

Crazy People Work on the Most Interesting Stuff

Think of the most exciting possible inventions and discoveries you can imagine.

Deep space travel. Telepathy. Wireless electricity. Anti-gravity. Cold fusion. Terraforming. etc.

If you poke around YouTube or podcasts or badly designed websites, you'll find people working on them. Devoting years to research and experimentation. You'll notice their passion and conviction. But you'll also notice something else: most of them are kinda crazy. Whether or not they are discovering anything true, you suspect they would be the last people on earth capable of bringing their idea to market or even credibly explaining it outside their niche circles.

But if you poke around places full of high achieving people with sharp minds, big vision, and lots of ability, you won't hear them say stuff like, "I'm working on faster than light travel. I think the current model of physics is all wrong, and I suspect it's possible so I want to prove it."

Most of the best, most respected minds seem to be employed on the more mundane stuff. Sure, they're doing cool valuable stuff (except when they go into politics), but how often does it question the most fundamental assumptions?

We know so very little about reality. We don't even know what we don't know, or whether what we know is actually true. And the most fundamental stuff - the nature and origin of the universe, our planet, our species, the basic rules of the physical strata, consciousness, death and beyond - is the stuff most of us spend the least time on.

Except the crazy people. They live there.

Part of the crazy label comes because they are working on this stuff. To examine widely accepted beliefs is often considered crazy. Part of the label is because most of the time these people are crazy. So it feeds itself. People who don't know how to be normal are more likely to go into crazy stuff because they have less to lose. The more they do, the more the belief that "only crazy people study that" is re-enforced and better minds are repelled.

I'm not trying to place blame or cast judgement. I'm trying to understand this phenomenon. It's the same thing that causes most conversations with neighbors and acquaintances to be so boring. Most of us - myself included - are not willing to dive into crazy stuff most of the time. If your reputation is shot, say, because you're crazy, it's easier.

Conformity is a powerful force. I try to do a little something every day to combat it. A world of crazy questions is much more interesting than a world of probably wrong answers no one wants to talk about.