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Prompt: Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

There are many things about everyday life people tend to not think about much. These are the tiny actions they do nearly automatically or habitually but not put much thought into. For a more understandable context, I must mention that I am a fan of music, so it may be considered a starting point of my interest. As it turns out, not all songs are simply what they mean. Even something that has a literal meaning may have profound cultural implications and references. For that reason, the topic that makes me lose track of time is the meaning behind things, whether it is music, films, or everyday rituals, especially if my interlocutor is also interested in it as well.

There is much history in the way people interact, which has different implications. Today, it is preserved as the etiquette of a specific behavioral code. The brightest example is probably the tradition of shaking hands—a traditional and silently obligatory part of masculine etiquette and masculinity in general. This tradition has roots in times of warfare, as shaking each other's hands showed that neither of the two has arms or weapons. Therefore, it was a certain transaction of verified trust. The same history concerns the tradition of clicking glasses after a

toast: initially, the point was in spilling the drinks in each others' glasses to prove they were not poisoned. Also, it is fascinating how little trust was in international relations in the past.

Another interest of mine is the origins of folk and fairy tales that are familiar to most people, at least of my age. The fact that attracted my attention is that the original story of the Red Riding Hood turned out to be much darker than it is told to children nowadays. Then, there is the tale of Hansel and Gretel, a lighthearted story, in which the good wins over evil. However, the plot is based on the immense social problem of famine and sending children to the forest was what parents practiced because they simply could not feed their family. Nonetheless, folklore preserved it both as praise of positive thinking and a horrible reminder of the tragic historical period humanity went through. However, the most interesting thing about that is that almost all folk tales are initially obscene and full of cruelty, while the preservation of them in history is a sign of societies being selective in the interpretation of heritage.

Another realm of human life that is full of peculiarity is celebratory traditions, which comprise symbolic rituals that are not as powerful and meaningful as they used to be. Apart from the traditions of presenting an engagement ring, which was invented by a genius advertiser, most wedding rituals are disturbing. For example, a wedding ring was once a symbol of one's ownership of a woman and the traditions of the father handing the bride to the groom was purely transactional and not symbolic at all. However, the most disturbing one is probably the ritual of

the newlywed bride coming into the groom's house symbolizing her death as a part of her family (as taking the groom's surname was obligatory).

To conclude, such interests factored heavily in my decision to apply for a B.A. program in history. The existence of the past and its interpretation are the essentials that give societies an opportunity to improve and grow. It is not visible in an instant but societies create new ways of symbolic interactions even nowadays, and it will be the task of future historians to reflect on societal phenomena and the clarification of their original meaning.



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