

Slightly Martian Musings

Emma of rationalparents.blogspot.com remarked in a comment on our previous item **Slightly Martian** (about people working on the Mars lander project who have switched their personal sleep-wake cycles to Mars time):

This sounds to me like a fantastic correlation of desire-to-live-asynchronously with justifying-one's-desire-to-the-conventionally-timetabled.

That's an interesting observation: there are two cultures, the conventionally- and the unconventionally-timetabled.

Is this just a matter of taste, or is one of these two cultures objectively better than the other? Ask yourself this question: suppose *you* suddenly became very interested in the current Mars exploration, and wanted to follow it in real time – which would entail switching your sleep schedule to Mars time. Would you be able to?

Consider the class of people who would *not* be able to. We're not referring to people engaged in activities that they value even more: if someone loves their work so much that they would not interrupt it to follow the Mars mission even if all the relevant authorities and physical constraints permitted them to, then they would not count as 'wanting' to follow it in the sense that we mean here. We're asking: which people would not be able to follow the Mars mission even if they became passionately interested in it?

Probably most people who earn a living through one of the patterns called 'jobs' would not be able to, or more precisely, would think of themselves as being unable to. Most children would be literally unable to, because they would be forcibly prevented. Hospital patients scheduled for urgent surgery. Prisoners in jail. People who can't afford an internet connection...

It must be the case – mustn't it? – that such people tend to avoid lines of thought that might lead to an interest in following the Mars mission, or anything else, with anything like that degree of passion.

And then, on the other hand, there are the elect of the Earth: the people who are either currently pursuing an activity that they love, or are free to do so whenever they discover one.

This dichotomy cuts across the differences by which people are

usually categorised: nationality, wealth, race, class, status, and even the political regime under which they live. It is obviously correlated with some of those. But far from perfectly, and in itself, it is perhaps more important than any of them.

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the future is flexible

Yes, it is absolutely amazing how many people consider it immoral to get up at 11am or later, say, even if you've been up till 7am doing perfectly reasonable things. I look forward to when all the world is on 24-hour flexi-time. The internet will move things along- as people make real-time connections with others in different time-zones, conventional timetables become less and less useful, and clever ways of solving apparent time-conflict problems can be evolved.

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by a reader on Wed, 01/07/2004 - 13:46 | [reply](#)

A speculation

A speculation: in the European Union, doing this would violate some directive or other about working conditions.

And, whether that is literally true or not, that, or something like it, is the reason the European Mars mission failed and the American one succeeded.

by a reader on Wed, 01/07/2004 - 14:50 | [reply](#)