

# *On Life and Meaning*

MARK PERES

## Episode 70 – Catherine Horne – Discovery Place

### *As We May Think*

And now a personal word,

A moment ago I received an email from the editor-in-chief of the *Atlantic* to the readers of the magazine. The email starts with a story about how in 1945, “Vannevar Bush, then the director of the U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development—the military’s R&D lab, the predecessor to DARPA—published an essay in the *Atlantic* that would become one of the seminal pieces of technology literature of the 20th century.” That’s how the email begins. It notes how Bush wrote an essay entitled *As We May Think* envisioning a device that could store all human knowledge and “which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility.” Today we have smartphones, soon with flexible and bendable screens, that call up answers to any question we ask. The email from the *Atlantic* announced a redesigned technology section of the magazine to “meet the demands of the moment.”

I could read popular articles about technology all day long—articles that explain what new inventions do and muse about the social and humanistic implications. This month in the *Atlantic* are articles about how YouTube’s algorithms really work, the problem behind a viral video of a baby bear, whether Google is making us stupid, and future shock in the countryside. This month in the *New York Times* technology section are articles about artificial intelligence and counterterrorism, how Internet memes become political slogans, and how a cryptocurrency millionaire wants to build a community in the desert based on blockchain technology.

The last show I binge-watched on Hulu was *Genius*, the National Geographic series about the life of Albert Einstein, based on the book *Einstein: His Life and Universe* by Walter Isaacson. How can anyone not like Einstein? His humor, his defiance of authority, his thought experiments, his passions, his principles, his outlandish hair, his ego and humility.

I’m interested in Steve Jobs and his reality distortion field and Elon Musk and Tesla and the Boring Company and SpaceX and making humans a multiplanetary species. I’m interested in DNA and genome sequencing and life extension. I’m interested in the newest planes, trains, and automobiles. I could go on, but the point is that millions of people share the same curiosity about what’s next, who’s making it happen, and what it all means.

Catherine Horne is devoting her life to sparking wonder in the lives of countless children and adults. She is changing the course of what is possible with every exhibit at Discovery Place, with every lesson plan shared with a teacher, with every starfish held in a visitor's hand. We are only as good as our understanding of our world and the places we might go. I would venture this: there is someone at Discovery Place right now who is meeting the demands of the moment.

Mark Peres © 2018