

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday June 30 2024

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A Lunar Corona over Paris



Image Credit & Copyright: Valter Binotto

Why does a cloudy moon sometimes appear colorful? The effect, called a lunar corona, is created by the quantum mechanical diffraction of light around individual, similarly-sized water droplets in an intervening but mostly-transparent cloud.

Since light of different colors has different wavelengths, each color diffracts differently. Lunar coronae are one of the few quantum mechanical color effects that can be easily seen with the unaided eye. Solar coronae are also sometimes evident.

The featured image was taken last month from Paris, France. The blue beacon emanating from the Eiffel Tower did not affect the colorful lunar corona.

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The Enduring Mystery of How Water Freezes



Konrad Meister, a biophysical chemist at Boise State University in Idaho, uses a video wall to explore the structure of ice-nucleating proteins.

Courtesy of Konrad Meister

Making ice requires more than subzero temperatures. The unpredictable process takes microscopic scaffolding, random jiggling and often a little bit of bacteria.

We learn in grade school that water freezes at zero degrees Celsius, but that's seldom true. In clouds, scientists have found supercooled water droplets as chilly as minus 40 C, and in a lab in 2014, they cooled water to a staggering minus 46 C before it froze. You can supercool water at home: Throw a bottle of distilled water in your freezer, and it's unlikely to crystallize until you shake it.

Freezing usually doesn't happen right at zero degrees for much the same reason that backyard wood piles don't spontaneously combust. To get started, fire needs a spark. And ice needs a nucleus — a seed of ice around which more and more water molecules arrange themselves into a crystal structure.

<https://bit.ly/462FpC1>

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Creative Glass Sculptures Channel Waves and Movement



moss&fog

Glass artist Nina Casson McGarva uses her medium in a new and exciting way, creating works of art that feel kinetic and full of movement.

<https://mossandfog.com/creative-glass-sculptures-channel-waves-and-movement/>

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The Universe May Have a Complex Geometry — Like a Doughnut

Scientists previously considered only a small subset of possible topologies



Scientists are considering whether the universe might have a complicated topology, represented by a doughnut shape in this artist's conception.

J. Law/Eso

In a universe with an analogous, complex topology, you could travel across the cosmos and end up back where you started. Such a cosmos hasn't yet been ruled out, physicists report in the April 26 [Physical Review Letters](#).

<https://bit.ly/3VO9bWa>

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A 90 Second Look at the Life of a Falcon Nine



spacex

<https://x.com/i/status/1801625641814466890>

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STRESS

"My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane."

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Monterey Bay Fascinating Deep-Sea Animals



*MBARI's advanced underwater robots discover deep-sea squid that broods giant eggs
Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute*

<https://youtu.be/ryRcPeOM1sY>

Just let the video run to succeeding clips.

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Copy of the Declaration of Independence Is Headed to Auction



Ann Ronan Picture

Library/Photo12/Universal Images Group via Getty Image

A 1776 copy of the Declaration of Independence is going up for auction with Sotheby's ahead of this year's July 4 holiday.

The document, one of five surviving subsequent printings of the declaration, was published in a July 11, 1776, issue of *The New-York Journal, or, General Advertiser*. Though much smaller than the official declaration, which is held in the National Archives Museum, it's the only copy still in private hands, and holds its own historical significance given that it was disseminated in a newspaper.

"Because they preserve the text of the declaration as first written and read, July 1776 printings like this are more original than the 'original' engrossed manuscript, the prized

treasure in the National Archives," Sotheby's explains in the listing. The auction, scheduled for June 26, also includes early copies of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. All together, it's expected to bring in up to \$8.6 million.

[See photos of the documents.](#)

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A 'Potty-Mouthed Parrot' Is Up for Adoption.



Niagara SPCA

300 people came forward for the cursing conure.

One of the biggest challenges of owning an amazon parrot is the fact that they can be prone to boredom, Lewis said. Boredom can lead to plucking their feathers and becoming very loud if they don't get the attention they need.

<https://bit.ly/3xwihyO>

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Why 7-Eleven Plays Classical Music Outside Its Stores



*Many businesses believe Bach and Mozart are the ultimate crime deterrents.
The Hustle*

Way back in the 17th century, as the composer Johann Sebastian Bach took Europe by storm, he described music as “an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul.”

Little did he know that by the mid-1980s, enterprising 7-Eleven managers in British Columbia would find a perfectly disagreeable use for his Baroque sound: deterring crime.

<https://bit.ly/4cHNDkK>

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Poetry Corner

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)



pinterest

English poet, literary critic, philosopher, and theologian Coleridge was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets with his friend William Wordsworth.

Coleridge had a turbulent career and personal life with a variety of highs and lows, but his public esteem grew after his death, and he became considered one of the most influential figures in English literature. For instance, a 2018 report by The Guardian labelled him "a genius" who had progressed into "one of the most renowned English poets." Organisations such as the Church of England celebrate his work during public events, such as a "Coleridge Day" in June, with activities including literary recitals.

He wrote the poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as the major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. His critical works were highly influential, especially in relation to William Shakespeare. Throughout his adult life, Coleridge had crippling bouts of anxiety and depression; it has been speculated that he had bipolar disorder, which had not been defined during his lifetime.

If I were king I would send the 'Man from Porlock' to Siberia, thus allowing Coleridge to finish Kubla Khan without interference.

Constancy to an Ideal Object

Since all that beat about in Nature's range,
Or veer or vanish; why should'st thou remain
The only constant in a world of change,
O yearning Thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
Call to the Hours, that in the distance play,
The faery people of the future day—

Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
Will breathe on thee with life-enkindling breath,
Till when, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!
Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
She is not thou, and only thou are she,
Still, still as though some dear embodied Good,
Some living Love before my eyes there stood
With answering look a ready ear to lend,
I mourn to thee and say—'Ah! loveliest friend!
That this the meed of all my toils might be,
To have a home, an English home, and thee!'
Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon,
Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
Without thee were but a becalméd bark,
Whose Helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
The woodman winding westward up the glen
At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head;
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

Desire

Where true Love burns Desire is Love's pure flame;
It is the reflex of our earthly frame,
That takes its meaning from the nobler part,
And but translates the language of the heart.

Epitaph

Stop, Christian passer-by!—Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seemed he.
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;

That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame
He asked, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same!

*** *And of course, the fragment courtesy of the man from
Porlock*

Kubla Khan

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
 The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

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Airbus' High-Speed Helicopter Made Its First Flight



Airbus

The maiden flight was only 30 minutes long, but Airbus aims to open the Racer's flight envelope over the next two years

As its name implies, the Racer is capable of reaching incredibly high speeds for a helicopter because of its propeller configuration. Airbus stated the compound helicopter's current cruising speed is 248.5 miles per hour, less than 1 mph behind the current world record held by the Westland Lynx. However, fuel efficiency was the impetus for the program's existence.

<https://qz.com/airbus-race-helicopter-first-flight-1851487211>

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New Rapid Blood Test Could Help Diagnose Strokes Faster



busracavus/ iStock

Over a third of stroke patients recover with minimal or no impairments, and early intervention is the key to achieving that. Now, people who have had a stroke may soon be in a better position to get the care they need, when they need it, thanks to a new rapid blood test that can help diagnose the medical emergencies in less than six hours.

“We have developed a game-changing, accessible tool,” Joshua Bernstock, a senior author of the new study detailing the test, said in a press release.

Here’s how it works: The test combines blood-based biomarkers with a clinical score to identify patients experiencing large vessel occlusion stroke, or LVO — a severe stroke that occurs when an artery in the brain is blocked. In this situation, a mechanical thrombectomy is one of the most helpful surgical procedures to remove the blockage and put patients on a path to recovery. But the time window makes a difference.

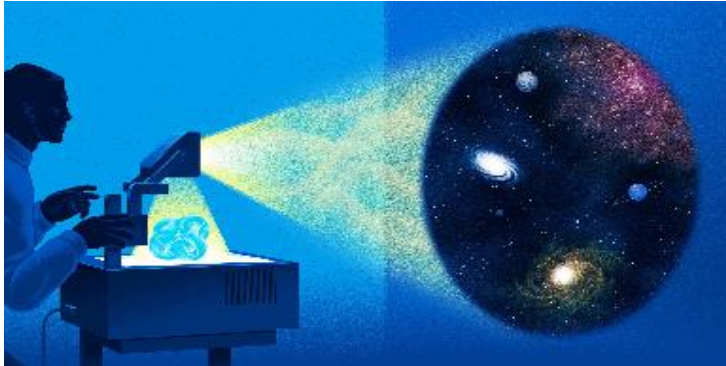
“In stroke care, time is brain,” Bernstock explained, adding, “The earlier this intervention is enacted, the better the patient’s outcome will be.” The new test was found to detect LVO strokes within six hours from symptom onset with over 90% specificity, an innovation that could help save lives and boost rehabilitation. [Click here](#) to learn the signs of a stroke.

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AI Starts to Sift Through String Theory's Near-Endless Possibilities



What macroworld emerges from string theory depends on how six small spatial dimensions are bundled up.

Kouzou Sakai for Quanta Magazine

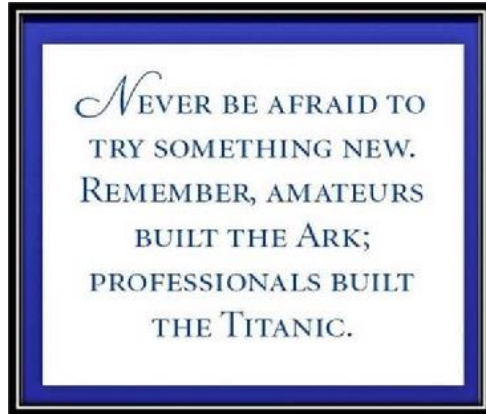
Using machine learning, string theorists are finally showing how microscopic configurations of extra dimensions translate into sets of elementary particles — though not yet those of our universe.

String theory captured the hearts and minds of many physicists decades ago because of a beautiful simplicity. Zoom in far enough on a patch of space, the theory says, and you won't see a menagerie of particles or jittery quantum fields. There will only be identical strands of energy, vibrating and merging and separating. By the late 1980s, physicists found that these "strings" can cavort in just a handful of ways, raising the tantalizing possibility that physicists could trace the path from dancing strings to the elementary particles of our world. The deepest rumblings of the strings would produce gravitons, hypothetical particles believed to form the gravitational fabric of space-time. Other vibrations would give rise to electrons, quarks and neutrinos. String theory was dubbed a "theory of everything."

But as physicists studied string theory, they uncovered a hideous complexity.

<https://bit.ly/44f4wQZ>

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Chords & Riffs

Marie-Joseph Canteloube (1879-1957) Chants d'Auvergne



independent.le

Born in Annonay, the French composer, musicologist, and author is best known for his collections of orchestrated folksongs from the Auvergne region: "Chants d'Auvergne".

In 1901 he entered the "Schola Cantorum" in Paris and became a student of Vincent d'Indy. He soon became friends with Isaac Albéniz and Albert Roussel. It was his teacher Vincent d'Indy who strongly advised him to study the folklore of his home region.

Canteloube combined his profession as a composer alongside his work as musicologist and in 1925 he founded a group called "La Bourrée" with several so called "Auvergnats", who were eager to publish material concerning the folklore and the beauty of their own homeland. Canteloube believed that peasant songs often rise to the level of purest art in terms of feeling and expression, as well as in form.

For more than thirty years he worked on the completion of his famous collection of songs: "Chants d'Auvergne", in which the landscapes of the Auvergne are reflected in

vivid, rich orchestral colors. This way he succeeded in making this French folklore and its rustic melodies better known worldwide.

The songs are written in the language of the historical region in southern Europe, where Occitan was historically the main language spoken.

Chants d'Auvergne (Songs from the Auvergne) is a collection of folk songs from the Auvergne region of France arranged for soprano voice and orchestra or piano by Joseph Canteloube between 1923 and 1930. The songs were published in five Series. The best known of the songs is the "Bailèro" from the first Series, which has been frequently performed in slight variations of Canteloube's arrangement.



My personal favorites from among renditions by the greatest sopranos of the recent and current eras are those of Natania Davrath, whose full recording is included below. Even though Bailero is her signature piece, I've included it here as sung by Kiri te Kanawa, Bourree by Victoria De Los Angeles.

Bailero Kiri te Kanawa <https://youtu.be/BIWaNu416YA>

Hé! Beyla-z-y dau fé Kiri Te Kanawa <https://youtu.be/xdKtoHqMe4w>

Bourree Victoria De Los Angeles <https://youtu.be/PAmU62qSuWc>

Entire playlist Natania Davrath

https://youtu.be/9UdCxzBmw5c?list=OLAK5uy_IL8mVkkNymKzKKbRTU3HysywFoiFDgS6w&t=3

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Adages and Recognitions for a Sunny Sunday



Tip for a successful marriage: Don't ask your wife when dinner will be ready while she's mowing the lawn.

So, you drive across town to a gym to walk on a treadmill?

Old age is coming at a really bad time.

If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would've put them on my knees.

Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.

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Startup Portal Space Systems Comes Out of Stealth Mode



Artist's illustration of Portal Space System's Supernova spacecraft in Earth orbit. (Image credit: Portal Space Systems)

Portal is led by Jeff Thornburg, the chief architect of SpaceX's Raptor engine.

Supernova will be able to move from low Earth orbit (LEO) — the realm within 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometers) of our planet's surface — to geostationary orbit, which lies 22,235 miles (35,786 km) up, in just hours, company representatives said. And it will be capable of making the trek from LEO to the region around the moon in a matter of days.

<https://bit.ly/3UJQwLK>

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Virtual Sensors Help Aerial Vehicles Stay Aloft When Rotors Fail



*A model of an Autonomous Flying Ambulance to test its NFFT control method.
CalTech*

A Caltech team has developed an onboard Machine Learning-based control method to help such aircraft detect and compensate for disturbances so they can keep on flying. The engineers describe the new method, which they call "Neural-Fly for Fault Tolerance" (NFFT), in a [paper](#) accepted for publication in the journal IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters.

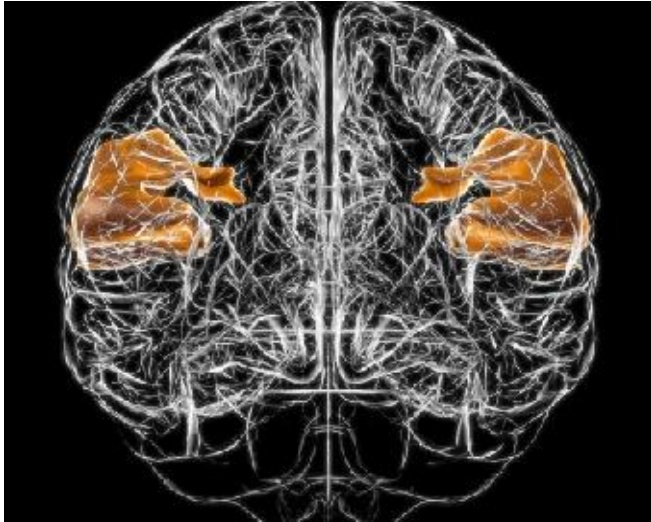
With NFFT, Chung's group has proposed an alternative, novel approach. Building on previous efforts, the team has developed a deep-learning method that can not only respond to strong winds but also detect, on the fly, when the aircraft has suffered an onboard failure.

<https://bit.ly/44oCen8>

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Brain-Reading Device Is Best at Decoding 'Internal Speech'

Technology that enables researchers to interpret brain signals could one day allow people to talk using only their thoughts.



*Illustration showing the supramarginal gyrus (orange), a region of the brain involved in speech.
Credit: My Box/Alamy*

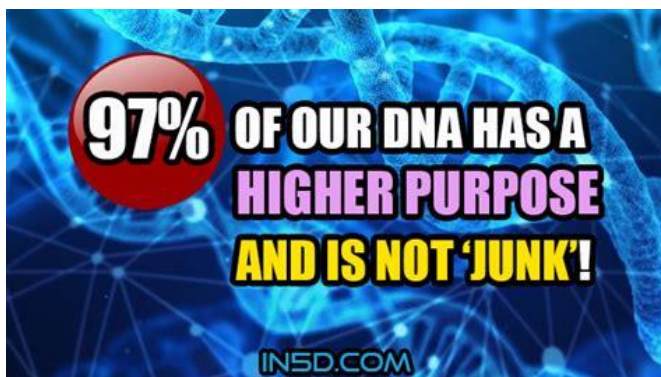
Scientists have developed brain implants that can decode internal speech — identifying words that two people spoke in their minds without moving their lips or making a sound.

Although the technology is at an early stage — it was shown to work with only a handful of words, and not phrases or sentences — it could have clinical applications in future.

<https://bit.ly/44QXke7>

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Some 'Junk DNA' Serves a Purpose



in5d

If you stretched out all the DNA in a single human cell, it would be more than 6 feet long. But only a sliver of that DNA makes proteins, the biological machinery for life. In 2003, the Human Genome Project quantified just how little: Only 1% to 2% of our DNA

— about 1.5 inches out of 6.5 feet — encodes genes for protein. The noncoding sequences that make up the other 98% are often referred to as “junk DNA,”

By comparing human genomes to those of chimpanzees and other animals, scientists have learned that noncoding regions may be a big part of what makes us uniquely human: It’s possible that gene regulation by noncoding DNA differentiates species more than genes and proteins themselves do.

<https://bit.ly/4bp3fss>

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What Makes 4D Weirder Than All Other Dimensions?



Quanta Magazine

Science fiction writers have often pushed past the limits of our senses by exploring the fourth dimension.

Mathematicians hope to continue exploring the strange realm of the fourth dimension. They’ve even developed a list of important problems to help guide them on their journey. For now, though, four-dimensional space remains the least understood of all the dimensions — and the most intriguing.

<https://bit.ly/4czbYJS>

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A Simulated Day in the Life of the Artemis 2 Moon Mission.



*The Artemis 2 astronauts practice in an Orion mockup during an exercise in late 2023; more mockup simulations are ongoing ahead of the launch. Pictured here are mission specialists Christina Koch (NASA, in front) and Jeremy Hansen (Canadian Space Agency).
(Image credit: NASA)*

Astronauts flying to the moon face that situation in spades: Once everything is on the spacecraft and they're on the way, there's no way to add to or change anything on the Orion spacecraft. So the Artemis 2 crew practiced a "day in the life" of their moon mission, expected to fly there in 2025, to see if there were any little items they may have forgotten.

<https://bit.ly/4dzmSQS>

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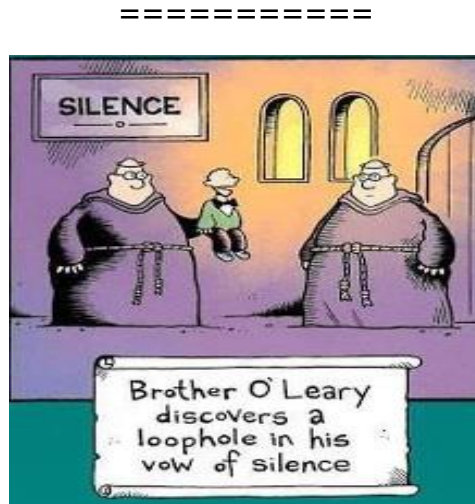
Incredible Coral Kaleidoscope Images



Georgette Apol Douwma

Using a kaleidoscopic effect, these coral reef photographs are turned into exquisite, mirrored works of art. Taken by 79 year-old scuba diver Georgette Apol Douwma, the images are mesmerizing, showing vibrant complex corals and colorful fish, mirrored.

<https://mossandfog.com/incredible-coral-kaleidoscope-images/>



L'Oréal Is Creating a Synthetic Skin That Mimics the Real Thing



L'Oréal - Joaquim Gomes

More and more, beauty companies are offering innovative makeup and skin care products. L'Oréal, however, is taking its efforts to another level by creating a new skin. Yep, you read that right. At the Viva Tech conference in Paris last month, the cosmetics giant revealed that it's developing a synthetic skin that has the ability to "feel" like real human skin — but is actually 3D-printed.

In a press release, the brand, which teamed up with researchers at the University of Oregon, explained the invention emulates the diversity of real skin, and can show certain conditions (like eczema and acne) as well as injury healing and tanning. They plan to incorporate sensors that will allow the material to provide feedback, mimicking how humans feel. So aside from offering a route for improved and more ethical product

testing, the synthetic skin could incite “transformative changes” for studying wound and burn healing.

“There are so many diseases and injuries in the world that aren’t being solved, so having an extra tool to try to tackle these is really valuable,” researcher Paul Dalton, who invented the 3D-printing technique that makes the synthetic skin possible, said in a statement. Guive Balooch, head of L’Oréal’s tech incubator, added to CNBC: “This is going to be a revolution.”

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Notre-Dame Rises Again.. in Lego



madeofbrick.com

Lego, the biggest toy company in the world, released a model of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, complete with rose windows, bell towers and a central spire surrounded by statues. The set, designed for adults, will be part of the company’s collection of sets based on architectural feats, including Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater and his Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

<https://bit.ly/4bMHieg>

This while an army of architects, masons, and glazers race to bring the complete repairs on the real cathedral before the end of the year.

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MIT Plans Energy Cement to Power Your House

By combining cement with conductive carbon black, the researchers created a material riddled with microscopic pathways for electricity.



New concrete technology stores renewable energy.
MIT

Concrete, the commonly used building material of modern civilization, is undergoing a revolutionary transformation.

What was once perceived as a passive construction material is now on the brink of becoming an integral component in powering our homes and infrastructure.

Developed by researchers at MIT and Harvard, this innovation takes three readily available ingredients – cement, water, and a soot-like substance called carbon black – and transforms them into energy storage devices.

<https://bit.ly/3KKFdNE>

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Geothermal to Power Google Data Centers



Reuters/Steve Marcus/File Photo

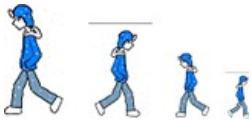
NEW YORK (Reuters) - Google has entered into an agreement with Berkshire Hathaway electric utility NV Energy to power its Nevada data centers with advanced geothermal electricity, the U.S. technology company said on Wednesday.

The deal, which has been sent to state utility regulators for approval, would increase the amount of carbon-free geothermal electricity injected into the local power grid for Google's operations to 115 megawatts from 3.5 megawatts in about six years, Google said in a statement.

<https://bit.ly/3KHWPd6>

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My Walking Thoughts



For Sunday June 30 2024

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Enroute to the Barn

No sooner had I reached for the radio control on the right console than the throttle slammed to the aft detent throwing me forward against the seat straps as the nose pitched down. For an instant my mind was blank, yet already I was pushing the fuel control to Full Rich and raising the nose to achieve the Best Range airspeed of 120 knots. Then recognition of the situation settled in a millisecond before Lieutenant Winan's confirmation, "Engine failure, Trotti, what're you going to do?"

I was surprised to realize I was already into the "Engine Out Emergency Procedure—one that by chance had held my attention as I fought to go to sleep the night before—as I checked and noted that all the engine gages were where they belonged except for the manifold pressure, so 'why not?,' I asked myself and tried to push the throttle forward.

"That's a no-no Trotti, you'll have to try something else."

Since bailing out was not high on my list of intentions, I looked out both sides of the canopy, at the same time I switched fuel tanks from Both to Left and then Right, knowing that while required by the checklist it was a useless gesture. Trimmed now for 120 knots, I focused my scan first left and then right looking for a good empty field to set as my point of intended landing since we'd never make it all the way to Whiting.

Winan's "Well Trotti are you awake up there," came just a second after I realized there was an airfield just beyond my left wingtip and with a surge of joy answered, "Right there," dipping the wing in that direction. Choctaw Field," one of the outlying bases belonging to Eglin Air Force.

Hearing nothing from the back cockpit I continued with a spur-of-the-moment plan, explaining that while we were too low to make the approved emergency landing pattern, I would enter a left downwind for runway 24 and circle to land, holding gear and flaps until I was certain I could make it to the tarmac.

After another few seconds I was rocked back into the seat as the throttle came forward, followed by a curt, "Take us home."

"Roger, sir," switching the radio to the ATIS (Airfield Terminal Information System) frequency to learn the current field wind, altimeter, and weather conditions at Whiting, and began a review of the Landing Checklist procedures.

For a moment or two I felt a surge of pride until my glee was dashed by the knowledge that I had been a lucky son-of-a bitch...a feeling I had with a great regularity ever since.

Next week we'll see if I will actually make it to Whiting without crashing.

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Leadership Skills IV

The principal architect of Chick-fil-A's culture says no one cares about your leadership skills if you can't lead like this. Skills matter but don't be deceived, says Mark Miller. Unless you harness your skills in tandem with the right heart, your skills become irrelevant.

"No one cares about your leadership skills if you can't lead like this."

By Mark Miller

Have you ever known a leader who appeared to have it all: vision, creativity, passion, a knack for team building, and a fair share of really good ideas? Yet, no real followers?

I think we've all seen this in one form or another. Maybe you've been that person who has wondered why, despite all your leadership skills, there seems to be a general reluctance for people to follow you. For some reason that continues to escape you, there appears to be a general attitude of compliance versus commitment. What's up with that?

It's simple not to resolve, but to diagnose. If your heart is not right, no one cares about your skills.

Contrary to conventional wisdom and much of what is written in the scores of books that line our bookshelves, the presence of leadership skills alone will never produce a great leader. I believe I can prove this to you.

Think about a leader you know personally and respect completely. What's the first attribute that comes to mind? I've asked this question to thousands of leaders over the years. The answers are extremely diverse. They include passion, their belief in me, integrity, trust, and more. What all these answers have in common is that 95% of the responses are NOT about skills. They can be neatly lumped into a category we call the heart of the leader.

In my book, *Uncommon Greatness*, I outline five fundamentals of uncommon leaders. One of these fundamentals is to embody a leader's heart.

Before I share a quick overview of the five HEART habits, let me quickly say, that skills matter. This should be a blinding flash of the obvious. The question is not whether skills matter. The real issue is determining how you best leverage your leadership skills and become a leader people want to follow. To be an uncommon leader, you must always start with the heart.

HUNGER FOR WISDOM

The best leaders are learners, period. A commitment to lifelong learning is one of the hallmarks of an uncommon leader. When you and I embrace the role of a learner, we are constantly getting smarter. This serves our people and our organization well.

We also demonstrate humility and acknowledge the well-known fact that we don't know it all. This is a tremendous antidote to the plague of ego and hubris that blunts the impact of far too many leaders.

In the recent global study of more than 4,000 leaders found in *Uncommon Greatness*, the top, unaided response regarding the chief impediment to their boss's effectiveness was ego.

When we model this heart habit, we gain the moral authority to ask others to learn and grow.

EXPECT THE BEST

Pessimistic leaders are in a really hard spot, and they're quick to tell you as much. Uncommon leaders are optimistic. As Napoleon said, "Leaders are dealers in hope." Just imagine how hard it would be to convey hope and cast a vision for a preferred future if you did not believe there could be a preferred future.

Expecting the best does not mean denying reality or looking at the world through rose-tinted glasses. On the contrary, the best leaders are always grounded in reality. Only then can you lead from a position of strength.

Where does this optimism find its source? From the leaders' belief in their own agency and in their team and/or organization to make the future better than today. This spirit of optimism is found in the heart, not the head.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

Uncommon leaders don't blame others, rather they understand and accept accountability for the outcomes of those they lead. Paradoxically, these same leaders, the ones who will accept ownership when things go sideways, are also quick to give praise and share the spotlight when things go smashingly well. You hear this after many NFL games when the quarterback is interviewed on the sidelines. If the team won, the best players always want to recognize others: "The line was amazing today," "The defense was rock-solid," and "The coaches prepared us well for today." If the team loses and the quarterback is an uncommon leader, you'll hear comments such as, "I've got to play better," or "I need to step up my game," and on and on. The same is true in your organization. You'll never become a leader people want to follow if you throw others under the bus for poor performance, or if you take all the credit when things go well.

RESPOND WITH COURAGE

Virtually every decision a leader makes requires some measure of courage— maybe a tiny amount or perhaps a massive dose. Think about the daily or weekly decisions and actions you take.

- Who should we hire?
- What strategy should we set?
- Which product should we offer?
- Which one(s) should we discontinue?
- Where should we invest our limited capital?
- Which meeting should I attend when I find myself overbooked?
- What feedback should I give my boss?

The moments requiring courage are infinite. Whether you consider yourself a naturally courageous leader or not. Courage is like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it becomes. Courage is an indispensable element of uncommon leadership.

THINK "OTHERS FIRST"

Years ago, while working on a book about these five HEART habits, my publisher asked me which was most important. Honestly, I initially considered his question impossible to answer. I believe all five of the traits to be critical to our success as leaders.

However, upon further reflection, I decided there was a "first among equals" on our list. Think "others first" is the one. If we want to become a leader people want to follow, we must cultivate the ability to put the needs of others, and our organization, above our own.

Skills matter, contrary to the title of this article, but don't be deceived. Unless you harness your skills in tandem with the right heart, your skills become irrelevant. The strength of your heart will always multiply the impact of your skills.

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