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THE PHILOSOPHER WITHIN YOU

There’s the legend of the fish who swam around asking every sea creature he’d meet, “Where is this great ocean I keep hearing about?” A pretty small legend, true—but one with a pretty big message.

We are very much like that fish.

For consider, it’s hard to look at a newborn baby without thinking: what an incredible miracle. But when was the last time you looked at an adult and had the same thought? But why not? Every adult *was* a little baby; if the latter is a miracle then so is the former. But it never occurs to us to think this way for one simple reason: we’re so used to seeing people that we stop reflecting on them.

Or you drop something, a spoon, and it falls to the floor. But why? Couldn’t it, in theory, have remained floating in air or moved upwards? And *how* exactly does it fall to the floor, by

“gravity”? There are no strings connecting the earth to the spoon. How can the earth pull on something from a distance, that it’s not even attached to? Why don’t we pause every time something drops and say: what an incredible miracle!

The most ordinary things contain a whole lifetime of questions, if only we are reminded to start asking them.

Children already know to ask these questions. Every answer you provide to one of their “Why?” questions just generates the next question. But we were all children once. What we need to do now is to let the child still within us—the philosopher within us—re-emerge. What we need now are a few seconds out of our ordinary conceptual habits. We need to take a cold wet plunge into the great deep ocean of thought.

It’s time to start thinking.

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Discussion Questions on Andrew Pessin’s “The Philosopher Within You”

By Caroline A. Buchanan, Erik Jarvis, James William Lincoln, and Eric Thomas Weber

- (1) Why are things the way that they are?
- (2) What is the utility in philosophizing?
- (3) What questions have children asked you that have surprised you?
- (4) What is an example of a time when you were taken aback by something that usually seems familiar to you?
- (5) How can we take a step back from our habits of daily life to think deeply? Is it important to do? Is it challenging? Why or why not?
- (6) What are those events in life that throw us into a state of wonder?
- (7) Why does it sometimes take an outsider to critique a system?
- (8) Do philosophers need to be outsiders? If so, how can they know themselves? Can we get outside of our own systems? If not, why not? If so, how?

For more thoughtful short essays like “The Philosopher Within You,” check out Andrew Pessin’s *The 60-Second Philosopher* (London: One-World Publications, 2013). SOPHIA chapters interested in a copy of the book can request one from SOPHIA by writing to Eric Thomas Weber at etweber@gmail.com.

Thank you to [Andrew Pessin](#) for permission distribute this excerpt from his book.

