

Don't Think.

The man, having been an avid questioner his entire life, had never considered that other people didn't, couldn't, or wouldn't think. As a youngster, he noticed acceptance in people's lives. Still, he'd never settled on the glaring evidence that many people just accepted the prevailing answer, within their socioeconomic group, without thinking about it. They'd heard an answer to a question or argument; others concurred, and that satisfied their curiosity.

The man snickered to himself because he could relate. He had done that too. During his younger years, he hadn't thought that the dogma he was learning might be either false or outdated. He hadn't questioned that the earth and everything else were created in six days, and God rested on the seventh day. He hadn't questioned the education he was receiving, nor why he was receiving the education he was. Political differences were debated between those of different political parties, but the political process was not questioned. The government had thought of everything, and all the population had to do was accept what they were told. There was no reason for anyone to question or to think.

Somehow, and somewhere along the man's path, he had strayed off the path most people took. He had begun to question things. He and his father took a gondola ride up a steep mountain one summer day. It was hot, and the boy and his father wore t-shirts, but upon reaching the top of the mountain, they were both shivering from the cold. The boy asked his father, "Dad, how come, now that we're nearer the sun, it's colder?" His father just shrugged and said he didn't know. As the boy grew older, he asked more questions aloud.

The man sought updated answers to his two lifelong questions:

Who am I? and

Why am I here?

because the answers often changed. For instance, while he was raising two children for more than a decade, the answers remained basically the same. But after his children left, those two questions became relevant once more.

His questioning demanded that he pay attention in class, with classes now being held in the school of life, and it became mandatory that he always attend class and ask questions until the answers were clear.

The man knew questioning was his way of finding accurate answers.

That's why the two questions needed updating throughout his life. The more the school of life taught him, the more he learned, changing him from accepting others' beliefs to learning what was right and acceptable for him.

The man saw that thinking was changing his life. He remembered having questions that went unanswered because he hadn't been in school long enough to learn. Once his immature knowledge was replaced by mature knowledge, he could begin to answer his deeper questions properly, but his previous answers needed to be checked for accuracy and updated.

The man eventually stopped talking about thinking to other people because they had long ago stopped. Most people, he found, lived a life of acceptance within their accepted sphere of influence and belief structure. And because they knew no better, they were content. The norm in the people around him was acceptance from those they befriended.

The man learned that society was made up of a majority of people who accepted either what its leaders dictated or what the opposition proposed. Yes, he knew that leaders vary country to country, religion to religion, and politically. Still, for a large percentage of people, acceptance was the norm, while for a small percentage, it was not.

What people within the medical profession say, what parents dictate, what the priest, rabbi, imam, or other religious leaders say, working until retirement while paying taxes, are all examples of acceptance. Society, however, asks that you don't think about alternatives.

The man laughed to himself. He had never been able to accept much of what he'd been told without rebelling against it first. He was able to accept that there's only one right way to use a spoon, but only after trial and error.

The man asked rhetorically, "Is acceptance without questioning acceptable?"

And: Should one ever stop questioning what they don't know for certain?

The man had seen that acceptance without questioning changes people.

The question of how to use a spoon was easily answered, but questions about our lives are existential, so we shouldn't accept others' answers without at least thinking about them.

The man sighed, knowing the path he described and the path he chose are not for everyone.

There was a reason he had few friends, and there were reasons he didn't socialize much. He was a minority, a person who didn't and couldn't accept just the alternatives society offered.

He could see that life was difficult for everyone sometimes, and it had been difficult for him too, but, as he thought more, he smiled, for he knew and was grateful he had chosen to think rather than simply accepting what others told him.

The man found that there were many questions he could neither prove nor disprove. Answers about the existence of a heaven and hell, reincarnation, and even God, offered no verifiable proof either way, and knowing he would find those answers when his time on this earth was done, he let those questions remain unanswerable, positive mysteries.