

Prologue

Poets say science takes away from the beauty of the stars – mere globs of gas atoms. Nothing is ‘mere’. I too can see the stars on a desert night, and feel them. But do I see less or more? The vastness of the heavens stretches my imagination – stuck on this carousel, my little eye can catch one-million-year-old light ... Or see them [the stars] with the greater eye of Palomar, rushing all apart from some common starting point when they were perhaps all together. What is the pattern, or the meaning, or the why? It does not do harm to the mystery to know a little about it. For far more marvellous is the truth than any artists of the past imagined! Why do the poets of the present not speak of it?

Finally, may I add that the main purpose of my teaching has not been to prepare you for some examination – it was not even to prepare you to serve industry or the military. I wanted most to give you some appreciation of the wonderful world and the physicist’s way of looking at it, which, I believe, is a major part of the true culture of modern times. (There are probably professors of other subjects who would object, but I believe they are completely wrong.) Perhaps you will not only have some appreciation of this culture; it is even possible that you may want to join in the greatest adventure that the human mind has ever begun.

Richard Feynman

