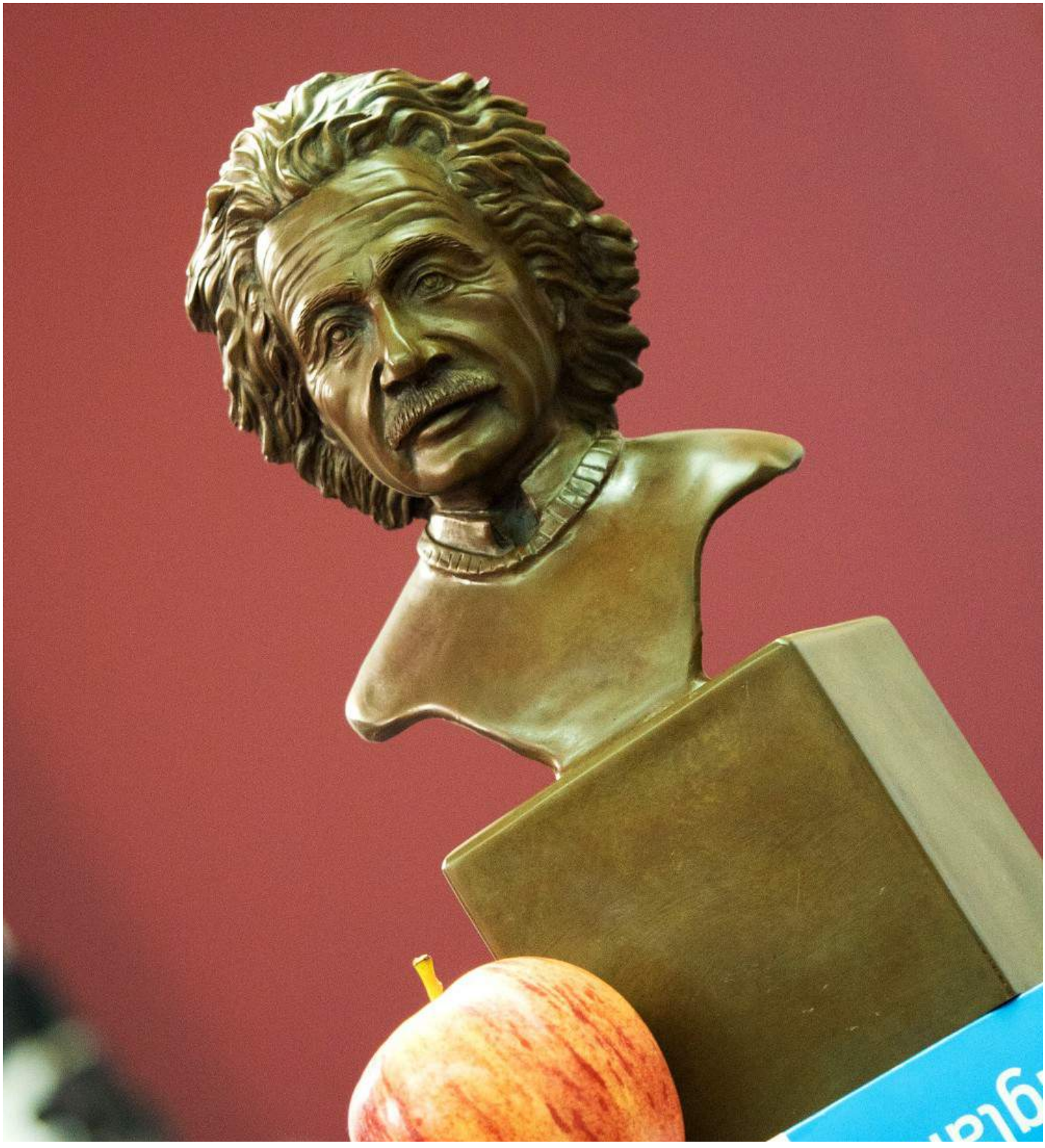
Intelligence is sexy but impractical

 Thomas Vato Dec 12, 2018 · 7 min read



Is intelligence practical? No. Then how to make it practical?

There is a tremendous emphasis on learning stuff, attending universities or taking courses. For a simple reason of getting smarter. It transforms individuals who work towards it into well-educated and therefore more attractive people.

Intelligence is sexy and useful but unnecessary to a prolonged living. Good to have. People can survive and function without great intelligence but it is valued. Even the most witless individual can achieve retirement.

Stupid is not sexy but dull and unappealing. Stupid is not dead. Stupidity can live on its own.

Interesting thing is that intelligence is the most abstract and leant to be theoretical thus less practical. Not something to sense but rather to think about. Ideas are impractical unless you put them in practice. Similar is to say about intelligence. You do not see or hear it but you can recognise when it enters the room.

Being intelligent may sound like an accomplishment but it is impractical because you cannot touch ideas. Every idea is alien unless you understand it.

Thinking is hard and rare. For the sake of curiosity, we can look at intelligent people and more specifically to the fields they represent. To make sure where this sexiness comes from. The list is taken from this article from Bigthink.

1. Leonardo da Vinci — **Science**, painting, sculpture.
2. Sir Isaac Newton — **Science**, **mathematics.**
3. Plato & Aristotle — **Philosophy**, **science**, **mathematics.**
4. William Shakespeare — Literature.
5. Albert Einstein — **Science.**
6. Confucius — **Philosophy.**
7. Marie Curie — **Science.**
8. Satyendra Nath Bose — **Science.**
9. Nikola Tesla — **Science.**
10. Gottfried Leibniz — **Philosophy**, **mathematics.**
11. Galileo Galilei — **Science**, **philosophy**, astronomy.
12. Avicenna aka Ibn Sina — **Philosophy**, **science**, **mathematics.**
13. Johann Goethe — **Science**, literature.
14. Hypatia — **Philosophy**, **mathematics**, astronomy.
15. Voltaire — History, **philosophy**, literature.
16. Aryabhata — **Mathematics**, astronomy.
17. Garry Kasparov — Chess.
18. Srinivasa Ramanujan — **Mathematics.**
19. Cleopatra — Languages.
20. Terence Tao — **Mathematics.**

What unites this list are science, math and philosophy — those disciplines dominate there:

Science — repeats 10 times out of 15.

Math — repeats 8 times out of 15.

Philosophy — repeats 7 times out of 15.

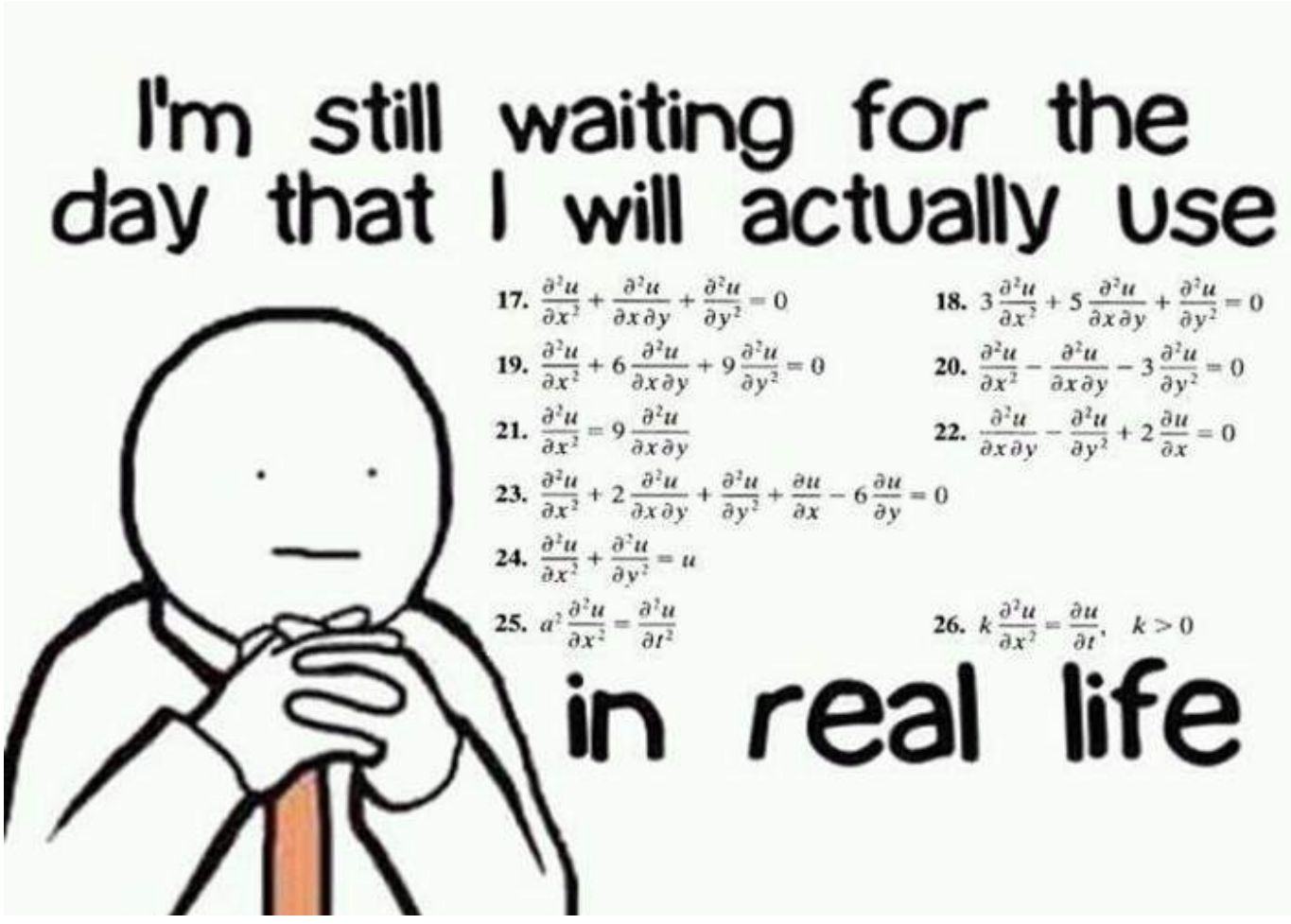
Conclusively,

Intelligent people are more likely to have a relationship with science, math or philosophy. Also, people who are into these fields are more likely to be intelligent than those who are not. Difficult, dry and impractical disciplines, aren't they? The less applicable, the more to do with ideas.

This article is perhaps to the clumsy intellectuals who may struggle in the market which demands practicality. There it is.

Look at practicalities.

Mathematics:

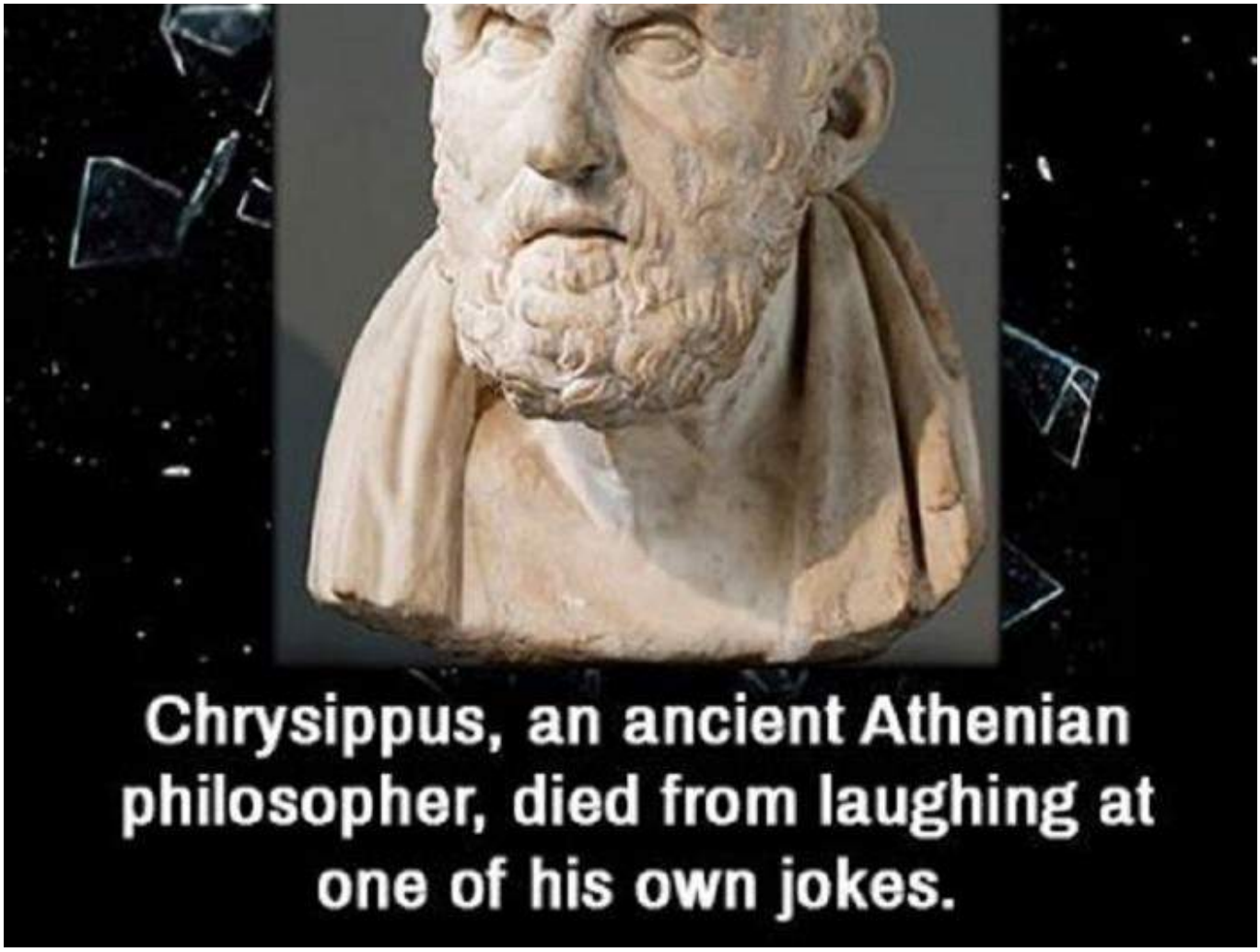


Source

Science:

Source

Philosophy:



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All three ways make a person more perceptive for it expands cognitive horizons. However, if knowledge remains unapplied it hardly becomes practical. That is the whole point. Being smart means nothing. The question is what can you do with philosophy? Math is generally detested for its disconnection with life. Science is considered for nerds or for the brightest of society — obvious division. Stereotypes — You must ignore them and look at what is what.

Let's say intelligence is somehow connected to science, math, and philosophy. Otherwise, people with inclinations towards these subjects would not be topping the list.

Regardless of which one we take into consideration, all of them have reached some meaningful accomplishments. Which by the way are taken for granted without seeing

the stemming root they come from.

Let's stick to basics:

> *Without science, electricity would be a joke.*
>
> *Without science, aeroplanes would be a fiction.*
>
> *Without science, modern medicine would be run perhaps by priests.*
>
> *Getting involved in science has its own benefits. It develops an attitude where claptrap receives less popularity. Aliens become less sensational and perhaps flat earth theory is less exciting. As well as miracles are less convincing. Also, Earth is not 6000 years old as historic best-sellers used to tell people.*
>
> *Science, in general, transforms itself beautifully into other disciplines. Like eggs make an omelette, it has useful applications in medicine. engineering of a various kind or R&D. There it gets applied. Just a very simple view — applied science and science are two islands. Science before an application is theoretical and so impractical. Scientists can be impractical by doing stuff which is scientific but less for solving current problems. It also is possible to think like a scientist and do none of the science.*
>
> *Science provides methods and promises a better understanding of the world. Why things happen, how they happen and what to do to solve problems. Raising questions, and finding out answers using logic as simply as in my book. Discover patterns of nature and take opportunities to advance human civilization forward. Almost every problem can meet its solution scientifically. You live longer and read this because of science.*

What is to say about philosophy? Another realm of an impractical way to spend one's time. However, it has some accomplishments or made the world easier to understand.

> *Without philosophy, constitutions would be unnecessary.*
>
> *Without philosophy, human rights would make no sense.*
>
> *Without philosophy, democracy would have no definition.*

Common sense now — once it was just a philosophy.

Philosophy is equally impractical. Look at this philosophy: "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?". Now it is supposedly the time to think on the matter. This is just an example which has no point of reference for those pursuing wealth or fame.

Philosophy starts making total sense in the face of emerging Artificial intelligence. Can computers think and be creative?

Or other stuff:

Can God create a stone so heavy that he cannot lift?

What is the meaning of life?

Is love just a feeling?

Is it worse to fail at something or regret of not trying after?

You cannot build a house with those questions but you can build a life. This seems to be the most idealistic. Philosophy fits well for managing things. Initially being a discipline of the mind to manage ideas, it gets practical rather quickly.

What is the difference between managing ideas, documents, data, money or people? It is management that unites different areas. Someone who can organise thoughts can relatively easy organise documents, data, money, and people. Not necessarily it happens vice versa.

When it comes to strategy and leadership, ideas often beat practicalities. Also, people value brands because they stand on ideas refined by practice. It is enough to compare the brand you love to something from China. China may stand for inexpensive products but they do not stand for ideas. Yet, ideas are impractical if they do not penetrate things.

After all, philosophers could be the most annoying breed which has the most developed skill to criticise everything and build castles out of thin air. Ideas are like air. How practical is air? Try not to use it to see what will happen. You can call it a scientific experiment afterward.

Finally, considered to be the most disconnected field from reality — mathematics.

> *Without mathematics, global communication would not be so obvious.*
>
> *Without mathematics, machine learning would be unreal.*
>
> *Without mathematics, the internet also would be just air.*
>
> *Mathematics, perhaps the most among other disciplines, gets its rebuke. The public disappreciates it for it often offers a pure speculation which is impractical. It is clear enough, you do not use Pythagorean theorem in real life, count angles or wonder how trigonometry will impact your life. It is rather a prep thing for aspiring scientists and engineers of the future.*

It is very easy to misjudge things.

> *Mathematics gets practical when it goes to economics, computer or data science. For data scientists, it is the sexiest job of the century by the way(this article claims). It has enough of math. Jobs are based on mathematics. In analytic positions, you do not do mathematics but you do the math. If a company earns two million in revenue and spends three of them — it is unsustainable. You do not see this unless you understand math.*
>
> *With knowledge of mathematics, it is hard to be tricked that 15% from 100 is 250, that 2+3=11 or that if you buy two get three and pay for seven is a good deal. So if someone is bad with money, it is more likely to be not a personal but a math problem.*
>
> *Impractical benefits include structured and precise thinking derived from it. Mathematicians seem like giants of logical thinking because math is just logic in numbers. This is a by-product. Then what seems impossible is perhaps 17% chance of success. That means if you tried 100 times to do something, you would succeed 17 times. Sounds hopeful even if you got defeated 83 times in a row. Math…*

After studying theoretical disciplines, it becomes easy to distinguish rubbish from the good in practice. When theory goes into practice and ideas penetrate things, it becomes practical. Implications matter.

Somehow sexy things are impractical, fit for enjoyment. It seems a fascinating source where the sexiness of intelligence stems from. This source — science, math and philosophy — boosts intelligence. Before anything pragmatic, it often starts with a naive idea having zero utility. That is why it is impractical.

Intelligence Science Mathematics Philosophy Math