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Why Ask Why? 为何总要追问“为什么”？

Sometimes we just need to move on. 有时，我们只需放下过往，向前走。

English Original

Why is the sky blue? Why does snow melt? Why do people die? Why is that man sleeping on the street? Why can't I have ice cream? Why do I have to go to bed? Young children are full of questions like these. They've learned from us that people ask why. As philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein would say, they've learned to play a language game (a "form of life" or activity that human beings engage in), and through playing this particular language game over and over and over, they come to see and experience things and events causally and to expect that everything they encounter in the world is either the cause or the effect of something else.

At first, parents delight in the "wondering whys" ("Why is the sky blue?"), proud of their child's intelligence and curiosity. Sooner or later, though, most parents will tire of their children's barrage of questions (many or most of which they have no clue how to answer). And then there are the "whiney whys" ("Why can't I...?") which adults like even less. That's a different language game—whose next move is often one of the parental standbys, "Because," or, "Because I said so."

Once we're adults, "Why?" stays with us.

Causality is one of the ways we know—to know something has come to mean to know its causes and its effects. Causality, reality, and others are among the 12 categories of thought identified by 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant to correspond to forms of understanding that are the foundations of our conceptual knowledge. These categorical ways of thinking are a priori, meaning they are independent of experience—they're the innate structures of the human mind. It's these categories, the story goes, that then shape our experiences. The short version, in the vernacular of our day, is, "We're programmed that way."

Traditional psychotherapy depends on causality. The working assumption is that identifying what is causing depression or anger or whatever—the cause usually being something in one's childhood—changes it, clears things up, and even makes a person better. I've long believed that the assumption of a causal relationship between past events and current emotions needs to be carefully examined—after all, it's the very foundation of a profession

中文译文

为什么天空是蓝色的？为什么雪会融化？人为什么会死？那个人为什么睡在街上？为什么我不能吃冰淇淋？为什么我必须上床睡觉？幼儿脑子里充满了这样的问题。他们从我们这里学会了：人会问“为什么”。用哲学家路德维希·维特根斯坦的话来说，他们学会了玩一种语言游戏（一种人类参与其中的“生活形式”或活动）；而通过一遍又一遍地玩这种特定的语言游戏，他们逐渐开始以因果的方式看待并经验事物和事件，并且开始预期：他们在世界中遇到的一切，不是某件事的原因，就是某件事的结果。

起初，父母会为孩子那些“好奇式的为什么”（“天空为什么是蓝色的？”）感到欣喜，为孩子的聪明和好奇心感到自豪。可是，迟早大多数父母都会被孩子连珠炮似的问题弄得疲惫不堪（其中许多问题，甚至大多数问题，他们其实也完全不知道该如何回答）。接着还有那些“抱怨式的为什么”（“我为什么不能……？”），成年人就更不喜欢了。那是另一种语言游戏——它的下一步往往就是父母的惯常回应：“因为，”或者“因为我说了算。”

等我们长大成人以后，“为什么？”依然伴随着我们。

因果性是我们认识世界的一种方式——如今，说“知道”某件事，已经意味着知道它的原因和结果。因果性、现实性以及其他范畴，是十八世纪德国哲学家伊曼努尔·康德所识别出的十二个思想范畴之一；他认为，这些范畴对应着各种理解形式，而这些理解形式构成了我们概念性知识的基础。这些范畴化的思维方式是先天的（a priori），也就是说，它们独立于经验——它们是人类心智的先天结构。按照这种说法，正是这些范畴随后塑造了我们的经验。用今天的日常说法简短概括就是：“我们天生就是这样被设定的。”

传统心理治疗依赖因果性。它的工作假设是：只要识别出是什么导致了抑郁、愤怒或其他感受——这个原因通常被认为是一个童年时期发生的某件事——就能够改变这种状态，把事情理清楚，甚至让一个人好起来。我一直认为，过去事件与当下情绪之间存在因果关系这一假设，需要被认真审视；毕竟，它正是一个专门帮助正在经历情

(and the industry it feeds) dedicated to helping people who are experiencing emotional distress.

There are at least two downsides to causality remaining unexamined:

Ignoring the topic keeps valuable information away from both consumers and professionals. If conversations about mental health don't address the assumption of cause and why we should try to uncover it, then it's unlikely that the "helpers" and the "helped" will have opportunities to learn about the many available non-causal treatment options. None of us should be limited that way.

We lose the chance to look at ourselves and our own assumptions. Examining our assumptions is an important, often eye-opening and transformative experience. In the case of causality, when we do look, we see how obsessed we are with cause in everyday life. Do you know people who truly believe that every single thing and event has some other thing or event that caused it to be, and who won't rest until they believe they've pinpointed it? I do. Are you sometimes even more concerned with the cause of something—say, why a friend seemed to ignore you, or why you got angry at the cashier at the supermarket—than with ways to move on with your relationships and your life? Or maybe you think you can't take a course of action until you know why it happened in the first place.

I'm among quite a few psychologists who believe that, far from being the solution, trying to find the cause of feeling a certain way only exacerbates feeling that way—and that we need to loosen the hold causality has on us. Applying causality to the psychological realm, and insisting that all of human thought and action is best understood in terms of cause and effect, is misguided.

While mainstream therapy (of both the talk and drug variety) reinforces a causal view of the world, to those of us who practice non-causal approaches it is clear that much of people's emotional pain comes from thinking causally—and we're finding more and more evidence that challenging this way of thinking can be extremely helpful to people.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/conceptual-revolution>

绪痛苦的人群的职业（以及由此滋养出的产业）的根基。

对因果性不加审视，至少有两个弊端：

忽视这个议题，会让消费者和专业人士都得不到有价值的信息。如果关于心理健康的对话不去触及“原因”这一假设，也不讨论为什么我们应该试图揭示原因，那么，“助人者”和“被帮助者”就很可能没有机会了解许多现有的非因果治疗选择。我们任何人都不应受到这样的限制。

我们也会失去审视自身和自身假设的机会。检视我们的假设，是一种重要的、常常令人豁然开朗并带来转化的经验。以因果性为例，当我们真的去看时，就会发现我们在日常生活中多么迷恋“原因”。你认识这样的人吗：他们真心相信每一件事、每一个事件背后，都有另外某个事物或事件导致其发生；在他们自认为已经找准原因之前，他们绝不罢休？我认识。你是否有时更关心某件事的原因——比如，为什么一个朋友看起来像是在无视你，或者为什么你会对超市收银员发火——而不是关心怎样继续经营你的关系、继续过你的生活？又或者，你觉得只有先知道事情为什么会发生，自己才能采取某种行动。

相当一部分心理学家都相信，试图找出自己为何会有某种感受，远非解决之道，反而只会加剧那种感受——我们需要松动因果性对我们的束缚；我也是其中之一。把因果性套用到心理领域，并坚持认为所有人类思想和行动都最好用原因与结果来理解，这是误入歧途。

主流治疗（无论是谈话治疗还是药物治疗）都在强化一种因果性的世界观；而对我们这些实践非因果取向的人来说，很清楚的是，人的许多情绪痛苦来自因果式思维——并且我们正在找到越来越多的证据表明，挑战这种思维方式，能够给人们带来极大的帮助。

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