

“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.” (Albert Einstein, *What I Believe*)

Humans are curious creatures. As part of our very nature, we wonder about why the world is the way it is. So naturally, it makes sense that we are drawn to the mysterious aspects of life. According to Albert Einstein, “[t]he most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.” Mysteries are indeed beautiful, as they challenge the mind and invoke the imagination. Science, a profoundly integrated part of the modern world as well as the ancient, was borne from the existence of natural phenomena and the human combination of curiosity and determination to uncover the mysteries of the world. All that we know about the world was once a mystery, and many mysteries still wait to be uncovered. These mysteries create beauty in our lives: they give us, as humans, something to reach for, something to achieve.

When I was maybe six or seven years old, everything about the night sky fascinated me. The stars, the planets, the constellations; they excited my imagination and aroused in me a deep curiosity. My grandmother, who knew quite a bit on the subject, regaled me with stories and names of constellations and told me why some stars flickered as if they had a faulty circuit. On clear nights, we would sit out in the backyard on a blanket, my toes in the cool dark grass, my head in the stars. This profound curiosity compelled me to learn more about the sky and how it worked. The mystery of the night sky ignited my desire to discover. So I looked at astronomy books in the school library, and learned about the stories associated with the constellations. Because I was intrigued by a certain “mystery,” I wanted to understand more about it. Even today I am still fascinated by the stars and the constellations, and I always love a weekend visit to the planetarium. But it was the absence of knowledge that prompted me to want to know, and

so I sought the knowledge and saw beauty in it. Thus is the general human formula of discovery: lack of understanding, desire to understand, and finally, the beauty of understanding.

But I wasn't the only one to ever be captivated by the stars. Vincent van Gogh shared the same area of interest, and displayed this interest in his famous painting *Starry Night*. Einstein mentioned how mystery is the source of all true art, and this piece is a prime example of the capture of one of nature's mysteries into something completely different, but just as beautiful. Well before van Gogh, famous astronomers like Copernicus and Galileo were also perplexed by the night sky. They, like childhood me, did their research, and they discovered truths that are essential to our modern world. They discovered complex systems and patterns that were groundbreaking during their time. Mystery is beautiful because of what it yields: discovery.

Ancient Greek civilization was made famous for a number of things, but its ultimate legacy was its mythology. The Greeks observed natural phenomena and wondered why these things happened. As humans, they were unsatisfied with their lack of explanation. Their solution was creative yet simple: make up stories to explain why things happened the way they did. From the changing seasons to the narcissus flower, the Greeks explained everything under the sun – including the sun itself. Their lasting impact on civilization, known as the Classical Period, influenced thinkers and artists for centuries afterwards, and people today are still enthralled with Classical culture and thinking. The revival of the ideas from the Classical Period triggered the European Renaissance, which marked the birth of the modern world. Thus, the ancient Greeks, through their discoveries and explanations of mysteries, opened the door for a beautiful worldwide transition from ancient to modern.

But it is not just discovery that humans crave, it is the *journey* to discovery that we find so exciting. Any researcher will tell you that a day in which they find out the smallest bit of

information is a good day. Without mysteries, we humans would have nothing for which to strive, nothing to seek to accomplish. Mysteries quietly but firmly demand explanation, and humans have just the minds to find those explanations. This system in itself is beautiful, but the result of the system is even more so: an evolving, ever-shifting world. As humans, we are drawn to find out more about our world – we seek to understand. So, Einstein was right: the mysterious *is* a beautiful thing.

Counterargument: “To understand God’s thoughts we must study statistics, for these are the measure of his purpose.”

- The world is too great for humans to understand; we must use what we are given
 - Our minds are unable to comprehend everything all at once
- To understand the mysteries of the world (“God’s thoughts”) would be impossible and absurd
 - Statistics break it down for us
 - By studying multiple groups and types of statistics (compiling information) we can come to conclusion about “God’s thoughts”
- Many, if not all, discoveries wouldn’t have been made if it wasn’t for minute details and carefully-measured data
 - Statistics are the heart of science
- Statistics, like mysteries, prompt further questions and discoveries
 - “Why is the data like this?” leads to further study and discovery
- The world operates on statistics
 - Articles aren’t a “good source” if they don’t contain a certain amount of statistics or factual information (logos)
 - Data and statistics make things “real”; people believe claims if they’re supported by numerical facts