Research Question: Does acquiring knowledge destroy our sense of wonder? Discuss with reference two areas of knowledge.

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In the context of this essay, our sense of wonder, which in the English language is connected to the "new," may be defined as our curiosity and our awe, which arise when encountering something exceptional. Some contend that knowing how things function might lessen the wonder of the undiscovered, but others think that gaining such knowledge deepens our enjoyment of the ever-evolving world. While comprehending the workings of creative or natural occurrences may seem to solve the mystery, it can also provide a deeper knowledge of their intricacy. As we learn more about the mechanisms that enable these phenomena, others contend that this increased comprehension even enables us to feel amazement in new and more complex ways.

In this essay, with the help of two fields of knowledge, the arts and the natural sciences, it will examine how gaining knowledge may either demystify or enrich our experiences, which is prompted by this conflict between knowing and awe. By taking into account both viewpoints, this essay will demonstrate the dynamic interrelationship between knowledge and wonder and investigate whether education actually reduces or increases our ability to be amazed by the world. We will learn more about how knowledge influences our feeling of wonder and our capacity for discovery by using examples from these fields of study.

Acquiring knowledge in the arts may enhance our sense of wonder by enabling us to recognize the many levels of meaning and complexity embedded in artistic works. Knowledge on different stroke techniques, the history behind the meaning of different colors, or specific cultural contexts does not dismiss the mystique; rather, it serves as a method of enhancing our sense of awe as we gain insightful knowledge into the ideas and the path of creation that lead to the final creation. For instance, in my advanced art class we had a look at the art of Renaissance painters like Caravaggio or Goya, and we gained insight on the principles of chiaroscuro (which is the use of strong contrasts between dark and light). Chiaroscuro can transform a painting's entire composition from just an eye-striking image into a deep investigation of subjects, for example, human nature. The technical knowledge of manipulating shadow and light to construct a three-dimensional effect affects our appreciation and highlights the artist's ability to control our perception. According to art historian Simon Schama in his documentary ‘The Power of Art’, he expresses how

understanding Caravaggio's techniques does not lessen the sense of wonder but rather fosters admiration and awe for his groundbreaking use of contrast to produce powerful scenes. This new knowledge broadens the sense of wonder in the artist's skills in using specific procedures to evoke strong emotions.

However, in a different field of the arts, gaining knowledge about filmmaking processes can diminish the sense of wonder, especially in cinema, by making the audience too overly aware of the medium’s manufactured character. The strength of film resides in its capacity to wrap viewers around a feeling of mystery and realism. In one of my all-time favorite movies, Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey, for example, the match-cut editing style, which is a type of cinematic editing in which two shots are seamlessly connected, frequently symbolically, by matching their visual, spatial, or thematic components, first draws the audience in with its timeless smooth transition between eras, inspiring the sense of wonder through cutting from a stone age bone to a spaceship. To an untrained eye, such as mine at first, this cut may leave a profound amazement at the symbolic leap in human evolution yet. This scene's wonder can be lessened, though, if one gains knowledge on the technical principles of a match cut. It shifts the perception of the moment from being an admiring scene to a calculated cinematic trick. Andre Bazin, a film theorist, criticized that the emotional immediacy and mystery that make cinema a special and potent art form might be diminished. Instead of underlining the film’s technical design, this change in viewpoint supports Bazin’s claim that the immersiveness of cinema resides in its ability to stir up amazement through preserving ambiguity and realism. Technical knowledge deconstructs emotionally charged moments into deliberate choices and methods. This viewpoint illustrates the artificial structure of a film, demonstrating how knowledge of cinematic procedures, in this example the match cut, may reduce the natural wonder of seeing it.

In the natural sciences, exploring the minute details of cellular biology may deepen our sense of wonder by highlighting the flexibility and intricate nature of life. Gaining insight on such a topic fulfilled part of my curiosity on how the human body works. In the case of cancer, previous superficial knowledge, which most of the time can be categorized as fear, can be turned into fascination. Cellular understanding offers an effective illustration of how

the illness works. Even though cancer is very often thought of as a highly destructive force, it also shows how resilient and resourceful cells can be. By examining the strategies of cancer cells, which, for example, include immune system evasion and unchecked cellular growth, cancer cells demonstrate astounding command of biological processes. Studying these phenomena deepens our sense of wonder and our knowledge of complex regulatory systems that preserve regular cellular activity and the inventiveness of medicinal advancements intended to disable these mechanisms. For instance, recent advances in cancer research have helped map out the evolving signaling networks in tumors, allowing for specific treatments and precise immunotherapies; this includes boosting immune responses and/or even just focusing on particular cell types and how they enact with the tumor. This new and increased knowledge does not only inspire wonder at the complexity of cellular biology but also gives us hope in one day finding a cure for this illness. In particular, these insights do not only advance medicine but also awaken awe in what is left to discover for us.

In spite of that, the sense of wonder that is typically connected to the topic of love may be diminished if it is outlined scientifically as a biological process. Love is reduced from an unexplained, heavenly feeling to a predictable result of brain activity when it is portrayed as a sequence of neurochemical events, such as the release of dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin. This change of knowledge changes how people view love from a very passionate and emotional ideal to one that relies on biological processes meant to ensure life and reproduction. One example is the use of oxytocin in tests to fictitiously increase connection and trust, even in lab conditions. The fact that it is possible to mimic these feelings using external stimuli shows that the mechanisms of love are physically preprogrammed rather than rare or mysterious. Such findings could make the experience seem less unique or remarkable, which would portray it as a simple evolutionary design. In certain ways, this biological devaluation of love eliminates its poetic value, decreasing it to something of a collective, predetermined function rather than an individual experience.This change in viewpoint casts doubt on the notion that love is an incomprehensible, ethereal force, which may limit our ability to perceive it as something remarkable or enchanted. This insight calls into question whether the romantic idea of love is unexplainable and individualized. Rather, it implies that love functions similarly to a formulaic system, where the same chemicals that activate love in humans can be seen in other species, diminishing its sense of uniqueness and wonder. All in all, the biochemical viewpoints provide knowledge on the nature of love but may lessen its emotional depth as well as its intimate aspects, which in hindsight diminish the sense of wonder.

In conclusion, the essay explores the intricate connection between wonder and acquired knowledge. In the arts, Simon Schama shows how grasping chiaroscuro can enhance the sense of wonder by illustrating the deliberateness and brilliance underlying creative decisions, while on the other hand, the comprehension of cinematic techniques can lessen the emotional amazement, as André Bazin contends because of the shift from an immersive experience to mechanical dissection.
While in the field of natural sciences, cellular biology demonstrates how knowledge may increase the sense of wonder as learning about the mysteries of life is evoked by the complexity of cancer cells; however, on the other hand, by reducing deep emotions into neurochemical processes like dopamine and oxytocin, the intense awareness of the process may decrease our sense of wonder.

These insights demonstrate how knowledge can both change and enhance the sense of wonder; it also has the power to transform and enrich it. In my opinion, gaining knowledge does not take away from the feeling of wonder. Rather, it offers us increasingly subtle and profound opportunities to be amazed by the intricacies of our world and since there is always more to learn, the never-ending pursuit of knowledge in this sense becomes an unending source of wonder.

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