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# Explorative curiosity

Raffaele Boiano





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## Raffaele Boiano

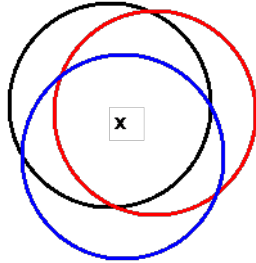
@rainwiz

UX unicorn, Professor @Polimi, Co-founder @fifthbeat, anthropology background, father, rugby addicted. Views are mine | Please feed my curiosity!

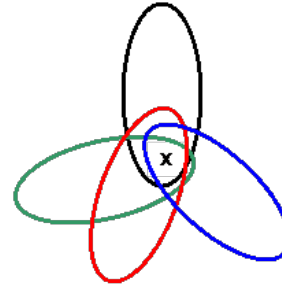
📍 Roma, Italy 🌐 [rainwiz.com](http://rainwiz.com) 🗓️ Born March 17, 1978

📅 Joined February 2008

## The intersection of social circles (1908)



Characteristic of smaller, more homogeneous societies. (In Spencer's functionalism, a society at an early stage of development.) **Social groups overlap/intersect a lot, so most people are in the same group with lots of the same people.** A person's various social roles or personality aspects tend to reinforce each other. There may be pressure to conform, and the individual may feel strongly embedded in society.



Characteristic of larger, more diverse societies with much **specialization or division of labor.** (In Spencer's functionalism, a society at an later stage of development.) Social groups overlap/intersect only a little, so few people are in the same groups with each other. A person's various social roles or personality aspects tend to diverge from each other. The individual may feel free but isolated.

# We're what we're able to connect

UX Design Professor @ **Politecnico di Milano** (Scuola del Design)

CEO @ Fifth Beat, a **Design Studio** (Rome, Milan, Berlin)

Consultant @ **European Commission**, DG-EMPL

Mentor @ Gaza Sky Geeks, startup incubator a **Gaza City**

Founder of Homes 2 People, a **real estate startup**

Board Member of Krystal Ball, a **machine learning consultancy**

Faculty member @ **IULM**, Master Information Architecture

Faculty member @ **SCUOLA HOLDEN**, Contemporary Humanities

Former VP @ **Architecta**, Società Italiana di architettura dell'informazione

Founder of UX DOJO, a deep dive **UX design school**



# Ontology, Taxonomy and Choreography

## Ontology

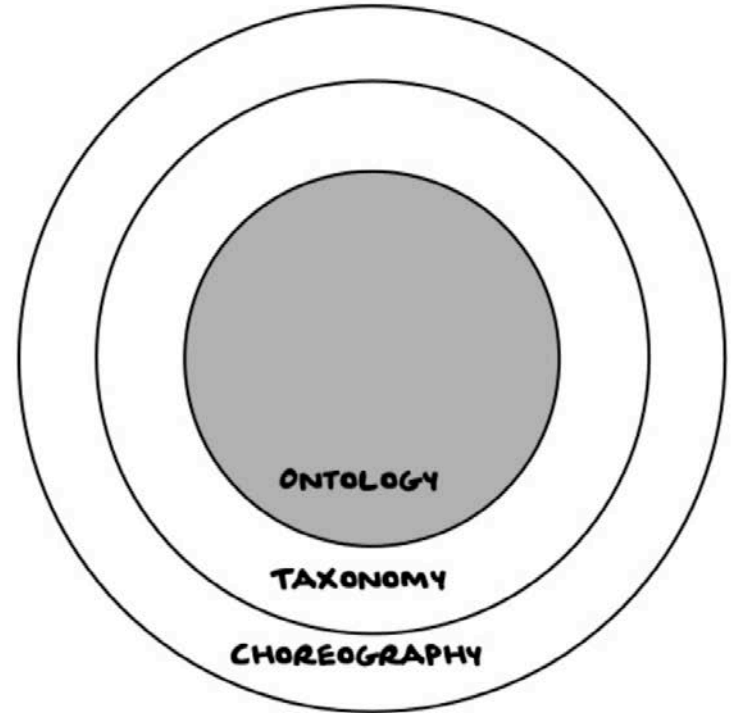
What do we mean when we say curiosity?

## Taxonomy

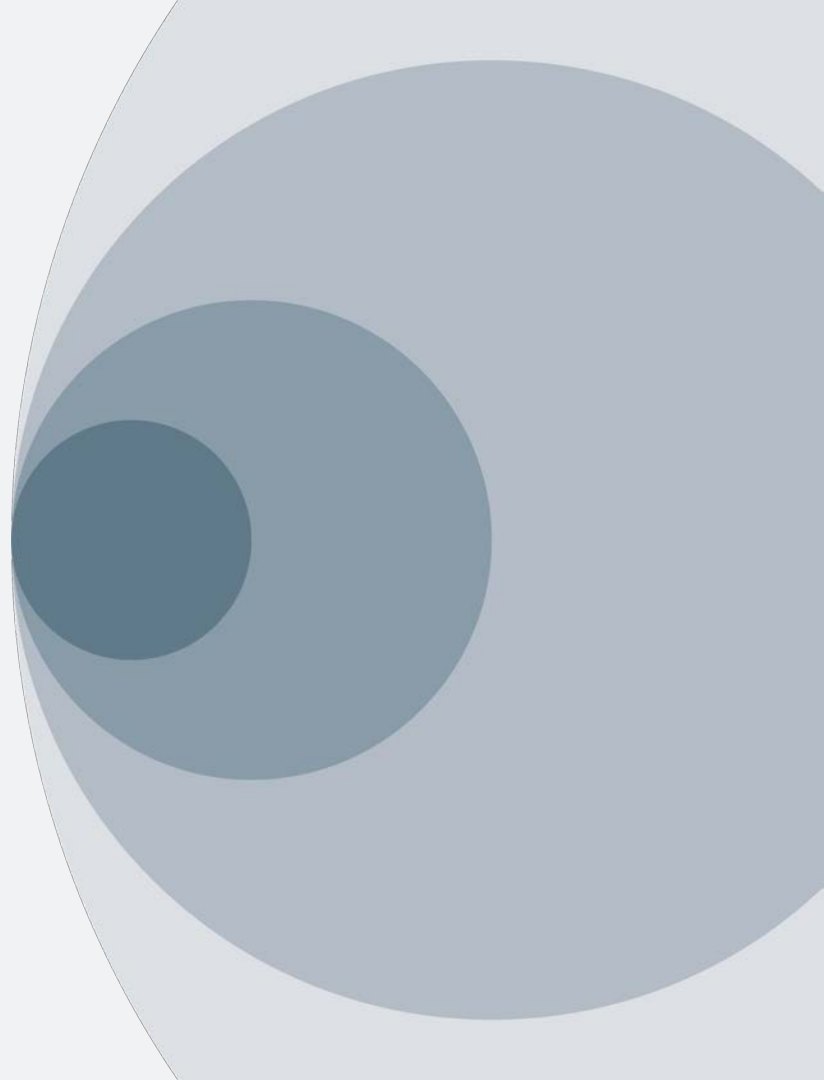
What is the structure of curiosity as an epistemic process?

## Choreography

How can we put curiosity in place, releasing its value?



# What is curiosity?





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## Define: curiosity

Raffaele's weird definition:

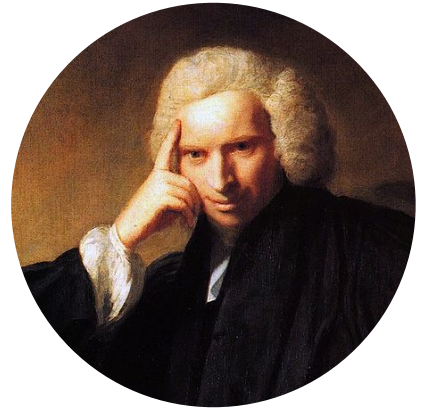
- What is curiosity?
- There is no single definition, but I'd like to say that it's the **ability to happily get lost for no apparent reason**. Unlike human intelligence, curiosity doesn't need skills of processing huge quantities of information and don't need to provide any output or decision. Unlike artificial intelligence, curiosity can do what we want without endless repetitions, computational power, and electricity.

## Dual meanings of the curiosity

Broadly it's a noun to convey the **desire of knowledge**.

- Her natural **curiosity** led her to ask more questions.
- The arrival of a construction crew at their house attracted the **curiosity** of their neighbors.

The desire of knowledge, like the **thirst** of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it.



Laurence Sterne

# What is the structure of an epistemic process?



# Marcia Bates

|            | Active                           | Passive                                   |
|------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Directed   | [A] active seeking and searching | [B] Passive monitoring                    |
| Undirected | [C] Browsing and scanning        | [D] Incidental acquisition of information |



Bates, M.J. (1979). Information search tactics. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 30(4), 205-214.

Bates, M.J. (1989). The design of browsing and berrypicking techniques for the online search interface. *Online Review*, 13(5), 407-424.

## Active

## Passive

## Directed

(A) Active seeking and searching

*Constitutive activities:*

- identifying information sources
- selecting sources
- locating sources
- accessing sources

*Key concepts:*

- active seeking (McKenzie)
- active search (Wilson)
- directed search (Bates)
- chaining (Ellis)
- herry picking (Bates)
- keyword searching (Foster)
- monitoring/ keeping current (Bronstein, Ellis, Foster)
- ongoing search (Wilson)

(B) Passive monitoring

*Constitutive activities:*

- back-of-the-mind alertness for things of interest
- recognizing potentially relevant sources in specific situations

*Key concepts:*

- passive search (Wilson)
- obtaining information by proxy (McKenzie)

## Undirected

(C) Browsing and scanning

*Constitutive activities:*

- glimpsing a field of vision
- sampling and selecting

*Key concepts:*

- active scanning (McKenzie) - non-directed scanning (McKenzie)
- conditioned viewing (Aguilar) - undirected viewing (Aguilar) - foraging (Pirolli & Card)

(D) Incidental acquisition of information

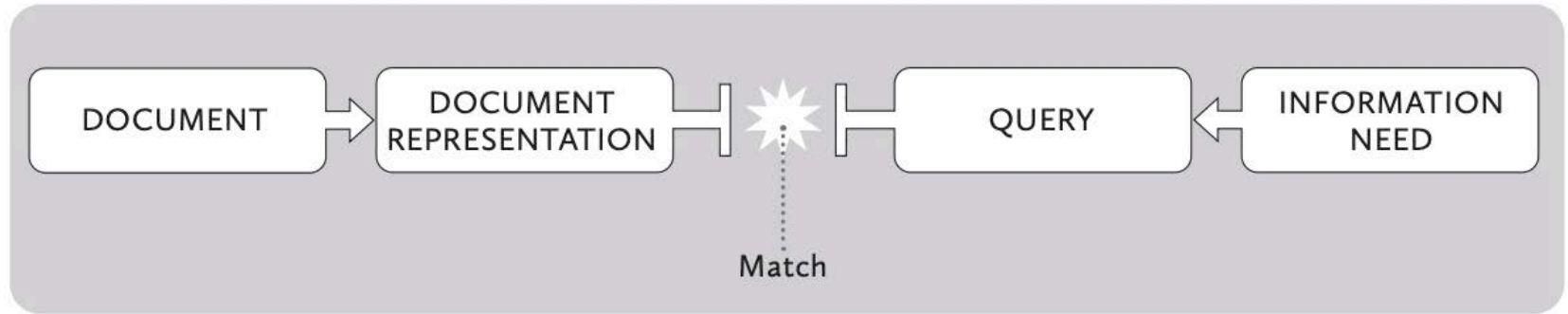
*Key activities:*

- obtaining information by chance in certain events or situations

*Key concepts:*

- information encountering (Erdelez)
- incidental information acquisition (Williamson)
- passive attention (Wilson)

# Epistemic strategy: classical model



# Epistemic strategy: Berrypicking

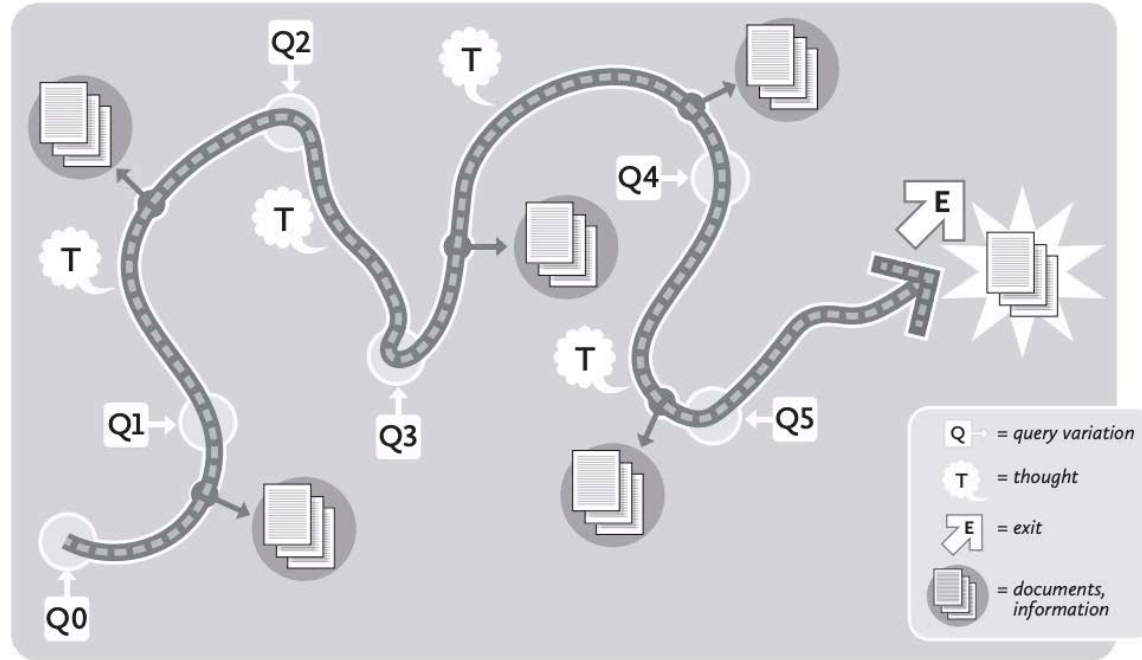


FIG. 2. A berrypicking, evolving search

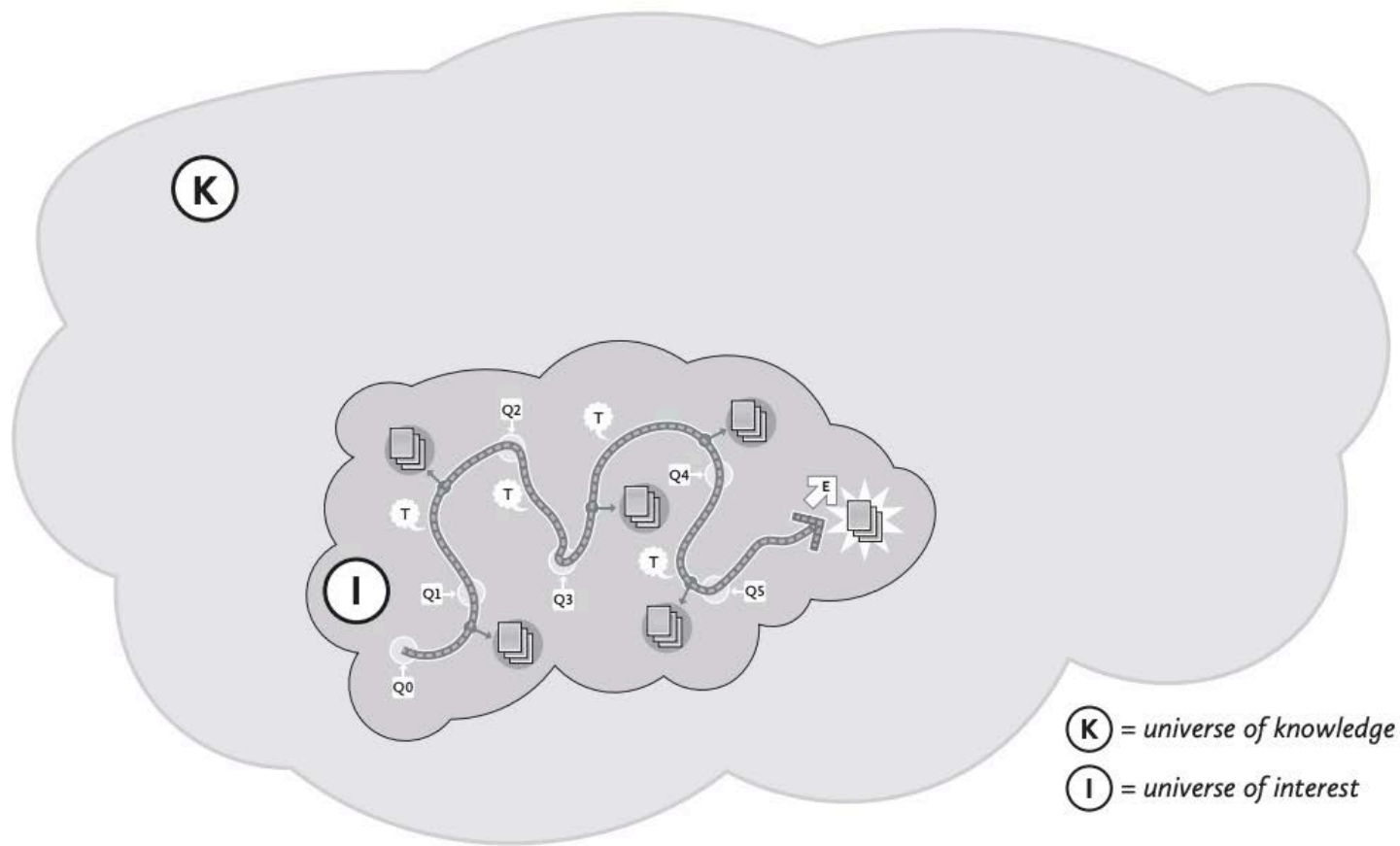


FIG. 3. Context of berrypicking search



## Ex- something...

- Exploration (ex ploràre)
- Experiment (ex perimèntum)
- Experience (ex perientia)



**How can we  
release the value  
of curiosity?**



- 9 <sup>a</sup>Because of his strength I will give heed unto thee; For God is my high tower.
- 10 My God with his lovingkindness will meet me: God will let me see my desire upon mine enemies.
- 11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.
- 12 For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, Let them even be taken in their pride, And for cursing and lying which they speak.
- 13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, so that they shall be no more: And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, Unto the ends of the earth. <sup>b</sup>Sē lāh
- 14 And at evening let them return, let them howl like a dog, And go round about the city.
- 15 They shall wander up and down for food, And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.
- 16 But I will sing of thy strength; Yea, I will sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning: For thou hast been my high tower, And a refuge in the day of my distress.
- 17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises: For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.

Lament over Defeat in Battle, and Prayer for Help.

For the Chief Musician; set to Shushan Eduth, Michtam of David, to Gash; when he strove with Aram-nabaz and with Aramnahab, and Joab returned and smote of Edom in the Valley of salt twelve thousand.

60 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down: Thou hast been angry; oh restore us again.

<sup>a</sup>Acc. to Sept. and Vulg. My strength is Or, them that lie in wait for me <sup>b</sup>Or, Make them wander to and fro <sup>c</sup>That is, The City of Testimony

- 2 Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it: Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
- 3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things: Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering.
- 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, That it may be displayed because of the truth. <sup>b</sup>Sē lāh
- 5 That thy beloved may be delivered, Save with thy right hand, and answer us.
- 6 God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exult; I will divide Shēchem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.
- 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the defence of my head; Judah is my sceptre.
- 8 Moab is my washpot: Upon Edom will I cast my shoe: Philistia, shout thou because of me.
- 9 Who will bring me into the strong city? Who hath led me unto Edom? Hast not thou, O God, cast us off? And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.
- 11 Give us help against the adversary: For vain is the help of man.
- 12 Through God we shall do valiantly: For he it is that will tread down our adversaries.

Confidence in God's Protection.

For the Chief Musician; on a stringed instrument. A Psalm of David.

61 Hear my cry, O God: Attend unto my prayer. 2 From the end of the earth will I call unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed:

<sup>a</sup>Another reading is, me. <sup>b</sup>Or, Lincroper. <sup>c</sup>Or, Who will lead me &c. <sup>d</sup>Or, Will not thou, O God, who hast cast us off, and gone . . . hosts? <sup>e</sup>Heb. salvation <sup>f</sup>Or, faithful

- Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
- 3 For thou hast been a refuge for me: A strong tower from the enemy.
- 4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever: I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. <sup>b</sup>Sē lāh
- 5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.
- 6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life; His years shall be as many generations.
- 7 He shall abide before God for ever: Oh prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.
- 8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, That I may daily perform my vows.

God alone a Refuge from Treachery and Oppression.

For the Chief Musician; after the manner of Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

62 My soul waiteth in silence for God only: From him cometh my salvation. 2 He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my high tower; I shall not be greatly moved. 3 How long will ye set upon a man. That ye may slay him, all of you. Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? 4 They only consult to thrust him down from his dignity: They delight in lies: They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. <sup>b</sup>Sē lāh

5 My soul, wait thou in silence for God only: For my expectation is from him. 6 He only is my rock and my salvation:

<sup>a</sup>Or, a rock that is too high for me. <sup>b</sup>Heb. tent. <sup>c</sup>Or, given a heritage unto those &c. <sup>d</sup>Heb. is silent unto God. <sup>e</sup>Or, an otherwise read, Ye shall be slain &c. <sup>f</sup>Heb. be thou silent unto God

## **Sirach, book 9, line 7 (Sir, 9, 7)**

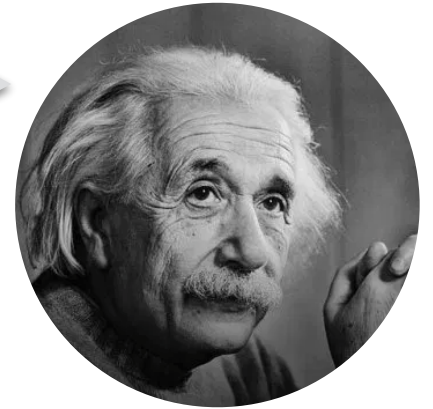
*“Do not look around the streets of the city or wander through its squares”*

## **St. Paul, First Epistle to Timothy (1Tm, 5, 13)**

*“And withal being idle they learn to go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.”*

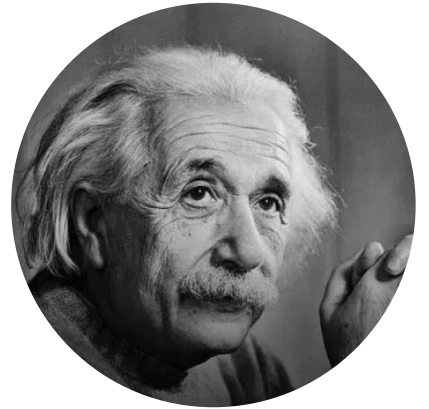


The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain **signs and more or less clear images** which can be “voluntarily” **reproduced and combined**. There is, of course, a certain connection between those elements and relevant logical concepts. It is also clear that the desire to arrive finally at logically connected concepts is the emotional basis of this rather vague play with the above-mentioned elements.



Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

But taken from a psychological viewpoint, this **combinatory play** seems to be the essential feature in productive thought — before there is any connection with logical construction in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others.



Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, **does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos**; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself.



Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

In this age of communication, through books, reproductions, exhibits brought from all over the world, **who can be free from influence**, — preconception? But — it all depends upon what one does with this cross-fertilization: — is it digested, or does it bring indigestion?



Edward Weston (1886–1958)





Investment

Passion

Role

Value

WE KNOW THE GAIN  
Learn The Problems

Coca-Cola

# Writings

- Georg Simmel's Theory of Intersecting Social Circles, <https://www.lsu.edu/faculty/fweil/SimmelCircles.htm>
- The Bible, (Sir, 9,7) and (1Tm, 5, 13)
- Edward Weston, [The Daybooks of Edward Weston: Volume II, California](#) (public library).
- Mary Shelley, preface to the 1831 edition of [Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus](#) (public library)
- Einstein quoted in Jacques S. Hadamard's [An Essay on the Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field](#)
- Bates, M.J. (1979). Information search tactics. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 30(4), 205-214.
- Bates, M. J. (1989). [The design of browsing and berrypicking techniques for the online search interface](#). *Online Review*, 13(5), 407-424.

# Images

- Cover: [Maria Elena Zuñiga](#)
- Alessandro Nardone @ [Commodore 64](#)
- Robert Mapplethorpe, Arnold Schwarzenegger. 1976
- Amhad Odeh, [Dance of the soul](#)
- Walking, by [Jyotirmoy Gupta](#)
- Bible, by [Aaron Burden](#)
- Lantern Slide - Motor Boat Party of Explorers, BANZARE Voyage 2, Antarctica, 1930-31  
Photographer: [Eric Douglas](#)

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Thanks!