

The Omnologist Manifesto

By Howard Bloom

Omnology is the aspiration to omniscience: an academic base for the promiscuously curious, a discipline that concentrates on seeing the patterns that emerge when one views all the sciences and the arts at once.

We are blessed with a richness of specializations but cursed with a paucity of panoptic disciplines—categories of knowledge that concentrate on seeing the pattern that emerges when one views all the sciences at once. Hence, we need a field dedicated to the panoramic, an academic base for the promiscuously curious, a discipline whose mandate is best summed up in a paraphrase of the poet Andrew Marvel:

Let us roll all our strength and all
Our knowledge up into one ball,
And tear our visions with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life.

Omnology is a science, but one dedicated to the biggest picture conceivable by the minds of its practitioners. Omnology will use every conceptual tool available—and some not yet invented but inventible—to leapfrog over disciplinary barriers, stitching together the patchwork quilt of science and all the rest that humans can yet know. If one omnologist can perceive the relationship between pop songs, ancient Egyptian graffiti, mysticism, neurobiology, and the origins of the cosmos, so be it. If another uses mathematics to probe traffic patterns, the behavior of insect colonies, and the manner in which galaxies cluster in swarms, wonderful. And if another uses introspection to uncover hidden passions and relate them to research in chemistry, anthropology, psychology, history, and the arts, she, too, has a treasured place on the wild frontiers of scientific truth—the terra incognita in the heartland of omnology.

Let me close with the words of yet another poet, William Blake, on the ultimate goal of omnology:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

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Editors' Notes: We are glad to include this additional piece from Howard Bloom in this issue. Here he marries a vision of ambitious scientific pursuits with metaphysical poetry from the 17th and 18th centuries to inspire the reader. KSI and the JSP have a tradition of honoring the humanities right alongside the sciences, and Bloom's composition exemplifies this holistic humanist value system. ***Gordon Arthur and Mark Wagner.***