
From: John Brockman [REDACTED]
Sent: 12/31/2010 6:23:47 PM
To: Jeffrey Epstein [jeevacation@gmail.com]
Subject: Edge Question 2011 - An Invitation

Importance: High

"Deliciously creative...the variety astonishes...intellectual skyrockets of stunning brilliance. Nobody in the world is doing what Edge is doing." Denis Dutton, ARTS & LETTERS DAILY

THE WORLD QUESTION CENTER

James Flynn has defined "shorthand abstractions" (or "SHA's") as concepts drawn from science that have become part of the language and make people smarter by providing widely applicable templates ("market", "placebo", "random sample," "naturalistic fallacy," are a few of his examples). His idea is that the abstraction is available as a single cognitive chunk which can be used as an element in thinking and debate.

The Edge Question 2011

WHAT SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT WOULD IMPROVE EVERYBODY'S COGNITIVE TOOLKIT?

The term 'scientific' is to be understood in a broad sense as the most reliable way of gaining knowledge about anything, whether it be the human spirit, the role of great people in history, or the structure of DNA. A "scientific concept" may come from philosophy, logic, economics, jurisprudence, or other analytic enterprises, as long as it is a rigorous conceptual tool that may be summed up succinctly (or "in a phrase") but has broad application to understanding the world.

[Thanks to Steven Pinker for suggesting this year's EDGE Question and to Daniel Kahneman for advice on its presentation.]

In Memoriam
DENIS DUTTON
1944-2010

Last year, the 2010 EDGE Question, "How Is The Internet Changing The Way You Think?" (http://www.edge.org/q2010/q10_index.html), generated 172 essays (132,000 words) and received global press attention.

To date, the following have already responded to the 2011 EDGE Question: Clifford Pickover, Rudy Rucker, Sean Carroll, Gino Segre, Jason Zweig, Dylan Evans, Steven Pinker, Martin Seligman, Gerald Holton, Robert Provine, Nassim N. Taleb, Roger Schank, George Dyson, Milford Wolpoff, George Lakoff, W. Daniel Hiliis, Nicholas Humphrey, Christian Keyzers, Haim Harari, John Allen Paulos, Bruce Hood, Howard Gardner.

PERMALINK: http://www.edge.org/q2011/q11_index.html
user id: edge
password: q2011
(all lower case - password-protected until publication)

SUBMITTING ESSAYS: Email as text or attached Word file to me.

DUE DATE: 8pm, Wednesday, January 12th

PUBLICATION DATE: Midnight, Thursday, January 13th

PRESS EMBARGO: Until publication. Do not cite or circulate.

EDITORIAL MARCHING ORDERS

Say something new, true, and interesting, based on your own experience, in 1,000 words or less. Email contributions to me.

As usual, no politics ("Democrat" "Republican") or politicians ("Obama" "Bush" "Clinton" "Palin", etc.), editorials, opeds, opinion pieces, flippancy. No ad hominem comments. No self-promotion: referencing your books, papers, courses, "selling from the stage", pushing your well-known agenda. No footnotes or hyperlink: stay on the page. No anecdotes about spouses, significant others, kids, family pets. Write a stand-alone piece: don't respond to the pieces of other contributors already posted.

Go deeper than the news. Tell me something I don't know. This is not a purely scientific question: this is question about our culture and ourselves. The ideas we present on Edge can offer readers and the wider public a new set of metaphors to describe ourselves, our minds, the way we think, the world, and all of the things we know in it.

Be imaginative, exciting, compelling, inspiring. Tell a great story. Make an argument that makes a difference. Amaze and delight. Surprise us!

I look forward to hearing from you. Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

John Brockman
Editor & Publisher

The EDGE Question in the News:

"Deliciously creative...the variety astonishes...intellectual skyrockets of stunning brilliance. Nobody in the world is doing what Edge is doing." ARTS & LETTERS • "Fantastically stimulating...It's like the crack cocaine of the thinking world.... Once you start, you can't stop thinking about that question." BBC RADIO 4 • "Big, deep and ambitious questions... breathtaking in scope." NEW SCIENTIST • "A stellar cast of intellectuals ... a stunning array of responses." NEW SCIENTIST • Brilliant ... captivating ... overwhelming." SEED • "Bold, often thrilling, sometimes chilling, answers." NEWS-OBSERVER • "The fascinating breadth of their visions of the future is revealed today by the discussion website edge.com, which has asked some of the world's finest mind the question: 'What will change everything?'" THE TIMES • "Edge: brilliant, essential and addictive. The result of this ambitious venture, for those who have already experienced navigating the web pages of edge.org, is not only brilliant, but addictive. It interprets, it interrogates, it provokes. Each text can be a world in itself." PUBLICO (LISBON) --COVER STORY, SUNDAY MAGAZINE • "The world's finest minds have responded with some of the most insightful, humbling, fascinating confessions and anecdotes, an intellectual treasure trove. ... Best three or four hours of intense, enlightening reading you can do for the new year. Read it now." SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE • "The splendidly enlightened Edge website (www.edge.org) has rounded off each year of inter-disciplinary debate by asking its heavy-hitting contributors to answer one question. I strongly recommend a visit." THE INDEPENDENT • "A great event in the Anglo-Saxon culture." EL MUNDO • "As fascinating and weighty as one would imagine." THE INDEPENDENT • "They are the intellectual elite, the brains the rest of us rely on to make sense of the universe and answer the big questions. But in a refreshing show of new year humility, the world's best thinkers have admitted that from time to time even they are forced to change their minds." THE GUARDIAN • "Praised by everyone from the Guardian, Prospect magazine, Wired, the New York Times and BBC Radio 4, Edge is an online collective of deep thinkers. Their contributors aren't on the frontier, they are the frontier." THE SCOTSMAN • "A selection of the most explosive ideas of our age." SUNDAY HERALD • "Uplifting ...enthralling." MAIL ON SUNDAY • "If you think the web is full of trivial rubbish, you will find the intellectual badinage of edge.org to be a blessed counterpoint." THE TIMES • "...fascinating and provocative reading." -- THE GUARDIAN • "...reads like an intriguing dinner party conversation among great minds in science." -- DISCOVER • "Fantastically stimulating...It's like the crack cocaine of the thinking world.... Once you start, you can't stop thinking about that question." BBC RADIO 4 • "Danger -- brilliant minds at work... exhilarating, hilarious, and chilling." EVENING STANDARD • "Wonderful reading." THE TIMES • "Strangely addictive." THE TELEGRAPH • "The greatest virtual research university in the world." ARTS & LETTERS DAILY • "Audacious and stimulating." LA VANGUARDIA • "Brilliant! Stimulating reading for anyone seeking a glimpse into the next decade." THE SUNDAY TIMES • "A running fire of a provocative and fascinating thesis." LA STAMPA

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