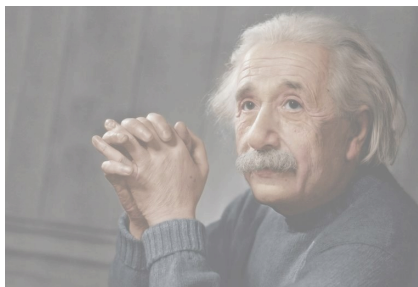


The most beautiful experience one can have in life is mystery. It is the essence of learning that knowledge destroys.

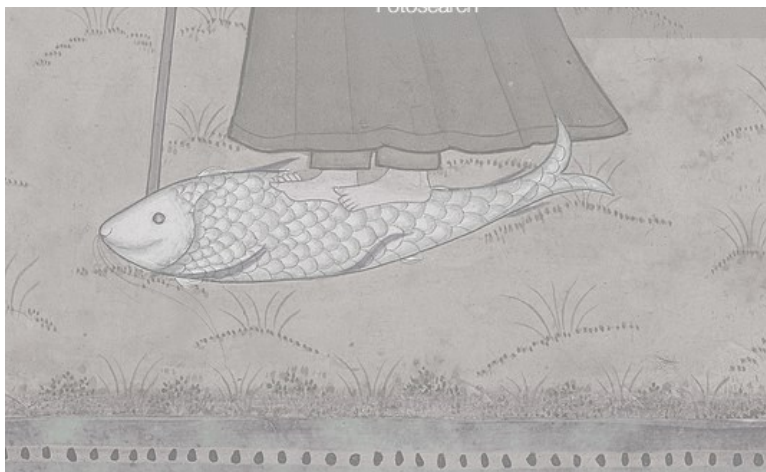
-Albert Einstein



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Albert Einstein: A New Year



What does it mean to study? To memorize information. To pass a test. I beg to differ. Study is a posture of the mind. It is simply another word for time. Often in literacy the first thing I listen for with each new student is how their time is spent. I have more than once said that I do not believe there is such a thing as illiteracy. Above, I have quoted Albert Einstein. Everyone should Google Albert Einstein quotes and read in awe. In context of my belief that illiteracy doesn't exist Einstein once said, "Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid."

"Education is what remains after one has forgotten what they learned in school," says Einstein? His understanding of learning and what it means to be literate are carefully built upon humility and awe, rather than knowledge and science. We will return to this later, as I am sure this quote, easily taken out of context, will ruffle some feathers.

"Perfection of means and confusion of ends seems to characterize our times." Einstein is a dynamism. He continues to polemicize, "The definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results." This leads me to my pedagogy, "The definition of study is simply a question of time and will." The only error is not identifying individual stasis, rather categorizing delusions.

Time is the one dimension never calculated into the educational system. As we watch many things in the world around us spin out of control, we attempt to solve them in the same way we created them. Economic problems cannot be solved with algorithms any more than fire can be put out with fire. So, why do we categorize disciplines? It seems the more we categorize them, the less unity we find in them? The more we attempt to gain control of them, the less control we gain over them?

So, you are likely thinking, "Albert Einstein didn't think school was important?" This would be easy to conclude from his statement, but rather what Einstein is saying is that we are viewing education wrongly. Education is viewed as an end, rather than a means, though in truth it is a learning how to learn, rather than a what to learn. Our leaning towards science and math is symptomatic we have lost our way, not found it... so lost we literally have organized into insanity.

As the New Year descends, I think this is an important reflection. Is your time spent in the comforts of the Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian delusions, or is it spent in mystery? "Science is dead. We killed it." Haven't you heard?

Write: Ghazal Winter Contest

Every winter for *Write*, a *Learn Project*, I like to offer a writing challenge to both expand our understanding of different styles of writing and a simple challenge while we hide in our houses warm and cozy this winter.

Write is a project that is one of three important disciplines to build a strong foundation for what I term “Learning how to learn, rather than learning what to learn.” Historically, Ghazal were popularized in America through Edgar Allen Poe, who according to his contemporaries, “became obsessed with them.”

I have often found it odd in conversation that when one says they can read a book, people’s general response is anticlimactic, though if one says that they have written a book people respond in awe. This shouldn’t be the case. Many educators, k-12 to higher education, lament the lack of students ability to write well. Reading and writing are two sides of the same coin and writing is how we contextualize, interpret, and understand our reading.

Dark Times © Marilyn Hacker

Naysayers in sequins or tweeds, libertine or ascetic
Find a sensual frisson in what they’d call bling about the dark times.

Some of the young can project themselves into a Marshall Plan future. Where they laugh and link arms, reminiscing about the dark times.

From every spot-lit glitz tower with armed guards around it
Some huckster pronounces his fiats, self-sacralized king, about the dark times.

In a tent, in a queue, near barbed wire, in a shipping container,
Please remember ya akhy, we too know something about the dark times.

Sindbad’s roc, or Ganymede’s eagle, some bird of rapacious ill omen.
From bleak skies descends, and wraps an enveloping wing about the dark times.

You come home from your meeting, your clinic, make coffee
and look in the mirror

And ask yourself once more what you did to bring about the dark times.

Writing is an important aspect in developing one’s own interpretation either of a text, and/or to explore one’s identity and learning language. I have observed that identity is often underdeveloped do to fear of expressing one’s thoughts. Writing is a way to safely engage oneself.

This winter, December 22nd-February 18th, *Learn: A Project* is offering a Ghazal writing challenge. Ghazal is a simple form of poetry originating in ancient Persia. It is generally five to fifteen couplets. A theme, title, is chosen and repeated at the end of the first couplet twice, and then the second line of each subsequent couplet. More difficult Urdu Ghazal attempt to keep the same number of syllables in each line. For the contest this isn’t necessary. For more information come by literacy or inquire at circulation, there are many architectural and anatomical sources.

There are prizes for the first three chosen by a group of judges. First place a Kindle Fire, second place a \$50 dollar gift card, and third place a \$25 dollar gift card.

Ghazal of What Hurt © Peter Cole

Pain froze you, for years—and fear—leaving scars.

But now, as though miraculously, it seems, here you are
walking easily across the ground, and into town
as though you were floating on air, which in part you are,
or riding a wave of what feels like the world’s good will,

Though helped along by something foreign and older than you
are and yet much younger too, inside you, and so palpable
an X-ray, you’re sure, would show it, within the body you are,
not all that far beneath the skin, and even in

some bones. Making you wonder: Are you what you are—
with all that isn’t actually you having flowed

through and settled in you, and made you what you are?

The pain was never replaced, nor was it quite erased.

It’s memory now—so you know just how lucky you are.

Face it, friend, you most exist when you’re driven

away, or on—by forms and forces greater than you are.