

8 June 2011



In my blogging, my essays and much of my other writing I urge the reader to think.

Thinking can be scary, as can answers we come up with. What is the use of thinking, anyway? Haven't all the important questions been asked? Haven't most of them been answered? How can we come up with anything new or important?

What *are* the important questions? This in itself is one of the important questions. How will we know when we have the right answer to an important question? Are some answers more right than others? How would we know? Is there even such a thing as *the* right answer?

Questions, questions and more questions. Why ask them? How do we answer them?

Why think at all? Because if you don't you are at the mercy of those who would prefer to think for you; by allowing them to do so, you give up your power and your independence. By allowing others to think for you and give *their* answers to *their* questions, you allow yourself to be manipulated and controlled. Freedom exists in the ability and willingness to questions and, thus, to think. Thinking involves asking questions, especially "What if ...?"

If you allow others to do all your thinking for you or on your behalf, you give up the ability to truly choose, for you are then limited to the options presented by them. If you ask your own questions, seeking your own answers, then your choices are informed by those questions. This may lead to the same result in many cases as if you had stuck to the choices on offer, but it is not the same. There is a qualitative difference between those things which are served up on a platter and those which you attain through your own endeavour. If you rely on other people's answers, you often don't know what questions were asked. Information, without the questions that led to the information, is often not very useful.

By asking questions in every instance, you are able to respond to circumstances and, importantly, to changing circumstances – you are response-able. If you leave all the thinking up to others, you give up your response-ability.

We all know the aphorism, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance". This is usually quoted to support the admonition that if we fail to keep an eye on our institutions, we will lose our freedoms. That was probably the meaning Thomas Jefferson had in mind. This may be true, but freedom requires more than just keeping an eye on them. How will you know whether 'they' are doing the right thing, whether 'they' are serving *your* needs or their own? Only by asking questions – asking questions of them and asking questions within yourself.

Every day we are fed rubbish by the bucket load, in the form of 'spin' and misinformation. It is very much like a magician's trick: the magician distracts the audience's attention so that the magician may do something else, unnoticed. Much of what is fed to us through the media is aimed at distraction. The only way to deal with this constructively and responsibly is to ask questions such as:

"Does this make sense?"

“What is it based on?”

“If it doesn’t make sense, why not?”

“What is the ‘magician’ trying to distract us from?”

Much of what we are fed in the media masquerades as answers to important questions. It is a dangerous masquerade, as the questions being asked are seldom useful ones and the ‘answers’ are often not even answers to the questions being asked – they are information put out to elicit responses sought by those who want something from you. They may be after your money or your support, your loyalty, your custom. Too often, what is put out as news is not – it is nothing more than PR, regurgitated uncritically.

The questions and ‘answers’ are formulated in such a way that you are bullied into a sense of security and you no longer feel the need to think for yourself. How often have you witnessed an interview with a public figure, where that person says what they are determined to say, no matter what questions are being asked? It is not an interview but a soliloquy. There is no engagement but simply an attempt to stifle the thinking of others.

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[I will continue this thread in my next posting.]