



laetus in praesens

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Challenging Questions of Global Significance from the Young

Can satisfactory answers be found for savvy kids?

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Possible questions to be anticipated?

1. Questions evoked by disorder and violence?
 1. If it is OK to assassinate the bad guys in foreign countries, why can the bad guys in our country not be "taken out"?
 2. If our country manufactures and sells weapons to other countries -- and uses bombs on some of them -- why are people surprised that so many refugees are coming from those countries creating problems for us?
 3. What should I do if someone is rude to you or threatens to hit you?
2. Questions evoked by shortages?
 1. If there is such a shortage of food in many countries, why do people there have so many children?
 2. Why does the Pope always encourage people to have more children -- if their families face so many shortages?
 3. Why are you and mummy making more children, when it is already a big effort for you to feed our family?
 4. Why are there so many starving people on TV when there are so many fat people around?
 5. If there is such a shortage of affordable housing in cities, why is no one offered the possibility of living underground -- so as to avoid lengthy travel and wrecking the parkland where we can play?
 6. Although it is fun to see, why is so much money spent on going into space -- to Mars and beyond -- despite severe shortages on Earth?
 7. Why are there so many things advertised on TV which nobody wants and nobody can afford to buy?
 8. The scarcity of jobs is a concern to many. Incoming migrants, and their children, are considered to be a threat because they take jobs away from others. Now that it is known that mechanisation and robots render more and more people jobless, should the creation of more and more robots be seen as a similar threat -- as "home grown migrants"?
3. Questions evoked by failures of governance?
 1. Why is the world in such a mess -- as shown on TV every night?
 2. Why do religions claiming to aspire for peace engage so frequently in supporting bloody violence against each other?
 3. Why do so many vote for the same party -- when everyone complains that the government does not keep its promises?
 4. If every guarantee is now given that banking can be safely done via the internet, then why can voting not be done in the same way?
 5. If the police know so much about corruption, prostitution and sex slaves, why is so little done about it?
 6. If the government is so clever at detecting threats from terrorist networks, even in our country, why can they not detect crime networks with similar confidence?
 7. If things get bad enough, is it certain that God will send someone to make them better again -- soon enough? Or will the US act on his behalf?
4. Questions evoked by injustice
 1. Why are the people frequently convicted for traffic and other offences not fined according to their income and the number of times they have been caught?
 2. Why do people who have done little get imprisoned, when people who have done really bad things go free?
 3. Why are there so many miserable people on the streets -- so many beggars?
 4. If we need to act urgently against terrorists, how are they different from those bullying me and my friends in school or in the street? They really scare me and no one wants to know

5. Why do some people manage to avoid paying taxes -- especially by using tax havens? Can I learn how to do that? Our family could get lots of things we need, if we did not have to pay them?
 6. Why do the rich people make so many decisions about how poorer people live -- people like us?
 7. If some old people really want to die, why should they not be helped to do so -- now that we help so many others to die who do not want to? My auntie has been in great pain for years.
5. Questions evoked by lack of opportunity?
1. If violence is so widely condemned, why is there nothing more exciting on TV and in video games?
 2. If drinking is bad, why are drugs considered worse -- if some want them?
 3. Why do we have to queue for so many things -- when lots of people would like jobs serving them more quickly?
 4. Why is it difficult for so many to get a job -- even when they have been to school and university?
 5. What should I do when I grow up -- if I cannot get a job?
 6. When computers can do my dad's job better than he can, will there be another job he can do better?
 7. Does crime pay?
6. Questions evoked by contradictions?
1. Why do those advertising products on TV each claim their's is the best? Who stops them if they are not telling the truth? What about the claims of religions and political parties?
 2. Why do girls earn less money than boys when they grow up?
 3. Why do men consider it OK for fathers to beat mothers -- but not OK for mothers to beat fathers?
 4. My mom says her boss terrifies her. Does that mean he is a terrorist?
 5. In our local church the priest says we should be afraid of God -- even though he loves us. Does that mean he is also a terrorist?
 6. Are policemen terrorists in disguise -- if people I know are terrified of all of them?
7. Questions evoked by the environment?
1. Why is there so much rubbish in the sea -- and at the sea side?
 2. Why is there so much junk on th streets in some places, but not in others? What should I do with my junk?
 3. If other kids can scream freely in the train and on the plane, why should I not do the same?
 4. What should I do if I see a dog doing its business on our pavement -- if the owner is doing nothing about it?
 5. Why does nobody help us when the neighbours make a noise all night?
 6. What will happen when everyone has a car -- or a personal drone?
 7. A little boy was caught by an alligator in Florida -- just after 50 people were killed in a mass shooting attributed to a man of Muslim faith. Donald Trump then declared he would ban all Muslims from entering the USA, when he becomes president. Should he also ban alligators? If Americans have a right to own guns -- and to use them for their survival -- do alligators also have a right to have teeth, and to use them?

What questions might be fruitfully added?

Questions about questions from the young in heart?

The above questions "from the young" have of course been imagined for illustrative purposes by a person of advanced age. How might a more genuine list be evoked -- perhaps according to the [KIss Principle](#) and in the spirit of [critical thinking](#)?

1. Learning rather than teaching?
 1. Why is the main focus of the literature on teaching the young rather than listening to them and understanding the perspective from which their questions are asked?
 2. Is conventional education designed to eliminate awkward questions through commodifying answers -- possibly to questions predetermined by teachers?
 3. Do questioners get smothered by the mindsets of the would be answerers?
 4. Rather than determining the answers to be taught, is there an art to recognizing the questions that the young might fruitfully ask?
2. Creativity and critical imagination?
 1. Is there something vital to be learned from the big questions asked by the smaller people -- perhaps in contrast to the smaller questions asked by the bigger people?
 2. Is the openness offered to the imagination by questioning more exciting than the closure provided by authoritative answers?
 3. Where do the more challenging questions come from?
 4. Is the dynamic of questioning, in the anticipation of answering, a curious form of trap -- calling into question the nature of the trapped?
 5. If the mentality of the young is readily considered "alien", should it be explored as a resource for engaging with the alien mindsets in society -- foreigners, adherents of strange religions, criminals, radicals, or the Taliban -- and why not extraterrestrials, if preparedness is worthwhile?
 6. Is it only kids that are given the opportunity to question the arbitrary distinctness made by convention -- and seemingly set in stone?
 7. Do questions from the young lose their flavour and excitement when transformed by educators into problems for which solutions have to be sought? Is this also true with respect to governance?
 8. Hold the question? Be wary of answers? They may well be premature.
3. Collections of questions?

1. Is there a case for holding the complex of questions in some new way as a complement to the [problematique](#) and the [resolutique](#) -- maybe as an "[imaginatique](#)" or even a "quaeretique"?
 2. Why are collections of questions not established and maintained -- possibly a *WikiQuestions* or an *Encyclopedia of Questions*? Should it be assumed that there are satisfactory answers to most questions -- obviating any such project as discouraging their discovery -- possibly in a *WikiAnswers* or an *Encyclopedia of Answers*?
 3. Do aphorisms and traditional fables frame interesting questions to which all could be fruitfully exposed?
 4. With what questions is society faced, notably as recognized by its major institutions?
 5. Should a particular distinction be made between the WH-questions: what, which, how, when, where, who, and why? Are there others?
 6. Are there patterns to be detected in the emergence of questions in relation to the unknown?
 7. Where are the questions of the super gifted children of whose potential so much is made?
4. Organization of questions?
1. How could the questions asked by the young be more fruitfully organized to highlight learning pathways -- or is it a question of "laying down a path through walking"?
 2. Is there a case for recognizing a set of 10 fundamental questions, a set of 20, a set of 30, etc -- and how might they be fruitfully organized?
 3. How might the young imagine the relation between the questions they tend to ask?
 4. how is a distincti be made between the "right" questions and those considered to be "wrong"?
 5. Is knowledge management in a knowledge-based society overly preoccupied with the organization of answers rather than with the questionable challenge of organizing questions?
5. Authoritative answers?
1. Is achieving maturity -- as a rite of passage -- marked for many by the suppression of any questioning impulse or the loss of that capacity?
 2. Do the mature have answers to everything with little need to question anything?
 3. Do authorities tend to ask questions of others rather than of themselves?
 4. Is it expected that questions should be serious? What particular insights emerge from questions that evoke humour -- or are asked or answered in that mode?
 5. Are the young indeed more capable than their elders of articulating the unasked questions which society avoids?
 6. Do the questions asked by the young reflect to a useful degree those characteristic of the disconnect between people and authorities?
 7. Is there a curious resonance between the questions asked by the very young and those which emerge as significant to the very old?

What questions might be fruitfully added?

Potential sources of questions from the young?

With respect to questions about global issues, an initial checklist of sources might include the following (but necessarily excluding the very young). These sources raise the question as to whwther they evoke questions or reflect the answers of the authorities to which they defer.

- United Nations (see summary on [Students](#))
 - [Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#)
 - [Model UN Workshops](#)
 - [UNICEF Voices of Youth](#)
 - [Focal Point on Youth](#) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
 - [UNESCO Youth Forum](#)
 - United Nations Foundation: *Engaging Youth*
 - United Nations Student Association
 - World Food Programme: *Students -- Get Involved*
 - [United Nations Student Club](#)
- World Economic Forum: [The Forum of Young Global Leaders](#)
- World Social Forum: *Youth and the World Social Forum*
- Global Diplomatic Forum: [Young Diplomats Forum](#)
- [Young Club of Rome](#)
- [Global Issues Network](#)

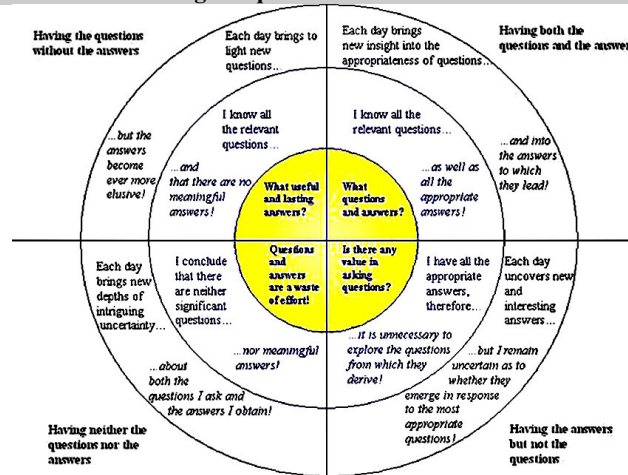
The particular challenge is that the framework in which the young are encouraged to ask questions may well be severely constrained by the policies and preoccupations implicit in that framework. Typically open-ended questions, and those crossing sectoral preoccupations, would be designed out of the process before any effort at appropriate acknowledgement.

The [World Question Center](#) of the [Edge Foundation](#) has been remarkable in eliciting answers to an unusual [question posed annually](#) -- for adults. There is no equivalent for the young and, more to the point, there is no process through which the young are invited to pose questions such as to elicit those which are most imaginative and evocative of further reflection.

Sustaining the quest for sustainable answers?

The following schematic maps the relationship between different understandings of question and answer.

Sustaining the quest for sustainable answers?



Reproduced from *Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers* (2003)

Also of interest is a [comic strip presentation](#) of the issues involved.

Beyond the answer economy?

The following is a checklist of documents variously challenging the conventional framing of questions and answers -- and providing references in addition to those listed thereafter.

- [2016] [Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence](#): matching incapacity to question the reason why
- [2015] [12 Strategic Questions for Europe Regarding Forced Immigration from Africa](#)
- [2014] [Radical Cognitive Mirroring of Globalization](#): Dynamically inning the unquestioningly outed
- [2013] [World Futures Conference as Catastrophic Question](#)
- [2013] [Strategic Implications of 12 Unasked Questions in Response to Disaster](#)
- [2012] [Unanswered Questions on Iran and Israel](#)
- [2011] [In Quest of Sustainability as Holy Grail of Global Governance](#)
- [2011] [Embodiment of Change: Comprehension, Traction and Impact? Discovering enabling questions for the future](#)
- [2010] [Superquestions for Supercomputers](#)
- [2010] [Strategic Embodiment of Time](#): configuring questions fundamental to change
- [2010] [Clustering Questions of Existential Significance](#)
- [2009] [Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem](#): the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues
- [2009] [Remedies to Global Crisis: "Allopathic" or "Homeopathic"?](#)
- [2008] [Being What You Want](#): problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?
- [2008] [Communication with Whom, about What, Where and Why?](#)
- [2008] [Responsibility for Global Governance: Who? Where? When? How? Why? Which? What?](#)
- [2006] [Am I Question or Answer?](#)
- [2006] [Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes](#): an exploration of potential psychosocial implications
- [2006] [Council of the Whys](#): emergent wisdom through configuration of why-question dynamics
- [2006] [Generating a Million Questions from UIA Databases](#): Problems, Strategies, Values
- [2006] [Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews](#): as exemplified by the need for non-antisemitic dialogue with Israelis?
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- [2006] [Question Avoidance, Evasion, Aversion and Phobia](#): why we are unable to escape from traps
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- [2004] [Engaging with Questions of Higher Order](#): cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness
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- [2003] [Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers](#)
- [2000] [Questions to which Many deserve Answers](#)
- [1995] [Questionable answers](#) (Strategic appropriateness: Global Strategies Project)
- [1993] [Strategically Relevant Evocative Questions ?](#)
- [1981] [Checklist of Nasty Methodological Questions -- regarding development analyses and initiatives](#)

The Ultimate Question from the Young?

There's a story, variously told, about a little boy who couldn't wait for his new baby sister to come home from the hospital. He couldn't wait to be near her, to talk to her. But his parents didn't want him to be left alone with her. After all he was only four years old, so they wanted to supervise the encounter. He kept begging to be alone with her, so one night his parents finally relented. The boy tiptoed into her room, stood next to his sister's crib and said: ***Could you tell me about God -- I'm starting to forget?***

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