovered? When investigating the ultimate truth of things, every so-called answer leads to new questions! Is this some cruel *Twilight Zone* episode, or torture from the ancient Greek gods? Happily, the universe is not a closed book; so neither are we fixed and finished in our development. Our ability to continually ask “why” reflects the characteristic of the universe as being anti-entropic, alive, growing and progressing at an accelerated rate to higher and higher phases. If someone was perfectly knowledgeable, they would not wonder or have a desire to know. The same is the case for ignorant people; they believe themselves to be in possession of all they need to know (this is the evil of ignorance). Someone who engages in philosophy holds an intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom, in much the same way that the world is in a state of becoming. No state of knowledge is ever perfect, but it can ever be perfected. Now we’re better prepared to ask: what happened to the human culture of wonder?

This anti-entropic nature of the universe being the case, why the lack of inquiry and investigation as a common passion in the culture, if it is not from the lack of things to figure out? Maybe there isn’t enough time or it takes too much energy and is just more trouble than it is worth? There used to be a rumor that scientific theory was used for the purpose of saving time and effort in thinking. There is truth to the opinion that there can be physical constraints to thinking: lack of food, disease, mind-deadening labor for long hours. But the rumor that

thinking is an inconvenience as if we would rather want to use a machine brain for practical efficiency is quite absurd. This is seen in a different way through a funny story. Max Born, “frenemy” of Einstein, writes:

The ideal of simplicity has found a materialistic expression in Ernst Mach’s principle of economy in thought. He maintains that the purpose of theory in science is to economize our mental efforts. This formulation, often repeated by other authors, seems to me very objectionable. If we want to economize thinking, the best way would be to stop thinking at all... the expression ‘economy of thinking’ may have an appeal to engineers and others interested in practical applications, but hardly to those who enjoy thinking for no other purpose than to clarify a problem.

One of the most well-known equations, $E=mc^2$, opened up resources of energies of ever increasing density to us: fission, fusion, and anti-matter matter reactions. These processes will allow human beings to explore the Solar System and beyond, as Columbus courageously discovered the New World. But a greater thing this hypothesis provided was a magnitude higher ability to understand the processes of our world. Before $E=mc^2$ was discovered, it was quite baffling how our Sun continued to shine, using just the process of breaking chemical bonds from burning material. A new degree of knowledge cannot be measured so much quantitatively because it provides a larger potential to make new hypotheses. Thought leads to higher thought, wonder to more refined wonder. (This is nothing like the questioning of whether, when a tree falls in the forest, does a greenie cry.) The physical possibilities $E=mc^2$ opened up were not the end goal of thinking, but the means to think more!

Our Bohemian friend Einstein has a

more staunch stance against materialistic motivations:

I found the idea intolerable of having to apply the inventive faculty to matters that make everyday life even more elaborate—and all, just for the dreary money-making. Thinking for its own sake, as in music! That is why I also never could take to Mach’s principle of economy of thought as the ultimate psychological driving force. Economy, correctly understood, may be one motive upon which intellectual aesthetics depends; however, the mainspring of scientific thought is not some external goal to be striven toward but the pleasure of thinking. When I have no special problem to occupy my mind, I love to reconstruct proofs of mathematical and physical theorems that have long been known to me. There is no goal in this, merely an opportunity to indulge in the pleasant occupation of thinking.

Einstein is no mental masturbator. Pleasure in this sense is the long-term joy one obtains from tapping into what makes us truly human, and what separates us from herds of animals: individual creativity. We are naturally inclined as a species to enjoy the tension of creative thinking and problem solving; this is the reason classical art was invented. It is unnatural to want to find a comfort zone where we cruise through life without a concern in the world. Not only does the mind atrophy, but our physical means of existence also becomes more difficult. Our mind is geared towards progress, not for any greedy intention, but because that’s the way the universe is geared. Value should be placed on thinking for achieving quality in life (as opposed to quantity). The value of thinking is not simply for creating more gadgets that further disconnect one from reality, but to create a higher platform of understanding from which to operate in reality.

The truth is, the act of questioning is unpopular not because everything has already been figured out or even because it is too costly or not practical; a lot of people lose their intense desire to know by adulthood because they've been brainwashed to believe that everything has been figured out for them, and so they become practical minded. The line is "go along to get along," conform to group think, don't rock the boat with revolutions in thought from original thinkers.

Think back to the child. Is it not most natural for them to want to know?

Max Planck said: "What, then, does the child think as he makes these discoveries? First of all, he wonders. This feeling of wonderment is the source and inexhaustible fountain-head of his desire for knowledge. It drives the child irresistibly on to solve the mystery, and if in his attempt he encounters a causal relationship, he will not tire of repeating the same experiment ten times, a hundred times, in order to taste the thrill of discovery over and over again."

Only something external and malicious could prevent that normal characteristic from continuing. Cultural warfare, entertainment propaganda, political pessimism, and artificial education methods² are the main tools used in our current degenerate culture to maintain a society at the level of peasants, barred from thinking profoundly. What is the solution?

This was the purpose of JFK's manned Moon mission: to inspire a whole generation, to liberate the minds of a generation to think like human beings again. Free play of the mind is the only way we could have even thought of going to the Moon in the first place. Non-linear thinking was encouraged, creating an environment for discoveries of bold ideas, as opposed to coasting along by ap-

2. "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education."

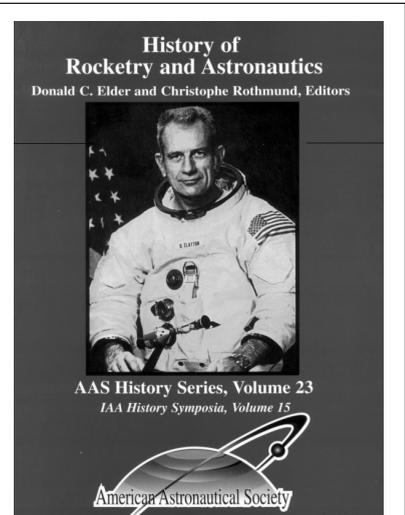
—Albert Einstein.

plying previous discoveries in different ways, or worse, using off-the-shelf technologies. That optimism changed the planet. New challenges were presented in a light that allowed for confidence in overcoming them. That is part of the reason why JFK was assassinated – to kill that optimism. Our mission today is similar to Kennedy's: we need a colonization program for the Moon and Mars, not only for the practical purposes of obtaining more resources and such, but to free the current population from the cynical and pessimistic philosophy imposed on them and to catch back up to lead the development of the universe. With the unleashing of man's mind, no problem is intimidating: disease, the nature of life, hunger, the quantum, war, the operating principles of the universe, etc.. All problems can be conquered. Individuals will be stimulated to take on fundamental questions of 'why' instead of simply 'how?'

Hence Einstein's advice to a young man who was going through an existential phase:

Then do not stop to think about the reasons for what you are doing, about why you are questioning. The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day. Never lose a holy curiosity. Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value. He is considered successful in our day who gets more out of life than he puts in. But a man of value will give more than he receives ... Don't stop marvelling.

Life is not about having the right answers, but about having the right questions.



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