

Why is studying philosophy so important?

It teaches us to examine our tacit assumptions.

It teaches us to question our beliefs.

It teaches us to ignore superficial details and attempt to get to the heart of the matter.

It alerts us to the ephemerality of intellectual fashions, and that the certainties of one generation may look ridiculous to the next.

In a word, philosophy teaches us to think, rather than merely parrot what we are taught.

Without philosophical inquiry, paradigm shifts are impossible, blocking fundamental progress just as much in the scientific and the technological domains as in the economic and political domains.

An unphilosophical nation adapts badly to change. Such a country is doomed to colonial status, to importing all fundamental innovations from abroad, even if they are ill-adapted to local customs and conditions. And its citizens are ill-prepared to participate in the democratic process, and easy prey to the facile promises of demagogues.

It is better to have a nation of philosophers than a nation of sheep!

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Chaitin is an Argentine-American mathematician living in Rio de Janeiro.

He is an emeritus member of the Académie Internationale de Philosophie des Sciences, and was awarded an honorary professorship by the University of Buenos Aires and an honorary doctorate in philosophy by the National University of Córdoba, the oldest university in Argentina.

In 2007 Wolfram Research awarded him a silver and gold medallion celebrating, on opposite faces, Leibniz's discovery of binary arithmetic and Chaitin's discovery of the Omega number.