

Some Smart People: Views and Lives 15



Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Forewords by
Entemake Aman
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Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Foreword by Honghao Zhao(赵宏昊)

I am very pleased to be invited by Scott Jacobsen to write this foreword. This is also the first time I have learned that a journalist has been interviewing members of high IQ societies from various countries and regions. Based on my previous understanding of international high IQ society members and Chinese high IQ society members, I found that among international high IQ society members, especially those with high scores, scholars, professors, or individuals with higher education such as master's and doctoral degrees occupy a considerable proportion. In contrast, although there are also some highly educated individuals among Chinese high IQ society members, their proportion is not high relative to the large base number of Chinese high IQ society members. Professors and successful individuals such as corporate executives are even rarer.

According to my guess, it may be because the Chinese high IQ society started relatively late, and the main group is still minors and full-time students. Moreover, the concept of IQ, which is innate and unchangeable, does not align with the values generally advocated by Chinese society. Therefore, high IQ societies have always been a niche group. However, the potential of Chinese high IQ society members is still very high. There are many talented young people, some of whom have received good education and already have high academic qualifications, while others lack educational resources and have not yet stood out.

On Zhihu (the Chinese equivalent of Quora), a user once collected some cases of high scores in high-range IQ tests. According to these cases, teenagers who have won Olympic competition awards usually perform well in high-range IQ tests, achieving IQ scores of 160 or even 170 (SD15). Some students who have been admitted to Tsinghua University and Peking University (the top two universities in China) generally have IQs ranging from 130 to 150 (SD15). This may indicate that in China, higher IQs have a positive correlation with academic qualifications, but extremely high IQs may not necessarily do so. Additionally, some high IQ individuals are easily ostracized from a young age due to being different from ordinary people, leading to mental health issues such as depression. If there is any way to help these potential individuals, I think it would be a wonderful thing.

Foreword by Entemake Aman

First of all, I am very glad to give the foreword to this book. This book is one of the rare interviews of geniuses in the world. Scott Douglas Jacobsen put a lot of effort into this book, and every question Scott asks is interesting and creative. I'm grateful to Scott for giving us so much to think about. If you are interested in genius, or in thinking, then every question in this book you will enjoy. Not every genius is successful, but they all deserve a platform to show their brilliant ideas, and thank Scott for providing such a platform. This book shows how geniuses think and how they live. You can learn a lot about high intelligence from this book. I also hope that society will pay more attention to this book, to find those geniuses who have not shown their wisdom in academia, and to provide them with opportunities. You can find a lot of interesting geniuses in this book, and you can get mental pleasure from their interviews. Geniuses often have different but interesting and accurate ideas, as you can see from this book. I also sincerely wish Scott more and more success. I think each of Scott's interviews is classic and worthy of our consideration and attention. Finally, I wish every reader happiness in reading this book.

Foreword by Mahir Wu

First of all, I would like to thank Scott Jacobsen from the bottom of my heart for inviting me to write the foreword to this book.

A century has passed since the term “IQ” was coined. In that time, IQ testing methods have evolved. In particular, the last few decades have seen the rise of the high-range IQ test, which, because of its mind-game-like nature, has managed to attract a large number of puzzle-solving enthusiasts. As a result, more and more test authors have emerged, and a variety of diverse IQ test formats have emerged.

Compared with traditional mainstream tests, these new tests examine in greater depth people's ability to recognize patterns and explore the nature of patterns. However, despite their remarkable breakthroughs in some areas, it is still difficult to comprehensively measure all of a person's intellectual abilities. This makes me realize that human beings still have a long way to go in the field of intelligence measurement and must continue to explore and innovate.

I don't have a definitive answer as to when the perfect IQ test will be constructed, and while it may still be some way off, we should be grateful to those who have contributed to the process. I believe that perseverance is an extremely valuable quality. To be able to continue designing tests and updating the data over many years, as Paul Cooijmans do, requires not only perseverance, but also deep expertise and passion. At the same time, interviewing, editing, and organizing large amounts of content from people who have excelled intellectually can be a daunting task. Fortunately, Scott Jacobsen has reinvigorated the field through this persistence and hard work. Thanks to his contributions, we've been able to get the real-world perspectives of the best and brightest from different countries, cultures, and professions, insights that often go beyond our own perspectives and open us up to a wider range of perceptions. And that's exactly what "Some Smart People: Views and Lives 15" shows. I have great respect for Scott Jacobsen's work, and I am delighted to see this book come together.

In "Some Smart People: Views and Lives 15", readers will find not only the diverse perspectives of people who have excelled on IQ tests, but also insights into their thoughts on macro topics such as humanity, history, God, and politics. These will surely provide readers with a wealth of takeaways and insights that will help them better understand the multidimensional character of intelligence.

Finally, I would like to thank Scott Jacobsen again for his careful organization and editing of this book. His efforts and dedication have made this book one of the major works in the field of intelligence that deserves to be carefully savored and reflected upon by every reader.

Foreword by Tianxi Yu

I am deeply honored that Mr. Scott invited me to write the foreword for this book, and I'm equally grateful for his ongoing dedication to collecting insights from highly intelligent individuals, which perfectly fills a significant gap in our understanding.

Our knowledge of high-IQ individuals and geniuses remains limited, as they haven't truly entered the public consciousness yet. Most people lack a clear understanding of the concept of 'IQ' itself, and their awareness of high-IQ societies rarely extends beyond Mensa. This makes the publication and promotion of this book particularly meaningful.

I love engaging in conversations, especially with fascinating people. While everyone has their own inherent perspectives, dialogue can break through the boundaries of thought—and what could be more enlightening than accessing the thoughts of some of the most brilliant minds on Earth? Despite the existence of platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and various communities with international membership, deep communication between members has been rare. Scott's work has broken through these barriers, allowing us to understand how the world's most intelligent people think.

In my view, thinking knows no boundaries, as definitions themselves are boundless. Good and evil, right and wrong, only exist within specific contexts. The more we can free ourselves from predetermined identities, the greater intellectual freedom we can achieve. However, life's daily complexities and the intersection of time and space often prevent us from attaining true freedom. Helping people break free from mental constraints and achieve intellectual liberation is the shared goal of both myself and this book, "Some Smart People: Views and Lives 15."

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude once again to Mr. Scott for his long-term commitment to interviewing and documenting information about high-IQ individuals. His efforts have made this book an invaluable reference for both the high-IQ community and the field of intelligence studies.

Conversation with ‘Seneka’ on Interest in High-IQ Societies

2024-08-08

‘Seneka’ is someone who reached out with an interest in IQ tests, high-range tests, and high-IQ societies. He discusses: interest in high-IQ tests; interest in high-IQ societies; any IQ tests; high-range tests; general impression; favourite aspect; main set of hesitations; skepticism; intellectual interests; tests; contribute to these communities; and final thoughts.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, thank you for reaching out. What is your interest in high-IQ tests?

Seneka: High-IQ tests are challenging and fun. Moreover, while assuming an IQ from a test may be debatable, it is not possible to argue that they do indeed assess an unusual way of thinking.

Jacobsen: What is your interest in high-IQ societies, generally?

Seneka: I really find it hard to have long conversations about irrelevant topics. That launched me into joining some of these societies, looking for relationships to learn from.

At first I was a little disappointed that there is not that much difference between inside and outside these associations.

But with a little searching you find true geniuses in various subjects in some of these societies.

Jacobsen: Have you taken any IQ tests before?

Seneka: This year I took several different intelligence tests. Generally, online IQ tests are not considered reliable, but nevertheless I took at least twenty of them and in all of them I got the maximum score given by each test.

I contacted Mensa, took a supervised matrix test and, if I am not mistaken, got at least 44 out of 45 items, if I was not lucky with one that I was not sure.

So far no test could give me a realistic approximation. I took a test supervised by a professional psychologist, the WAIS. The few items that did not score were for exceeding the time limit. Even so, the score was 157.

Jacobsen: How have you done on some of these alternative tests, high-range tests?

Seneka: Indeed. After this last test I came across some high range tests. Actually, with very good results. More than I expected and less than I know I could get. I am very impulsive and just after submitting my answers I found three other correct solutions. I prefer not to take those results as a reference, but they were pretty high.

Jacobsen: What is your general impression as an outsider to these communities with an interest in them?

Seneka: I have no idea. The reality is that in associations like Mensa, Intertel or Triple Nine are very good and there you can find all kinds of profiles and opportunities.

The higher ranking associations I have seen too few members and that discourages me a bit.

Jacobsen: What is your favourite aspect of considering joining them?

Seneka: I really don’t know if the benefit in these associations would be greater than in the more recognized ones. At this point I think joining these associations is more about ego than anything else.

Jacobsen: What is your main set of hesitations?

Seneka: To damage some relations. Some people don't understand intelligence is more about the way you think than about knowledge.

Pertenecer a esas asociaciones hace que algunos sean más exigentes y critiquen los errores. Pero todos cometemos errores.

Jacobsen: Where do you think skepticism is warranted?

Seneka: It's not skepticism. I've always been what you might call a weirdo kid. I've been judged a lot for doing different things and people are willing to say: I knew it! I told you so!

Jacobsen: What are your current intellectual interests? Why those? When did they develop?

Seneka: I am very interested in neuroplasticity. I have been a hypnotist for many years and have found that strengths can be enhanced with hypnosis. Working memory, reasoning or processing speed.

Although I think that intelligence has a strong genetic load, I am fully convinced that it can be developed up to 30 or 40%.

Undoubtedly, I believe that more intelligent people, considering intelligence as the ability to solve problems, have more options available. That's why I want to do more research on this.

Jacobsen: What tests would you like to take, but they look a little heftier and more difficult?

Seneka: Right now I don't want to do any more tests. I have fun doing them, but then I regret having dedicated some valuable hours to it.

For me the most difficult ones are the verbal analogies, mainly because my native language is Spanish and they always need a deep understanding of English.

Jacobsen: What do you hope to contribute to these communities?

Seneka: If I can prove my hypothesis of increased intelligence and neuroplasticity, not only with "domestic" evidence but on a scientific level, you will have a lot of work to do.

Jacobsen: Any final thoughts today?

Seneka: We can conclude with three key points.

Partnerships are good for facilitating quality contacts.

Test results are not so important although, in my opinion, they give very good guidance.

Intelligence has a high genetic load, but it is also practiced. You can learn to think better or think in other ways.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time Seneka.

Seneka: Thanks to you, it has been a pleasure talking to you Jacobsen.

Conversation with Tianxi Yu (余天曦) on Graduation, Work, and Hobby Tests (6)

2024-08-08

[Original publication here](#).

Tianxi Yu (余天曦) is a man who's interested in IQ tests. Here we talk some updates in his work and professional life when applying his intelligence to work and personal situations. Yu discusses: new stuff; work; the two years we've known each other; being intensively focused on a task; thinking of pursuing this field for the long term; recommendations for high-IQ people; and most people do not find work deserving of their intelligence.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When I returned from travelling through the United States, you mentioned how insanely busy you have been. What is new?

Tianxi Yu: Not a lot of news. I'm busy in three main places: my job, cryptocurrency investing and startup investing. There's not much to say about my work; I only had some small output this year. I've made over \$150,000 in cryptocurrency investments, but mostly by luck; my startup is still in its infancy, but it's already paid for itself. Free time will be spent thinking about Mahir's new test, "Mystery," link: <https://mahirwu.wixsite.com/iqtests/%E5%A6%82%E8%B0%9Cmystery>, which is an interesting spatial test, and I've solved most of the items, and will probably submit it in several months.

Jacobsen: Does it work, or is it an insanely attention-absorbing hobby?

Yu: Just work itself! I don't know how to attract attention or even deliberately gather it. It's more like letting the thoughts collect and dive in wherever I want to immerse them.

Jacobsen: How have you changed in the two years we've known each other?

Yu: Two years is a long time for me, and a lot has happened to me in those two years. I graduated from university in 2022 and started my journey into the world. I was impatient and short-sighted in the year I was about to graduate. I made some money during college but lost my capital due to ego at the beginning of cryptocurrency investing. Still, I was more resilient and kept fighting for opportunities in the market with a minuscule amount of money, which I now recall as a time that helped immensely refine my perceptions. I then managed to get a job in the government sector (passed in one sitting; it was difficult), and it was also at that moment, I felt that the whole person and the world formed a very harmonious and smooth state. Even though I had no money then, I knew I had succeeded. Next, I became addicted to reading, focusing on politics, economics, religion and psychology, which deepened my understanding of the world. People tend to think that their inherent perceptions are correct and are reluctant to break the boundaries of their perceptions, which is the cause of conservatism, prejudice, ignorance and bickering. I am now reading *The Spectrum of Consciousness* and *The Sovereign Individual*, which are well-written and highly recommended. I now spend hours a day reading books that continue to increase my spirituality. Many of the scholars have very sharp and profound perspectives, and if I didn't know them, I probably wouldn't have thought that I could understand them in this way, which makes me realize the limitations of "IQ" even more, and I am now facing the IQ test mainly as a hobby. "Wisdom" can bring much more than "Intelligence."

Jacobsen: How did you find work that kept you intensively focused on a task? Something intellectually capable and able to keep you preoccupied and focused.

Yu: I don't have any tricks. If it's a task I have to complete, I force myself to finish it before the deadline (imagine the consequences of not finishing it—the worse, the better). If it's a job I'm interested in, then it doesn't take any tricks for me to give it my full attention.

Jacobsen: Are you thinking of pursuing this field for the long term?

Yu: Yup. I have to have a foundation that I can stabilize in the long term and explore more possibilities.

Jacobsen: What are your recommendations for high-IQ people to find work of interest that meets their intellectual level?

Yu: Steady as it goes. Have a good foundation of life security first, and then go on to develop personal interests. In this high IQ space, we are exposed to high-range IQ tests where the range of abilities he can detect are mainly imagination and logic, with imagination outweighing logic in good tests. These are not so much needed in today's society unless you are in an academic job, which is the popular stereotype of us, but we also have our own lives and what we want. So, I would advise members to forget about their "high IQ" labels and find ways of getting along with the world.

Jacobsen: Do you think most people do not find work deserving of their intelligence?

Yu: Yes. I used to think that this question was proof of the inefficiency of current social development, but I don't think so now. In your question, "everything is useful" is the point, but is everything in nature useful? That is certainly not the case; nature and even the universe are disordered, and the existence of many things is complex and random. At the same time, human beings are also complex, and each is characterized by enormous potential and capacity. Intelligence is a minuscule twig, and the great tree does not bear all its fruit on a single branch.

Conversation with Tianxi Yu (余天曦) on CAT2 and Education (7)

2024-08-08

[Original publication here](#).

Tianxi Yu (余天曦) is a man who's interested in IQ tests. Here we talk some updates in his work and professional life when applying his intelligence to work and personal situations. Yu discusses: trends of moving away from traditional standardized tests; CAT2; college entrance exam statistics; style of schooling; and the Chinese government and businesses.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How does the interest in IQ and intellectual activities in China compare with other countries that have historically placed a high value on standardized tests, like Russia or India? Are there trends of moving away from traditional standardized tests towards other forms of intellectual engagement? As with my Chinese equestrian friend, you noted a particular distaste with standardized tests.

Tianxi Yu: 1) The question is vague, but if it's the concept of "IQ," then it's of greater interest. In areas with large populations and low per capita resources, there is more emphasis on the concept of "ranking" as a way of expressing a sense of superiority over others, and IQ is a good outlet for this. From this point of view, Chinese people are probably more interested in IQ (The general level of education in India is lower, which makes most of them insensitive to "rankings.") . I don't know much about IQ activities about Russia and India, but the common ones in China are probably Go, Rubik's Cube, memorization, etc, which have a certain popular base. 2)None.

Jacobsen: What components of the CAT2 make it uniquely rigorous compared to other tests? Have there been any efforts to bring these alternative test creators from China into a database or a directory of tests? It might help increase sample sizes.

Yu: 1) Abstract and I can only try to describe it in words. Graphical tests are low in rigour compared to numerical tests. This is because numbers are one-dimensional without regard to space, making it a more limited jump. However, graphical tests involve a lot of thinking about multiple dimensions;. At the same time, the paper is two-dimensional, the presentation of the questions can only be a projection of higher dimensions in two dimensions, but theoretically, the number of projections in two dimensions is infinite. However, the questions give a limited number of elements, so graphical questions are difficult to rigorously express the full in a finite space.CAT2 features in-depth thinking about the two dimensions while simplifying the two-dimensionality to the higher dimensions in higher-dimensionality questions. Validation, so it is highly rigorous.2) Huanyun Chen once put together a catalogue: <https://xn--kivvho02b.xn--fiqs8s/916.html/2022/10/03/>.

Jacobsen: Beyond the college entrance exam statistics, what cultural or societal factors contribute to the educational challenges for students?

Yu: First, there is the traditional concept, the elders think that only a good education can lead to a good life, because their generation has witnessed the dividend of education, and they think that the current dividend is sustainable, so they all ask their children of school age to study and further their education. Second, there is a lack of coordination in the distribution of resources, like the children of Germany, and early education diversion, which is currently lacking in China. Society generally believes that studying vocational education is despised, at the same time, society

does not have much inclusiveness for this kind of student, but now the government is also learning from Germany, at this stage in the beginning of change. Last, there is fatigue on the consumer side, and there is no further upgrading of the social structure, resulting in no new blood to support future development at this stage, so people can only compete for stock but share less of the cake with more effort. These challenges, however, present opportunities for change and improvement in the Chinese educational system.

Jacobsen: Do teachers learn to hate teaching to the test, or do they genuinely love teaching in this style of schooling? As far as I have been told, students dislike it deeply. My Chinese woman friend notes this. You note this. Chinese exes state much the same.

Yu: Rock can't change the flow of water.

Jacobsen: What should the Chinese government and businesses adopt to mitigate the impacts of such a downturn and capitalize on the recovery phase?

Yu: If it's just simple economic reform, then a tax reset is relatively the easiest way to go. The cycles of the world can't be changed by one or two superpowers. However, there is a potential for the Chinese government and businesses to adopt innovative strategies and policies to mitigate the impacts of such a downturn and capitalize on the recovery phase, which could significantly impact the educational system as well.

Conversation with ‘JayStar’ on Development, Talents, Achievements, Mathematics, and Philosophy

2024-08-08

‘JayStar’ is considered to be one of the most intelligent people in the world by those known to him. He has competed against and holds wins over some of the best players in the world in Super Smash Bros, reached an NTRP level of 5.0 in tennis by the age of 18 while being largely self-taught, published various articles in both academic and non-academic journals, and is a student of mathematics and philosophy (previously specialized in Integrated Sciences with interests in cognitive systems, statistical and biological sciences). Additionally, he holds an RCM level 10 piano certification at the age of 14 and was previously a participant at chess regionals hosted by the chess’n math association. ‘JayStar’ discusses: more substantial development points; tennis; an RCM level 10 piano certification; an avid gamer; the field of chess; mathematics and philosophy; academic, professional goals; personal hopes; and other areas of mental competition.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: For personal life, what do you consider your more substantial development points?

‘JayStar’: As a kid I was extremely competitive, trying to be as good as I can get at everything I cared for. Throughout my competitive experiences, I was able to learn to deal with emotions, make healthier decisions, and develop great connections with others.

I was addicted to video games, loved going outdoors to play soccer, cycling, going to the park, and playing tennis near the local park. Succeeding in these activities made me happy and I even wanted to become either a professional tennis player, youtuber, or professional gamer someday. Reality hit, and I’d have to focus on developing actual study and communication skills if I wanted to succeed personally.

In academics, I had begun to take an interest in it after high school due to some obsession over certain topics. Issue is, I spent too much time on those topics (completely unrelated to the course-work) rather than focusing on the tasks in front of me. Although I didn’t pay much attention in class, or cared about doing homework throughout elementary and high school, I was able to begin developing my interests. My academic experiences have helped me develop presentation skills, writing skills, and critical thinking that will allow me to utilize them in other areas of life.

I used to struggle with toxicity, narcissism and immaturity due to a host of negative childhood experiences and a lot of emotional neglect, but I started meeting and talking to individuals with great social skills that guided me the right way and I started to work hard everyday on improving my social skills, empathy and maturity. Growing up, I later suspected I was gifted intellectually (after having very little knowledge and being quite confused about many things), and realized what I needed was more communication with gifted individuals but very rarely did I end up communicating with gifted individuals until joining chess clubs, the competitive gaming community, chess clubs, research organizations, and various online communities which would only begin in teenage years) to enhance intellectual stimulation. I was also not selected for a gifted program and didn’t skip grades likely due to some trauma and issues with attention prior to entering school (which led to gaming addiction and other various interests throughout my life). Once I discovered more about myself and others through cognitive testing, discussions, seeking knowledge and various life achievements, I began to see reality much more nicely which is the ultimate development I suppose.

Jacobsen: You are a tennis player. How does this help develop physically? How far have you gone in this endeavour? You are a three-time regional champion.

‘JayStar’: The unique aspect of tennis has to be the sound of the strokes whenever you hit the ball. Tennis is also good at training lateral movement – although quick vertical movement helps in dealing with drop shots.

My first sport was soccer which I played at the local park in the city I grew up in. I went to the park a lot and did a lot of cross crossing and cycling during elementary school as well. I was attracted to tennis because it was a lot of fun, and there were tennis courts near the local park so I could often just bike there and play. Initial athletic experiences will have a strong impact on one’s current and future athletic experiences. Sports like soccer build up stamina, teamwork, and agility. Running cross-country and track builds up endurance and speed. Volley-ball develops teamwork and coordination, and sports like table tennis, badminton, squash and pickleball all resemble the techniques and shots in tennis.

In tennis, my best achievement is a toss up between being awarded the All-Star Award in 2014 throughout league player matches, being an Antique Bronze Medalist at the provincial championships, awarded the Mens A/B championship trophy in Singles at my tennis club in 2020 and being a three-time regional champion (once in singles, twice in doubles). In the future, I hope to play more competitive matches with players at similar higher levels. Up until now, I have reached the highest level at the club level (5.0 NTRP – which is also considered the highest level a self-taught player should reach and roughly the top 2% of USTA players to the best of my knowledge). Although my parents do not really have any experience with competitive sports, since they almost always let me go outside and bike around, I was able to then take it upon myself to learn everything I needed about the game.

Jacobsen: You have earned an RCM level 10 piano certification and play the baritone. What were some of the earlier inclinations as to musical talent in these areas?

‘JayStar’: In elementary school, everyone learned to play the recorder – which I forgot mostly about.

I originally intended to become a percussionist or play the Tuba although I settled for the Baritone and found it to be an interesting instrument. I was far from the best in my band and I usually struggled with tune, so I eventually quit in junior year of high school. I played for the high school instrumental band for two years and then quit however due to lack of continued interest

I started playing piano at the age of 7 since my parents wanted me to learn. In general I began playing piano at the age of 7, took lessons for 7 years (switched teachers along the way and skipped two or so grades at some point). After learning from two different instructors, at the age of 14 I finally received the certification from the Royal Conservatory of Music for grade 10 piano. This is based on practicing for roughly 30 mins a day on average for 7 years. Music is great to learn to promote good study habits, focus, and passion for other things. As a child, I was not passionate about music and so did not pursue it further, and for the most part, it was forced until I had finished level 10. Some children are forced to play an instrument and are also forced to continue up until level 8 at the very least (although it is true that many people quit early on if they are uninterested). I believe music can be played until a late age and it is something I find more enjoyable than as a kid.

I have entered two competitions and received second in a small local competition. I also played

for musical halls and was considered to be somewhat talented (although I never considered myself to be all that great).

Jacobsen: Also, you are an avid gamer, particularly for Super Smash Bros Ultimate. How far has your ranking gone in online rankings?

‘JayStar’: As a kid I spent quite a large amount of time playing or thinking/studying Call of Duty Black Ops 2, Call of Duty Ghosts, Super Smash Bros Melee, Super Smash Bros. Brawl, Super Smash Bros for Wii U. Surprisingly, I actually practiced SSBU less than those other games, but mainly studied quite a bit and attended a good amount of tournaments from the end of 2018 until now.

I haven’t played enough tournaments to be ranked highly on wifi and most top players avoid wifi tournaments. My best achievement here is that I was able to take a set off of a player named Icy-mist whom (if memory serves me correctly) was considered to be one of the best wifi players in the world at some point in time.

The issue’s online arises due to a poor internet connection, and the game being quite a lot different online than offline. I tend to attend far fewer tournaments than most of the top Canadian players, so it is often assumed that I am playing wifi more (which is somewhat true), although I believe it is more important to think about the game in an analytical way such as by studying videos of various players, and of one’s own habits and mistakes. Super Smash Bros is ultimately a game that relies on analyzing and adapting on the fly, while processing loads of information and making informed decisions.

Although irrelevant to your question, I do want to point out something I have learned over time through my experiences although I won’t say much at this time since I still want to learn more. What I noticed about Super Smash Bros players as a whole – they are very good at learning. I personally believe top professional Super Smash Bros players (such as MkLeo and Hungrybox – the former wanted to be a physicist growing up and had an interest in astrophysics and the latter also became an engineer) are at the same level of intelligence as historical polymaths such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Johann Goethe.

Jacobsen: How far have you gone in the field of chess?

‘JayStar’: At the age of 14 and for 6 months, I was extremely passionate about learning chess and played it a bit for a few more months after. My peak skill level might have been somewhere around 1400-1800 ELO (cannot remember exactly at this time) depending on the opening although I seem to have dropped to an average level now. In fact, there was a chess national master in my high school and I could never beat him once but my experience with the chess club was truly a great experience for me and helped me develop a great interest in chess during that time. My best achievement (despite the loss) is taking a player rated approximately 2000 down to end-game (which I believe was my biggest weakness at the time) during a chess regional (possibly due to playing out of my mind and also my opponent possibly underestimating me a bit). During a period of 6 months, as far as I can remember I must have been thinking about chess for at least 4 hours a day, often playing during lunch period and sometimes after school with rivals, and if not, I’d be studying openings, thinking about moves, or watching different kinds of videos. I played on chess.com a lot in the past and I managed to compete in chess regionals (after getting 5th out of individuals in my grade in the qualifying event). I am considering competing more in the future because I enjoy this game a lot.

Jacobsen: What was the ultimate interest in studying mathematics and philosophy?

‘JayStar’: First year is a general science year and then I ended up specializing in Integrated Sciences after a solid first year (which is generally considered a major for people interested in medicine) where most if not all of the graduates apparently get into graduate school or professional school. I decided to switch into something else and the only fields that seemed possible to graduate were either statistics or mathematics. I also had some plans to go into either law, medicine or computer science but I ultimately became more interested in learning various fields in the social sciences and humanities outside of my coursework.

I was drawn to mathematics after a statistics phd holder mentioned how only a few individuals in the world could truly understand topology (after some minimum level of experience) and I found that if I were to prove myself (at least, I should be in mathematics (although I have come to like applied mathematics as well and see the beauty in application too). Philosophy also requires a lot of analyzing which is a strength of mine and I enjoy learning about the field overall (although admittedly, I have developed some poor study habits since a child and neglected pre-readings and generally have had some issues paying attention in lecture due to my other passions in the social sciences (which are not relevant to the course work). I also wondered about my math ability ever since a kid because I felt that I hadn’t put in much effort or focus (or possibly zero at all aside from somewhat paying attention in some lectures in sophomore year of high school), which was also the year I managed to receive a certificate of distinction from participation in the high school Cayley Mathematics Competition featured by the university of Waterloo.

My university has various options for mathematics and I am generally pleased by the professors, students and course offerings. I had my first taste of upper-level coursework in 2021 through complex analysis and then later took real analysis and abstract algebra (courses that are most important to an undergraduate mathematics degree if one wishes to pursue graduate level math) and kept going ever since.

My best achievement in mathematics is getting a 97 (one of the highest marks in differential calculus) with only about 20 or less hours of “serious” mathematics study my whole life (although I realize such a claim will be hard to believe – it is ultimately based on what I can remember to the best of my ability at the current time. Up until now I have (by my estimate) less than 100 good hours of study in mathematics (since elementary school) which means I must study both hard and smart if I want to reach new heights.

Jacobsen: What are your academic, professional goals now?

‘JayStar’: I have an interest in the subject of mathematical and philosophical *Infinity* (whether or not I study the topic in academia or outside) and various other fields in both pure and applied math. My current level of knowledge is not quite at the level of a typical graduate student but this only means I need to start studying seriously (which is admittedly something I have failed to do my whole life before due to many distractions).

I may have to look into other options however due to the lack of career opportunities in pure mathematics so if not professionally, I will have to develop a lot of mathematics knowledge while being self-taught such as Ramanujan (also known as the *Man Who Knew Infinity*) who managed to become one of the greatest math minds without formal schooling.

I am mostly interested in work that involves analytical skills and numbers but only time will tell.

Jacobsen: What are your personal hopes for the next couple of years?

‘JayStar’: I hope to publish articles and write on many different subject areas (including biological sciences, psychological sciences, mathematical sciences and more). I’d also hope to continue competing in the next Smash game and aim for greater heights and face off against the best in the world on the big stage. I also hope to continue to enjoy athletics – such as going to the gym, playing pickleball, tennis and possibly coaching as well.

Jacobsen: Are there other areas of mental competition that you’d like to develop a skill-set in and then compete?

‘JayStar’: I am always willing to try new things and test my mental capacity in tasks that require me to adapt to new situations.

I have little experience with trivia for instance, but it is something I might like to try someday.

I really admire the mathematician Noam Elkies for being a talent in math, music and chess. He became a chess national master at the age of 20 and a world-chess solving champion at the age of 30. John Nunn who received a PhD in mathematics at Oxford at the age of 23 and also became a Chess grandmaster at the age of 23 is also someone of whom someone who increases my motivation to pursue various activities to a higher level.

In Canada, there is a mathematician named Adam Logan who is extremely good at Scrabble. I do not have an extremely large vocabulary or general knowledge (which are areas of weakness at the moment in which I’d someday want to fill some of those gaps). I am not so knowledgeable in history and geography and were often my worst subjects in school but I am very willing to learn much more in these areas.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time.

‘JayStar’: Thank you Scott. I am always inspired by your work and knowledge. It was my pleasure.

Conversation with Tianxi Yu (余天曦) on Globalization and Controversial Views (8)

2024-08-08

Tianxi Yu (余天曦) is a man who's interested in IQ tests. Here we talk some updates in his work and professional life when applying his intelligence to work and personal situations. Yu discusses: globalized world; the foundational mark of a civilization; patterns of civilizations; the different periods of history; the contemporary period of civilization; the future stages of human civilization; difference between European, American, and Asian, academics; the rise and fall of nations; a cyclical nature of economies; anxiety; balance professional responsibilities and relaxation; and outspoken posts on Facebook.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With an increasingly globalized world, especially for the younger generations, do you think it's still appropriate to talk about East and West as placeholders about the global order?

Tianxi Yu: The dominant group in globalization is not necessarily governments; the development of civilization is inevitably accompanied by a diminution of governmental power and the rise of individual sovereignty. Thus there are no two different symbols, East and West, but rather the cognitive consensus of individual human beings serves as a placeholder.

Jacobsen: What seems like the first instance of true human civilization to you? What is the foundational mark of a civilization?

Yu: Maybe humans learned to make fire? Or learned to use tools? Or learned to trade? It's also possible that nothing that happens to humans now is enough to make up a collection. It seems to me that "civilization" gets its bearings when you fully realize that past actions were stupid, and that's the beginning of civilization.

Jacobsen: What have been the historical trajectories or patterns of civilizations over time?

Yu: Based on artificial intelligence and cryptography, the evolution towards personal sovereignty begins

Jacobsen: What would demarcate the different periods of history into the present?

Yu: By the winners in history, may be based on technology, may be based on tactics, in short these winners make our history books read in order.

Jacobsen: What would best characterize the contemporary period of civilization?

Yu: It's a hard choice, but for each person, it could be themselves

Jacobsen: How might this characterization be helpful in making predictions about the future stages of human civilization or, at least, the next likely steps?

Yu: The evolution of human society is long and tortuous; the slowness of evolution stems mainly from the corrosion of interest groups, and the collapse of interest groups inevitably accompanies every advance in civilization. So still from a human perspective, the more disgruntled humans there are, the more likely the next stage will come.

Jacobsen: What seems like the difference between European, American, and Asian, academics, academic communities, and academic output?

Yu: It's hard for me to give a very in-depth judgment because I'm still only in the sewer of academia. But as most people believe, Europe and the United States tend to be more original in their academic output, while China tends to be more replicative and transcendent.

Jacobsen: What might be the rise and fall of nations in the midst of global politics, aging populations, low birth rates, populism, war, and the like, on the rise?

Yu: Decline due to war, political persecution, continued decline of newborn.; prosperity due to entering new narratives, creating hope, granting individual sovereignty.

Jacobsen: What contributes to a cyclical nature of economies?

Yu: On a micro level, it can be attributed to technological development, human mental activity, regime change But I prefer it to be a by-product of God's creation. God exists and is immortal. And the economy is a pseudo-god, the only way to acquire divinity as a mortal.

Jacobsen: I've had anxiety too. What are your strategies for re-centering yourself, calming down?

Yu: Read psychology books, meditate on Buddhist scriptures, go for a walk and let yourself go

Jacobsen: Do you have any time to balance professional responsibilities and relaxation, and self-care?

Yu: Time is enough, but it's hard to get yourself to really relax, especially when you're done relaxing and facing reality.

Jacobsen: You have been an outspoken person. What were the reasons for the more recent outspoken posts on Facebook? How should they be interpreted? What were the reactions to those posts?

Yu: On a very offensive note, the vast majority of them are not intelligent, and in my opinion stupid, and I don't get what I want within this group. I'm outspoken in many groups, even in my workplace, and I'm outspoken because I understand that I'm much better than the vast majority of these groups. That's my backbone, but it's also the source of my anxiety. A lot of my anxiety still stems from my loneliness, and while I say I believe in the existence of God, God is not the most powerful, and above God is the indescribable void. I know I can't be an all-knowing, all-powerful God if I live 1000 years, but I want to go after Him too. God is not alone because He created the world and has countless children from whom He derives His emotions. But I don't, and am far from God, and that has led to constant self-doubt and doubts about my abilities. Suffice it to say that acquiring more divinity is my goal in life, making money and a good job is just me finding something for me to do with myself. As for these posts, they were made because my emotions weren't well relieved. I don't think there's much to explain, what other people think has nothing to do with me.

On High-Range Test Construction 13: Seneka, Point of View

2024-08-22

*This interview probes **Seneka**'s work in the field of high-range intelligence testing, especially the Point of View test. Seneka conceives of cognitive abilities in ways that standard tests often overlook, such as lateral thinking and divergent intelligence. In this conversation, readers will learn more about Seneka's philosophy, his contributions to the field, and the implications of his work for a more nuanced understanding of human intelligence.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Seneka, could you briefly introduce yourself and your areas of expertise?

Seneka: I think it's accurate to call myself a polymath. I have worked and have experience in dozens of topics such as business, hypnosis, magic, art, chess, research, writing and more.

Spanish is my native language and I self-learned English by reading some books or watching online videos. Just a heads-up: my English may sound a bit "basic".

Jacobsen: When did this interest in test construction truly come forward for you?

Seneka: It all started from a wider curiosity about the nature of intelligence and how we can understand it better.

In traditional tests, I achieved the highest scores, which made me question the limitations of these tools in measuring the complexity of human intelligence. This is where my interest in alternative evaluation methods began, allowing me to include my understanding of multiple intelligences in test design.

Jacobsen: What were the realizations about the tests earlier, and then the need to develop yours?

Seneka: Most IQ tests tend to focus specifically on certain cognitive abilities like reasoning, working memory, or crystallized knowledge. While these are definitely important and, in my opinion, accurate, they don't show the full range of human intelligence.

Jacobsen: What was the origin *and* inspiration for the creation of this test – the facts and the feelings?

Seneka: The origin of my test, Point of View, comes from both research and a more personal goal. In fact, POV is just one test in a collection that evaluates different high-level intelligences. On one hand, I aim to isolate and give more importance to divergent thinking in this test so it can be evaluated. On a personal level, I believe that we don't value the intelligence of many people because we only measure the logical or rational part.

Jacobsen: What do you mean by "evaluating divergent thinking"?

Seneka: I think Howard Gardner was very right with his theory of multiple intelligences. In fact, my idea of intelligence is similar, but with a classification of intelligences that is not connected to educational, cultural, environmental, and social factors.

Divergent intelligence is what allows a person to look at a problem from different angles. For example, an "X" might just be the letter X for someone, but for someone with high divergent intelligence, the same X could mean a mistake, a number, two lines, a cross, a destination on a map, a selected option, a chromosome, an adult content rating, a prohibition, and many more things. The POV test specifically evaluates a person's ability to see concepts through divergent and lateral

thinking. Once you find the right perspective, the logic to apply is really simple.

Jacobsen: What skills and considerations, in an overview, seem important for both the construction of test questions and making an effective schema for them?

Seneka: Creating effective questions requires the use of my own divergent intelligence. It's important to design items that can differentiate between different levels of ability. To do this, I need to analyze the most common uses of each element and progressively move away from the more unfrequent perspectives.

Jacobsen: With Point of View, why focus on a matrix design?

Seneka: I like matrix tests because the information is contained within the problem itself. I also know that people feel more motivated to take a test when it looks interesting. The structure is very good for "misleading" the test-taker. It hides the perspective from which to approach the problem behind hundreds of possible logics that lead nowhere. With the matrix design, I can better evaluate a person's ability to think laterally and remove the noise.

Jacobsen: What do you mean by a "high-range matrices test"?

Seneka: These are tests aimed at people who probably perform at a very high level on traditional intelligence measurements. In my test, I try to isolate and give more weight to divergent thinking over logical or rational thinking. So, it's possible that there may be some differences between IQ (from the traditional test) and DQ (divergent quotient).

Jacobsen: As the aim is to measure divergent and lateral thinking, how does this style of matrix design differ from more traditional mainstream tests like the Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices?

Seneka: While tests like Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices focus mainly on logical-deductive reasoning, spatial vision, and pattern recognition, POV introduces elements that require lateral thinking. The design of my test intentionally includes ambiguity to push the test-taker to explore other approaches when the "logical" approach doesn't lead to any solution.

Jacobsen: When trying to develop questions capable of tapping a deeper reservoir of ability, what is important for spatial and matrix test type of questions?

Seneka: Even though other intelligences play a role in a high-level test, the goal is to isolate divergent intelligence until it becomes the most important factor for solving the problem. In fact, the test-taker should indicate how they reached the conclusion for each item. If they managed to find the perspective from which to solve the problem, it validates their divergent intelligence, even if the answer is wrong or they made a logical mistake.

Jacobsen: Potentially, what are roadblocks test-takers tend to make in terms of thought processes and assumptions around time commitments on these tests? So, they get artificially low scores on high-range tests.

Seneka: The biggest obstacle for participants is getting stuck on the wrong perspective. I'll give an example with an item that I developed and finally didn't include in the final test:

I	X	C
V	L	D
X	C	

Here comes a spoiler. If you want to solve it, don't listen to this. Many people spend minutes or even hours trying to find out what logic is hidden behind these letters: they look at their positions in the alphabet, do math operations, or search for patterns. You won't find anything online if you search for those letters.

Only divergent intelligence allows them to “see” that the letters might not be letters and could be numbers. Once you think that, a simple search is enough to solve it. Maybe you even already know what numbers they are, and then you'll reach the conclusion even faster.

Jacobsen: What are the difficulties in preventing cheating on tests in the online era?

Seneka: I had the task of creating original items that are not on the internet, which is quite complex, by the way. I also tested the exam with different artificial intelligences, and out of all the items, only one reached a correct conclusion. Some AIs might score between 115 and 125 on traditional tests. That's already well above the human average. However, in lateral thinking, AIs have no chance; we humans have irreplaceable intelligences.

Jacobsen: What are the most appropriate means by which to norm a test when, in the high-range environment so far, the samples tend to be lower?

Seneka: Invite people who already belong to high IQ societies. They will be more inclined to take this test. Also, it's important to warn that scores as low as three or four out of twenty-three are possible, even for gifted individuals. Using methods like Item Response Theory (IRT) can improve the accuracy of norms, even with smaller samples.

Jacobsen: Pragmatically speaking, for really good statistics, what is your ideal number of test-takers? You can't say, “8,500,000,000.”

Seneka: Getting several hundred or a few hundred participants would be optimal. This number

allows for relevant analysis and keeps the needed precision to identify performance differences. To give a number, reaching 500 participants would provide a solid base and statistical validity.

Jacobsen: What tests and test constructors have you considered good?

Seneka: There are few high-range test constructors, and I don't want to argue with anyone here. In general, we could say they create harder versions of existing tests. They make tests that can be solved if you have knowledge of group theory, geometry, and mathematics at a very high level.

Recently, I discovered some tests by Laurent Dubois, and I found them very interesting.

Jacobsen: What have you learned from making a test?

Seneka: It has been a very fun experience, more art than science. And it's helping me a lot to better define the concept of multiple intelligences, so I will continue doing this for other intelligences as well.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time.

Seneka: Thank you, Scott. It's a pleasure to discuss these topics with you.

Conversation with Harry Royalster on Views and Life

2024-09-15

Harry Royalster is a lifelong autodidact. He is member of the high-IQ communities including World Genius Directory, ISPE, Glia Society, CIVIQ Society and Mensa. He discusses: growing up; extended self; family background; youth with friends; education; purpose of intelligence tests; high intelligence; extreme reactions to geniuses; greatest geniuses; genius and a profoundly gifted person; necessities for genius or the definition of genius; work experiences and jobs held; job path; myths of the gifted; God; science; tests taken and scores earned; range of the scores; ethical philosophy; political philosophy; metaphysics; worldview; meaning in life; source of meaning; afterlife; life; and love.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Harry Royalster:

Transistor radio story:

My parents were children of The Great Depression. My father in particular had experienced economic hardship as a child. So, he was strongly inclined toward frugality and his character had been steeped in this ethos for decades while running a small electroplating business in the middle years of the twentieth

century. I think he was wary of aspirational dreams that weren't firmly grounded in a logical path to a job. An episode comes to mind that illustrates – and casts a shadow. I may have been eight or nine years old. I could see that my transistor radio was powered by a battery that completed a circuit and wondered why it couldn't run on house current to perform the same job. I wired her up and flipped the switch. Of course, the radio was instantly fried. I showed it to my dad, wondering whether there was any hope of resuscitating the thing. He grimaced disgustedly and spat out the phrase “ya burnt it out.” While my “experiment” was grounded in pure ignorance and a real absence of common sense, it did reveal a scientific temperament that a dad with a broader horizon may have paid heed to and (even) good-naturedly encouraged. It happens that in those early years I imagined myself a future scientist. I quite enjoyed the classy act of Mr. Wizard on TV, which I revisited in recent days on youtube after a pause of sixty years. But, early on, I lost my child-like enthusiasm, while still a child, and was susceptible to discouraging messages about the feasibility of my hopes, fantasies and dreams as unrealistic or simplistic...

Love in the third grade:

There is a much beloved tale of how my parents came to be romantically linked. Undisputed is that they attended the same elementary school class for at least one year in Brooklyn, NY circa 1930. After that, nothing is certain but the basic outline of the story is accepted legend. It seems that even as children Laurence and “Mimi” (a hated family nickname for Miriam; Mia was preferred) admired each other's academic prowess and perhaps there was even a nascent pre-adolescent romantic spark. In their late teens, both had nearly completed bachelors degrees, each having skipped several “terms.” A key element of the story is that, after that shared year or so in grammar school, they weren't in touch for the remainder of their childhoods; Laurence's family had moved to a different section of Brooklyn. So, it came quite out of the blue that Laurence telephoned Mia, at age eighteen or so, to probe for romantic interest. It is said that he asked “Do

you know who this is?” The implicit storyline –maybe not so implicit– was that *if* Mia had failed to come up with the right name (note: after a ten year or so

separation), then Laurence would not be interested; this would be the acid test. **Jeremy**

Another family storyline concerns the sparkling intellect of my much older brother Jeremy (name changed). It seemed to his little brother Harry that Jeremy was deified in the family culture. He was a robust fellow, nearly seven years older than I. He had skipped third grade when I was just out of the womb. During his adolescence he would tunelessly sing to himself “I’m a genius, I’m a genius...” He was a daunting presence to his admiring kid brother, me, a scrawny second banana with a stutter who routinely fell asleep in his first grade class—and was teased for it. It took many years for me to develop an accurate take on Jeremy that went beyond the caricatured family myth. Despite his being a certifiable narcissist, we now get along reasonably well—albeit with some caution on both sides, now as older men. My brother is a successful author and certainly a smart guy—possibly Glia eligible—but not a person with freakish, uncanny powers who is categorically different than the plodding rest of us. (An aside here: the “plodding rest of us” includes your garden variety three-sigma-above-the-mean—give-or take folk who jostle together, every day, throughout our academic and professional lives.) I love my brother—in the way one can love a (genuine) narcissist: at arm’s length.

By the time I rolled into second grade, the New York City public school system had pretty much eliminated grade skipping, an early concession to creeping egalitarianism in education philosophy and everyone-gets-a-trophyism generally. I probably wasn’t a candidate anyway; at school, I didn’t have the buoyant, confident personality that would have launched me to early stardom. Indeed, due to the hostility of my first grade teacher (who, naturally, had been my brother’s first grade teacher seven years earlier and who made invidious comparisons between us), I was placed in one of the dumber classes for second grade. In time, I did skip eighth grade via a program called SP or Special Progress, which was a long standing institution in NYC public schools in which a rather high percentage of students— maybe 10% —it seemed to me— were selected for a program that ostensibly squeezed three years of academic work into two; classes were composed entirely of SP students. Earlier, Jeremy had also been selected for the SP and so, had skipped *two* grades, and graduated from the prestigious Stuyvesant High School at just about his 16th birthday.

Laurence and Mia

My father Laurence also had been an academic star and, along with Mia, set the family expectations for decades to come. He had earned a chemical engineering degree from (free and highly selective) Cooper Union at age 19 and went on to earn a mechanical engineering degree from Penn. He was recruited (but declined) to work on the Manhattan project. As it was, my dad’s MS was sponsored by the federal

government during WWII.

My mother was a character, high strung and certainly neurotic; she was melodramatic and prone to inappropriate or excessive worry. But she was also great fun, with bubbling creativity. She was wistful about her years at Brooklyn College, where she graduated magna cum laude with an English degree at nineteen; she was steeped in the English Romantic poets. I present here a telling couple of lines from her obituary, which I adapted from an earlier biographical sketch written by my brother: “She was active in Hadassah, the Jewish woman’s organization, for whose

staged musical productions she wrote new lyrics to Broadway show tunes. She could recite Shakespearean sonnets from memory, and wrote occasional sonnets herself, as well as several published essays about her Brooklyn childhood.”

All this intellectual fire power.

So, Mia and Laurence, married at ages 20 and 21, had a child, made in their image: my brother Jeremy, among the first boomers.

Reality Check

To be clear, none of these people were geniuses. I came to know their blind spots, coverups, self-serving stories, vanities and defenses all too well. Certainly, in the ordinary flow of life, they were all significantly smarter than the average bear, where “average bear” is defined as, let’s say, Mensa level. But, in the careers and academic circles where smart people tread, and in their families, there are many, many people who are Mensa level and well above, with outsized opinions of themselves. In the circles that smart people run in, being smart is not all that special.

During my formative years, I sensed that something was wrong with a family that unabashedly equated emblems of high intelligence with intrinsic worth. And still, such emblems were *de rigueur* and displayed almost daily, perhaps only when my mom would embarrassingly correct the grammar of one of my buds. I felt diminished and stymied by these outsized egos and felt there was no conventional path to success since intellectual and academic excellence did not seem to accrue any benefits; it was a “Royalster” *given*; the risk of failure had no corresponding and proportionate reward.

Meanwhile, I was a stutterer and was anxious and unhappy and always subject to shame if there would ever be shakiness in my academic excellence. My stuttering was a serious problem. It greatly ratcheted up anxiety at the prospect of college interviews— even when those interviews would be many years in the future! I didn’t hate school but I did find it sadly stultifying. While I was generally classified among the brighter students, I felt cheated by my stutter, which made it difficult to really shine. Also, I was offended by teachers’ diatribes about supposed bad behavior of the pupils. I felt this was mostly unfair and I didn’t feel like being yelled at in the schoolyard by some power obsessed harpy. At times, I was confused and frankly depressed by the mediocrity of the other pupils—and teachers. During the two SP years, I was stimulated enough, in part by the discovery of girls, but the move to suburbia was looming.

Bad Days at Green Way High

When I was 14, in the summer of 1967, the family moved to a New Jersey suburb of New York City. I had graduated from the SP and so, by default, had been scheduled for honors classes in the public high school in Brooklyn. But now in the New Jersey suburb of Green Way (not its name), I would need to register for sophomore classes in a sit-down with the ironically dubbed “guidance counselor” at Green Way High. I would have benefitted by taking my mother along as an advocate, in navigating these treacherous bureaucratic waters. But I was too invested in the silly image of myself as an independent adult and was too proud to enlist my mom. And *she* didn’t have the good sense or parental leadership to insist on an advocacy role. The result was that I was signed up for a generic “college bound” sophomore year curriculum of mostly mediocre classes composed of not very serious students. It was a source of shame to me that I was classified as one of these people. I felt socially alienated due to this mismatch. And, of course, I was new in town, scrawny, stuttered and was a little on the young side.

My high school career was undistinguished. I found the institutions and rites of passage through the college prep and admissions process just not for me. It was too fraught with anxiety. My SATs (1968 or 1969 vintage, long before re-norming) were good but not stellar. As I recall, I ran out of time, due to too much indecision and rumination, a recurring mode with me, and filled in the last few circles hoping to scoop up a few more correct answers. I applied to one college, Reed, known for its eccentric but brilliant students, and was not accepted.

So, life in Green Way High was not a riotous success. From the beginning, it felt to me... alien; of someone else's making. Which, of course, it was. One problem was how humorless and credulous and brittle *I* was. I was just too tightly wound to cope with persistent culture shock. And my parents would soon be ambushed by my seething discontent, with very little insight into its source.

Escape!

Within several months of our settling in Green Way, I found what seemed to be a safety valve to relieve my perpetual anxiety. I needed an alternative storyline to justify a less stressful (i.e., less competitive!) way of being in the world; I became a hippie. I could jettison the value system that I had inherited from Western Civilization and – presto chango – leap headlong into the Age of Aquarius, along with millions of other “gentle people with flowers in their hair,” worldwide, who were similarly “aware” of the stultifying stranglehold of the dominant societal values.

To go along with this departure from conventional striving, I did not challenge myself in the hard sciences, to my enduring loss. How could a smart person be so dopey? In my defense, I had lots of company and was only 14 or 15 (depending on which stupid life-changing decision or event we peg as pivotal).

In any case, I felt cornered; I needed a pressure release and didn't have the maturity, confidence, steadfastness or patience to be less compulsive and reckless. So, I essentially dropped out of school by coasting to graduation, smoking pot, dropping acid and hitchhiking around the country. I looked about 13 and so often ended up in lockup in far off communities, as a runaway. This was rather humiliating and not really much fun.

Later, as a young adult, I adopted, rather passively and uncritically, a simplistic, copout form of nihilism that was cobbled mainly second-hand and not so much through original sources (does anyone actually read Nietzsche?). I created for myself the illusion of a person standing above conventional rules as a manifestation of superiority. This was, of course, ass backward: it's true that geniuses will break the rules from time to time but it does not follow that people who break the rules are geniuses.

This adopted philosophical stance had real life effects including some high risk episodes. I cringe with a disbelieving shake of the head when I think of them, some 50 years later.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Royalster: I did the Ancestry.com genetic analysis thing which revealed even more homogeneity than I expected. In retrospect, it shouldn't have been surprising that my revealed gene pool is 100% Ashkenazi Jewish; my ancestors, on both sides, were observant Jews, mainly from Bessarabia and a frequently disputed area near the Poland/Ukraine border, in the town of Yavoriv (Polish version, Jaworów), some 34 miles west of the oblast capital, Lviv. My grandparents on

my father's side met and married in Jaworów with its distinct Polish and Jewish heritage that was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The borders in that part of the world have been contentiously redrawn after both world wars (and the cold war) and Jaworów is now (or should I say currently) Yavoriv, in western Ukraine.

I visited the town in the summer of 2018. There were only subtle clues of a past Jewish population there: a few door posts showing the markings of violated and removed mezuzahs. The city of Lviv, much larger, had a more complete Jewish historical footprint. Still, Jaworów was where my grandparents met and courted, presumably introduced to each other by a shadkhan (Yiddish: matchmaker).

They had two children while together in their home town of Jaworów. My grandfather, Harry, who I never met, and for whom I am named (in the Jewish custom of naming a child after a deceased relative), came to the U.S. in 1913, presumably seeking economic opportunity. Perhaps also to avoid the military draft as the empire lurched toward war. A boggling and not fully explained fact is that my grandmother, Rachel (Rose, depending on context) did not reconnect with her husband in the United States until 1920! It's reasonable to suppose that the Great War had something to do with this extended separation. In the interim both of their children succumbed to disease, perhaps the Spanish flu of 1919.

A son, my father, was born to the reunited couple in 1921 in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. A daughter, Minnie, would follow four years later.

1921 was also the year my mother was born, the eldest of three girls, born to Rose—yes, another Rose — a first generation American and crackerjack Scrabble player, and her husband Saul. My grandfather Saul had migrated to America as a 14 year-old, some twenty years earlier, to avert being drafted into the Czar's army. Saul was the first of my forebears to drift toward a secular worldview and a much reduced observance of Judaism. He was also a successful small businessman who owned and operated a metal finishing plant, a wood craftsman, a mandolin player, a loving steward of a large side-yard festooned with apple trees and a strawberry patch.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Royalster: Good; during my Brooklyn childhood there was a good group of bright neighborhood kids though I did experience some anxiety when the complicating element of attraction to girls kicked in with attendant parties and insecurities. Not so good after family's move to suburbia, examined elsewhere in this questionnaire.

Jacobsen: What have been some professional certifications, qualifications, and trainings earned by you?

Royalster: As a child, I was generally on the high honor roll. I learned my eventual vocation (computer programming) by a combination of autodidacticism and vocational training at an orthodox Jewish vocational school in NYC. An aside: All other students were either Jewish emigres from Soviet Socialist Republics or orthodox Chasidim. I was the only native secular Jew.

I founded a chess club at Franconia College in NH, an "experimental" college I attended in the early 70s for three semesters. Skipping ahead some decades:

As VP and software engineer running a critical and ultra high stress project at Charles Schwab Co, I was awarded the annual “Best of the Best” award at Schwab, as both team leader and team member of the capital markets unit.

Earlier (1970s) I lived a prolonged period as a somewhat shabby but neatly turned out “tourist” in San Francisco, socializing with a cohort that was similarly independent but not friendless. I’m reminded of Paul Simon’s *The Boxer* reference to “where the ragged people go.” But this was a group that wasn’t quite so ragged and I remember its members fondly. I did enjoy this extended hiatus from the old familiar stress, spending hour upon hour in bookstores and coffeehouses and San Francisco’s main library, with its grand facade—consistent with the Beaux Arts style. Among my hangouts was someplace called the Network Coffeehouse that offered a range of stimulating programs to me and my fellow urban explorers, along with a pretty good level of pingpong and chess.

But, the State of California eventually tired of my extracting a living from its very liberal social welfare programs and quite insisted that I take a battery of tests to try to determine how I might be able to get off the dole. The results of these tests triggered the signal that I should be trained as a computer programmer and also provided an onramp into Mensa, which would soon have some utility for me.

I then competed in SF Regional Mensa puzzle solving competitions which would provide an indirect way of boasting Mensa membership on a resumé in a natural and relevant way since puzzle solving is a talent and skill that was integral to the newly sought career as a programmer. Touting Mensa membership out of context would have been vulgar and irrelevant and contrived but, couched within a

profile, it was just the thing to generate interest in a candidate who had no computer science degree, indeed, no degree of any kind.

This may have been 1979. But, it was the birth of my first child, with my then future wife, in 1982, to establish a tipping point for my transition from SF street denizen to software engineer and Wall St executive.

Earlier, during those amorphous 70s, there were some vacations from my vacation, notably a few months as a “work scholar” at the new age mecca Esalen Institute in gorgeous Big Sur, where I took workshops from Elizabeth Kuhbler Ross, Leo Matos, Dick Price, et al. and knew and counseled with Gregory Bateson toward the end of his life.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of intelligence tests to you?

Royalster: Any time I’ve taken any of these tests it was for a specific purpose: (1) age 9: to provide grist (i.e., experience and data) for my uncle as he pursued a masters degree in psychology in middle age; (2) to select students for the SP, discussed elsewhere (3) to detect whether I could be gainfully employed, a test was administered by the state of California at age 25 (4) to entertain myself during long bus commutes to Manhattan, I took the W87 test (age 38), used at that time for admission to the ISPE, an I.Q. society whose standard for admission is a score at or above 99.9th percentile; (5) to be admitted to Glia Society, possibly offering contact with interesting people and interesting ideas; also to verify 99.9 level with entirely different instrument (tests by Paul Cozijmans).

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Royalster: To clarify, let me re-interpret the question in two different ways: (1) when did you become aware that you were highly intelligent? (2) when did you become aware that being highly intelligent was “a thing,” a formal and measurable thing? I was confused about “where I stood” at a young age. There were other smart kids but I felt that there were qualities of mind that were palpably different when comparing my mind with the minds of other smart kids. So, I wanted to tease out whether I was a notch above or a notch below these other kids or just different.

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered, what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy – many, not all.

Royalster: What does “platformed” mean in this context? ...Genuine geniuses are qualitatively different than the rest of us. Sometimes their ideas are sufficiently different and alien that they make us discombobulated and angry. Also, institutions can be vested in old ideas that they are unwilling to jettison. Galileo’s tussle with the Catholic church comes to mind. Conversely (I suppose), these feelings can induce a cult like worship of the genius or special person, perhaps as a way to make peace with the threat of new superseding ideas.

Jacobsen: Who seem like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

(see next Q&A).

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Royalster: I think there is a big problem with the word genius. It strikes me as a word in search of a meaning. It is used colloquially in many more ways than any writer or speaker would ever hope to use it with precision or formality. But, let’s take a shot at it:

The ability to apply a mechanism or tool in a novel way is a component of genius. Think of the ingenuity depicted in the movie (and actual historic events) of Apollo 13. Of course this was a case of cooperation among resourceful engineers on the ground partnered with the fevered creativity of the astronauts aloft. And, the tools and materials available were pre-determined, limited to the objects in the spacecraft. But, these very singular conditions signify to me that genius may be a process apart from the muse of a single individual but an artifact of inspired necessity constructed by one or more ordinary but able human beings.

One of my favorite geniuses is Godfrey Wilhelm Leibniz, arguably the father of German technology, as we’ll see. Leibniz is probably best known for conjuring the Calculus, simultaneously to, and independently of— Isaac Newton. He was bogglingly eclectic; a mathematician, philosopher, physicist and statesman. And, yes, a politician. He wasn’t hemmed in by the— perhaps— artificial boundaries that delineate disciplines to us non-geniuses. This mental plasticity may be a signal feature of genius. The elegance of Leibniz’s mind was further revealed by the superior notation he conceived for representing the Calculus, much cleaner than Newton’s unwieldy notation. Leibniz made insightful contributions in physics including predictive observations about force, energy and time. And, he refined the binary number system. The great polymath invented the “Leibniz Wheel”—the operating mechanism used in the “Arithmometer,” the first mass-produced mechanical calculator and also the quaintly named “Stepped Reckoner,” the first calculator that could perform all four arithmetic operations. Eclecticism, versatility, applying old ideas to new problems, applying new ideas to old problems, envisioning applications that are beyond

boundaries of current technology. This freedom of mind seems to be a defining feature of genius.

A polymath of even greater breadth, if that were possible, was John Von Neumann, who was graced, by God, with an astonishingly powerful and supple mind, spanning linguistics, history, mathematics, computer science and an improbable slew of other disciplines, some of which he invented. He formulated Game Theory, conceived the mathematical underpinnings of quantum mechanics; his ruminations on parallels between brains and computers inspired the origins of artificial intelligence and the development of neuroscience. Somewhat echoing Leibniz, “Johnny” is credited with building what is possibly the world’s first programmable electronic digital computer, the ENIAC. Echoing Archimedes, he developed and refined weapons of war during and in the run-up to WWII. Prescient about the looming war, Von Neumann developed expertise in the mathematics of ballistics and explosives as early as 1930, lending his acquired knowledge to the Americans and ultimately the Manhattan Project. It was Von Neumann who calculated the arrangement of explosives needed to detonate the “Fat Man” bomb that would be dropped on Nagasaki at the close of the war. This short digest barely hints at the scope of Von Neumann’s work and originality..

In sharp contrast to the eclecticism modeled by Von Neumann and Leibniz, consider the narrowly focused but luminous careers of mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan and chess prodigy Bobby Fischer. Both seem to have had talents and proclivities that far exceeded the grasp of mere hard work (though genius does inspire and almost certainly requires hard work). As an aside, the rivalry of Mozart and Antonio Salieri, famously depicted in the film *Amadeus*, springs to mind as illustrative of both the necessity and limits of hard work... Ramanujan openly proclaimed that many if not all of his mathematical insights were presented in final form by the Indian goddess Namagiri. This suggests that there was something visionary and decidedly non-linear about Ramanujan’s process of discovery. This may not be unusual. Fischer was so much better than his contemporaries that he had a certain something that the next tier of rated players did not. Fischer bristled at being labelled a mere “chess genius,” asserting that his brilliance could be expressed in almost any field.

All asides aside, we have two distinct and opposed models of genius: the polymath whose brain demonstrates superplasticity and the specialized savant who seems to be hardwired with highly specific targeted abilities that are possibly not broadly deployed.

Re: What differentiates a genius from a Profoundly Intelligent Person?

PIP:Genius::Potential:Kinetic

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Royalster: Genius represents the coming together of talent and a field or discipline—or several—or many—that has become a nearly obsessive interest which feeds off this talent in an upward spiral. The level of talent does not have to necessarily meet a standard of profundity, which may be an arbitrary requirement. Still, we would expect the talent of genius to be at a significant level, compared to the average bear.

Jacobsen: What have been some work experiences and jobs held by you?

Royalster: Executive Director UBS Investment Bank, from which I retired at 55,
Vice President IT at Charles Schwab Capital Markets,

Senior Systems Analyst at German/global commodities trader (aptly named Metallgesellschaft),
Temporary office worker, generally in San Francisco's business district,

Cab driver in NYC,

Sandwich maker at San Francisco's The Coffee Gallery, the longtime Beatnik hangout, making sandwiches for a later generation of hanger-outers,

Hated scab agricultural worker in California,

and so on.

Prior to career as software engineer, I had lived an unstructured life, mostly in San Francisco, for many years, unwilling or unable to complete my "adult adjustment," often surviving by means of government programs. At one point, age about 26, this lifestyle began to get "old" and also no longer tenable due to drying up of government resources. And the State of California and other government entities were

eager to take me off their balance sheet.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them? **Royalster:** I don't know that "genius" and giftedness can be understood as things that have much in common, except that genius requires some threshold of talent. Giftedness by itself could be something like having significant –but not rare– talent, that is not necessarily realized "in the world." (Genius is discussed in some detail elsewhere.) Generally I avoid the word giftedness because it seems to signify an extra layer of specialness that sets a person apart, unnecessarily, much as identity politics does.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or gods idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Royalster: My "take" on God is that I have become satisfied with the evidence for intelligence that is superior to human intelligence. A snippet of this evidence can be found in *Darwin's Black Box*, by Michael Behe, a biochemistry professor at Lehigh, who coined the term irreducible complexity, to capture the notion of mutual dependency of separate biological systems that cannot be independently "selected" because of their mutual dependency. Also, for more discussion of design, see Stephen C. Meyer's *Signature in the Cell* and my long review of it in *Telicom*, Journal of the International Society of Philosophical Enquiry (TELICOM XXIII.1 – First Quarter 2010). Here is a snippet of the review to

give its flavor:

In 1958, five years after his co-unveiling of the molecular structure of DNA, Francis Crick announced the daring hypothesis that pointed the way to the genetic code. Crick surmised that it was the arrangement of DNA bases, not their shape or any merely physical feature, that was responsible for their salient effect. The individual base molecules, the famous A's, G's, T's and C's in the popular shorthand, would prove to be a four letter alphabet whose words mapped to the meaning expressed by the fancy, functional protein machines that hummed within the cell. The "sequence hypothesis," as it was dubbed, was proposed with scant empirical evidence, perhaps hurried along by the digital revolution that paralleled the biological one of that era. It envisaged a mechanism that was logically indistinguishable from computer collating sequences, the

trick by which conventional alphabets are represented “under the hood.” Just as an arbitrary arrangement of digital bits (Os and 1’s) maps to an English character set, a likewise arbitrary arrangement of nucleotide bases maps to certain amino acids that are chained together to form proteins. As a point of contrast, consider the decidedly physical nature of a protein that is so synthesized, whose specific shape is exquisitely tied to its function.

These two elements, the abstract cipher encased in the sequence of DNA bases and the contrastingly palpable and quirkily shaped proteins of cellular machinery are, roughly, the beginning and end points of what is called gene expression. And, it was the explication of gene expression in the 1960’s that formally confirmed Crick’s hypothesis that the sequencing of DNA bases contained information content. But how was this information originally supplied? It is the *origin* of biological information that is the pivotal question of SITC.

...I think religious principles, stories, customs and rituals are useful and helpful and even instructive for many people but are mainly human intellectual artifacts. However, discernment, discussed elsewhere, is real.

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Royalster: When science is politicized, it ceases to be science because it is not disinterested. This certainly does happen. Scientists exhibit the range of human behavior including laudable tenacity but also cowardice, conformity and venality. As a software engineer/programmer I learned the lesson well that our early assumptions about any system, including Nature’s systems are usually wrong and cannot generally be considered sound unless verified empirically and with painstaking rigor. Here is a relevant snip from the SITC review:

[Meyer] presents the common sense view that it cannot be a source of alarm or scientifically discrediting that ID has metaphysical implications since it, not surprisingly, “addresses a major philosophical question that most religious and metaphysical systems of thought also address, namely, ‘What caused life and/or the universe to come into existence?’” Thus, like its materialistic counterparts, the theory of intelligent design inevitably raises questions about the ultimate or prime reality. ...Scientific theories must be evaluated on the basis of the evidence, not on the basis of philosophical preferences or concerns about implications.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the tests taken and scores earned (with standard deviations) for you?

Royalster: CTMM 139 SD 15, W87 result reported as a percentile (99.9), Cooijmans Intelligence Test – Form 4E 149 SD 15, Gliaweb Riddled Intelligence Test 161 SD 15

Jacobsen: What is the range of the scores for you? The scores earned on alternative intelligence tests tend to produce a wide smattering of data points rather than clusters, typically.

Royalster:

22 points SD 15

Jacobsen: What ethical philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Royalster: Treat people with empathy, kindness, honesty and consistent integrity. Also, individuals should be treated as individuals and not members of groups; over the long term this brings out the best in people but more importantly is the most truthful and least distorting way.

Jacobsen: What social philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Royalster: Trust the marketplace

Jacobsen: What political philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Royalster: Trust the marketplace; ambitious government programs, ostensibly well-meaning, are at their heart power grabs and ultimately (almost always) corrupt.

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Royalster: To carve out a small piece of this question let us not forget that almost all information about the world is presented by our sense organs which fashion this information in ways that can be processed by our brains; even the crude initial capture of this information is within limited ranges (e.g., the “visible” spectrum and many other examples) and has specific (human) qualities (so, e.g., human sense of smell is quite different than canine sense of smell). This should remind us that we are privy to small specialized snippets of the world. Obviously this is still true when we extend our senses as through a telescope or a cochlear implant or an MRI machine. So, much of life is an attempt to extrapolate the truth from the interplay between what is delivered to our senses and what is not.

Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Royalster: Any refinement of thought that can be embraced as more true or more probably true than whatever it supersedes is good. This dovetails nicely with the practice of science. Also, any thought or supposition or heuristic that improves clarity and reduces ambiguity is a good thing. And, as Wittgenstein wrote, anything that can be said can be said clearly. This implies that some things, maybe most things, cannot be said.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Royalster: (See next answer)

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?

Royalster: I think meaning can be discerned. When the U.S. Declaration of Independence declares that humans have certain “unalienable rights” that are “self-evident,” it implies that there is something important about the way the world works and our place in it that is accessible and discernible, however imperfectly, by the finite minds of people who are receptive to these truths. Such “natural law” would tend to reify an ambitious claim to know the mind of God. If too contrived, such a claim is patently absurd. If lawmakers attempt to apply this standard of natural rights in a counterfeit way, the fraud should scream out at us. For example, while there are complexities and ambiguities about the abortion debate, no one who is intellectually honest can frame the “right” to choose as a sacred right, granted by God, through all nine months of pregnancy.

I hasten to add that this standard of certainty and discerned rights does not require a belief in God, just plausible insight into the workings of a divine mind that is consistent with common sense. This standard is much more compelling than changeable rules invented by human beings for, say, political

or careerist purposes. When *innate* “rights” are conjured up without a serious attempt to apply the standard of “endowed [to us] by our Creator,” the fraud is “self-evident.” This corrupt concoction of “rights” is exposed. Rights and protections are, of course, legitimately crafted in the

domain of political horse trading but we are regularly confronted by the reality that such political process is rife with venality and ego. In the spirit of Justice Potter Stewart's famous observation about obscenity—that he “knows it when he sees it,” the truthfulness of claims of natural rights is something we know when we see it. To acknowledge that such a standard exists is to demand that it be applied in a disciplined way. The discernment model is a buttress against cynically or carelessly making stuff up.

So, this discernible truth is a source of meaning to me. Also, meaning surely derives from applying one's mind to life's problems and ruminating on which line of thought or which considered intuition “makes the cut.”

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not? Royalster: Not in any way that preserves identity or memory. But consciousness is not understood at all and it may not be physical or exclusively physical. Philosopher of science Thomas Nagel has posited that consciousness itself is a special kind of non-material stuff. In a manner that is somewhat analogous to stuff becoming animated (by whatever is the source of life—we don't know); material stuff, he supposes, can be permeated by consciousness.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Royalster: It's quite the thing, isn't it. All the brothers and sisters and bosses and parents and children and celebrities and geniuses and ballerinas and criminals and musicians and redheads and accountants on and on are occupying their bodies and living their lives in a minuscule window of time. Our bodies service us for a little while and then, when it's all over, we do a complete vanishing act. Every person we see, with his or her flesh and blood package of bio-machinery is a short story that unfolds and then ceases completely into matter that becomes indistinguishable from all other matter. Time itself is neither long nor short, when considered outside the human frame. We know that we, our selves, living beings on earth, are dependent on a star that, like all stars, will burn out. It's easy to believe that life itself is unique to this celestial moment, and may be a “one off.” And time, itself, is not well understood much as consciousness is not well understood. Physicist Carlo Rovelli has written a provocative volume about time, “The Order of Time.” Here's a snippet from an interview with Rovelli:

What does physics have to say about the “flow” of time that humans seem to feel?

It may not be a physics problem. I think it depends on our brains and the complicated way in which we form memories. It has to do with how we remember the past and anticipate the future. So to explain this passage of time, this flowing of time, I believe one should look at neuroscience, not physics.

For me the most accessible take-away from Rovelli's work here is that all of our human notions about time, filtered through human sense organs, are confined (i.e., applicable only) to that human frame. When we consider the idea that the sun will not burn out for a “long, long time,” almost certainly outliving our species, the correct rejoinder is “so what, it *will* burn out; that's just the way things work.” To think differently is much like trying to assuage the anxiety of a child, coming to grips with mortality at, say, age five.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Royalster: I love dark chocolate, integrity, logic, the ocean, truth, my children and grandchildren, my late wife, all in different ways. It is safe to say, love is not one thing but many. Among these things is the unforced, undoubted rightness of empathy toward a spouse, superseding all

else. I'm reminded of a true story, repeated in Orthodox Jewish circles, concerning a famous rabbi, Rabbi Aryeh Levine.

Accompanying his wife to a medical clinic, and after perhaps several minutes of an exasperating interview, attempting to pin down symptoms, the Rabbi finally explained "Doc, it's my wife's leg; it's killing us."

Conversation with Marc Roberge on Views and Life: 2nd VP/Historian/PR, #2477, International Society for Philosophical Enquiry

2024-09-15

Marc Roberge is the 2nd Vice President of the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry, a historian, and a retired teacher. He discusses: growing up; extended self; family background; youth with friends; education; purpose of intelligence tests; high intelligence; extreme reactions to geniuses; greatest geniuses; genius and a profoundly gifted person; necessities for genius or the definition of genius; work experiences and jobs held; job path; myths of the gifted; God; science; tests taken and scores earned; range of the scores; ethical philosophy; political philosophy; metaphysics; worldview; meaning in life; source of meaning; afterlife; life; and love.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Marc Roberge: Scott, if I may, let me begin by commending you for your work here at the very aptly named In-Sight Publishing, as each interview achieves precisely this aim. Also, I'm grateful for, albeit humbled by, your invitation to chat. Thank you. This is a first.

To answer your question, it's odd that we should begin there since my childhood lacked lore and stories. For one, I was born in 1970, the second of two, 5 years apart, my sister the elder. My father worked construction and was away all week, a theme that would carry through his seventies. My mother worked in the office at a sawmill manufacturer-retailer in the neighboring town, meaning that we children were with sitters and extended family more often than not. When my sister turned 11 or 12, she started taking some of that responsibility. There wasn't a lot of family time to speak of, from my spotty recollection.

My father was 7 years my mother's senior, and 31, by my calculation, when I was born. He'd started owning a dairy farm, and whether it went under, or due to pressure from my mother to adopt a more conventional lifestyle (to this day, I don't know), but they ultimately sold it and moved to a small nearby town. I do know that while they owned the farm, my father had already transitioned into other work, settling on construction, and my mother was, as she likes to tell it, left practically alone to tend to my sister, the animals, and the farm. Nevertheless, my father, I sensed, always resented having sold it, and up to the very last I could denote a mixture of deep nostalgia and regret.

Further complicating the matter was that there seemed to be distinct versions of him—a past life few ever talked about in my company, a public one, and the one only I knew. From what I gleaned over the years, he'd apparently been a bit of a wild man—a story of him getting his scrotum caught on a barbed-wire fence trying to outrun game wardens at night after being spotted poaching fish by flashlight and requiring, apparently, quite a stitch count. Another story of a little speed boat he'd clapped together in the barn and mounted with a far too powerful outboard, zipping along on his maiden voyage along the river bank bordering the farm and, less than a few minutes out, dipping the nose under water, effectively planting it in the bottom beyond retrieval. He flipped the farm tractor into the very same river. Lost one fingertip to a saw. Lost another to a crossbow.

He raced snow-machines in quarter-mile heats. He drove a rather impractical 4×4 Chevy on a lift kit and beefy A/T tires, which, on weekends, often found its way into sand pits and mud bogs. I

couldn't reach the door handle. He was an outdoorsman—hunting and fishing, some camping, and, for a period, a bit of an adrenaline junkie. When I turned 5 or 6, whether it was discussed or decided all on his own, he got rid of the racing sleds and the truck perhaps a year or two later.

He was the eldest of five, not counting the one that had passed in childbirth, dropping out in 9th or 10th grade, I presume, to help work his father's farm, which he eventually bought or inherited—again, none of these things were ever discussed. The rest of his siblings all went on to complete their post-secondary education—three school teachers and a dental assistant. My grandfather also held an agricultural college certificate and worked for some time as an inspector or assessor, I believe.

Given my father's choice of career, he being away all the time, and his siblings residing an hour's drive or more from our home, visits were few and far between—cordial, somewhat awkward, like a polite congregation of strangers, save for the one quirky uncle who brought light to the mix. I could never shake the feeling my father felt the need to compensate for his lack of education by way of career and financial success.

He never quite broke into the multimillionaire stratum, not that I'm aware, but between his work and side ventures, property flipping and rental units, let's just say he had no problem plopping down \$10k on Christmas gifts. He earned every penny. A true bull of a man, tenacious and goal-oriented. All of it accumulated with sweat beading from his brow. A stronger work ethic or sheer grit I've yet to encounter. He was hardly ever phased or stumped unless it had to do with human affairs. I, unfortunately, inherited this last trait, and it plagues me still.

Thus far, we've painted an admirable man, one of action, aptitude, courage, and generosity. All of these are true. He was exceptional in many ways. Stamina. Problem-solving. Numbers. Physical strength. In my experience, however, I've come to realize that exceptionalism comes at a cost or with concessions. Professional athletes and leading innovators must shelve portions of 'normal' life in order to excel—hours at the gym aren't hours cracking the physics texts, volunteering, or socializing. Exceptionalism is an anomaly.

Now, on to less flattering and perhaps more troubling matters. Sometime around my birthday, I believe I was 7 going on 8. I came home from school, as usual, dawdling along and singing to myself, lost in thought. It was late October or early November, a Friday. I enjoyed school, but I was looking forward to the weekend—a chance to visit the library and stock up on some new books. When I arrived, through the screen door, I spied my father hunched over the kitchen table, crying, my mother and sister holding hands and standing at the door, three suitcases next to them. I noticed the car was running and packed with boxes. When I walked in, I was held back at the door, informed we were moving, and that was that.

We lumbered up to a semi-furnished apartment in a six-plex, and by Monday, I was enrolled in a new school. It was assumed, I guess, that I was too young to understand. They were wrong. I was spun around in a constant fog, and my nerves were shattered. It had been a tremendous shock to the system, and there was nothing to do but to let my body and mind 'eat it.' Not only was my father out of the picture, but there were never any of the regular faces around, either family or friends. It was radio silence.

My birthday passed without much ado—no friends or family around, just three of us and a big old elephant in the room. At the time, my father was just starting out and wasn't quite as prosper-

ous as in later years, but we still lived well. We had a cozy three-bedroom bungalow on a double-lot backed by a few hundred acres of undeveloped land where we were free to roam, play, and build forts. There was a double garage filled with tools and snowmobiles, and even a TERRA-JET (similar to ARGO), with an above-ground pool attached to it via a deck. All of that was gone. That Christmas, we spent at a fireman's charity function in a local hall, collecting a food hamper, a plastic fireman's hat and a plush dog. Sitting in a room with several dozen families receiving charity—that was blow number two.

It would be four months before we'd hear from our father. I'd simply assumed he was busy working, but he'd never been away this long. I began to suspect something was amiss. I hadn't considered that he simply didn't know where we were. When he showed up unannounced at the apartment door, our mother wasn't home, and my sister was under strict instructions to open the door for no one, without exception. As he knocked, cried, and pleaded from the other side, and I watched, impotent, as my sister told him he had to leave since she wasn't allowed to open the door—well, at that moment, I was torn to shreds. Afterwards, I became inconsolable. My mother would wake in the middle of the night to find me huddled behind a dresser, sobbing. I couldn't eat or function. I was wracked knowing that she had been hiding us, that either our father presented a real or imagined threat, perhaps with the intention to abduct us. I think it may have had more to do with support and marital assets than the children, convinced my father would have been vengeful in that regard, given the way she'd left. I'd always wondered how our meager belongings had made it to the apartment before we arrived. I'd been unaware of anything being boxed or missing prior to that fateful day. After several nights, I was admitted to the hospital for a week to replenish my fluids, nutrients, and get me eating again. When I was released from care, I was informed that I'd no longer be living with my mother and sister but my father. In my mind, this seemed the fairest settlement for the parents, not so for us.

Little did I understand the magnitude of these decisions. My father wasn't going to alter course, career-wise. Granted, everyone was exceedingly kind and compassionate — I am truly grateful. Nevertheless, not only had I been separated from my mother and sister, but I was now living with family friends, themselves with three children. This was the case until Summer when I would be sent to live with my grandparents, two hours drive away. When September rolled around, I'd live with a widow, kind and capable but in her 70s and taken with a serious nervous condition that made her stride unsteady, her face and arm somewhat spastic. She also had this creepy cat who was a total scrapper, always coming back bloody, and had no litter box because it did its business on the commode as we do, without the decency to shut the door first. This type of carnival fare is pure nightmare fuel for a kid living out of a suitcase in a quasi-foster-care arrangement for roughly five years.

I didn't realize it at the time, too nomadic for normal friendships, but in hindsight, from a material standpoint, my father provided for an enviably comfortable existence. The flip side is that he was hardly around, and when he was, we were all pretty much dancing to his tune. He did show emotion, sometimes compassion. He could be warm. But generally, like a box of knives. He could be negligent, abusive, intimidating, judgmental, critical, cold, non-communicative, authoritarian, and prone to triggers. Not that the discipline was frequent, and I wasn't a difficult child, but of a measure I felt disproportionate, punitive as opposed to instructive. To see rage flash across a parent or guardian's face leaves an indelible mark. To see it brandishing, what today would raise some eyebrows—a belt, spoon, ruler — or soap in the mouth, or a few hours bare-

kneaded on the floor, or tossing every last toy into garbage bags and dragging them to the curb—as the truck pulls up.

It was a house without appeal, and the judge had a record for siding with the complainant. My father, I feel, saw any mark against me, real or fabricated, as a personal affront—an attempt on my part to undermine his own hard-won image and standing in the community. His ego was, and perhaps all egos are, precious.

He also enjoyed getting a rise out of others, teasing or frightening them. A blast up ride up a 50-degree sand dune in a jacked-up 4×4 with the front wheels off the ground is scary for a child. He once accidentally discharged a pellet gun into his own calf. I might have been 8 at the time, and we were alone walking back to the vehicle. He started acting, quite convincingly, as though he were about to faint, saying that I'd have to carry him to the truck and drive us back to town, and quickly before he bled out. He was always playing mind games. Fun times.

He was complicated, my father, and sociable but awkward. I could tell he wasn't always at ease. Maybe that's why he worked so much. But he did have his regular stops—his parents, a brother-in-law who worked in real estate and fed him the cherry listings. Otherwise, he mostly worked, and I spent a lot of time alone. He always encouraged talent development and education, above all, and signed me up for baseball one Summer, Cub Scouts another, guitar lessons, and so on. The problem was he just expected me to dovetail seamlessly. He could see I had the wherewithal but couldn't apprehend that there'd been none of the groundwork. We'd never tossed a ball. We never watched sports. I had none of the mechanics, notions, or rules, and surrounded by peers who did, I felt like a fool. Same with scouts. As for guitar, I was handed an adult acoustic I could barely hold, a classical neck my fingers couldn't span, and an instructor in his retirement with an impenetrable Italian accent. Each attempt felt like a setup—a preconfigured failure to keep me pegged. From very early on, I couldn't help but feel like a constant disappointment.

His motives, though they often were, weren't always altruistic—concerned with 'perception.' It may be unfair to say but, I think he might have loved me more if I'd been an esteemed professional, someone respectable and accomplished, and a little less of a screw-up. The bar, I assure you, was always high and moveable. He had my hat and played keepsies with it throughout my entire life. He could never relinquish his parental role nor concede, at any time, that we were on equal footing; insisting on maintaining that leverage, rubbing my nose in old business or finding ways to undermine my confidence was his way of ensuring dominance.

My grandparents were staunch Catholics. The evangelical channel was on all the time, thrice weekly Church attendance, nightly rosary, and even a traumatic pilgrimage through the Eastern provinces, stopping at all the religious points of interest along the way—cut short when I relapsed. I wasn't faring well, and nothing was being done about it. Keep in mind, after that second familial split, I would neither see nor speak to my mother or sister but more than twice a year, a week in the Summer, a day or so at Christmas, from ages 8 through 18. My mother was, in clinical terms, a dead mother. Few, if any, of the extended family helped to provide some consistency. I'm sure they cared. But it still felt like it was being treated as someone else's problem. My father was, if I were to venture any diagnosis, given to narcissistic tendencies with a mildly sadistic streak.

We can see how that level of fraying all but silenced reminiscences and any positive feelings one has about family—it was all mired in guilt, shame, regret and open wounds. The only specifics I am able to provide beyond this are that we were, with regards to heritage, Norsemen, finding a

port along the St-Lawrence during the settlement era, a family of craftsmen (Roberge is, as I understand, a name for 'longship') and farmers. Intelligence was in the pool. My father could perform complex mental arithmetic faster than I could punch it into a calculator.

Jacobsen: Have these stories helped provide a sense of an extended self or a sense of the family legacy?

Roberge: They might have, had I any that resonated. I see in my cousins, for instance, some grounding and amongst themselves a connection I never managed to plug into. I was uprooted and dancing constantly to adapt to my ever-changing circumstances and environments. Eventually, my father met someone. She had two younger children than me, by 2 and 4 years. She was 11 years his junior, a professional in health care, pretty, from a respected family. They loved each other and made a good pair. I'm sure, not only smitten, he also felt he'd found a trophy, a true 'how do you like them apples' to my mother. And he lavished her—building a new home, buying her furs, jewelry, a Cadillac, yearly trips abroad. She was often embarrassed by the luxuries, preferring to be understated. She wasn't presumptuous in material ways. She was very caring, loving, kind, generous, and I am grateful to her. I am indebted. I'd be remiss however to omit a latent righteousness about her, one that sparked magnesium bright should you happen to strike it. It wasn't always easy to communicate.

The dynamic had once again shifted. I was now the eldest of three, one of whom had been crushed under a dump truck while riding a tricycle down the sidewalk and required much attention and frequent hospital visits. A robbery. A house fire. Broken limbs. Teenage drama... Let's just say there was no time for hindsight—we were always very much in the churn of things. Chaos from the get-go. My circle, effectively a zoetrope. We looked good on paper. I always felt adrift, apart, like a refugee, or a ward — beholden, voiceless, impotent.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Roberge: I'd say most of what I know is covered in the first two responses, except for culture, language, and religion. I was profoundly altered by all of this. I'd been a curious, cheerful, sweet child. Following these events, I was suspicious, trusted few, and grew skeptical of the authoritarian line—doubting they'd so much as once questioned their own creeds, morals, or motives. I was a boy, convinced that to survive I would need to become self-reliant, on a mission to be broad in learning and skill. Religion was one of the first things to come under my scrutiny, and though I studied extensively across all denominations and offshoots, I resolved that I'd been lied to and manipulated. As a consequence, I rejected 'religion' rather openly but was made to go through the motions, nonetheless, for appearances. Naturally, all three — culture, language, religion — coalesced on my educational doorstep. I attended a French Catholic school. There was no point in suggesting I might want to attend one that was non-denominational or Anglophone. I'd not hear the end of that. So, in very real ways, all of these decisions have a profound impact and added to my growing sense of skepticism.

All decisions of any import were made for me, usually without any consideration. I would finish the school year on a Friday and learn on the Saturday that I was leaving for the Summer to go work with my father. You might assume I'd be happy to have some extra time with him, but he was a boss both at work and at home. It was he and I, 24/7, without a buffer, and me without any independence or means to escape for even an hour, the only privacy to be had, in the washroom,

the only time I wasn't being ordered around was when he slept. It felt like years of taking it on the chin, driven around and into the ground, never a 'me' in the mix—just this thing, this brute.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Roberge: Early on, before the divorce, things seemed fine. After I started popping on and off the radar, their bonds strengthened as my alienation deepened, by slight increments, since I was slipping, as it were, from their narratives. Meanwhile, I was alone a lot and spent my time reading, drawing, experimenting, and so on. I developed a palette for the solitary and cerebral, whereas they were steeped in 'normal' activity. The rift only grew from there. For reasons I can't quite explain, I still fared well socially and was rarely shunned, bullied a few times but grew into my own, and I had a few close friends with whom I hung out regularly. I smooched a few girls, all of them quite pretty, decent and lovely, and I suppose I struck the odd fancy, but I was a mess and didn't realize how bad. Invariably, none of these trysts were serious, lasted, nor ended well, all on account of me. So, in reality, I was actually failing miserably and feeling it, but I was faking it as best as I could. Again, being dragged off in the Summer and plopped back down when school started, a more prolonged iteration of the fostering of prior years, wasn't helping. Nothing was working out. I was chronically stressed, inflamed, suffering from migraines, insomnia, bruxism, psoriasis.

Jacobsen: What professional certifications, qualifications, and training have you earned?

Roberge: Brimming with potential but inconsistent, I'd generally make the top three, later top 10th. The vicissitudes were never along subject lines but personal phases or periods. I graduated from H.S. with an 89, and I am a valedictorian, etc. Having never really been afforded a voice, those choices I'd made were often criticized, and I wasn't sure what to pursue. I applied to four universities, each with a different program: engineering, architecture, accounting, and literature. I was accepted by all but discouraged by my father towards architecture, the prospect of mining or numbers for thirty years unappealing; I defaulted to the last with a mind on a PhD and professorship.

Problem was, my father made too much money for me to qualify for loans, and he was helpful, to a degree, but I had to work construction to keep myself afloat. As one of these sidelines turned profitable, by my third year and exhausted from doing both, I decided to take a year off and either make a go of it or bank enough to see me through another year or two of scholarship.

As it turns out, I'd been used and lied to by my business partner and drawn into bankruptcy. Not a great start for a 23-year-old. My then-on-and-off girlfriend and I got pregnant, and two months after losing it all, we welcomed a child into the world in pitiable circumstances, echoing that Christmas long ago. Not a year later, I learned my girlfriend had been stepping out for nearly the entire duration of our courtship. My brother in law died in a vehicle collision on his way to work. Rug-pull after rug-pull. Bankruptcy, separation—nothing was breaking right in spite of how hard I worked. I scrambled out of that mire with a new business partner and, within two years, had turned things around, managing to finish off my degree and a B.Ed, just in case. Shortly thereafter, he died of lymphoma at 33. Not my first loss, but it hit hard. The next year, I began teaching. I met a lovely woman with two incredible children, and for nearly twenty years, although not without its challenges, a pleasant contrast to the first twenty. It wouldn't last.

Nevertheless, over the course of a lifetime, I've acquired proficiency in several trades, operated a variety of machinery and equipment, run businesses and organized events, built my own house,

earned a B.A. in English/French Literature, a B.Ed Level 3, completed a year towards a College Business Diploma, Cisco CNAP certification, Working at heights, Laser Safety Officer (qualification to maintain our Makerspace CO2 laser). In short, nothing of note or significant merit, but rather things I simply needed at the time.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of intelligence tests to you?

Roberge: Let's start with agreeing that, barring a better instrument or metric, standardized testing has, over its roughly 100-year course, proven incredibly consistent and perhaps one of the more studied/critiqued areas of intelligence. I feel this, along with a battery of other assessments and interviews, should be integral to educational intake, profiling and follow-up. As it stands, we only do them when things are going terribly wrong, the exceptionality impossible to overlook. We need to be more proactive and preemptive on that front. Gnothi seauton—know thyself. I.Q. factors are included, as well as coordination, height, strength, etc. Each is a metric, but for arbitrary reasons, some are singled out as impolite to speak of. It's a number. A predictive one, to a degree. It does point to something seemingly intangible called 'g,' but, in simple terms, we can speak to the number of neurons, density, the robustness of these networks, how they are organized, and so on. Ultimately, it's a matter of intensity and frequency, subjectively anyway, since fMRI scans show what we might expect from a bodybuilder lifting weights, which is that the actual activity or load on the muscle is less, given its efficiency.

It has been useful in sussing 2E conditions and disparities via sub index analysis, providing insight on that front. It offers clues to possible underlying conditions, such as those related to working memory or reasoning. It can serve to monitor therapeutic protocols or provide a prognosis of the rate of functioning over time. It is predictive of academic and career success, health, longevity, and quality of life. Personally, the number range was a foothold on a cliff face. It helped me figure out why I felt out of step.

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Roberge: I was 48, following an attempt on myself and placed on leave from work. I bounced around the health system for two years, four therapists and two psychiatrists, before eventually obtaining a proper diagnosis and correct medications. That whole time, I was running on two or three hours of sleep, consuming a few hundred calories per day, down sixty pounds from my standing 210, sweating through my sheets and sick to my stomach every night, teetering on the precipice—it was a hellish period, and I was often tempted to get it over with. For me, the sun hadn't sunk but gone out, and I couldn't see it ever returning. I can't say it has, but at least now my eyes are scanning the horizon. I'd wish that on no one.

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered, what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy—many, not all.

Roberge: Oh my! That's a tall one. I find the term genius problematic, and I don't consider myself adjacent in league. I can only speculate, focusing rather on the more generic form of what is effectively a rejection of the individual. There is us, and there's them. This is primitive encoding. What is strange, unknown, uncertain, beyond one's comprehension, inspires fear. It is unsettling, uncomfortable, and often embarrassing to be confronted by phenomena of an exceptional or indescribable nature. How do you argue, debate, or even attempt to comprehend something so far

out of your experience? Add to this the roughly 70/30 extrovert/introvert split and what may be inferred with regards to social, mental, and physical predispositions; there is inherent in us a chirality towards tradition/the past/the tried and true, or away from it—innovators bring about change, traditionalists resist. The madness of the crowd drives them to extremes, as with Socrates, Bruno, Galileo, et al. Christ broke with tradition, and he was dealt the same fate. Part of the crowd now, part of the crowd then. People forget that all traditions were once innovations. I understand the disconnect.

Jacobsen: Who seems like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

Roberge: Children, probably. Everything, to them, is a question mark. How we assess genius is subjective, there is room for disagreement. I am biased toward the rebels and eccentrics in literature and social commentary, Bukowski, De Quincy, Rimbaud, Sartre, Camus, Orwell, Brontë, and Hesse; the list is long. Philosophy and science, Heraclitus, Aurelius, Socrates, Archimedes, Euclid, Da Vinci, Maxwell, Newton, Bohr, Planck—again, not so easy to whittle down. Had I to select, say 5, under duress—Shakespeare has few peers in committing to a page or stage the full tapestry of human emotion and relations. His portrayals are as relevant today as ever they were. Da Vinci not as a singular model of the ‘Renaissance Man’ but for the distinction of being exceptional among a host of other polymaths. Tesla—decades or more ahead of the curve. Given the time and resources, he would have had tenfold the impact. Sidis, I think, was an important loss to the intellectual community—his book *The Animate and Inanimate* held some compelling arguments, especially regarding entropy. He also stands as a cautionary tale. Mendelev and Darwin. It’s like Pringles — I can’t stop at one.

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Roberge: There is a genius in all—a thumbprint uniqueness to each person’s thought process, associations, attunement, experience and problem-solving that harbor the potential for ideas and innovations no other might ‘lock onto.’ There is a mixture of these, serendipity, context, and motivations beyond our ken, conspiring to inspire. Naturally, the highly intelligent are, presumably, more learned or broad in interest. As a result, they have additional arrows in their quiver with which to hit their target—but not always. If genius means anything at all, it is likely predicated on spatial reasoning, bilateral processing and a talent for sussing patterns where none seem apparent. Wordsworth spoke of spots in time—significant and saturated imprints strewn like stars across the night sky and genius is the eye that gathers them into constellations.

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Roberge: Apologies. I got ahead of this in my last response, but not necessarily.

Jacobsen: What have been some of your work experiences and jobs?

Roberge: Construction laborer, carpenter, HVAC, plumbing, landscaping, entrepreneurship (Landscape Construction and Retail, Restaurant Management, Website Design and Small Business online marketing, P.C. and smartphone repair, event organizer, educator (STEM, Media—film/photo/audio/animation/graphic design, Robotics/Electronics, Makerspace, gifted program, Cisco networking). A lot of other things as well. Forced into early retirement as I’m no longer able to sustain more than an hour or two of effort or focus at a time, I’ve kept myself as sharp as possible, reading copiously when I am able, teaching myself new programming languages, conceptualizing some devices, improving my technique in art and music, sorting out my thoughts in

writing, exploring emerging technologies, and devoting quite a lot of time to the neurodiverse community.

Jacobsen: Why pursue this particular job path?

Roberge: It had far less to do with choice than the lack thereof—circumstances often prevailing; I took what was available and did what was necessary to keep us afloat.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them?

Roberge: Myths abound, as do delusions. The mythical is, as the word implies, expunging from our public conscience the all too human factors, frailties and flaws. Einstein did something genial, perhaps of mythical proportion to some, but also made some rather questionable life choices we rarely speak of. It's easy to hone in on the discoveries while overlooking the years of work that go into dislodging them or the countless failures before achieving success. I think that this idea that things just randomly manifest and are fully formed is a caricaturization. Eureka, like the cart, comes after the horse. I might have a handful of these every day, but intuition only points the way—you still have to walk the path, often to discover it's a dead-end. I have a lifetime of these, yet none are robust enough to withstand my own skepticism. Another is that those of a certain I.Q. are susceptible to mental health struggles, socially inept, frail, stuffy—all of the tropes. Nothing could be further from the truth. The vast majority are well-adjusted, rounded and balanced individuals, equally at home on the ball field or in the boardroom, leading 'normal' lives. Some are arrogant, solipsistic, suffer from mental health struggles. Others are congenial, funny, gracious, and so on. Everyone falls victim to logical fallacy and cognitive bias at some point, and drunk on our own Kool-Aid. It's a hodge-podge. People are people. So, none are infallible nor as fallible as one might assume. They do, all of them, think differently from the average person. This is no myth. Similar to a pro-level hockey player forced to play in the Minor or Junior league, one or two competitive grades off. It's not an issue of better or lesser, but a question of fitness. If you want the best for and from people, you have to place them in the appropriate context. It was Einstein again, wasn't it, who said that we can't judge a fish by its ability to climb? What is germane to the 2SD+ demographic is that, by dint of their rarity, society is adapted to the norm and ill-provides for them.

Still, we all heed the call of Maslow's hierarchy, and the need for belonging and connection is fulfilled elsewhere, perhaps in academia, advanced R&D, I.Q. societies, or associating with the support community around neurodiversity. At least there are some, if far too few, means to congregate and connect. Trekkies have their thing, comic book readers have their ComiCons, Cinefiles their Festivals, gun owners their shooting ranges and clubs—why should we be different? At best, some of us may actually be endeavoring to do some good and provide some benefit to society; at worst, we are doing puzzles and debating nonsense. Regardless, we are far from fringe and rather benign. Keep in mind that while these communities are prosocial environments bespoke to N.D.s, divergence does mean that we are independent and nonconformist to varying extents. A herd of cats, basically, but eerily smart ones. The same tensions do tend to arise in these circles as with any other grouping.

The usual culprit stems from that stance that leaves no wiggle room, no space for debate, as there is nothing to concede from that vantage. The thing is settled, and everyone else is misinformed or incorrect. After twenty years of paying down your mortgage, standing there with a clear title in

your hands, it's understandable if you're not amenable to letting people live there rent-free or remove you from the premises. That's kind of the situation there, part sunken-cost & double-down, part 'say what you will talk all you want, I don't care because I'm not budging.' We run into that everywhere, but what is specific to this demographic is their sparring prowess.

Any who cast shade on exceptionality, giftedness, IQ, and the rest may be well reminded of their medications, health care providers, engineers, designers, architects, etc., as they certainly don't call on just anyone to solve these types of problems. Still, you are correct to point out this disconnect.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or God's idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Roberge: Here's the thing. We use words that have no meaning, none inherent at least. Our lexicon could stand a pruning and overhaul to solve a more fundamental issue—clear and concise communication. There is currently far too much flex and latitude, circular references, self-references, speciousness, connotations, denotations, and obfuscations. It is an unwieldy bit of kit that lands us in heaps of trouble. I can't subscribe to anything fully when at its core lies an axiom or a word without description—like perfection, or ideal, or truth. Furthermore, of all five questions, 'Why?' is the one many are chasing, and I've been down that rabbit hole. Let me save you the hassle. The answer to 'why?' is another 'why?', ad infinitum, ad nauseam. Causality, per se, I suspect is a 'human lens.' It isn't necessarily part of the 'system,' if you will, only a 'gut feeling' that everything is motivated and obeys certain 'laws' we feel are 'universal.' The motive, I suppose, is the boundary I cannot penetrate. There's a lot to figure out yet and it's too early in the game to make a call. Regardless of what the math or the heart may say, it has to make sense. It is wonderful to consider all of the possibilities, follow our intuitions, and engage our emotions and imagination. It is harmful to self, relations, and progress to allow oneself no margin for concession or error while acknowledging elsewhere we are only human and make mistakes—somewhat contradictory.

In short, I don't know what God is, or whose. It's a name lacking a face and description—a true unsub. I know what 'a god' is. I know of thousands. Many themes repeated, some borrowed, others were outright stolen, fragments of questionable pedigree, organized by an agendized committee, and again, and so on. We make mistakes and assumptions. We leap to conclusions. We fear uncertainty. We are baffled and bedazzled by the mystery. We cling to each other, to hope, to the illusion of certainty and security. We'd be paralyzed otherwise. With all of these dubious stages of evidence gathering, handling, analysis, discovery and interpretation, spanning thousands of years, that alone is a significant margin of error. Tampering will have poisoned the well. Most of the texts are quite beautiful and inspiring. There is wisdom and insight in them. They have poetry or prose that is exceedingly powerful and employ the levers of imagery and song to great effect. I've read extensively, as I alluded to before. For a long while, I attempted to reconcile these contradictions, but I simply couldn't.

I've followed attempts to quantify or elaborate a 'God' formula to explain the universe, consciousness, life, and creator. That's well above my weight class. From where I'm sitting, I'm aware of myself and 'others' as persistent anomalies; that all that exists, known or unknown, is in flux and fleeting, a question of relativities and scale. Nevertheless, I am a prisoner of my senses and my biology, conscious of my subconscious and ego and that primitive twin encased within. I understand that everything is fundamentally an expression of energy, and immaterial. In other

words, while not without questions, I don't accept that we've yet developed the ability or technology to 'perceive' that of which we haven't conceived. Sort of like asking if chairs were 'invented'?

Basically, I don't subscribe to what has been presented thus far, but I do not discount the possibility. I lean into the mystery.

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Roberge: It is of great importance to me. Imagination, intuition, puzzles in my mind are constant preoccupations. I don't have much formal education in the sciences but have read several hundred texts and am able to grasp the concepts, even if I can't always work out the long form. I 'get it' and am able to abstract from there, albeit I would never have the audacity to cough up a thesis—I'd be trounced.

As with anything, I allow for a margin of error or confidence, if you prefer. The same human factors need to be accounted for, the reminder that nothing is ever quite 'settled,' even in science, regardless if the it is twenty decimals out, nothing breaks clean. This entire thing is fractal, a matter of scale, boundaries, phases, and liminality—without coordination. The atom was once a firewall. Next came the event horizon and quanta. Everywhere, a horizon, a new boundary, smaller, wider, farther. Another one beyond those. Relativity insists on a frame of reference, without which scale is indistinguishable from distance and a dimension collapses. We don't know what we don't know. So we need to keep looking. That's where my mind is, trying out different combinations, thinking if I keep fiddling with the knob, I may get lucky and crack the code accidentally. Wishful thinking, I know. I'm casually current on emerging/burgeoning technologies and am fascinated with chemistry, evolution, neuroscience, physics, product design, kinetic sculpture, geometry, and more. Overall, it is quite significant.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the tests taken and scores earned (with standard deviations) for you?

Roberge: All of them were on a 15SD scale. The WAIS-IV was administered in a clinic while I was in distress and not properly medicated. On this, I scored an FSIQ of 145 and GAI of >151, or > 99.97th. Given the disparity between WMI and GAI, in the 1.5 to 2SD range, the GAI prevails, while the FSIQ is overall more representative of my global cognition at the time due to the 2E drag. This is what pointed us to a diagnosis of ADD and B.D., which finally helped to explain the inconsistency, the highs and lows, and struggles. I'd always been curious about the ISPE, ever since 1993 when I happened upon 'Thinking On The Edge' from Agamemnon Press and devoured its essays. Surely, I was delusional to even entertain such a thought. Turns out, not so much, as December marks my fourth anniversary as a member. Their M4.0 designed by Dr. Grove was the next one I challenged, a pass/fail with no score. I challenged the KIT 2.0 and scored 158, 162 on the GENE II Verbal. All told, I've submitted a dozen or so, generally varying in score from 142 to 162, the majority in the 150–156 range. I did those to verify the original score. I have a pile in progress, but I only do them now to provide designers samples for norming.

Jacobsen: What is the range of the scores for you? The scores earned on alternative intelligence tests tend to produce a wide smattering of data points rather than clusters, typically.

Roberge: Again, using WAIS as a reference, the others simply were a means of establishing an effective range. Rather than add noise, it helped defined the upper and lower of the 'my' norm.

Jacobsen: What ethical philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: On ethics, I'd say I'm a humanist first, drawing the distinction between 'right action' and 'moral action' given the latter is a subset. I've given most a chance, from the pre-socratic onward, through St. Augustine and Bruno, Hegel, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and many voices in between, such as Russell, Wallace, Searle, etc. Ethics, as I interpret, is concerned with relations and public behaviors. If you were shipwrecked, alone on a distant planet with no hope of recovery, what is ethics then? What does it resemble, if it exists at all? To my mind, ethics nor morals are contextual. So, striving for something universal, seek first to do no harm. That covers a lot of ground. Trespass could be substituted.

Jacobsen: What social philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: John Searle offers some critical insights into institutions, meritocracy, and the like. Beaudrillard and DeBord. Russell, Huxley, Orwell. In a post-modern world, many have lit the way, but it doesn't bring us the whole distance. Otherwise, I'd merely be regurgitating a list of names and uttering poorly paraphrased ideas. I suppose I resonate with those looking past and through, not at, what is happening. Jim Morrison, in his interviews, proved himself a rather astute observer. They're everywhere, you just have to find them. So far, no luck though. I've not come across a philosophy for change that isn't somehow regressive.

Jacobsen: What economic philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: The government pretends it's in the business of business, but more entrepreneurial incompetence and financial irresponsibility would be hard to find elsewhere. Every system known has been tried. None is flawless; several are downright egregious. In this modern age, I think there are opportunities to explore: an independent clearing house for proposals, with a referendum-style voting apparatus, improved civic education and engagement through incentives, for example. If concerns over loss of jobs because of A.I. or bots, then let the condition of use be a salary-tax equivalent. Capitalism and consumerism are bedfellows. If one stops putting out, the marriage falls apart. To me, that's not long-term feasible. Call it socialism+, capitalism light or a hybrid, but if COVID taught us anything, it's that there are many more ways to do business, earn a living, and have a strong economy than the tired and often obsolete methods of old. Sustainable, over the long haul, that's the goal, right?

Jacobsen: What political philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: Lobbies, PACs, \$1000/plate functions—the money's got to go. We must disentangle the whole snarl and return it to its seat as the people's podium. Fin. It can't be that among 40M, or 350M, 1B, the best we can trot out are a handful of aged-out actors and spit-shined swindlers? It's sheer lunacy. This anti-intellectual sentiment and pandering to the lowest common denominator has a predictable trajectory—steep decline and greater social entropy. First and foremost is that we have to strike a balance between reason and emotion and clean up our discourse. The kids are watching, let's act accordingly.

We need to play to everyone's strengths, the thinkers hashing out the hard problems, the fiscally astute manning the purse strings, the visionaries providing the waypoints, the deal-makers greasing the wheels, the engineers/architects/trades making it happen, everyone else keeping things moving. We've more pressing concerns, and international collaboration is both necessary and key to our survival. Enough with the squabbles, brinkmanship, sword rattling and the rest. When do we learn? When do we figure it out? When it's too late?

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: I'm not qualified, I don't think. It doesn't compute for me. Either it's integral or unknowable, and that which is integral, whilst not known, I don't know to be super- or meta-, simply undiscovered or unexplained. Every mystery solved demotes it in rank. Meta is overarching, encompassing, but also part of; thus, Gödel would point us to incompleteness. There are clues everywhere. A question of stitching it all together. There are things in focus now distracting from what undergirds even that, but I'll end on that for fear I'm wandering out of my depth.

Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Roberge: All citizens should not be compelled or coerced to feel or show pride; they should be genuine and a result of a sense of ownership and transparent democracy. Novel approaches to civic engagement and stakeholder-managed resources and assets are needed. We need to quit churning out landfill fodder, burning fossil fuel to make these things, tote them around the globe, only to bury them. I can defend its use, not its abuse. I don't know of any such philosophy, although there definitely could and should be.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Roberge: My wife and kids. They keep me in check, invested, and have taught me what 'unconditional' looks like. Curiosity is definitely up there. I'm a junkie. Being of service. Barring that, holding space for people or ideas.

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?

Roberge: It is derived from one's lived experience, unresolved issues, unrequited needs, and so forth. Everything seeps into the mix. What rises from that loam is an arbitrary waypoint—it gets us moving.

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not?

Roberge: No. Not in the way described to me. Not as a persistent 'I'. Whatever 'I' am is a construct—memories, biology, neuroanatomy. A solid smack to the noggin, and I wake up as someone else. Without our memories, who are we? Far more compelling is the evidence of an emergent property than a pre-existing condition. I am a product and oftentimes passenger, not necessarily an agent, of this body. A newborn has no 'self' and isn't differentiated. Everything is an amalgam to them, and there is no recognition of 'other' until several months later. We like to think we have a consistent core but often curse ourselves, saying things like 'that's so out of character!' And that's my point; the world's a stage and we, the players in bit parts, tremble before the darkened hall to utter our senseless lines.' We don't even know if there's anyone in the audience.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Roberge: It is what makes it worthwhile—that it is golden, rare, precious and fleeting. Immortality holds no appeal for me.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Roberge: Love is acceptance, possibly the noblest face of compassion. People that'll suffer you, warts and all, especially when you've little to offer in return other than the same—they 'love' you. Love that turns hot and cold, or with strings, or fine print, ..., that's the fictional kind. You

know it's love when you don't feel yourself altered in their company—come as you are. Both ways, of course.

This has been a thought provoking and stimulating experience. Thank you Scott! I'm grateful for the opportunity.

Conversation with Honghao Zhao on Views and Life

2024-09-15

Honghao Zhao is a member of the OLYMPIQ Society based on a qualifying score on the Strict Logic Spatial Examination 48. Zhao discusses: growing up; extended self; family background; youth with friends; education; purpose of intelligence tests; high intelligence; extreme reactions to geniuses; greatest geniuses; genius and a profoundly gifted person; necessities for genius or the definition of genius; work experiences and jobs held; job path; myths of the gifted; God; science; tests taken and scores earned; range of the scores; ethical philosophy; political philosophy; metaphysics; worldview; meaning in life; source of meaning; afterlife; life; and love.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Honghao Zhao: There are no particularly special stories, just some amusing anecdotes that parents or older generations share during their leisure time. For example, a bear picking corn.

Jacobsen: Have these stories helped provide a sense of an extended self or a sense of the family legacy?

Zhao: This story is actually an interesting folk saying about a bear picking corn. The bear walks into a cornfield, picks an ear of corn and tucks it under its arm. After walking a few steps, it picks another ear of corn, but the first one falls out. This story is often used to describe someone who is so focused on one thing that they neglect another, ultimately gaining very little. Of course, this story is just one of the many stories my grandparents told me to entertain me when I was a child. The purpose wasn't really about an extended self or the family legacy.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Zhao: I come from an urban household, although my parents are both from rural backgrounds. I grew up in Shandong, including attending university and graduate school here. As you might know, this is also the birthplace of Confucius and is deeply influenced by Confucian culture. Besides my native language, Chinese, I have a limited proficiency in English. As for religious beliefs, I am a materialist, or an atheist, except perhaps for the concept of "Dao", which I understand as the rules and principles governing the operation of all things.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Zhao: When I first started elementary school, I was quite introverted and was often bullied by girls, so I had few friends. By the time I was in middle and high school, I had grown quite tall and my talent in mathematics had become apparent. Although I was still relatively introverted, I got along well with my classmates and had quite a few friends.

Jacobsen: What have been some professional certifications, qualifications, and trainings earned by you?

Zhao: Some awards in mathematics competitions and structural design competitions, some awards in the field of rail transit, and a master's degree in civil engineering.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of intelligence tests to you?

Zhao: Initially, intelligence tests were just a curious experiment for me. Later on, they became more like brain games that could inspire my thinking.

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Zhao: If you mean discovering a high score through an intelligence test, that was in 2018 when I was 19 years old. However, in daily life, I had already easily completed the “Sokoban” game on my phone during kindergarten. In middle school, my grades were excellent, especially in mathematics. My mental arithmetic skills were outstanding at that time because I could easily visualize a clear draft paper in my mind and perform calculations on it.

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered, what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy — many, not all.

Zhao: In my understanding, geniuses are inevitably vastly different from ordinary people in one or even multiple aspects, statistically lying at the edges of the normal distribution. This makes it clear that the essence of a genius is being out of sync in one or more aspects, unless they have high social skills, commonly known as emotional intelligence, to appear more sociable. For the collective will of a group, extreme non-conformity is unacceptable; the concept of “seeking common ground while reserving differences” usually only tolerates minor differences. In this context, if a genius achieves highly recognized accomplishments by society, their uniqueness can be praised. However, if a genius fails to achieve this, they are seen as out of place and not regarded as a genius by others, and they might not even see themselves as a genius. How could they not be mocked in such a situation?

Jacobsen: Who seem like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

Zhao: Perhaps Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, etc.

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Zhao: It depends on how you define a genius and a profoundly intelligent person. The difference in definitions is the difference between the two. If we define a genius as someone who has exceptional talent in a particular field, and a person with a very high IQ as someone who scores extremely high on IQ tests, then a genius could be a mathematician, physicist, dancer, painter, etc., while a person with a very high IQ might only excel in mental capabilities.

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Zhao: Possibly not necessary in very rare cases.

Jacobsen: What have been some work experiences and jobs held by you?

Zhao: I only have experience with attending school and pursuing graduate studies for now. Of course, during my graduate studies, I need to conduct experiments for scientific research or solve some engineering problems.

Jacobsen: Why pursue this particular job path?

Zhao: Obtain a master’s degree and find a job to make a living.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them?

Zhao: Geniuses. I don't know much about those myths.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or gods idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Zhao: I am an atheist, unless this god is just a powerful being, similar to how modern technology might be considered god-like if it traveled back to ancient times. If this god refers to an omniscient and omnipotent entity with its own free will to control our destiny, requiring people's worship or sacrifices, then I do not believe in it. I only believe that the universe has 'laws', such as logic, mathematics, and physical laws.

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Zhao: Most of it.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the tests taken and scores earned (with standard deviations) for you?

Zhao: SLSE 48, by Jonathan Wai, 30.5/48, IQ178.6(SD15);

Qing, by Huanyun Chen, 29.5/33, IQ167(SD15);

Numerus, by Ivan Ivec, 15/30, IQ156(SD15)

夜曲其二, by Mahir Wu, 47.5/60, IQ153.8(SD15)

Jacobsen: What is the range of the scores for you? The scores earned on alternative intelligence tests tend to produce a wide smattering of data points rather than clusters, typically.

Zhao: Currently, it's approximately between 150 and 180.

Jacobsen: What ethical philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: I believe that humans, like animals, are born without a distinction between good and evil, only with purity and the instinct to seek benefits and avoid harm. For the benefit of the group, people seek common ground while reserving differences, forming laws and moral concepts. This is somewhat similar to reducing variance while keeping the overall expectation constant. However, personally, I think humans should pursue something different from animals, namely spiritual pursuits, so I am more inclined to do good deeds.

Jacobsen: What social philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: Maintain your integrity in poverty; help the world in prosperity.

Jacobsen: What economic philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: Reap what you sow.

Jacobsen: What political philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: The free and comprehensive development of every individual.

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: Perhaps the pursuit of free will.

Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Zhao: The only constant in life is change. So I won't judge what is most meaningful.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Zhao: Thinking.

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?

Zhao: Both.

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not?

Zhao: I don't believe in an afterlife, 'innocent until proven guilty,' but I hope there is one, in whatever form.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Zhao: People today do not see the moon of ancient times, but the moon today once shone on the ancients.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Zhao: Perhaps, love is about giving rather than taking.

Conversation with Entemake Aman (阿曼) on American High-I.Q. Societies and Tests: Member, OlympIQ Society (5)

2024-09-22

Entemake Aman claims to be a super genius, because he is a member of the Olympiq and Mensa Associations, the theoretical threshold for Olympiq is 175 (SD 15). He claims that his IQ is around 199 (SD 16) because ‘he has done some IQ problems correctly that no one has ever done correctly’ on the SLSEI. Aman discusses: American high-I.Q. societies; high-I.Q. culture and constitutions; educational systems; and some personal notes.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Have you had any luck getting onto CGTN? I doubt I can help in that department—outside of my reach.

Entemake Aman: I am not getting anywhere in that department.

Jacobsen: How did the American media look to you after the article was published? Thank you for noting some questionable behaviour in scores in the Asiatic region, at least with one individual, several received **documentation** from another.

Aman: American media is more authoritative and influential. Geniuses are often honest, and we all hope there are no liars in the circle of high intelligence.

Jacobsen: When you look at different examinations in the U.S., what ones seem to tap the g factor?

Aman: The SAT and GRE are the only I.Q. tests in the United States that measure children’s G-factor.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the recent positive and negative developments in the high-I.Q. world in Asia? There tends to be more focus on the Americas and Europe.

Aman: I am only looking at the high I.Q. circles in Europe and the United States because I suspect there have been scammers in the high I.Q. circles in Asia since 2012.

Jacobsen: You have more of an affinity for American culture than me. What do you like about it? I tend to be more lukewarm about it.

Aman: I like American movies, the culture of I.Q. testing, the culture of educating gifted children, and the emphasis on creativity.

Jacobsen: How important are constitutions and broader high-I.Q. society guidelines to high-I.Q. societies? I know of three former **Mega Society** members of note: Keith Allen Raniere, Christopher Michael Langan, and YoungHoon Bryan Kim. **The Mega Society** was founded in 1982 by **Dr. Ronald K. Hoeflin**. **Keith Allen Raniere (1, 2) was sentenced to 120 years in jail**. He “**was convicted by a federal jury in June 2019 of racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, sex trafficking, attempted sex trafficking, sex trafficking conspiracy, forced labour conspiracy and wire fraud conspiracy.**” **Christopher Michael Langan** went **through litigation** with **the Mega Society (1, 2)**. He founded the **Mega Foundation** in 1999 as a 501c(3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation. YoungHoon Bryan Kim was the Senior Membership Officer of Chris Langan’s Mega Foundation until about 2020, then joined the Mega Society from 2020 to late August, 2024. Following an **award** and **an interview with Ian Bott**—alongside others like **Aubrey de Grey**, **Professor Howard Gardner** chose **revocation of his award** and assessed Kim’s

United Sigma Intelligence Association (founded **by HanKyungLee, M.D. (1)** in **2007 as United Sigma Korea (1)** and **registered in 2023 by YoungHoon Bryan Kim**) in **August, 2021** in “Good Work, Compromised Work, Bad Work... And Ego.” Gardner gave **an additional examination in a mid-October, 2021 update** to the same article republished in *The Good Project*. The **USIA Lifetime Achievement Award, formerly the USIA Award**, has been awarded to Neil deGrasse Tyson, Jennifer Doudna, Richard Dawkins, Noam Chomsky, Yuval Hariri, Anthony Giddens, Elizabeth Blackburn, Terence Tao, and Howard Gardner.

[Ed. Update October 3, 2024: A professional photo of YoungHoon Bryan Kim claimed as “**own work**” under the username ‘**Reality180**’ was uploaded on June 1, 2024 in English Wikipedia. The same username, ‘**Reality180**,’ attempted to create English Wikipedia pages ‘**YoungHoon Bryan Kim**’ (May 29, 2024) and ‘**United Sigma Intelligence Association**’ (April 21, 2024). The same identified pattern occurred with Korean Wikipedia username ‘**Reality180**’ with a professional photo of YoungHoon Kryan Kim claimed as “**자작**” (Google Translate: ‘One’s own work.’), which created the Korean Wikipedia page ‘**세계지능협회**’ (United Sigma Intelligence Association) and only ever edited Korean Wikipedia pages for **YoungHoon Bryan Kim and United Sigma Intelligence Association (English)**. Also, Korean Wikipedia username ‘**211.237.101.103**’ (**English**) only ever created and edited the page ‘**김영훈 (아이큐)**’ or “Kim Young-hoon (IQ).” Recently, the same for Korean Wikipedia username ‘**61.255.211.119**’ (**English**) only ever editing Korean Wikipedia page ‘**세계지능협회**’ (United Sigma Intelligence Association) and ‘**김영훈 (아이큐)**’ or “Kim Young-hoon (IQ).” **A Reddit thread about IQ Olympiad 3 years ago** focused on English Wikipedia editing too, particularly around username ‘**58.227.250.85**.’ (**User contributions**) ‘**Reality180**’ on Korean Wikipedia **threatened to sue (English)**—on November 15, 2023—another Korean Wikipedia user who had the username ‘**2607:740:2D:7:ABAF:CD92: 974A:23B5**’ (**English**). ‘**2607:740:2D:7:ABAF:CD92: 974A:23B5**’ claimed ‘**Reality180**’ **was a Christian and, at one point, training to become a priest (English)**. Subsequently, a legal context was reported on, by **YoungHoon Bryan Kim in a professional or personal blog (English)**, on March 18, 2024. Recently, the **claimed GIGA Society (TM) medium account** issued statements about **Ronald Hoeflin (1)**, the “**Mega Society**,” (1) “**IQ Olympiad**,” (1) “**South Korean Jeong Kye-won(정계원) called Andrew Zheng or Andrew Jeong**,” (1) “**another giga-level group**” and **here**, (1, 2) and “**Scott Douglas Jacobson**.” (1)]

Aman: The High I.Q. Society asks only for I.Q. There are no other requirements. I would guess that only 0.1% of the people in the high I.Q. association are problem characters. If they are no longer members of the Mega Society, then the Mega Society may focus more on moral aspects.

Jacobsen: I would agree. It is a handful or less than a handful, or less than 0.1%. The vast majority have been excellent and kind to and with me, whether in word or deed. As a practical example, they have been generous with their talents and time in expressing their views in interviews for over a decade. Are there any emerging trends in the approach to I.Q. testing?

Aman: There are a few new trends in I.Q. tests. They have only one purpose: to measure the G-factor. So, it is all about the ability to find patterns.

Jacobsen: How will the high-I.Q. community evolve over the next decade?

Aman: I prefer supervised I.Q. tests, like Stanford Binet. Hopefully, there will be better I.Q. tests in the next ten years. The most important thing for the I.Q. society is whether its members' I.Q. is qualified.

Jacobsen: Are there any unique challenges the American high-I.Q. community faces compared to other regions?

Aman: Members of the American High I.Q. Society is doing reasonable quality control, but some answers to American I.Q. tests have been leaked. I hope the American I.Q. test is changed to a paper I.Q. test.

Jacobsen: How has digitalization impacted networking and collaboration within the high-I.Q. community?

Aman: Digitization makes it easier for knowledgeable people to communicate. However, it could also lead to the leakage of answers.

Jacobsen: Are there specific regions where high-I.Q. communities are particularly active or growing?

Aman: America. Because America values I.Q.

Jacobsen: How does the high-I.Q. community support the development of young talent?

Aman: Mensa often reports on child prodigies under seven, bringing them to society's attention. Mensa also has some social benefits. Some companies may focus on whether someone is a Mensa member.

Jacobsen: Have any recent debates or controversies within the high-I.Q. community?

Aman: I have not been paying attention to the High I.Q. Society has been controversial for a long time.

Jacobsen: What role do you see artificial intelligence play in the future of high-I.Q. communities?

Aman: Artificial intelligence may be able to design brilliant questions for people.

Jacobsen: How do different cultural attitudes about I.Q. in different parts of the United States seem on the outside?

Aman: Most states have rules for gifted children. In 1961, California became the first state to legislate meritocracy education.

Jacobsen: What seems like the different cultural attitudes towards intelligence and high-I.Q. communities in the States?

Aman: Supportive. Because the United States values I.Q. the most.

Jacobsen: From your analysis, you claimed to have answers stolen from your computer after it was hacked. What is how hacking is done?

Aman: That is one thing I regret and am sorry for, Jon. I should have deleted the answer from my mailbox. He probably planted a computer virus.

Jacobsen: How can test-makers protect themselves and their answers, especially from hacking and cheaters?

Aman: The authors no longer provide email addresses to the testers. Instead, submit using a paper envelope, like Mega Test.

Jacobsen: If we were to ignore paper and pencil tests, what qualitative metrics would you have noticed in gifted and talented people? So, words, deeds, and other non-test markers of higher I.Q.s—those that indicate the *g* factor—I am curious how you see these as culturally and individually emergent.

Aman: Geniuses often have good character, quick thinking, and original thinking about every problem. They also like to talk to themselves sometimes.

Jacobsen: Are there aspects of American culture you find in Asian cultures now?

Aman: High-I.Q. societies have also emerged in Asia.

Jacobsen: Would it be helpful for high-I.Q. societies that are more established to implement ethical guidelines?

Aman: That doesn't help the High IQ Society.

Jacobsen: On constitutions, what about inclusion in refined constitutions for expulsions of individual members on the vote of the membership? I know the Mega Society included a clause for expulsions in its [Constitution](#)—"Drafted by Chris Cole and Kevin Langdon; ratified January 1, 2001; amended August, 2005," Article IV. Elections in Paragraph 7:

1. *Any member may call for the expulsion of any other member at any time. An expulsion vote shall be held only if after the call for expulsion has been seconded by another member. The member whose expulsion is proposed shall be entitled to up to eight pages to present a defense in the issue following the appearance of the second to the call for expulsion (which may be the same issue in which the original call appears), which shall also contain a ballot, and every member shall be entitled to present up to two pages for or against the expulsion. Expulsion of a member shall require two-thirds of the votes cast on the expulsion. The member whose expulsion is proposed shall be allowed to vote in the expulsion election.*

In the Mega Society's ~42-year history, it has been used only once to expel a member. The expulsion from the Mega Society was based on vastly overwhelming "votes cast" against the expelled member's defense case. After the subsequent expulsion from the Mega Society, removal from the mailing list, deletion from the listing on the website, and so on, the then-former member later sent an email to the Mega Society claiming withdrawal from the Mega Society, and then later publicly claimed to have voluntarily resigned from the Mega Society.

You don't have take it on faith. You could email the Mega Society or a representative.

Aman: It is a good idea. It raises the moral level of the I.Q. Society. It can make their communication more positive.

Jacobsen: What can high-I.Q. societies do to stop the leakage of test answers and maintain test integrity now?

Aman: I.Q. test questions are not published, and paper envelopes are used. The test creator's email number is not provided. Periodically check to see if the answers are leaked.

Jacobsen: What are the positive things Mensa is doing to foster young people, nurture young talent, and keep the spirit of the high-I.Q. societies alive in positive contributions to community building, which so many of these people crave?

Aman: Mensa's advantage is supervised testing. It can identify gifted children and help them find a platform to communicate.

Jacobsen: Specifically, how could A.I. help develop hard test questions for people to separate intelligent people from brilliant people?

Aman: Artificial intelligence may have higher I.Q.s, be proficient in psychology, and create complex I.Q. tests for people.

Jacobsen: How could online platforms be more robust in terms of security and prevention of cheating? **The Adaptive I.Q. Test** comes to mind from a team in the Mega Society.

Aman: Artificial intelligence may be able to help solve this problem, with any leaks about I.Q. test answers automatically blocked. The team should switch I.Q. tests regularly.

Jacobsen: Could high-I.Q. societies do with more diversity?

Aman: No need. Paying attention to the quality of members is the most important.

Jacobsen: How do you perceive the role of digital platforms in shaping the future interactions of high-I.Q. communities?

Aman: Increase the risk of I.Q. test questions being discussed and leaked.

Jacobsen: What measures can high-I.Q. societies implement to prevent the leaking of test answers and ensure test integrity?

Aman: Use paper envelopes to test; do not reveal the questions.

Jacobsen: What are some fundamental cultural differences you have observed in attitudes toward intelligence across various regions in the United States?

Aman: For example, in junior high schools in suburban St. Louis, gifted classes are similar in the difficulty of teaching knowledge to ordinary classes, but they pay more attention to cultivating students' practical and hands-on skills, often organizing science experiments and speech competitions. On the East Coast, where the pace of life is much faster, it is different. Maryland's gifted class advocates advanced education, children have more homework, and small and medium-sized tests are standard.

Jacobsen: What are the most significant ethical guidelines that high-I.Q. societies should consider adopting?

Aman: Abide by the laws of the state.

Jacobsen: How might artificial intelligence contribute to developing more challenging I.Q. tests, and what implications could this have for test fairness?

Aman: I do not think it affects fairness.

Jacobsen: Are there any high-I.Q. communities outside the United States and Europe that you find particularly noteworthy or growing in influence?

Aman: Not found. I think the American High IQ Society is the best in the world.

Jacobsen: What qualitative traits have you observed that indicate high intelligence beyond traditional I.Q. test metrics?

Aman: No other indicator surpasses I.Q. tests.

Jacobsen: How do you see the evolution of high-I.Q. societies over the next decade, especially regarding inclusion, diversity, and ethical practices?

Aman: The diversity of I.Q. society does not matter. What matters is the quality of members of an I.Q. society. There will probably be more good tests in the next ten years, and members' ethics will get higher and higher.

Jacobsen: What positive contributions do organizations like Mensa make to support young talent within high-I.Q. communities?

Aman: Regular meetings, monthly magazines. Some countries may have social benefits. Large companies may require Mensa membership.

Jacobsen: In what ways could online I.Q. testing platforms improve their security measures to prevent cheating and maintain credibility?

Aman: Using an envelope paper I.Q. test, the author of the I.Q. test question regularly investigates whether there is a possibility of giving away the answer. Keep the test questions secret.

Jacobsen: Can you share your personal journey in high-IQ societies? How being a member has influenced you?

Aman: When I joined Mensa, I had a high-quality circle. But it didn't affect me that much.

Jacobsen: How being a member has influenced you?

Aman: I met some successful people. The effect on me is that I have an easy circle to communicate with.

Jacobsen: How has being part of high-IQ communities affected your relationships, both personally and professionally?

Aman: I found Mensa to be generally of higher quality than those around me. They have better characters. I prefer to talk to them.

Jacobsen: What are the subtle ethical challenges high-IQ societies face today?

Aman: The High IQ Society needs more supervised IQ tests.

Jacobsen: How can they address them?

Aman: Establish supervised examination rooms. Like the Stanford Binet test and the Mensa test.

Jacobsen: Are current ethical guidelines in high-IQ societies effective?

Aman: Effective.

Jacobsen: How could they be improved?

Aman: The most important thing is to obey the laws of the country.

Jacobsen: Besides test security, how can technology enhance collaboration and networking in high-IQ communities?

Aman: Technology has made it easier for members of high-IQ societies to meet.

Jacobsen: How can artificial intelligence improve communication and collaboration among high-IQ society members?

Aman: Artificial intelligence can help find members of highly intelligent associations in a particular country.

Jacobsen: How can high-IQ societies promote cultural diversity and inclusion among their global members?

Aman: The High IQ Society test requires no knowledge. It only requires a high IQ.

Jacobsen: How can members of high-IQ societies use their abilities to make meaningful contributions to society?

Aman: Studies mathematics, philosophy and physics.

Jacobsen: How can high-IQ societies encourage members to apply their intelligence to solve real-world problems and help their communities?

Aman: The High IQ Society creates different hobby groups.

Conversation with Tianxiang Shao on Views and Life: Member, OlympIQ Society (1)

2024-10-08

Tianxiang Shao (Camus Shaw), a 20-year-old from Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China, is an undergraduate student fluent in Chinese, French, and English. A talented individual, he excels in mathematics, high-range IQ tests, and travel design. He is also a poet, lyricist, and member of multiple high-IQ societies: growing up; extended self; family background; youth with friends; education; purpose of intelligence tests; high intelligence; extreme reactions to geniuses; greatest geniuses; genius and a profoundly gifted person; necessities for genius or the definition of genius; work experiences and jobs held; job path; myths of the gifted; God; science; tests taken and scores earned; range of the scores; ethical philosophy; political philosophy; metaphysics; worldview; meaning in life; source of meaning; afterlife; life; and love.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Tianxiang Shao: My grandparents were remarkable. During the years when China was impoverished and weak, they made their way from the countryside to the city, which brought prosperity and happiness to our entire family. To this day, their story and spirit continue to be passed down in our family.

Jacobsen: Have these stories helped provide a sense of an extended self or a sense of the family legacy?

Shao: Yes, these stories have influenced my choices, inclining me to pursue my career in big cities. At the same time, I believe life is a continuous journey of exploration, and success is something that each person defines for themselves.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Shao: My parents work in the financial sector, and they are materialists with no religious beliefs. One distinctive aspect is my mother's side of the family. My maternal grandparents are from Huangshan, a southern mountain town in China. It's a peaceful and serene city, and I often say that this city has significantly shaped my outlook on life and the world.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Shao: In fact, I didn't get along well with most of my peers. In kindergarten, I was often excluded by my classmates, and in elementary school, I tended to remain quiet. It wasn't until middle school that I started engaging in some social activities.

During elementary school, I would sometimes spend time imagining entire stories inspired by a clock and filling my notebook with writing and drawings. None of my classmates understood what I was expressing, but I found joy in it nonetheless.

Jacobsen: What have been some professional certifications, qualifications, and trainings earned by you?

Shao: I have received certificates from several mathematics competitions. Additionally, a few months ago, I achieved a good score in the IELTS exam.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of intelligence tests to you?

Shao: Initially, I took intelligence tests like Mensa and Raven's out of curiosity to understand my own intellectual abilities. Later, I encountered high-range IQ tests. Now, for me, they serve more as a form of leisure and entertainment.

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Shao: In fact, I don't consider myself to have exceptional intelligence. I don't want others to see me as someone special. If I had to pinpoint something, it would be during my childhood when we were all learning together—I tended to grasp things more quickly and think about problems more deeply than others.

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered, what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy — many, not all.

Shao: A person's success is influenced by their own qualities, but often, fate plays a significant role as well. Newton became Newton not just because of his genius, but also because he lived in post-Renaissance England. Look at Giordano Bruno, who was also a genius—what was his fate in the end? If Alan Turing were alive today, would he still meet a tragic end?

Similarly, geniuses have different personalities. Some align with the times, while others stand in opposition. Success is not solely determined by intelligence; many factors are involved, and most of them are beyond one's control.

As for your point about geniuses being camera-shy, I am reminded of my best friend, one of the top geniuses in China, who has achieved incredible scores on various tests. However, he remains humble and dislikes being in the spotlight. This is his personality. In short, geniuses have their own perspectives and choices in life, and we must respect their decisions.

Jacobsen: Who seem like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

Shao: There are several people, not just one. I can list a few for you:

From China: Laozi, Zhuangzi, Su Dongpo, and Wang Yangming.

From the West: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Immanuel Kant, and Albert Camus.

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Shao: Let me explain it using a mathematical concept: a genius is a subset of profoundly intelligent people. Being profoundly intelligent is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being a genius.

If we imagine the existing body of knowledge as a large circle, profoundly intelligent individuals can approach the boundary of that circle, while a genius has the ability to break through it. That's the key difference between them.

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Shao: I already explained this in the previous question: profound intelligence is indeed a necessary condition for genius.

Jacobsen: What have been some work experiences and jobs held by you?

Shao: Haha, I'm currently just a second-year university student.

Jacobsen: Why pursue this particular job path?

Shao: I'm currently a student. In the future, I plan to pursue research in artificial intelligence or algorithms because I find these fields fascinating.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them?

Shao: To be frank, I don't know how to respond. So I don't answer this question.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or gods idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Shao: I don't have any religious beliefs, but when I try to find calm and quiet, I sometimes read Buddhist scriptures.

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Shao: Science accounts for about 80% of my worldview.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the tests taken and scores earned (with standard deviations) for you?

Shao: I personally enjoy numerical tests. I scored IQ 180+ on Mahir Wu's Numeric Inspiration Test and even broke the record for this test. On the Chinese verbal test Nocturne II, I achieved an IQ score of 185.

As for international tests, I scored IQ 176 on the SLSE test and IQ 177 on the spatial test COS-MIC.

So far, I have achieved six scores above IQ 170 and two scores above IQ 180. I only started taking high-range IQ tests this year, so I haven't accumulated many scores yet.

Jacobsen: What is the range of the scores for you? The scores earned on alternative intelligence tests tend to produce a wide smattering of data points rather than clusters, typically.

Shao: My lowest score on a test was IQ 139 (I submitted it very casually), and my highest score was IQ 185. The median of my twenty test scores is IQ 168, and the average is IQ 169.4.

Jacobsen: What ethical philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: For me, the ethical philosophy that makes the most sense and seems the most workable is existentialism. It emphasizes individual freedom, choice, and responsibility, suggesting that each person must create meaning in their own life through their actions. This philosophy encourages me to reflect on how to find myself in an uncertain and complex world while taking responsibility for my choices.

Jacobsen: What social philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: It would likely be Marxism, as I was exposed to it from a young age.

Jacobsen: What economic philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: I am not sure.

Jacobsen: What political philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: I am not sure.

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: Personally, I am fond of classical Chinese philosophy, particularly the Daoist perspective. I advocate for the concept of “wu wei” (non-action), believing that people should follow the natural flow of things, approach gains and losses with a sense of detachment, and face each challenge with a calm and steady mindset.

Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Shao: I think it would be Marxism, but I don’t really like answering questions with absolutes, such as “the most,” because nothing should be seen as entirely absolute.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Shao: I believe books and music provide meaning in my life.

Reading is a way to engage in dialogue with the great minds of the past, and when I feel life lacks meaning, I find joy in books. Often, problems resolve themselves through this.

Music, on the other hand, is something that can break down barriers, allowing people across the world to understand and communicate with each other without the obstacle of language. In the rhythm of music, I sometimes feel that “the world is one.”

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?

Shao: I tend to believe that meaning is internally generated.

I can share an interesting story with you. There was an ancient Chinese philosopher named Wang Yangming who once had an insight while looking at flowers. He said, “Before you looked at this flower, it remained in silence with you. When you observe it, its colors become clear. This shows that the flower’s existence is not outside your heart.”

His words are often labeled as subjective idealism, but I don’t think labeling ideas is the right approach.

When people are born, they cannot choose their circumstances. But from that point onward, everything can be changed through their own efforts. One of my favorite movies, *The Truman Show*, illustrates this well. The protagonist only breaks through the barriers at the end because he firmly believes that he is real and others are not. His belief in himself leads to his final breakthrough.

Life indeed resembles *The Truman Show*. History continuously rhymes, and no matter how much the external world changes, on a scale of millennia, it all repeats itself. The only thing that can determine everything, and give meaning to all things, is your own heart.

There’s a famous Chinese saying I’d like to share: “Where the heart finds peace, there is my home” (此心安处是吾乡).

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not?

Shao: I only seek peace and happiness in this life, not wealth or status in the next. I don't like discussing the afterlife much because thinking about the next life before living this one well only adds unnecessary worry.

However, I do hope that everyone has a next life, a chance to reach the "other shore" in the Buddhist sense. There are many forms of cause and effect in this world, and one lifetime isn't enough to fully understand them. If plants can regenerate over and over, why shouldn't people be able to as well?

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Shao: The mystery of life lies in the fact that you can never clearly know what will happen in the next moment. You never know whether the next step will be good or bad.

Human life is incredibly brief, but within that short span, endless possibilities can still be created.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Shao: This question brings a bit of sadness to me, as I recently went through a breakup while working on this interview. I used to think I was more mature than others and understood these concepts earlier. I had relationships in both middle school and university, though none of them lasted in the end.

However, I still believe in pure love. To me, love is both a passion and a long-term commitment. I often compare love to Morse code, made up of alternating signals: passion (the short signals) and enduring care (the long signals).

Conversation with Reuven Kotleras on Views, Life, and Love (1)

2024-11-22

Reuven Kotleras, from a secular-Jewish background between Vienna and Vilnius, excelled academically, earning dual Bachelor's from MIT and a Ph.D. from Michigan. High intelligence was identified early, confirmed at age four. He highlighted society's mixed treatment of geniuses, citing da Vinci and Einstein as examples. Kotleras believes genius involves unique insight and distinguishes it from general intelligence. His career spanned teaching, research, and policy roles. He dispelled myths about innate genius, emphasizing the need for skill development. Influenced by Stoic pragmatism, organized complexity, and Mahayana Buddhism, Kotleras finds life's meaning in discovery, believes in reincarnation, and views love as complex.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Reuven Kotleras: There were none, actually.

Jacobsen: Have these stories helped provide a sense of an extended self or a sense of the family legacy?

Kotleras: Not applicable.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Kotleras: If you draw a line on a map from Vienna, Austria, to Vilnius, Lithuania, then all eight great-grandparents were born within 100 miles of this line. All sides of the family immigrated to the United States in the early, middle, or late nineteenth century. Both parents were from Brookline, Massachusetts. The family was secular-Jewish.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Kotleras: Satisfactory.

Jacobsen: What have been some professional certifications, qualifications, and trainings earned by you?

Kotleras: I earned two Bachelor's degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology by the age of 20, and later a Ph.D. from The University of Michigan. There were also a good number of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships that took me to cities and institutions where I would not otherwise have had the opportunity to be.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of intelligence tests to you?

Kotleras: To measure Spearman's *g*, now often called the "g-factor" and which represents general intelligence.

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Kotleras: Very early. It was suspected by my parents well before age two and confirmed by testing at about age four.

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered,

what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy — many, not all.

Kotleras: Groups and masses of people like to treat individuals who are not like them in special ways.

Jacobsen: Who seem like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

Kotleras: To choose at random from only the modern era: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin. For the pre-modern eras, one can confidently name Aristotle and Hildegard of Bingen.

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Kotleras: I think the Schopenhauer quotation gets this: “Talent hits a target no one else can hit. Genius hits a target no one else can see.”

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Kotleras: This seems to be the case.

Jacobsen: What have been some work experiences and jobs held by you?

Kotleras: File clerk, photocopy shop drone, office boy, secondary school teacher, graduate teaching assistant, research assistant, professor, researcher, research director, editor, journalist, international affairs analyst, policy analyst, policy advisor.

Jacobsen: Why pursue this particular job path?

Kotleras: It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them?

Kotleras: One of the deleterious myths is that genius is innate and therefore guarantees success, whereas any potential requires development and learning such necessary skill-sets as resilience and adaptability.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or gods idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Kotleras: Not to speak of.

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Kotleras: A significant part.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the tests taken and scores earned (with standard deviations) for you?

Kotleras: I prefer not to be very detailed. Let’s just say a lower bound of +5 sigma and an upper bound of +7 sigma, with the greatest likelihood somewhere between +6 and +7.

Jacobsen: What is the range of the scores for you? The scores earned on alternative intelligence tests tend to produce a wide smattering of data points rather than clusters, typically.

Kotleras: [See reply to previous question.]

Jacobsen: What ethical philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Stoic pragmatism.

Jacobsen: What social philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Organized complexity.

Jacobsen: What economic philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Capitalism is the worst economic system, except for all the others.

Jacobsen: What political philosophy makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Pragmatic realism.

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Madhyamaka.

Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Kotleras: Mahayana Buddhism.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Kotleras: The pursuit of understanding, the process of discovery, and having a positive influence through sharing new things or new ways of looking at old things.

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?

Kotleras: Both.

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not?

Kotleras: Buddhist reincarnation.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Kotleras: I make of it what I can.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Kotleras: This is too complicated and context-dependent to explain.

On High-Range Test Construction 24: Alex Tolio

2024-11-22

Alex Tolio is someone interested in I.Q. tests and high-range test construction. He discussed common errors in creating valid, reliable high-range IQ tests, highlighting test constructors' biases, insufficient abstraction, and questions overly reliant on novelty or complexity. Tolio notes that a balance between creativity and clarity is essential to prevent ambiguous items. He suggests beta-testing, revision, and removing unnecessary elements to reduce bias. He advocates for heterogeneous tests to best capture the general intelligence factor (g) and highlights the importance of correlating new tests with validated ones. Confirmatory factor analysis and careful data preparation are key for precise measurement. Feedback issues often involve claims of ambiguous items.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What are common mistakes in trying to make high-range tests valid, reliable, and robust?

Alex Tolio: I suppose the most common mistake may be one's own biases towards what they consider valid.

While there exists objectivity in what parameters constitute a good test, there does not seem to be a set consensus on what really is "absolutely needed" to measure IQ's supposedly above 3-4SD.

I can only suppose with certainty that the need for increased abstraction (rather than speed) has to be present, but there exists a fine line between what is really abstract or simply convoluted.

Because of this, test-creators (including myself), are likely implementing their own bias within the question(s) themselves, which ultimately may reflect one's own attitude to measuring very high IQ. In other words, what one considers great items or perhaps even format, is already biased.

I believe this can manifest itself in many forms; such as:

1. A tendency towards creating items that may be inherently polluted or prone to by external factors; examples of such may be unnecessary layers in hopes of increasing difficulty, which, when made poorly may falsely promote novelty in cost of quality. I believe the main flaw of such items may be that a conscientious but yet less capable individual; may be able to untangle them given enough time. This means that the difficulty of the item in question is shallow; given it may be sufficiently understood with enough time, it is only a mere product of the layers of which the true solution may be.
2. Implementation of too much creativity, I've found this may be counter-intuitive to creating a solid test, but I believe there need be a balance. In the process of one's own journey to create novelty, one will be faced with such issue, where a large risk is esotericism, which may ultimately bring its own set of problems. Such items are also prone to interpretation, which ultimately hurts a test's quality, because the reliability is primarily based on responses given by the candidates that answered an item. Because reliability is a product of this, such questions will dramatically lower the consistency, because of the variety of the responses received. I believe there are numerous tests out there of which this is an issue; and possibly a reason of the lack of report for such statistic.

To note, a test may be good in of itself, but the sample to which it is administered will have a direct effect on its quality.

3. Misjudge of sufficiently discriminating questions may result a test author to produce a test that is too difficult.
4. Some test authors are not attempting to create tests to measure IQ, but is rather a showcase of their own ability, in which superfluous and unreasonably difficult items are present.
5. Recycling one's own questions (something I'm equally guilty of)!
6. Poor balance of difficulty within a test; or too "graded" difficulty. If difficulty is too calculated, or a steep sudden increase occurs, there may exist a common "wall" that collapses in a certain raw; of which people of a ball-park of ability may fall into, possibly seizing to discriminate further.

A good example of that is when a norm has a jump of almost +10-15 points per raw; this means that the people who are in this raw are not distributed.

7. Creating too many difficult questions, does not make for a great test as a whole.
8. Possibly the repetitive use of patterns, of which one has seen, thought of, or previously used in tests. This creates a author-specific learning effect, of which familiarity with such pattern(s), assuming they have been solved once, will not require sufficient amount of ability afterwards.

I believe this is also a mistake I tend to make. However, I believe it is ultimately unavoidable as one proceeds to solve an author(s) tests. One will have to exert the most effort in the first couple tests, of which may truly measure "IQ". But as one proceeds to take multiple tests by an author, their scores are prone to increase. I truly think this reflects that tests may cease to be robust in particular cases; this seems to be irrespective of whether author's work is of quality, but may be related to becoming more aware of what may be asked by a certain author; developing an intuition for such; or perhaps an eventual reverse-engineer on how the author may tend to think, and general familiarity. This, for me, highlights the human error that is present in such tests, which constitutes imperfect measurement; but also possibly invalid after a certain period of time.

9. Test questions do not discriminate properly, as-per-flawed construction. This ties well with shallow questions. I believe questions that poorly discriminate are likely the ones that are also prone to be more polluted by (external) factors required; that is in addition to pattern recognition (core).

Whereas those factors may ultimately eliminate the quality and need (albeit not absolute) for pattern recognition.

10. Items that are poor may result in an "artificial ceiling" of which the test does not bare the ability to truly measure to the levels it is reporting.
11. False or manipulated statistics (or lack thereof)

Jacobsen: What are the core abilities measured at the higher ranges of intelligence or as one attempts to measure in the high-range of ability?

Tolio: I believe what is unitary of such tests is their increased demand on abstraction.

This means that the focus is shifted to the depth rather than speed, of which may challenge the strength of one's understanding.

Because understanding requires pattern recognition as per item, candidates answer directly reflects their understanding of an item.

Assuming answer is commonly unique, then the discrimination should occur naturally; a phenomenon better seen by the (likely) common understanding of items between candidates of different ability levels.

This does not necessarily imply there truly is an alternative (or weaker answer), but is a consequence of lack of sufficient understanding, of which ambiguity may seem apparent.

However, it is also possible there does exist a weaker “common”, of which ideally should be eliminated.

The strictness of the answer is perhaps also a prerequisite, of which candidates of higher ability tend to be extremely rigorous, and may not rush to think they have “the” answer.

In short, the core abilities are depth of understanding (reason), pattern recognition, higher ability for abstraction, and often inherent divergence that may result.

Pattern recognition of the highest form, in my opinion, is not about recognizing a pattern in all the chaos (or noise), but proposing structure to it; such that it is sufficiently and simply understood.

This means unnecessary elements implemented in questions may contradict this notion, and presentation ought to be clean.

If an element does not bare meaning, or is not useful in any particular way, is probably best removed. Which may also reduce item likelihood to load on external polluting factors.

Jacobsen: How do you remove or minimize test constructor bias from tests?

Tolio: It is not possible in its absolute form, but certain measures may help to eliminate it.

- Questions should (ideally) be beta-tested before release.
- Conscious effort of elimination by author, rigorous revision of items.
- Creating questions that are more pure; so that cultural difference is minimized
- Exclusion of esotericism and the inherent creativity
- Removal of unnecessary elements, promoting a clean presentation of an item
- Too many clues may be as good as none
- Very careful implementation of novelty, and preferring a more universally understood form of expression.
- Eliminating the projection of one's own subjective ideas of sufficient discrimination between higher-ability candidates;

Jacobsen: What should be done with homogeneous and heterogeneous tests?

Tolio: Despite my own construction of homogeneous tests, it is clear that heterogeneous tests are the best measure.

It is not possible to extract true g if the test is homogeneous, and is likely extracting the most “general” factor the test is loading on.

I believe heterogeneous tests are the only way to extract g , because it is also simply a manifestation of a unitary excellence in various cognitive facets;

I’ve come to the recent conclusion that it is best that a test’s ceiling should be raised by this variety, rather than the implementation of extremely difficult questions in one area.

The latter being flawed, as these questions are the most challenging to make “healthy”.

1. Cooijmans tests are a great model, but I would also encourage possible “inventions” for authors. Such forms may be of the problems or task in question.

Jacobsen: What tests and test constructors have you considered good?

Tolio: P. Cooijmans has the most thorough and professional work, which could additionally be used for educative purposes.

1. Jouve has professional work; and implements a rather linear approach. Rather accurate; however I believe it could be potentially limiting after an arbitrary threshold.

And for this I think Johnathan Wai is a better fit.

Johnathan Wai’s work is more of well-suit to the high range.

I am not very well acquainted with old generation of authors, or non-western.

1. Prousalis work is promising.

There are other authors of which I like, but may lack substantial statistics.

Jacobsen: When trying to develop questions capable of tapping a deeper reservoir of general cognitive ability, what is important for verbal, numeral, spatial, logical (and other) types of questions?

Tolio: While overlaps with the previous, however I will add:

Question difficulty may be effectively raised by:

Careful implementation of additional rules and the complexity of them; (reason)

Increasing the abstraction level of the idea in question; (horizon)

These seem to be primary ways, but not necessarily only ways.

In the process of a candidate tackling an item, one must first generate a plethora of ideas of whom (most, may not be meaningful) in solving the item.

However; the discrimination of such items occurs as per their idea, and not necessarily that they are difficult to work-around (reason).

It is likely that if one is not capable, they will never generate the idea to solve the item in question, of which requires associative horizon (see P. Cooijmans).

The most important part of every item is whether discrimination occurs; while it may seem intuitive that an author should be very rigorous with their own idea(s) and logic, or to even the disambiguation of their own items; this perfection is not always necessary in the process of creating a good item.

I've come to observe that an author mainly needs to think of the best application of their idea, in combination to the best presentation of such; of which, if made correctly, should naturally dis-encourage alternative solutions from being present. In other words, disambiguation may occur as a consequence of this.

Jacobsen: What is efficient means by which to ballpark the general factor loading of a high-range test?

Tolio: I suppose since ballpark is used:

Correlation of authors test to a test or test(s) known to have captured g.

This means that correlations with professional tests are absolutely necessary, because they indicate construct validity.

Jacobsen: What is the most precise or comprehensive method to measure the general factor loading of a high-range test, a superset of tests, or a subset of such a superset?

Tolio: The most precise method I believe would be confirmatory factor analysis, of which samples are usually not apt.

This means it may misrepresent a test's true g loading, and this is not necessarily towards the "better", but often contrary, however it can be both ways.

It is also very likely that the extracted factor is not true g, of which a test may have extracted A "general factor".

Correlations help to ensure of this.

When omega η is estimated, the square root of omega η is thought to be the g loading.

Data may need be prepared very carefully, but meaningful factor analysis may be least possible with a clean sample of N=70-100, albeit not precise.

Intercorrelation between tests, or one's own tests, may be flawed because of the assumption the tests have captured g; unless correlations previously made have indicated construct validity, of which this method may be then considered valid.

Jacobsen: Have test construction and norming processes evolved in the aggregate for you?

Tolio: It started as a creative outlet and hobby for me; and I believe such lack of seriousness may be vaguely reflected, however, I attempt to provide honest statistical work/methods. It has been (and still is) a learning curve for me, of which I've tried to educate myself from the variety of work provided by authors, particularly P. Cooijmans, and using it as a stepping-stone to my own conclusion(s). There is still a lot to learn, in fact I would claim that I'm not even remotely advanced with statistics.

So I may use a disclaimer in the case something said is of ignorance; P. Cooijmans norming method is the definite best for norming a high-range test. Because of the linear issue proposed by Z-scores.

I have tried to propose at the very least my own, of which seems to have began with a flawed premise.

I proposed that many high range IQ tests do not contain sufficiently discriminating items; such promoting an essentially “artificial ceiling”.

This means that the items may not scale further upon a certain level, and are likely reporting false IQ scores beyond that.

I thought of attaching a “grade” or an IQ level for each problem, of which may be estimated by its solvability, of which is tied to the reported IQ of candidates that solved this item,

of which try to extract the least “known” IQ possible to solve a question, thus attaching this grade to the question.

The reason of this, would be to ball-park the true IQ content/difficulty present within a test.

This would help with promoting a healthier ceiling, or at the least; estimating true discrimination of a test.

Some but not all flaws:

The flawed premise is that a question absolutely necessarily needs a minimum IQ, this assumes that every question is good.

And of course; the dishonest reports of IQ’s, or scores.

Jacobsen: What is the most common mistake people make when submitting feedback about your tests?

Tolio: I’ve received primarily positive feedback, however there are often cases of which candidates attempt to point out a supposedly ambiguous item.

To eliminate this issue, whilst being entirely aware of the feedback this gives; I report every single “incorrect” answer to items.

I hope this approach is transparent enough, so that there should be no further discussions.

I’m fully aware however that such approach (and availability of tests), is promoting further familiarity/practice.

I hope to tackle this issue by creating more novel items.

However, it has also served as an experiment for me, and thus far it does not seem to be of extreme benefit to candidates.

This means that thus far; despite reporting the incorrect answers, the correct answers are still not “correctly” found, by re-occurring candidates in case an item may have been re-used.

This does not necessarily prove the contrary about the approach, but it may be of lesser impact as initially thought of.

On High-Range Test Construction 25: Patrick Liljegren

2024-11-22

Patrick Liljegren is a member of the Synaptiq Society and The Glia Society. He achieved a 171 on the IQ test OASIS. Patrick is passionate about audio system tweaks, including the use of crystals. He enjoys eating banana ice cream daily and braving the winter without a jacket. His philosophy emphasizes self-improvement, perseverance, and the importance of having fun. Liljegren's passion for test construction developed from his interest in cognitive processes and personal experience with traditional IQ tests, which felt limited in measuring deeper logical reasoning. Dissatisfied with repetitive and uninspiring test formats, Liljegren sought to create engaging and enjoyable tests that foster cognitive growth and reflect true intellectual ability. He emphasizes the importance of avoiding biases, maintaining rigorous test design, and ensuring test reliability. His focus is on holistic, multi-domain questions that stimulate deeper problem-solving. For valid results, he values participant engagement and careful test scoring, addressing potential errors and aiming to support test-takers' growth and confidence.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When did this interest in test construction truly come forward for you?

Patrick Liljegren: This interest in test construction emerged as a natural evolution of my lifelong passion for understanding cognitive processes. After taking numerous IQ tests myself, I realized there was a distinct kind of logic I was using—one that allowed me to engage with problems on a deeper level than these tests seemed to measure. Each test left me with the sense that there was something more to explore, a way of thinking that wasn't captured by standard approaches.

Over time, I grew increasingly curious about crafting an alternative that included this “deeper logic.” I wanted to create tests that not only challenge conventional boundaries but also engage test-takers with a format that's more enjoyable and dynamic than rows of text or numbers. In combining rigor with creativity, I hoped to produce tests that would captivate people who, like myself, crave an experience that reflects the true intricacies of high-range cognition. This blend of challenge and engagement was a calling that I couldn't ignore, and that's when I truly began dedicating myself to test construction.

Jacobsen: At the time, what were the realizations about the tests and the need to develop yours?

Liljegren: My biggest realization about other people's IQ tests was that they were, frankly, very boring for most people. The majority of the tests I encountered were filled with repetitive tasks—just text and numbers—making the experience feel more like a tedious obligation than an engaging intellectual challenge. It became clear to me that this format didn't capture the interest of participants, and I could see why many would be unwilling to invest hours on end in something so monotonous. This realization drove me to create my own tests, ones that would not only be intellectually stimulating but also fun, encouraging people to engage deeply with the process without feeling like it was a chore.

Jacobsen: What are common mistakes in trying to make high-range tests valid, reliable, and robust?

Liljegren: A common mistake in creating high-range IQ tests is neglecting the participant's experience, which can lead to a lack of engagement. If the test is so boring or tedious that people don't want to spend the necessary time on it, then the test fails to be truly valid. Cognitive ability

cannot be accurately measured if participants are rushing through questions or abandoning the test early. A valid test needs to capture the participant's full cognitive range, which means making it not only intellectually challenging but also engaging enough to keep the participant involved. Without this engagement, the test becomes more of a hurdle than a meaningful assessment.

In the past, when I was a teenager, I took an IQ test administered by a psychologist. At the time, I wasn't particularly interested in the test, so I rushed through it, not fully engaging with the questions. The result was that I received a score which they deemed as 'retard level,' and the feedback was devastating. However, this experience was incredibly eye-opening for me. It made me realize how much external factors—like lack of interest or engagement—can skew a test result, leading to an inaccurate and harmful assessment of one's abilities. That experience, while painful, inspired me to create tests that are not only challenging but also engaging enough to allow people to truly demonstrate their cognitive potential, free from the constraints of traditional, often discouraging, testing methods.

Jacobsen: What are the counterintuitive aspects in taking tests and making tests in the high-range?

Liljegen: A major issue with traditional tests is that people are often more focused on completing them as quickly as possible to achieve a higher IQ score. They rush through the questions without taking the time to dive deeper into the problems, which leads to surface-level answers. This tendency to prioritize speed over depth contributes to the overall boredom with text- and number-based tests, preventing individuals from fully exploring the underlying logic or the deeper meanings within the questions.

In contrast, my tests break away from this model by incorporating images and humor, which serve to keep participants engaged and entertained. This approach fosters a sense of enjoyment and curiosity, encouraging participants to delve into the problem-solving process with a genuine desire to explore deeper, rather than just rushing to finish. The inclusion of humor makes the experience more relatable and less daunting, while still maintaining intellectual rigor, creating a more enjoyable and effective testing experience.

Jacobsen: What are the core abilities measured at the higher ranges of intelligence or as one attempts to measure in the high-range of ability?

Liljegen: The core abilities associated with high-range intelligence are not about speed, as calculators and computers are not truly intelligent. Real intelligence involves the ability to approach a problem from multiple perspectives and select the most logical solution. It's about having a broad understanding of various concepts and identifying the most reasonable choice. Rushing to solve something often limits the range of perspectives considered. True intelligence requires taking the time to explore different ways of solving the same problem, which can take thousands of hours. It's akin to exploring a forest and visiting every part to fully understand it and create a complete mental map. This process of deep exploration is essential for making the best decision.

Jacobsen: In an overview, what skills and considerations seem important for both the construction of test questions and making an effective schema for them?

Liljegen: If the author of a test has certain mental limitations or a narrow understanding of basic human behaviors, it can lead to a biased, limited test. This test would reflect the author's own cognitive framework, potentially making it skewed toward a specific way of thinking. If

such a test is used, individuals who score highly may be seen as having similar mental characteristics or limitations, which could simply be a result of the test's narrow perspective.

In this case, the high scores would no longer represent general intelligence or cognitive flexibility, but rather a shared bias or limitation that the test fails to account for. This would be problematic, as it would reinforce the cognitive limitations of both the author and the test-takers, rather than providing a comprehensive measure of intelligence.

For a test to be valid and accurate, it must be free from these personal biases, ensuring it measures general intelligence, not a particular mindset or cognitive limitation.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on proposals for dynamic or adaptive tests rather than—let's call them—"static" tests consisting of a single item or set of items presented as a whole test, unchanging, instead of a collection of algorithmically variant or shifting items adapting to prior testee answers in a computer interface?

Liljegen: I believe the most effective dynamic test would be a virtual world where time is infinite, and the participant cannot escape until they have successfully solved the test. In this environment, the test taker's intelligence would be measured based on the choices they make and the paths they explore as they interact with the world around them.

The absence of time pressure is crucial. Just like in real life, there's no strict timeline for decision-making, and rushing would only limit the depth of exploration. Early choices might lead the participant down a seemingly wrong path, but without a time limit, they would have the opportunity to revisit earlier decisions, re-evaluate their choices, and learn from their mistakes. This reflects the process of growing through experience and finding the best path through reflection and exploration.

The world would be locked, meaning the participant cannot escape or finish the test until they have solved it in their own way. This would ensure that the participant is fully engaged and has the space to explore every facet of the test, allowing for a deeper understanding of their own problem-solving process and decision-making abilities. The test is not a race—it is a journey where intelligence is reflected in adaptation, learning, and growth over time.

By removing time constraints and providing an infinite amount of space to explore, this dynamic test would truly measure the ability to think critically, adapt to new information, and learn from past choices. The best answers would come not from rushing but from the thoughtful, reflective process of solving problems over time in an ever-evolving environment.

Jacobsen: How do you remove or minimize test constructor bias from tests?

Liljegen: I believe that to minimize bias in test construction, the author needs to possess a high level of general intelligence. The higher the intelligence, the broader and more flexible the thinking, which helps in considering multiple perspectives and reducing narrow-minded bias. Lower intelligence tends to create more biased and limited thinking, which may not resonate with a diverse range of test-takers.

Moreover, the test constructor needs to have a well-rounded understanding of human behavior. A test creator with greater intelligence is more likely to recognize these biases and account for them, ensuring that the test is fair and representative of a wider audience.

Jacobsen: How do we know with confidence many listed norms are, in fact, reasonably accurate on many of these tests? What is the range of sample sizes on the tests, even approximately, now?

Practically speaking, for good statistics, what is your ideal number of test-takers? You can't say, "8,128,000,000."

Liljegen: I believe the sample size for a test should consist only of individuals who take it 100% seriously. When test-takers are fully engaged and committed, the data collected will be far more accurate and reliable. This ensures that the results reflect the true cognitive abilities of the participants, rather than being skewed by rushed or careless answers.

While a larger sample size can be beneficial for diversity and generalization, the quality of the responses is paramount. A smaller, but more focused group of serious participants will yield more valid and meaningful norms. In essence, the test becomes much more accurate when the sample is composed of individuals who approach it with the same level of seriousness and dedication as athletes competing for a gold medal.

In my opinion, a sample size of around 100 highly engaged participants is ideal for creating accurate and reliable test norms. When the group is larger, such as 500 participants, the level of seriousness tends to decrease, especially for those who find themselves near the bottom of the results. As a result, these individuals may rush through the test or fail to fully engage, which can lead to less reliable data.

In contrast, when the sample size is smaller, like 100 participants, the competition feels more real and the stakes are higher. This creates an environment where test-takers are more likely to commit fully to the process and give their best effort. The focus and dedication of such a group result in more meaningful and precise data, as each participant is genuinely invested in the outcome, much like athletes competing for a gold medal. By keeping the sample size smaller and more engaged, the test is able to capture more accurate measures of intelligence and cognitive ability.

Jacobsen: Is English-based bias a prominent problem throughout tests? Could this be limiting the global spread of possible test-takers of these tests rather than limiting them to particular language spheres? Although, these tests are taken, to a limited degree, in many countries of the world in all/most regions of the world.

Liljegen: I avoid English-based bias in my tests by incorporating numbers and images, which are universal elements that don't rely on language. This approach ensures that both English and non-English speakers have a fair chance to perform based on their cognitive abilities, rather than language proficiency. While English language knowledge can be an advantage for native speakers, non-native speakers might actually have an advantage in some cases. When they encounter unfamiliar words, they are more likely to look them up, which could reveal subtle clues that a native speaker might overlook, assuming they already know the meaning.

Overall, this approach balances things out and ensures fairness for both groups. By relying on numbers and images, I make sure that the test evaluates true cognitive skills, regardless of the language spoken. This way, the test becomes more universally accessible while still maintaining its reliability across different populations.

Jacobsen: When trying to develop questions capable of tapping a deeper reservoir of general cognitive ability, what is important for verbal, numeral, spatial, logical (and other) types of questions?

Liljegen: I believe that in designing questions that tap into deeper cognitive abilities, it is crucial to integrate different domains—verbal, numerical, spatial, and logical—into a cohesive, in-

terconnected framework. Rather than treating each domain as separate, questions should challenge test-takers to blend these different types of reasoning, creating a more holistic and real-world relevant measure of intelligence.

In traditional tests, we often see sections devoted solely to one type of reasoning: a verbal section, a numerical section, a spatial section, etc. However, true cognitive ability is more complex. It lies in how well someone can synthesize and apply knowledge across these domains to form a broader, unified understanding. This is akin to solving a puzzle where the pieces are of different shapes and forms—verbal, numerical, spatial, and logical. The challenge comes not from solving each piece individually but from recognizing how they interconnect and contribute to the whole.

This integrated approach mirrors real-world problem-solving, where we constantly draw upon diverse areas of knowledge. To test someone's true cognitive abilities, we must create challenges that require them to blend these elements and think beyond linear, compartmentalized patterns. It's about understanding the bigger picture and making connections that others might miss, which is often the hallmark of high-level cognitive processing.

In this way, the test becomes more than just a measure of isolated skills. It gauges how well someone can think creatively and flexibly, applying various types of reasoning in novel ways to solve complex problems. This method of testing challenges individuals to think out of the box, drawing on multiple domains to find the best possible solution—a far more comprehensive reflection of intelligence than traditional, domain-specific tests.

Jacobsen: What are roadblocks test-takers tend to make in terms of thought processes and assumptions around time commitments on these tests? So, they get artificially low scores on high-range tests.

Liljegren: Many test-takers often fall into the trap of underestimating the time commitment required for high-range tests. They tend to think that they should be able to answer the questions quickly, driven by a sense of confidence or even narcissism. These individuals often assume that their initial answer is correct without fully considering alternative perspectives or exploring the problem deeply. This overconfidence typically leads them to rush through the test, which results in lower scores.

The key to performing well on such tests lies in approaching them with humility. When a person is humble enough to accept that they don't have all the answers and that there could be multiple ways of thinking about a problem, they tend to spend more time reflecting on each question. Rather than sticking rigidly to their first choice, they're open to exploring different avenues and rethinking their responses. This deeper, more methodical approach leads to better performance, as it allows them to tap into a broader range of insights and avoid missing crucial clues that could improve their answers.

So, in essence, those who approach a high-range test with an open mind and a willingness to consider all possibilities—without rushing or prematurely settling on answers—are far more likely to succeed.

Jacobsen: What is the intended age-range for high-range tests? How do these account for individuals younger and older than this range?

Liljegren: I believe that the intended age range for high-range tests often reflects the cognitive and emotional maturity required to fully engage with them. Younger individuals tend to rush

through questions and make quick decisions, often due to a lack of experience or an overestimation of their ability to answer immediately. As people grow older, they gain a sense of relaxation and wisdom that allows them to approach problems more thoughtfully. This maturation process helps individuals realize they don't have all the answers right away, which leads them to spend more time considering different perspectives and refining their responses.

When I was younger, I would only spend a couple of hours on each test, but now, after years of experience, I dedicate thousands of hours to fully exploring every test I take. This shift in approach illustrates how cognitive growth and emotional development over time lead to better results on high-range tests.

Jacobsen: What is important in constructing and norming a test?

Liljegren: When constructing and norming a test, one crucial factor that is often overlooked is the cognitive growth that occurs during the testing process. A test that promotes cognitive development as the participant moves through it is not only more engaging but also yields more accurate results. This dynamic approach ensures that the test-taker's cognitive ability is allowed to evolve, which, in turn, enhances the reliability of the results.

Cognitive Growth During the Test:

One of the most important elements in test construction is ensuring that the test encourages growth in cognitive ability while the participant is engaging with it. This process involves crafting questions that require test-takers to think critically, adapt their strategies, and explore new methods of problem-solving as they progress through the test. By introducing progressively more challenging and thought-provoking questions, the test encourages test-takers to evolve their thinking, enhancing their problem-solving ability and, in turn, their cognitive growth.

This improvement is especially important because it directly influences engagement. When a test-taker sees their cognitive abilities growing during the test—when they feel that they are not just answering questions but also becoming more intelligent throughout the process—they are far more likely to invest the necessary time and focus to fully engage with the test. This increased focus and effort can lead to a more accurate and comprehensive assessment of their potential, as they are operating at their maximum cognitive capacity.

Engagement and Accuracy:

As a test-taker becomes more engaged in the process and experiences cognitive growth, they are more likely to take the time to consider their answers carefully and explore multiple perspectives before finalizing them. This is where the real value of cognitive growth comes into play: when participants are learning and improving as they work through the test, their final answers are more reflective of their true cognitive ability. They are less likely to rush through questions, make careless errors, or settle on superficial solutions.

In contrast, tests that are too short, or lack this cognitive growth element, may encourage rushed decision-making, ultimately leading to less accurate results. In such cases, the test may not fully capture the test-taker's potential, and the results could be skewed by the lack of cognitive engagement. Therefore, a test should not only measure raw ability but also stimulate growth throughout its duration. By doing so, test-takers' cognitive abilities are fully exercised and measured at their peak.

The Importance of Test Length:

For this process to take place, the test needs to be long enough to allow for meaningful cognitive

growth. If the test is too short, test-takers will not have sufficient time to experience this transformation. As the test progresses, their problem-solving skills improve, which should be reflected in their answers as they revisit and reconsider earlier questions. This iterative process ensures that their final performance represents a more accurate picture of their cognitive abilities.

By fostering cognitive growth during the test, you are not simply assessing the static intelligence of the participant; you are capturing the dynamic nature of their cognitive abilities. This allows for a much more nuanced and accurate understanding of their intelligence, which is crucial when norming the test. This approach can lead to more meaningful norms, as test-takers are measured based on their full cognitive potential, not just their initial capacity.

In summary, test construction and norming should go beyond merely measuring cognitive ability at a fixed point in time. By designing tests that promote cognitive growth, you engage test-takers in a deeper and more meaningful way, which not only improves their performance but also leads to more accurate, reliable, and comprehensive results. This dynamic approach is essential for creating a test that truly measures the depth and breadth of human intelligence.

Jacobsen: Cheaters exist. Frauds exist. How do you a) deal with frauds and cheaters on tests and b) prevent fraud and cheating on those tests?

Liljegren: I believe that the key to preventing cheating on IQ tests lies in making the test engaging and enjoyable. People tend to cheat when they find the test boring, as they simply want to finish it as quickly as possible, similar to how one might skip through a dull movie. However, if the test is fun and feels like a rewarding journey, participants are far less likely to rush through or cheat.

When the test is designed in such a way that it encourages deep thought, curiosity, and cognitive growth, test-takers are naturally more invested in the process. This engagement reduces the temptation to take shortcuts, as participants are more interested in exploring and solving the problems presented. By making the experience fun and stimulating, you not only prevent cheating but also improve the quality of the data collected.

In essence, if the IQ test becomes an enjoyable challenge, much like a game or an intellectual journey, participants are far less likely to cheat and more likely to put forth their best effort. This approach ensures that the results reflect their true cognitive abilities, rather than rushed or dishonest attempts to finish quickly.

Jacobsen: What is an efficient means by which to ballpark the general factor loading of a high-range test?

Liljegren: To efficiently estimate the general factor loading of a high-range test, the test should incorporate a variety of question types that tap into multiple forms of intelligence and cognitive processes. This ensures the test measures a broad spectrum of abilities, including verbal, numerical, spatial, logical, creative, and abstract thinking. Using only one style of questions—such as rows of text or numbers—limits the scope of intelligence being tested, and can lead to a narrow, predictable response pattern.

Additionally, relying on the same question types repeatedly can result in a learning effect, where test-takers begin to predict the types of questions and answers. This skews the test's validity, as the test-taker's experience may be based more on familiarity with the format rather than actual cognitive ability. Therefore, introducing a diverse range of question formats prevents this issue,

ensuring that the test captures a fuller, more accurate measure of the general factor of intelligence.

Jacobsen: What is the most precise or comprehensive method to measure the general factor loading of a high-range test, a superset of tests, or a subset of such a superset?

Liljegren: The most comprehensive and precise method to measure the general factor loading of a high-range test is by employing a superset approach, which integrates a variety of subsets. The superset allows for a more holistic view of intelligence by encompassing a diverse array of cognitive abilities, such as numerical, verbal, spatial, and logical reasoning. This broad scope provides a more accurate measurement of general intelligence (g) because it evaluates a wide range of cognitive processes that overlap and interact.

By using a superset, the test becomes dynamic, capturing the interconnections between different cognitive domains. Knowledge from one subset can inform and enhance performance in another, allowing you to form a fuller, more nuanced understanding of a person's intellectual capacity. This approach not only reduces bias but also prevents the predictability of answers that can arise when a test is too narrowly focused.

Moreover, a superset allows for greater accuracy and robustness in general factor loading by avoiding the limitations of focusing on a single type of reasoning. By examining multiple subsets together, you provide a more comprehensive measure of cognitive ability, reflecting the complex interplay of various intellectual skills.

In summary, a superset ensures that you're capturing the full range of human intelligence, minimizing the biases associated with narrowly focused tests, and providing a more complete and dynamic assessment of general cognitive ability.

Jacobsen: What seem like the most appropriate places for people to start when taking your tests—taking into account their own skill sets, or others' tests for that matter?

Liljegren: My tests are designed to be accessible even to individuals with no prior exposure to IQ testing. The key idea is that as the test-taker progresses, their IQ naturally increases through the process. Each part of the test is interconnected, offering clues within the test itself to help guide them toward solving other sections. Rather than presenting isolated questions, the test is structured as a unified experience where everything fits together, fostering both growth and understanding as they move forward. This approach ensures that the process of taking the test is not only a challenge but also a journey of discovery.

The journey through the entire test is genuinely fun and rewarding. With each question solved, there's a sense of accomplishment and often laughter, which keeps you engaged and eager to continue. The satisfaction of cracking a question creates a sense of excitement, motivating the test-taker to push forward until they've solved it all. The tests are created with the intention of helping people increase their intelligence, not simply taking their money by leading them to believe they are correct when they aren't. This journey isn't just about testing; it's about expanding cognitive abilities in an enjoyable, engaging, and fulfilling way.

Jacobsen: What tests and test constructors have you considered good?

Liljegren: I believe that many tests I've encountered are designed not with the intention of fostering genuine intellectual growth, but rather to exploit the test-taker's desire for validation and to profit from their repeated attempts. These tests often provide immediate validation to make the

participant feel correct, only to later disappoint them, leading to the common practice of encouraging a second (and often third) attempt to “fix” their results. This cycle is not about true intelligence testing but about encouraging further payments by exploiting a psychological pattern: the desire to prove oneself right and gain recognition from peers.

This type of testing is harmful because it focuses on validation rather than education. It relies on participants’ egos, motivating them to pay again to prove they’re capable, rather than helping them grow. This creates a cycle where the person is encouraged to rush through the test for validation, only to feel let down and encouraged to submit another payment for another attempt.

In contrast, my tests are designed to be engaging, fun, and intellectually rewarding, with the goal of fostering actual cognitive growth. The experience is meant to be so enjoyable and fulfilling that test-takers don’t want to stop. The aim is to encourage them to fully immerse themselves in the test, where they are learning, exploring, and growing their IQ as they progress. The focus is not on tricking participants or manipulating them for financial gain but on offering a genuine opportunity to develop and discover new intellectual perspectives.

A good test should be an experience that challenges and encourages cognitive growth, one that leaves the test-taker with a sense of accomplishment and a desire to keep going. It’s about helping them learn, not about creating a system where they’re trapped in a cycle of disappointment and further payments.

Jacobsen: What have you learned from making these tests and their variants?

Liljegen: I spent three years on two different tests, working on them simultaneously and dedicating 2000 hours to each. When I submitted them at the same time, something very interesting happened: I scored my all-time high on one test, but my all-time low on the other. This experience highlighted just how unpredictable and subjective these tests can be.

Even with extensive preparation and effort, the outcome is not guaranteed. The tests are designed in such a way that, despite the time and focus invested, the results can vary dramatically depending on various factors—many of which are beyond your control. This unpredictability demonstrates that intelligence is not solely about raw effort or preparation; it also involves a complex interaction of factors, including problem-solving approach, adaptability, and the ability to navigate unexpected challenges.

Ultimately, this reinforces the notion that high-range tests are inherently unpredictable, and the experience of taking them can vary significantly from one instance to another, regardless of how much effort is put into preparation.

Some authors’ tests feature repeated questions across multiple test versions, likely due to a combination of laziness and a desire to maximize profits. By identifying these repeated questions, I was able to deduce the correct answers through second attempts, as well as spot consistent errors in the scoring of the tests I took. These errors included misspellings of my name, incorrect dates, and discrepancies in my raw scores. The recurrence of these mistakes suggests that many authors are sloppy in scoring, and I must take this into account when submitting my tests.

In such cases, I realized I need to factor in the author’s state of mind during the scoring process. The outcome can vary depending on the author’s circumstances—whether they are distracted, tired, or experiencing stress. To minimize errors, I must plan the timing of my submissions carefully, choosing moments when I anticipate the test author is most likely to score the tests accurately. For mail-based submissions, I also have to consider potential delays or disruptions, such

as holidays or issues like mail theft or vandalism, that could impact the delivery or processing of my test. These external factors, which are beyond my control, require careful planning and preparation to ensure the best possible conditions for submitting my tests.

The realization that so many aspects of the process are influenced by factors out of my control has shaped my approach to testing. While it's frustrating, it also underscores the need to approach the testing process with patience, awareness, and strategic thinking to navigate these challenges effectively.

When creating my own tests, my primary goal is always to foster cognitive growth rather than to make quick profits. Too often, the rush to monetize IQ testing leads to burnout among authors, which in turn results in sloppy test scoring and a lack of care in the process. This is something I'm very conscious of, and I make it a point to thoroughly double-check and verify everything I do. Each test I score is done with the utmost care, knowing that inaccurate results can have lasting consequences on someone's life.

I understand how a poorly scored test can affect a person, particularly when they are already facing difficulties. A mistake on a test could contribute to feelings of inadequacy or frustration, or even worse, lead to a deeper sense of alienation. I am very mindful of this, and it's why I dedicate hours to ensuring the accuracy of each test I score. I want the experience of taking my tests to be constructive, encouraging, and enlightening for the test-taker, and to give them an opportunity to truly grow their intelligence.

Moreover, I believe that creating tests with integrity, where the scoring is accurate and fair, has a far-reaching positive impact on individuals. People should leave my tests feeling not only more knowledgeable but also more confident in their abilities, as opposed to feeling confused or disheartened by an inaccurate result.

Ultimately, the goal is always to provide an environment where learning is rewarding and enjoyable. This is why I am so meticulous about every detail in the process, ensuring the test is as much a tool for personal growth as it is an intellectual challenge.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Patrick, and thank you additionally for your patience and forgiveness in my delays.

Liljegren: You're very welcome! I'm glad I could assist, and I truly appreciate your thoughtful words. If you ever need more help or have further questions in the future, don't hesitate to reach out. Best of luck with your endeavors, and I hope everything goes smoothly from here on out!

On High-Range Test Construction 26: Marco Ripà and Roberto Enea, DynamIQ

2024-11-22

Marco Ripà gives some opening commentary on his involvement in the dynamic style high-range test. **Roberto Enea** talks about his work on DynamIQ, a dynamically generated spatial IQ test. Enea, inspired by Marco Ripà, aimed to create a test that minimizes the “training effect” and resists cheating, making it suitable for repeated use. Developing DynamIQ involved balancing design, coding, security, and fairness. The test generates questions dynamically with consistent difficulty across tests. Enea acknowledged challenges in norming tests due to low and self-selected high-IQ samples and emphasized the need for diverse populations. DynamIQ avoids linguistic bias and ensures privacy by anonymizing user data. Its credit system allows economical, flexible use over time.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: As an opening question, what is your involvement in this dynamic style test?

Marco Ripà: Since I deleted all my data around early 2017, when I left the project, my memory of the test construction and normalization process is limited. Additionally, my memory isn’t solid. I do recall following Paul Cooijmans’s guidelines at the time, and if I’m not mistaken (we should verify this to be specific), I also communicated with him about the test norming to ensure everything was done correctly. The info I used to norm the test at the time also included the testee previous scores on reputable HRTs and supervised tests. Cooijmans and I talked about the z-scores method between September 3rd and September 4th 2016. I used the z-scores instead of the rank equations since our norming sample was too small for the latter method.

I remember choosing circles, triangles, and squares to create a culture-fair test with geometric properties. This decision was based on my initial idea to develop a spatial version of the ENNDT, which I had previously developed with Gaetano Morelli (see [this paper](#)). Regarding the colour selection—yellow, green, and white/blank—we opted for these colours to avoid underestimating the performance of colour-blind individuals.

Here is a summary of the entire story (please feel free to ask Roberto for more details):

In 2011, I envisioned developing a dynamic high-range test featuring thousands of unique software-generated items. Thus, this would ensure that any collection would share the same norm. Initially, we planned to use OEIS sequences characterized by unique properties. A few years later, with Gaetano, we developed the ENNDT tests, as described in the paper above. However, this test proved extremely challenging. Only highly skilled individuals achieved positive scores, making it impractical for screening purposes—even among the gifted populations.

Our next goal was to create a spatial, culture-fair IQ test for the high range that wouldn’t require participants to be exceptionally gifted. This was a more difficult challenge than the previous one. I enlisted another Italian Mensa member to help us. Roberto Enea joined the project, handling the programming and technical aspects, which I couldn’t manage myself. This collaboration involved over six months of work.

After internal testing, the tool was ready. We began beta testing. Then I normalized it using the standard techniques described by Paul Cooijmans. However, that was the last time I engaged in

such work. I can't recall the details. There were a lot of linear regression attempts and the corresponding R^2 values. I left the project in early 2017.

Subsequently, I deleted all documentation related to the test, the item projects, and the data on testees' performances, which only included initials, raw scores, and attempt numbers. So, I can't provide more technical information than Roberto, who has been the sole owner of the spatial dynamic test platform since 2017.

Nonetheless, I'm pleased to receive credit for the concept I envisioned over a dozen years ago—a true dynamic IQ test generator developed by software that is resilient against cheating (at least in the pre-ChatGPT era).

Anyway, I created the items following my initial idea of a mathematical method to combine those three geometrical shapes and Roberto wrote the program and created the tool to make the whole thing happen. I remember that the idea was to divide every shape in corners and/or sides and merge different shapes together.

Now I have to go.

Jacobsen: When did this interest in test construction truly come forward for you?

Roberto Enea: Hi Scott, thanks for this interview. Actually, I was mostly interested in solving tests rather than constructing them but I have found Marco's idea about implementing a system to automatically generate IQ tests very interesting and challenging.

Jacobsen: What were the realizations about the tests, at the time, and the need to develop yours?

Enea: At the time we started working on DynamIQ there was nothing similar meaning no systems that were able to generate dynamically spatial IQ tests. We were conscious of being creating something completely new.

Jacobsen: What was the origin *and* inspiration for the creation of the [DynamIQ](#) – the facts and the feelings? [You have made some comments about it. Marco Ripà first mentioned this to me about 8 years ago](#) with particular excitement about the 'ambition' behind this project.

Enea: This is more a question for Marco since he had the initial idea. The main idea was creating an IQ test that cannot be cheated and where the "training effect" has a lower impact so that you can take it several times without losing accuracy. That is a great idea because it could be used to monitor the actual efficacy of brain training systems. The initial idea was making DynamIQ also something that could be used by professionals and academics but we never accomplished this final step.

Jacobsen: Any word of credit to others who helped in the development of this test?

Enea: Unfortunately, not. DynamIQ has been developed only by Marco and me

Jacobsen: How does [design and coding](#) play into the construction of DynamIQ?

Enea: I would say 50% designing and 50% coding. Design is not just about the test design but it includes other aspects like security, anti-cheating, data privacy, etc.

Jacobsen: What skills and considerations, in an overview, seem important for both the construction of test questions and making an effective schema for them?

Enea: The main challenge of creating a dynamic iq test is defining a sort of generation rule for test questions rather than defining the single test question, because you have to automatically

generate tests whose difficulty should increase during the test (let's say from the 1st question to the 25th) but it should also be almost the same for the same question across different tests (the question n. 13 should have almost the same difficulty across all the tests generated). This requires a deep understanding about how spatial tests work “behind the scenes”, meaning that you have to know what makes a spatial test more difficult than another one beyond the intuition of it.

Jacobsen: How do we know with confidence listed norms are, in fact, reasonably accurate on many of these tests?

Enea: In my opinion the answer is that we cannot be 100% sure. Most of the time the norms are computed by the authors and they are not verified by other peers. Unfortunately, until there isn't a rigorous scientific validation of the test you cannot be sure about the accuracy declared.

Jacobsen: What are the most appropriate means by which to norm and re-norm a test when, in the high-range environment so far, the sample sizes tend to be low and self-selected, so attracting a limited supply and a tendency in a type of personality? Pragmatically speaking, for really good statistics, what is your ideal number of test-takers? You can't say, “8,126,000,000.”

Enea: Rather than being the number of test takers the problem is the sample composition. For example, selecting people in the high range is not difficult. There are a lot of test takers coming from High IQ societies like Mensa who have an official assessment of their IQ. It is much more difficult selecting people in the low and middle range because in a lot of countries like Italy IQ assessment is not a common practice so most of the people are not aware of their IQ. For this reason, it is difficult to collect a sample that is homogeneous enough to actually represent the whole population.

Jacobsen: Is English-based bias a prominent problem throughout tests? Could this be limiting the global spread of possible test-takers of these tests rather than limiting them to particular language spheres?

Enea: About DynamIQ that is definitely not a limit since it is a spatial test. No language knowledge is required.

Jacobsen: How do you ensure protection of the “[privacy and personal information](#)” of test-takers? Why “[share information about your use of our site with our social media, advertising and analytics partners](#)”?

Enea: About this I would like to clarify that sharing information about website usage does not mean sharing results. The website collects anonymous information about the provenance of the visitors and other information that are usually useful for marketing but these are not related to the test itself. The test is anonymized also because we don't collect any personal information of the user. We store the email used for the registration but there is no information stored that can connect the email to the real person.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose of the [account and credit system](#) of the DynamIQ test setup?

Enea: The credit system allows you to buy several tests executions in one shot so that the user can save some money. The credit never expires so you can take the test even several years after the purchase.

Jacobsen: With the advent of the internet, cheating on individual questions and on whole tests is a possibility and a reality on these high-range tests. How do we prevent such occurrences? Also, things like [the law and ethics](#).

Enea: That is actually the main purpose of DynamIQ: avoiding cheating in IQ tests. The number of combinations you can have avoids that the user can somehow “memorize” the answers. Of course, in the age of AI, it might be possible to cheat using systems like ChatGPT but at least for now it seems that they are not smart enough to solve this kind of tests. There is a challenge in place called ARC prize designed by researchers at Google that is focused on creating AI model to solve spatial tests. The tests designed in the ARC prize are quite simple, not comparable to DynamIQ. Nevertheless, the best result so far is 42% accuracy meaning that the best model fails almost 60% of the times.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Roberto.

Enea: My pleasure.

Conversation with Yaniv Hozes on Views and Life: Member, OlympIQ Society

2024-11-22

Yaniv Hozes is an Artificial Intelligence Researcher with extensive expertise in machine learning, deep learning, and neural network architecture. With nearly a decade of experience, Yaniv has contributed to innovative AI solutions and cutting-edge research, including Nested Neural Networks (NNN) for flexible data processing. He is affiliated with high-IQ societies like OLYMPIQ and The International Society for Philosophical Enquiry (ISPE). Yaniv's published works span 35 entries, exploring AI's intersection with psychology, linguistics, and philosophy. He has held roles at Zirra Co Ltd., Check Point Software, and the Israeli Ministry of Defense, enhancing AI capabilities in diverse applications. Hozes reflects on family legacy, inspired by his uncle's basketball career, and a rich cultural background rooted in Israel, where his grandfather, Mordechai Hozes, was a rabbi and kabbalist. Professionally, he is focused on applying pure logic to practical challenges. A member of elite societies like Sigma Xi and OLYMPIQ, Hozes believes genius is innate, shaped by profound intelligence. His metaphysical views explore dualities of time, logic, and transcendence, emphasizing growth through challenges. Gratitude defines his life's meaning, with belief in an afterlife as a bridge to ultimate unity.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you were growing up, what were some of the prominent family stories being told over time?

Yaniv Hozes: I grew up in Ganei Tikva, Israel. One of the prominent family stories often told was about my uncle, Pinhas Hozes, an Israeli former basketball player who represented the Israeli national basketball team.

Jacobsen: Have these stories helped provide a sense of an extended self or a sense of the family legacy?

Hozes: When I played basketball in elementary school, I dreamed of becoming a basketball player when I grew up. My uncle's career inspired me, and I often thought about continuing his path in basketball, which gave me a strong sense of connection to our family legacy.

Jacobsen: What was the family background, e.g., geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Hozes: My grandfather, Mordechai Hozes, was a synagogue rabbi, a mohel, and a kabbalist. He was fluent in Assyrian and Aramaic, mastering them at a native level.

Jacobsen: How was the experience with peers and schoolmates as a child and an adolescent?

Hozes: It wasn't always easy for me, because I couldn't express what I was feeling in a way that others could fully understand. I tended to see things in multiple layers and dimensions, and explaining that wasn't always successful.

Jacobsen: What have been some professional certifications, qualifications, and trainings earned by you?

Hozes: I am a Full Member of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society (affiliated with the Stanford Chapter). Additionally, I am a Fellow of The International Society for Philosophical Enquiry (ISPE). I have conducted peer reviews for scientific journals published by Taylor & Francis, Springer Nature, and Wiley in association with The British Association for Counselling

and Psychotherapy, earning reviewer verification certificates. Furthermore, I have conducted peer reviews for Qeios (ISSN: [2632-3834](#)), a platform I would like to highly recommend. Qeios is an exceptional academic journal that offers a modern, inclusive approach to peer-reviewed publishing. It fosters open dialogue and collaboration among researchers, encouraging innovative ideas and critical thinking. My experience working with Qeios has been enriching and professionally rewarding, and I wholeheartedly endorse it to fellow researchers and professionals in the field.

Jacobsen: When was high intelligence discovered for you?

Hozez: In 2020, I was accepted into The OLYMPIQ Society, an organization with a membership cut-off requiring an IQ score of 175 (SD 15).

Jacobsen: When you think of the ways in which the geniuses of the past have either been mocked, vilified, and condemned if not killed, or praised, flattered, platformed, and revered, what seems like the reason for the extreme reactions to and treatment of geniuses? Many alive today seem camera shy—many, not all.

Hozez: Before the sin of Adam and Eve, wisdom and abundance were freely accessible. However, after they ate from the Tree of Knowledge, these became scarce and limited in their accessibility. True wisdom, and the happiness that accompanies it, can only be discovered when one recognizes how little they truly know. Yet, after the act of eating from the Tree, Adam, Eve, and humanity as a whole became aware of things they were never meant to know. This awareness imposed limitations on themselves and all of humanity. The sin granted knowledge, but this knowledge, paradoxically, made humanity ignorant and constrained in its understanding and perception. Only by regaining the ability to acknowledge what we don't understand—a capacity diminished after the sin—can we rediscover true wisdom. The yetzer hara (evil inclination), symbolized by the primordial serpent, continues to influence humanity by perpetuating these limitations. It not only made wisdom less accessible, but it also introduced jealousy as a pervasive force in human nature. Jealousy causes individuals to resent the wisdom or gifts they see in others, projecting their dissatisfaction outward. In this way, the yetzer hara manipulates people into feeling deprived, while simultaneously depriving them of the 'antidote'—the joy of contentment and the ability to value their own blessings. To illustrate, consider the moral principle of theft: If you see a poor man with very little, would you steal from him? No, because it's wrong to steal, regardless of how little or much someone has. Similarly, if you see a rich man with abundant wealth, would you steal from him? Again, no—because theft is wrong, irrespective of the circumstances. The same principle applies to envy. If you see someone wealthy or successful, are you justified in envying them? No, because envy, like theft, is inherently wrong. It does not matter how much someone else has; the moral obligation to refrain from envy stands independent of their circumstances. Many people justify contentment by pointing to the misfortunes of others—for instance, telling someone, 'Be happy with what you have because others have greater hardships.' But this justification is flawed and even destructive. It ties one's happiness to the suffering of others, perpetuating envy and bitterness rather than resolving it. Worse, it can lead individuals to cause harm to others as a way to feel better about themselves, further feeding the destructive cycle of envy. True contentment and joy do not arise from what one possesses but from the ability to be satisfied with what one has. This is a universal principle that applies to all: not everyone has the same material blessings, but everyone is entitled to the joy that comes from cultivating contentment. The yetzer hara seeks to obscure this truth, encouraging jealousy and dissat-

isfaction. Overcoming this influence requires recognizing that contentment is not about the quantity of what we have, but about the perspective we choose to adopt toward it. In this context, humanity's extreme reactions to geniuses—whether mocking, vilifying, or revering them—stem from the scarcity of true wisdom since that pivotal event. Geniuses often embody a rare connection to deeper layers of understanding, which can inspire awe but also provoke discomfort or fear in others. Their insights challenge the conventional knowledge that humanity clings to, exposing the limitations and ignorance that were inherited after the sin. This tension between admiration and fear explains why society's responses to geniuses are so polarized: they are either revered as gateways to lost wisdom or rejected as threats to the fragile equilibrium of human understanding. Moreover, the yetzer hara fuels this polarization by amplifying feelings of envy and inadequacy in the presence of genius. Instead of viewing extraordinary wisdom as an opportunity for growth and inspiration, the yetzer hara leads people to see it as a threat, encouraging them to either idolize it to the point of dependency or

attack it out of resentment. The key to resolving this tension lies in rejecting jealousy and embracing contentment, understanding that the value of wisdom—like the value of wealth—does not diminish because someone else possesses more of it. Only then can humanity truly celebrate and learn from those who embody the rare connection to deeper truths. I also believe that in the era of redemption and the end of days, wisdom will once again become freely accessible. However, the capacity of individuals to grasp this wisdom will not be equal, as each person's capacity will reflect the peak of their own potential. Unlike before the sin, when humanity's capacity for understanding was equal but at its lowest point—absolute zero—post-redemption, each individual will reach the fullest potential of their capacity. Paradoxically, had Adam and Eve not sinned, humanity would never have been able to achieve its ultimate potential. Although wisdom would have remained universally available, no one would have had the capacity to truly comprehend or internalize it. The sin, while forbidden, was an integral part of humanity's development, enabling us to grow, struggle, and ultimately achieve greater levels of understanding and fulfillment.”

Jacobsen: Who seem like the greatest geniuses in history to you?

Hozez: King Solomon stands out to me as the greatest genius in history, renowned for his unparalleled wisdom and ability to navigate complex human and divine matters. His contributions to ethical and philosophical thought remain timeless. I also admire Benjamin Netanyahu for his exceptional leadership acumen, strategic thinking, and ability to handle complex geopolitical challenges with remarkable insight and resilience. Both exemplify different facets of genius—one rooted in timeless wisdom, the other in pragmatic leadership.

Jacobsen: What differentiates a genius from a profoundly intelligent person?

Hozez: Nothing at all.

Jacobsen: Is profound intelligence necessary for genius?

Hozez: Yes.

Jacobsen: What have been some work experiences and jobs held by you?

Hozez: During my military service, I served as an Artificial Intelligence Researcher at the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Following that, I held the same role at a capital market startup in Israel. Currently, I am working as a Data Science Intern at Check Point Software Technologies.

Jacobsen: Why pursue this particular job path?

Hozez: I chose this job path because it represents the best implementation of pure logic in practical applications. The fields of artificial intelligence and data science allow me to apply pure-logical frameworks and principles to solve complex problems and deliver impactful solutions. This alignment between abstract reasoning and real-world utility is both intellectually fulfilling and deeply meaningful to me.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important aspects of the idea of the gifted and geniuses? Those myths that pervade the cultures of the world. What are those myths? What truths dispel them?

Hozez: One of the more significant truths about gifted individuals and geniuses is that their intelligence is primarily innate. Contrary to the widespread myth that anyone can achieve genius through effort and discipline alone, true genius is a rare, intrinsic quality. This does not diminish the importance of hard work, but effort alone cannot create the profound intellectual abilities, unique insights, or exceptional talents that characterize geniuses. Their abilities are a natural gift, and while they may refine and develop them over time, the foundation is something they are born with. A pervasive myth is that gifted individuals are no different from anyone else and that their success is simply the result of better opportunities or more favorable circumstances. This myth is rooted in a misunderstanding of the nature of intelligence and talent. Geniuses often display extraordinary abilities at a young age, before external factors like education or training could play a significant role. Dispelling this myth requires acknowledging that intelligence is not equally distributed and that certain individuals are born with capacities that far exceed the norm. Another myth is that geniuses are universally recognized and celebrated. In reality, society often struggles with how to react to those who deviate far from the average. As I mentioned earlier, the scarcity of true wisdom and the tension it creates leads to polarized reactions—some are revered as exceptional, while others are ridiculed or rejected. This is because their innate gifts can challenge conventional understanding, making people uncomfortable with their own limitations. The truth that dispels these myths is that genius is a natural phenomenon, rooted in biology and genetics. It is not something that can be taught, replicated, or achieved by everyone. However, recognizing this does not mean dismissing the contributions of those who work hard to develop their potential—it simply places genius in its proper context. By understanding that intelligence and talent are innate gifts, we can better appreciate and support those who possess them, while also recognizing the unique role they play in advancing humanity.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on the God concept or gods idea and philosophy, theology, and religion?

Hozez: ה' מִלֵּךְ ה' מִלֵּךְ ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Jacobsen: How much does science play into the worldview for you?

Hozez: Science plays an important role in understanding the world, but for me, the foundation of my worldview is pure logic. However, my reliance on logic is not confined to classical logical principles. I critically evaluate even foundational rules of logic, and where they fall short or conflict with deeper truths, I am open to alternative frameworks. My approach emphasizes consistent reasoning and rationality, but it also allows for flexibility when classical logic fails to align with the complexities of reality.

Jacobsen: What ethical, social, economic, and political philosophies make some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Hozez: A social philosophy that resonates with me is one that balances individual freedom, collective responsibility, and a strong belief in meritocracy within a conservative and capitalistic framework. I support the idea that personal autonomy and free markets are fundamental drivers of progress and

innovation. In a meritocratic, capitalistic society, opportunities and rewards should be based on individual talent, effort, and achievement, fostering an environment where hard work and ingenuity are incentivized. From a conservative perspective, I value traditions and systems that provide stability and encourage personal responsibility. While collective responsibility is important, I believe it is best realized through voluntary community efforts and private initiatives, rather than excessive government intervention. A society thrives when individuals are empowered to pursue their potential, with minimal barriers to success, while respecting the values that sustain social cohesion. In this framework, justice is about ensuring fairness of opportunity rather than equality of outcome. By focusing on individual merit and fostering a culture of self-reliance, a conservative and capitalistic philosophy allows individuals to reach their fullest potential, benefiting both themselves and the broader society. At the same time, it promotes accountability and ensures that rewards are aligned with contributions, sustaining long-term growth and prosperity.

Jacobsen: What metaphysics makes some sense to you, even the most workable sense to you?

Hozez: The metaphysics that resonates with me most is one that integrates both rationalism and a sense of the transcendent. I find the idea of a structured, ordered reality governed by logical principles and universal laws to be compelling. At the same time, I believe there are aspects of existence that transcend human comprehension, pointing to deeper layers of meaning and purpose beyond what empirical science can explain. These layers become especially clear when we examine the duality of the human and divine realms, particularly through the framework of time and process. In the human experience, time operates in what I would describe as a two-dimensional framework. Events unfold linearly, with each one dependent on the one that came before it. This sequence creates a process-driven reality, where outcomes are not immediate but require effort, causality, and progression. This need for processes is a direct consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve, which fragmented an otherwise unified and immediate reality. In this framework, we experience time as a single “slot” in which events build upon one another, each step necessary to reach the next. The constraints of this reality mean that even when one knows what ought to be done, implementing it requires navigating a process fraught with obstacles and delays. By contrast, the divine realm operates in three-dimensional time. Here, each event exists independently, unbound by sequential causality. Each event has its own “slot” of time, enabling it to exist fully and immediately, without dependency on prior events or processes. In this framework, there is no separation between intention and actualization; what is meant to exist does so completely, in a state of harmonious unity. This timeless, process-free state reflects the divine order that existed before the sin of Adam and Eve—a reality where ideals and their realization were one and the same. This distinction between two-dimensional and three-dimensional time illustrates the metaphysical duality between the human and divine realms. In the human world, we are bound by causality and fragmentation, struggling to bridge the gap between ideals and their fulfillment through sequential processes. The divine realm, on the other hand, manifests completeness and immediacy, embodying a harmonious state where intentions are realized without delay. The sin of Adam and Eve introduced the necessity of process into human existence. Before the sin, the divine order allowed for the immediate actualization of principles—what needed

to exist simply existed. After the sin, humanity was relegated to a fragmented reality, where processes became an unavoidable intermediary between knowing what should be done and achieving it. This fragmentation is not merely a hindrance but also a mechanism for growth, forcing humanity to grapple with challenges, learn from them, and ultimately develop the capacity to engage with deeper truths. I believe that redemption will reconcile these two metaphysical frameworks. The fragmented, process-driven reality of two-dimensional time will give way to the harmony of three-dimensional time, where the fulfillment of ideals occurs directly, without the need for sequential causality. This metaphysical perspective provides a framework for understanding the interplay between the material and immaterial, the temporal and the transcendent. The physical universe operates according to consistent and observable laws, but it is incomplete without the immaterial dimensions of consciousness, morality, and free will. These immaterial dimensions are not just complementary but essential to fully understanding the nature of reality. The human condition, situated in two-dimensional time, reflects the tension between fragmentation and unity. While it presents challenges, it also allows for growth, self-discovery, and the development of wisdom. The divine realm, operating in three-dimensional time, offers a vision of completeness that transcends the limitations of the human experience. Redemption, in this framework, represents the resolution of this tension, where the barriers imposed by fragmentation are removed, and humanity can experience a more immediate and harmonious reality. Through this metaphysical lens, I see the pursuit of knowledge and the acceptance of mystery as complementary endeavors. Rational inquiry allows us to engage with the material world, uncovering its structures and principles, while humility and introspection open us to the transcendent dimensions that lie beyond empirical understanding. This integration of the rational and the transcendent, the material and the immaterial, offers a meaningful and workable framework for interpreting the complexity of reality and striving for greater understanding.

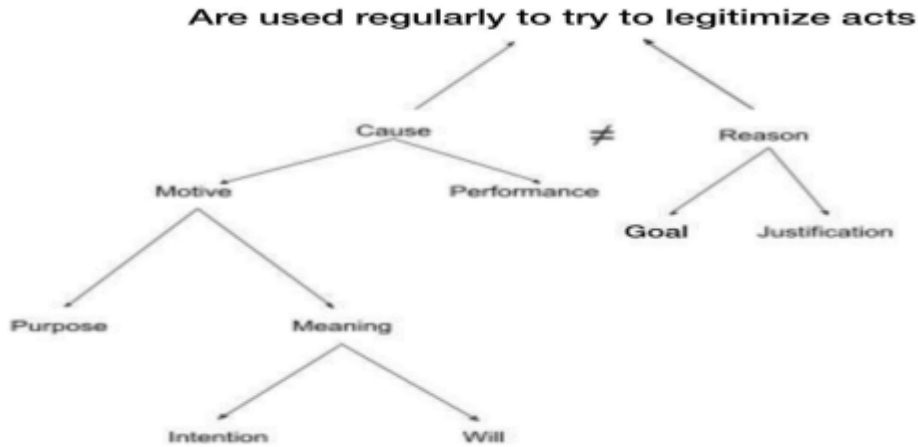
Jacobsen: What worldview-encompassing philosophical system makes some sense, even the most workable sense to you?

Hozez: Neither would I have been able to find a greater understanding of the world than its mathematical, pure logical-oriented concept, nor will I ever have been taking into consideration the possibility of my enormous passion for research obstructed not only by the cease of my existence but also by any kind of obstacle whatsoever for more than 20 years of life.

Jacobsen: What provides meaning in life for you?

Hozez: Gratitude for the life I have been given.

Jacobsen: Is meaning externally derived, internally generated, both, or something else?



Hozez:

Jacobsen: Do you believe in an afterlife? If so, why, and what form? If not, why not?

Hozez: I believe the afterlife serves as a midpoint between our current realm and the post-redemption realm. It is a transitional state where the soul has fully shed the limitations of the physical world and is entirely prepared for the ultimate realization of existence. However, it is not yet “ready” in the sense that the post-redemption reality has not yet arrived. This perspective aligns with my view that life is part of a larger continuum, where each phase—physical life, the after-life, and the post-redemption reality—serves a distinct purpose in the journey toward ultimate unity and fulfillment.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?

Hozez: Felicity, for me, originates from pure logic. The mystery and transience of life can be understood as integral aspects of existence that align with logical principles. While life’s fleeting nature may seem unsettling, it underscores the importance of living meaningfully within the constraints of time. The logic of impermanence teaches us to value each moment, and the mystery invites us to seek understanding, purpose, and connection. Together, they create a harmonious balance, where felicity arises from embracing both the clarity of reason and the depth of what remains beyond comprehension.

Jacobsen: What is love to you?

Hozez: ה' מֵלֶכֶּה ה' מֵלֶכֶּה ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Conversation with ‘Fatty White’ on Selling I.Q. Test Answers

2024-11-22

‘**Fatty White**’ joined high IQ communities in 2017, excelling in logic puzzles and IQ tests, achieving record-breaking scores. Disillusioned with the vanity and elitism of these communities, he began selling IQ test answers in 2018, earning \$1,500–\$3,000 monthly and expanding his business. His expertise in solving complex problems made him a prominent figure, despite criticisms. After ceasing answer sales in 2021, he proved his intelligence through independent achievements, including publishing scientific papers and excelling in challenging IQ tests. Now, he focuses on research, reflecting on his journey as a critique of aspects of high IQ societies.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Thank you for agreeing to openly and frankly talk about this issue from a firsthand experience. This is a problematic area in high-I.Q. Communities with algorithms like large language models, for instance. Who is ‘Fatty White’? When did you enter the I.Q. communities and begin and end the selling of I.Q. test answers? What were the lessons and outcomes?

‘**Fatty White**’: I’m glad you asked me about this question, and I’m happy to share this story about what happened to “Fatty White”—which is actually my story.

First, I want to specify that I joined the High IQ Society in late 2017, started selling IQ test answers in 2018, and ended this practice in late 2021. Here’s my story – I won’t exaggerate anything, and I won’t withhold any details. I welcome anyone to cross-examine me on the specifics.

Around 2017, I was interested in logic puzzles and participated in many Chinese reasoning competitions, winning multiple first-place awards. At that time, due to the popularity of the TV show “The Super Brain,” Chinese high IQ societies were very active, and I received invitations from several high IQ association members. Initially, I didn’t use my real name, but I joined GFIS (China’s largest high IQ organization) under a pseudonym. The admission rate for the audition of “The Super Brain” is 100 out of 100000, and I have been selected twice under the name of “Fatty White.” The reason why I was only selected twice is because I helped others get on the list.

At first, I didn’t know much about IQ tests; I joined GFIS through their timed test. GFIS’s timed tests were far superior to the Shenghan Association’s, with many different questions – something I only learned later. In my first timed test, I surprisingly scored 170+, breaking GFIS’s timed test record. While I always knew I was smart, I hadn’t expected to be that smart. My first high-range IQ test was probably Junlong Li’s Silent Number (though I’m a bit fuzzy on the details), but my first HRT score was also around 170. Later, I attempted Ivan Ivec’s Numerus Classic and achieved a perfect score (185, SD15).

I initially joined the High IQ Society because I found the organization interesting, but as I learned more about this community, I began to despise it – not just specific individuals but the vast majority of its members. It was full of people with limited education and, in my opinion, actual IQs not exceeding 130, who used their seniority to constantly boast and profit from membership fees and test fees (primarily the Shenghan High IQ Association). Most members were not doing well in real life and sought validation through IQ scores. This phenomenon wasn’t limited to Chinese associations but was common in international ones, too. I often openly expressed my contempt for some international members on Facebook.

Subsequently, I decided to profit from most people's vanity by selling IQ test answers. My business was extensive – beyond HRT answers, I could take intelligence-related tests for others, including timed tests or qualifying rounds for shows like “The Super Brain.” This brought me monthly earnings of \$1,500-3,000. I used this money to take my parents on trips to Japan and other countries myself and become a regular at Michelin-starred restaurants. As my business grew, I recruited several people with genuine IQs around 150 to help me with HRTs – not because I lacked ability, but because I lacked time. I needed more people to solve simpler problems, especially since most clients only requested scores in the 130-160 range.

This process wasn't as simple as I've described. I wasn't just selling IQ test answers but also a force opposing Chinese high IQ associations. Why oppose them? Simply because I disliked them. To fight them, I had to consistently and efficiently crack their problems to prove my capabilities. For instance, with Junlong Li's high IQ association “Silent House,” which required solving a weekly thinking problem before joining, I would often be the first to solve these weekly problems and then sell the answers. I even solved some problems that had never been correctly answered before. Emotionally, I liked Silent House but disliked Junlong Li personally, so I opposed him at every turn. However, I must admit that his Silent Numbers and SS40 HRTs were very high quality. I later learned these tests were collaboratively developed, but I still appreciate them greatly.

The story became more routine after that. After establishing my foundation, my business grew and monopolized China's answer-selling market. I became very well-known (always using Fatty White as my codename) because my answers were extremely accurate, and I was one of the few people scoring above 190. I've always believed Chinese HRTs are superior to international ones. Even today, only two people in China have IQ scores above 190: Mahir Wu and I. We are generally recognized as China's two highest IQ individuals. Later, I settled with the Chinese High IQ Association committee – after 2021, I would stop selling any IQ test answers, and I could use my real name, Tianxi Yu, in High IQ Association activities.

Some might question: How can you prove your IQ is genuine when you've admitted to organizing answer sales? Honestly, I don't care anymore what others think my IQ is. Even in real life, I don't mention my IQ because I find it meaningless. However, I can explain: First, the Chinese High IQ Association committee investigated me afterward and found that I achieved my extremely high scores independently, so I can now use my real name on rankings and submit tests. Second, on Mahir Wu's Death Numbers – possibly the world's most difficult numerical HRT today – I scored 28/30, ranking first, with Zoran Bijac second at 16.5/30. Such results couldn't be achieved through group effort, and I had already disbanded my team when I submitted this.

Afterward, I invested my earnings in cryptocurrency, which greatly increased my wealth. This March, my daily income reached \$160,000. However, this wasn't sustainable, and I lost several hundred thousand dollars in subsequent market fluctuations. I've now completely exited the cryptocurrency market, disgusted by monetary manipulation – money makes me sick. Today, I've graduated from university and formally entered society, working in research-related fields and living a fulfilling and satisfying life. By the way, I published SCI and EI core papers during my undergraduate years, quickly figuring out the publication process even for high-level papers. I've always believed that a truly intelligent person can achieve success in any field rather than constantly bragging about their IQ test scores.

This is my story's general outline- Fatty White's story.

Conversation with ‘Fatty White’ on I.Q. Test Leaks and Sales Gone Global, Trust Restoration, Reform, and Vanity (2)

2024-12-08

Tianxi Yu, once intrigued by logic puzzles, entered the high-IQ community through chance, adopting it as a hobby. Over time, Yu’s disillusionment with superficial validation in high-IQ societies led to selling test answers, exposing systemic flaws. Yu criticized the lack of integrity in high-IQ leaders, highlighting vanity and false pretenses. Advocating for tests as intellectual hobbies, Yu proposed transparency, dynamic testing, and diminished focus on scores. While acknowledging ethical tensions, Yu emphasized the need for reform over trust restoration, urging communities to prioritize intellectual challenges and real achievements. Ultimately, Yu seeks systemic change and challenges the culture of validation-driven intelligence.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did participation in logic puzzles and reasoning competitions influence the development of the eventual conclusion of high-range tests best as a hobby?

Tianxi Yu: From a young age, I was interested in solving puzzles. My encounter with HRTs was purely accidental. However, as I learned more about HRTs, I discovered they represented a purer form of logic, which led me to adopt them as a hobby.

Jacobsen: What motivated the extension into participation into high-IQ societies? What are some of the other reasons or decisions to sell IQ test answers?

Yu: Initially, I was motivated by my interest in HRTs and the belief that members of high-IQ societies would be intelligent and interesting people. After all, members of high-IQ societies frequently appeared on intellectual competition TV shows. My decision to sell answers ultimately stemmed from my growing dislike of this community.

Jacobsen: I have been told before that the selling of high-range test answers in Asian circles spans back as far as 2012. Therefore, at a minimum, this is potentially a significant issue and a long-term one. What would you estimate the scale selling and leaking of high-range test question answers in Asia and beyond? With the internet, it seems natural: This is global, not simply Chinese circles or even Asian circles. What does this mean for the Latin, European, and North American high-I.Q. circles, as this has been happening for so many years and so pervasively?

Yu: I find it difficult to estimate the scale, as I was just an elementary school student in 2012. However, given how much time has passed, I believe most regions have likely received test answers. I myself have received such answers, including SLSE I II 48 and LS24 36. These leaked answers were of high quality, capable of achieving scores around 170.

As a side note, when I was verifying these answers, for example with SLSE II, I found that the leaked answer ‘a’ differed from answer ‘b’ that I derived through my own logical reasoning. When I applied answer ‘a’ to the question, I discovered logic chain A, but found that both logic chains A and B were similarly rigorous, making it difficult to determine which answer was superior. This wasn’t an isolated case – there were multiple such questions, suggesting that SLSE I II tests weren’t particularly rigorous. From my perspective, the leaking of HRT answers was an inevitable outcome of systematic flaws in the testing mechanism.

Jacobsen: What were the primary factors that led you to oppose certain high-IQ associations outside of the stipulated emotions felt, i.e. “dislike”?

Yu: Yes, it was because of “dislike.” I tend to be conservative in my approach – if I’m 80% certain of something, I’ll only claim 30% certainty, which is why people around me consider me reliable. As I learned more about the high-IQ community, I discovered they were like buckets filled only to 10% but presenting themselves as 100% full, while hinting at their modesty when in reality they claimed to be pure gold.

Take China’s largest high-IQ society – the Shenghan Club – for example. Its three leaders attended the worst universities, with some not even making it to university. I’ve spoken with them all; they try to sound profound but lack substance, only interested in collecting membership fees.

Then there’s the case of Liu Dan, a high-IQ society member who started with a score of 120 and later applied to the Olympic Association. She gained higher IQ scores through making love with high-scoring members of the high-IQ community (<https://www.zhihu.com/question/396415262/answer/1241102475>). For clarity, the key names in the article are: CWJ – Wenjin Chen (Shenghan Association founder), SWJ – Wenchin Sui (former highest IQ in China), LJJ – Junlong Li (Silent House Association founder).

Now you can understand how ridiculous the Chinese high-IQ community is. They’re ignorant without realizing it, yet act superior and treat others as fools. This phenomenon isn’t limited to Chinese communities – people like Younghoon Kim appear equally absurd to me. I’m not completely dismissing high-IQ societies; there are some good people like Mahir Wu. However, when the highest leaders of this community don’t live up to their positions, there’s a need for change.

Jacobsen: How did you balance profiting from their frameworks while actively challenging their practices? The ethics seems more clear, as bad in exploitation of a weak spot in the high-range testing environment, while redeeming to some degree to beginning, potentially, a serious conversation about developing more cheat-resistant tests and about the culture desired to be developed amongst the smart; when compared to the effects long-term and short-term on the high-range testing environment, that is, the given uncertainty of the extent of the challenge to the entire environment—so, a distinction and line drawn between ethical and technical-cultural issues.

Yu: There was no need for balance, as my goal was to completely overturn the high-IQ community with overwhelming force. This business couldn’t last forever – the high-IQ community only entered public consciousness due to the explosive popularity of shows like “The Super Brain” and similar intellectual competition programs.

But such popularity is inherently unsustainable. When the hype dies down, everything returns to obscurity. What I was doing wasn’t just about profit – it was about exposing the fundamental flaws in the system. By selling answers and demonstrating how easily the system could be manipulated, I was forcing a confrontation with its inherent problems.

The community’s focus on scores and certifications rather than genuine intellectual achievement created its own vulnerability. I saw my actions as a form of creative destruction – by exploiting and exposing these weaknesses, I was demonstrating why the entire system needed to be reformed.

In a way, the ethical implications were secondary to the larger goal of systemic change. When a system is fundamentally flawed, sometimes it needs to be broken down before it can be rebuilt properly. While selling answers was technically unethical, the existing system was already ethically compromised by its emphasis on superficial measures of intelligence rather than genuine intellectual development.

Jacobsen: I am aware others did the same for free. So, finances aren't the main motivation necessarily. These can be swept under the rug without being dealt with at times. Maybe, your expressions were a long-time coming while you become the lightning rod for a wider phenomenon. Why was finance part of the equation for you? What do you think the motivation might be for others who take no charges for any of the leaks of high-range test answers?

Yu: Money was a factor for me because I lacked it at the time. Now that I'm financially comfortable, I wouldn't consider doing this kind of business anymore. However, I'm still reluctant to release my answers for free, since many of my solutions achieved perfect scores, while other leaked answers typically only reached around 170 points.

As for others who leak answers for free, their motivations could be varied – some might want to show off their abilities, others might want to attack specific test authors, and some might simply want to disrupt the system. Since I was just an elementary school student when much of this started, I don't know the specific details, but from what I understand, these high-scoring answers initially began circulating in Europe and America.

Jacobsen: How do you perceive the role of vanity and validation-seeking within high-IQ communities? What if others direct accusations against your behaviour and attitudes, i.e., claiming arrogance and lack of remorse & accountability?

Yu: The role of vanity and validation-seeking in high-IQ communities is precisely what I despised most. Most members are people with average intelligence who seek validation through test scores rather than real achievements. They often have limited education and actual IQs not exceeding 130, yet they constantly boast and profit from membership fees. They seek validation through numbers because they're not doing well in real life.

As for accusations of arrogance and lack of remorse – honestly, I don't care what others think anymore. I've moved beyond caring about IQ scores or others' opinions of me. A truly intelligent person proves themselves through actual achievements, not by defending their reputation in high-IQ societies.

I understand people might call my behavior arrogant, but I've always been direct about what I observe. When I see people with mediocre abilities presenting themselves as intellectual giants, I call it out. When I see systemic problems, I expose them. If being honest about these issues makes me appear arrogant, so be it. I'd rather be considered arrogant while speaking the truth than be praised for maintaining comfortable lies.

Regarding accountability – I've been completely transparent about my actions. I've used my real name, Tianxi Yu, since 2020, and I've openly discussed everything I did. Unlike many in these communities who hide behind false credentials, I've taken responsibility for my actions and their consequences

Jacobsen: What lessons did you learn from managing a business that profited from selling test answers?

Yu: From this business experience, I learned that truly intelligent people exist, but most of them maintain a low profile and don't seek attention. For example, there's someone in the high-IQ community with an IQ over 180 who, despite limited formal education, earned over 10 million in 2023. The genuinely smart people I regularly interacted with in this community weren't the ones

with prominent reputations – they were mostly unknown figures working quietly in the back-ground. Most importantly, I learned that those who can accept themselves and acknowledge their imperfections are the ones who can go further and achieve more.

Jacobsen: How did these experiences influence your current values?

Yu: These experiences didn't have much influence on my values, as my core principles haven't changed. If anything, my experience investing in cryptocurrency had a greater impact on my value system.

Jacobsen: How did these experiences make you want to move to a more standard path in life?

Yu: My move to a more standard path wasn't really about these experiences with the high-IQ communities – it was more about recognizing what truly matters in life. After seeing both the superficiality of the high-IQ world, I realized that real fulfillment comes from meaningful work and genuine achievements.

Jacobsen: Given your background and, essentially, expertise in a weird enterprise grounded in the vanity of others, what are your thoughts on the effectiveness and security of high-range tests, particularly in the context of widespread answer leakage? Are proctored standardized tests like the WAIS subject to similar or different weaknesses to test answer leaks?

Yu: HRTs have no real security. I remember Mahir Wu once publicly stated that by combining two test papers that scored 160 on N-World, one could create an answer set scoring over 180. For tests of lower difficulty, high scores can be achieved through collaboration.

WAIS test questions have also been leaked, and their difficulty level is quite low – they can only measure lower IQ ranges. Moreover, WAIS was originally invented to detect intellectual disability, not genius.

Jacobsen: How do you respond to concerns raised about undermining trust in high-IQ societies, high-range tests, and high-range test scores?

Yu: Don't trust anyone.

Jacobsen: What steps do you believe high-IQ societies should take to make tests more cheat-resistant, especially for extreme high-range IQ tests?

Yu: Instead of being conservative with test security, I think we should open up the system. Let people freely discuss test answers, but invalidate all previous test questions. If someone wants to join a high-IQ club, they should take a new, timed test specifically created for them, with scoring scales estimated by experienced professionals.

Jacobsen: How do you reflect on your actions reshaping the landscape of high-IQ societies in China?

Yu: The obnoxious fellows disappeared, and Shenghan's ability to amass wealth plummeted. But these are not enough; the ways of the high IQ community are backward and need to be revolutionized from the ground up.

Jacobsen: Do you believe these changes have broader implications for global high-IQ communities, even the potential to be adapted to other national and regional contexts—as your proposed solution is simply to make them hobbies more than anything?

Yu: My influence on global high-IQ communities has been limited because I haven't spent energy boasting about myself globally. However, demystifying something that appears impressive is often a way to reduce fanaticism. This applies not just to high IQ scores, but also to academic credentials, money, power, and similar status symbols.

Jacobsen: What insights do you have into the ethical tensions between acknowledging flaws in high-IQ societies and the potential erosion of trust that comes with such transparency?

Yu: The trust issues in high-IQ societies have long existed. My choice to expose these problems isn't creating a new crisis of trust, but rather revealing an already corrupted system. While this transparency might cause short-term disruption, it's necessary in the long run.

Let me use a specific example: as I mentioned before, some so-called high-IQ society leaders have limited education yet act as if they possess supreme wisdom when collecting membership fees. This false authority has already eroded the foundation of trust within these societies.

I believe the real ethical tension isn't about whether to reveal the truth, but about how to rebuild a healthier system. When I publicly sold answers, I was, in a way, demonstrating the system's flaws through extreme means. This may damage some people's trust in high-IQ tests, but that trust was built on a false foundation to begin with.

That's why I suggest treating high-IQ testing as merely a hobby. When we stop placing excessive importance on these tests, we can more clearly see true wisdom and ability.

Jacobsen: How do you reconcile your past actions with your current stance on the value of IQ scores?

Yu: There's no need to reconcile, because it's not my business.

Jacobsen: Given the long history of leaked answers dating back to 2012 or earlier, what systemic changes do you think are necessary to address this issue on an international scale?

Yu: We can refer to the puzzle solving community.

Jacobsen: How might dynamic question pools and randomized testing reduce answer leakage, as in things like the DynamIQ Test of Marco and Roberto or the Adaptive IQ Test of some members of the Mega Society?

Yu: This is difficult to effectively prevent. After GFIS realized the problems I was causing, they switched to in-person testing with randomized questions and trusted proctors. Subsequently, I trained some people to achieve high scores, infiltrate GFIS internally, and gain the power to create test questions. Without government regulation, there's no perfect solution.

From my perspective, we could use market economy methods – letting people openly discuss and freely explore these tests. The positive impacts of such openness would outweigh the negative ones.

This highlights the fundamental challenges in securing any testing system, even with dynamic approaches. When there's sufficient motivation and capability, people can find ways to manipulate even well-designed systems. Sometimes, embracing transparency might be more effective than attempting to maintain strict security measures.

Jacobsen: What advice would you offer to high-IQ societies, test developers, and participants, to restore credibility and ensure the integrity of their communities and assessments?

Yu: The key issue isn't really about restoring credibility or ensuring integrity – it's about fundamentally rethinking what these communities and tests are trying to achieve. From my experience, both running an answer-selling operation and achieving legitimate high scores, I see several clear points:

For societies and test developers:

Accept that no test system will be completely secure, especially without government oversight

Instead of trying to create unbreakable tests, focus on making tests that are genuinely interesting intellectual challenges

Move away from treating scores as absolute measures of intelligence

Consider implementing time-limited testing sessions with new questions for each participant

Be transparent about limitations rather than pretending they don't exist

For participants:

Treat these tests as intellectual hobbies rather than validation of worth

Focus on developing real-world capabilities and achievements

Understand that truly intelligent people don't need to prove their intelligence through test scores

The hard truth is that many high-IQ societies are fundamentally flawed because they're built on vanity and validation-seeking. Until this culture changes, no technical solution will fix the credibility problem.

Remember that even the most secure test systems can be compromised if people are determined enough. The solution isn't to build higher walls, but to create a community that values hobby growth over numbers.

Conversation on Finding God with Claus Volko, Donald Wayne Stoner, Rick Rosner, and Tianxi Yu

2024-12-22

The conversation explores definitions and perspectives on God, blending theology, science, and philosophy. Scott Douglas Jacobsen prompts dialogue on God's definition and role. **Rick Rosner** critiques traditional omnipotent concepts, suggesting godlike civilizations within the universe's informational structure. He highlights evolution, rejecting omnipotence while speculating on advanced civilizations' roles and time perception. Rosner argues logical principles govern existence, leaving little room for traditional deities. He finds comfort in cultural symbols like "office Jesus," juxtaposing technology and spirituality as modern sources of solace. **Donald Wayne Stoner** builds a theological framework on primordial logic, equating God to the logical foundation underpinning math, quantum mechanics, and the universe. He blends Christian theology with scientific rationalism, asserting God's omnipresence as "conscious logic." Stoner explores humanity's role as co-creators, emphasizing ethical, logical, and emotional dimensions of divine understanding. He critiques reductionist models, advocating for a nuanced reconciliation of science and faith. **Claus Volko** sees God as an abstract metaphor for the unknown, contrasting with Stoner's detailed theological model. Volko suggests dualistic forces of life and death shape existence. **Tianxi Yu** incorporates Eastern philosophy, linking Taoist concepts of emptiness with the unknowable nature of God. Yu critiques Western rationalism's limitations, advocating for embracing paradoxes and interweaving scientific insights with spiritual wisdom. The dialogue reveals shared themes: the limits of human understanding, evolving definitions of divinity, and reconciling ancient wisdom with contemporary science. Questions persist about consciousness, morality's origins, and reconciling diverse philosophical traditions. Ultimately, participants offer diverse but complementary perspectives, enriching the discourse on humanity's search for meaning and the divine.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What seems like the easiest first definition of God to you? This can include a pivot into an inability to define or an ineffability, too.

Rick Rosner: The first step, therefore, is to posit that God, understood as an omniscient, omnipotent being, might be impossible. I doubt such an entity could exist. The next step is to hypothesize what could exist. We know we exist.

We know the universe exists and is approximately 13.8 billion years old. It is even older in the context of potential multiverses, and there may be no limit to the size or number of possible universes. Within these vast possibilities, beings and civilizations of unimaginable age could arise. They could achieve extraordinary levels of complexity, power, and information processing capacity with enough time.

Thus, one could imagine entities or civilizations that may exist or have existed with a scale and power that would appear god-like to us. Within our universe, human civilization is about 10,000 years old. However, life could have emerged on another planet a billion, two billion, or even five billion years ago. An old civilization would have an immense head start, potentially becoming god-like after everything it has learned over billions of years.

Donald Wayne Stoner: 1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

Therefore, by inclusion (the effective minor premise):

God is also: That which also brought *us* into existence.

Therefore, by causal hierarchy (minor premise again):

2) God is also: That which is *responsible for our personal existence*.

More figuratively, God is our primordial “parent.”

To focus this definition more precisely, *I must admit that all of my beliefs (about anything) are based on at least one thing which I take on “faith” alone.* To explain what I mean by this, there is a question which I have frequently asked my professional associates (usually physicists, engineers, and programmers):

“Do you know how to construct a logical proof for the validity of logic itself?”

Invariably, they have been surprised that they don’t happen to know how to do that. Logic seems to be something which normal people just seem to take for granted; so they never question it.

Is Logic really valid? How might we test it? In very general terms, there are really only two possible ways:

1. A) Logically: This one would be circular, hence invalid.

-or-

1. B) Illogically (or alogically): This simply avoids validity.

So, Logic cannot be proven to be valid.

Therefore, we must assume that Logic is either:

1. C) An Illusion (Any idea is as good as any other idea)

-or-

1. D) Primordial (It’s The self-existent source for all proofs)

I have *chosen to believe* that:

3) logic is primordial

Logic happens to be one of those things which, as I emphasized above, I take on faith alone. Choosing (D) over (C) seems like an obvious choice to me; and having now made that choice, I have committed to the position that Logic must be primordial (3), and that it is, therefore, *self-existent*.

Having thus accepted “primordial logic” (3), I can, next, derive:

4) Mathematics

A quite detailed and formal logical proof for the validity of math, has been provided by Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell. More detail can be found here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principia_Mathematica

An extremely informal “proof” (it’s very brief, illustrative, and also a cheating* short-cut) is presented here:

Nearly all computers could, in theory, be constructed from logic gates alone. (In principle, they could be constructed using nothing but combinations of 2-input NAND gates.) So, anything those computers can do, could, in principle, be done with logic alone. This includes just about anything which is mathematical.

The key takeaway, here, is that “math” is just a derivative of “logic.” Nothing “new” has really been added (other than the additional complexity which is incurred with increasingly complex, but still completely-logical, procedures).

Given “math” (4), we now have all we need to construct:

5) Quantum Mechanics

“Real” particles do some very strange things. In fact, what they do is so weird (e.g. one single particle existing in two different places at the same time) that it is frequently claimed that the actual “physical particles” themselves, don’t really need to exist, nor does the “space,” through which those particles move. The math, alone, is all that is really necessary. *Seriously!*

For example, see this source here:

“The only way we can explain this pattern is that each particle is a sum – a superposition – of two paths, one going through the left slit and one through the right. So why not just say that the particle goes both ways? There are two reasons I don’t like this phrase. One is that a superposition of two paths is not something in space. It belongs in an abstract mathematical structure called a Hilbert space. It just has no analogue in physical space. This is why we can’t find good words to describe it. It doesn’t belong in the world we know; it’s something else entirely.”

Warning: The link below (to the above quotation) may only allow one viewing before it blocks further access.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2328087-can-particles-really-be-in-two-places-at-the-same-time/>

Back when I was an undergrad physics student, one of my professors “joked” that the “particles, themselves” probably didn’t really need to exist, that the strange *math alone* would be enough to construct our world, exactly like we see it; but that “pretending” there were actual particles, just made things impossible to imagine.

I didn’t believe him at the time, but, like my professor, I eventually chose to “believe” that *the “irrational appearing theoretical particles” were less “real” than the math, which correctly predicted the behavior, which I could actually observe in my experiments.*

The key takeaway here, is that “this world” is made of nothing more than “quantum mechanical” rules, which, in turn, are constructed from math, alone; which, in turn, is nothing more than “logic.” Nothing “new” has really been added (other than the additional complexity which is incurred with increased stacking of operations, all of which are still completely-logical, procedures).

And given that both “logic” and “math” have always been operational, everywhere in the universe, ever since the “Big Bang” we have a solid foundation for Quantum Mechanics. So, given “Q.M.” (5), we should now have everything we need to “construct” (bring into existence):

6) The Physical Universe

Here is where it starts to get fun: Starting with the Universe, and working backwards, down the causality stack, we have:

The physical universe (6) ...

Comprising Q,M, (5) ...

Comprising Math (4) ...

Comprising Primordial Logic (3) ...

... taking us all the way back to our starting definition:

1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

From this, it appears that:

7) God (1) assumes *the same identity as* Primordial Logic (3).

Here, both God (1), and Primordial Logic (3), are defined as *the single primordial source* which produces the universe.

We could try to avoid this conclusion by asserting that “*God produced Logic,*” but then we would have to ask whether this was done: A) Logically -or- B) Illogically. So, we still seem to be at the *primordial* bottom here.

Alternately, we could argue that both God and Logic exist side by side, on the same, primordial, bottom level. This brings up the need for a “context” in which the two could interact, which, in turn, brings up the need for an additional “logical creator” to create that extra context, ad infinitum.

Evidently, we are stuck with God (1) sharing the exact same identity with Primordial Logic (3). This causes a problem: Since our normal understanding of the term “God” is *so very different from* our normal understanding what of “logic” is, this may require a bit of explaining:

In the argument above, we presumed that “logic” had existed, and operated, everywhere in the universe, during the billions of years preceding the very first sentient creatures. Although we normally presume this to be the case, have we tested it?

Can “logic,” itself, operate in a complete vacuum? ... or in the absence of a physical mind (maybe either organic or electronic)? What kind of working mind could possibly have been present to have performed the necessary “math” to cause the Q.M. event responsible for the “Big Bang?”

Although there are several theoretical models for what might cause consciousness to happen, e.g. here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Models_of_consciousness, the traditional, most common models, claim it is *emergent from matter (when sufficient complexity is present)*. There is a large amount of weird speculation involved in how or why this is supposed to happen; but, so far, no experiment has shown this to be workable.

However, there is a new, cutting-edge, scientific field of study, involving theoretical Q.M. models, which challenges this old, and, so far, non-productive, “consciousness” model: it’s called “Orchestrated objective reduction (Orch-OR)” in the above link.

Over the last few decades, I have been following the work of Sir Roger Penrose and Dr. Stuart Hameroff, who, together, have been developing the science behind this model.

Instead of accepting the theory that awareness emerges from complexity in matter, their experiments suggest that, in our real world, *“consciousness is a fundamental property, which is part of the logical and mathematical structure of the entire universe.”* **

Therefore, our logical conclusion (above): (That God (1), and Logic (3), are both valid descriptions of the “creator”) starts to sound *less like an absurdity*, and more like the first connection between otherwise-sterile science, and the “spiritual existence” which we all know we experience (made famous by Descartes’ famous realization: “I think, therefore, I am.”)

I, personally, believe that this new theory of consciousness will, eventually, replace the present standard scientific model. In any case, for the the present discussion, I will be using it as my working theory.

It has not escaped my attention that this theory brings “a universe filled with otherwise-sterile logic,” into close alignment with the more traditional descriptions of God (1 & 2).

Let’s see where this working theory takes us:

Starting with the above “backwards” causality sequence:

The physical universe (6),

Comprising Q,M, (5).

Comprising Math (4),

Comprising Primordial Logic (3)

... but working in the normal, forward direction, we now have:

In the beginning was primordial, self existent, Logic (3).

This Logic (3) caused Math (4), which caused Q.M. (5), which created the physical Universe (6) (caused by 1 & 3, *and actually comprising 1 & 3*), and also “us” ourselves (who seem to share logical reasoning, and likely also self awareness) with **That** which must also potentially assume responsibility for our actions **(2)**.

I find it interesting that: by critically examining the validity of Logic itself; and by translating the original Greek Biblical word “λογος” (logos) as “Logic” (the way Plato and Aristotle probably would have used that word — instead of how most modern theologians usually translate it); and by taking it in combination with the (above) cutting-edge theory, we are now able to verify, logically, some critical parts of the first three verses of St. John’s Gospel.

For comparison, here is how Young’s Literal Translation of those three verses would have read, if he had translated ” λογος” as “Logic” instead of as “Word”:

1. In the beginning was the Logic,
and the Logic was with God,
and the Logic was God;

2. this one was in the beginning with God;
3. all things through him did happen,
and without him happened
not even one thing that hath happened.

So, in conclusion, my working definition for God is:

- (1) That which brought our universe into existence,
and by inclusion, also ourselves into existence;
and therefore also, by causal extension:
- (2) That which is responsible for our personal existence.
(More figuratively, God is our primordial “parent.”)

or:

- (3) Primordial Logic

One last thought:

St. John’s Gospel is likely to be worth some further study.

Claus Volko, M.D.: For me the term God is a metaphor for things we don’t understand, and perhaps can’t understand. Anything that can’t be explored by the scientific method can be attributed to God. What exactly God is, remains unknown. We can only speculate about it.

Tianxi Yu: In Western religious perspectives, God is considered omnipotent, and all things are created by God. However, from the viewpoint of Chinese culture, humans evolved naturally, and the concept of God is a figment of the imagination that arose from people in the old world trying to understand unknown phenomena. Personally, I am inclined to believe in the existence of an omnipotent God, but God is not considered supreme. When you describe an object, it acquires certain attributes. If it has certain attributes, there must be corresponding opposite attributes. For example, if you define Audrey as “beautiful,” it implies that you think other women are less so. But if the median level of female attractiveness is closer to Natasha’s, Audrey would not be defined as “beautiful.” Therefore, when you define God as omnipotent, God essentially becomes a slightly more powerful human, indirectly acknowledging that God evolved from humans. Thus, the supreme existence I believe in is the indescribable “emptiness,” which transcends God. It cannot be defined or described.

Jacobsen: For you, does one seek God, or does God seek them, or both (... or neither)?

Rosner: I see the universe as an information-processing entity. Quantum mechanics suggests that the universe operates on probabilities and incomplete information.

On average, the universe increases in complexity over time, leading to a greater amount of information and order as time progresses. The emergence of beings within the universe might be connected to this increase in order. I am proposing that sufficiently long-lived civilizations may become involved in the universe’s workings.

With that in mind, our civilization may find out if these ideas hold any truth in the future. A future human, transhuman, or posthuman civilization will have to decide whether to attempt to

contact other civilizations which might be found closer to the galaxy's center. At the same time, perhaps contradictorily, I think civilizations generally have more important endeavours than seeking out others. This challenges many alien invasion scenarios that assume aliens would come to Earth because they need something. That is improbable because any civilization powerful enough to reach us would be powerful enough to create whatever they need near their location, even simulating other civilizations if necessary.

Therefore, there is no compelling reason to seek out and conquer other civilizations. The only reason to contact them would be to gain knowledge, assuming they are more advanced than us. More advanced civilizations would tend to be non-malevolent. Admittedly, this is speculative thinking on my part. I am exploring these ideas as they come to mind.

Why would they be interested in us? If they are powerful enough to do whatever they want relative to us, they likely do not care about what we do. That is my guess—that civilizations tend to gravitate towards the galactic center. Or, as we are observing in an early form, much of a civilization's focus is on information processing. I suspect that if a civilization wants to engage in this on a vast scale, it might be more efficient to do so closer to the center of a galaxy.

If I were to construct a scenario, it would involve a civilization facing decisions about whether to seek out other, more advanced civilizations in the hope of gaining knowledge from them. The counterargument is the risk of being wrong and facing potential destruction if they view us as competition. This answers your question.

Stoner: Following from my understanding of God: Probably both.

But speaking as a tiny piece of God's entire universe,
rather than as its omnipresent creator ("conscious logic itself")

I doubt my efforts can hold a candle to God's.

Volko: People seek God. They want to be good people and obey God's laws, and since God has never come down to earth and told people what his laws are, they have to find out for themselves.

I don't think that God seeks people. In my opinion God is so powerful that he can easily observe anybody.

Yu: As I mentioned in response to the first question, the God has evolved from human. From a human perspective, it is humans who seek God. However, as a deity, God would also desire more individuals to evolve into divine beings. Therefore, God communicates the principles of the universe to humanity through natural phenomena. Those who can decipher these divine hints often become godsthemselves in the future. Thus, the relationship between God and humans is one of mutual pursuit.

Jacobsen: What seems like the first reasonable realization in sensibly engaging in this search of God?

Rosner: In my view, the initial realization is that one must consider the fundamental principles of existence, which are sufficiently durable and inviolable to exclude the idea of a transcendental God. By "transcendental," I mean a God that exists beyond the principles and laws of existence itself.

Suppose this were 500 years ago, when we lacked a comprehensive understanding of the universe. In that case, proposing entities made of something greater that transcends earthly limitations might have seemed plausible. However, this is the present day. We now have a deeper understanding of what matter is made of. We have a concept of the universe's shape and the distribution of matter within it. We also have insights into the universe's physics and some metaphysical aspects. This does not leave room for beings that transcend the foundational principles of existence.

I mentioned earlier civilizations that could be hundreds of millions of years old. Based on what they learned over such immense periods, they might have developed entirely different modes of existence. For example, we live in linear time, but they may have discovered ways of existence that defy our current understanding of reality.

It is unlikely that civilization could figure out how to exist in two-dimensional time instead of one-dimensional time or something along those lines. However, it is possible. Regardless, no matter how advanced, any civilization would still be bound by the principles of existence, such as non-contradiction. That is the first realization.

In searching for God, one must set up the limiting case, which, in my view, is that an all-powerful or all-knowing God cannot exist. An omnipotent being did not create us. This is easier to read as an initial premise. To add a supplement, we may have been created by a not-all-powerful being.

Some thinkers, perhaps more than one, argue that this reality could be a simulation. If it is a simulation, an entity must be behind it. You then face two choices: this world is naturally emergent and evolved or a simulated one. Even in the case of a simulation, the being who created it is not omnipotent and is subject to the same fundamental limitations that apply to existence.

Stoner: The first step (above): Realizing that we take logic on faith.

The next step: Deriving a definition for God (3 & 2 & 1).

The next step: Understanding that *God is omnipresent*, sentient logic.

The next step: Presuming that, *very likely, God is also seeking us*.

This present step: Engaging: This shouldn't be overly difficult:

We just ask God for whatever help we might need.

The only catch is that it's unlikely that a seeker would be able to hide any questionable motives they might have.

Volko: (No answer).

Yu: The first reasonable realization in the search for God is that God communicates with humanity through various natural phenomena. For instance, the observation of apples naturally falling led to the discovery of gravity, the shape of mushrooms inspired the invention of umbrellas, and financial market indicators are used to predict economic trends. The advancement of human civilization to its current state is largely due to highly intelligent individuals who have interpreted these divine hints and guided the evolution of our society. Therefore, in our quest to find God, it is crucial to humbly recognize that everything is under divine guidance. We must contemplate these divine signs to draw closer to God.

Jacobsen: Does God, even if distinguishing types or levels of epistemology & ontology, seem knowable in principle or unknowable, as such?

Rosner: Now, for the question of whether God, even when considering different types or levels of epistemology and ontology, seems knowable in principle or unknowable: Science, over the past 500 years, has been remarkably successful at discovering and explaining phenomena in a mathematical and somewhat mechanical way. We understand how things work and can express them mathematically. Still, this understanding often comes at the expense of exploring metaphysics—the “why” behind existence.

We now possess enough information and theoretical knowledge about the universe’s mechanics to address metaphysical questions. The “why” of existence is closely related to the “how,” and I believe the principles of non-contradiction in existence are such that they allow for the possibility of being. Anything not prohibited by the principles of existence can, by definition, potentially exist.

In terms of epistemology—how we acquire knowledge—it is possible to build an understanding based on these foundational ideas. While effectively explaining the “how,” science often stops short of explaining why the universe exists. Concepts such as an unstable null state, potentially loaded with energy that compels it to expand into existence, are considered. However, even in standard Big Bang theory, deeper “whys” remain unanswered. So, yes, we can explore the “whys” behind the “hows.”

Stoner: God can choose to be: knowable, unknowable, *or even both simultaneously*. We can observe how this might happen with a test case: Consider this quotation by Physicist Stephen Hawking:

“Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?”

— Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*

[A Brief History of Time Quotes by Stephen Hawking](#)

Is the source of Hawking’s “fire,” an “unknowable” and *mysterious* enigma? Or is it *blatantly* obvious? This was, obviously, a “choice” which Dr. Hawking had to make while he was studying this evidence.

This same choice is also ours to make whenever we study the same universe Hawking once did. I, personally, take the same position taken by Paul (the Apostle): God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20 NIV)

Volko: I don’t think anybody really knows what exactly God is.

Yu: God is, in principle, knowable because He has evolved from the pinnacle of humankind, representing the culmination of human wisdom. Thus, humanity can understand God through observation and reasoning. The indescribable “emptiness” is an existence that transcends God, one that cannot be described or defined.

Jacobsen: Any overarching questions for the group or hopes for this discussion as we proceed?

Rosner: As for questions for the group or hopes for the discussion, God, as traditionally understood, is under scrutiny due to scientific progress. The more science explains, the less we rely on divine or supernatural explanations. In the U.S., the concept of the traditional Christian God is also challenged by the behaviour of certain groups, such as some Christians aligning with MAGA, who often act in unchristian ways. Younger generations are leaving the church in large numbers.

My question, then, is how does the concept of God survive into the future, and do we even need God for humanity to thrive? The idea of a godless, cold universe without inherent morality—where everything happens by chance—can be a grim prospect. Yet, I believe there is an inherent drive toward order and value within the universe. How can some form of morality persist and be justified in the future without resorting to existential absurdity? The notion that the universe is absurd and that we must impose our values upon it feels bleak to me and not entirely accurate.

Stoner: I’m looking forward to what I expect to be a fascinating discussion!

Notes: * This “cheating” involves a slight-of-hand switch between the classical, time-dependent, clocked sequences, which are used by a computer, and the very different time-independent processes used by a human math student:

The computer, when fed the “command” $N=N+1$, mindlessly fetches “N,” from a memory location, increments it by “1,” and then moves the new value back into the same location from which it was originally fetched. (For simplicity, here I have omitted the middle step, where the computer “compiles” (translates and reorders) “ $N=N+1$ ” to: “N, get, 1, add, N, put”)

The student sees the “equation” $N=N+1$, as a simultaneous, unsolvable, contradiction. (For simplicity, here I did not attempt to track the thoughts which may or may not have happened in the student’s mind.)

In spite of the differences, this computer example illustrates the causal chain, from simple logical components, to complex mathematics.

** Among the participants in this new field, is author, and Nobel Prize winning physicist, Sir Roger Penrose (who together with Dr. Stephen Hawking, predicted of the existence of Black Holes).

Also among these participants, is Penrose’s associate Dr. Stuart Hameroff, (an anesthesiologist, and physicist, who has made some fascinating discoveries regarding apparent “intelligence” in microscopic and molecular biochemistry). I’m anticipating that either these researchers, or possibly those who follow them, will eventually shed more light on this question.

A video of a discussion with Penrose and Hameroff can be found here:

[Stuart Hameroff, MD | Sir Roger Penrose | Qualcomm Institute](#)

Here are a few time markers for some interesting and significant statements:

0:23:55-0:25:07 Penrose says that “non-life can be “conscious.”

0:40:20-41:44 Terms: “Proto consciousness,” objective reduction (OR), and “Orchestrated OR.

1:16:55 Briefly discusses the six major competing theories of consciousness

1:36:00 Hameroff says that, “Consciousness is actually a fundamental property; it goes all the way down to the structure of the universe.”

Yu: God x Science, Emptiness x Buddhism.

Jacobsen: A varied style of talking about God and diverse presentation style. But they are in character! So, patterns are emerging. How has your personal view of God changed over time if at all?

Rosner: When I was a little kid, I assumed I believed in God, but as I grew older, I started reading physics books—at least introductory ones like Time-Life Books, *The Universe*, not advanced physics books but ones aimed at the general public. I was reading these books by around 1968 or so, maybe 1970. That was when the Big Bang theory was becoming widely accepted.

Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered the cosmic microwave background radiation in 1964. By the late 1960s, the Big Bang theory had largely been established as the leading cosmological model. I took that as my framework for understanding the universe.

Of course, I had questions, the kind a child might have—like what created the thing that the Big Bang originated from? But I wasn’t considering those questions in terms of God.

I attended Sunday school, but I don’t remember ever believing in the traditional depiction of God as an old white man with a beard and flowing robes. That concept didn’t resonate with me. I didn’t start seriously contemplating the metaphysics of God until my early 20s, and even then, only sporadically.

When I considered the structure of the universe, I might occasionally entertain ideas that allowed for the existence of God. However, those thoughts never lasted long before I found inconsistencies or logical flaws. I distinctly remember being in my college cafeteria during these moments. I did a lot of thinking over meals because I ate frequently—about seven meals a day—just trying to bulk up. I worked as a bouncer and wanted to build muscle, so the cafeteria became a place for eating and reflecting.

One time, for about 10 minutes, I considered that mystical phenomena might fit within the rules of existence. But I quickly dismissed the idea while eating red Jell-O, fried chicken, or mulligatawny soup. This dish combines leftovers from previous meals with broth.

Aside from those fleeting moments, I’ve consistently believed that the concept of God doesn’t align with the principles of existence as I understand them. The universe doesn’t require an omnipotent creator in the background.

Simply put, my views on God haven’t changed much in decades.

Donald Wayne Stoner: Like everyone else, I started life at a very young age, with virtually no understanding at all about anything (religious or otherwise). It would be fair to say that everything I now believe is a result of change since that time. Also, back then (several years after WWII), topics like religion and politics were considered to be very much more private than they are today. It was also generally believed that it was not expedient to expose young children to

that sort of subject matter. This may have retarded the accumulation of religious opinions in my development.

However, from the beginning, I was a curious child (a real troublemaker, and also an “escape artist” in training). Disassembling the latches on my crib was the first step toward enlarging my world. Protecting me from accidental injury, soon became a full-time job for my mother. Fortunately, she had the required skills: Her previous work experience had been as a cyclotron operator at a military base in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; so keeping me alive until adulthood was within her capabilities.

My father and mother met at a Church in Tennessee, while he was temporarily stationed at that same base. Later, he was transferred to Los Alamos, to help Robert Oppenheimer with his part of the same project. After the transfer, my parents continued their courtship by mail until the end of the war. (They were both the sort of people who might have expected troublemakers for children, and also the sort who might have once caused trouble for their own parents.)

After the war, they married and started a family. Of course we all attended Church. My sisters and I were exposed to what was, at that time, typical for religious instruction: dumbed-down, preschool-level, Sunday school. I learned to sing songs with mysterious phrases like, “Little ‘once’ to him belong,” and “I will make you fishers ‘Amen’,” (while wildly swinging open safety-pins tied to strings taped to dowel sticks, for “fishing poles”).

During this time, I was told that someone called “God” (or maybe “Jesus”) had made me (and everything else). I also remember having the vague impression that “God” was significantly bigger than my parents. None of this bothered me too much. It made sense because, by this time, my mom had showed me how stuff like crayons, scissors, tape, and glue, all worked. I’d also watched my dad make things in the garage. I figured I understood how things were “made” well enough.

When I wasn’t “learning about God” in Church, or disassembling my crib or playpen, I was usually disassembling my toys, my sisters’ toys, or other things around the house, to see how they worked. The gears, levers, shafts, and wheels all made perfect sense. (The occasional negative reaction from my sisters and parents was somewhat harder to understand.)

The very most fascinating thing I ever encountered was well beyond the reach of my exploratory capabilities, and it did not seem to be mechanical at all. I remember, at about the age of two or three, staring out through my own eyes, at nothing in particular, and thinking how very strange it was that I could perceive the world around me, and how strange it was that I was aware of my own existence. In this case, there was something different about the “device” involved; it wasn’t just more complex; it seemed to operate on a completely different principle – one that I still needed to understand.

Of course I didn’t stay three forever. By about the first grade, something had changed: I had tried inviting Jesus into my heart. No one had asked me to do it; in fact, I don’t remember anyone ever suggesting that it was a thing a person could do. In Sunday school we kids were all in the middle of singing a song called, “Come Into My Heart Lord Jesus;” and for some reason, I just decided it would be cool if I tried really meaning the words while I sang them – so I did – and He Did. I won’t try to explain how I knew. Any string of words I could possibly chain together would fail to catch the experience.

Shortly after that, I started having questions: First, I happened to notice that the Church and the school disagreed on how long it took God to create the universe. I asked my dad, and he told me that my grandpa (Peter W. Stoner) had written a book that explained how the Bible had originally been written in an ancient language and that it had not been translated perfectly. I said OK and went on with my life, completely missing out on my first possible crisis. (In hindsight, it appears that my grandpa was also a troublemaker, but one who “rocked a larger boat” than anything I had yet attempted.)

That same book is available here online:

[On-line book: Science Speaks by Peter Stoner \(Peter W. Stoner\)](#)

That single question had been answered, but the mystery of my self-awareness was still a problem. The Church called the missing element “soul” or “spirit,” but merely giving it a name didn’t really explain it; so I kept searching.

One day my Dad brought home a microscope, and we grabbed a cup of water from a stagnant pond (which looked like a good source for microscopic organisms). I spent some time watching those tiny transparent critters wiggling around in that little drop of water, hunting for food, and just exploring their world. I announced to my Dad that those critters appeared to be aware they existed! He smiled, and nodded in agreement, but neither of us understood how that was possible. They each had only one cell; and that cell wasn’t a brain cell, or even a nerve cell! I still didn’t know how a “soul” or a “spirit” worked, but I then had the impression that something very much like it was present, even in microscopic critters.

Years later, I remember viewing a microscopic time-lapse movie of a single cell dividing. The resolution was good enough that I could see the double set of chromosomes being pulled away from each other, by their middles, into the two separate sides of the dividing cell. I wondered how the process worked, and how it was able to make sure that each half of the cell got a complete set of the chromosomes. This was another puzzle for which I had no answer. (More recently, I watched a high resolution computer video of the same process, where the viewer could watch the individual microtubules rapidly groping around, each trying to locate the exact chromosome they were seeking; it still looked completely unbelievable.)

(These microscopic observations were, of course, quite similar to those which also caught the attention of Stuart Hameroff M.D. and started him down the path which eventually brought him into contact with Sir Roger Penrose — as I mentioned in the first round of questions.)

By junior high school my Dad’s engineering company had a small desktop computer which I learned to program. This expanded my world in a completely new direction — opening a door to a new world of invisible and complex electronic processes. In addition, my relatives started getting me books on computers and electronics for Christmas and birthday presents. My hobbies all began focusing on computer electronics.

Also about this same time, I complained to God that His Bible was not really the right kind of book: It was simply too long, and it was also way too archaic sounding. I suggested that I could do a better job, and that maybe I should rewrite it for Him. Sometimes God doesn’t bother dealing with my silly complaints, but this time I got an immediate reply. Although it came instantly, in a single “flash,” it will take a few words to spell out the “text” of the general idea here:

God: “Gee Don, that’s a great idea! Say, maybe you should try reading it first. That way you’ll know what parts need trimming and changing. OK?”

I was now on a mission and ready to start! Also at about that time, my mom brought home a copy of Kenneth Taylor's newly published "Living Letters." (Paul's Epistles, paraphrased into modern language.)

<https://www.amazon.com/Living-Letters-Kenneth-Nathaniel-Taylor/dp/0842326014>

It took reading about two of Paul's letters before I understood the "practical joke" God had pulled on me. Over the next few years, I followed Taylor's progress as he translated the whole New Testament, and then the entire Bible. But, by then, many excellent modern translations had become available.

Although I do explain the Biblical content to others in my own words (as I promised I would do) I no longer anticipate that I will ever be replacing the Bible in any sense.

Returning to the non-biblical part of my search and enlightenment: I also became a fan of Martin Gardener's writings: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Gardner

In particular, one of Martin Gardener's Scientific American magazine columns, titled "Machines That Learn" caught my attention, because I thought "learning" might have a connection to awareness. I started spending most of my time designing different kinds of "learning" computers, still hoping to figure out how my own awareness worked.

By high school, I knew, in theory, how to build a conventional working computer, one transistor at a time; by college, I had a good start on actually building one; but by that time, I understood the machine well enough to know there was no "ghost" anywhere, in it — nor could there be. I could see for myself that computers couldn't possibly "think," they just blindly "did."

Since I had done well on a state-wide high school physics competition, I chose physics for my major in college. This was where I was finally introduced to the real "ghost in the machine" which I had been seeking. It turned out to take the form of quantum mechanics. I still don't have answers for every question I'd ever asked, but I'm no longer particularly worried about those questions which still remain.

By that time I was a fairly opinionated and outspoken Christian. I was also considering going into the ministry, instead of into science or technology. All that stopped me was that the Church didn't really seem to want anything to do with my non-traditional ideas; but the gatekeepers of science and technology did want my skills — particularly my computer skills. (At that time, microprocessors were just beginning to hit the markets, and very few schools were turning out graduates who knew how to design with them or to program them.)

So, I supported myself, and a newly acquired wife (we celebrated our 50th this year), and our growing family, with my scientific and computer skills, while, every chance I had, I taught, wrote, and lectured, on how the faulty understandings in "Christian" teachings needed to be identified and corrected. If anyone is interested, some my opinions are presented on my web page here:

[Don Stoner, Donald Wayne Stoner, High-Energy Theology](#)

That link will take you to my thoughts concerning: the creation (Genesis 1), the rest of the book of Genesis, the first Exodus from Egypt (there was also a second one), the various theories of Evolution (including my own unique thoughts), Jesus' 70 AD return, and a timeline to fit it all together, as well as to the other sorts of mischief with which I have become involved.

Evolution alone is sufficiently interesting to spend some time on it here, since both Rick Rosner and Tianxi Yu brought up “emergence” and “evolution.” It is especially significant here, because my views on this subject have, themselves, undergone some “evolution” of their own during the years I have been studying the nature of God and His creation.

There are presently two competing scientific “Theories of Evolution” which are in opposition to each other. An explanation of sorts is presented here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawkins_vs._Gould

Here’s the problem: Each position presents evidence which falsifies the claims of the other.

In more detail: *Darwin’s theory does not predict the sudden leaps which are seen in the fossil record.* Its theoretical basis – random mutations and survival of the fittest – predicts that change will occur by very small steps, and that it will occur more rapidly in larger populations than in smaller ones. The leaps which are seen in the fossil record are sufficiently large that some scientists (most notably the late Stephen Gould) have suggested that most evolutionary change must take place quickly and in small populations, where it would not be expected to leave much evidence.

It is easy to show that the relative size of a population is a very important factor in determining whether those populations should evolve rapidly upwards, slowly upwards, or even downwards. If we put two targets, a large one and a small one, right next to each other, and randomly throw unaimed darts at both of them, it is likely that the larger target will receive more hits. The same is true of a population of living individuals. Whatever mutation rates we assume, *we can confidently expect that a larger breeding population will receive more of those favorable mutations than a smaller one will.* (It will also receive more unfavorable mutations – but those are quickly weeded out and eliminated from the gene pool, because they produce individuals which are less fit for survival.)

We also know that unfavorable mutations are more common than favorable ones; no one deliberately raises their family on an old nuclear test site to take advantage of possible favorable mutations. But even though favorable mutations are rare; they confer a survival advantage to offset this. How much this helps depends on the size of the breeding population which receives the mutation.

If we assume that favorable mutations occur in one individual out of a thousand, and that their survival advantage will cause them to quickly spread to the whole population, a population with only twenty individuals will receive a boost about once in fifty generations. However, if the population size is a hundred individuals, a boost can be expected about every ten generations. *This means smaller populations cannot evolve upward as rapidly as large ones.*

This is the reason why insects and micro-organisms are able to make adaptations by which they resist man’s attempts to eliminate them; they have extremely large populations (and also short generation times). At the other extreme, the future of endangered species is bleak; their low numbers are a liability, not an asset. Without a large enough population, survival pressure simply means a high probability of extinction.

This means upward evolution can be expected to occur most rapidly in large populations of individuals, but it cannot even keep pace with normal genetic deterioration in very small populations (from the relatively more common, unfavorable mutations). *However, the fossil evidence shows*

us that observable evolutionary advance do not happen quickly (if at all) in even the largest populations (such as cockroaches, who quickly adapt, but don't appear to "advance" into anything other than tougher cockroaches) where we might be expected to observe great changes over geological time. It would seem to follow that the evidence is against any naturalistic theory of evolution.

Here is the solution which I am suggesting:

When genetic engineers make changes to DNA molecules, they typically find a "surrogate mother" (usually the closest genetic candidate they can find), inject their modified DNA into a cell (often an egg cell), and let the existing cellular machinery do the work for them. The present hypothesis proposes that God might have used a similar method. As powerful as God might be, He could easily make use of very economical methodology. It is well within His capability to simply modify the DNA in an existing egg cell and then wait, allowing His previous creations to take it from there.

More specifically, *God might have taken the DNA in a female creature (female where the distinction applies) of one species and modified it to create male and female members of a new species.* He may have caused the necessary atoms to align themselves within the DNA, using the "back door" of access He left for Himself in the design of the universe – the Heisenberg uncertainty principle.

Modifications could have been minimal. God could have left many DNA segments unmodified. As mitochondrial DNA demonstrates, He appears to have borrowed heavily from existing creatures. The pattern of mitochondrial DNA in various creatures suggests that God must have simply left it alone – not even bothering to "correct" neutral mutations which had occurred over the years.

We know from the fossil record that God created a sequence of erect-walking ape-like creatures – each step being less like an ape and more like a modern human. Even if God (having foreknowledge) would not need to make gradual "experimental" progress, there is a reason why this sequence might have been necessary anyway.

If God chose to use surrogate mothers to produce the first members of each new species, he would have needed to create an entire chain of closely spaced transitional forms, connecting all species. The spacing would need to be close, because a surrogate mother can't successfully deliver something too different from herself. *Assuming God has chosen this method to create new species, this would not be a limitation of God's capability, it would be a limitation of the mother's.*

The problem is obvious if we imagine modifying the genes in a mother mouse in such a manner that her offspring were to become a baby elephant. This is an extreme example; but the same general principle applies to even very small steps – such as the problems that humans have when there are incompatible blood Rh factors between a mother and a her developing child. Since even a difference in blood type can make a true mother dangerous to her unborn baby, a "surrogate mother" (in the sense we are now considering) would need to be quite similar to any potential offspring.

If God chose to bridge major kinds using surrogate mothers, *there would be an upper limit to the size of the steps which could be taken; this limit would be the point where the differences become*

fatal to a developing offspring. It is similar to the natural limit for interbreeding between creatures of slightly different kinds, for the same reason. If the kinds are too dissimilar, offspring cannot survive (or cannot reproduce in some cases). This hypothesis predicts that the maximum step size between created “kinds” will be at about the limit of interbreeding.

In many cases, this appears to be the approximate spacing between presently existing species. This is also approximately the spacing we find in the fossil record: we see a chain of “quantum leaps” at approximately the interbreeding limit, connecting life’s kinds. This is different from the gradual continuum predicted by Darwin’s theory, and also different from the complete absence of transitional forms which most creationistic theories predict.

We can see how God might have accomplished this in Luke’s Gospel, starting with how Jesus was to be born of Mary:

Luke 1:35:

“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Next, just three chapters later, in Luke’s Gospel:

Luke 3:37:

Adam is also called “The son of God.”

Since the phrase, “The Son of God,” has just been defined for us two chapters earlier, it would seem to appear that Luke is telling us that: *“The Most High also overshadowed Adams ‘mother’.”*

If this is how “evolution” proceeds, the paradox between Dawkins and Gould has been easily resolved, and Luke’s Gospel clears up the conflict between: the mathematical theoretical basis, and the fossil evidence! For details, see:

[Surrogate Mother Hypothesis, by Donald Wayne Stoner, Don Stoner](#)

However, this sort of proffered harmony between evolution and the gospel isn’t likely to take root in the world as we presently know it. If it were to establish a footing, it might require a small, isolated, group of individuals who were less subject to social pressure.

The “Christian Church” is a huge and very splintered “disorganization.” Once upon a time we seemed to have done fairly well at hanging together — at least for about the first thousand years following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (with occasional Church councils to hammer out the squabbles), but following about AD 1054 (the great schism), we have been rapidly bifurcating: Roman, Greek, Russian, Protestant, Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Pentecostal, Cults ... None of the branches have perfectly followed the straight and narrow path specified by God’s Holy Truth. (For example, it took about 400 years for the Roman Church too “pardon” Galileo for telling the truth about astronomy.)

Young people are, indeed, leaving established Churches, although new Churches are also being planted and established all over the world. I, myself, am guilty of leaving half a dozen established churches (for one reason or another) while I presently attend only one Church. Arguably, that makes me, personally, responsible for a net loss of five, in Church attendance (joke intended). Children do not always accept their parent’s beliefs. Attrition tends to be slow and constant, while “revivals,” and other means of church growth, tend to be episodic and unpredictable.

Change happens in many different ways. From the tiny “twigs” at the ends of the denominational branches come new, but surprisingly seductive and popular teachings, like Ellen G. White’s “24-hour creation days” and “flood geology,” or John Nelson Darby’s teachings on “futurism.” Sometimes these new teachings even lure established denominations away from scientifically sound teachings. Might it be possible for a new way of viewing evolution to take root in a similar manner, but in a way that restores scientific continuity?

How are churches to avoid becoming irrelevant? They certainly cannot afford to ignore correctly-established scientific understanding. Bertrand Russell’s essay: “Why I am Not a Christian” should be read by anyone who is concerned about the relevancy of the Church; his objections may originally have encouraged the Church to abandon science; but “science” has moved on; it is finally in a position to answer all of Russell’s objections in a solid and convincing manner. Christians ought to be made aware of this.

And what about the scientists? At this point, well established scientists are probably afraid to reconsider evidence which might cast an unfavorable light on their own “sacred cows.” There is so much bad blood between the Church and the scientists that physical evidence no longer appears to be sufficient to modify established theory. But again, there might be a “Galileo” somewhere who is willing take up such a crusade.

Claus Volko, M.D.: For me God has always been an abstract concept.

Tianxi Yu: My perspective on God has evolved through an interesting journey that reflects both Eastern and Western influences. Initially, like many others, I was influenced by the Western religious concept of God as an omnipotent, supreme being. However, as I delved deeper into Chinese traditional culture, especially the Taoist concept of “The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao,” I began to realize that any existence that can be defined is not truly ultimate. The key transformation came with the realization that: when we attribute any qualities to God, we are actually limiting God. It’s like my previous example about “beauty” – when we say someone is beautiful, we imply others are relatively less so. Similarly, when we call God omnipotent, we are actually defining God by human standards, which reveals that God evolved from human thinking. Therefore, my current understanding is: the true ultimate existence is the indescribable “emptiness.” It transcends God and all concepts of duality. God is the culmination of human wisdom, a bridge to “emptiness,” but not the endpoint. This understanding has enabled me to better comprehend how divine manifestations occur through natural phenomena, and why the relationship between humans and God is one of mutual seeking. This isn’t a weakening of faith, but a deeper understanding of divinity.

Jacobsen: Based on the formulations given before, what formulations of God, either as reality or concept, make the least sense to you? Those proposed, at least, by some in history, not necessarily here. I am trying work on a strengths-based presentation of the different views.

Rosner: So, I don’t have a huge problem with God as a manipulating force behind the universe as a simulation. Suppose you want to postulate that all of this is a simulation in somebody else’s world and that it’s just a good simulation. In that case, I’ll accept that for the sake of argument. The argument breaks down if you try to break the simulation because it’s a poor simulation.

And there might be no significant differences in what we experience between a universe that plays out naturally and one that is a well-made simulation. So, that kind of God, I’m okay with

considering. That leaves the old-school God—the omnipotent, omniscient, score-keeping creator—pretty absurd.

You’ve got gods like the Greek and Roman gods, which are superheroes in a big soap opera with lots of drama. Those are ridiculous. And I don’t entertain that many versions of God.

I haven’t studied all the deities in Hinduism or the gods in Indian religions in detail. So, I know there’s someone who is the destroyer, there’s Ganesh, the elephant-headed God, and so on. But all those gods don’t hold up to any scrutiny. The ancient Egyptian gods, with their animal-headed depictions, don’t hold up either.

So, if you want to divide things, you have to eliminate from consideration, under your question, all the gods that people used to believe in but don’t anymore. Then you’re left ranking the ridiculousness or absurdity of the gods that still have some following.

The old Christian and Catholic gods don’t hold water either. I suppose you could include superstitions, like astrology, as having godlike properties. However, to the extent that they determine behaviour, they’re also ridiculous.

So, there you go. That includes the devil under “ridiculous” since he’s essentially the loyal opposition.

Stoner: Among the most common formulations of God, the one which makes the least sense to me would probably be the one presented by the Hindus. This does not mean that I disagree with everything that Hindus teach.

The Bhagavad Gita, according to Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavad_Gita

“... is a synthesis of various strands of Indian religious thought, including the Vedic concept of dharma (duty, rightful action); samkhya-based yoga and jnana (insight, knowledge); and bhakti (devotion).”

These three are roughly parallel to the three ways which Plato and Aristotle believed that arguments could be legitimately made:

Ethos: similar to dharma (duty, rightful action);

Logos: similar to jnana (insight, knowledge); and

Pathos: similar to bhakti (devotion).

I have no problem at all with applying combinations of ethics, logic, and compassion. Also according to the same Wikipedia article:

“The text is generally dated to the second or first century BCE, though some scholars accept dates as early as the 5th century BCE.”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato>

This, places western thought (e.g. Plato — born 428-423 BC, and died 348 BC) roughly contemporary to it (at least according to “some scholars”).

Continuing with the Wikipedia article on the Gita: “The Gita discusses and synthesizes sramana- and yoga-based renunciation, dharma-based householder life, and devotion-based theism, attempting “to forge a harmony” between these three paths. It does this in a framework addressing

the question of what constitutes the virtuous path that is necessary for spiritual liberation or release from the cycles of rebirth (moksha), ...”.

It has been a few years since I read this story about Prince Arjuna’s discussion with his chariot-eer Krishna, but my memory was less about accepting any imagined “harmony” about the disaster of the impending battle, than it was focused on the unrealistic time scales given for the involved cycles

BG 8.17: Chapter 8, Verse 17 – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God – Swami Mukundananda

(Incidentally the very “precise” numbers for the times of those cycles appear to result from the ancient Sumerian, astronomically-based, numbering system, involving exact factors of 5, 3, and 2. This would make an interesting study in itself.)

The goal of the Hindu religion appears to be: escape from the unrealistic and endless cycles. This is where it appears to make the least sense to me.

On the other hand, in the Gita, Krishna appears to be an avatar of Vishnu. As explained in the Wikipedia articles, Hinduism, like Christianity, is quite fragmented. I hope to be able to hear more thoughts on this.

Volko: Well, I just do not think that God is a creature that looks similar to a person. It would be strange – God should be eternal and therefore need no mouth and intestines to absorb and digest food, for example.

Yu: From my perspective, several theological concepts throughout history are particularly difficult to reconcile with reason. First, those formulations that attribute extreme personified characteristics to God, such as describing the divine as angry, jealous, or vengeful, are clearly projections of human emotions and limitations onto the concept of divinity. As I mentioned before, when we attribute specific personal characteristics to God, we are actually limiting and diminishing the divine essence.

Second, certain religious traditions that simultaneously describe God as completely transcendent while claiming direct divine intervention in mundane human affairs present a contradictory position that’s hard to rationalize. If God is truly transcendent, then divine actions shouldn’t be interpreted through human behavioral patterns. Chinese traditional culture offers a more reasonable explanatory framework through the concept of “unity of heaven and humanity” (天人合一), where divinity is inherent within nature and human nature, rather than an external force arbitrarily intervening.

Third, perspectives claiming that God can only be approached through specific religious organizations or rituals are questionable. In my understanding, divinity manifests itself through natural laws and universal principles, which everyone can understand through observation and contemplation. As Laozi stated, “The Tao follows what is natural” (道法自然). True divinity should be universally accessible rather than monopolized by any particular group.

These limitations in conceptualizing God often stem from trying to confine the infinite within finite human understanding, much like trying to contain the ocean in a cup. The more profound approach, as suggested by Eastern wisdom traditions, is to recognize the inadequacy of our conceptual frameworks while remaining open to the mystery of existence itself.

Jacobsen: What are the strengths of the propositions on God presented so far in this conversation if any?

Rosner: I take everything back to the principles of existence. Though that can drift into tautology—it's easy to end up as circular reasoning. Only self-consistent things can exist, but pushing that idea too hard becomes a tautology. The only things that can exist are the things that can exist.

You can put it on a better footing by saying that the principles of existence aren't so restrictive that nothing can exist. That at least allows you to figure out what *can* exist.

That includes entities, beings, and conscious things. Those conscious beings, no matter how old or big or how much information they process, are subject to limitations similar to our own.

It's reasonable to think that everything that exists is subject to the rules of existence, which precludes omnipotence and timelessness—concepts like “has always existed” or “will always exist.”

Those limitations mean we likely share characteristics with beings and civilizations much more vast and older than ourselves and our civilization. These entities are so ancient, vast, and powerful in information processing and manipulating the world around them that they possess godlike powers.

Does that power extend to things like not having to live in linear time or being able to reconfigure space to their liking? I don't know. But it's a reasonable proposition.

We don't currently know of any entities in the world beyond those on Earth, but I assume we will eventually discover some. Even though such entities might appear godlike, they will still have limitations in common with us.

So, those are a couple of propositions that, whatever the fucking question was, address the idea.

Stoner: Perhaps ironically, I find myself unable to provide a purely “logical” rebuttal to Tianxi Yu's:

God x Science, Emptiness x Buddhism.

I have (somewhat arbitrarily) accepted “logic” on faith alone (option “D” in my original post) hence embracing science and, consequently, a “logical” God. However, if I had (arbitrarily) chosen to regard logic as “illusion” (option “C”), then I suppose I might now be, philosophically, staring into an empty void (and probably chiding Descartes for arguing against me).

Volko: I have the impression that most participants agree on the abstractness of God.

Yu: From the dialogues presented, I observe several valuable perspectives. Most notably, each participant attempts to construct a framework for understanding divinity from their professional domain and cultural background. Dr. Stoner's approach of building a theological system through logic and mathematics, while characteristic of Western rational thinking, provides a concrete foundation for discussion. Mr. Rosner's understanding of God through the lens of universal information processing is equally illuminating. It's particularly noteworthy that all participants are attempting to reconcile traditional theology with modern scientific knowledge, an endeavor that is significant in itself.

However, I believe the strongest proposition lies in acknowledging the limitations of our cognition. As Taoism suggests, “The greatest wisdom is like foolishness,” sometimes acknowledging

our ignorance is the highest form of wisdom. Dr. Volko's view of God as a metaphor for the unknown resonates with the Chinese traditional concept of "The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao." This reminds us to maintain an open and humble attitude when exploring questions of divinity.

The integration of Eastern and Western perspectives provides a more complete understanding, just as the concept of Yin and Yang suggests that opposing forces can complement each other. This cross-cultural dialogue demonstrates that the search for understanding God benefits from multiple viewpoints, methodologies, and cultural traditions, creating a richer and more nuanced comprehension of the divine.

Jacobsen: What were the aspects of the responses leaving more questions open about theology and philosophy for you if any?

Rosner: I touched on it in the previous answer, which is this: Let's say that any conscious being or linked set of beings or civilizations—even if they are a billion or 10 billion years old—

1. Are there beings like this of arbitrary age? Is there no prohibition under the principles of existence, and is there no upper limit to the size or age of entities? Is that true?
2. If it is true, what limitations would these entities be unable to overcome regardless of their power to manipulate the world?

So, just as a starting point, are there godlike entities by their age and size? And if so, what are their limitations and powers?

One area to consider is that we are verging on extremely powerful quantum computing and advanced regular computing. Computing—especially the kind of computation in our brains—is inherently predictive. Our brains are predictive organs. According to the leading framework in neuroscience right now, brains are designed to predict what will happen next so that we are best prepared to respond to it.

As computation becomes more powerful, can entities see superimposed future world lines with great detail? Everyone knows about Schrödinger's cat, a thought experiment involving a box containing a cat in two superimposed states: alive and dead. If the predictive capabilities of computation become sufficiently advanced, does that mean entities could live within superimposed world lines?

That is, would they perceive multiple potential futures simultaneously and negotiate among them? Could they see a range of superimposed possibilities for the future and choose the most favourable ones?

We do this anyway, but it doesn't feel like we choose among superimposed worlds. However, as our ability to simulate the future becomes more powerful, could this fundamentally change how time is experienced? If that ability becomes advanced enough, does it mean such entities wouldn't experience time as linearly as we do?

I don't know.

One possible question, specifically, does an entity of sufficient age and computational power experience time linearly? Events still have to play out in sequence, but if such an entity chooses from possible futures moment by moment—with each possible future laid out in detail—what does that mean for their time experience?

For example, some AI chess programs can calculate far more potential moves than a human chess master. A chess master might be able to anticipate five or six moves ahead based on various possibilities. Still, a chess-playing computer can map out the next ten moves for hundreds of branching possibilities.

Suppose an entity could do that with the entire world itself. Would that result in a fundamentally different time experience? Or am I just overthinking this?

Stoner: I am generally comfortable with my current understanding, however, Claus Volko has left me with a few questions: His definition: “God is a metaphor for things we don’t understand and perhaps can’t understand,” ... certainly leaves me questioning how much more there is which I don’t and can’t understand. Although the scientific method (observation and reason) is certainly useful, I was unable even to take that first step (believing in logic/reason) without taking logic on “faith” alone.

... And, I don’t think anybody really knows what exactly God is either

“... Who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. ... – 1 Timothy 6:16

Volko: (No answer).

Yu: Looking at the responses, several key questions emerged that deserve deeper exploration.

While each respondent offered unique perspectives, certain gaps remained worthy of further discussion. When Rosner discussed cosmic civilizations and information processing, it reminded me of the Buddhist concept of “other worlds.” If advanced civilizations truly exist, could Buddhist scriptures’ descriptions of other realms be metaphors for different levels of civilization? This question bridges metaphysical and physical understanding.

Stoner’s theological system built on logic and mathematics raises intriguing questions about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative aspects of existence. While ancient Chinese thinkers recognized the connection between numbers and principles, the fundamental question remains: Can logic fully explain the essence of existence?

The deepest question concerns the nature of consciousness. Although quantum mechanics and consciousness were mentioned in the discussion, no one thoroughly explored how consciousness undergoes qualitative changes. In modern physics, we see phenomena like quantum entanglement that might suggest deeper connections between individual and universal consciousness. The real mystery lies in understanding these connections without falling into simplistic reductionism.

These questions reflect the complex interplay between ancient wisdom and modern science, pointing to the need for a more integrated understanding that transcends traditional boundaries between disciplines and cultural frameworks.

Jacobsen: Based on the responses from others, what questions do you have for individual participants or the group as a whole now?

Rosner: I can understand the idea of nothingness being a preferred way of being. I like existing, though. I enjoy the moment-to-moment rewards of existence. But I also understand that if you cease to exist, everything great you’ve experienced is obliterated—which is probably what will happen.

Even if I don't share that perspective, I can see why nothingness is desirable to some people. I don't like that view—it gives me the “sads”—but I can acknowledge it.

I'd ask a Christian, particularly a sophisticated Christian, how Christianity fits into the world's physics and metaphysics and how it interacts with physics and cosmology.

It seems like a generous or efficient God. If such a God had created the world, it would have created it with physical laws that give it immense coherence and solidity. A world where cause and effect operate consistently, where its apparent age of 14 billion years and the process of evolution spanning billions of years are part of that design, and where we humans are one of its products.

I'd want to know how God “pulled it off.” What were His intentions, and how does He continue interacting with the world He created?

Regarding the Bhagavad Gita, apart from associations with Hinduism—like depictions of gods with multiple arms or being blue—is that part of it?

Given the way the world has been going in the 21st century, I used to think, “Nah, I wouldn't want that.” I wanted to live in a world where physics was in charge. But given all the chaos and problems in the world, I've started to reconsider.

My wife and I—well, mostly me—have this obsession. I have a collector's personality. When I was a kid, I had every single issue of *Mad Magazine* ever printed. And now, I kind of obsessively collect mosaics and micromosaics.

One of my best mosaics is this huge, high-relief 3D mosaic of Jesus on the cross with Mary and John. It's definitely Mary—his mother—and John, the disciple, who are all depicted in 3D in this mosaic.

It sits in my office, where I look at it dozens of times a day, and I often find myself wishing for the figure in that mosaic—Jesus—to come back and set shit straight.

I have almost zero belief that this could happen, and I know it would be pretty freaking weird. I believe in physics a million times more than I believe in Jesus. But I still wish that Jesus would come down. Now, I know the Rapture is supposed to take good people up to Heaven, but I want a reverse rapture where the biggest dickheads on Earth are taken off Earth and given a comfortable existence elsewhere. I picture the Europa, the ice moon of Jupiter, that is said to be possibly conducive to life, because it might have an radioactive center that makes it warm enough to support life.

Anyway, he is Jesus. I want him to rapture the 10,000 biggest assholes on earth to ice caves in Europa, where they can't fuck everybody up here with their bullshit. Then I want Jesus to take the 10,000 second rank jerks. The next 10,000 jerkiest people and have them live there on probation on the moon. The 10,000 people on Europa, they can't come back. They have proven they're dickheads. The 10,000 people on the moon, if they clean up their act and quit being dickheads, then they can either keep being dickheads and get sent to Europa or can come back to Earth. That's my wish for Jesus, and for him to thoroughly convince people of his existence via holy means and shame the people who are Christians in name only and say, “You're not doing it right, and have them be convinced of his holiness.” I don't think any of that is going to happen, but I do often wish it would. I do not believe in Jesus, but appeal to Jesus many times in a day.

You could ask me. Why don't you, if you're Jew and a science guy, appeal to a science guy or somebody under Judaism? I don't think we have a guy. Jesus is the handiest deity that I can appeal to.

The God of the Jews is almost too abstract and nebulous. I can imagine Jesus showing up and telling people what's what. He is—being human—an approachable guy. Does he cut his hair? Does he not look like white man's Jesus, the really pretty blonde guy? Does he look like more of a Mediterranean dude? Does he take a different human form than the original Jesus? I don't know.

Stoner: Rick Rosner brings up several points which I believe are worth some discussion:

1. His idea (or definition) of God being “outside of reality” might be a misunderstanding. (Christians often say “outside of time and space”). This common belief is probably founded on a lack of awareness of a basic principle of quantum mechanics: The “Math” of Q.M. is not bound to any particular “time” or “location,” within space-time (at least not in the same way that we humans seem to be trapped). Similarly, “God” is not “locally trapped” either, but is as free from that constraint, as is “logic itself.” This does not actually put God outside of reality.

1. Rosner mentions the beginning of human civilization about 10,000 years ago. This falls between the development of agriculture (circa 12,000 BP) and the development of writing, and therefore the beginning of history (late fourth millennia BC).

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/development-agriculture/>

This period of time is certainly worth some exploration.

III. Regarding Rosner's thoughts about the galactic core being more favorable to civilization than the outer arms (where we are): My research suggest otherwise. The close proximity (to the sorts of things rogue stars frequently do) causes our “coastal view of deep space” to represent considerably safer location, as well as one which is far more interesting astronomically.

1. Rosner's speculation about “two dimensional time” reminds me of Richard Feynman's space-time diagrams. If you plant one of his diagrams right at the “big bang,” and rotate it around, you might start to suspect that time not only “advances” in two directions: forward (matter) and reverse (antimatter), but that there might be six additional directions (3 dimensions of space times 2 directions each) which may be accessible via Feynman's rotations.

2. I don't share Rosner's belief in any real “divorce” between science and religion. I see this as an artifact of the partial blindness of the practitioners of both camps. One might, similarly, expect unity between Democrats and Republicans, if both sides were suddenly to be granted a clear understanding. This might also be worth some discussion.

3. I particularly thought his haunting closing was worth some discussion:

“The idea of a godless, cold universe without inherent morality—where everything happens by chance—can be a grim prospect. Yet, I believe there is an inherent drive toward order and value within the universe. How can some form of morality persist and be justified in the future without resorting to existential absurdity? The notion that the universe is absurd and that we must impose our values upon it feels bleak to me and not entirely accurate.”

Yu: To be frank, after hearing all the responses, I find most viewpoints too confined within Western thought frameworks.

Mr. Rosner: Your discussion of universal information processing merely scratches the surface. Have you considered why Eastern philosophers proposed much more profound cosmic views thousands of years ago? When you discuss advanced civilizations, have you considered how this thinking itself carries a certain technological supremacist bias?

Dr. Stoner: While your attempt to construct a theological system through logic and mathematics is admirable, it precisely reflects the limitations of Western thinking. Truth often exists within logical paradoxes, just as in Eastern thought, contradictions need not be resolved but embraced.

Dr. Volko: Reducing God to merely “a metaphor for the unknown” seems rather superficial. With a deeper understanding of Eastern philosophy, you would realize that “unknown” itself is a state of being, not merely an absence of knowledge.

From my perspective, true understanding transcends these artificial divisions between East and West, logic and intuition, known and unknown. Until we break free from these mental constraints, our discussion of God will remain disappointingly superficial.

Jacobsen: Life continues to deliver modest amazement at its timing, on a personal note. I am grateful for many, many happenings in life. This is one. Let’s take a more existential orientation, life, death, and love, are realities for everyone. No apparent choice in our coming to life, so pick your parents wisely. In most cases, probably, no definite choice in the time of leaving with some biological limits, so far, placed on upper limits of lifespan. Woody Allen made an astute point. Every century, it’s a flush. We get a new collection of humanity for the most part, since the inception of the human species. What do you make of the relation of life to God? Please feel free to give an individual definition.

Rosner: So, I mean, as you know, I think that what happens and what exists are things that can exist under the principles of existence—which is a circular way of saying that things that are consistent, self-consistent, and have a possible history can exist within a world that can exist. I mean logically consistent framework.

Existence is pleasant while we’re existing. It’s great that the principles of existence permit things to exist. There isn’t a creator involved in this. I do think there are potent processes—like evolution—that we’re a part of. But those processes don’t have teleology, willful intent, or consciousness.

When we think of God, we think of a conscious being intentionally creating the world. I don’t buy that. Unless we’re part of a simulation—which I don’t think we are—there would be no creator; if we were in a simulation, there’d be a creator behind that simulation, but would there be a creator behind the creator? Not necessarily. Probably not.

So, I have a certain amount of reverence for the possibilities that existence permits. I appreciate that the world can exist because it’s logically and mathematically possible. I don’t like some of the constraints of existence—like the inevitability of death and other grim realities—but I still appreciate existence.

Stoner: I particularly enjoyed your advice: “pick your parents wisely.” God’s design for matching parents to their offspring (DNA supplying the causal link), enables just the sort of generation-linking-“wisdom” which you recommend. Not only

do each of us tend to get the parents which we “deserve” (for better or worse), it also tends to saddle each of us with just the sort of children that might enable our remaining progenitors to enjoy their well-earned revenge (as gleefully doting grandparents).

“Life” gives us all a chance “to act as little gods.” As autonomous rulers of our own lives, God gives each of us a chance to make all of our own decisions. We can choose to be kind or cruel, to be selfish or selfless, to love or to hate. Our choices, more than any accident of birth (e.g. the genetic “hand” we were dealt) determine who we really are.

Volko: I actually believe that life and death are two antagonistic divine forces. So you could perhaps speak of the God of Life and the God of Death. I believe that the current state of the world is a consequence of the ongoing fight between these two godly forces. Since neither of them has prevailed yet, people and animals are born and after some time die. If life wins, everything will be alive forever.

Jacobsen: What do you make of the relation of death to God? Please feel free to give an individual definition.

Rosner: I don’t think there’s a willful or intentional God. I think we’re the product of processes that are allowed to happen under the principles of existence—rules that are loose enough to permit things to exist. The most complicated things that have emerged on this planet are evolved beings.

Evolution incorporates death. Evolved creatures are only good enough to produce the next generation and maybe more. But under that system—which isn’t a system since “system” implies intent—we’re not made to live indefinitely. We die. Evolution doesn’t care. It’s not about us.

Evolution can’t care because it’s not an entity. So, there you go.

Stoner: This is when our life’s performance is finally evaluated. As we have all been taught (by the popular cliché), judgement is never really based on whether we “won” or “lost,” but on “how we played the game.” (Or, for anyone who would prefer the biblical version of this same concept: “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” -Luke 9:25 NIV)

At another time: <https://in-sightpublishing.com/2021/03/22/stoner/> you asked me:

“What do you make of the mystery and transience of life?”

The crux of my answer was:

“This life” isn’t “real life.” It’s just “a test.” As we all seem to sense:

“Real life” must be something which is more real and lasts much longer.

So: “Death” is not necessarily the final end. It can be the beginning of “real life.”

Jacobsen: I’ve asked a lot of your community members about love. What do you make of the relation of love to God? Please feel free to give an individual definition.

Rosner: In an evolutionary sense, and in terms of how we function in the world, love is deeply tied to stability and order for an individual. We love someone who reliably and consistently treats us the way we want to be treated. In return, we try to reciprocate. Love is about trust.

It’s about commitment, consistency, and helping each other fulfill our wants and goals. When we look at the love between us and our pets, it’s also about trust—consistently treating another being the way it wants to be treated. Or, in cases where the being can’t make good decisions for itself, treat it in a way we think is best for it.

Stoner: As I have explained elsewhere, Love is a full “third” of God’s nature.

(Logic and Ethics comprising the other two “thirds”).

Volk: In my private religion love is a demigod related to life.

Jacobsen: Relevant to your prior statements about the structure of reality, definition of God, and thoughts on a Deomorph or a Theomorph, or simply a deity or theity, what brings these arguments together under these banners of the existential realities of life, death, and love?

Rosner: To discuss God, you must consult a being—a creator—who is willful, intentional, and conscious. That’s an entity, not just a process allowed to happen, because it doesn’t violate the principles of existence. It’s hard for me to talk about God about anything because I don’t believe in the kind of God we’re likely discussing.

Stoner: I think that is most concisely summed up in St John’s Gospel, where he is relating a discussion between Jesus and a religious leader named Nicodemus. As Jesus explained:

” ... God so *loved* the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall *not perish* but have *eternal life*.” -John 3:16 (NIV)

In context:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&version=NIV>

But what if we aren’t righteous people?

“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” -Romans 5:7,8 (NIV)

In Context:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205&version=NIV>

That's both you and I; (it's all of us).

Jacobsen: Now, the floor is Don's! We can revisit progress and structure once this session is complete.

Stoner: To Tianxi Yu:

I'm duly honored that you have chosen to confer an honorary doctorate upon me; however, I'm primarily autodidactic, and we automaths typically eschew such titles. I'm also honored that you deem my theological system to be a concrete foundation for discussion. I hope that will prove to be true.

I am mildly surprised at your impression that rational thinking is merely a "Western" characteristic. I would have guessed that "logical truth" was a "qualia" which was sensed similarly, to some degree, by all humans, rather than an arbitrarily "taught" way of processing ideas. If not, then I would have to presume any difference would have to be cultural, rather than inherent (although that would be "difficult" for me).

Recorded history appears to have begun in the Mideast: specifically ancient Sumer (central Iraq): <https://www.amazon.com/History-Begins-Sumer-Doubleday-Anchor/dp/B0006AVTRC> ... and to have spread both eastward and westward from there.

Judaism, and hence Christianity, are both heavily based on this historic foundation, even preserving a few of the ancient Sumerian words in the first few chapters of Genesis, including the ancient Sumerian name "Eden" (the plain between the two rivers), "Adam's" name (Sumerian for "man"), the "high ranking port authorities," "ka-rib" (cherub), whom God placed to guard the garden, and the untranslatable puns on the original name for "Adam's" wife (originally "Ti," meaning both "rib" (Genesis 2:23) and "life" (Genesis 3:20) in that ancient tongue).

Evidence also suggests that those same original ancient religious beliefs, as well as their systems of astronomy, dating, and numbering (factors of 2, 3, and 5), spread east and west with the technology of writing, and this first "seed" of history.

Claims have even been made that there is some residual evidence of this same ancient history in the ancient Chinese God, Shang Di, and in the ancient characters themselves:

https://evidencetobelieve.com/2019/01/28/bible_in_ancient_chinese/

Although I've watched this video, I, personally, don't have enough understanding of the Chinese characters to evaluate the argument which it presents. I would be quite interested in hearing your thoughts on it.

You mention that, in Eastern thought, "Contradictions need not be resolved but embraced." Starting with the Epimenides/Liars paradox: "This statement is false:" A person who embraces logic can certainly have some fun with that; I, certainly have:

[Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, A Critical Examination, Revision 2005/11/17 by Don W. Stoner](#)

However, I think the real fun comes in resolving apparent paradoxes; making logical sense (or even scientific sense) out of things which "appear to be paradoxical." For example, I used the

two “apparently contradicting” theories of evolution (Gould and Dawkins) as the springboard for my own theory of reconciliation. That sort of operation is how life becomes meaningful to me.

Can logic fully explain the essence of existence? You state that any existence which can be defined is not truly ultimate. This would normally be true, unless, of course, that definition ultimately included *all of logic and reason and all material things*).

That would be the one, single, exception.

You pointed out that, “No one thoroughly explored how consciousness undergoes qualitative changes.” As Penrose and Hameroff may have demonstrated in their experiments, perturbing quantum mechanical effects appears to temporarily disable consciousness. However, if God is “consciousness,” and we (as well as all matter) are “made of the same substance,” (as Col. 1:17 affirms), then your question gets reversed: “How does “consciousness” control “physical matter” (which is also quantum mechanical)?” This reduces the problem to the obvious: They are the same substance, and they are both “thoughts of God.”

Also: “quantum entanglement” turns out to be the single part of Q.M. which makes classical physics appear to govern the “physical” universe. Entangled “particles,” collectively, “obey” Newton’s laws, while individual “particles” behave under the direction of individual spirits (ourselves) and of God (all other “decisions” in the universe).

Anthropomorphizing God is certainly a technical error, but sometimes it helps lesser humans (almost all of us) to grasp otherwise difficult concepts. (If “God” “calmly” senses an “error,” more is likely to come of it than could ever come from the most angered and vengeful human imagination.)

You claimed that the true ultimate existence is the indescribable “emptiness.” I agree that if you meditate long enough on statements like “this statement is false,” or unresolved “scientific contradictions,” (without seeking resolution) you will get exactly “nowhere” (a metaphorical synonym for “emptiness”). My question is, why would that kind of “emptiness” be worth pursuing?

You appear to be (presently) a student in Hubei Province. You may be hoping to get a good job that provides more than the “emptiness” which you claim you seek. That strikes me as being inconsistent. If my view of this is too simple-minded, then I would appreciate correction.

Otherwise, if at some point in the future, you should choose, instead, to live according to the principles of “primordial logic” (as opposed to “logic” being an illusion) you might find both the temporal and eternal rewards to be preferable.

Incidentally, I have a friend in: Shandong, Linyi, Kunan, Dadian, (276612), who is seeking to produce useful and educational products (see atom-pops “soccerball”) and to help people who are in need. Might you and he be on similar or different paths?

(天道酬勤) “Nature follows Tao,” or maybe, “God rewards hard work?”

—

To Rick Rosner:

When Jacobsen asked (in the second round of questions): “Based on the responses from others, what questions do you have for individual participants or the group as a whole now?”

You answered: “I’d ask a Christian, particularly a sophisticated Christian, how Christianity fits into the world’s physics and metaphysics and how it interacts with physics and cosmology.”

This puzzles me, because, in my answer to Jacobsen’s first question, in the first round of questions, **#1** define God), I thought I (being a Christian) had already answered this question when I explained:

1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

Therefore, by inclusion (the effective minor premise):

God is also: That which also brought us into existence.

Therefore, by causal hierarchy (minor premise again):

2) God is also: That which is responsible for our personal existence.

3) Logic is primordial

4) Math is Logic

5) Quantum Mechanics is Math

6) The Physical Universe is Quantum Mechanical

Comprising Q,M, (5) ...

Comprising Math (4) ...

Comprising Primordial Logic (3) ...

... taking us all the way back to our starting definition:

1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

From this, it appears that:

7) God (1) assumes the same identity as Primordial Logic (3).

Continuing with your answer (above):

... “It seems like a generous or efficient God. If such a God had created the world, it would have created it with physical laws that give it immense coherence and solidity. A world where cause and effect operate consistently, where its apparent age of 14 billion years and the process of evolution spanning billions of years are part of that design, and where we humans are one of its products.

“I’d want to know how God “pulled it off.” What were His intentions, and how does He continue interacting with the world He created?”

I’d have to agree: If I were in your position, I would want to know that too. Did I forget to mention that I am a Christian? (Maybe even a sophisticated one.) Let’s go over Jacobsen’s questions, and my answers, again:

(#2) Jacobsen: For you, does one seek God, or does God seek them, or both (... or neither)?

Stoner: Following from my understanding of God: Probably both. But speaking as a tiny piece of God’s entire universe, rather than as its omnipresent creator (“conscious logic itself”) I doubt my efforts can hold a candle to God’s.

(#3) Jacobsen: What seems like the first reasonable realization in sensibly engaging in this search of God?

Stoner: The first step (above): Realizing that we take logic on faith.

The next step: Deriving a definition for God (3 & 2 & 1).

The next step: Understanding that God is omnipresent, sentient logic.

The next step: Presuming that, very likely, God is also seeking us.

This present step: Engaging: This shouldn't be overly difficult:

We just ask God for whatever help we might need.

The only catch is that it's unlikely that a seeker would be able to hide any questionable motives they might have.

(#4) Jacobsen: Does God, even if distinguishing types or levels of epistemology & ontology, seem knowable in principle or unknowable, as such?

Stoner: God can choose to be: knowable, unknowable, or even both simultaneously. We can observe how this might happen with a test case: Consider this quotation by Physicist Stephen Hawking:

“Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?

The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?”

— Stephen Hawking, A Brief History of Time

A Brief History of Time Quotes by Stephen Hawking

Is the source of Hawking's “fire,” an “unknowable” and mysterious enigma? Or is it blatantly obvious? This was, obviously, a “choice” which Dr. Hawking had to make while he was studying this evidence.

This same choice is also ours to make whenever we study the same universe Hawking once did. I, personally, take the same position taken by Paul (the Apostle): God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20 NIV)

In case you missed it, I am a follower and student of Christ. I am also a scientist and a computer engineer, among other things. (And I don't believe God is an old white man with a beard and flowing robes any more than you do.)

Wrap your head around the Bell Experiment, if you want to understand how God interferes in human affairs. (Like North Dakota, it isn't the end of the world, but you can probably see it from there.)

Also, I'm guessing your “relationship” with your “mosaic Jesus” might not be as far off as you may have assumed. God sometimes uses both angels and fleas, etc. to do His work. (Maybe He

was eavesdropping, and sent you a messenger; one who could answer your questions, face to face, in terms you might be able to accept.)

To Volko:

I'm having trouble extracting a consistent position from your brief comments: e.g.:

“God is a metaphor for things we don’t understand, and perhaps can’t understand.”

“God [presumably the idea held by others?] is so powerful that he can easily observe anybody.”

“We can only speculate about it. (What exactly God is)”

Can you identify any points where you and I specifically and unambiguously disagree?

Do you believe there are elements in my position about which I have been unclear or inconsistent?

Regarding an addition to my questions for the other participants in our discussion on the nature of God:

I have several married daughters; and over Thanksgiving, I got into a disagreement with one of my son’s-in-law over my “definition of God” and my consequential derivation of God’s nature. He lent me a book titled “Does God Have a Nature?” by Alvin Plantinga, which presented a different answer than the one I had proffered; After examining Plantinga’s arguments, I have come to the conclusion that my son-in-law raised some valid points; so, in the spirit of fairness, I must also raise what I regard to be a serious objection against my own definition. So:

Here’s my question for myself (addressing myself in 2nd person):

—

Don Stoner:

Your answer to Scott Jacobsen’s first question:

1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

... appears to be an oversimplification.

Although this might appear to provide a framework for: logic, math, science, and the physical universe, it fails to address other questions which are certainly at least as important: For example:

How is this supposed to explain “Love,” “Hate,” “Good,” or “Evil?”

Further, considering your conclusion:

7) God (1) assumes the same identity as Primordial Logic (3).

Here, both God (1), and Primordial Logic (3), appear to be defined as the single primordial source which produces the universe. What it fails to do is provide answers to the remaining questions (which are, almost certainly, even more important).

You also bring up the way Plato and Aristotle would have translated “logos” (as “logic”), but fail to mention that Aristotle also considered “pathos” and “ethos” to be valid forms of argument. For example, see:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos> (logical appeal)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pathos> (emotional appeal)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethos> (ethical appeal)

Both your definition of God, and your supporting argument, appear to be missing at least the last two of these important components of reality.

... and, to expedite the process, here is my answer to my own question:

I appear to be guilty as charged. The definition which I supplied, is clearly incomplete. Please allow me to attempt to correct this omission (recognizing that I am wading into a very convoluted and controversial theological morass of historical opinions as I attempt to do so.)

My answer was:

1) God is: That which brought our universe into existence.

(E.g.: Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1-3)

As an experienced theologian would have immediately volunteered (probably without waiting for an invitation): The nature of God comprises three “persons” (although what the term “person” means, in this context, is subject to some interpretation):

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity>

Here I will attempt to sort some references to these three “persons” into Aristotle’s categories:

Pathos: See what great *love* the **Father** has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! – 1 John 3:1 (N.I.V.)

Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is from God*, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because *God is love*. – 1 John 4:7,8 (N.I.V.)

Logos: In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God. – John 1:1

Through him *all things were made*; without him nothing was made that has been made. – John 1:3

The *Word* became flesh and made his dwelling among us [the **Son**]. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only one *who, came from the Father*, full of grace and truth. – John 1:14

Ethos: When he [the **Spirit**] comes, he will prove the world to be in the *wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment*: – John 16:8
(emphasis added)

I should warn the reader that this apparently clean separation is not always this clear and simple. The exact nature of the relationship between these “persons” (or “properties” of “God”) appears to be more complex. They appear to “blend” together into a single being (one apparently assuming three distinct identities):

Philip said, “Lord, show us the *Father* and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know **me**, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father**. How can you say, ‘Show us the *Father*’? Don’t you believe that **I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me**? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the *Father, living in me*, who is doing his work. – John 14:8-10

“When *the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father*—he will testify about me. – John 15:26

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. *Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you*. When he comes, **he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment**: – John 16:7,8 (*emphasis added*)

In my original answer, I concentrated on “logos/logic” and the physical aspects of the universe, because that is the arena where my formal education has been focused. Although the “pathos” and “ethos” elements are almost certainly, even more important, they are sufficiently outside of my field of expertise, that I am reluctant to attempt to claim understanding of additional detail.

My corrected answer is:

1A) God is: That which is foundational to logic, math, physics. and therefore our universe.

1B) God is also: That which is foundational to emotion and emotional arguments.

and

1C) God is also: That which is foundational to ethics and ethical arguments.

Although I am able to supply the details backing 1A, I lack the expertise and experience, and I therefore, leave it as an exercise for the reader to fill in the “mechanics” supporting 1B and 1C. I don’t suppose this clarifies my answer; but I do hope that it, at least, corrects it.

Rosner: For Don, on the argument for the existence to logic, math, quantum mechanics, and then back to God, I agree with much but not all of it. Anything that exists must conform to the principles of existence. There may be deeper levels of understanding beyond the basic logic of non-contradiction.

For things to exist, they cannot contradict themselves. They must have a consistent history and exist within a framework of space and time free from contradiction. I think this applies to God as well. God cannot supersede or override the principles of existence, including logic and non-contradiction.

One could argue, from a standpoint of faith, that God created these principles and thus has power over them.

However, I don’t accept that part of the argument. For God to exist, God must conform to the rules of existence. To paraphrase: “God must exist to exist.”

On the position that we take logic on faith, if we take logic on faith, everything we understand is also based on faith. Our understanding of logic comes from our accumulated experience of the world, through which we’ve explicitly and implicitly learned what seems to exist.

In our experience, for something to exist, it must have a degree of solidity, permanence, or duration. It must also conform to explicit and implicit principles we’ve learned about the world. This

includes some level of logic. But all of this is ultimately based on our experiences, and believing in our experiences is both an act of faith and necessity, as we have little to rely on. Our lived experience is the foundation of what we know.

To reject this would leave us with nothing to stand on. Stephen Hawking once pointed out that “without some foundation of truth, we have no place to stand.”

On Hawking’s insights an unknowable mystery, maybe it is something blatantly obvious, this is a choice Hawking had to make as he studied the evidence.

Consider this: when we are children, we often ask ourselves why we are who we are rather than someone else. The answer lies in our lived experience—our sensory input belongs to the person we are. Similarly, the fire within us, like Hawking’s drive or “fire,” is rooted in experiencing our particular selves in this particular world at this particular time. This fire is animated and given meaning through the lens of our conscious experience.

And for something to exist, it must have some consistency. This allows us to believe in the world and trust in its durability. But you can imagine there is an infinity of other possible experienced worlds—or even the same world experienced by other people—that each has that same fire, immediacy, and feeling of authenticity rooted in consciousness.

I’m taking “fire” to mean roughly the same thing as the feeling we get from being conscious in the world—the feeling of extreme authenticity that we are alive in a world that exists. But countless other worlds could potentially exist. However, we don’t experience those other worlds. We experience moments, a string of moments, as ourselves in this particular world.

Why not some other world?

Because everything we experience pertains to us, informs us, and is experienced as us in this particular world. This world is special because it relates directly to our consciousness of it. But that doesn’t preclude the existence of other worlds that function in similar ways for others.

To repeated statements about being a Christ follower, student, and sophisticated Christian, my take on these sophisticated theological approaches when they incorporate modern scientific concepts.

I don’t mind these approaches—they’re certainly preferable to those of American evangelicals who have, in many cases, moved away from Christ and his principles in service of some truly terrible people. I appreciate the teachings of Christ, even while knowing less about other religions that also value humans and the world. I value all teachings that emphasize preservative order and Golden Rule-based principles, which are common across many religions.

These principles exist beyond religion. You can also find them within physics, though this has been deemphasized over the last 100 years. Modern physics often portrays the universe as cold and random, indifferent to us, which isn’t entirely true. At the very least, Jesus was a person who existed in the world. I believe any person has value—both as someone who experiences it and as a manifestation of the forces for order.

On the inherent tragedy of existence, every conscious being is, to some degree, a tragedy because we’re all born to die—unless you believe in religions that promise something beyond this life. For many, the recompense for the loss of oneself is insufficient. Technology, however, may soon offer more means of perpetuating ourselves. Humanity, combined with technology, could evolve into entities and systems that are less mortal than we are now.

Technology is replacing religion. That's a process I've talked about. As technology becomes more powerful, it increasingly takes over functions we once turned to religion for—such as immortality, justice, fairness, and preserving what we value in the world.

I'm writing a book about a smart individual who turns to Jesus for comfort in old age—not as the Messiah, but as a source of solace. Some people turn to the world of Disney for unconditional love. Just two blocks from our house, an auction house specializes in Disney memorabilia. We walked through it today on the way to get sandwiches.

Unconditional love is powerful. It's comforting and can inspire you to be a better person. It's the opposite of engaging with violent movies or porn. If you look at porn, you go out into the world and have to correct your perception of people as just sexual objects. Similarly, after watching a violent movie—like a Liam Neeson film or something with an even higher body count—you need to remind yourself that the world isn't just a place for violent confrontations: having an “office Jesus” is a reminder that there are better ways to be in the world.

On an omnipresent creator as conscious logic, I'm not sure I believe in “conscious logic.” Consciousness exists in sufficiently complicated, self-consistent information-processing systems. But logic—or the principles of existence, like non-contradiction—is not an information-processing system. It's a set of principles that define what can and cannot exist in the world.

Logic isn't a reality constructor; it's a reality allowler. It's not conscious or capable of information processing. Unless proven otherwise, it's more like an inanimate gatekeeper.

You said, “I don't believe God is an old white man with a beard and flowing robes any more than you do.”

It's interesting. I think it shows some alignment in rejecting certain anthropomorphic depictions of God. However, I also appreciate attempts at theology that use logic and science as a foundation.

We both share common ground in believing that any God or creator must be consistent with the rules of physics. Either the creator has to exist within the framework of those rules, or there has to be some structure in the universe that exempts the creator from them.

Our understanding of physics limits this perspective. Our experience of the world and its physics is incredibly local. Humans have only been aware of and interacting with physics for about 100,000 years—if you include fossil records and our broader observations of the universe. However, we've only had what could be considered a fairly complete understanding of the overall structure of the universe for about 100 years.

Given this, there could be a greater scope of physics or metaphysics, where what we know is just a subset. Within such a broader framework, there might be room for a virtually omnipotent creator. But suppose the physics we know turns out to be the physics of all possible worlds and all places within them. In that case, that leaves little room for a God beyond the physical laws we already understand.

Stoner: If you and Rick choose to end the discussion at this point, at the very least, I am compelled to explain that I am stopping under protest: I am prepared to demonstrate that modern physics (particularly quantum mechanics) answer Ricks closing objections; not only do they leave room for a God, in some cases they even require some such entity, in order to explain what we observe in our modern experiments, e.g. see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheeler%27s_delayed-choice_experiment

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_test

<https://www.quantamagazine.org/how-bells-theorem-proved-spooky-action-at-a-distance-is-real-20210720/>

These experiments demonstrate ‘spooky’ effects which are not even remotely within the reach of Newton’s classical-causality laws.

Conversation with Scott Durgin on Lots of Seemingly Random Stuff (4)

2025-01-15

This interview delves into the multifaceted life and scholarly pursuits of **Scott Durgin**, a Senior RF Design Engineer, Physics Instructor, and dedicated archaeologist. Scott shares significant personal milestones, including his recent marriage and impending fatherhood, alongside his professional endeavors and intellectual interests. The conversation explores his excavation of a geometric necropolis, the publication of his work “Arch Euclid Secret,” and his ongoing project “The Pentachoron,” which integrates Borges’ literary techniques. Scott also discusses his deep engagement with ancient geometries, mythology, and calendrical cycles, highlighting the overarching theme of “Ars est Celare Artum” (Art is to conceal art). Additionally, he provides insights into his views on the current political climate in the United States, emphasizing concerns over democratic stability. This interview offers a comprehensive understanding of Scott Durgin’s dedication to uncovering hidden geometric and symbolic patterns in history and art, as well as his reflections on balancing personal life with extensive scholarly and professional commitments.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Scott, Scott here, it’s been a bit since last session. I owe you an apology for delays. This will be another “YUGE” session, but this will be done in parts, bite-size. Thank you for your immense patience with me. My questions will be piecemeal and original in some while others will build on prior responses. Let’s start light, my friend, what is newest in your life since our last session, session 3?

Scott Durgin: Marriage recently, wife now pregnant, new discoveries, new job.

Jacobsen: Any developments on the high-IQ societies and high-IQ communities front?

Durgin: No.

Jacobsen: Any developments on the Giga Society of Paul Cooijmans front?

Durgin: Nothing recent other than publishing my “Arch Euclid Secret” in Thoth. Only 10 chapters so far. Just a semi-treatise on Astronomy, Chronometry, Metrology and Mythology. Should be less than 50 chapters but it’s been slow going with 2 professional jobs and my excavation craziness.

Jacobsen: Any developments on the high-IQ societies and high-IQ communities front?

Durgin: No.

Jacobsen: What about the Glia Society?

Durgin: No.

Jacobsen: How is the political situation in the United States?

Durgin: A little crazy right now.

Jacobsen: Have you taken any new IQ tests?

Durgin: No.

Jacobsen: Have you picked up any new languages or intellectual pursuits since last talking?

Durgin: Still working on Egyptian, getting okay at hieroglyphs! Also learning cartography because I’m mapping the geometric necropolis near my neck of the woods.

Jacobsen: Any good books lately?

Durgin: Bunch:

Got a copy of Leonardo's geometric drawings: 3D versions of tetrahedron, cuboctahedron, etc., full page, color, in his pencil pretty cool.

Jewish Princedom in feudal France by Zuckerman

Sanchuniathan's Phoenician history, edited/annotated by Cumberland (died in 1721) super interesting tome.

Mythical origin of the Egyptian temple by Eve A Reymond, probably my favorite. Excellent thesis published in 1969.

In last 2 years acquired and read about 48 new books, but can't remember them now. Some more here:

Codex Rosae Crucis by Manly Hall

Book of Kells by Sullivan

Feynman Lectures on Gravitation

Geometry of Light by Leonhardt and Philbin

Myth and Symbol in ancient Egypt by Rundle Clark

Legends of the Egyptian gods by Budge

Time by Marie Louis von Franz

Jacobsen: Any new drama in your life?

Durgin: Nothing crazy.

Jacobsen: What is the biggest new theme in your life that I should keep in mind this time?

Durgin: Ars est Celare Artum. Absolutely 100% dominant theme, been chasing it and finding it, then being chased by it for 2 decades now. Resurrected this last October like a giant monster and mistress.

Jacobsen: How did you and the wife meet?

Durgin: Restaurant after online.

Jacobsen: How long were you two together before being married?

Durgin: 7 years, almost exact.

Jacobsen: Who proposed to whom?

Durgin: Me to her in our favorite restaurant.

Jacobsen: What was the style of the wedding?

Durgin: Celtic witchery: Outdoors under the pines with pagoda.

Jacobsen: Who had more input the ceremony and the officiation?

Durgin: She did nearly everything, I had only a few things in mind.

Jacobsen: Who did the officiation? What was the theme and the aesthetic, the food and the attire, and the location?

Durgin: Local female officiant. Uxbridge, Mass., Celtic themes. She arrived in a horse-drawn carriage with her father. Read each other personal vows. Champagne-colored tuxedo for me, white bridal gown for her, with an elegant crown on her head. Five bridesmaids in maroon gowns, my daughter was Best Man.

Jacobsen: When are you expecting the new child? You might want to talk to Matthew Scillitani or Rick Rosner, new dad and old dad, respectively. Any objection to a three-way session on expectant dad, new dad, and old dad?

Durgin: January; no objections.

Jacobsen: What are some of the new discoveries? That'll be trail of gummy worms with an open can behind it.

Durgin: You mean gummy bears... tasty gummy BEARS. Admittedly the analogy disappears with the can.

Durgin: Backdrop: Patterns in history provide a great substrate for understanding how the future unfolds. This is especially true when those patterns can be identified with numbers, cycles. Religious adherents of the deep past used numeric cycles (planetary or astronomical orbits, eclipses mostly, so basic astrology) to record and plan their holidays, legends/stories and epochal events. The Roman empire absorbed these when conquering various cultures, and then the Holy Roman Empire inherited it. They continue to this day. The Ancient Olmecs, Toltecs and Mayans did this too, to a remarkable extent. One very important example of this I have discovered recently is the plan to co-opt the Jewish intent on rebuilding their "temple", whose grand historical cycles (mythical really) form a nexus in 2034-2041. The Roman Catholic Church has been aware of this for centuries, so they are counting down the clock too, and helping to arrange its success by interfering in geopolitical affairs, as they have done for centuries.

From a practical standpoint, the Church had "court mathematicians" or historians, per se (probably Jesuits) who would constantly study these natural cycles and then plan their own future events so as to stamp them with an air of divine origin or authority. In most cases, the activity is to back-date mythical events (like births of gods, emperors, etc.) so as to fit a pattern. Been doing this for centuries. I've tracked it, learning a lot of basic history myself in the process. The many gaps I have filled in my knowledge often confirm and re-confirm; but sometimes they contradict, which is where the real learning takes place.

Just 2 examples of studies like this are *Breaking the Mayan Code* by Michael Coe and the book by Zuckerman referenced above.

Durgin: A sidebar to the above activity allowed me to uncover a potentially meaningful solar system cycle, related to the ancient Jewish (Hebrew) calendar makers and myth makers: 25925 earth years is 9,468,900 days (and about 3-1/2 extra). The nominal number is a multiple of 2338 days and 13527 days, where 2338 days is an orbital syzygy of Earth, Mars and Venus (whose relative positions repeat after such number), whereas the 13527 is an approximate eclipse cycle (+/- 1 or 2 days), not part of the Saros cycle. If one divides 9468900 by 360, the result is about 26303 days, which is 72 years and about 5 days (making up one degree). This much Hipparchus approximated in his lifetime as well, but the prevailing theories up till now fixate on a more rounded 26000 years or 25920 years or thereabouts. I have my own. NASA uses the 2338-day

cycle to ensure our landers take off from Earth with the right timing to optimize the trip to Mars. I believe this cycle is related to the Chandler wobble, but have had no time or any puke grad students at my disposal to experiment. Example: about every 6.4 years it is known that the Chandler wobble experiences some sort of “reset”. A bit of literature on it, but no recollection right now. My suspicions are raised due to the fact the wobble has a ~433-day cycle. 54 cycles fit approximately into 10 syzygies of 2338 days (i.e., $433 \times 54 = 23382$ days).

Also interesting is the above ratio $9468900/360$ is very close to $71499/e$, where e is the natural logarithm (2.71828...), a number close to 2.72, naturally.

Durgin: Gigantic Solomon’s seal laid out in plan form, deep in the woods; formed at vertices by granite boulders, 273 ft apart (about). Pentagram overlaid such that its vertex is coincident with center of top crossbar (one of six legs of the hexagram). Hexagram and pentagram are tilted to the NW by 15 degrees, such that the internal 45-45-90 triangle has sides (approx 193 ft) aligned N-S and E-W. This 15-degree delta can only occur at certain earth locations, so it’s possible the intent was an enormous geodetic marker. This internal triangle I found first (about 6 years ago). Took more than a decade of repeated measurements to finally work most of it out, but the years of uncertainty, confusion and doubt were all worth it, due to the intensity of clarity that takes hold (things falling together in rapid succession) when the solution is approached, and then all the mistakes I made in the past are understood and I slap my forehead.

Jacobsen: What is the new job, or are the current jobs?

Durgin: Large defense contractor, functionally I am a Senior RF Design Engineer. I also double as a Physics Instructor and a marketing strategist.

Jacobsen: What is “Arch Euclid Secret”? Anything else to be included outside of Astronomy, Chronometry, Metrology and Mythology?

Durgin: No, that’s enough. Actually, I am still working on *The Pentachoron*, which is a fugue-like literary creation of mine. I’m attempting to fuse all 4 of Borges’ literary devices together: (a) The Voyage through Time, (b) the Story within the Story, (c) the Contamination of Reality by the Dream, and (d) the Double. I have had intimate knowledge of each of these in my life, especially FUCKING ALL OF THEM. So a labyrinth I get trapped in is an apt metaphor, especially if I must create a labyrinth in order to enter the big one; then be trapped for aeons.

I can’t easily summarize *Arch Euclid Secret* other than to say the central and primary theme is Geometry, which is the most archaic form of knowledge we know of (predates language, symbols, letters, orthography, etc.), preserved by ancient priests (Egyptian, Mayan, Babylonian), eventually discovered and preserved by modern-day Freemasons. One Secret (I believe known to Euclid) is in plain sight to those who study geometry and its history: latent in art, language, mythology (scripture); also used in metrology, chronometry, and astronomical observations. The relationship crosses over to religious treasures and artifacts: Noah’s Ark, Enoch’s pillars, Enoch’s altar, the Emerald tablet, Solomon’s Temple, The Ark of the Covenant, the grail, etc., which all have very exhaustive and precise geometric detail in their references.

This secret is just one example of a geometric relationship (which ties together many of the above) and is that between the Egyptian royal cubit (“RC” which I take to be 1.72 feet or 20.64 inches) versus $\sqrt{3} = 1.7320508\dots$. An equilateral triangle is the best form to illustrate this, where the sides are about 71-1/2 feet, then its height is ~36 RC. The relation is precise if the sides are

$72 \times 1.72/\sqrt{3} = 71.499057336...$ So close to 71.5 ft that no practical distinction could be made even today, excepting laser measurement or maybe thin film processes.

Inclusion of the number 68 ties together the equilateral triangle with the pentagram. That is, 68 feet is 25 RC + 25 feet = total 25 “megalithic yards” (“MY” = 2.72 feet). Coincidentally, if a pentagram has sides of ~71.5 ft, then its height (which is the height of its circumscribed pentagon) is very near 68 feet, especially if the 71.499... metric is used: $72 \times 1.72/\sqrt{3} \times (\cosine\ 18) = 67.999644...$ Again, close enough that the ancients would not have detected a difference. Both these numbers (71.5 or 72, and 68) appear to have been used on a few obelisks (the height of Cleopatra’s needles, for example). What I like about this is the fusion of ancient metrology: MY, RD, and feet. Jefferson worked on this, so did Newton a century before him.

I have rational reasons for believing Euclid was well aware of this obvious little pearl of a relation, and have thus commandeered a Greek letter for its definition: $\Xi\ (\text{def}) = 72 \times 1.72/\sqrt{3}$

This also dovetails back into the orbital cycles and calendric chicanery previously mentioned, but not enough space here to cover.

Jacobsen: What have you been excavating? Any related to petroglyphs?

Durgin: Yes, the above #3. There are dozens of petroglyphs there; four of them are:

Gigantic head of what appears to be a Griffin (used to think was an owl)

Serpent

Turtle

Head of a crane, or sandpiper/bird. I call it Saiph.

The griffin head is about a 10-ton stone, the serpent consists of 4 segments of granite stones laid out in a 34-35 ft length (each stone about 8 feet x 4 ft, so these are ~5 tons each). Its head bears an additional carving of the griffin’s claw and just above the serpent’s mouth, one of the talons in the claw is pressing down on a small stone, intended to represent a pearl or perhaps gemstone. The serpent is about 300 ft south of the griffin and extends from north to south, tail to head. There is a geometric arrangement of all of these that I am still working out, very difficult and time-consuming. Over a 60-acre spread in deep woods, completely covered in granite stones. So the “Find the pattern among chaos” is an apt symbol here. Perhaps even the labyrinth.

Saiph is only visible after March, due to the necessary sun’s elevation to cast a shadow on the stone (otherwise viewing is impossible). Brilliant carving, as it is in bas-relief too. Finding it was a magic moment, as with a few others not mentioned here.

Jacobsen: What kind of “a little crazy right now”?

Durgin: What is crazy is that Trump’s followers have no problem with a dictatorship. Never thought I would see this kind of anti-American idiocy in my lifetime. And when liberals (or even rational conservatives for that matter) force their little heads around to observe the constitution’s guarantee on individual freedoms, they shout “dictator!” It’s formidably amazing how ignorant these people are and how close we are to losing the Republic. There is hope, though...

Jacobsen: What seems to have spurred all this new activity?

Durgin: My unholy curiosity.

Jacobsen: What is an accurate way in which to characterize Egyptian hieroglyphs as a language?

Durgin: Solis Sacerdotibus: Only for the initiated.

Jacobsen: What is the geometric necropolis?

Durgin: “I learned the secret among the bones of the dead.”

Still working everything out, see above #3. It may be a ritual-only necropolis (no dead bodies), but this is a multi-generation construction, so I don’t know for sure yet. Learning how to lift 2000-3000 pound stones out of a 14-foot deep hole I excavated; also excavated a 40 ft long tunnel (connected to the hole at its bottom) through near solid granite; took me 4 months to go 20 feet, and this slightly below the water table, so imagine laying supine on ledge deep below ground with 6-10 ft of stone and a further 6 ft of earth above you, dragging yourself by your arms across the ledge and through about 6-9” of cold water; all the while the ledge ABOVE you is scraping your backside as you move forward in the dark...). All this in a remote wooded area with hand tools. Insanity. But, regarding its construction, seems like a lot of work for ritual. Perhaps they were creating a mythical ancestry due to the fact they were exiles. That is...maybe their parents, grandparents, etc., were all buried back home, so in order to create the psychological illusion/impression they were still with them, they built a pseudo-cemetery. This does tie in to Raymond’s thesis tangentially.

Jacobsen: What are da Vinci’s drawings telling you?

Durgin: That he also knew.

Jacobsen: What is Jewish principedom?

Durgin: A 1972 study about the 8th/9th century activity in France, which paralleled the rise and reign of Charlemagne. His family apparently merged with that of a Jewish Prince (“Nazir”) from Babylonia who was brought over (by King Pepin, Charlemagne’s father) to rule the Jewish communities in Narbonne (against the Pope’s wishes). Narbonne was part of Septimania in southern France (not far from Rennes le Chateau), Carcassonne, Rennes le Bains, etc.), and it is here that Pepin and his sons established a Jewish Principedom, according to Zuckerman. The use of calendar cycles on the part of the Jews was covered here, for they were believing a Jewish Kingdom could be established in time, thus their Messiah would show. Many Christians (leaders) were spitting and farting in their chairs, of course; just beside themselves to death, especially Pope Stephen.

Jacobsen: How does the Phoenician history tie into this new work?

Durgin: It doesn’t too much. One is ancient, the other Medieval. They both make reference to calendar cycles, of sorts, but Cumberland was so clouded and poisoned in his judgment by his attempt to show Sanchuniathon as “heathen,” versus “proper Christian,” that it’s difficult to unveil the nuggets and disentangle the actual facts. Religion poisons everything, as Hitchens said.

Jacobsen: What is Raymond’s conclusion?

Durgin: My brutal summary does not do 10% justice to her work, which is brilliant: *The Ancient Egyptian Temple* is entirely mythical (at its beginning), except for the pattern first established. All future versions of the temple are simply copies and manifestations of the original. This is similar to the concept of an architectural plan or engineering drawing/blueprint representing all future buildings constructed from it, but the original is deeply ensconced in myth. In the same way, all the Hebrew treasures (including the temple) are conceptual only. Those who choose to build one are simply manifesting a particular version of it (“true copies”).

This dovetails into my *Arch-Euclid Secret* in the sense that Geometry on paper is perfect. Geometry in concept is perfect (like the grail, or ark of the covenant), but real practical geometry is not and never can be. There are no perfectly straight lines, perfectly parallel lines, perfect circles, etc., except in concept. Euclid knew this, of course.

The Egyptians used natural elements to inform their myth: Hawks, reeds, serpents, catastrophes, islands, fire, turtles, etc., as well as precise geometry. Much like the South Americans. Typically, they used $\sqrt{2}$, $\sqrt{3}$, and $\sqrt{5}$ (emphasis on two meanings of the term “root”). Interestingly, I believe they were inspired by the constellation of Orion, because a simple rendition of the stars (i.e., flattened onto a map) come close: From Saiph to Rigel to Bellatrix forms a very near 1-2- $\sqrt{3}$ triangle (30-60-90 degrees). A pseudo-rectangular version of the constellation may have been used as a design for a flat stone gnomon in the deep past.

Jacobsen: How is “Ars est Celare Artum” or art is to conceal art connecting everything as a “dominant theme”?

Durgin: Geometry hidden in Art (like Poussin, Teniers, da Vinci, etc.), Geometry hidden in calendar cycles and mythologies (art imitating life and vice versa), my excavation project: same. The geometric stone necropolis is the ultimate example of true art concealing art within a chaotic landscape, and further concealing sweet spots within the geometry. I have attempted to conceal art within my own work as well. Inspiration. The theme which preceded this was deeply ingrained in me from over 25 years ago: *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*.

Conversation with Rick Rosner on Hollywood Schmollywood

2025-01-15

This interview explores the insights of Rick Rosner, a seasoned television writer and producer, in conversation with Scott Jacobsen. The discussion delves into the evolution of celebrity behavior from the 1970s to the present, highlighting the transition towards more responsible conduct. Jacobsen reflects on the dynamics of fame as a tool for creative endeavors and the balance celebrities maintain between their public personas and private lives. Key topics include the role of charisma and social skills in achieving success, the importance of authenticity and ethical behavior, and the impact of political climates on public figures. The interview also examines the motivations behind celebrity interviews, the public's fascination with personal relationships and vulnerabilities of celebrities, and the shift towards more mindful and ethical behavior in modern celebrity culture. Additionally, Jacobsen shares personal anecdotes illustrating the influence of charisma and the diverse paths to success within the entertainment industry. This conversation provides a comprehensive understanding of contemporary celebrity dynamics and the factors contributing to sustained public admiration and professional longevity.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In 2024, you suggested I start interviewing celebrities or media personalities. Since then, I have received emails with specific hooks pitching these individuals. Did your suggestion and the subsequent publication of my work contribute to this? I am not certain. However, celebrity interviews tend to generate the most excitement. This is demonstrated by the long-standing success of *People Magazine*, which has been in publication since 1974, surpassing its 50th anniversary. With celebrities, there is a natural advantage—audiences are familiar with them and want to learn more. Since the Trump era, and perhaps even earlier, public life has become increasingly politicized.

Rick Rosner: As a result, celebrities often take public stances that attract significant interest. For instance, Taylor Swift has adeptly shown her political sympathies without overly politicizing her image. Meanwhile, it was recently reported that Carrie Underwood might perform at a politically charged event, which sparked backlash. In a world oversaturated with content, celebrity interviews remain highly engaging.

Jacobsen: What do celebrities seek from interviews when the focus is not on promoting their next project, in your experience?

Rosner: Celebrities often seek to be understood as multidimensional individuals beyond their professional accomplishments. This perspective is often successful. For example, Pamela Anderson is making a significant comeback with *The Last Showgirl*. Interviews have highlighted her strong performance and intellectual engagement with acting as a craft, moving beyond her previous image as a star of *Baywatch* or someone associated with public controversies.

Audiences tend to support celebrities who appear relatable and genuine. On the other hand, they are equally fascinated by celebrities behaving poorly. Recently, Mel Gibson appeared on a podcast promoting Ivermectin as a cancer cure, spreading misinformation. This drew criticism, yet people would likely be equally interested if Gibson changed their perspective and demonstrated a more informed and positive approach.

Jacobsen: Why are people so interested in celebrities?

Rosner: One reason is that we already know much of their stories. Another is that we want them to be deserving of our interest. Celebrities have immense resources, agency, and wealth, and we want to see how they use their power.

We cheer for their relationships, even when we expect them to fail. For example, Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck recently got back together. This might be their third time as a couple. People want it to work out but are intrigued by its potential to fall apart.

J.Lo is known as a diva but doesn't seem unkind. Despite some personal struggles, Ben Affleck comes across as intelligent, kind, and fun. People generally want good things for him. He was married to Jennifer Garner, who is widely respected and seems genuinely decent.

When we see celebrities with every advantage face challenges, we question how the rest of us will manage. What does that mean for everyone else if they struggle to make relationships or personal goals work despite their resources?

Jacobsen: Which celebrities have impressed you with their commitment to causes outside Hollywood, even after achieving fame?

Rosner: Any celebrity who becomes knowledgeable and active in a cause stands out. Leonardo DiCaprio, for instance, speaks about environmental issues and seems reasonably well-informed. However, he's criticized for using yachts and private planes, contributing to the pollution he advocates against.

George Clooney also comes to mind. He is knowledgeable and upstanding and has championed causes like protecting the oceans. Additionally, Clooney has actively supported Democratic political candidates and worked to nudge President Biden on policy matters.

When George Clooney exited the race for office, reactions varied. However, he comes from a political family—his father ran for office—so he understands the landscape. He also seems like a genuinely decent person. When he became rich and famous, he gave each of his friends a million dollars, reasoning that if he could enjoy financial relief, why shouldn't his friends share that comfort?

This generosity reflects someone who values others. My former boss was similarly charitable. I know he's incredibly informed from years of working with him, particularly on random subjects. He's highly tech-savvy, always online, and can quickly educate himself on nearly any topic. Many celebrities share these traits—surprisingly knowledgeable and smart, which benefits them in the entertainment industry.

Jacobsen: Do you think intelligence correlates with acting success?

Rosner: To a degree, yes. Successful actors often exhibit intelligence because it enhances their craft. While some may succeed early in their careers due to extraordinary physical attractiveness, sustaining a long-term career often requires intelligence, intuition, or hard work.

Jacobsen: How would you assess their social astuteness and emotional sensitivity?

Rosner: The entertainment industry is full of individuals with exceptional social skills, almost to the point of what could be called "reverse autism." Many performers have heightened social understanding and intuition, which correlate with success. However, these qualities aren't mandatory—some succeed without them.

For example, we attended a talk with Jesse Eisenberg, an actor, writer, and director. He wrote and starred in a film about cousins retracing their grandmother's life during the Holocaust alongside Kieran Culkin. In the movie, his character has OCD, which mirrors Eisenberg's experiences. He used rubber bands around his wrist, snapping them to stay grounded in the film and real life.

He was candid about the challenges of making that film compared to others in which he was simply a hired actor. It became clear that a creative individual who loves making art, working hard, and focusing on the craft rather than seeking widespread recognition.

Jesse Eisenberg, for example, seems to enjoy making films more than embracing the perks of being a movie star. He mentioned that being a star makes it easier to get projects funded. He can secure financing more effectively by attaching his name to a screenplay. However, he doesn't seem drawn to stardom's glamour or hedonistic aspects. For him, fame is a tool to achieve creative goals rather than an indulgence.

Jacobsen: Do charisma and schmoozing play a significant role in success, or can performers manage without them?

Rosner: It certainly helps, but it's not essential. George Clooney, for instance, is naturally charming and charismatic, whether he intends to be or not.

I once worked as a doorman at the Sagebrush Cantina. One of my duties was to ensure no one parked in a specific space out front. It looked like a handicapped spot but was reserved for the fire marshal if he needed to check occupancy limits. If we exceeded those limits, the fire marshal could shut us down or start visiting regularly, which would have been bad for business.

One day, a car full of older adults parked in that spot. An older man, probably in his late 70s, got out with his wife, who was walking with a cane. I approached them to explain that they couldn't park there. My job required me to be firm, even unpleasant, if necessary. However, as the man spoke to me, he exuded a charming, twinkling charisma. He pleaded politely, explaining his wife's difficulty walking.

Against my better judgment, I let them park there. Afterward, I questioned myself, wondering why I had caved so easily. I couldn't figure out if the man were deliberately persuasive or if it was just his natural demeanour. Later, I realized it was Lloyd Bridges. His charm was undeniable, whether intentional or not.

Even in his old age, Lloyd Bridges remained a charming and charismatic figure. As the father of Jeff Bridges and a star in his own right, his charisma was undeniable. It's not a physical force like in physics but a real interpersonal force that can influence people profoundly.

This reminds me of seeing actors like Sam Elliott, who is now likely the same age Lloyd Bridges was when I met him. In his late seventies, Sam Elliott remains a familiar and charismatic figure. If you Google "Sam Elliott and wife," you'll see this iconic actor, who has been in movies for over 55 years, married to a petite, older woman. It's striking because we associate stars with immense social leverage. Yet, many remain in long-term relationships with partners who seem like "regular" people.

Jacobsen: Why do you think that contrast feels unusual?

Rosner: It seems odd because we expect celebrities to maximize their social capital in all aspects of life. However, many have long-term partners who've been with them through the highs and

lows of their careers. They're human beings first and love their partners for reasons beyond surface appearances or public perception.

I used to work out at Gold's Gym in North Hollywood, where I met Albert Beckles, a legendary bodybuilder. Beckles, who might now be in his mid-80s or older, was incredibly fit. Even in his seventies, he maintained a physique with around four percent body fat. Despite his age, he looked youthful, with a shaved head and a ripped body.

Occasionally, I'd see his wife or girlfriend, a petite older white woman, and their pairing seemed unusual at first glance. With his youthful appearance and powerful presence, Beckles contrasted starkly with his partner, who looked her age. However, their relationship likely spanned decades—they probably met when they were younger and grew old together. She naturally aged while he maintained a youthful appearance due to his lifestyle. It highlights how their bond was built on something deeper than appearances.

Jacobsen: Do you think celebrities have an innate duality—a personal identity and a public persona—that helps them succeed?

Rosner: Absolutely. Celebrities who reach the highest levels of fame often balance two distinct identities: their authentic selves and their celebrity personas. The way they manage this dynamic varies greatly. Some embrace their celebrity status fully, using it to fuel their careers. In contrast, others prioritize maintaining their identity and relationships. Success often depends on how well they can navigate these two facets of their lives.

These days, most celebrities manage their public lives well. We're no longer in the age of "celebrity assholes," which was more prevalent in the 1970s. For instance, when I was on the writing staff of a major show, the culture wasn't about excess or indulgence. Instead of doing cocaine, we were taking fibre gummies to deal with the sedentary lifestyle of long hours at our desks.

This era has more celebrities who behave responsibly and navigate fame with maturity. I watched my former boss evolve from being largely a radio personality to one of America's 100–150 most famous people. Despite this rise in fame, he didn't lose his decency.

Jacobsen: How did he manage the pressures of fame while staying grounded?

Rosner: He didn't engage in exploitative behaviour or use his position to harm others. He remained charitable and reasonable, though he enjoyed playful banter and asking awkward questions as part of his natural curiosity. His increased agency and responsibilities came with new challenges—paying for a publicist, manager, and agent and managing media interactions carefully.

However, he became less cautious in expressing his views during the Trump era. As a decent person, he felt compelled to speak out about alarming events in America. For example, he was deeply upset by the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, where over 50 people were killed and more than 500 were injured. As a Las Vegas native, this tragedy hit close to home.

Traditionally, late-night hosts avoided political commentary to maintain a broad audience. But my boss, like others, felt he had to address critical issues, even at the risk of alienating some viewers.

Jacobsen: Do you think this shift reflects a broader change in celebrity culture?

Rosner: Yes. We're in an era where most celebrities manage their public personas carefully and behave with greater responsibility. Of course, no one is perfect, and every celebrity has moments of controversy. Still, the overall trend is toward more mindful and ethical behaviour.

Celebrities, like anyone else, can occasionally be caught acting poorly. However, we are in an era where they are generally more responsible. This may be because the public is better informed, as a lack of information often leads to poor decisions. In the 1970s, I was certainly immature, as were many celebrities at the time.

Jacobsen: What about people in Hollywood who aren't socially competent? Can they still succeed?

Rosner: Yes, it's possible. I'm not particularly socially competent, but I managed to build a career. Part of my success was due to a writing partnership with someone who excelled socially—what I'd call “reverse autism.” He handled the social dynamics, which was helpful, even if it wasn't always easy.

Additionally, you can succeed without social prowess if you're good at what you do. I worked hard and developed skills that compensated for my shortcomings. For example, I became comfortable admitting personal flaws and turning them into humour, similar to what stand-up comedians do. If my jokes didn't land, I could still make people laugh by being candid about embarrassing topics.

Many talented individuals in entertainment, some on the spectrum or socially unconventional, succeed because of their competence, creativity, and hard work.

Jacobsen: What about people at the lower levels of entertainment, like production assistants or interns?

Rosner: At the entry-level, I've noticed a mix of talent and incompetence. Many interns or PAs I encountered early in my career were hired through connections rather than merit. Some were unreliable or lacked dedication. This often allowed competent and hardworking individuals—even unconventional—to stand out and advance.

Over time, the less capable individuals tend to be weeded out. In the early stages, though, it's possible to succeed as a “weirdo” if you're reliable, competent, hardworking, or possess a couple of those qualities.

Jacobsen: What if someone is found to be unethical or fraudulent?

Rosner: I've been fortunate to work with mostly ethical people. While dishonesty exists in any industry, I've rarely encountered it directly. Ethical behaviour tends to matter more as people advance, where reputations carry greater weight.

Jacobsen: Thank you again for the time, Rick.

Conversation with Tomáš Perna on ANNs and More (6)

2025-01-15

This interview features Scott Douglas Jacobsen engaging in a profound discussion with **Tomáš Perna** on the simulation of human intelligence through artificial neural networks (ANNs) and its implications for the development of genuine artificial intelligence (AI). Perna delves into the intricate relationship between intelligent processes and neural network domains, introducing the concept of MACP (Manner of Assigning Coordinates to Processes) as a pivotal yet enigmatic mechanism governing intelligent behavior. The conversation explores the integration of quantum mechanics, particularly the Schrödinger equation, into neural network modeling to understand information transmission at the synaptic level. Perna also discusses the challenges associated with interpreting intelligent phenomena beyond conventional language frameworks and the potential role of Klein Gordon Equation (KGE) in optimizing ANN architectures. The dialogue highlights the theoretical complexities and practical considerations in bridging neural networks with quantum principles, underscoring the need for advanced research and collaboration to advance the frontier of real AI development.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Hi Tomáš! It's been a long time since we've had an ANN chat! Let us get on with it. How is the simulation of human intelligence in artificial neural networks the correct manner in which to pursue the development of real AI?

Tomáš Perna: The intelligent processes take place in certain domains of the cerebral neural network (NN). So, the “coordinates” of any intelligent process occupy a corresponding domain of NN and the reference frame of this process can be found, if the manner of how the domain is assigned to the process (in short MACP). Nobody knows, how it can be done. MACP is not a part of the thinking process and simply stands thus outside of any language, in which it is thought. We can only assume that the MACP is an information that is transcendent with respect to the thinking process languages. So, consequently, we introduce a transcendent function that could be studied from the information transmission point of view. And you know that the basic role at an information transmission the electric charge or a distribution of electric dipoles within the synaptic slots in the NN-case play. So, man, we have a task to study the electric charge behavior with respect to a transmission to our considered transcendent function. In this way, we get the wave function without any intelligent thinking process language interpretation possibility associated with an electric charge that, in the first most simple degree, satisfies the Schrödinger equation thought as an MACP transmission equation with respect to an intelligent observation of phenomena, which such a transmission could emerge within the synaptic slots of NN. These slots are thought of as the above mentioned domains of the intelligent process's course. – Many synaptic slots, many electron system observable states as the solutions of the Schrödinger equation. – Very roughly described, you have just obtained the Schrödinger equation as a mathematical model of the observable electronic states of NN. Such the equation thus becomes characteristics of your intelligent observation and thinking instrument usable within synaptic slots. Point. Problems with interpretations of the observed phenomena in the thinking process languages are now seemingly generated by the wave function, where your languages ansatz should be completely forgotten and these “problems” are very natural consequence of the MACP.

Now, you can see that the Schrödinger equation is silent, it cannot speak in any natural language. Taking the machine language that is isomorphic to the considered thinking process language up to the wave function interpretation, you can obtain certain artificial solutions of the Schrödinger

equation which exist with respect to the artificial thinking process representations (ATR). These are already the ANN- algorithms creating the horizon of observables-considering manner coupled with the Schrödinger equation, very schematically expressed. We say that the quantum states of aNN lay on the ATR- horizon of the Schrödinger equation. Optimizing the aNN- architecture, you should control them by means of the KGE, such that the AI-horizon can be found.

That is, however, another more complicated story and who will pay the money for it? Why? Since there are some keys, which could help the guys from the OpenAI (e.g.) already without anything for us. Therefore, I will be silent up to any substantiated possible KGE-conversation.

Breaking Bread with Marco Ripà on Iterated Exponentiation and the Nine Dots Problem (4)

2025-01-22

This interview provides an in-depth exploration of Marco Ripà's innovative contributions to discrete mathematics as an independent researcher and autodidact. Conducted by Scott Douglas Jacobsen, the conversation delves into Ripà's dual focus on the modular properties of integer tetration and the development of minimal covering paths in high-dimensional grids, including his work on the Nine Dots Puzzle and generalized knight's tours. Ripà discusses his fascination with iterated exponentiation, the concept of congruence speed, and his creation of over 100 sequences in the OEIS. The dialogue also covers Ripà's formula for generating infinitely many c -th perfect powers whose constant congruence speed is also equal to c , for any positive integer c , his counterexamples to established theorems, and the potential applications of his research in cryptography and Ramsey theory. Additionally, Ripà outlines his future research directions, including collaborations on Euclidean knight's tours and optimization problems in high-dimensional grids. The interview highlights Ripà's unique approach to mathematics, characterized by innovative algorithms, constructive proofs, and a commitment to expanding the boundaries of combinatorics, number theory, and graph theory.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Over the past decade, you've pursued a unique dual-aspect focus. One on the modular properties of integer tetration or iterated exponentiation: how rightmost digits stabilize with growth in power tower and introduction of congruence speed. Another on minimal covering paths in high-dimensional point grids: emphasis on the 3×3 Nine Dots Puzzle with a clockwise-algorithm to minimize straight segments needed to cover all points. Other work has covered perfect powers, number-theoretic conjectures, and Hamiltonian paths in higher-dimensional hypercubes. So, what is your background interest as an independent researcher and autodidact in mathematics?

Marco Ripà: That's fundamentally correct. Given that, in the same period, I've contributed over 100 sequences published on the OEIS (180+ since 2011), e.g.:

Ripà's sequences for the OEIS

Single author of (175): A176942, A180346, A181073, A181129, A187602, A187603, A187604, A187605, A187613, A187628, A187636, A206636, A220090, A225227, A244056, A260586, A260751, A260819, A260820, A260821, A260823, A260825, A260939, A260953, A260955, A260982, A261039, A261040, A261066, A261067, A261071, A261116, A261140, A261149, A261150, A261151, A261152, A261193, A261547, A306658, A306700, A306744, A307379, A317163, A317164, A317255, A317259, A317824, A317903, A317905, A317914, A318165, A318478, A319259, A320523, A321130, A321131, A335112, A335113, A335114, A337392, A337833, A337836, A339313, A340009, A340012, A340036, A340315, A340319, A340345, A340841, A349425, A351663, A351727, A352396, A352991, A353025, A353152, A353238, A353246, A354209, A354619, A354959, A355417, A355424, A355461, A356022, A356023, A356562, A356751, A356756, A356946, A356987, A357055, A357056, A357969, A358030, A358361, A359201, A359187, A359202, A359662, A359740, A359855, A360178, A360180, A360270, A360750, A361006, A361010, A361011, A361100, A361918, A361352, A362000, A362004, A362529, A362530, A362590, A363746, A363755, A363766, A363980, A364270, A364271, A364711, A364789, A364837, A364855, A365689, A365707, A365935,

A365936, A365937, A368008, A368009, A368146, A368476, A369624, A369771, A369826, A370211, A370255, A370532, A370775, A371048, A371074, A371078, A371129, A371671, A371720, A372490, A373205, A373206, A373386, A373387, A373537, A374148, A374149, A374224, A374260, A374883, A374948, A374949, A376446, A376838, A376842, A376883, A377124, A377126, A378419, A378421, A379243, A379906, A380031.

First author of (7): A306780, A307383, A307384, A307385, A355420, A356805, A364806.

Co-author of (3): A181373, A352329, A356810.

More terms added to the original sequence (1): A254276.

Reference: The On-Line Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences (OEIS),
<https://oeis.org/search?q=author%3Arip%C3%A0&sort>.

We could synthetically say that my focus as an Independent Researcher (100% self-taught in mathematics) is discrete mathematics. For example, let us consider my preprint *Shortest polygonal chains covering each planar square grid*: the original proof of Lemma 2.1 in the Appendix transposes a graph theory problem into a Diophantine equation, which is discrete number theory in the end.

Research-level mathematics is incredibly challenging for an autodidact to navigate across multiple fields. I chose combinatorics and number theory because many open problems lie within these domains (as you can see by visiting Open Problem Garden) and are not as technically demanding as branches that merge algebra and topology. Additionally, I have been fascinated by integers since I was very young. So here I am.

Jacobsen: How did you become fascinated by iterated exponentiation?

Ripà: I grew up as a lonely child. My mom worked in her toy store, and I spent countless hours there, often bored with nothing to do. In the late '80s, my best friend in that store was an old calculator with only the four basic arithmetic operations. I discovered that if I typed a number, pressed “×” twice, and then repeatedly hit “=”, the result grew rapidly, filling the entire screen. I was fascinated by the patterns in the final digits.

About 25 years later, I discovered WolframAlpha and revisited this “game,” replacing “×” with “^”, thus exploring power towers instead of iterated multiplications. I suddenly noticed how the final digits stabilized, and then I realized that even the digit next to the leftmost stable digit exhibited non-random behavior, eventually entering a periodic loop. It reminded me of those days in my mom’s store.

Delving deeper into these patterns, I noticed that the number of new frozen digits after each iteration became constant at some point. This observation inspired me to study the topic more formally. I wrote a book in 2011 and eventually published the first peer-reviewed paper on the subject, titled “On the constant congruence speed of tetration”, in 2020.

Jacobsen: What is iterated exponentiation or modularity of integer tetration?

Ripà: I focused my work on integer power towers in radix-10, the familiar decimal numeral system (bring closure to the countless hours spent by that lonely child repeatedly pressing “×” followed by “=” over and over), where all the entries are the same given positive integer.

These are called “tetrations” (the next operation above exponentiation, also called hyper-4), where we raise a given number “ a ” to itself “ b ” times. When we write $a^{^b}$, we mean

$a^a a^a \dots^a$, starting from the top and working downwards. For instance, $3^{3^3} = 3^{3^3} = 3^{(3^3)} = 3^{(27)} = 7625597484987$, instead of $(3^3)^3 = 27^3 = 19683$ (which is not particularly interesting from a mathematical point of view). The latter is sometimes referred to as “weak tetration”, but mathematicians like to make simple things complex, so why be surprised by that choice? (Just joking — we are serious thinkers, n’est-ce pas?).

Jacobsen: What are minimal covering paths in high-dimensional point grids?

Ripà: Here we are in the field of combinatorics and graph theory. We are considering grids of points in a Euclidean k -dimensional space, so we can properly define those sets of $n_1 \cdot n_2 \cdots n_k$ points through the Cartesian product $\{0, 1, 2, \dots, (n_1 - 1)\} \times \{0, 1, 2, \dots, (n_2 - 1)\} \times \cdots \times \{0, 1, 2, \dots, (n_k - 1)\}$.

A minimal covering path for these grids is a simple polygonal chain with the minimum number of edges that fits all the given $n_1 \cdot n_2 \cdots n_k$ points. If we visit any of those points more than once, we have a trail and not a path (paths are also trails, but the reverse is not generally true). We can solve the Nine Dots Problem by drawing a trail, but we can also find solutions that are paths...

Jacobsen: What is the classical Nine Dots Problem?

Ripà: In my previous answer, I assumed that everybody here already knows the rules of the most famous divergent-thinking puzzle ever — the one that inspired the “thinking outside the box” idiom (it appeared in *Sam Loyd’s Encyclopedia of Puzzles*, page 301, more than one century ago).

Basically, we can describe it mathematically as follows:

take the 3×3 grid $\{0, 1, 2\} \times \{0, 1, 2\}$ and then consider the square $[0, 3] \times [0, 3]$. Now, try to join all the points by drawing a polygonal chain with no more than four edges, entirely contained inside the mentioned square $[0, 3] \times [0, 3]$.

Jacobsen: What drew you to it?

Ripà: My former girlfriend, at the time, challenged me to solve it. I found a solution in about 30 seconds; she thought I already knew the correct answer. She lived far from my house, so I spent the whole journey thinking about harder versions of the basic puzzle while the train was traveling back to Rome (many great ideas came during train journeys, from Mickey Mouse to Harry Potter... unfortunately, I wasn’t as lucky as Walt Disney or J. K. Rowling; and that’s all, folks).

Jacobsen: Why generalize it to higher dimensions?

Ripà: Because it is the most natural way to generalize the classic puzzle, as the planar extension to $n_1 \times n_2$ grids admits a trivial solution and was proved by others (even though I only discovered this a few years later).

Jacobsen: How would you summarize the key insight behind your general k -dimensional solution to the Nine Dots Problem?

Ripà: Although I reached the solution independently by gradually reducing the gap between the proved upper and lower bounds, a fascinating pattern was revealed at the very end: the clockwise-algorithm simply returns the k -dimensional generalization of the solution to the classic Nine Dots Puzzle by Loyd. To understand the concept, let us take the $k=3$ case: the solution is a trail consisting of 13 line segments in space, but when you view it from the right perspective, you

only see the Nine Dots Puzzle solution drawn on a piece of paper. Here's a [4D video](#) showing a few solutions returned by my clockwise-algorithm (up to 4 dimensions).

Jacobsen: What are the main mathematical steps or ideas in constructing that k -dimensional solution?

Ripà: The proof starts with establishing the trivial lower bound $(n^{k-1})/(n-1)$ for any $n \times n \times \dots \times n$ grid, where n is an integer greater than 2. If $n=3$ is given, then the lower bound becomes $(3^{k-1})/(3-1)$. Our goal is to find, for any given integer $k>0$, a constructive algorithm that produces trails with $(3^{k-1})/2$ lines joining all the 3^k points of the set $\{0,1,2\}^k$ in $\mathbb{R}^k$.

Jacobsen: What is the most elegant part of the Nine Dots generalization?

Ripà: In my opinion, it is the way the solution for the $k-1$ case is used to produce a valid minimum-link trail for the k -dimensional case. When $3^{(k-1)}-1$ points are left, the trail with $3^{(k-1)}/2$ line segments that covers $\{0,1,2\}^{(k-1)}$ is applied to the remaining unvisited points. In general, each solution produced by the clockwise-algorithm can be viewed from the right perspective to reveal a trail of $3^{(k-1)}/2$ segments covering a $\{0,1,2\}^{(k-1)}$ grid. For example, in a 3D solution of this kind, you will see Loyd's expected solution for the classic Nine Dots Puzzle, and again, if we look at it the same way, we will see just a line segment fitting 3 collinear points... which perfectly overlaps with the solution for the case $k=1$.

Moreover, as k grows, the number of different optimal trails increases. Each k -dimensional solution obtained by applying the clockwise-algorithm to an optimal trail for the $(k-1)$ -dimensional configuration retains the same features of the input trail with $3^{(k-1)}/2$ segments. This process extends in the same way as the four-line solution for the Nine Dots Problem generalizes to a line segment fitting the points $\{(0), (1), (2)\}$: it performs a 3-step circuit returning to the starting point, leaving exactly 3^1-1 collinear points, allowing a line segment to connect to the farthest grid point. Essentially, the solution replicates the line segment fitting $\{(0), (1), (2)\}$, and while we're ignoring stretching, lengths are irrelevant for such mathematical problems where graph isomorphisms are the focus.

Jacobsen: On the knight's tours, what is the significance of proving there are infinitely many (Euclidean) tours on $2 \times 2 \times \dots \times 2$ chessboards?

Ripà: In the strictest sense, a knight's tour on a given $n \times n \times \dots \times n$, k -dimensional, chessboard requires moving a knight (following the chess knight move rule, whatever it entails) from a chosen cell back to the starting point (performing a closed knight's tour), visiting all the other cells with the first $n^{(k-1)}$ moves, without landing on the same cell more than once. Proving the existence of infinitely many Euclidean tours on such chessboards shows that this problem admits solutions under the natural generalization of the knight's move to higher dimensions.

Jacobsen: What does a "knight's move" mean in higher dimensions?

Ripà: Good question, thank you for asking. In my opinion, chess rules are determined by FIDE (The International Chess Federation), which has defined chess regulations for over 100 years, including the knight's move. Article 3.6 of the FIDE Handbook, Section E/01 – Laws of Chess (see <https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/E012023>), states: "The knight may move to one of the squares nearest to that on which it stands but not on the same rank, file or diagonal".

This definition implies that the knight moves to a cell at an exact Euclidean distance of $\sqrt{5}$ units from the starting point. Here, a “unit” is the distance between the centers of two adjacent cells (e.g., A1 and A2, or C6 and D6, on the classic 8×8 chessboard).

This conclusion follows directly from pure logic: if we were to restrict knights in higher dimensions to only perform “L-shaped” moves, we would wrongly admit moves that violate the geometric constraint. For instance, consider a knight placed at the center of the $3 \times 3 \times 3$ chessboard $\{0,1,2\} \times \{0,1,2\} \times \{0,1,2\}$. Based on the “rank, file, or diagonal” rule alone, one might claim that the knight could move from $(1,1,1)$ to $(1,2,2)$ since $(1,2,2)$ does not lie on the same rank, file, or diagonal as $(1,1,1)$, but it is trivial to point out that the Euclidean distance between $(1,1,1)$ and $(1,2,2)$ is $\sqrt{2}$, which is smaller than $\sqrt{5}$. By correctly interpreting the knight’s move as requiring an exact Euclidean distance of $\sqrt{5}$, we ensure that the concept logically extends to higher dimensions without inconsistencies.

Jacobsen: How does your result provide a counterexample to Theorem 3 in the Erde et al. (2012) paper?

Ripà: If the knight’s move as defined by FIDE is correct, then the rule can be stated as: “The knight may move to any cell at a Euclidean distance of exactly $\sqrt{5}$ units from the starting cell”. Now, I have constructively proved the existence of closed knight’s tours on any $2 \times 2 \times \dots \times 2$ chessboard with at least 64 cells. More specifically, such tours exist on all $2 \times 2 \times \dots \times 2$ chessboard with 2^k cells for $k > 5$ ($k \geq 6$ is a sufficient and necessary condition).

Theorem 3 of the mentioned 2012 paper states that no closed knight’s tours exist on any $n \times n \times \dots \times n$ chessboard where $n < 3$. However, my results provide constructive counterexamples under the assumption that FIDE’s definition of the knight’s move is authoritative.

The paper by Erde et al. does not explicitly define how a knight’s move generalizes to higher dimensions. It is likely the authors assumed L-shaped moves only, but this assumption no longer holds as k goes above 4. If someone disagrees with my construction, they must explain why a move from $(1,1,1)$ to $(0,0,1)$ would not be allowed according to FIDE’s definition of the knight’s move (by Article 3.6 of the Handbook, Section E/01).

Jacobsen: Are you using a unifying technique or approach for the Nine Dots and Knight’s Tour problems?

Ripà: No, I am not. The approaches are entirely independent, relying on direct proofs. My constructive solution for the $3 \times 3 \times \dots \times 3$ Dots Problem (the clockwise-algorithm) does not describe a Hamiltonian cycle or even a path. Instead, it constructs minimum-link trails with $(3^k - 1)/2$ edges joining all 3^k points.

Jacobsen: What is your formula for generating infinitely many c -th perfect powers?

Ripà: My formula not only generates infinitely many perfect powers of degree exactly c , but also ensures that these perfect powers are characterized by a constant congruence speed equal to c . This result is a particular case of what I consider the most elegant equation I have ever proved in number theory.

In detail, let $V(\dots)$ denote the constant congruence speed of the argument, and let $v_5(\dots)$ and $v_2(\dots)$ indicate the number of times that 5 and 2 divide the argument. Let c , k , and t be positive integers such that $t > \min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\} + 1$. Then, the formula $V((10^{k+t} + 10^{t - \min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\}})$,

$v_5(c)\}+1)^c=t$ holds for every pair (c, t) , as $k=1, 2, 3, \dots$ does not affect the result. The expression $10^{(k+t)}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1}$ is constructed to be a multiple of 3 but not divisible by 3^2 , ensuring that $(10^{(k+t)}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c$ is always a perfect power of degree exactly c . The congruence speed formula guarantees that $V((10^{(k+t)}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c)=t$, which remains valid when we assign $t:=c$.

Finally, this leads to $V((10^{(k+c)}+10^{(c-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c)=c$, providing infinitely many c -th perfect powers with the desired properties.

Jacobsen: How does your formula ensure a constant congruence speed rather than a variable congruence speed for these c -th powers?

Ripà: The proof involves some technical special cases that we can safely omit here for simplicity. Let $t > \min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\}+1$ and assume $c > 1$. The constant congruence speed of any positive integer greater than 1 and not a multiple of 10 is itself a positive integer. In collaboration with Luca Onnis, I derived the general formula to compute the constant congruence speed of any such tetration base. This formula is provided as Equation (3) in *Number of stable digits of any integer tetration*.

We observe that $10^{(k+t)}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1}$ is a multiple of 3 (as the sum of its digits is 3) but not divisible by 3^2 . Additionally, it ends 01. Therefore, we only need to consider the first line of Equation (3).

Then, using the Lifting The Exponent (LTE) lemma, I proved Lemma 2 in *On the relation between perfect powers and tetration frozen digits*, from which Theorem 2 follows.

These results are sufficient to prove the general equation:

$$V((10^{(k+t)}+10^{t+1})^c)=t+\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\}.$$

We can safely replace t with $t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\}$ (as $t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\} \geq 2$ by hypothesis).

This gives:

$$V((10^{(k+t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c)=t. \text{ Since the value of the positive integer } k \text{ does not affect the result, we simplify this to: } V((10^{(k+t)}+10^{(t-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c)=t.$$

Finally, when $t:=c$ is given, we have $V((10^{(k+c)}+10^{(c-\min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\})+1})^c)=c$, as $c \geq \min\{v_2(c), v_5(c)\}+2$ holds for any $c > 1$ (Q.E.D.).

Jacobsen: Do you see any potential applications or implications of these formulas and proofs outside of pure mathematics?

Ripà: It's hard to say definitively, but I've outlined a few ideas in the introduction of "On the relation between perfect powers and tetration frozen digits". One potential application lies in cryptography. For example, I could challenge you to the following game:

Me: Choose a positive integer greater than 1 and not ending in 0, as large as you wish.

You: I choose "x".

Me: Here's a tetration base whose constant congruence speed is not (yet) stable at height x and whose congruence speed never matches its constant value at heights 1 to x .

For instance, if you choose $x=103$, I could construct a base such as:

[Ed. Numeric sequence immediately below should be taken as one line or complete unseparated sequence.]

4355257089251996605256803858446960842587857122227...

...47129609220545115161423787862411847003581666295807

which can then generate infinitely many tetration bases with similar properties.

Moreover, the congruence speed formula can solve a particular class of problems related to Ramsey theory. For instance, I used it to answer an open question asking to determine how many iterations of Hensel's (lifting) lemma you can do in order to keep getting one more (new) ending digit of Graham's number at a time... it is sufficient to invoke the first Lemma of my old paper "On the constant congruence speed of tetration", but I proved the result by using the general formula. The result shows that Graham's number, G , has exactly $\text{slog}_3(G)-1$ stable digits, where slog is the super-logarithm.

Furthermore, in my preprint "[Graham's number stable digits: an exact solution](#)", I showed that the difference between the $(\text{slog}_3(G))$ -th least significant digit of G and that of 3^G is exactly 4 (where nobody is actually able to predict the first digit of G in the decimal numeral system — see the MathOverflow discussion "[The problem of finding the first digit in Graham's number](#)").

Jacobsen: How do you typically approach "established" theorems or conjectures with an eye to finding counterexamples?

Ripà: I usually attempt to find counterexamples to any mathematical result I read, as a way to test my own understanding and reading comprehension. However, this was not the case with the mentioned Erde's paper. At that time, I was working on a lengthy preprint about metric spaces in generalized chess (*[Metric spaces in chess and international chess pieces graph diameters](#)*), which required a deeper analysis of how chess pieces move can be defined.

Actually, the strictest logical solution I derived was the Euclidean knight definition and, you know, chess knights do not understand advanced mathematics, nor can they read published theorems... they simply move around any k -dimensional $2 \times 2 \times \dots \times 2$ grid as long as $k > 5$, eventually returning to their starting cell after their (2^k) -th move, each jump spanning $\sqrt{5}$ chessboard units. Whether or not this constitutes counterexample to the mentioned theorem depends on the assumptions we make at the outset. In my humble opinion, if a mathematical object is not rigorously defined, theorems built upon it become vulnerable to such ambiguities. To clarify further, I believe even Euler's concept of a knight aligned with the common understanding: one restricted to performing L-shaped moves in any number of dimensions.

Jacobsen: What directions or expansions do you envision for each of these results?

Ripà: Currently, Gabriele Di Pietro (a mathematics teacher) and I are further generalizing my initial breakthrough on Euclidean knight's tours, extending the results to other fairy chess leapers (chess pieces with non-standard movement patterns that moves directly to a square a fixed distance away). These developments are detailed in the preprint *[On the existence of Hamiltonian cycles in hypercubes](#)*.

Regarding optimization problems on regular grids, another independent Italian researcher is working to improve the bounds I provided for the general $n_1 \times n_2 \times \dots \times n_k$ points configurations. Meanwhile, I have summarized the best current results for $n \times n \times \dots \times n$ grids in the preprint

General conjecture on the optimal covering trails for any k -dimensional cubic lattice (v3). In *Optimal cycles enclosing all the nodes of a k -dimensional hypercube* (2022), Roberto Rinaldi and I have also proved the exact solution for the (k -dimensional) $2 \times 2 \times \dots \times 2$ case, showing that $3 \cdot 2^{(k-2)}$ links are sufficient to cover the grid with a cycle (not just a trail, circuit, or path). However, the $4 \times 4 \times \dots \times 4$ problem is still open, for any $k \geq 3$ (I've only been able to prove that the $4 \times 4 \times 4$ grid can be covered with a path consisting of 23 links, while no trail with less than 21 links can do the same).

Lastly, Gabriele and I plan to develop a more compact notation to express the congruence speed (not only its constant value) and the phase shift (not only its asymptotic value) of any integer, including multiples of 10. Although I have already published preprints with all the necessary formulae, this new notation will improve readability and facilitate future research on the topic.

To encourage recreational exploration of this area, I have provided *Twelve Python Programs to Help Readers Test Peculiar Properties of Integer Tetration* that allow anyone to experiment with congruence speed and phase shift. As part of this effort, I also issued a challenge to my YouTube followers to solve at least three out of five problems within 2.5 hours. None of the participants managed to pass the test on January 3, 2025. For reference, the full text of the challenge and solutions can be found here: [Five Hard Problems with a Simple Solution](#)).

Jacobsen: How do you see your work influencing other areas of combinatorics, number theory, or geometry?

Ripà: As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the discovery of the constancy of the congruence speed of tetration (and the related congruence speed formula) holds great untapped potential. It could also find applications in areas such as Ramsey theory. Exploring congruence speed-related problems is a fascinating endeavor, particularly for individuals with strong analytical skills and a high level of pattern recognition. I coined the term “speed” because the height of the tetration can be interpreted as time, and the total number of stable digits as the “distance” traveled during the first “ b ” iterations. Consequently, the congruence speed maps the rate of frozen digits’ growth: from height 1 to 2, from height 2 to 3, and so forth. At certain points, depending on the base of tetration under consideration, this value stabilizes at the constant congruence speed value, as long as the given tetration base doesn’t end in 0.

Interestingly, the hyperoperator pentation — which is to tetration what tetration is to exponentiation — might similarly exhibit a constant “congruence acceleration” (assuming an integer pentation base greater than 1 and not divisible by 10).

Keeping the focus on the skills that led me to study tetration’s last digits, the classic Nine Dots Puzzle’s extension into three dimensions could serve as a useful psychometric tool for testing advanced pattern recognition. I’ve already created a similar challenge focused on two-dimensional grids, which I believe is well-suited for individuals with IQs in the 140+ (S.D. 15) range. You can find it here: [DOTS Rev – A Real IQ Challenge for the High Range](#). Enjoy!

Jacobsen: Finally, if someone wanted to explore or build upon your findings, where would you recommend they begin?

Ripà: It’s a personal choice, but my advice is to start with our more accessible papers on each topic. Here’s a roadmap:

Congruence speed and tetration:

Although the core paper is “The congruence speed formula”, since you need it to prove the results stated in “Number of stable digits of any integer tetration”, I suggest to begin from the latter. You may skip the complex proof involving the homomorphism with the commutative ring of 10-adic integers, as it delves into advanced topics like the 15 10-adic solutions of the fundamental fifth-degree equation $y^5=y$.

This introduces the congruence speed formula as Equations (3) and (16) and provides results that are easier to grasp. Then, read “Graham’s number stable digits: an exact solution”, which is far easier than “On the relation between perfect powers and tetration frozen digits”. Make sure to understand “Number of stable digits of any integer tetration” first, as it lays the groundwork.

For a deeper dive, explore Sections 3 and 4 of “The congruence speed formula”. Section 4, which proves the existence of infinitely many prime numbers characterized by any positive constant congruence speed by invoking the powerful Dirichlet’s theorem on primes in arithmetic progressions, is particularly fascinating. Finally, for the congruence speed formula of all the bases that are multiples of 10, check out the short and accessible *[Congruence speed of tetration bases ending with 0](#)*.

Optimization problems on regular grids:

Start with “Minimum-Link Covering Trails for any Hypercubic Lattice” (version 5) for lower bounds and “General conjecture on the optimal covering trails for any k -dimensional cubic lattice” for upper bounds.

For open research lines, “General uncrossing covering paths inside the axis-aligned bounding box” is an excellent starting point. It introduces new optimization problems and opens avenues to create many OEIS sequences. This paper is the culmination of a trilogy that began with “Solving the 106 years old 3^k points problem with the clockwise-algorithm”.

Euclidean knight’s tours and generalized multidimensional chess pieces:

Begin with the concise and easy-to-follow “Proving the existence of Euclidean knight’s tours on $n \times n \times \dots \times n$ chessboards for $n < 4$ ”.

Next, explore “Metric spaces in chess and international chess pieces graph diameters”, which delves into the complexities of generalizing chess piece movements on k -dimensional chessboards. This paper provides a comprehensive perspective on k -pieces (i.e., chess pieces operating on k -dimensional $n \times n \times \dots \times n$ chessboards in Euclidean space). To round out your understanding, consider “On the existence of Hamiltonian cycles in hypercubes”, a shorter paper that expands the Euclidean knight’s tour concept to all the others fairy chess leapers, where the knight represents the mere (1, 2)-leaper and the paper considers each (a, b) -leaper for any pair of positive integers $a \geq 0$ and $b > 1$.

These papers provide a solid foundation while highlighting many open problems and research directions for anyone eager to explore or expand on these findings.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Marco.

Conversation with Tianxiang Shao on Family and Feelings (2)

2025-01-22

This interview offers an insightful exploration of **Tianxiang Shao's** personal and academic journey, conducted by Scott Douglas Jacobsen. The conversation delves into Shao's family history, including his grandparents' migration from rural Anhui to the provincial capital, Hefei, amidst challenging socio-political landscapes such as the 1960s famine and Cultural Revolution. Shao discusses his career aspirations in artificial intelligence, his perspectives on success, materialism, and the balance between introversion and social growth. The dialogue also touches on Shao's childhood creativity, his passion for number theory, and his views on the interplay between human and artificial intelligence. Additionally, Shao shares his philosophical influences, including Albert Camus, and his engagement with Buddhist texts for personal peace. The interview highlights Shao's multifaceted interests, resilience in personal challenges, and his commitment to balancing academic pursuits with diverse hobbies, providing a comprehensive understanding of his character and intellectual pursuits.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: There are a lot of details to fill in, about your grandparents! Which countryside of Huangshan were they from?

Tianxiang Shao: My paternal grandparents were not from Huangshan. They were born in a village in central Anhui, near the provincial capital, Hefei. My maternal grandparents, however, were from Huangshan, and the area where they lived is now called Tunxi District.

Jacobsen: How did they travel from the countryside to the city, and which city?

Shao: Hefei, the capital city of Anhui Province. The journey was quite challenging in many ways. My grandparents were exceptionally talented and managed to rise above their circumstances through rigorous selection processes during a time when China was extremely poor.

Jacobsen: Were there any outstanding stories from this trip from the countryside to the city?

Shao: Yes, there were. Both of my grandparents came from very poor families. At that time, many rural families had a lot of children. In the 1960s, China experienced a devastating famine, followed by the Cultural Revolution starting in 1966. As a result, my grandparents didn't receive a complete formal education. Instead, they relied heavily on self-study and the education available through society.

Despite these hardships, they managed to excel. What's more, my grandmother brought her four siblings from the countryside to the city, and now all of them are leading good lives.

Jacobsen: What did they do to make prosperity for their family?

Shao: They relied entirely on their own efforts and achieved prosperity through hard work and dedication.

Jacobsen: What careers have you aspired to attain achievement in the big city?

Shao: For me, at this stage, my academic pursuits are the most important.

As a child, I wanted to become an astrophysicist. Later, I aspired to be a mathematician. Now, considering my current field of study and where I can achieve success, becoming an artificial intelligence algorithm engineer seems to be the most fitting goal.

Jacobsen: What work have been the actual choices in the big city?

Shao: I'm still a student and don't have a job yet.

Jacobsen: How do you define success?

Shao: Doing what you love and staying committed to it for a lifetime—that is success.

Jacobsen: Is there a peculiarity to their materialism, as in something more specific like a naturalism, or is more standardly defined materialism without religious belief?

Shao: I think it's probably more of the latter.

Jacobsen: Huangshan makes you sound like a small town family dreamer like me.

Shao: Is that so? Haha. In fact, when I was a child, I always dreamed of big places. I loved visiting large office buildings, big shopping malls, and crowded areas. I enjoyed the excitement of exploring.

However, I gradually realized that small towns have their own charm. It wasn't until I had lived in a big city for several years that I truly came to appreciate this.

Jacobsen: Do you feel that you carry some of that serenity with you?

Shao: Sometimes this serenity helps me block out the noise of the outside world, allowing me to think independently and explore the world on my own.

Jacobsen: Do you feel more social now compared to before?

Shao: Haha, to be honest, I've always been a relatively introverted person and rarely participate in social activities unless necessary.

Jacobsen: When you didn't get along well with peers, was this something to do with fights and misconduct, social awkwardness, or simply not fitting into the social groups?

Shao: That said, social skills are something that improve with experience. I believe my social skills and emotional intelligence are probably better now than they were five years ago.

Part of the reason was social awkwardness, and another part was my lack of participation in social activities. You know, many people enjoy going to bars, dancing, or making a lot of noise together, but I rarely go to those places because I don't enjoy that kind of hustle and bustle.

I rarely argue with others or engage in inappropriate behavior. I find arguments to be too draining, and I prefer not to spend my time on unnecessary people or matters.

Jacobsen: What were the stories "inspired by a clock"?

Shao: Those are stories from my childhood. I've always been someone who loves to daydream. Back then, I was inspired by movies like *Inception* and *Interstellar*. Sometimes, I would even jot down those ideas in my notebooks.

I remember imagining stories about traveling to the past by altering a clock, or epic battles between beings from different galaxies through time fissures. These stories might seem absurd now, but at the time, I even created abstract drawings to go along with them and thoroughly enjoyed the process.

Jacobsen: What kind of mathematics competitions, e.g., olympiads?

Shao: Yes, exactly the Olympiad, but I only participated in regional-level Olympiad competitions and some mathematical modeling contests.

Jacobsen: What area of math do you like the most?

Shao: Number theory. This probably explains why I felt so comfortable when I first started solving numerical reasoning problems. I remember the first time I took a proper high-range IQ test—it was Ivan Ivec's *Numerus*. At that time, I had no clear understanding of the underlying logic or techniques, but I quickly submitted it and scored an IQ of 165.

I love numbers; I feel that each number tells a story. Number theory is so harmonious and beautiful. From a young age, I've used my knowledge of number theory to solve some problems.

Jacobsen: That's a nuanced and healthy sense of self-consciousness on the latter personal note and a balanced view of high-range tests. I'm told by those who've spent a lot of time—e.g., Rick Rosner—on them that they're almost a great challenge and stimulating because they are genuinely difficult and take 20, 50, 200 hours or more, sometimes. Those two factors of a speedy survey of the landscape and a rapid dig of the wells into the ground of a topic are pretty strong signs in youth. Outside of the math, was there anything in particular intriguing to you, apart from the academic work?

Shao: Thank you for the compliment! Let me first share my thoughts on high-range IQ tests. These tests are indeed very challenging, but there's a mix of quality in the ones available today. So I usually approach them selectively. I treat them as a hobby—something to challenge myself with and enjoy the process rather than focus heavily on the results.

Many people ask me how much time I spend on these tests. I've actually calculated that my average time per test is about 6–8 hours. Occasionally, for particularly difficult tests that I enjoy, I spend longer. So far, only one numerical test has taken me over 50 hours: Mahir Wu's *N-World*, which I consider the best pure numerical test out there.

As for my other interests, the truth is I have many! For example, I love playing table tennis, singing, and writing lyrics. I enjoy learning English and French, and I find great joy in reading. These are just a few examples.

These hobbies bring me happiness and balance alongside my academic work. I always recommend not letting academic work completely consume your life, as that can become exhausting.

Jacobsen: Do you think computers will become far smarter than even the top geniuses in this or that country?

Shao: I don't think so. In fact, my field of study is related to artificial intelligence, and my mentor and most of my peers share the same view.

Computers are undeniably intelligent. Since IBM's Deep Blue defeated the genius chess player Garry Kasparov 28 years ago, stories of computers surpassing humans have become commonplace. In the future, it's safe to say that for executing specific tasks, humans can be entirely replaced by machines.

However, the two most remarkable traits of humans are emotion and creativity, which are deeply interconnected. No matter how advanced AI becomes—be it OpenAI's ChatGPT o1-pro, or some of Google's cutting-edge AI models—it will never truly experience the nuances of human emotions like joy, sorrow, bitterness, and sweetness. Nor will it possess the profound creativity unique to humans.

Lastly, here's an interesting wordplay: in English, "AI" (artificial intelligence) sounds identical to "爱" in Chinese pinyin, which means "love." So far, I haven't seen anyone use this as a theme for a puzzle, but it's a fascinating coincidence. I often think love is the root of many great creations, and AI will never have the capacity to actively experience or comprehend the broader essence of "love."

Jacobsen: What do you think of Camus?

Shao: Oh, he is a great French philosopher and writer. I've read many of his works before, and I highly recommend *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*. My worldview has been significantly influenced by his philosophical framework.

Jacobsen: Is there much different between algorithms and artificial intelligence, e.g., the latter as a higher-order kind of the former?

Shao: There is a distinction between algorithms and artificial intelligence, though they are deeply interconnected. Algorithms are the step-by-step instructions or rules designed to perform a specific task or solve a problem. They are the building blocks of all computational processes, including artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence, on the other hand, is a broader concept that refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines. It encompasses not just algorithms but also data, training methods, and systems designed to learn, adapt, and make decisions. In a way, AI can be seen as a higher-order application of algorithms, where algorithms work together in complex ways to create learning and decision-making capabilities.

Jacobsen: What Buddhist passages help bring some calm and peace?

Shao: I recommend three texts, all of which are well-known in the Buddhist world: the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the most famous one, the *Heart Sutra*.

The *Heart Sutra* is not very long—I memorized it completely when I was thirteen. Since then, whenever I feel restless, I recite it to calm myself down.

Jacobsen: Are there any neo-Daoist or Buddhist writers who capture a contemporary appreciation of Classical Chinese philosophy in a novel way?

Shao: One prominent example is Li Zehou, a contemporary philosopher who integrates Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism with modern thought, presenting a fresh perspective on Classical Chinese philosophy.

Jacobsen: What is the other 20% of your worldview not incorporated primarily by science?

Shao: I have a partially idealistic perspective. I believe in the existence of some transcendent spiritual beings, such as God, Buddhas, or deities mentioned in various religions.

Interestingly, I recently discussed this exact topic with Zolly Darko, a well-known author of high-range IQ tests, and I also used percentages to describe my worldview during that conversation.

Jacobsen: What do you mean by science?

Shao: It's the conventional understanding of science as we know it.

Jacobsen: Subjectively, of those tests, which one felt the hardest and took the most time?

Shao: I've answered this question before—it's Mahir Wu's numerical test *N-World*. I spent nearly 60 hours on it and achieved a score close to full marks.

However, this year I'm planning to spend a similarly long time on one of Paul Cooijmans' tests, aiming to submit it around my birthday. I won't reveal more details for now, haha!

Jacobsen: Is the existentialism mentioned in ethical philosophy related to the reference to Albert Camus?

Shao: Yes, exactly.

To add an interesting note, Camus consistently denied being an existentialist philosopher, yet later philosophers widely regard him as one.

Jacobsen: What facets of Marxism make sense of social realities in China?

Shao: I'm sorry, but I prefer not to answer this question due to some political reasons. I hope you understand.

Jacobsen: What books have influenced you?

Shao: *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez, and *Dream of the Red Chamber* by the Chinese novelist Cao Xueqin.

Jacobsen: What music generates stronger feelings in you?

Shao: I must highly praise Lana Del Rey's songs—she's my favorite Western singer! Almost all of her songs resonate deeply with me.

In terms of musical forms, I love classical music, both Chinese and Western. I practiced violin as a child and later developed a strong appreciation for piano and violin compositions.

One genre I've always loved is Chinese traditional music (*Guofeng*). It brings me a sense of tranquility and is closely tied to China's 5,000 years of history and culture. It feels almost like having a conversation with the ancients.

Jacobsen: Do we make a mistake in thinking the structured representation of letters on a page truly brings us in touch with the great minds of the past or merely in connection with the low-fidelity representation of what they had in mind?

Shao: I am more inclined to believe that it allows us to truly connect with great minds.

Jacobsen: How do you juxtapose the momentary feeling of the world as one with the realities of geopolitical strife?

Shao: I don't particularly enjoy discussing too many politically related topics. I advocate for peace and hope that cultures from different countries can engage in equal exchanges and that people can support and help each other.

Jacobsen: Do you think the West's primary concern among many of its populations with an Abrahamic afterlife is largely a waste of time and a cause of worry? We have large, anxious sub-populations.

Shao: Haha, I'm not very familiar with this topic. But from my perspective, I've never hoped for an afterlife—I only strive to live this life to the fullest.

Jacobsen: How are you feeling since the last breakup?

Shao: Wow, at first, of course, I needed some time to adjust. But soon after, I got back on track because life and studies still needed to move forward.

I want to thank my good friends. I have several Chinese friends who supported me emotionally, including Tai Jing and Mahir Wu. My two friends from the Glia Society (you're surely familiar with), Matthew Scillitani and Andrei Udriste, also comforted me. I'm grateful for their kindness!

I'm doing great now. I'm not even 21 yet, so there are plenty of opportunities and challenges ahead. I've grown to see matters like relationships in a much more mature way.

Lastly, thank you for this interview. I really enjoyed some of your questions, and I hope we meet again next time!

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Tianxiang.

Scott Durgin, Rick Rosner, and Matthew Scillitani on Fatherhood Facts and Opinions 1: First Salvo

2025-01-22

This interview explores the multifaceted experiences of fatherhood through the perspectives of Giga Society members **Rick Rosner**, **Scott Durgin**, and **Matthew Scillitani**, as well as the reflections of Scott Douglas Jacobsen. The conversation traverses diverse topics, including the evolution of parenting styles, the influence of generational gaps, character development in children, and the challenges and rewards of fatherhood. The dialogue offers insights into Rosner's unconventional career and parenting approach, Durgin's emphasis on exposing his children to diverse experiences, and Scillitani's early journey as a father. The interview highlights shared themes of reflection, adaptation, and a deep commitment to fostering meaningful relationships with their children.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, three Giga-Society members, Paul Cooijmans from 1996, who are dads. We're calling this series *Fatherhood Facts and Opinions*. So, what are your thoughts on fatherhood?

Rick Rosner: I have several generations to compare—not just my experiences as a dad but also my experiences with my two dads, my biological dad and my stepdad. My stepdad did a better job than my biological dad. I was with my stepdad for 11 months of the year. He was married to my mom, and he tried hard with me. I was a difficult kid, and he faced significant pressures from his family, which he tried not to inflict on us.

He was a good man; I wish I had known and treated him better. However, the concept of fatherhood, even as a topic, might not have come up in his generation. Parenting wasn't even a term. It may have appeared in one in a million publications before 1980, but it wasn't something people thought about much.

You had children, sent them to school, and they were just your kids. You told them what to do. The idea of working on being a parent wasn't a thing until the 1980s. For most people, *laissez-faire* parenting is the notion that if you provided your kids with food, a place to live, and clothing, had dinner with them, watched TV together and sent them to school; everything would turn out fine.

My biological dad and my mom got divorced when I was an infant, and it wasn't an amicable divorce. He was always behind on child support. At one point, when my mom and I visited him to see if he would contribute to my college expenses, he claimed I wasn't his real son, that he didn't love me, and that his real son was my stepbrother—whom my dad had adopted. He was just being cruel. He got better later and was a better grandfather, but back then, he was difficult.

He was a workaholic. Even with the kids he lived with full-time, he wasn't very available to them because he was always at the office. People found it odd, and his second wife eventually grew tired of it, but it wasn't that unusual for the 1970s.

My child was born in 1995. My wife and I have spent much time reflecting on our lives. I've been to at least six therapists in my lifetime, and I've also tried writing my autobiography for decades. My wife has also spent time in therapy, though she's less troubled than I am. She has her wounds from her upbringing, particularly related to her mom.

Her dad was kind but quiet, reflecting the style of his generation. Suppose you've seen the movie *Postcards from the Edge*. You know that Shirley MacLaine plays the overbearing mom, and the dad is always in the background. In that case, I don't think he has a single line. That dynamic reminds me of her upbringing.

Dads were quieter; they weren't as involved, for the most part. Carol and I had our child during an era when parenting was fully in focus, and we tried to be conscientious and avoid repeating our parents' mistakes. We didn't become tiger parents, hovering over everything, but we were fortunate to have a good, engaging child to be around. We just tried to support her and provide help without making that help unfair.

A few years ago, maybe three or four, there was a college admissions scandal the Feds called *Varsity Blues*. Parents were spending a million dollars, half a million, bribing colleges. They used a college admissions expert to set up bribes for admissions offices to get their kids in, even if they weren't entirely qualified.

We didn't do any of that, but we did much studying about what it took to get into selective colleges. We became a three-person team: my wife, our child, and I dedicated to helping her. She earned a scholarship to a private high school, which was a great opportunity because private schools tend to have better counselling departments.

So, I guess it was a four-person team—three of us, plus the admissions counsellor—strategizing and assembling the best admissions packet we could. We ensured she took the right classes but didn't push her into anything. She pushed herself. She took many AP classes and even hired me as her PSAT tutor because she wanted to be a National Merit Scholar, even though that's mostly a meaningless distinction. I pushed her hard until she fired me for going too far.

I had her take 80 practice SAT and PSAT tests at one point. We were resources for her in what she wanted to do. We get along with her, though she's cited things we've done that she says caused her some trauma. For instance, I used to take her to Adam Sandler movies that I thought were harmless but might have been over her head.

She once mentioned that I took her to a Molly Shannon movie where Shannon plays a clumsy high school girl who often shows her underwear. She said that was traumatic. I didn't mean for it to be, but I screwed up some things too.

We took her out a lot, even when she was a baby. I'm socially awkward, and my wife is shy but not awkward. We'd go to the gym with our baby, and while one of us worked out, the other would sit in the lobby with her. This started within two weeks of her birth and continued as a routine. She was exposed to many people from an early age.

Our child turned out to be quite gregarious. My role has been to be supportive without too much pressure—helping her decide what she wants to do and supporting her. My wife and I have been lucky to have a child amenable to that parenting style.

We've seen other equally reasonable parents whose kids weren't as open to that approach, and it didn't work as well for them. So, we were fortunate.

More questions? I looked around the question, but that's the best I could do.

Scott Durgin: If I were to drastically reduce life lessons learned from some family members: From my mother I learned to doubt; my father, to observe, work and fucking WORK; my brother to teach; my children to wonder and grow; their mother to believe; my dog to dig, to SEARCH;

my new wife to listen and live carefree. Focusing on my father, who was 13th generation descendant from William Brewster (patriarch of the Mayflower) and also Rev. Robert Cushman, down through many generations of war veterans I learned further the values of perseverance, solitude, silence, respect and diligence. He was austere and severe with very little verbal communication throughout 16 years: an only son of an only son, so spent much time alone himself. First real job for him was a ranger spending weeks at a time in the Maine wilderness. This followed his short time in the army as a trained marksman, though never seeing much action between the Korean and Vietnam wars. After that, Engineering (Highway). I only learned to not despise him once reaching my early twenties. He carved his own gun stocks, bows and arrows, so I learned how to hunt, carve and navigate too. Music was plentiful growing up, so I learned to play (horns, percussion mostly) and became an audiophile before 15. Despite all these skills, his fatherly nature was perceived by me as minimal once I figured it all out. I was intent on raising my own children with many opposite intents, but in reality the lessons I learned from Dad were quite healthy after some reflection. Communication was non verbal, almost 90-100 % by example or symbolic. He was a man of few words. I am also, but with my children I attempted to improve greatly upon the past.

Matthew Scillitani: Fatherhood is a wonderful experience so far. To be fair, I'm only six months in... But no complaints from me. Week over week, I watch in awe as my daughter develops new skills and personality traits. I know that every parent thinks their kid is special, but my daughter has really exceeded my expectations in every way. By three months, she already had the fine motor coordination to turn book pages. By four months, she was solving color and shape puzzles designed for one year olds. Now at six months, she's catching balls and scooting around. She's also very giggly, which brings a smile to my face even when she wakes me up at 4 AM...

Speaking of, there are some drawbacks to fatherhood (and parenthood, in general). Less free time, less sleep, less romance, etc. But it's all worth it. When I watch my daughter interacting with the world, it's the most spectacular thing I've ever seen or had the pleasure to take part in. I only hope that I do a good job and don't make any big mistakes. It's probably every parent's worst nightmare to mess their kid up in some unforeseeable way.

Jacobsen: Do you think your parenting style has changed from decade to decade as you've developed?

Rosner, I feel bad now because our kid is 6,000 miles away in England, and my wife texts her much more than I do. I feel bad that my wife has more daily interactions with her than I do. It feels a little awkward for me—I should do more of it so it doesn't feel so awkward.

I should check in with her more often. That has changed; it was more equal during our kid's first decade than now, in her third decade. Even so, I still help out where I can. For instance, every piece of writing needs to be edited.

So she sent me her writing, and I gave it a medium-intensity edit. I catch typos, note things I don't think are clear, and point out repetitive word choices. Everybody should have an editor or learn to become their editor. I enjoy it—it's a way to stay in touch with her.

Durgin: My philosophy and effort was to expose my children to as many experiences as possible as early as possible so that they had a much wider range of potential than I did. Art, books, film, concerts, education, museums, sports, science, exercise, outdoors, indoors, woods, beach and mountains, antiques, you name it. They became successful as I had hoped. This really built upon

my childhood and took it to higher levels. I don't think I'd change much of that. What I did try to change was communicating much more often with a high effort toward clarity and non-judgmental open advice.

Scillitani: This isn't applicable to me yet, but I'll add that my parenting style has changed even in the few months that I've been a dad. In the beginning, I admittedly had little patience and felt like pulling my hair out constantly. Not being able to sit down and work on something without interruption was a huge adjustment for me, and multiple times I sped through caring for my daughter so that I could get back to what I was doing. But now I realize that was foolish. Whether it's work or leisure, whatever I'm doing isn't anywhere near as important as spending time with my daughter. If I'm solving a puzzle or playing a game, I'll forget all about it in a month anyway. And why am I working? For recognition, wealth, or to support my family? It took a few months to get my priorities straight, but luckily that happened before it was too late.

Jacobsen: How do you instill character in smart kids? Because smart kids, if they go bad—like amoral or even immoral—that can be a concern.

Rosner: Okay, I don't know how you instill character in smart kids. With our kid, we were lucky that she didn't feel the need to be of bad character. We know other kids who acted out at various points in their lives, and we could see how that happens. It's not necessarily the fault of the kid or the parents.

It's often due to personality and circumstances. In the 1970s, for example, there was more emphasis on programs like the Boy Scouts. I was a Boy Scout. Many kids were Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, or Webelos, between Cub and Boy Scouts. There was an effort to instill character through programs like that or by being active in the church.

Even in the 1970s, though, Scouting was beginning to fade. It didn't fit into the disco or hippie eras. But there was still this idea that if you grew up the right way, you would be of good character. That notion has diminished over time, partly because of the influence of social media.

Social media is pervasive, almost like a guide to life, but it makes people incredibly self-centred. Later generations seem more self-centred, but you can't entirely blame them. They're surrounded by stimuli that promote selfishness. You can see how social media could make people less empathetic or even turn them into assholes.

As for smart people, I think there's a tendency for very intelligent individuals to be a bit sociopathic. I forget the exact distinction between sociopaths and psychopaths, but highly intelligent people might look at moral rules and see them as arbitrary.

At least for me, I don't believe in a traditional God-keeping score. Some aspects of morality are built into the universe, but not to the extent that Jesus tracks every move. A smart person might be tempted to break traditional moral rules without religion. However, a smart person could also recognize that morality is a useful framework—it's practical because acting immorally doesn't get you anywhere.

For the most part, behaving reasonably well leads to better outcomes. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yes.

Rosner: Now, I never taught that idea to our kids. She didn't need to be taught morality. She happens to be—knock on wood—not a psychopath.

When you look at psychopaths who act out, they might be less intelligent than those who don't. So, there you go.

Durgin: Kids have character already. I learned that very little effort by me was necessary to impose or instill character. Stuff they learn in kindergarten is sufficient. Story telling and play acting was a daily occurrence so I let the story sink in naturally; any addition by me was an imposition (at least I think so). I was never violent, never deceitful, always frank and never tied any sort of morality lessons to religion, despite exposing my kids to a variety of church activities. Live and let live was probably the example I exuded most of the time.

Scillitani: Leading by example. I've always hated the "do as I say, not as I do" mentality of many parents. If you, the parent, aren't even able to muster up the willpower to do the right thing, how the hell is your child supposed to? When important moral decisions arise, it's also useful to talk through them with children. I do this with myself even now as an adult. What is the proper thing to do? Why do I think that? What are the repercussions? Is it practical?

Jacobsen: What do you notice about parenting when you're in your 80s and your children are 40, 50, or 60, compared to people with newborns? How does that differ?

Rosner: All right. Well, it's nice to have your parents around as long as possible, which happens more often now than 100 years ago. My wife got to keep her mom until just after her mom's 90th birthday. My mom passed away at 88 and two-thirds.

Everyone has some trouble with their parents, at least in our generation—people in their late 50s or 60s with parents in their 80s. I don't know of any parent in their 80s who doesn't have behavioural issues that can be a challenge for their kids. For instance, many parents refuse to adjust to their physical limitations, like falling frequently.

Falling is a terrible, often life-ending event for people in their 80s. Many parents don't take precautions, like getting Life Alert or similar devices, and it's dangerous. It probably contributed to the increasing debilitation of both Carol's mom and my mom.

Carol and I have often asked each other, "When, between now—our age now—and our 80s if we live that long, are we going to turn into assholes?" I don't know. I don't want to be.

I'm well aware of the dangers of falling, even in my mid-60s. I tripped off a curb recently and caught myself on my wrist. I probably cracked or smashed a bone in my wrist. You see NBA players take falls like that multiple times in a game, but I'm more fragile.

Parenting in your 50s—well, being a kid in your 50s with parents in your 80s—often involves trying to guide your parents into healthier behaviours. Carol has been after me to get hearing aids and test my hearing. I do have hearing loss, especially at higher frequencies, but I can get along without hearing aids for now.

She argues that if you go too long without correcting your hearing, your brain loses the ability to interpret signals. My brain is still okay, but I'll probably get hearing aids eventually. I'm not as resistant to the idea as the older generation.

Both our moms had issues with hearing aids. They didn't wear them enough, let the batteries die, and left them unused. I'll use mine properly when I get them, stay connected to the world, and try to preserve my brain. I'll do my best not to turn into a senescent asshole.

Durgin: Not sure how to answer. Generational gaps are always problematic no matter how one attempts to distinguish between better and worse. Right thinking and right action takes decades to master, no matter who you are.

Jacobsen: Let's call that part one a stop.

On High-Range Test Construction 28: Dr. Kristóf Kovács on Accuracy in IQ, Intelligence, and Cognitive Abilities

2025-01-22

This interview includes a detailed conversation between Scott Douglas Jacobsen and **Dr. Kristóf Kovács**, a Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Institute of Psychology and the Department of Counselling and School Psychology. Dr. Kovács leads the Cognitive Abilities Lab, focusing on research in cognitive abilities, intelligence, psychometrics, and their measurement. He critiques the limitations of IQ tests in assessing creativity, sensorimotor skills, or interpersonal abilities, emphasizing the need for detailed profiles for diagnostics over societal “IQ fetishism.” Dr. Kovács explores the importance of ethical and transparent research practices and provides a nuanced understanding of IQ scores and their applications. The discussion includes the historical context of IQ testing, its practical applications, and the sociological implications of the g-factor as a statistical construct.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, we are here with Dr. Kristóf Kovács. This interview is a recommendation from Björn Liljeqvist, so thank you, Björn. I interviewed with him a while ago. I have been interviewing many individuals from various groups, including Mensa. In high-IQ communities, I wanted to get a professional opinion about testing. So, I posed the first big question that people might have if they are stumbling upon this interview: How much do IQ tests measure intelligence? What is the overlap between IQ and intelligence? In other words, what is the overlap in this Venn diagram?

Dr. Kristóf Kovács: That is a very old question. Whether IQ tests measure intelligence is a controversial issue. I do not think it is a particularly useful question because, to a large extent, it depends on how we define intelligence. If intelligence traditionally meant some form of cognitive ability, then today, with enough research, one can find references to all sorts of intelligence.

There is a paradox I perceive here. People who are very critical of IQ tests and the concept of intelligence argue that IQ testing is flawed. Yet, simultaneously, they are quick to embrace the term intelligence. There is always an alternative concept proposed to counter IQ. The first major alternative was emotional intelligence, which, after 20–25 years of research, became a meaningful scientific construct, in my opinion. However, it does not necessarily need to be called intelligence—it could be termed emotional ability. Nevertheless, now we see references to concepts like spiritual intelligence, naturalist intelligence, and other types of intelligence.

Of course, IQ tests clearly do not measure intelligence if intelligence is defined broadly enough to include aspects such as one’s relationship to spirituality. IQ tests do not assess spirituality, emotionality, one’s connection to nature, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, or other qualities often labelled as intelligence today. Therefore, the extent to which IQ tests measure intelligence depends entirely on how intelligence is defined. Debates over definitions, in my experience, are not particularly useful.

I try to avoid using the term “intelligence” whenever possible. Interestingly, I used to work extensively with Mensa, which is probably how you found me through Björn. However, I am primarily a researcher specializing in individual differences in cognition. My academic work at the university involves a research position.

In my research, I cannot entirely avoid using the term “intelligence,” particularly in contexts related to Mensa, but I prefer to frame my research interests as focusing on cognitive abilities rather than intelligence. When we discuss cognitive abilities, there is no meaningful way to include aspects like spirituality.

My research lab is called the Cognitive Abilities Lab—it is not called the Intelligence Lab. In my work, I consciously use the term cognitive abilities because it is plural. Intelligence, by contrast, is singular. As a researcher, discussing a range of specific abilities, such as fluid reasoning or crystallized knowledge, is far more meaningful.

Working memory or perceptual speed, and so on, are more meaningful constructs than a single general intelligence. General intelligence, in my opinion, is an index derived from various specific cognitive abilities. Still, it is not an ability in itself. For this reason, I prefer discussing cognitive abilities rather than intelligence. This approach avoids the type of definitional debates you raised. That said, I don’t want to circumvent the question completely.

IQ tests do a reasonable job if we define intelligence as cognitive ability. There’s a famous saying from Winston Churchill that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others humanity has tried. When I teach this or present at conferences, I often draw a parallel, saying that IQ tests are the worst instruments for measuring intelligence—apart from all the others psychology has ever tried.

Jacobsen: That’s good. A different way to frame it is from an empirical basis. If we’re examining cognitive abilities, what has emerged from research over the past century or so regarding what IQ tests measure? Also, what do the tests not measure that we know fall under cognitive abilities?

Kovács: That’s an interesting question. If we consider creativity a cognitive ability, IQ tests do not measure it. Creativity is assessed using creativity-specific tests, but it is a much harder construct to define, operationalize, and measure with psychometrically sound instruments.

Sensorimotor abilities are another relatively underexplored area in cognitive ability testing, especially in young children. In my lab, we are conducting a research project on this topic. Our findings suggest that in preschool children, sensorimotor abilities—such as balance or other basic motor skills—are strong predictors of cognitive abilities required in school settings. Interestingly, these correlations diminish after about age seven. However, in preschoolers aged four, five, and six, sensorimotor abilities are significantly linked to skills like memory and the ability to focus, which are crucial as children begin formal education.

Sensory motor abilities and creativity are two areas that, while reasonably considered cognitive, are not measured by IQ tests. IQ tests have historically focused on educational settings and later workplace applications. The military was among the first workplaces to use intelligence tests to predict achievement or trainability. What schools and workplaces require has heavily influenced the development of these instruments.

Jacobsen: People researching IQ might encounter terms like standard deviation, whether 15, 16, or other values, and lists of IQ scores—highest IQ score lists, historical figures, famous people, etc. What should people think critically about when they encounter these references? Regarding some of these popularized extraordinary IQ scores, what can we reasonably say about their accuracy? Specifically, how do high and low scores relate to rarity percentiles?

Kovács: That's a great question. There are two parts here: one about standard deviation and the other about the interpretability of the range. The most common standard deviation is the 15-point standard deviation, which was established with the Wechsler scale. This is the standard IQ distribution you'll find in textbooks. IQ is typically presented as a scale with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

Here's how it works: your raw test score is standardized, converting it into a z-score, expressing your performance in standard deviation units. Then, we assign 15 points for every standard deviation. For example, if you score exactly one standard deviation above the mean, your IQ score will be 115. If you score two standard deviations above the mean, your IQ score will be 130.

You're right, though, that other standard deviations are in use. For instance, some tests historically used a 16-point standard deviation. However, I'm unsure if that is still true with the Stanford-Binet scales. The Cattell scale, on the other hand, used to have a standard deviation of 24. As someone who has provided feedback on IQ tests, I find this variability somewhat frustrating.

Many people, understandably, don't realize that IQ is simply a relative scale. Without a background in statistics, interpreting it can be confusing. IQ is not an absolute measure.

For example, you can express even something like height on an IQ scale. You do not need to, since height has an absolute zero, so we use absolute measures like centimetres. IQ, by contrast, lacks an absolute zero—it's purely comparative. Everyone is compared to the mean, and differences are expressed in standard deviation units before being translated into IQ scores. But if you really want you can express height using an IQ-style scale. In this case it becomes a relative score. For instance, let us assume that the average height for Canadian males is 175 centimetres, with a standard deviation of 6 centimetres. If someone is one standard deviation above the mean, their "height IQ" would be 115. This approach standardizes the data for easier comparison.

Jacobsen: Centimeters work—we're Canadian and use metric and imperial measurements.

Kovács: Perfect. So, if we continue with that example, a two-standard-deviation height above the mean—187 centimetres—would correspond to a "height IQ" of 130. Of course, this is just an analogy to explain how IQ operates as a comparative scale rather than an absolute measure.

IQ scores can always be translated back to standard or z-score scores. For example, if you're just above one standard deviation above the mean, your z-score would be +1. If you're exactly as tall as the average Canadian male, your height in a standard z-score would be 0. If you're one standard deviation above the mean, your z-score is +1. Theoretically, you could translate that into an IQ scale, but why would you? There's an absolute zero with height, so you don't need to use a relative scale like IQ.

IQ, conversely, is purely a relative scale. If you know someone has an IQ of 150 but don't know the standard deviation being used; you can't determine if it's three standard deviations above the mean or slightly less than two. For example, with a standard deviation of 24, an IQ of 150 represents something different with a standard deviation of 15. People often don't realize the importance of standard deviation in interpreting IQ scores.

At the same time, there's this strange IQ fetish in society. For example, you often hear claims from celebrities—actors or actresses—saying they have an IQ of 180. These numbers are thrown around, but they lack context. In my experience, percentiles are far more useful and comprehensible for the general public.

If you have a normal distribution of scores, any z-score can be converted into a percentile or an IQ score. Theoretically, These measures are interchangeable, but percentiles are much easier for most people to understand. For instance, if you tell a parent their 12-year-old outperforms 95 out of 100 children of the same age, they will understand what that means. Similarly, if you say, “Your child has a better vocabulary than 98 out of 100 children their age,” it’s immediately relatable.

If you tell the parent that the 98th percentile corresponds to a z-score of +2 or an IQ of 130, it becomes more abstract. If you say their child has an IQ of 130, most people won’t know how to react. Should they be ecstatic? Perhaps they read in the paper that morning about a celebrity claiming an IQ of 190, and they might feel disappointed. In reality, an IQ of 130 is excellent—it’s in the top 2% and qualifies for Mensa membership.

If I were in charge, I’d eliminate IQ scores entirely and only use percentiles. In my experience, IQ scores create more confusion than clarity. Unless someone in this field understands the statistical nuances, they often misinterpret the scores. Since IQ scores can always be converted to percentiles, the latter is more intuitive and effective for communication.

On the other hand, it couldn’t be clearer to a parent if you say, “Your child outperforms 90 out of 100 peers,” or, “Your child is weaker than 80 out of 100 peers.” That immediately highlights whether a specific area is a strength or a weakness for the child.

The other question was about the range of interpretable scores. Typically, all scores are normed against a sample, usually a few thousand people. For example, in a representative sample in the U.S., you might have 5,000 or 6,000 participants, with around 200 individuals for a specific age group, such as 12-year-olds. When you compare an individual to that age group, anything beyond one in 200 is based on extrapolation.

The more you project beyond your data, the less accurate the interpretation becomes. For instance, if someone claims a child is “smarter than one in a million,” but the comparison is based on only 200 children, that projection is highly speculative. Typically, scores within plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean are interpretable. A third standard deviation can also be meaningful, especially for individually administered tests that take significant time to complete.

IQ scores are often calculated as scores derived from multiple subtests. If someone scores in the top 2% across five subtests, the likelihood of that occurring across all subtests is much rarer than 2%. To explain this with an analogy: imagine you’re looking for people who are taller than 98% of Canadians and have driven more miles than 98% of Canadians. The probability of finding someone who satisfies both criteria is much smaller than 2%.

Similarly, if someone scores very highly on multiple subtests, it provides a stronger basis for interpreting their overall IQ as being exceptional. By contrast, if someone scores high on just one test, that result is more likely to be “noisy,” with a larger margin of error.

In statistical textbooks, normal distributions are usually illustrated up to plus or minus three standard deviations because this range covers 99.7% of the entire distribution. Only 0.3% of scores fall outside this range—0.15% on each end. For example, anything above three standard deviations would represent about 3 individuals out of every 2,000. That’s why illustrations of normal distributions in textbooks typically stop at three standard deviations; beyond that, the probabilities become increasingly rare and harder to measure accurately.

Up to plus or minus three standard deviations is meaningful and reliable. I know there are groups like the higher sigma societies, but I don't want to comment. I'll leave that to someone you might interview from those societies. For the record, what I'm describing here is what you'll find in standard statistical textbooks. Reliable and valid testing generally falls within plus or minus three standard deviations. Beyond that, scores become far less reliable.

I'd be skeptical of scores above +3 standard deviations and specially above +4. A score of +4 can be equivalent to one in a million. For instance, someone claiming, "My child is smarter than 999,999 other children," raises the obvious question: how do you know?

Jacobsen: These issues often tie into statistical limitations, such as sample size and whether the test was properly proctored. Then, there are potential conflicts of interest. For example, if someone takes a test designed by someone they know, the results could be biased. Setting aside those issues, we've covered a lot so far: definitions of intelligence, the scope of IQ tests, reframing to cognitive abilities, standard deviations, and reliable ranges. What about the context in which these tests are proctored? For example, tests developed with significant investment and large sample sizes are conducted in secure environments where answers aren't leaked—what is the importance of those measures when trying to measure what IQ tests aim to assess?

Kovács: In short, high stakes. Suppose you want an elaborate and thorough measurement, especially when the stakes are high. In that case, ensuring the test is secure, properly administered, and statistically sound is essential. This is particularly critical in diagnostic contexts.

One high-stakes example is the death penalty in the U.S. Individuals with an IQ below 70 cannot be sentenced to death. Determining whether someone's IQ is below this threshold becomes a matter of life and death—the highest stakes imaginable. While that's not my area of research, it's an extreme case where the reliability of IQ testing carries enormous weight.

More commonly, professionally proctored IQ tests are administered for diagnostic purposes, particularly in school settings. In the U.S. alone, millions of individually administered IQ tests are conducted yearly. These tests help identify cognitive strengths and weaknesses to guide educational and developmental interventions.

A comprehensive profile, derived from a range of subtests, is so important. It provides a detailed view of strengths and weaknesses. For example, one of the most common recommendations by school psychologists is to suggest that a child be given extra time on tasks or exams.

Imagine a child with a profile showing excellent fluid reasoning (nonverbal problem-solving), strong verbal ability, and strong spatial ability but only slightly above average working memory and average perceptual speed. This profile often leads to frustration because the child's abilities outpace their processing speed. In other words, their strengths cannot fully compensate for the slower speed at which they process information. This kind of detailed profile allows a school psychologist to make targeted recommendations to address the child's specific challenges.

Individually administered tests are resource-intensive, typically taking one to one-and-a-half hours of a psychologist's time in a one-on-one setting. This level of investment is far greater than administering a group test to 30 students, so it's generally reserved for high-stakes situations. For instance, if a child is underachieving, frustrated, or showing signs of learning difficulties, then creating a full-ability profile is worth the investment. A detailed profile highlights individual strengths and weaknesses. It is far more useful for diagnostic purposes than a single overall score.

When I teach this, I often use an analogy to explain the limitations of an overall IQ score. Imagine visiting your doctor and receiving a detailed lab analysis of your blood sample. You see values for glucose levels, cholesterol, vitamin levels, and so on. Imagine the doctor told you, “Your health IQ is 70.” What would you learn from that? You’d know you’re in trouble—only 2% of people your age are less healthy than you—but it wouldn’t help you or your doctor determine what’s wrong or how to address it.

That’s the issue with relying solely on an overall IQ score. It’s like receiving a “health IQ” score that says you’re less healthy than 95% of your peers. While that might motivate you to worry, it doesn’t provide actionable insights. Similarly, while overall IQ scores can be useful to an extent—such as for Mensa membership, where the goal is to identify the top 2% of cognitive performers—they don’t provide the diagnostic depth necessary to understand and address specific challenges.

A health quotient (HQ) might be useful if your goal is to create a society comprising the healthiest 2% of people. However, if someone is unhealthy, an HQ score won’t help them. What they need is a detailed diagnostic to identify the specific problem. That’s why we use detailed tests and invest significant resources and time to assess a child individually and create a profile of their strengths and weaknesses.

Jacobsen: These are important cautionary tales about interpreting results. What about multiple intelligences, Sternberg’s triarchic theory of intelligence, and the g-factor? While there’s no general consensus, what is the prevailing view?

Kovács: These are all controversial topics. Regarding multiple intelligences, I think Howard Gardner’s work critiques the educational system more than a true theory of individual differences. Gardner has never shown much interest in rigorously measuring these intelligences. Essentially, his theory advocates focusing on children who might not be conventionally “smart” but excel in areas like social skills or the arts. It’s an example of extending the concept of intelligence, which is valuable in its own way. However, Gardner hasn’t developed reliable assessment tools for most of this proposed intelligence.

Whether we should call someone “intelligent” for having exceptional interpersonal skills despite not being conventionally smart is a matter of perspective. I’ll leave that judgment to others. As for the g-factor, that’s closer to my area of research. My work focuses extensively on interpretations of the g-factor, and I’ve published on this topic. We have a framework called the Process Overlap Theory, which explains the g-factor without requiring the assumption of a general intelligence or overarching ability. Naturally, I’m biased because this is my research field. Still, I see the g-factor as a summary or index score of separate cognitive abilities.

The g-factor is statistically advantageous in many ways. While it doesn’t represent a single ability, it’s a latent construct useful for certain purposes. For example, suppose you’re conducting large-scale sociological research and want to study how cognitive functioning predicts income. In that case, the g-factor is a highly effective tool. In that context, it doesn’t matter whether someone excels in working memory, perceptual speed, or vocabulary—the overall level of cognitive functioning matters.

However, the utility of the g-factor depends entirely on your purpose. For diagnostics, the g-factor is not particularly helpful. Like the HQ analogy—it provides an overall score but doesn’t tell

you much about specific strengths or weaknesses. If your goal is to diagnose and support individuals, identifying patterns of cognitive strengths and weaknesses is far more informative. On the other hand, if you're studying broad trends, such as the relationship between cognitive functioning and socioeconomic outcomes, the g-factor is invaluable.

If you want to predict someone's salary based on their cognitive abilities, overall scores or indicators like the g-factor are very useful. However, I don't see the g-factor as a proxy for a single "general intelligence." Instead, it's an index score calculated from various distinct abilities.

Jacobsen: That's a very interesting perspective. I hadn't heard it framed as an index at a sociological level rather than as a generalized commentary on a larger sociological construct. Viewing it as an index aligns with your emphasis on cognitive abilities about different factors. That makes the research clearer, too.

Kovács: Exactly. I'm glad it makes sense.

Jacobsen: Any final important things people should remember when they look at scores or assessments?

Kovács: That topic would take over a minute to address, so I'll leave it at that for now. If that's okay with you, my part is complete. I look forward to seeing the transcript.

Jacobsen: Excellent.

Kovács: Thank you for your time and patience.

Jacobsen: I truly appreciate this conversation.

Kovács: Thank you so much. Cheers!

Conversation with Marc Roberge on Navigating the Margins of Existence (2)

2025-02-22

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Being born in 1970, what do you see as the main lessons in the first half of life?

Marc Roberge:

1. Shrinking Margins — they frame our ideas, discourse, and experiences. A 2.23” border around an 8.5”x11” page makes for a text-to-space ratio of ~1.618:1, the Golden Ratio and proper guardrail against homogeneity. Current standards are <1”. These are the narrowing battlegrounds of ideas where individuals can directly engage with authority, providing there’s room left to swing a pen. In all affairs, private and public, we must guard against the erosion of our margins — those of ideas, tolerance, patience, experimentation, et al. Otherwise...

2. Regression Obsession — Bodily, we are products of evolution, yeah? Next to bipedalism and opposable thumbs, most would agree that our greatest trick, and still one of the most confounding to us, is the neocortex. Those who maintain that we were instantiated through some divine means must nonetheless concede that reason, language (communication), memory, and awareness, are chief among the sundry refinements our neocortex brings to the limbic regardless of origin. From a religious or ideological standpoint, I read any concession of our reasoning faculty and failure to scrutinize as an insult and affront to whichever creator is paid fealty, or innovator credited. Where and when are we asked to suspend our disbelief? Works of fiction, of course. In the immortal words of Gemini P-Orridge, our ‘identity is fictional, written by parents, relatives, education, society’, as was theirs, and so on. Our identity— our beliefs, perceptions, culture, language, knowledge, — describe and circumscribe our subjective realities. Michael Levin defines the latter as ‘cones’ of knowledge, but I digress. We think of social engineering as a catchall for hackers and scammers who compromise systems and individuals for personal gain, but it is simply a ‘professional designation’ for something we all do in our daily interactions. Nearly all social dynamics employ these simple levers of manipulation to compromise our reason by targeting our emotions. Carnegie’s book is a distillation of the techniques we learn from a very young age. In short, men ‘speak opinions, not facts. They see perceptions, not truths.’ — Marcus Aurelius. Which brings us to...

3. Heuristic hysterics — Circa 500-370 B.C.E, Democritus lays out atomism while Heraclitus offers the ideas of flux, logos, liminality, and *nous*, anticipating by 2500 years or so, ideas and developments that have come to define much of the 20th and early 21st Centuries. That we pulled the trigger early on labeling ‘atoms’ doesn’t detract from Democritus’ premise — be it quanta or other, there is a point where matter is indivisible and can only further be reduced to something immaterial, as understood within current limits (see **Margins**). Einstein offers a framework that marries the two, but stops shy of explaining what ‘energy’ is. Heraclitus, writes that ‘(many) people do not ‘understand the sorts of things they encounter’! Nor do they recognize them (even after they have had experience (of them) — though they themselves think (they recognize them).’ Fragments 4(D 7). Plato follows with his ‘Allegory of the Cave’. David Foster Wallace gives us ‘The Fish Story’. Shakespeare weighs in via the monologues of Polonius or Jacques. Now, the aptly named J.T. Webb telescope is upending physics and cosmology — the

very fabric of our reality is turning to vapour before our eyes. In such chaos, the only lodestar remaining is to ‘know thyself and to thine own self be true, for the unexamined life is not worth living.’ Family, community, and society — they craft the masks and write the parts. Improvise at your peril. Bottom line — most people are only half-awake, cozy in their blanket conformity, the collective thumb of the lowest common denominator mashing the snooze button.

4. Becker suggested that we are motivated by the fear of death. Nietzsche described a death drive. I submit that death is the portemanteau for that which is fundamental to all anxieties and fears — impotence. Chaos, randomness, unpredictability, the unknown, these are the traits of uncertainty, in the face of which we are ignorant and lack control. Collectively, they represent one of our greatest frustrations — the future, the unknown — of which death is but one form. Burton provides contemplations on this from a variety of perspectives in his book ‘On Being Certain’. My point is, we like patterns, order, and structure. When they’re absent, we are disoriented.

Plato’s Allegory of The Cave. Thales’ Ship. Erving Goffman. Shakespeare via Polonius (Hamlet) and Jacques (As You Like It). John Searle. Sam Vaknin’s Theory of Self-States. Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration and Personality Shaping via TPD.

The World truly is a stage, and we are actors, wearing a variety of ready-made masks, playing many roles. What we call a core or self is an amalgam of these.

Calhoun’s Rat Utopia experiments.

The Parker Probe has traveled nearly 90M miles, screaming towards the Sun at 430,000mph, and expected to pass within 3.8M miles from it — the fastest craft ever built. D.A.R.T. hit its bullseye last September. We have RC robots and drones on Mars. The Webb telescope has broadened our understanding of the Universe. Lidar, Side-Scan Sonar, and Ground Penetrating Radar have uncovered ancient mysteries that would otherwise remain entombed. Electron microscopes and particle colliders are allowing us to peer ever deeper into the fabric of our reality.

100 years ago, W.J. Sidis penned a slim book titled ‘The Animate and the Inanimate’ in which he challenges the 2nd law of thermodynamics, proposing the existence of a counter-mechanism, hinting at something akin to what J.A. Wheeler would term, some 50 years later, a ‘black hole’. I expect everyone is familiar with the academic lineage of Bohr, Wheeler, Feynman, three of the most intuitive and prolific minds in physics. As an aside, Wheeler praised the I.S.P.E.’s 1992 essay compilation titled ‘Thinking On The Edge’. I digress.

Another 50 years has provided us with tangible evidence of black holes and, thanks to the contributions of Heisenberg, Schrodinger, Schwarzschild, Hawking, Thorne, Susskind, et al, a far deeper understanding. Voyager 1 (originally Mariner) launched in 1977, poked through the heliopause a decade ago, and is currently transmitting from roughly 15.5B miles distant.

We’ve got A.I. powered supercomputers crammed in our pockets with 1M x the RAM, 4M x the ROM, and 100k x the processing that landed Apollo 11. All of our ‘Maslow Daily Recommended Needs’ are on tap. Flying cars? For a paltry \$250k, you can be a Jetson too, or a Cous-teau, or an astronaut.

At the turn of the 20th Century, wars were still fought with rifles and sabers on horseback, roads were mud or cobble, sidewalks were wood or stone (often doubling as public toilets). Nikola Tesla is unwittingly shaping modern society — radio communication, alternating current, wire-

less lighting, x-ray (before Röntgen), wireless power, turbines, engines, generators, remote control, the Niagara project, etc — rewarded with theft, sabotage, ridicule, litigation, and a pauper's death.

Now, we're approaching 200M vehicles belching fumes on well-drained and well-maintained public roads — larded with asphalt, lined with concrete sidewalks, metal guardrails and automated lights. There's some 730,000+ miles of pipeline underground, over twice the length of global railways. Advances in medicine, computing, engineering, sciences, physics, mathematics — what's to say other than 'wow'? Once unthinkable, now manifest. And we make it so.

Jacobsen: How do you see relationships with siblings developing over childhood, adolescence, and adulthood?

Roberge: Families — it's a lottery. Some are great (or good enough) while others are downright dysfunctional and detrimental, which returns us to the above. We know better, but fuck it up anyways. We insist we have free will and agency, that we are upright, civilized — meanwhile, we're slaves to our emotions, passions, desires, superstitions, fears. Until recently, I'd have taken a bullet for any of them. Now, I realize how little we truly know (knew) each other and how toxic our environment was. I don't harbor ill-feelings and wish them all health and happiness. I just didn't want them in my life any longer — partly to spare them (myself, equally), partly because I'm done.

Jacobsen: Do you resonate with that “deep nostalgia and regret” to this day?

Roberge: I prefer John Koenig's coinage ‘anemoia’ from his ‘Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows’, describing nostalgia for something never directly experienced. I think we all experience grief for the en-passant losses. We tend to fantasize about the ‘roads not taken’ or those we were barred from. Regrets? I have had a few. Nostalgia? None.

Jacobsen: Do you feel as though you took on that same work ethic?

Roberge: Not as consistently. He was unusually hale. I began to struggle with depression and inflammation (migraines, restless legs, insomnia, psoriasis, joint pain, ...) when I was 9. He smoked three packs a day, ate sugar pie for breakfast, and drank Pepsi by the gallon. I don't recall him ever taking a sick day. He retired in his 60s only to return to work, on and off, into his 70s. Even then, most guys in their 20s had a hard time keeping up. That's when it all caught up with him — diabetes and cancer. He survived a first bout, not the second.

He built himself a hunt camp 15-20 years ago, humping everything on foot up and down a ¼ mile stretch of mud trail — plywood, studs, drywall, cement bags, asphalt shingles, carpet and linoleum, cabinets and countertop.

Jacobsen: What do you make, in hindsight, of your own attempts at ending your life?

Roberge: Bipolar Disorder is a double whammy, and often comorbid with at least one other serious disorder (mine include ADD, OCPD, GAD). While only ~3% of adults have BD, for 82% of them, quality of life and ability to function is severely impaired. The risk of suicidality is 10-30x greater than that of the average population, twice that of those with major depressive disorder, with a 20-60% chance of at least one attempt, 20% succeeding.

Life expectancy is already curtailed by some 10-15 years from the wear and tear. I'm 54. My father passed at 84. While not wholly predictive, odds are I've only got another decade or so. Statistically speaking, I'm already a cliché. The disorder is incurable, worsening with each major

depressive/manic cycle. So suicidality is baked into the cake and, frankly, never off the table. There are things worse than death —

We may have some reservations, but overall, for the elderly or terminally ill, when quality of life/prognosis is such that the only thing on the menu is more suffering, the type that can be ‘seen’, medically assisted suicide seems the compassionate choice. Invisible ailments? Compassion flies out the door. the matter into your own hands, you’re stigmatized. What’s the fucking difference? If anyone dares try the ‘long term solution to a temporary problem’ line on me, they get an emphatic middle finger. There’s nothing temporary about chronic illness, and no solution, only management.

Most of us can sympathize/empathize with a bad headache. A migraine is another beast altogether — for the longest while, I was getting 2-3 of them per week. The pain was so intense that I vomited nearly every time, couldn’t stand light or noise, and needed really heavy meds just to dull the edge long enough for me to pass out and sleep it off. Sleeping 4 hours a night, sweating through my bedding, 4 broken molars and several other teeth worn or chipped from bruxism, psoriasis,..., extreme swings in mood and energy,..., while trying to maintain a family life and career?

Toss in all of the other factors such as ACEs (divorce, neglect, abandonment, attachment disorder, self-esteem, stress, abuse,...) and a 1/3,000+ IQ, for example, attending high school with only 400 students in a small blue collar town. The local library had 10 copies of Danielle Steele for every obsolete reference book on the shelves. I managed, but never truly fit in.

I think my attempts, the one more of a practice run, the other full-fledged, are normal responses. Still, it takes a lot to brace yourself for something like that, so to go through with it only to wake up — I was insane with anger and not six months later, I had already planned out my next attempt, but I divulged it during a rare argument with my spouse the night before and she instantly leapt into action — lining up appointments and advocating on my behalf, since, by then, I was unmoored. My pilot light blew out 5 years ago. Try as I might, I’ve not been able to get the furnace fired up since.

Jacobsen: What was the immediate feeling at the surprise moving time?

Roberge: As might be expected, rather alienating and disorienting. To an 8 year old, washing away 4-5 years of familiarity, routine, memory, experience is tantamount to ego-death. What little identity may have begun to crystallize was shattered and the rapid succession of some half-dozen ‘living arrangements’ over a roughly five year course at such a pivotal developmental stage was disastrous.

Jacobsen: How was the time re-adjustment socially at the new school?

Roberge: I never did. Three months in, I fell into a deep depression and was hospitalized for a week, following which I was returned to my old school, albeit under less than satisfactory circumstances.

Jacobsen: How did you feel in the separation from immediate family?

Roberge: The rift ran deep. My mother was shunned by her siblings. My father still hunted with her brothers and when she came to town I would visit with her at my grandmother’s or aunt’s

(depending on where she was staying for a few days). Otherwise, other than a cousin in my classes and summers at my father's parents, all of those relations remained arms-length and somewhat formal.

Jacobsen: Do you feel that you missed out of time with your father, as in the “fool” among other youth?

Roberge: I register it as a mutual loss. He was a looming figure and so competent in his field that he felt his success was a recipe that could be applied universally. The problem was, given his limited education and openness, he lacked any curiosity outside of these narrow pursuits and could not accommodate for a mind (mine) quite different from his. He recognized my potential, perhaps even feared it, but couldn't find the middle-ground (nor try). As a result, we never shared stories, heartfelt exchanges, deep life discussions, or anything of the kind. Ours was a transactional affair, very ‘boss-like’.

Jacobsen: Do you think the grandparents' Catholicism in any way influenced your father's domineering behaviour and attitude around you?

Roberge: Without a doubt. When I lived with them, they were already well into their 70s and somewhat milder but my grandfather had a cruel streak wedged in there that I rarely witnessed but knew from the odd retelling and behaviour of their adult children around them that definitely paints a stern upbringing. Superstition is the gateway drug to conformity — the soma of the masses.

Jacobsen: Do you still feel like a disappointment?

Roberge: Disillusioned, which is a bittersweet gift. Painful, but now disabused of the delusion, I could focus on the damage done or, as I prefer to do, focus on the newfound clarity.

Jacobsen: Do you see yourself as a “screw-up”?

Roberge: I've screwed up many things, and lives (mine included), but am not a ‘screw up’. I'm not convinced there was ever a stable target of any value to shoot for, so partly my failures are due to the climate, partly due to the fact that I don't think like most and not motivated by the same things, and we can't discount that many of my ideas are ambitious and either lack financing, technical backing, or time. Am I happy with how things have turned out for me? No. But I do have a great spouse, kids, a granddaughter, a place to live, food on the table, my mind isn't fully compromised yet, I've a stack of reading and a devoted medical team helping me connect the dots.

Jacobsen: How did you deal with the bullying after the divorce?

Roberge: The first few times, I ran, I froze, I trembled, I fawned. Then one day I was subbing for a friend on their paper route and was chased by a pair of dobermans. The next day I approached the house and the dogs started towards me, I rolled up a paper and smacked them both on the snout, sending them whimpering. After that, I always stood my ground. I only had maybe five minor altercations — most recently about 6 years ago when a drunk patron at a hotel where I was attempting to check in was harassing the desk clerk and eventually attacked him, which is when I stepped in, lifted him off the ground and slammed him into a wall and down onto a bench where I sat on him until police arrived.

Jacobsen: I wasn't very good at construction, but I enjoyed it. How about you?

Roberge: I loved construction and would have kept at it. I was accepted into UofO Architecture but dissuaded by my father, who also discouraged my pursuing a career in construction. Of course, when I started in the trade, it was the late 80s and early 90s — wages were stagnant and infrastructure work had dried up so there was a flood of ‘jobbers’ around. Small businesses were folding up every other day. Still, it paid for my education, kept me afloat during difficult times and has served me since, including saving myself \$80k building my own house.

Jacobsen: How was the welcome for the new, first child?

Roberge: I won’t lie. There were some earlier concerns and later complications but in the end everything went really well and she’s absolutely amazing. Only 3 months and already interacting, expressive, two little teeth poking from her gums when she laughs. She’s provided a new focus for the family and I see already that ours is a vastly different parenting style than that of our parents, far more engaged.

Jacobsen: What has “rug-pull after rug-pull” taught you?

Roberge: As Mike Tyson said, ‘everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.’ There is no antidote — the only thing one can do is invest in their own intellectual and skill development, expose themselves to as many tests of these, such that one is confident, if in nothing else, their own abilities, justified by the fact these abilities have afforded them this opportunity to ‘fight again’.

Jacobsen: What were the lessons from your first marriage of those twenty years with the woman with two children?

Roberge: Exactly what I’ve outlined above. Regardless of either party’s shortcomings, the bare truth is that I ‘fooled myself’ into thinking I was ‘in love’ and that she would come around. People you share a life and bed with can become incredibly nasty and vindictive when they fear disclosure because they need to control the narrative. She was the consequence of my upbringing — I should have waited until I was 30.

Section 10: Reflections on Career, Health, and Existential Dichotomies

Jacobsen: How are you managing health, and so on, with the current stage of work and limited energy in the day?

Roberge: It’s not great. I read about reported long-COVID (Epstein-Barr), POTS, et al., and many of the symptoms are eerily similar, which raises questions on my end as to what the underlying commonalities may be. Sleep and stress are my two biggest factors. I barely get 5.5 broken hours on a good day and the current political climate hardly allows for much relaxation. So that’s been undoing some of the progress. Since leaving the IQ societies, I’ve refocused on more actionable pursuits, including volunteering to provide tech support for the CFIC (<https://centrefor-inquiry.ca>) and create educational content for onboarding newcomers to decentralized platforms and services, something that is exceedingly pressing given the unprecedented level of scrubbing happening across the Web and deliverables (i.e., Kindle). Those who haven’t been paying attention are already compromised.

Jacobsen: What has leaning into the mystery of the god/non-god dichotomy brought for you?

Roberge: Primarily, that it’s a non-starter. When I think of the lives, time, money, effort, and relations wasted on this nonsense, I am embarrassed for the human race. If you lead with the answer, your arrogance blinds you and you learn nothing.

Jacobsen: Do you think an education around scientific concepts and processes is more important than formalities of symbols and operators for those symbols?

Roberge: Language is key, so symbols and operators and icons are all part of the programatics. We can learn things without them but cannot store them long-term nor communicate them very effectively. Replication (self) is a signature of life and words allow knowledge and skills to be replicated, hence that strand of knowledge lives on. Words describe our reality, our thoughts, allow abstraction and can be sequenced in ways that hack the brain (NLP). But language out of context is meaningless, so lead with the question, follow with the symbols.

Jacobsen: You attempted your life, more than once, yet have no sway from immortality: Why?

Roberge: The value of anything is in its uniqueness and rarity. Immortality is like printing fake money — it devalues the currency and the product. If you can't make a heaven of this place, you'll only make a hell of another, so check yourselves. Let's not omit the fact that pro-lifers seem less militant vis-à-vis MAID, something widely accepted by a vast many 'faithful' — hypocrisy much? So why is my suffering any different than a Senior's if, as is the case, my condition is incurable and progressive? Every party is fun until it's not — eventually you get tired of feeling like the sober adult chaperoning blottoed adolescents, the whole thing is getting out of control and you just want it to end. Since you can't reason with them and you're outnumbered 99:1, you get to a point where every sunrise promises another onslaught of stupidity and sleep seems the only inoculation against it.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time again, Marc.

Conversation with Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen, Mrs. Jorgensen, David Quinn, Matthew Scillitani, Casey Scillitani on Smart People Mating and Dating

2025-02-22

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Thank you for taking the time for this short session on mating and dating amongst some smart people, these are intended for you and, if desired and if time, your partner too. Length of responses are entirely up to you. The focus is mating and dating here. “Mating,” the partnering part either by common law, marriage, or something equivalently formalized in some sense up to and including having children. “Dating,” the search and dance of finding someone or some people who fit well with your gender identity, sexual orientation, various belief commitments, emotional and intellectual proclivities, and the like. Regarding life goals and values, what seems, in an overview, essential to consider in a partner for intended short-term pairings and long-term relationships? The idea being: the image and goals, realistic and not, one has for one’s life vis-a-vis a partner.

David Quinn: Well I am a straight male and sought a straight female. Got married just over 30 years ago, same partner now. I had been dating another woman before, but left her when I met my future wife with whom the match was much better. In my view marriage is about the children, carrying on the line, so fertility and heritable traits including intelligence are important, but so is sexual attraction. I was sexually attracted to my wife.

She is fully my equal intellectually. We met in a PhD program at a good university, probably the only couple to have graduated from that program. We also agree on most social issues. But we are from far distant places, different countries.

Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen: In the initial period, you find the answers you need about whether, in my case, she is someone worth pursuing, meaning investing time in, and gradually making the assessments that naturally follow in the wake of invested time. Relationships are like most other things – you need to walk some miles before you can form an opinion about whether the investment was worth it or not. Love usually doesn’t take into account the human parameters; they emerge as time progresses. So when the “fog” if you can call it that, has settled, then what you’re looking for here appears. Or, as one can more easily describe as “everyday life,” when it kicks in, then and only then do the criteria – whether one fits or not, whether you’re compatible or not – stand the test. It’s only then, regardless of short-term or long-term.

Mrs. Jorgensen: Everything that appears in the beginning is all the beautiful but fleeting things; it’s only when the dust has settled and everyday life sets in that you see who still stands there. Those are the ones who meet all the criteria that were set.

Matthew Scillitani: I’ve never had any desire for a short-term pairing. But for long-term relationships, it’s very important that we have similar ideas surrounding kids, religion, politics, day-to-day relationship dynamics like chores, professional work, and (frequency/type of) romantic outings.

Personally, I want 2 to 4 kids and aspire to raise them in a mostly apolitical environment, both at home and school. Actually, kids spend most of their time at school, so it’s important to make

sure they're attending a good one. For day-to-day things, I prefer cooking and doing outside chores, and would preferably want to go on at least one romantic outing per week.

Casey Scillitani: Matt and I met online. So, before we even saw each other, we had already talked about our political and philosophical values. At the time, we also shared our mental health struggles and were up front about everything, talking for hours through text. This made it so that we didn't have any surprises down the line because we'd already said everything from the start. Sometimes, even now, we communicate best through text.

Jacobsen: Leta Hollingworth posited a plus or minus two standard deviation communication gap in cognitive ability. Too high or too low for interlocutors then the fidelity of conversation becomes too different to maintain it—let's call this hypothesis cognitive ability congruence. This seems discussed amongst various high-IQ communities. Similarly for socioemotional sensitivities and skills, maybe, a similar hypothesis exists for these, in a different domain, too. In general terms, does this seem like a real factor in the area of intimacy and relationships—matching of mind and emotions for entrance into and sustainability of a relationship?

Quinn: We think mostly alike and respect/fear each other's ability. A small fraction of a standard deviation one way or the other, if we took some suitable test. We learn from each other and tend to end in the same place on just about every issue. I didn't seek this aspect and had heard that opposites attract, but it happened that I got similarity. It probably makes life smoother, given how strongly we hold opinions about many things.

Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen: Meeting each other cognitively, or socio-emotionally, can in many cases play a major role, and can certainly in many cases follow an exponential atypical development, resulting in a premature breakup. However, there are relationships that flourish contrary to what would be predicted to end in certain termination. A relationship based on pure love will overcome everything. If one looks beyond the mental barriers that can quickly form, one discovers the underlying values, those that you build upon further. It is then that relationships become lasting.

Mrs. Jorgensen: It has never been an issue for us. Our values overlap. What I'm good at might not be his strength, and vice versa. It's all about complementing each other.

Matthew Scillitani: I think that the gap between partners isn't too important. Picture this, a couple who are both around I.Q. 85. They're very likely to have serious communication issues despite their similar intellectual ability.

In contrast, take a couple where one is I.Q. 140 and the other is I.Q. 180. There's a 40-point gap there, but I.Q. 140 is more than enough to effectively work through the typical problems that arise in any romantic relationship.

Casey Scillitani: If you intend to discuss intellectual interests with your partner, and it's a huge part of your relationship, you will potentially have communication issues. But if your relationship is based on emotional intimacy, and shared hobbies and interests, then you'll have good success in communication.

Jacobsen: Following from the last question, or more particularly, how relevant, even rank-ordered in importance, are factors including "gender identity, sexual orientation, various belief commitments, emotional and intellectual proclivities," desire for children, and more of which you're aware, in selection of individuals in dating?

Quinn: For marriage, I think gender identity and sexual orientation must be settled and acceptable between the partners. I can't imagine myself as a straight male being in a long term relationship with anyone but a straight female. 30 years ago this went without saying though.

Then desire for children should be agreed. Fertility can even be checked if it is in doubt.

As for the other stuff, each couple will probably work them out differently, and I wouldn't want to specify, rank-order, or otherwise try to guess how another successful couple might do it. Other marriages seem much unlike ours, but I don't have to get along with those people, just my own wife.

Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen: "It's not easy to answer, as much of what you mention emerges as time progresses. However, as everyone knows, physical appearance is one of the first things that comes into play, before moving from the purely platonic to something of more substance. This is what one can build upon: similarities, shared values in combination with a pleasant appearance. For me, a life partner only becomes that when a beautiful exterior reflects an equal interior."

Mrs. Jorgensen: I'm not really concerned about what you're referring to, as it wasn't something I considered when I got together with my husband. Back then, we shared many of the same interests, just as we do now. However, it's probably something people would take into account today, as it seems to play a bigger role now than it did 20+ years ago.

Matthew Scillitani: My ranking is, from most to least important is gender identity/sexual orientation, sense of morality, romance, desire to have children, political beliefs, and lastly the little things like chores or hobbies.

Casey Scillitani: Gender identity, morality, romance, hobbies, chores, emotional proclivities, and political beliefs.

Jacobsen: Does the style of pairing seem to have an explicit or implicit effect, apparently statistically significantly different, on the health and longevity of the pairing, e.g., common law, secular marital union, religious ceremonial marriage, etc.?

Quinn: I am speaking from experience about a marriage with children. Marriages have rough spots. Making divorce / breakup a bit difficult can help with getting through those rough spots.

I think it's well supported statistically that children do best with a two-parent household, preferably their birth parents. The state should discourage divorce and the creation of single parent and step-parent situations where the birth parents could have stayed together for the children.

If there are no children in a longterm relationship, it's a situation I am unfamiliar with. When children arrive, it changes many things about a relationship including putting many stresses on it — life is never the same afterward. We had children soon after marriage.

Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen: Marriage itself is not the important thing here, even though tradition would have it that this is the safe choice to make for a long-lasting relationship. Here, the religious sphere collides with the statistical reality sphere. Possibly this is why so many relationships fall apart, due to the framework conditions of marriage. Well, in my case, our relationship was safely grounded in what must always lie at the foundation: love, which overcomes everything, married or not. We did not get married until 23 years had passed, and then only to put the formalities in place with regard to heirs, etc.

Mrs. Jorgensen: Getting married in itself was not important to me; what mattered most was that we had, and still have, a strong relationship. Getting married was, of course, nice, but it wasn't to strengthen the bond between us—rather, it was to formalize things for our children.

Matthew Scillitani: For me, it was important that we were legally and ceremonially married. Symbolism is valuable, and I doubt that many relationships are able to survive long-term without both sides caring about symbolic gestures.

Casey Scillitani: Marriage isn't just symbolic, it's also a legal agreement, and in cases of infidelity and financial issues, there are real consequences if the marriage isn't going well. If a partner were unfaithful then there's a legal repercussion (divorce and division of assets). So, if a person doesn't see legal marriage as essential, I question their motivations because, if things were to go south in the relationship, they wouldn't be held accountable for their actions.

If the reason someone doesn't want to get married is because they say they don't have the time or resources, that's an indication that there's a lack of commitment to the relationship. Even if it were about symbolism, it's easy to quickly get married at the courthouse for a minimal cost and time investment. So, if they can't find the time to be legally married then it indicates that they're not prioritizing the relationship.

Jacobsen: People change over time. Unless, they have some rigid personality structure, exhibit some personality structure disordering. What seem like important factors and skills to develop in, if not already have entering, the partnership to take into account over the evolution of the “dance” between the members of the relationship, as they age, change, grow, and even lose physical and mental functionality?

Quinn: Shared goals help, shared children is the most obvious and probably most enduring shared goal. Shared housing is another — it's cheaper to run one household than two, and division of labor in running the household is helpful too. Our parents stayed together until death on both sides. Relationships grow apart in some ways, but there has been enough glue to hold them together.

One distinctive characteristic of our relationship is that we are both intellectually confident. We fear nobody. If we don't understand something, many others don't either. This common experience helps us understand each other.

Mr. Tor Arne Jorgensen: In a relationship that lasts for decades, the dance between partners is about following each other's rhythm, adjusting the steps as life changes, and never forgetting why they began the journey together in the first place. I'd like to highlight a few points that illustrate what I mean:

Communication and openness

Being open to each other's thoughts, feelings, and desires, even as they change, is essential. Regular and honest dialogue helps build trust and understanding, preventing the couple from growing apart.

Flexibility and adaptability

Even when a couple shares values and goals, it's natural for individuals to evolve over time. The ability to adapt to each other's growth and find new ways to support one another is key to a lasting relationship.

Room for individual growth

Even in a close partnership, it's important to give each other the freedom to pursue individual interests and passions. This can bring new energy to the relationship and inspire both personal and shared growth.

Maintaining intimacy

Love flourishes when the couple prioritizes closeness, both emotionally and physically. Small acts of affection and attention, like a hug, a compliment, or a thoughtful surprise, help keep the spark alive.

Shared goals and experiences

Setting new goals together or sharing experiences can further strengthen the bond. This might include traveling, exploring new hobbies, or contributing to the community in meaningful ways.

Patience and humor

Challenges will arise over time, whether they're small annoyances or major life events. The ability to face them with patience and to laugh together when things don't go as planned is an invaluable resource.

Care during physical or mental decline

As time goes on, health challenges may become a reality. A lasting love means being there for each other, showing care, and adjusting the relationship to accommodate these changes.

For couples like my wife and me, who already have a strong foundation, it's this continuous evolution that keeps the love alive.

Mrs. Jorgensen: Ditto

Matthew Scillitani: Empathy, patience, and self-control are always going to be valuable skills to develop in a relationship. As time goes on, making sure that your mind and body are staying fit will help too. Hopefully my wife and I will be in good health into our old age, but if ever she's unwell, I'd like to be healthy enough myself to support her.

Casey Scillitani: Developing your love for your partner, continuing to understand yourself and them as time goes on, realizing that many relationships fail because one or both partners love something about the other that isn't enduring, and understanding what makes you really love your partner; if it's something transient or permanent.

For example, figuring out that loving someone's appearance, social status, or wealth isn't true love. Those things go away with time, so if that's what you were attracted to, the relationship won't last and you'll be constantly having to replace them.

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