

A Walk in the Park

1.

Walking along the tree-lined Common in downtown Boston, you can easily spot the State House with its familiar golden dome. Consider that (1) the principles of Democracy expressed as a constitutional republic and (2) evolution by means of natural selection are perhaps the two greatest ideas of the last millennium. Democracy is cultural, natural selection biological.

Einstein said that human motivation is reducible to fear and longing.

There are about five-thousand thunderstorms that occur in the Earth's atmosphere every day.

We know more about the internal workings of a distant star than we do about the interior of the Earth.

Physicist Richard Feynman quoting a poet has said 'the whole universe is in a glass of wine.' He points to the evaporating liquid dependent on the wind and weather, 'the reflections in the glass', the glass being 'a distillation of the Earth's rocks, and in its composition the secrets of the universe's age and the evolution of the stars.' He continues, 'when we divide the glass into parts --- physics, biology, geology, astronomy, psychology..., --- remember that nature does not know it. Let it give us one more final pleasure. Drink it and forget it all.'

Henry David Thoreau was the first American field ecologist to be influenced by Darwin's theory of natural selection and adaptation.

During the two-year period that Thoreau was hermitted at Walden Pond, he would sometimes walk along the railroad tracks to his Mother's house for lunch.

The first sounds used for the purpose of communication were probably made by insects.

When you hear a nearby sound, consider that sound waves travel outward in all directions from the center of a source, forming an expanding three-dimensional sphere in air.

Imagine the very first sound on Earth. Imagine the last sound on Earth. Imagine the sounds of a collapsing solar system. Imagine the final sounds of an exploding or imploding universe.

People normally and unconsciously coordinate their walking along a path, creating harmonic resonance with one another; creating the music of walking.

Three clocks placed on a wooden mantle will eventually beat in rhythmic unison due to vibrations transferred from one clock to another through the medium of wood. Three

young women, all roommates, may experience their menstrual cycles at the same time each month, harmonically coordinated by means of pheromones.

Notice something extraordinary. A highly stressful or emotional experience will activate adrenaline hormones that help to preserve *memories* of that event.

2.

What is the function of the earlobe? Is it a vestigial artifact left over from a prehistoric time when it served a more useful purpose? For thousands of years, the earlobe has been used as a contemporary art gallery for the purpose of decoration and adornment, as well as sexual signaling.

Since human ears are made mostly of cartilage, they tend to get bigger with age. Why is the ear so sensitive to sexual stimulation, as opposed to the nose or eyebrow, for example?

All languages are combinatorial and depend on a vocabulary of expression. The vocabulary of speech is phonemes. The vocabulary of *writing* is graphic symbols. The vocabulary of *mathematics* is numbers. The vocabulary of *computers* is a binary code of zeroes and ones. The vocabulary of *life* is DNA. The vocabulary of *nature* is atoms.

Most species of bees do not live in colonies. They live solitary lives, occupying tiny holes dug into the dirt or a tree.

The word 'month' is derived from the word 'moon'. In the English language, there is no rhyme for the word 'month'.

Notice an old person whose skin is *wrinkled*, a *wrought*-iron fence, a baby *wrapped* in a blanket. English words beginning with *WR* refer to some form of twisting.

While watching ducks on a pond, you might ask the question, **which came first, the chicken or the egg?** Guy Murchie speculates that the egg has existed on Earth for at least several hundred million years, while the Hen has been here only fifty million years.

Observe someone smiling or laughing. Mark Twain said humor arises from sorrow; that 'there is no laughter in heaven'.

Artist Amy Robinson suggests that proteins may have evolved prior to DNA molecules. If you think of the nucleus as the embryo or egg, and proteins as its protecting membrane, or material body, then one may conclude that the **chicken did, in fact, come before the egg.**

Consider the proportion of things. To understand nature is to be aware of scale.

Humans are pattern-seeking animals.

A female pigeon cannot lay eggs if she is alone. In order for her ovaries to function, she must be able to see another pigeon. If no other pigeon is nearby, viewing her reflection in a mirror is enough to cause the desired result.

Clouds fly higher during the day than at night.

Notice an interesting person. All life-forms, including humans, are at different times, extremely fragile and truly indomitable.

3.

11 percent of American drinkers consume 88 percent of the wine. And largely on the east and west coasts. Most of the drinking population in America consume beer and hard liquor.

All things are made of atoms. Stars are made of atoms. Humans are made of atoms. When we look at a tree, we see ourselves.

Ideas, like organisms, conform to Darwinian rules of natural selection.

Humans are living fossils. Every human gene has an ancestor.

Traditional African tribes have no words for *I'm sorry*.

There are between five and six thousand different languages spoken in the world today. Like genes, languages evolve because they accumulate mutations.

Cro Magnons were the first humans to speak a language containing a universal grammar, or syntax. Much of our *thinking* involves the use of words, and relies on the innate rules of language.

A human brain is the most *complex* system in the known universe.

Flowering plants, which are only 150 million years old, provide 80 per cent of the human food chain.

Every organism that you see mirrors the shape of its environment.

Space is everywhere. Time is now.

We often *react* to a situation rather than *consider* a thing. Reactions happen quickly. Considerations require more time and are more complex. A walk in the park can slow observations and events. It can transform reaction into awareness.

4.

All species that are alive today are the most successful in history. They are at the top of the evolutionary ladder.

If you believe that the shell of a snail, or the scroll of a violin is the same shape as your inner ear, *shut your eyes, and imagine that you are a small creature, spinning slowly in a counterclockwise direction, while translating through space at supersonic speed.*

While overhearing a conversation, consider that spoken language is acquired spontaneously, while writing and reading must be learned.

Animals have allowed themselves to become domesticated as a means of survival, rather than as a benefit to humans. The same is true for large fruit, such as apples, oranges, or grapefruit, where animals large enough to eat them and disperse their seeds have become extinct.

When you see a dog on a leash, consider Michael Pollan's reminder that there are millions of dogs in the world today, while only thousands of wolves. 'Work like a dog' is a misnomer. 'Work like a bee' is more apt.

If you have at some time looked through an observatory telescope, or an electron microscope, if you have never traveled out of the country, if you are ambidextrous, or if you know where you are in relation to the center of our galaxy, *smile at no one in particular.*

The next time you notice a plant or animal, consider that one-hundred and fifty years ago a species died-out every 5 years. Today a species disappears every 9 minutes.

There are no truly *random* events. Random is the name we give to patterns in nature for which the human brain is unable to confer meaning.

If you believe that synchronicity and resonance occur at every order of magnitude and scale, *blink your eyes.*

One-half of all living matter on Earth is microbial.

The functional purpose of life is the survival of DNA.

There are approximately 10 to the 18 (one followed by 18 zeroes) number of *insects* on planet Earth.