

The Love of Wisdom

Read the following letter received by Sophie from her teacher, who tries to explain what philosophy is:

A lot of age-old enigmas have now been explained by science. What the dark side of the moon looks like was once shrouded in mystery. It was not the kind of thing that could be solved by discussion; it was left to the imagination of the individual. But today we know exactly what the dark side of the moon looks like, and no one can 'believe' any longer in the Man in the Moon or the moon is made of green cheese. A Greek philosopher who lived more than two thousand years ago believed that philosophy had its origin in man's sense of wonder. Man thought it was so astonishing to be alive that philosophical questions arose of their own accord. It is like watching a magic trick. We cannot understand how it is done. So we ask: how can the magician change a couple of silk scarves into a live rabbit? A lot of people experience the world with the same credulity as when a magician suddenly pulls a rabbit out of a hat which has just been shown to be empty. In the case of the rabbit, we know the magician has tricked us. What we would like to know is just how he did it. But when it comes to the world it is somewhat different. We know that the world is not all sleight of hand and deception because here we are in it, we are part of it. Actually, we are the white rabbit being pulled out of the hat. The only difference between us and the white rabbit is that the rabbit does not realise it is taking part in a magic trick. Unlike us. We feel we are part of something mysterious and we would like to know how it all works.

P.S. As far as the white rabbit is concerned, it might be better to compare it with the whole universe. We who live here are microscopic insects existing deep down in the rabbit's fur. But philosophers are always trying to climb up the fine hairs of the fur in order to stare right into the magician's eyes ... Are you still there Sophie?

(From the novel *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder)

Reflect on this letter and imagine it was you who received it. How would you respond?
