**The best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things.**

**Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement above and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should consider ways in which the statement might or might not hold true and explain how those considerations shape your position.**

Essay Response:

Many scientific discoveries have been a result of passionate research, with scientists using their knowledge from their daily lives, as well as from their abstract knowledge. Whether it is the pedestrian things that lead to the best ideas is a hard question to answer, with many nuances to capture. In my opinion, I mostly agree with the prompt’s claim, albeit only to a certain extent. There are three main points to consider, with respect to this issue.

First, many of science’s foundational principles were observations that could be made by anyone. While this may put into question why people did not already know about such things, if they were always in front of them, it was purely because of their assumptions about how the world works. Take for example, the famous story of Newton sitting under an apple tree, then getting struck in the head by a falling fruit, leading him to hypothesize the existence of a gravitational force. Had he not been as observant, or if he had brushed it off, assuming that ‘things fall because they are supposed to,’ we would not have developed the intricate and cerebral field of physics today. Indeed, the goal of most sciences is to explain why things work the way they do, and observing nature with a passionate interest to question observations is what makes the scientific process effective. Hence, the prompt’s claim is true for many of the first principles laid out in various fields of science.

Second, commonplace things, though not necessarily created with an intention to provoke thought, can lead to groundbreaking theories and discoveries. Humans have always looked up to the stars – for directions, for astrology, or just to admire their beauty. When astronomers took it upon themselves to track the stars and the Sun, they discovered that the solar system is heliocentric – the celestial bodies in this system revolve around the Sun, as opposed to the older theories of Earth being the centre. This discovery even changed the way people look at things; we humans are not the centre of the universe, but form a minuscule portion of it. If there did not exist such people who were so involved in ‘looking at’ the stars, then our knowledge of the universe would have taken several more decades. If they were not as interested as they were, would they have bothered calculating the trajectories of stars? We may not be able to conclusively answer this, but their passion for studying outer space was a huge driving factor in the progresses of astronomical theory.

Finally, it can be conceded that there are some domains where ideas arise from more complex, abstract things. For one, Einstein’s theory of relativity was not one that could be inferred directly. If we look back to Newton’s development of calculus, that mathematical breakthrough was a product of abstract thought. Furthermore, some artists may capture the real, raw aspects of life in their paintings, while others also create beautiful works from spontaneous unstructured ideas. As technology gets more complex, one may argue that the commonplace would be harder to exploit ideas from. While this is a valid concern, even the seemingly more mundane observations that scientists have made, like the movement of ants in their colonies, has led to further development in routing algorithms for artificial intelligence systems. Hence, while the intangible is also a big contributor to the greatest ideas, the role of common observations cannot be understated.

In conclusion, there are no easy and direct answers to fully rule out one side of this issue. However, based on the points discussed above, most of the greatest ideas have arisen from a passionate interest in the commonplace. After all, making inferences by observing the world around us may even be more fruitful than trying to conjure an abstract conclusion, making it rather difficult for the intangible to provide sufficient support for the best ideas.