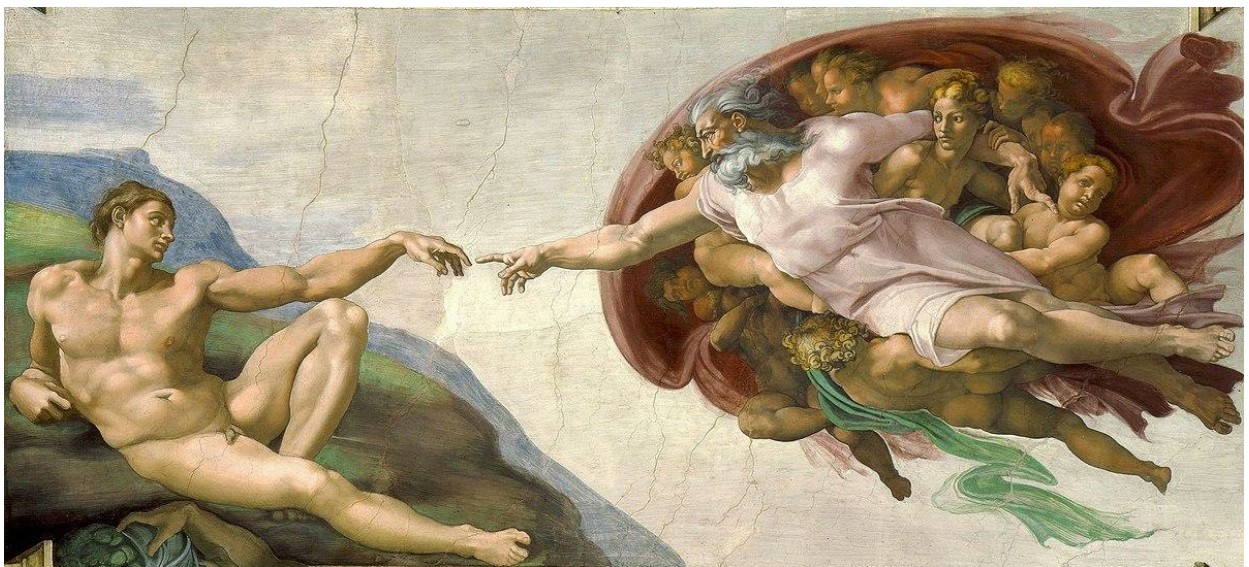


26. Does our knowledge depend on our interactions with other knowers?

This exhibition explores this prompt through delving into whether any knowledge can be obtained or created without the need for interaction. Interactions are exchanges of knowledge between person to person, either indirectly or directly. The myth of the 'lone genius', how knowledge depends on language and how far we should interact with other knowers will be explored.

Object 1. Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" Sistine Chapel



Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" is a fresco painting from circa 1512 that forms part of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, depicting the creation of the first man, Adam, in the Book of Genesis in Christianity. Michelangelo was an Italian sculptor and painter, one of the most accomplished artists of his time, and regarded as the forefather to the development of Western art and a 'lone genius'.

Yet, this notion that Michelangelo was a 'lone genius' and in the absence of interaction with other knowers created groundbreaking masterpieces is false. The "Creation of Adam" fresco clearly illustrates this, as Michelangelo employed 4 assistants; Bastiano da Sangallo, Giuliano Bugiardini, Agnolo di Donnino and Jacopo del Tedesco, to help him throughout the entirety of the Sistine Chapel artworks. Michelangelo could not possibly have created the masterpieces on his own, as he had

those assistants to help him out - making interaction and the exchange of ideas and knowledge inevitable.

Additionally, the fresco depicts a scene from the Book of Genesis, a motif that clearly required Michelangelo to interact with the Christian faith and have an understanding of the bible. Thus reinforcing that Michelangelo could impossibly be a 'lone genius', as the Biblical knowledge he vividly depicts is the direct result of interaction with Christian knowers.

Moreover, Michelangelo was the apprentice of the famous Italian renaissance painter Ghirlandaio at age 13 in 1488, and from 1490 to 1492 attended the Platonic Academy. Both experiences heavily influenced Michelangelo's later works, guiding Michelangelo's later groundbreaking humanist and naturalist art forms. These interactions with other knowers shaped the genius that became Michelangelo, yet he would not have become so successful if not for the interactions with other knowers. This reinforces that knowledge and the development of knowledge relies on interactions with others.

Object 2. Swedish Book on Animal Sounds



This object is a page from a Swedish 'ordbok' - a collection of Swedish words accompanied by illustrations to allow children to learn the words and sounds of many different things. The book also contains English translations of each. The book was published in 1973 and has been in use for two generations in my Swedish family.

The book explores a diverse range of themes, from cooking to traffic to animal sounds. The latter being incredibly significant as the animal sounds are unique to the Swedish language; the pig makes a '*nöff*' sound and horses '*gnägggar*'. Therefore the child will associate the auditory animal sound with the visual word, without needing to even hear the animal beforehand. This is where interaction is vital to the acquisition of knowledge - without the book the animal sounds would not be known to the child and would not be able to be put into words correctly.

Yet, therein lies an issue; the animal sounds are different according to each language. Taking the pig and horse example from above, they make a '*oink*' and '*neigh*' sound in English, far from the Swedish equivalents. This same issue arises when comparing any two languages, especially those who are not in the same language group. It can therefore be difficult for a child to navigate what sound is 'correct', as it differs from language to language. My understanding of animal sounds is largely based on English and Swedish onomatopoeias, as these are the ones that have been taught to me through books like the Swedish 'ordbok'. Books like these and their interaction with children can therefore be regarded as highly influential in shaping the child's knowledge.

Object 3. Photograph of the Sentinelese Tribe



This object is an undated photo released by the Anthropological Survey of India of Sentinelese tribesmen rowing their canoe in India's Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. The Sentinelese tribe of North Sentinel Island off the coast of India are one of the most unknown and undocumented tribes on earth, having been largely cut off and isolated from contact with the modern world. Only a few interactions with the tribe have occurred, yet much of their culture, language and community is completely unknown.

Interactions with other knowers is one of the major ways to gain knowledge. Photographs are a form of interaction, yet the photograph of the Sentinelese tribe provides very little insight in comparison to other forms of interaction. All that can be ascertained is the type of boats the tribe uses. This is a limitation of a still image, which provides much less knowledge than a face-to-face interaction would, as such an interaction could provide possibilities to understand how the tribe communicates, what their culture is like, how they live and endless more unanswered questions that a photo cannot provide. Thus although the photograph serves as a form of interaction between those seeking knowledge and the knowers, it still heavily limits what knowledge can actually be gained.

Understanding current hunter-gatherer tribes would provide us with an immense understanding and insight into how our hunter-gatherer ancestors lived. Understanding our past would also serve to help us understand our own evolution and development, and how our lives today have been shaped by that, perhaps something rooted deep in our psyche. Only interaction with our ancestral heritage and continuous exploration into our past as a species and the knowledge contained there could answer why we are the way we are today.

Word Count: 914

References

Object #1:

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Object #2: Photograph from author's private collection

Object #3: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kionasmith/2018/11/30/everything-we-know-about-the-isolated-sentinelese-people-of-north-sentinel-island/?sh=4e1173ec35a0>

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