

Some thoughts on curiosity

Jeremy Till

When curiosity has become free, it takes care to see not in order to understand what it sees, that is, to come to a being toward it, but *only* in order to see. It seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty. The care of seeing is not concerned with comprehending and knowingly being in the truth, but with possibilities of abandoning itself to the world. Thus curiosity is characterized by a specific *not-staying* with what is nearest. Consequently, it also does not seek the leisure of reflective staying, but rather restlessness and excitement from continual novelty and changing encounters. In not-staying, curiosity makes sure of the constant possibility of *distraction*. Curiosity has nothing to do with the contemplation that wonders at being, *thaumazein*, it has no interest in wondering to the point of not understanding. Rather, it makes sure of knowing, but just in order to have known. The two factors constitutive for curiosity, *not-staying* in the surrounding world taken care of and *distraction* by new possibilities, are the basis of the third essential characteristic of this phenomenon, which we call *never dwelling anywhere*. Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere. This mode of being-in-the-world reveals a new kind of being of everyday *Da-sein*, one in which it constantly uproots itself.

Heidegger: Being and Time

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“Curiosity is a vice that has been stigmatised
in turn by Christianity, by philosophy, and
even by a certain conception of science.
Curiosity is seen as futility.”

Michel Foucault

“However, I like the word; it suggests something quite different to me. It evokes ‘care’; it evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilised before it...”

Michel Foucault

“(Curiosity suggests) a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way...”

Michel Foucault

“(Curiosity suggests) a passion for seizing
what is happening now and what is
disappearing; a lack of respect for the
traditional hierarchies of what is important
and fundamental.”

Michel Foucault

“I dream of a new age of curiosity”
Michel Foucault